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RETHINKING THE COMMONS: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE
FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

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**RETHINKING THE COMMONS: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE
FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE**

**MÜŞTEREKLERİ YENİDEN DÜŞÜNMEK: FEMİNİST BİR BAKIŞ
AÇISININ ÖNEMİ**

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ABSTRACT

Today, the commons has become an increasingly popular concept both in and outside of academia. It is possible to interpret the increasing popularity of the concept in today's capitalist society with neoliberal policies and the harmful consequences of these policies. Although neoliberalism has many differences in historical and geographical context, it often brings with it displacement, enclosure, and exploitation. In such an order, the disadvantaged groups in society are the most affected by this situation. Therefore, social movements today are more heated than ever before. The potential of the commons to offer alternatives for a more equal, just, and participatory world allows us to see many social movements as anti-capitalist struggles around the commons. Therefore, this thesis focuses on a movement that may arise from a coalition of feminism and the commons by questioning the position of women, who are in a more disadvantaged and vulnerable position with the transition to capitalism, in the capitalist society. While there is no single and exact formula for how the commons will be constructed, I will present the common struggles and unique practices of both movements as the first steps for such a coalition while focusing on a struggle that will arise from the coalition of the commons and feminism.

Key Words: commons, feminism, neoliberalism, capitalism, reproduction

ÖZET

Günümüzde müşterekler hem akademide hem de akademi dışında gittikçe popülerleşen bir kavram haline gelmiştir. Kavramın artan popülaritesini günümüz kapitalist toplum düzeninde, neoliberal politikalar ve bu politikaların yıkıcı sonuçlarıyla yorumlamak mümkündür. Neoliberalizm, tarihsel ve coğrafi bağlamda birçok farklılık gösterse de çoğunlukla beraberinde yerinden edilmeleri, çitlemeleri ve sömürüyü getirmektedir. Böyle bir düzende de bu durumdan en çok etkilenen toplumdaki dezavantajlı gruplar olmaktadır. Bu nedenle günümüzde toplumsal hareketler hiç olmadığı kadar hararetlidir. Müştereklerin, daha eşit, adil ve katılımcı bir dünya için alternatifler sunabilme potansiyeli ise birçok toplumsal hareketi müşterekler etrafında anti kapitalist mücadeleler olarak görmemize olanak sağlar. Bu nedenle bu tez, kapitalizme geçiş süreciyle birlikte daha dezavantajlı ve kırılgan konumda olan kadınların kapitalist toplumdaki konumlarını sorgulayarak feminizm ve müştereklerin koalisyonundan doğabilecek ortak bir hareketin üzerinde durmaktadır. Müştereklerin, nasıl kurulacağına dair tek ve değişmez bir formül bulunmadığı için müştereklerin ve feminizmin koalisyonundan doğacak bir ortak mücadeleye odaklanırken her iki hareketin ortak mücadele alanlarını, kendilerine has pratiklerini böylesine bir koalisyon için başlangıç adımları olarak sunacağım.

Anahtar Kelimeler: müşterekler, feminizm, neoliberalizm, kapitalizm, yeniden üretim

INTRODUCTION

Writing a thesis combining two dynamic and contemporary movements, feminism, and the commons, made me reconsider my understanding and position in these fields. Therefore, I have frequently questioned my own position, struggle, and awareness, particularly regarding feminism. This questioning brought many flashbacks and memories I did not even know I had.

When I considered my journey to discovering feminism, I realized that the fact that I wrote a thesis examining issues such as the role of women in a capitalist society, reproduction, and the private sphere was no coincidence. For, it was precisely when I realized something was wrong in this "private sphere" that I discovered feminism. I had my first arguments with my father, and I formed my first bonds of solidarity with my mother. Perhaps this was a rehearsal for my future battles and the hopeful signals of the women with whom I would stand in solidarity.

My first encounter with the commons occurred on a day that could be considered late. I met the commons thanks to a class, "Politics of Space," I took from Ferhat Taylan in 2020. From the very first day, I was fascinated by the possibilities of commons hold. Furthermore, I have a specific memory from class that I believe inspired me to write this thesis today. This was the moment when the lecturer said that the studies that combined the commons and feminism were actually limited. I was surprised about this since these two movements have many grounds and struggles in common.

Indeed, feminism and the commons are not new theories or struggles. Feminism, in particular, has a long history and roots. There were numerous and varied resources for both movements. Nevertheless, the resources to consider feminism and the commons together were limited. This motivated me to write a thesis that would allow me to combine my interests in the commons and feminism.

Therefore, this curiosity and interest led me to seek answers to the following questions throughout my thesis: Why do feminism and commons need each other? Furthermore, how can they co-operate?

To answer these questions, we should first examine the dynamics of the commons, and the commons-based social movements since grasping these dynamics will be a basis for analyzing feminism and the commons together. Moreover, such a beginning would be beneficial in terms of demonstrating the alternative policies that a potential coalition could offer to today's capitalist societies.

Furthermore, the first thing that most people who research and discover the commons will notice is that although this concept is not really new, it has become increasingly popular in both academic and non-academic literature, especially in the last decade. Since I believe that increasing popularization of the commons is a current need and that this need reveals a lot about today's social orders, I will begin with a theoretical discussion of why the commons is a field that is regaining popularity.

For this reason, in the conceptual framework, I will look at the social movements that I believe will explain today's need for the commons and the practices that lead us to define them as "anti-capitalist" movements. A better understanding of the commons can be gained by looking at these practices. Thus, while understanding the commons, it will be possible to understand what the commons encompass, what types of practices they contain, and what they actually are.

Following these discussions, in the second part, I will examine the current political sphere to strengthen the theoretical discussion I will begin in the first part. Therefore, I will use examples from Turkey, where neoliberal policies and their harmful consequences are readily apparent.

For this purpose, I will examine neoliberal transformations and urban transformation, especially in Istanbul, and I will deepen this analysis with Harvey's concept of *accumulation by dispossession*. Afterward, I will emphasize how capitalism has benefited from this crisis environment where many economic,

political, and democratic crises are intertwined. This will focus the discussion on the commons movement, which we can presently define as an anti-capitalist social movement.

While examining the commons movement, I will also consider the "commoning" practices that enable us to interpret many movements in commons today. Thus, I will emphasize that the commons today encompasses many alternative struggles that focus on solidarity rather than physical spaces and the use of common resources.

In the first section of the fourth chapter, where I aim to discuss feminism and the commons together, I will concentrate on my theoretical discussion of women, whom I consider to be one of the most disadvantaged groups in the capitalist social order. I will begin such a discussion by first discussing the position of women in the capitalist order. Therefore, I will take a closer look at the distinction between private and public spaces, which capitalism separates, and problematize "the invisible labor" of women in this private space.

At this point, I will especially examine the dynamics of the concept of capitalist patriarchy used by Maria Mies. In addition, since the dynamics I will focus on are inherent in capitalism, I will discuss concepts such as primitive accumulation and surplus value, which have been reinterpreted by feminist writers such as Federici and Mies, through the criticism of Marx's gender-blindness. I believe that such a discussion also makes it possible to consider the history of capitalism from a feminist perspective.

In the following section, I will look at how these two movements might be able to co-operate on the issue of reproduction, which I believe is a common ground for feminism and the commons. I will try to answer my main questions while conducting such a discussion: Why do feminism and commons need each other? Furthermore, how can they co-operate?

In the third part that follows this chapter, I will continue to answer my main questions and focus on the main goals of a movement that will arise from the

cooperation of the two movements. Accordingly, Federici and Caffentzis' discussion in *"Commons Against and Beyond Capitalism"* on a common that focuses on collective solidarity will be my primary resource, as there is no single and definitive roadmap for such a movement. While aiming for a common goal of collective solidarity, their discussion will serve as my reference and guide on how feminism and the commons can cooperate.

I will give examples of solidarity practices that can abstract the theoretical discussion I have conducted over the discussion of Federici and Caffentzis. Moreover, in addition to the previous roadmap, I will take a closer look at the feminist tradition that Federici argues that we must revisit today. For this purpose, I will examine some of the issues raised by materialist feminists, such as the collectivization of housework and intersectionality, and present a concrete example from the solidarity kitchens where we can discuss these traditions.

Lastly, I will discuss risks to the commons. I will point out that a common constructed by the coalition of feminism and the commons, with the goal of collective solidarity, could be the main target of these attacks, rather than being autonomous to capitalism's attacks. In addition to these risks, I will consider gender-based criticisms that can be directed at such a common, in which women play the central role and focus on reproductive processes. Therefore, I will discuss these criticisms from a feminist perspective.

CHAPTER 1

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section will focus on the logic of today's social movements and their relation to the commons. I will start by discussing the commons-based social movements. For this purpose, I will focus on the following question: Why the commons, this not-so-new theory, came to the fore? To answer this question, I will examine present social movements' motivation and importance of the commons within them. Therefore, I will discuss the approaches of scholars such as Pierre Dardot & Christian Laval, Antonio Negri & Michael Hardt, Massimo De Angelis, David Harvie, and Naomi Klein. Then, I will focus on the notion itself to formulate a definition, since I believe focusing on today's commons-based movements will enable us to understand the commons better.

1.1. COMMONS BASED SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: AN OLD THEORY within THE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The commons has become a frequently used concept in the academic, political, and philosophical fields. When the current "popularity" of the commons is questioned, its close relation to the new social movements comes to the fore. Indeed, many scholars focused on the commons-based movements to explore the need for the commons and their importance today. However, to understand commons-based social movements, we need to grasp the precise meaning of the words it contains: the commons and the social movements. Therefore, it is necessary to understand today's world where social movements are heated.

Today, we live in an age where social and economic crises are getting deeper on local and global scales. Wars, conflicts, and pandemic deepen these crises each day and the climate crisis is knocking on the door. Yet, no one takes responsibility or action. Current arguments cannot go beyond blaming another crisis that exist,

although the current neoliberal system has already found various ways to profit from the existing crises.

Moreover, in the neoliberal order, which focuses on profit from all areas of life, we are experiencing its harmful consequences. Since politicians are also businesspeople and the privileged people in %1 “represent” the rest of the society. In such a sphere, the remaining 99% are much more vulnerable to devastating consequences of neoliberal policies. It is quite clear that the current situation is not working, at least for the %99. Therefore, the main issue today is not only to demand new policies, but to question the existing system as well.

In a system that affixes a price tag to every aspect of life, people have to fight for even their basic rights. People have no choice but come together to show that this order is no longer functioning. Therefore, social movements are perhaps more heated than ever in the current system, where profits even from simple basic human needs. The neoliberal policies legitimize the enclosure of common areas such as the soil, water, air, and food, which are in the common use of the people.

Moreover, it is also necessary to consider what enclosure means without getting into an in-depth discussion and to better understand such practices. Enclosure is a term that is technically precise (hedge, fence, wall), and expressive of concepts of unfreedom (incarceration, imprisonment, immurement).¹ The concept of the commons and enclosure has permeated the critical social science literature and the vocabulary of social movements today, with the spread and intensification of neoliberal accumulation processes.² This term can be used to describe a variety of forms of dominance and exploitation used in today's capitalist relations. And it has been an important interpretative idea for understanding the historical suppression of women, the great carceral confinement, or the accumulation by dispossession as well as an important empirical fact.³ The enclosures, however, are not a one-time

¹ Peter Linebaugh, "Enclosures from the bottom up," *In Radical History Review* 108 (Fall 2010): 11.

² Begüm Özden Fırat, "Müşterekleştirme ve Çitlemenin Zamanı: Göllüce'de Toprak Mücadeleleri," *Praksis* 49 (May 2019): 40.

³ Linebaugh, "Enclosures from the bottom up," *In Radical History Review*, 11.

process at the dawn of capitalism. They are a regular return on the path of accumulation and a structural component of class struggle.⁴

Naomi Klein emphasizes that in such a sphere where we face with enclosure of every aspect of our lives, activists are not waiting for the revolution; they are acting right now, where they live, where they study, where they work, where they farm.⁵ Therefore, the main issue today is the privatization of rights by the state such as the right to the city, the right to housing, education, and health. Since the states are also responsible for the enclosures that spread our lives, it is not only about demanding things anymore; it is about taking what is already ours. Therefore, when the commons-based social movements are considered, the main point is reclaiming the commons. Dardot and Laval explain the reason why the commons are so fore in today's world as follows:

For if the concept of the common has indeed become a central political issue today, it is precisely because it brutally undermines belief in the progressive promise of the state. This criticism is obviously not meant to echo the neoliberal condemnation of various social, cultural, or educational state interventions, but is rather a call to recognize the state's inherent bureaucratic limitations and thereby submit the state form to social activism and truly democratic political participation.⁶

Indeed, as the neoliberal economic model prevailed around the world, the role and functions of the state were redefined. Now the most important task of the state is to ensure competitiveness in the global economy.⁷ Therefore, many movements; far beyond demanding something from the state, which is intertwined with the market, responsible for the devastating results of policies, it demands that people decide

⁴ Midnight Notes Collective, "The new enclosures," *Midnight Notes* 10 (1990): 1.

⁵ Naomi Klein, "Reclaiming the Commons", *New Left Review*, N.9 (May/June 2001).

⁶ Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval, *Common: On Revolution in the 21st Century* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 3.

⁷ Brigitte Kratzwald, "Rethinking the social welfare state in light of the commons," in *the Wealth of the Commons: A World Beyond Market and State*, ed. David Bollier and Silke Helfrich (Massachusetts: Levellers Press, 2012), 55.

their own future. For it is the states themselves that create many inequalities, feed these inequalities with neoliberal policies, and make 99% of the world more fragile and 1% richer as a result of these policies.

Furthermore, the depth of today's many crises, directly threatening various aspects of social reproduction, and the failures of markets and states to address these crises – indeed, their co-responsibility in producing them – make the development of commons a necessity.⁸ It can be said that many movements today demand control over existing policies. It is possible to see all these control demands as a need for democracy and participation in decision processes. Furthermore, the commons is emerging as an alternative path to take an action, participation, and responsibility.

Due to today's neoliberal policies and its consequences, the commons is often on the agenda as an alternative solution within the social movements. The positioning of the commons as an alternative policy against the harmful consequences of neoliberalism, create connections between many different social movements which come together around an alternative solution. The commons is therefore a category that “makes it possible to identify both the unity of this movement as well as its great variety, its constitution as a global field of struggle and its tendency to be localized and singular.”⁹

Moreover, “the movements that emerged against neoliberalism united under the name of common constitute a new moment in the history of social struggles given against capitalism.”¹⁰ Therefore, commons based social movements often goes by many names: anti-corporate, anti-capitalist, anti-free trade, anti-imperialist.¹¹

Naomi Klein calls “coalitions of coalitions” the gathering of all these seemingly separate movements around the commons. And according to her, what we should

⁸ Massimo De Angelis, David Harvie, “The Commons”, *In the Routledge Companion to Alternative Organizations* (Abington: Routledge, 2014), 291.

⁹ Dardot and Laval, *Common: On Revolution in the 21st Century*, 67.

¹⁰ Begüm Özden Fırat, “Global Movement Cycles and Commoning Movements,” *The Politics of the Commons: From Theory to Struggle* (İstanbul: Sivil ve Ekolojik Haklar Derneği, 2018), 71.

¹¹ Naomi Klein, “Reclaiming the Commons,” *New Left Review*.

focus on is what makes this coalition possible. She emphasizes that this coalition was due to the existence of a common threat: “the privatization of every aspect of life, and the transformation of every activity and value into a commodity.”¹² And all these movements share a common spirit of resistance is taking hold around the world: reclaiming of the commons¹³.

The strength of the commons lies in its core principles, porous boundaries, and endless permutations of possibility. These are core elements of any living system—especially social movements.¹⁴ The organized and participation-oriented position of the commons-based movements against the market and the state has brought together many different groups and different movements against capitalism. Indeed, the anti-capitalist commons involves breaking away from the market and the state by producing alternative solutions against the enclosures legitimized by neoliberal policies. Therefore, the word commons has also gained new connotations which encompass comradely words like solidarity, autonomy, horizontality, and collectivism. It therefore presents an oppositional conceptual tool kit in relation to today and for today.¹⁵

On the other hand, while thinking about "commons-based movements", it is important not to forget that the structure of the commons and social movements is different. Since commons and movements are two modalities of social systems within society, the social broth that includes all social systems.¹⁶ Focusing on social movements and the structure of the commons, De Angelis refers to the structure of social movements as follows:

¹² Dardot and Laval, *Common: On Revolution in the 21st Century*, 66.

¹³ Naomi Klein, “Reclaiming the Commons,” *New Left Review*.

¹⁴ David Bollier, “The Commons as a New Paradigm of Economics, Politics, and Culture,” *The New Possible: Visions of Our World Beyond Crisis*, ed. Philip Clayton, Kelli M Archie, Jonah Sachs, Evan Steiner (Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2021), 99.

¹⁵ Begüm Özden Fırat, “Global Movement Cycles and Commoning Movements,” *The Politics of the Commons: From Theory to Struggle*, 68.

¹⁶ Massimo De Angelis, “Crises, Movements and Commons,” *Borderlands* Volume 11, No.2 (2012): 16.

Each social movement as a succession of waves and cycles is a recomposing and decomposing force, it favours certain types of connections and destroys others, and it creates sociality and creates alien differentiations with the ‘enemy’ while at the same time overcoming alien relations among commoners. But if social movements favour connections and sociality, it does not mean that they create a new social fabric that can reproduce and sustain itself in characteristics that we may recognise as fundamentally alternative to the current one dominated by capital.¹⁷

Thus, for their own limited characteristics, social movements can only contribute to the making of alternatives; they themselves are not the alternative.¹⁸ However, commons could create a social basis for alternative ways of organizing social production, independent from capital and its prerogatives.¹⁹ This is the reason why the commons and social movements need each other. Although social movements can mobilize and organize the masses fast, they cannot always offer an alternative solution. However, commons brings with it alternative solutions and the practice of responsibility. In areas where social movements are limited, the commons embody alternative solutions.

In brief, as Peter Linebaugh reminds us, there is hardly a society that does not have the commons at its heart.²⁰ In fact, commons are latent within society and channel all the support and resources through which we reproduce our lives and knowledge.²¹ Therefore, when the new social movements considered, the issue that brings them together with the practices of solidarity around the commons is the reclaiming the commons.

¹⁷ Ibid, 17.

¹⁸ Ibid, 17.

¹⁹ De Angelis and Harvie, “The Commons”, *In the Routledge Companion to Alternative Organizations*, 290.

²⁰ George Caffentzis and Silvia Federici, “Commons Against and Beyond Capitalism,” *Community Development Journal* Vol. 49 (2014): 93.

²¹ Massimo De Angelis, “Social Revolution and the Commons,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 113, Issue 2 (Spring 2014): 304.

1.2. UNDERSTANDING THE COMMONS

The position of the commons against neoliberalism and its potential to bring along a series of alternative solutions undoubtedly gave new meanings to the notion. In today's world, where every aspect of our daily lives has turned into a struggle, the commons embody alternatives for an equal, fair, and participatory world.

Within the politics of common, one of the most remarkable contributions can be found the work of Hardt and Negri's. For them, instead of the plural concept of the commons, "the common" highlights the philosophical content of the term and emphasizes that this is not a return to the past but a new development.²² Therefore, when we look at their common definition, we see the singular use of the concept. According to Hardt and Negri, common means:

[...] the common wealth of the material world such as the air, the water, the fruits of the soil but it also refers more significantly those results of social production that are necessary for social interaction and further production, such as knowledges, languages, codes, information, affects, and so forth²³.

Furthermore, Hardt and Negri see the common is the only possible path toward a non-capitalist future.²⁴ In this order, where neoliberal policies have spread to all areas of our lives, the commons is the only way out. Indeed, we are living in a moment in which the "common" is a term that designates a regime of practices, struggles, institutions, and research all dedicated to realizing a non- capitalist future.²⁵ In this sense, Dardot and Laval argue about the concept of the common and its current position the following:

As the central term used to denote an alternative to neoliberalism, the common became the effective principle for struggles and

²² Dardot and Laval, *Common: On Revolution in the 21st Century*, 125.

²³ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Commonwealth* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), viii.

²⁴ Dardot and Laval, *Common: On Revolution in the 21st Century*, 125.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 5.

movements that, over the past two decades, have resisted the dynamics of capital and given rise to original forms of activism and discourse. In other words, the common is far from a purely conceptual invention: the common is rather the concrete product of social movements and various schools of thought dedicated to opposing the dominant tendency of our era, namely the extension of private appropriation into every sphere of our societies, our cultures, and our very lives. In this sense, the term “common” does not so much refer to the resurgence of the eternal Communist Ideal, but rather designates the emergence of a new way of challenging capitalism and imagining its transcendence²⁶.

Today, defining the commons with only physical assets such as air, water, soil places the concept in a limited framework. The concept of the commons certainly includes these physical assets and the struggles against their enclosure as well. However, the commons is not just a physical resource found in the nature. It refers to much more than simple bounded territories, also encompassing physical attributes of air, water, soil, and plants as well as socially reproduced goods such as knowledge, languages, codes, information.²⁷

Commons suggest alternative, noncommodified means to fulfill social needs, e.g., to obtain social wealth and to organize social production.²⁸ At this point, considering commons based social movements help us understand the commons beyond the physical and material sides. Since it is also important to look beyond these basic physical attributes and see commons as complex social and political entities underpinned by particular social practices and relationships and forms of governance.²⁹

²⁶ Ibid, 4.

²⁷ Andre Pusey and Paul Chatterton, “Commons,” In *Urban Theory: New Critical Perspectives*, ed. M. Jayne and K. Ward (London: Routledge: 2017), 64.

²⁸ Massimo De Angelis, "Reflections on Alternatives, Commons and Communities," *The Commoner* 6 (Winter 2003): 1.

²⁹ Pusey and Chatterton, “Commons,” *Urban Theory: New Critical Perspectives*, 65.

In addition to these definitions, looking at the etymology of the commons will allow us to understand the notion itself better. Dardot and Laval examine the origins of the notion in tribute to the work of Émile Benveniste. He indicates that the Latin term *munus* designates a particular social phenomenon. The term “designates a particular type of performance and counter-performance concerning honors and benefits associated with an office or a position of status.”³⁰ Thus, the term denotes a responsibility that must be fulfilled and what is given as a gift. The term “common” is particularly apt, then, for designating the political principle of co-obligation for all of those engaged in the same activity.³¹

In this sense, the commons refers so much more than resources that are shared in common, it also refers to “duties in common.” The common, therefore, always implies certain obligatory reciprocity related to the exercise of public responsibilities.³²

Lastly, the commons are neither private nor public spaces. They refer to social systems in which resources are shared by a community of users/producers, who also define the modes of use and production, distribution, and circulation of these resources through democratic and horizontal forms of governance.³³

³⁰ Dardot and Laval, *Common: On Revolution in the 21st Century*, 10.

³¹ *Ibid*, 10.

³² *Ibid*, 10.

³³ Massimo De Angelis, David Harvie, “The Commons,” *Urban Theory: New Critical Perspectives*, 280.

CHAPTER 2

POLITICAL SPHERE

In this chapter, I will take a closer look at the logic of the commons movement, which has come to the fore with the new social movements in Turkey. For this purpose, in the first section, I will focus on the political sphere where many different crises are intertwined and have caused the commons movement to be on the agenda today. Then, I will mainly focus on urban transformation in Istanbul and examine this transformation process through Harvey's concept of "*accumulation by dispossession*." In this way, I will highlight the effects of displacement practices, especially on "the others" living in the city.

Lastly, in the second section, I will examine the rising commons movement in the face of neoliberal transformations that I mentioned in the first section and take a closer look at the dynamics of the commons movement.

2.1. NEOLIBERAL TRANSFORMATIONS in ISTANBUL

We are going through many ecological, economic, and democratic crises in today's world, where capitalism has spread to all areas of our lives. Undoubtedly, the connection between various crises and capitalism is not coincidental. Crises are essential to the reproduction of capitalism. It is in the course of crises that the instabilities of capitalism are confronted, reshaped and re-engineered to create a new version of what capitalism is about.³⁴

It is possible to say that all these crises are experienced on a global scale and have deepened with neoliberalism. However, some countries are going through these processes more destructively. Turkey is undoubtedly one of them. Turkey is going

³⁴ David Harvey, *Seventeen Contradictions, and the End of Capitalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), ix.

through a period in which many crises are intertwined, and each crisis deepens the previous crisis. As Fırat Genç states:

Today, Turkey seems to have submerged into a moment of multiple crises. The signs that the shocks endured in the economic sphere will make life even more troublesome, especially for the laboring classes as well as other oppressed groups, are becoming clearer with each passing day. The effects of the ecological crisis, especially on climate and food, are becoming more and more evident day by day as if they prove the fact that ecological destruction is not just a dystopic scenario of the future. The recent democratic crisis, to crown it all, denotes the dismantling of the political institutions established within the last century.³⁵

Although neoliberalism takes diverse forms in different historical and geographical contexts, it is often defined by processes like privatization and deregulation of publicly owned resources and the expansion of various forms of free trade agreements.³⁶ The cities with the most intense economic and cultural activities are the ones where these crises are becoming increasingly apparent.

Istanbul is undergoing a similar transformation now. Istanbul has become a city that has suffered from the harmful effects of neoliberal policies and neoliberal urbanization. The solution that will keep the masses in urban life against the inequalities and impoverishment created by neoliberalism has been the reorganization of housing enforcement.³⁷

³⁵ Fırat Genç, "Urban Social Movements and the Politics of the Commons," *The Politics of the Commons: from Theory to Struggle* (İstanbul: Sivil ve Ekolojik Haklar Derneği, 2018), 95.

³⁶ Ebru Özdeş, "Patronsuz Kazak, or Jumpers without masters: A Critical Engagement with Commoning and New Social Movements in Turkey" (Master Thesis, Sabancı University Institute of Social Sciences, 2018), 14.

³⁷ Erbatur Çavuşoğlu, *Türkiye Kentleşmesinin Toplumsal Arkeolojisi* (İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2016), 195.

Additionally, the inhabitants of Istanbul witnessed the regeneration of their city in the 2000s at an increasingly rapid pace.³⁸ Istanbul has become a major building site as a result of the AKP government's economic development strategy focused on the construction sector, and the displacements have "legitimized" due to the urban transformation.

Local and central governments support property ownership by encouraging new housing and rebuilding, thus paving the way for the construction industry. TOKI, in particular, played a crucial role in developing and encouraging private property ownership.³⁹ Due to growing rent prices in big cities, many people have found it more appealing to acquire a home. Since it is more enticing to pay a loan than to pay high rents, the majority of them are burdened by large, long-term debts that they are unable to repay owing to rising living costs.

Indeed, this situation clearly shows the relationship that neoliberalism establishes with space. When the relation of neoliberalism with space is considered, it is clear that it transfers the accumulation of capital to the commodification and transformation of cities.

These transformations have left great destructions and displacements behind, causing great wounds in fragile groups. It has entailed repeated bouts of urban restructuring through "creative destruction." As Harvey states:

Surplus absorption through urban transformation has, however, an even darker aspect. It has entailed repeated bouts of urban restructuring through "creative destruction." This nearly always has a class dimension, since it is usually the poor, the underprivileged, and those marginalized from political power that suffer first and

³⁸ Fırat Genç, "Urban Social Movements and the Politics of the Commons," *The Politics of the Commons: from Theory to Struggle*, 81.

³⁹ Erbatur Çavuşoğlu, *Türkiye Kentleşmesinin Toplumsal Arkeolojisi*, 231-232.

foremost from this process. Violence is required to achieve the new urban world on the wreckage of the old.⁴⁰

By the “creative destruction” term, Harvey claims that the city is constantly being demolished and rebuilt so that it can turn into a more efficient and profitable production-consumption chain. This proves that crises are not actually unexpected things. On the contrary, crises are processes that have many steps planned before. Creating, controlling, and manipulating the crisis sets the stage for an unfair redistribution of the resources.⁴¹ In short, the process of dispossession and displacement forms the core of capitalist urban processes.

Moreover, neoliberalism has intensively directed the capital flow towards cities. In this sense, it is also possible to see how the ideology that Harvey called *accumulation by dispossession* impoverished the people in the cities. Harvey defines *accumulation by dispossession* as the reproduction and distribution of "primitive accumulation" practices, which Marx states as the cause of capitalism, through present neoliberal policies.⁴² Practices of accumulation by dispossession, rental appropriations, by money- and profit-gouging, lie at the heart of many of the discontents that attach to the qualities of daily life for the mass of the population.⁴³ The urban transformation projects found in Istanbul today are just one of the quintessential examples of Harvey’s conceptualization of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ in which he emphasizes the continuity and timeliness of the attacks by capital on the commons.⁴⁴

Additionally, when it comes to Istanbul's urban transformation, the transformed places are mostly places where people come together with "the other." These are the only spaces where the others come together, organize, corporate, and create their

⁴⁰ David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2012), 16.

⁴¹ Müge Ertürk, “Mülksüzleştirme Yoluyla Birikim ve Göç”, *sendika.org*, 20 January 2020, <https://sendika.org/2020/01/mulksuzlestirme-yoluyla-birikim-ve-goc-574798/> (accessed 22 June 2022).

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*, 129.

⁴⁴ Fırat Genç, “Urban Social Movements and the Politics of the Commons”, *The Politics of the Commons: from Theory to Struggle*, 89.

own culture as a part of the city. Therefore, the transformation in these areas is not coincidental. Harvey similarly emphasizes discrimination in accumulation by dispossession with an example from the United States. According to him:

Conversely, the way capital differentiates and divides populations ethnically, racially, and a cross gender lines produces marked disparities in the economic dynamics of dispossession in the living space (thanks to the circuits of Money and commodity capital). While the median loss of household wealth in the United States for everyone was 28 percent over the period 2005-09, that of Hispanics was 66 percent, and that of blacks 53 percent, while for whites it was 16 percent. The class character of ethnic discriminations in accumulation by dispossession, and the way these discriminations differentially affect neighborhood life, could not be plainer, particularly since most of the losses were due to falling housing values.⁴⁵

From this perspective, a similar situation can be observed in Turkey. It is clear that Istanbul's transformation has been aggressively implemented, particularly in areas where refugees, LGBTI+ and diverse fragile groups live. Just like in Tarlabası, Sulukule and many more examples. Indeed, Tarlabası itself is the example: Istanbul-Tarlabası Urban Transformation Project has brought many migrants and immigrants to the danger of forced evacuation.⁴⁶

Furthermore, while focusing on Istanbul, migration practices should not be ignored. Today, approximately 550,000 Syrians under temporary protection live in Istanbul. This situation changes the dynamics of the city. Many Syrian refugees mostly live together in neighborhoods close to temporary job opportunities in Istanbul, where accommodation opportunities are also available. The urban transformation with neoliberal policies also causes the displacement of refugees, immigrants, and the

⁴⁵ David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*, 152.

⁴⁶ Tuna Kuyucu and Özlem Ünsal, "Urban transformation'as state-led property transfer: An analysis of two cases of urban renewal in Istanbul," *Urban Studies* 47.7 (June 2010).

other groups. The consequences of this are not only the loss of shelter but also the loss of established solidarity networks. From this point of view, Tahire Erman emphasizes:

As the migrant neighborhoods in the city center are intervened with urban transformation projects or as social housing is evacuated within the scope of these projects, migrants lose the solidarity networks and socialization they have established through the space. Displacement creates more desperate situations for migrants than citizens; displace from their homes and neighborhoods in a country where they are not already citizens, or in an environment where they are excluded because they are different even if they are citizens, harms their survival mechanisms. In addition, stigmatizing migrant neighborhoods due to a rent possibility over immigrant culture and daily life and sometimes criminalizing migrants can be used to legitimize the intervention in these neighborhoods with urban renewal projects. This makes migrants even more vulnerable in their new society.⁴⁷

Accordingly, Istanbul is going through a destructive neoliberal urbanization process. Undoubtedly, it is the others of the city who experience these transformations most deeply. Under these conditions, ideals of urban identity, citizenship, and belonging, of a coherent urban politics, already threatened by the spreading malaise of the individualistic neoliberal ethic, become much harder to sustain.⁴⁸

Solidarity practices are crucial for "the others" of the city in the scope of neoliberal urbanization processes. Understanding the gravity of the situation necessitates questioning many interconnected urban practices. There are numerous responses to

⁴⁷ Tahire Erman, "Neoliberal Kent Projeleri ve Konut Politikalarının Göçmen Mahalle ve Yaşamlarına Etkisi: Göç Çalışmalarına Yeni bir Araştırma Gündemi Denemesi," *İdealkent Kent Araştırmaları Dergisi* 15 (Ocak 2015): 209.

⁴⁸ David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*, 15.

why solidarity behaviors are so important, particularly for immigrants. The actual answer, however, is found in the market.

The number of people forced to flee their countries has increased as a result of conflict and instability. The current global estimate is that there were around 281 million international migrants in the world in 2020, which equates to 3.6 per cent of the global population.⁴⁹ Hence, migration is become the world's most pressing agenda. However, the lack of immigration policies in countries, rising xenophobia, and nationalism cause migration to come to the fore as a crisis. On the other hand, it will be insufficient to explain the frequent emergence of migration as a crisis only by the lack of policy and present social order since existing/created crises involve various components that contribute to today's capitalist system.

During global crises, the state and the market frequently reach invisible agreements. These agreements are defined as required, mandatory, and alternative procedures to end the crisis, and they are implemented accordingly. These pre-planned solutions are frequently dramatized as future crises' sources. As is particularly common with arguments that current political crises are the cause of the current refugee crisis or that the refugee crisis is the cause of an economic crisis. The names of the crises are determined by the type of change sought; such as the economic crisis, the oil crisis, and the refugee crisis.⁵⁰

A similar process was experienced in Turkey with the start of the Syrian civil war in 2012. Many Syrian refugees, who had to leave their country to survive, were initially accepted in Turkey partly by religious brotherhood and hospitality discourses. When it was understood that the situation was not actually temporary, the situation became a crisis, and the guest discourses were often replaced by hate speeches.

A related problem is seen in the present "refugee crisis," especially in the labor market. Refugees are often accused of stealing citizens' jobs and cheapening the

⁴⁹ "World Migration Report 2022," *IOM Migration*, <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/wmr-2022-interactive/> (accessed 22 June 2022).

⁵⁰ Müge Ertürk, "Mülksüzleştirme Yoluyla Birikim ve Göç", *sendika.org*.

labor market. Although this attitude is frequently encountered in many parts of the world, things can go much further, especially in developing countries with limited resources. At this point, it shows that capitalism also benefits the "refugee crisis" for its own interests. In Turkey, where the organization is complex, labor is getting cheaper, and job security is never a priority, citizens have followed the scapegoat due to xenophobia and rising nationalism rather than questioning the real issue.

In this respect, it is possible to say that the market and states use the refugee crisis to cover up other crises. Indeed, some economic groups, social classes, and political castes refuse to yield their power and privilege and are instead trying to prolong their domination by perpetuating forms of economic warfare, blackmailing the unemployed, stoking hatred of foreigners, etc.⁵¹

Furthermore, in reality, refugees are mainly exploited as cheap labor and often forced to work as precarious employment. Refugees' constant state of being the "other" in Turkey and uncertain, fragile labor; forces them to work in the jobs or working conditions that no one wants. As Harvey states:

Ethnic, racial, religious and gender prejudices and discriminations become deeply embroiled in how the labour market as a whole gets segmented and fragmented and how pay gets determined. Jobs that are considered dirty and demeaning, for example, are typically low-paid and left to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable migrants (often those who have no legal status)⁵².

We can explain the question of why solidarity practices are so crucial, especially for refugees, with their fragile position of them in the labor market. Furthermore, the displacement of refugees along with neoliberal urbanization makes it difficult for them to come together and organize. More crucially, while considering Istanbul's urban transformation, it is clear that refugees' practice of living with one another and with "citizens" has been taken away from them. Preventing this practice

⁵¹ Dardot and Laval, *Common: On Revolution in the 21st Century*, 3.

⁵² David Harvey, *Seventeen Contradictions, and the End of Capitalism*, 126.

also prevents citizens from understanding that the other is not really something to be afraid of and that they are not always criminal, as is often represented. Likewise, the usurpation and transformation of common areas serve the growth and sustainability of crises and, therefore, capitalism itself. However, what is needed is for the immigrants to be organized, and much more importantly, to organize together with the local, with the citizen and fight together for their own labor in the current capitalist system.

In short, Istanbul is deeply experiencing the destruction of neoliberal urbanization and the isolation and exploitation it brings. In today's Istanbul, the rapid disappearance of common spaces, where practices independent of the relations determined by the market and state can be sustained, in effect means that the anonymity, the possibility of meeting one another is lost.⁵³ What needs to be done in such a sphere is to oppose capital attacks and the relationship that capitalism establishes with space and to engage in a struggle to produce alternative spaces.

2.2. THE COMMONS MOVEMENT

It is possible to read the economic regime that marked Turkey's last decade as an operation of enclosure and accumulation by dispossession.⁵⁴ While capital aims to settle in local spaces with the help of globalization and transform these places in its favor, it also tries to benefit from the locality, authenticity, cultural memory, and traditions by marketing them. Alternative movements inevitably emerge in response to this capitalist mindset. Indeed, the commons movements is more visible than ever due to new enclosures.

There are many debates regarding what the commons encompass, what types of practices they contain, and what they actually are. However, while considering the

⁵³ Fırat Genç, "Urban Social Movements and the Politics of the Commons", *The Politics of the Commons: From Theory to Struggle*, 93.

⁵⁴ Bengi Akbulut, "Bugün Burada: Savunudan İnşaya Müşterekler", *Herkesin Herkes için: Müşterekler Üzerine Eleştirel Antoloji*, ed. F.Adaman, B.Akbulut, U.Kocagöz (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2017), 281.

debates around the commons movement, it is possible to say that the concept does include not only resources and spaces but also the usage patterns of these resources and the dynamics of relations in space. Indeed, commoning consists of a distinct, active community that sets boundaries around the resource, negotiates rules of access and use, assigns responsibilities and entitlements, monitors for, and punishes free riders and shirkers, and so on.⁵⁵

Additionally, the commons, address the practices that are autonomous from the processes of marketization and commodification and those in which new relations through social reproduction are established/maintained, as well as the areas and spaces in which such practices occur implicitly.⁵⁶ Accordingly Paul Chatterton:

The common then is made real through the practice of commoning, which reflects, not so much a set of bounded, defensive or highly localised spatial practices, but dynamic spatial practices. Rather than a simplified, monolithic entity, the common is complex, and relational—it is produced and reproduced through relations weaving together a rich tapestry of different times, spaces, and struggles. Thus, we should not position the common as something always subjugated or in response to the more dynamic practices of capital accumulation. The common is full of productive moments of resistance that create new vocabularies, solidarities, social and spatial practices and relations and repertoires of resistance.⁵⁷

While considering the commons in terms of commoning practices rather than limited practices in certain regions will enable us to understand the concept used for an increasingly broader set of domains as a commons movement. The commons as a social movement is a way of politics that is based on the rationality of

⁵⁵ David Bollier, *Beyond Development: The Commons as a New/Old Paradigm of Human Flourishing* (June 2016) <http://www.bollier.org/blog/beyond-development-commons-newold-paradigm-human-flourishing> (Accessed 13 June 2022)

⁵⁶ Fırat Genç, Urban Social Movements and the Politics of the Commons, *The Politics of the Commons: From Theory to Struggle*, 83.

⁵⁷ Paul Chatterton, "Seeking the Urban Common: Furthering the Debate on Spatial Justice," *City* 14:6 (2010): 626.

commoning. Commons are not static. They have been claimed, enclosed, reclaimed, and enclosed again at different times and in different locations. Similarly, the ways commons are managed changes.⁵⁸ In this way, it would be possible to understand the commons as relations and practices, but not as entities. Thus, the rationality of commoning would appear as the commoning practices of singular beings.⁵⁹ As Chatterton states:

The common, then, is not a static entity; it is as much a verb as a noun. It is something that is perpetually made and remade, created, eroded, and defended. This is particularly the case in the face of contemporary patterns of capital accumulation that seek to dispossess the poorest and most marginal groups in society of vital resources they depend upon and attack their livelihoods as well as advance on the basis of the enclosure, appropriation and dispossession of land, resources and lifeworlds.⁶⁰

Moreover, the commons has too many variations to be captured in a fixed, universal set of principles. Each commons has distinctive dynamics based on its participants, history, cultural values, the nature of the resource, and so forth.⁶¹ The term commons is used for a broader set of domains, e.g., knowledge commons, digital commons, urban commons, health commons, cultural commons, etc. It is possible to show many examples from each of these different domains because of the new enclosures and the rising social movements against these enclosures.

Today, it is impossible for any discussion of the destruction of the commons in Turkey to be carried out independently of the dynamics of capital accumulation and

⁵⁸ Alexander Dwinell and Marcela Olivera, "The Water is Our Damn It! Water Commoning in Bolivia," *Oxford University Press and Community Development Journal* (2014): 45

⁵⁹ Umut Kocagöz, "Rationality of the Politics of Commons" (Master Thesis, Istanbul Bilgi University Institute of Social Sciences, 2015), 67.

⁶⁰ Paul Chatterton, *Seeking the Urban Common: Furthering the Debate on Spatial Justice*, 626.

⁶¹ David Bollier, "The Growth of The Commons Paradigm," *Understanding Knowledge as a Commons: From Theory to Practice* ed. Charlotte Hess and Elinor Ostrom (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 27.

the state's role that paves the way for these dynamics.⁶² As a matter of fact, Istanbul, where neoliberal urbanization and urban transformation projects are intensely experienced, is one of the cities that experienced the devastating consequences of this destruction. Essentially these destructive practices, which we can explain with Harvey's concept of accumulation by dispossession, imply not only a narrow handover, but also the invasion of areas where social reproduction is autonomously organized through market.⁶³

When we look at today's Istanbul, we see a city worn out by neoliberal urbanization and transformation projects and displaced groups due to all these. However, in a city where all these neoliberal practices are pretty intense, it is solid to encounter alternative spaces and solidarity practices. When examining such struggles and solidarity movements, it is essential to question whether it is possible to see all these movements as a commons movement. Especially in Istanbul, considering these movements within the scope of urban commons will be beneficial in terms of understanding the commons movement.

Furthermore, before focusing on the urban commons, it is necessary to clarify what is understood by the term. The city is undoubtedly much more than just a physical place. Indeed, the city is not just a built environment consisting of buildings and streets and subways and parks and waste systems and communications cables but also a living dynamic of cultural practices, intellectual circuits, affective networks, and social institutions.⁶⁴ Hence neoliberal enclosures target not only the city as a physical attribute but also all the dynamics and relations that make the city.

In cities where current enclosures are highly dense, the commons and communing practices are heated in line with it. Just as the city has many potentials for the market, it also has many potentials against these rapid marketization dynamics. Chatterton discusses the potential of the urban commons to deepen the understanding of the city in terms of spatial justice. In the first of these potentials,

⁶² Bengi Akbulut, "Bugün Burada: Savunudan İnşaya Müşterekler," *Herkesin Herkes için: Müşterekler Üzerine Eleştirel Antoloji*, 288.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 286.

⁶⁴ Hardt and Negri, *Commonwealth*, 154.

he focuses on the multitude's capacity in the city. According to him, just as the city has become a potential site of economic production today, it also constitutes the potential site of resistance, struggle, and alternatives through the productive capacities of the multitude. The second potential that he mentions in this context is the everyday life in the city. The city's rich everyday life and intense socialization patterns offer the opportunity to deepen social relations based on communing. The third and final potential concerns new political imaginaries. Building an urban common requires the ability to conceive and control new ways of governance beyond the capturing of new lands.⁶⁵

It is possible to see the urban commons' potentials that Chatterton emphasized in many urban social movements in Istanbul. Moreover, Emek Cinema is remarkable example to embody all these potentials. The Emek Cinema movement is a practice of resistance that was triggered by the concern of defending the rights of the public against the privatization of a public property.⁶⁶ The importance of Emek Cinema resistance cannot be overstated. Since shopping malls and office towers eliminate our public squares, our parks, and our promenades, we lose our capacity to see each other, to socialize and speak publicly, to identify and empathize with each other, to BE commoners.⁶⁷ In the example of the Emek Cinema, we see that many different groups in the city came together and started a resistance over the right to use the space. Emek Cinema movement brought many communing practices within. According to Genç:

...the resistance of the Emek Cinema was the reaction to the enclosure of such urban commons. This is because of the way both lifestyles and cultural practices that derive from them in a given place are framed in accordance with the trends of the global tourism industry, and thus transform them into mere commercial elements so

⁶⁵ Paul Chatterton, *Seeking the Urban Common: Furthering the Debate on Spatial Justice*, 627.

⁶⁶ Fırat Genç, "Urban Social Movements and the Politics of the Commons," *The Politics of the Commons: From Theory to Struggle*, 89.

⁶⁷ David Bollier, "The Commons, Political Transformation and Cities," *bollier.org*, (2014). <http://www.bollier.org/commons-political-transformation-and-cities> (Accessed 13 June 2022)

as to increase the attractiveness of individual locations, paradoxically, causes them to lose their originality and in time lead to uniformity.⁶⁸

Furthermore, it may be rather misleading to focus solely on the challenges that arise from the uses of commons within the city while assessing urban commons-based social movements.⁶⁹ Considering the rising movements against neoliberal enclosures in Istanbul today with commoning practices will make it easier for us to understand that many movements are closely related to the commons. When we consider that the urban space is established by the daily practices, social relations, historicities, and encounters of the city's inhabitants, we can see that water, air, public spaces, neighborhoods, architectural structures, cultural symbols, etc. are urban commons.⁷⁰

In short, in the economic and democratic crisis environment that Turkey is currently in, there are many movements that we can consider within the commons movement. The many movements that exist in Istanbul are essential as they bring together many different groups in the city in today's increasingly polarized world. Indeed, the commons movement also provides alternative policies and diverse organization types on space. Lastly, what makes the commons movement, so outstanding today is that the movement is not only about expressing the discomfort felt about today and wants the change right now and therefore comes with a solution.

⁶⁸ Fırat Genç, "Urban Social Movements and the Politics of the Commons," *The Politics of the Commons: From Theory to Struggle*, 89.

⁶⁹ Bülent Duru, "What are the Commons? On Natural, Urban, Social Commons and Their Effects on Urban Social Movements," *The Politics of the Commons: from Theory to Struggle* (İstanbul: Sivil ve Ekolojik Haklar Derneği, 2018): 23.

⁷⁰ Bengi Akbulut, *Bugün Burada: Savunudan İnşaya Müşterekler*, 284.

CHAPTER 3

FEMINISM AND COMMONS

In the first section of this chapter, I will start by discussing women's labor power and their role in the capitalist order, as they are a much more vulnerable group in the face of capitalism's attacks. For such a discussion, I will deal with some of the concepts used by Karl Marx, who is accused of blindness when it comes to unwaged women's labor power in the labor processes with the reinterpretations of feminist scholars such as Mies and Federici. I will analyze the close relationship between capitalism and patriarchy and discuss the dynamics of this relationship based on these interpretations. Such an analysis, I believe, will allow us to examine the history of capitalism from a feminist perspective before moving on to the struggle practices that I will discuss in the following chapters.

In the second part, I will focus on the reproduction processes and labor of women who are imprisoned in the private space due to capitalism's separation of private and public spaces. Thus, I will examine the possibility of a common movement arising from the coalition of these two movements on issues such as women's labor, production, and reproduction, which I believe are feminism's and the commons' shared issues. Therefore, in this section, I will seek answers to these two questions: why do these two movements need each other? Besides, how can they co-operate?

In the third section, which follows these questions, I will go into greater detail about how a "feminist common" can emerge from the union of these two movements. Since there is no single and definitive formula, we must follow for such a common, I will propose Federici and Caffentzis' discussion in "*Commons Against and Beyond Capitalism*" on a common that focuses on collective solidarity. As a result, I will argue that their analysis of the commons which based on collective can be an excellent beginning point for a feminist common.

Moreover, in the following section, I will take a closer look at the views of materialist feminists, who have made the reproduction processes of women one of the main discussions of feminism. Besides, I will discuss this feminist tradition, which is a tradition that we need to resurrect within the commons to be constructed today. Thus, I will focus on today's solidarity practices, where we can find traces of the same tradition.

In the last part, I will argue that the commons positioned against capitalism are not exempted from the attacks of capitalism and are even their primary targets. From this point of view, I will discuss the risks within the commons themselves. Lastly, more specifically, I will consider the possible criticisms inherent in the feminist common, which focuses on reproduction, and I will reconsider these criticisms from a feminist perspective.

3.1. THE POSITION OF WOMEN IN CAPITALISM

In today's rapidly globalizing capitalist world order, women are in a much more vulnerable position against the attacks of capitalism. Capitalism, as a social-economic system, is necessarily committed to racism and sexism.⁷¹ At the core of capitalism there is not only the symbiotic relation between waged contractual labor and enslavement but, together with it, the dialectics of accumulation and destruction of labor-power, for which women have paid the highest cost.⁷²

Women's disadvantaged and vulnerable position in society, the roles attributed to "women's nature," and the discrimination they face are embodied by capitalism. The transition to capitalism, on the other hand, reinforced existing inequalities and targeted women and their labor.

As I mentioned in the previous section, capitalism and current crises have a mutually beneficial relationship, and these crises are necessary for capitalism to

⁷¹ Silvia Federici, *Caliban, and the Witch* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004), 17.

⁷² *Ibid*, 17.

function. When this dynamic is questioned from a feminist perspective, unequal social relations and the dominance of groups unwilling to give up their privileges can be seen as one of capitalism's crises. In this context, many "issues" such as "women's labor problem" is often mentioned in the capitalist order. Yet, the main problem that we frequently encounter in the past and present is the problem of patriarchy. In short, it can be said that there is also a relationship between capitalism and patriarchy focused on benefiting from each other.

Capitalism uses the existing patriarchal order to make women's labor invisible and discredited, essentially keeping her labor power it out of the production. Women who have somehow "managed" to be involved in production processes are disadvantaged twice. Basically, since they are women, waged women workers face more exploitation and inequality than men. All of this is a brief summary of the role that capitalism has assigned to women in general, as well as where woman has been placed in society.

Maria Mies examines how capitalism and patriarchy are inextricably linked. Moreover, she claims that these two concepts are closely intertwined, particularly regarding women's labor power. She uses the concept of capitalist-patriarchy to denote the system which maintains women's exploitation and oppression.⁷³ This term is frequently used to describe the unequal and exploitative relationships that exist in both patriarchy and capitalism. According to Mies:

Whereas the concept patriarchy denotes the historical depth of women's exploitation and oppression, the concept capitalism is expressive of the contemporary manifestation, or the latest development of this system. Women's problems today cannot be explained by merely referring to the old forms of patriarchal dominance. Nor can they be explained if one accepts the position that patriarchy is a 'pre-capitalist' system of social relations which

⁷³ Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour* (London: Zed Books, 1994), 37.

has been destroyed and superseded, together with ‘feudalism’, by capitalist relations, because women’s exploitation and oppression cannot be explained by the functioning of capitalism alone, at least not capitalism as it is commonly understood. It is my thesis that capitalism cannot function without patriarchy, that the goal of this system, namely the never-ending process of capital accumulation, cannot be achieved unless patriarchal man-woman relations are maintained or newly created. We could, therefore, also speak of neo-patriarchy. Patriarchy thus constitutes the mostly invisible underground of the visible capitalist system. As capitalism is necessarily patriarchal it would be misleading to talk of two separate systems, as some feminists do.⁷⁴

It is clear that the concept of capitalist patriarchy has aspects that can be debated from Mies' perspective. However, since it emphasizes the exploitation of women in capitalist society and the relationship between this exploitation and patriarchy, it allows for a crucial feminist discussion. Besides, such a discussion, which focuses both on the concept itself and on the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism, is especially valuable for feminism as it allows us to reconsider the history of capitalist relations from the perspective of women.

Additionally, Dalla Costa and James argue that the exploitation of women played a central function in the capitalist accumulation process, as they are producers and reproducers of the most important capitalist commodity: labor power.⁷⁵ By rooting the exploitation of women in capitalist society in the sexual division of labor and women's unpaid work, they showed the possibility of transcending the dichotomy between patriarchy and class and gave patriarchy a specific historical content. Besides, they also paved the stage for a feminist reinterpretation of the history of capitalism and class struggle.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Ibid, 38.

⁷⁵ Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, 8.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 9.

However, why is women's labor an important debate for feminism? Silvia Federici re-examines the process of primitive accumulation from a feminist perspective in “*Caliban and the Witch.*” She argues that the nature of capitalist society can be understood if it is analyzed in terms of women and reproduction.

Federici emphasizes that the expulsion of peasants from their lands and the enclosure of common areas are not the only aspects of the primitive accumulation process. This process, she claims, also involves the enclosure of women's bodies through the criminalization of their sexuality and reproductive capacity and the devaluation of their reproductive labor and social position. These two facts are critical for the accumulation and commodification of labor power.⁷⁷

Indeed, women are the ones who are most affected by today's new enclosures and dispossessions. Due to the attempts to establish dominance over the women's body and the invisible labor of women, which is deepened by capitalism every day, women need to come together and organize against it more than ever. As the globalization of the world economy sees new waves of enclosure and spreads market dominance worldwide, women are once again paying the highest price.⁷⁸

Conversely, to neoliberal theory, which celebrates globalization as evidence of the "democratization" of social life, Federici analyzes globalization as a process of primitive accumulation. According to her:

Globalization aims to give corporate capital total control over labor and natural resources. Thus, it must expropriate workers from any means of subsistence that may enable them to resist a more intense exploitation. As such it cannot succeed except through a systematic

⁷⁷ Silvia Federici, “Türkçe Baskıya Önsöz”, *Caliban ve Cadı: Kadınlar, Beden ve İlksel Birikim*, trans. Bilge Tanrısever, Ece Durmuş, Melis İnan, Münevver Çelik, Sinem Özer (Istanbul: Otonom Yayınları, 2020):10-11.

⁷⁸ Ibid, 11.

attack on the material conditions of social reproduction and on the main subjects of this work, which in most countries are women.⁷⁹

However, in order to look into “the issue” of women's labor, we must first examine the terms we frequently use when discussing labor. Many feminist scholars, such as Mies and Federici, interpret Marx's concepts such as *primitive accumulation* and *productive labor* from a feminist perspective.

According to Marx, primitive accumulation is a historical process that involves the separation of the means of production from labor and the producer, the transformation of labor into wage labor and its subordination to capital, and the provision of the necessary foundation for capitalist production. Marx uses the term in *Capital* Vol.1, to characterize the historical process upon which the development of capitalist relations was premised. He uses the term as a foundational process, revealing the structural conditions for the existence of capitalist society.⁸⁰

Nevertheless, Federici argues that the history of primitive accumulation cannot be understood from the perspective of an abstract universal subject. According to her, the essential aspect of the capitalist project has been the disarticulation of the social body, through the imposition of different disciplinary regimes producing an accumulation of ‘differences’ and hierarchies that profoundly affect how capitalist relations are experienced. For this reason, she claims that we actually have different histories of primitive accumulation.

Although Federici believes that the concept of primitive accumulation is crucial because it allows us to read the past as something which survives into the present, she also believes that it must be reanalyzed. Therefore, she examines this concept from a feminist standpoint. Her analysis departs from Marx’s in two ways:

Whereas Marx examines primitive accumulation from the viewpoint of the waged male proletariat and the development of commodity

⁷⁹ Silvia Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*, (Oakland: PM Press, 2020), 166. <https://www.scribd.com/read/505628727/Revolution-at-Point-Zero-Housework-Reproduction-and-Feminist-Struggle#> (Accessed 23 May 2022)

⁸⁰ Federici, *Caliban, and the Witch*, 12.

production, I examine it from the viewpoint of the changes it introduced in the social position of women and the production of labor-power. Thus, my description of primitive accumulation includes a set of historical phenomena that are absent in Marx, and yet have been extremely important for capitalist accumulation. They include (i) the development of a new sexual division of labor subjugating women's labor and women's reproductive function to the reproduction of the work-force; (ii) the construction of a new patriarchal order, based upon the exclusion of women from waged-work and their subordination to men; (iii) the mechanization of the proletarian body and its transformation, in the case of women, into a machine for the production of new workers.⁸¹

Another feminist interpretation/criticism of Marx comes from Maria Mies through his concept of productive labor. While explaining the concept of productive labor, Marx states that productive labor, regardless of the mode of production, is labor that usually result in a surplus product.⁸² On the other hand, Mies claims that such a definition excludes women. According to her:

... But by focusing only on this capitalist concept of productive labour and by universalizing it to the virtual eclipse of the more general and fundamental concept of productive labour-which could include women's production of life - Marx himself has theoretically contributed to the removal of all 'non-productive' labour (that is, non-wage labour, including most of women's labour) from public visibility... Without the ongoing subsistence production of non-wage labourers (mainly women), wage labour would not be 'productive'. In contrast to Marx, I consider the capitalist production process as one which comprises both: the super

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*, 47.

exploitation of non-wage labourers (women, colonies, peasants) upon which wage labour exploitation then is possible.⁸³

However, when issues such as unwaged labor, production, and reproduction are discussed, Marx's theory is frequently criticized for being gender blind. Although he takes the exploitation of labor as the key element in the production of capitalist wealth, he leaves untheorized some of the activities and social relations that are most essential for the production of labor power.⁸⁴ Yet Marxist theory remains significant in feminist theory today, the most severe criticism is that it only considers labor and labor processes from the perspective of male wage earners. Furthermore, in all these discussions on labor power, the transition to capitalism is critical in terms of feminist theory. The separation of production from reproduction is a process that needs to be analyzed in particular since it created a class of proletarian women. In this process, women were as dispossessed as men but, unlike their male relatives, had almost no access to wages, thus being forced into a condition of chronic poverty, economic dependence, and invisibility as workers.⁸⁵ Moreover, Federici claims that the transition to capitalism is a test case for feminist theory. She shows other approaches to "women's history" and feminist theory in *Caliban and the Witch*. According to her:

It confirms that "the transition to capitalism" is a test case for feminist theory, as the redefinition of productive and reproductive tasks and male-female relations that we find in this period, both realized with the maximum of violence and state intervention, leave no doubt concerning the constructed character of sexual roles in capitalist society. The analysis I propose also allows us to transcend the dichotomy between "gender" and "class."⁸⁶

⁸³ Ibid, 48.

⁸⁴ Silvia Federici, *Patriarchy of the Wage: Notes on Marx, Gender, and Feminism* (Oakland: PM Press, 2021), 55.

⁸⁵ Federici, *Caliban, and the Witch*, 75.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 14.

Indeed, though women also perform such surplus-value-generating labour, capitalism the concept of labour is generally used with a male or patriarchal bias, under capitalism, women are typically defined as housewives, that means as non-workers.⁸⁷ In such a perspective, the majority of women's work, both inside and outside the home, has characteristics that do not fit into economic concepts. These works are often attributed to the "women's nature." By examining this viewpoint, we can better understand the relation between "gender" and "class" and the dynamics of that relationship. If it is true that in capitalist society sexual identity became the carrier of specific work-functions, then gender should not be considered a purely cultural reality but should be treated as a specification of class relations.⁸⁸ Moreover, the *housewifeization* of women is one of the situations that enables us to understand the relationship between gender, class, and capitalism. Federici, claims that the creation of a full-time housewife redefines women's role in society. According to her:

...The creation full time housewife redefined women's position in society and in relation to men. The sexual division of labor that emerged from it not only fixed women to reproductive work, but increased their dependence on men, enabling the state and employers to use the male wage as a means to command women's labor. In this way, the separation of commodity production from the reproduction of labor-power also made possible the development of a specifically capitalist use of the wage and of the markets as means for the accumulation of unpaid labor.⁸⁹

The productivity of the housewife is the precondition for the productivity of the (male) wage labourer. The nuclear family, organized and protected by the state, is

⁸⁷ Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*, 45-46.

⁸⁸ Federici, *Caliban, and the Witch*, 14.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 75.

the social factory where this commodity 'labour power' is produced.⁹⁰ The primary ground of their exploitation and resistance, as the female body has been appropriated by the state and men and forced to function as a means for the reproduction and accumulation of labor.⁹¹ Hence, the housewife and her labour are not outside the process of surplus value production, but constitute the very foundation upon which this process can get started. In other words, women's labor is the basis of the capital accumulation process.⁹² The reproduction of labor power is undeniably the most essential for capitalist accumulation, and reproduction is largely realized through the unwaged labor of "women."

The duties and responsibilities attributed to women throughout history (cooking, cleaning, shopping, laundry/dishwashing, ironing, caring for children/sick/elderly) have made her the primary function of the reproduction process. While the invisible labor of women ensures the sustainability of the family's daily life, it has a decisive role in the reproduction of both capitalism and patriarchy.⁹³

Moreover, women are excluded from producing surplus value since they use their own labor for free during the reproduction process. The invisible labor of women benefits both capitalism and patriarchy. While the "housewife" contributes to the male worker's participation in social production by assuming all domestic responsibilities, this gender-based division of labor also reinforces gender roles. According to Federici:

The expulsion of reproductive work from the spheres of economic relations and its deceptive relegation to the sphere of the 'private,' the 'personal,' 'outside' of capital accumulation, and, above all, 'feminine' has made it invisible as work and has naturalized its exploitation. It has also been the basis for the institution of a new

⁹⁰ Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*, 31.

⁹¹ Federici, *Caliban, and the Witch*, 16.

⁹² Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*, 31.

⁹³ Gülnur Acar Savran, *Beden Emek Tarihi Diyalektik Bir Feminizm İçin* (Istanbul: Kanat Yayınları, 2004).

sexual division of labor and a new family organization, subordinating women to men and further socially and psychologically differentiating women and men.⁹⁴

Furthermore, it can be said that unpaid labor power of woman is at the heart of capitalist production, but it is rarely acknowledged. Patriarchal relations determine the division of labor within the family: the woman is the "housewife," and the man is the one who brings money into the house. The realization of the family and the reproduction of labor are two crucial roles attributed to women in the capitalist patriarchy's division of labor.

Many changes in the family structure have resulted from capitalism, and these changes have served to strengthen the patriarchal system. In capitalism, women are driven to work at home and quickly adopt precarious and flexible working conditions. Work done at home either does not produce visible results or is consumed quickly; it is done in the private sphere, it does not generate profit, and it only creates value in use.

Making women into mothers, wives, and housewives is a capitalist illusion to define half of all human labor as a free resource. The separation of home and workplace, the transformation of the home into a "place" outside of the economy, and the attribution of consumerism only when the home is associated with the economy are all facts of history from the last two centuries.⁹⁵

The income of a woman, whose "main task" is to be a perfect mother and ideal wife, is always defined as additional income or support for the family budget. At the same time, women's paid work was devalued because it was seen as a complement to the work of the husband. In this state, the woman's wage is always destined to be below the wage of the man, who is the main income source of the

⁹⁴ Silvia Federici, *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons* (Oakland: PM Press, 2019): 17.

⁹⁵ Aksu Bora, *Kadınların Sınıfı Ücretli Ev Emegi ve Kadın Öznelliğinin İnşası* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2010), 59.

house. As a result, women's free and easily manageable labor allows the capitalist to reduce the male worker's wage.

Furthermore, this order, which we can refer to as capitalist patriarchy, maintains the home as a "private space." The labor of women confined to the private sphere is naturalized by capitalism. Therefore, as I mentioned earlier, patriarchy and capitalism cannot be considered separate from the feminist viewpoint. Mies similarly states the following on this matter:

Moreover, the way some feminist authors try to locate women's oppression and exploitation in these two systems is just a replica of the old capitalist social division of labour: women's oppression in the private sphere of the family or in 'reproduction' is assigned to 'patriarchy', patriarchy being seen as part of the superstructure, and their exploitation as workers in the office and factory is assigned to capitalism. Such a two-system theory is not capable, in my view, to transcend the paradigm developed in the course of capitalist development with its specific social and sexual divisions of labour. In the foregoing, we have seen, however, that this transcendence is the specifically new and revolutionary thrust of the feminist movement. If feminism follows this path and does not lose sight of its main political goals - namely, to abolish women's exploitation and oppression - it will have to transcend or overcome capitalist-patriarchy as one intrinsically interconnected system. In other words, feminism has to struggle against all capitalist-patriarchal relations, beginning with the man-woman relation, to the relation of human beings to nature, to the relation between metropolises and colonies. It cannot hope to reach its goal by only concentrating on one of these relations, because they are interrelated.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labour*, 38.

Capitalist patriarchy, which positions the house as a private space, undoubtedly legitimizes the violence in this area. Capitalism requires the reproduction of labor power to continue production, and the nuclear family provides this service for free. The basic responsibilities in the family become the woman's duty, and thus the family is sanctified. Capitalism sanctifies the family for its own benefit throughout this process and forces the existing family structure to be the only option. This sanctification of the home and family makes everything that happens there invisible. As a result, the inequalities within the family, violence, dominance, abuse, and oppression are dismissed as "private" issues.

Indeed, one of the most productive debates initiated by feminism is on domestic labor and the issue of "private space" in this context. The phrase "*the private is political*" is now widely used by feminist groups worldwide, with the mission of bringing patriarchal oppression a political issue in all of its forms. Thus, this discourse emphasizes the importance of making visible the problems confined to the private space that women face as a common problem; more importantly, the problem should be solved at the political level by exposing the political functioning that underpins them.

The phrase "private is political" indicates that women's unpaid domestic labor is social and political rather than natural. By politicizing the private sphere, we can begin to reevaluate and define the labor that goes into it. From this point of view, the public/private distinction is problematized, and it is objected to define the public as the domain of men and the private as the domain of women.

In short, understanding the position of women in the capitalist order and their struggle against capitalism is now possible through a feminist analysis of capitalism's history and examination of the division between production and reproduction. Undoubtedly, examining capitalist development from the perspective of feminism tells us a lot about its past and present. There is no doubt that the land dispossession and mass impoverishment we encounter so often in the present capitalist order are associated with the ongoing attacks on women. For this reason,

now more than ever, a feminist re-definition of labor and a strong feminist movement are required.

3.2. A COALITION AGAINST THE CAPITALIST ORDER: COMMONS AND FEMINISM

Among social movements today, the feminist movement has the broadest sphere of influence and is the most debated. Although the feminist movement has a strong history, the movement's sphere of influence has grown with the transition to capitalism. Furthermore, despite the fact that feminism has various definitions in academia and political literature, I prefer to explain it through feminist theory, which focuses on the dynamics of capitalist relations regarding the capitalist practices discussed in the previous section.

Feminist theory creates theoretical tools for understanding and analyzing patriarchal social structures in modern capitalist societies.⁹⁷ Historically, capitalism has always been male dominated; since women's domestic unrequited/invisible labor is a necessary condition for capital accumulation. Indeed, even today, capitalism is deeply connected to patriarchy itself. Therefore, it can be said that one of the starting points of feminist theory is the concept of male-dominated society or patriarchy which we presently encounter in a variety of aspects of capitalism.

As the feminist movement developed, new manifestations of patriarchal structures and ideologies emerged. One of them was undoubtedly the distinction between private and public. The distance between the public and private, which were separated from each other with the transition to capitalism, was widened by the day. Women are imprisoned in this private space by the capitalist order, and their labor has been rendered unwaged, invisible, and worthless. The feminist movement was the one that recognized and questioned this private sphere. Through the

⁹⁷ Serpil Sancar, "Türkiye'de Feminizm ve Kadın Hareketi," interview by Yasemin Akis, and Ülkü Özakın, *Cogito* 58 (Istanbul: Yapıkredi Yayınları, Bahar 2009): 245.

contributions of feminist theory and the movement, we had the chance to discuss the Marxist theory's blindness to the unwaged labor of women and reproduction.

Furthermore, the impact of patriarchy on women's invisible labor in the home and the concept of family should be at the forefront of any discussion of the capitalist order. Labor power that shaped by patriarchy also determines women's labor forms and relations within the whole of patriarchal capitalism. Due to the capitalist order that women must perform unpaid labor, women can either enter the labor market at a disadvantage or not at all. This disadvantaged position forces women to precarious, low-wage forms of labor or, most importantly, to the family once again.⁹⁸

The family is crucial in bringing sexuality and fertility under state control, in addition to being the primary institution that regulates the transfer of property and the reproduction of labor power within the capitalist mode of production. This state control, on the other hand, is based on the cooperation of men, who control women's labor and bodies as fathers/husbands, and these two forms of control are perpetually reproduced.⁹⁹ The capitalist order, which relies on the family for reproduction, sanctifies the family, ascribes this space to the private sphere, and legitimizes the violent relationships that exist here.

Today, however, attacks on the improvements made as a result of years of struggle and the value placed on family come to the fore. The most recent examples of these attacks are abortion debates aimed at controlling the woman body in many countries worldwide. On the other hand, Turkey's withdrawal decision from the Istanbul Convention, which is against violence against women and domestic violence, can be another example.

The Istanbul Convention was a significant step toward a more comprehensive approach to ensuring a life free of violence as it recognized not only violence

⁹⁸ Gülnur Acar Savran, "Patriyarka," *Feminist Bellek* (January 2021) <https://feministbellek.org/patriyarka/> (Accessed 29 May 2022)

⁹⁹ Ayşe Toksöz, "Patriyarka, Kapitalizm ve Doğurganlığın Kontrolü," *Sosyal Feminist Kolektif* (May 2012) <http://www.sosyalistfeministkolektif.org/web-yazilari/kurtaj-web-yazilari/erkek-egemenligi-kapitalizm-ve-dogurganligin-kontrolu/> ((Accessed 29 May 2022)

against women but also domestic violence, gender, and gender-based violence. Turkey decided to withdraw from the convention since it was concerned that it would have a negative impact on society's morality and that it would endanger the family structure by encouraging divorce. Behind this decision, we can see the traces of a male-dominated mentality that prioritizes the family's sanctity and integrity.

As a superstructure institution where ideological dominance will be established and maintained, the family is always a target of capitalism's attacks as a place where all kinds of social changes are quickly reflected. However, we cannot overlook the fact that there is also a defense where there is an attack. This defense is now the feminist movement against decades of systematic attacks on women.

When we consider the various struggles that are currently taking place in response to capitalism's attacks, it is clear that we require more organized or united social movements to combat these systematic attacks. Moreover, the possibility and potential of a united and transvers struggle including ecological movements, labor movements, and women's struggles take place within the globalization movement; and in the center of this relationality lie the defense and creation of the commons.

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Furthermore, many common areas of the struggle currently exist between the commons movement, which can be seen as an anti-capitalist movement, and the feminist movement, which can be seen as one of the most organized struggles. When the issues considered, such as women's labor, production, and reproduction which are crucial to the feminist movement today, are also crucial to the commons movement. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that these two movements have a lot in common, but the main issue is that they need each other more than they need common ground in the current capitalist order. However, why do these two movements need each other? Besides, how can they co-operate?

¹⁰⁰ Özden Fırat, "Global Movement Cycles and Commoning Movements," *The Politics of the Commons: From Theory to Struggle*, 71.

Opposing capitalism's divisions on the basis of race, gender, and age, as well as reuniting what has been divided in our lives and reestablishing a collective interest, must be a political priority for feminists and other social justice movements today.¹⁰¹ At this point, a coalition of the commons and feminism has a better chance of opposing capitalism's practices that specifically target women and fight them and propose inclusive alternatives against these discriminative practices.

Furthermore, the question of why the commons and feminism need each other is a question that needs to be answered from both perspectives. Therefore, I will begin with that as a starting point, answering the question of why feminism requires the commons. Thus, in answering this question from both perspectives, I will begin to indirectly answer the question of how these two movements can come together.

From a feminist standpoint, I examined women's place in capitalism and “the problem of women's labor” in the previous section since analyzing women's social status through the lens of capitalist labor exploitation reveals the continuity of gender-based discrimination. Indeed, as the feminist movement grew, we discovered more and more new expressions of patriarchal structures and ideologies. Today, in the face of a new process of primitive accumulation, women are the main social force standing in the way of complete commercialization of nature, supporting a non-capitalist use of land and a subsistence-oriented agriculture.¹⁰²

Furthermore, reproduction is a topic that has been on the feminist movement's agenda for decades, and it is possible to say that the feminist movement has made significant progress on this issue. The women's movement gave a material basis to the everyday life's critique by rebelling against women's confinement to reproductive work and the hierarchies constructed through the sexual division of labor by exposing the deep structure underlining multiplicity of daily events.¹⁰³ Indeed, feminists did establish that the reproduction of labor power involves a far broader range of activities than the consumption of commodities, since food must

¹⁰¹ Federici, *Patriarchy of the Wage: Notes on Marx, Gender, and Feminism*, 67.

¹⁰² Federici, *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*, 107.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*, 175.

be prepared, clothes have to be washed, bodies have to be stroked and cared for.¹⁰⁴ Despite the fact that this is a difficult achievement that should not be underestimated, it is clear that also alternative solutions, policies are required to the reproduction of labor power problem.

It is one of the most essential issues to bring the problematization and conceptualization developed by feminist thought and struggle, especially regarding the separation and discrediting of reproduction from production to the discussion of the commons.¹⁰⁵ The production of commons requires first a profound transformation in our everyday life, in order to recombine what the social division of labor in capitalism has separated.¹⁰⁶ Federici points out that feminist allegiances should be restructured, particularly in daily life, and that the anti-capitalist commons should be integrated to them. Her approach, which integrates her feminist perspective with the commons, searches for traces of capital strategies in daily life and emphasizes that our lives will be shared by transforming them with the feminist tradition.¹⁰⁷ Indeed, it is a long path to commoning our lives by transforming them in a feminist tradition. As Federici points out:

Although this task may seem more difficult now than passing through the eye of a needle, it is also the only condition to broaden the space of our autonomy, cease feeding into the process of capital accumulation, and refuse to accept that our reproduction occurs at the expense of the world's other commoners and commons.¹⁰⁸

This time, however, it is women who must build the new commons, so that they do not remain transient spaces or temporary autonomous zones but become the

¹⁰⁴ Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*, 182.

¹⁰⁵ Bengi Akbulut, "Sofradaki Yemeğin Ötesi: Gıda Müşterekleri ve Feminizm Üzerine," *Kültür ve Siyasette Feminist Yaklaşımlar* (2015). <http://www.feministyaklasimlar.org/sayi-26-haziran-2015-2/sofradaki-yemegin-otesi-gida-musterekleri-ve-feminizm-uzerine/> (Accessed 13 June 2022)

¹⁰⁶ Federici, *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*, 109.

¹⁰⁷ Silvia Federici, "Feminizm ve Müşterekler Politikası," *Heinrich Böll Stiftung Derneği*, <https://tr.boell.org/tr/2014/11/19/feminizm-ve-musterekler-politikasi> (Accessed 27 May 2022)

¹⁰⁸ Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*, 265.

foundation of new forms of social reproduction.¹⁰⁹ Indeed, these new commons, which women reconstruct, may become a common ground of resistance for all groups exploited, impoverished, and displaced by capitalism. Because women have become much more prepared in their resistance to capitalism's attacks, therefore, without women, reconstructing or reclaiming the commons would be impossible.

However, what is needed to construct new commons? What can women do about it? Undoubtedly, the answers to these questions are hidden in daily life itself. If we are to deal with the commons and the coalition of the feminist movement, it is essential to question the practices of daily life. As Federici states:

What this task entails is powerfully expressed by Maria Mies when she points out that the production of commons requires first a profound transformation in our everyday life, in order to recombine what the social division of labor in capitalism has separated. For the distancing of production from reproduction and consumption leads us to ignore the conditions under which what we eat or wear, or work with, have been produced, their social and environmental cost, and the fate of the population on whom the waste we produce is unloaded. In other words, we need to overcome the state of constant denial and irresponsibility, concerning the consequences of our actions, resulting from the destructive ways in which the social division of labor is organized in capitalism; short of that, the production of our life inevitably becomes a production of death for others.¹¹⁰

Indeed, today, reproduction processes can be found in every aspect of our lives, as capitalism moves further away from production. Under these circumstances, feminists would agree that a broad-based mobilization is needed to build the power of women in every sphere of life: health, education, employment, and reproductive

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 269.

¹¹⁰ Federici, *Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle*, 266.

work, as well as to ensure women's access to land.¹¹¹ Otherwise, any gains will be difficult to achieve. Therefore, if we are going to reconstruct or reclaim a feminist commons today, there is no doubt that it must begin at home, where capitalism imprisons women as house-prisoners. No common is possible unless we refuse to base our life and our reproduction on the suffering of others, unless we refuse to see ourselves as separate from them.¹¹²

Moreover, today, a movement that will emerge from the coalition of the commons and the feminist movement has the potential to oppose the separation between the private and public spheres imposed by capitalism and the violent relations that this separation brings. This potential is critical to women's liberation because it demonstrates that there are alternatives to the understanding that ascribes reproduction of labor power to women as a natural destiny. Recognizing domestic work as labor that (re)produces the workforce relieves us of the guilt women had felt when they wanted to refuse domestic work and emphasizes the importance of the feminist notion that "the personal is political."¹¹³

Indeed, in this private space, we must unite against the capitalist patriarchy, which confines women to the home and legitimizes all violence there. As Federici points out:

If the house is the oikos on which the economy is built, then it is women, historically the houseworkers and house prisoners, who must take the initiative to reclaim the house as a center of collective life, one traversed by multiple people and forms of cooperation, providing safety without isolation and fixation, allowing for the sharing and circulation of community possessions, and, above all, providing the foundation for collective forms of reproduction.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Federici, *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*, 126.

¹¹² *Ibid*, 110.

¹¹³ Federici, *Patriarchy of the Wage: Notes on Marx, Gender, and Feminism*, 57.

¹¹⁴ Federici, *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*, 112.

Establishing such forms of collective reproduction will also enable women to find practices of solidarity. Undoubtedly, one of the things that feminism excels at is weaving these solidarity networks, providing spaces for them, and raising feminist consciousness of a new critical perspective. A commons movement with this feminist experience can also offer production relations that are not based on capitalist practices. It can potentially provide a safe space for women exploited by the capitalist order. Indeed commons:

...contend with the threats posed to them by capitalist development and revalorize locale-specific knowledges and technologies. They do not assume that there is a necessary connection between scientific/technological and moral/intellectual development, which is an underlying premise of Marx's conception of social wealth. Commons place at the center of their political project the restructuring of reproduction as the crucial terrain for the transformation of social relations, thus subverting the value structure of capitalist organization of work. In particular, they attempt to break down the isolation that has characterized domestic work in capitalism, not in view of its reorganization on an industrial scale but in view of creating more cooperative forms of care work.¹¹⁵

In short, the question of why feminism needs the commons can be explained by its position against capitalism. The commons embody the potentials that can offer alternative solutions to the relations of reproduction that capitalism distances from the relations of production. Today, in the face of capitalist relations that imprison women in the home, the commons have the dynamics and experience of commoning that will make the private sphere truly political.

Furthermore, returning to the first question from the perspective of the commons, why does the commons movement need a feminist movement? Understanding the

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 167.

dynamics of the commons and looking at capitalist patriarchy from a feminist viewpoint provides a clear answer to this question. Today as well, many existing commons discriminate, mostly on the basis of gender.¹¹⁶ Despite the fact that we often consider of the commons as an anti-capitalist movement, they are nonetheless affected by patriarchy, which is much older than capitalism. Patriarchy is a set of social interactions that predates capitalism by a long time, on the other hand, it is the buried ground of capitalism and a source that feeds it.¹¹⁷ As a result, the commons need feminism far more than feminism needs the commons since feminism has a broad experience fighting patriarchy.

Moreover, they can benefit from each other's know-how. Feminism is already one of the strongest movements, and it has many encounter mechanisms against capitalist patriarchy. Besides, feminism is the only organized movement that allows women to unite against all forms of oppression and violence caused by the capitalist patriarchy.

The commons, on the other hand, are not unfamiliar with capitalism's attacks. It is one of the most accomplished movements for developing alternative solutions and policies to counter these attacks. Thus, the unity of these two movements is quite valuable not only for women and women's labor that I have mentioned so far but also because they can open up areas for these two movements to learn from each other and even overcome their limitations with the experience they have.

Lastly, we cannot build an alternative and a strong self-reproducing movement unless we redefine in more cooperative ways our reproduction and put an end to the separation between the personal and the political, political activism and the reproduction of everyday life.¹¹⁸ Yet a coalition of commons and feminism can achieve this. However, how can they co-operate? and how is this cooperation possible?

¹¹⁶George Caffentzis and Silvia Federici, "Commons Against and Beyond Capitalism," *Community Development Journal* Vol. 49 (2014): 103.

¹¹⁷Acar Savran, "Patriyarka," *Feminist Bellek*.

¹¹⁸Federici, *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*, 112.

3.3. THROUGH A FEMINIST COMMON

In today's crisis environment, there are many struggles that we can interpret as an anti-capitalist struggles. Despite the fact that these struggles differ from one another, their opposition to capitalism allows us to discuss them together. However, we also require a consciously organized collective struggle against capitalism's systematic attacks.

The feminist movement and commons movements are two distinct movements that can be considered in a coalition at that point. Today, a movement that emerges from the coalition of both movements which I will refer to as feminist commons in the following sections, can offer more inclusive and equal alternative policies. However, constructing a feminist common from the emergence together of such movements is a challenging experience. And only with a sense of shared purpose and collective responsibility can this process be accomplished.

Notwithstanding, thinking of a struggle that brings together feminism and commons against the capitalist patriarchy is very promising for a more equal and just world. Undoubtedly, only the struggle that will arise from such a coalition can enable us to build safe spaces by getting rid of the pressure of capitalism on our lives. Moreover, this will happen through the first lesson we can gain from these struggles is that the "commoning" of the material means of reproduction is the primary mechanism by which a collective interest and mutual bonds are created.¹¹⁹ However, how can commons movement and feminist movement co-operate? And how is this cooperation possible?

The commons we wish to construct today aim to transform social relations and create an alternative to capitalism.¹²⁰ It is not only about reconstructing and reclaiming physical common resources but also about re-transforming society and the norms. According to Dardot & Laval state:

¹¹⁹ Silvia Federici, *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*, 108.

¹²⁰ George Caffentzis and Silvia Federici, *Commons Against and Beyond Capitalism*, 100.

Today, more than ever, every activity and every locale is interconnected: saving the world today it is not therefore so much a matter of isolating and protecting some natural “good” or “resource” considered fundamental to human survival, as it is a matter of profoundly transforming the economy and the society by overthrowing the system of norms that now directly threatens nature and humanity itself. In other words, effective political ecology can only come from a radical anticapitalism.¹²¹

Moreover, the commons we build should enable us to gain more power with regard to capital and the state and embryonically prefigure a new mode of production, no longer built on a competitive principle, but on the principle of collective solidarity.¹²² As a matter of fact, we can now think of the coalition between the feminist and commons movements as the construction of a feminist common. For the construction of a feminist common, I will take as a starting point the steps Federici and Caffentzis used while aiming for a common based on the principle of collective solidarity. In *Commons Against and Beyond Capitalism*, Federici and Caffentzis emphasize some features of the commons that based on the principle of collective solidarity:

1. Commons are not given, they are produced.
2. To guarantee our reproduction ‘commons’ must involve a ‘commonwealth’, in the form of shared natural or social resources.
3. One of the challenges we face today is connecting the struggle over the public with those for the construction of the common, so that they can reinforce each other.
4. Commons require a community.

¹²¹ Dardot and Laval, *Common: On Revolution in the 21st Century*, 2.

¹²² Caffentzis and Federici, *Commons Against and Beyond Capitalism*, 101.

5. Commons require regulations stipulating how the wealth we share is to be used and cared for.
6. Equal access to the means of (re)production and egalitarian decision making must be the foundation of the commons.¹²³

While saying that the commons are the things produced, Federici and Caffentzis state that the commons are the values that enable us to live our lives commonly beyond material assets. The point they emphasize here is more than just a resource or physical asset, and it is a matter of commoning practices. Indeed, As De Angelis points out:

As soon as the process of socialisation begins, we reproduce our subjectivities in bodies and spirit through engagement in networks of social cooperation which confront us with the need to develop values and measures that are truly alternative to the subordination of life to profit or that push us to learn to adapt to it while keeping a distinct identity. As soon as these networks of social cooperation develop into systematic patterns, we have all the elements of commons: pool of resources, communities and commoning.¹²⁴

Therefore, what must be taken into account when constructing the commons, is the collective nature of the reproductive work and the means of reproduction involved.¹²⁵ Indeed, a feminist common with the aim of commoning the reproduction that capitalism systematically exploits and benefits from today will be crucial for the struggle against capitalism. One crucial reason for creating collective forms of living is that the reproduction of human beings is the most labor-intensive work on earth and, to a very large extent, is irreducible to mechanization.¹²⁶

Another point that Federici and Caffentzis emphasize on the path to a common based on the principle of collective solidarity is; that the commons must involve a

¹²³ Ibid, 102.

¹²⁴ De Angelis, *Crises, Movements and Commons, Borderlands*, 11.

¹²⁵ Caffentzis and Federici, *Commons Against and Beyond Capitalism*, 101.

¹²⁶ Federici, *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*, 110.

‘commonwealth’ in the form of shared natural or social resources to guarantee our reproduction.¹²⁷ This step will undoubtedly vary depending on where we want to construct a feminist common. Therefore, another question that needs to be answered at this stage is where and how a feminist common can be constructed.

When we talk about the construction of a feminist common in Istanbul today, it is extremely difficult to physically create a space, and even more difficult to create this space for a common purpose in Istanbul, where neoliberal urbanization has resulted in a severe rent attack, as I mentioned in the second part. Therefore, cooperation with a non-governmental organization can be made for such a space.

Civil society organizations are political actors, but, unlike political parties, they focus on specific issue areas, such as human rights, environment, peace, and the rights concerning gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and culture.¹²⁸ Civil society is still a powerful sector, even though it has to deal with heavy sanctions and inspections in Turkey, experiencing a major democracy crisis.

A space allocated by a non-governmental organization can also help combine the struggle over the public with the construction of the common, which is another point Federici and Caffentzis emphasize. Since, despite its current difficulties, non-governmental organizations remain one of the most effective intermediaries in communicating alternative policies to be presented to the public. They mostly have the knowledge and experience to present alternatives to be produced by the feminist common as a good example and to advocate for inclusive policies.

Moreover, another point is commons require a community. At this point, a community of women who have common issues will be very effective for constructing a feminist common since it is clear that women are the most disadvantaged group in the reproduction processes in the social order dominated by capitalism. For this reason, on the path to constructing a feminist common, women

¹²⁷ Caffentzis and Federici, *Commons Against and Beyond Capitalism*, 101.

¹²⁸ E. Fuat Keyman and Ahmet Icduygu, “Globalization, Civil Society and Citizenship in Turkey: Actors, Boundaries and Discourses,” *Citizenship Studies* 7.2 (2003): 226.

must take the lead and even initiate the process. The feminist movement, which is already in an organized struggle, can contribute to women coming together for a feminist common at this point.

However, what should not be forgotten on the way to the construction of a feminist common is that we cannot speak of ‘global commons’, as these presume the existence of a global collectivity which today does not exist and perhaps will never exist as we do not think it is possible or desirable.¹²⁹ Therefore, a feminist collective can be organized locally with the contributions of local feminists and collectives and be open to the participation of all women who want to take responsibility in that locality. Thus, every woman exploited by the capitalist patriarchy can find a safe space within the feminist commons, even if she does not define herself as a feminist. Making progress in this manner through the feminist common also prevents incompatibility with the locals.

Besides, constructing the feminist common locally also increases the sense of belonging to the commons. The issue of belonging is crucial since the commons necessitates more than just coming together as a community; it also requires responsibility. Women who share the common and a sense of belonging must work together to devise plans for how the common will be used and protected. As Federici states:

Commons require regulations stipulating how the wealth we share is to be used and cared for, the governing principles being equal access, reciprocity between what is given and what is taken, collective decision making, and power from the ground up, derived from tested abilities and continually shifting through different subjects depending on the tasks to be performed.¹³⁰

Nonetheless, once a feminist common is constructed, capitalism will continue to attack, and it will most likely attempt to enclosure these spaces as it knows the best. For this reason, the protection of the commons is also a crucial issue that should be

¹²⁹ Caffentzis and Federici, *Commons Against and Beyond Capitalism*, 102.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

regulated by the community that built the common. While creating these arrangements, if we want to propose an alternative policy against the existing capitalist patriarchy, we must first implement this alternative policy ourselves in every aspect of the feminist common. For this reason, decisions in the feminist common must be taken democratically and inclusively. Indeed, equal access to the means of (re)production and egalitarian decision-making must be the foundation of the commons.¹³¹

In short, although Federici and Caffentzis' suggestions provide direction for constructing a common, there is no single formula for it. The path to constructing a feminist common today will vary depending on the location of the common and the needs of the community that will be establishing it. What is certain is that the construction of such a common is an important step towards learning about collective government and our recognition of history as a collective project, which is perhaps the main casualty of the neoliberal era of capitalism.¹³² Lastly, as Federici points out:

For no struggle will succeed in changing the world if we do not organize our reproduction in a communal way and not only share the space and time of meetings and demonstrations but put our lives in common, organizing on the basis of our different needs and possibilities, and the rejection of all principles of exclusion or hierarchization.¹³³

3.4. SOLIDARITY PRACTICES

It is nothing new for women to get together and cook, look after each other's children, or help each other with household chores. Women may come together to

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Federici, *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*, 110.

¹³³ Caffentzis and Federici, *Commons Against and Beyond Capitalism*, 103.

do household chores for a variety of cultural and economic reasons, as well as political ones.

Many feminist traditions have contributed to the politicization of this field by emphasizing the importance of households, which is often referred to as "women's work." However, one of the many different variations of the feminist movement, the materialist feminist tradition, has prioritized this field. Although the material feminist tradition is today relatively unknown, its emphasis on reorganizing women's labor as the material basis of the reproduction of society is directly relevant to today's political struggles.¹³⁴

Regardless of various criticism directed at the materialist feminist tradition today and during their period, the material feminists expounded one powerful idea: that women must create feminist homes with socialized housework and childcare before they could become truly equal members of society.¹³⁵ They argued that women's isolation at home and confinement to domestic life was the root of their unequal social standing. They defined women's control over woman's sphere as women's control over the reproduction of society.¹³⁶ Indeed, Dolores Hayden claims that only the material feminists argued that women must assert control over the important work of reproduction which they were already performing and reorganize it to obtain economic justice for themselves.¹³⁷ For this reason, "material feminism" devised a number of plans and strategies based on this standpoint. Dolores Hayden says the following about some actions material feminists have taken:

When, at their most militant, the material feminists demanded that paid workers perform all household tasks collectively in well-equipped neighborhood kitchens, laundries, and childcare centers, they called for architects to develop new types of housing and for planners to create new kinds of community facilities, giving these

¹³⁴ Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1981), 6.

¹³⁵ *Ibid*, 1.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 5.

¹³⁷ *Ibid*, 6.

professions a human importance long since lost by architects working for speculative builders or planners in the zoning bureaucracy.¹³⁸

Furthermore, it is important to remember such a tradition when discussing the commons. Federici claims that we must include the communing of household chores in our political agenda and revisit the feminist tradition, including materialist feminists' efforts. According to her:

On this account, we too must include in our political agenda the communalization of housework, reviving that rich feminist tradition that in the U.S. stretches from the utopian socialist experiments of the midnineteenth century to the attempts that 'materialist feminists' made from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century to reorganize and socialize domestic work, and thereby the home and the neighborhood, through collective housekeeping—attempts that continued until the 1920s when the Red Scare put an end to them. These practices and, most importantly, the ability of past feminists to look at reproductive labor as an important sphere of human activity not to be negated but to be revolutionized must be revisited and revalorized.¹³⁹

Moreover, another point emphasized by materialist feminists that we need to revisit is the issue of intersectionality. When analyzing the domestic revolution of materialist feminists, Hayden emphasizes this point:

Women can never gain their own liberation from stereotypes of gender at the expense of other women of a lower economic class or another race whom they exploit by paying them low wages to do sex-stereotyped work. Black women and white women, Yankee women

¹³⁸ Ibid, 28.

¹³⁹ Federici, *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*, 110.

and immigrant women, housewives and servants, had to break out of woman's sphere together, or else not at all.¹⁴⁰

Indeed, if we are genuinely committed to revisiting this feminist tradition today, we must also consider intersectionality, which deals with social categorizations such as race, class, and gender in the context of discrimination. Especially in such a period when immigration is the reality of our era, we should make the labor of refugee women one of our agenda and the discriminatory practices they are subjected to a part of the commons.

It may seem impossible to consider women's reproduction based on collective processes with such values, but it is possible to consider some existing solidarity practices from this perspective. Moreover, rather than starting anew, resurrecting this deep-rooted feminist tradition today in local spaces where already existing solidarity practices take place could be a start.

Solidarity movements are particularly important today since they have emerged during a period when racism, xenophobia, and anti-immigrant tendencies have increased, and rightist politics have gained ground.¹⁴¹ Solidarity kitchens, which bring together people from various backgrounds, are particularly important at this time. Furthermore, these kitchens can serve as a starting point for women who want to reclaim control over their reproductive processes.

In addition, many solidarity kitchens can be found in the context of solidarity movements with refugees in Europe and Turkey, where migration is one of the most critical matters. The vision and function of the solidarity kitchens, on the other hand, differ from one another. For instance, some solidarity kitchens are established through collective action, while some others are funded by non-governmental organizations. Besides, some kitchens distribute free meals only for disadvantaged

¹⁴⁰ Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities*, 229.

¹⁴¹ Ilker Ataç, Kim Rygiel & Maurice Stierl, "Introduction: The Contentious Politics of Refugee and Migrant Protest and Solidarity Movements: Remaking Citizenship from the Margins," *Citizenship Studies* 20:5 (2016), 528.

groups' access to food, while others are run by disadvantaged groups themselves and contribute to their inclusion in the production process.

Indeed, there are various examples of Solidarity Kitchens in Turkey where has become a significant route for many refugees. Besides, we see that not only has there been an increase in the national and international non-governmental organizations working in this field, but also different formalities and organization patterns have emerged as regards the solidarity movements that work with migrants.¹⁴² “Woman to Woman Refugee Kitchen” was one of them.

The "Woman to Woman Refugee Kitchen" was founded as part of the Okmeydanı Social Cooperation and Solidarity Association (OK-DER), which aimed to find solutions to various neighborhood problems through neighborhood solidarity. Indeed, Okmeydanı is an important place to begin such solidarity as that neighborhood is dealing with urban transformation and other issues related to it. Besides, Okmeydanı has become one of the places where the refugee population is concentrated due to the possibility of finding a temporary job in the textile industry.

As the number of people visiting the association, particularly women, increased day by day, the local organization decided to put women in production. Thus, the solidarity kitchen emerged.¹⁴³ Another problem highlighted by the organization is that refugee women, like women from Turkey, are subjected to a great deal of pressure. As one of the representatives of the association cited:

Life's whole burden and responsibility are actually on women: a woman cares for children, seeks assistance, and finds a home. If there is a man, he goes to work; if there is no work, he sleeps at home. The pressing issue in our neighborhood was the need for a space to allow refugee women to express themselves and meet and

¹⁴² Lülüfer Körükmez, “Thinking Migrant Solidarity Movements within the Commons,” *The Politics of the Commons: from Theory to Struggle* (İstanbul: Sivil ve Ekolojik Haklar Derneği, 2018), 123.

¹⁴³ Nilay Vardar, “Kadın Kadına Mülteci Mutfağından,” *Bianet* (2017). <https://m.bianet.org/kurdi/toplum/182813-kadin-kadina-multeci-mutfagi-ndan> (Accessed 6 June 2022)

support each other. The association has turned into a meeting place where needs are met, and friendships are formed on the occasion of these needs.¹⁴⁴

Thus, the idea of a kitchen where they would bring together refugees and non-refugees to make food came to the fore. Yet the standard in production, buyers' concerns about hygiene, and the ability to make a variety of products other than jam and pickles, it was realized at the end of 2016 that a professional kitchen was required. They needed a fund since constructing a professional kitchen is quite expensive. They received funds from another institution for a year at this point, despite their hesitations. With the help of volunteer architects, they rented an old textile workshop and converted it into a common industrial kitchen.

Moreover, by considering the kitchen as a common, it is possible to observe how commoning practices carried out in a collective and solidarity manner bring together migrants and non-migrants together in everyday activities. Those solidarity movements working with migrants and performing commoning practices together is an important way of defining migrant rights from the 'bottom' and removing them from the nation-state scale.¹⁴⁵ Indeed, we cannot think of radical social change, then, as coming about from above, or as the introduction of central planning. Revolution can only be a construction from below.¹⁴⁶

Lastly, in solidarity kitchens, it is possible to find sparks of the feminist tradition that envisages reorganizing the home and neighborhood by forming a domestic labor collective, which Federici emphasizes that we need to be revalorized. Furthermore, a solidarity practice that includes not only citizens, women with similar education and backgrounds, but also immigrant women, will address the intersectionality issue raised by materialist feminists. Another fact that contributes

¹⁴⁴ Caner Murat Doğançayır&Umut Kocagöz, "Alternatif Gıda İnisyatifleri Söyleşileri: Kadın Kadına Mülteci Mutfağı," ed.Yaşar Adnan Adanalı, Bahar Bayhan, Deniz Öztürk, Selini Yazıcı *Mekânda Adalet ve Gıda* (İstanbul: Mekânda Adalet Derneği, March 2018): 103.

¹⁴⁵ Lülüfer Körukmez, "Thinking Migrant Solidarity Movements within the Commons," *The Politics of the Commons: From Theory to Struggle*, 127.

¹⁴⁶ John Holloway, "Is the Zapatista Struggle An Anti-Capitalist Struggle?" *The Commoner* 6 (2003): 1. https://files.libcom.org/files/7_holloway06.pdf (Accessed 12 June 2022)

to the importance of such solidarity practices is the possibility of overcoming the isolation in which reproductive activities are performed and the separation between the private and the public spheres that has contributed so much to hiding and rationalizing women's exploitation in the family and the home.¹⁴⁷

3.5. THE RISK OF THE COMMONS AND IMPORTANCE OF A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

The commons, which has become a field of struggle against the attacks of the capital, contains some risks. These risks are related to the structure of the capital, which the commons are positioned against. While capital maintains its violence and dominance in all aspects of life, it does not forget the commons as well. Capital, even more dangerously, discovers the virtues of the commons for its own benefit. Therefore, when advocating for constructing or reclaiming a common, we must also consider and prepare for these risks.

Federici and Caffentzis, in "*Commons against and beyond capitalism*," argues that communalism is also the jargon used to recruit unpaid labour.¹⁴⁸ In this context, they give an example of British Prime Minister Cameron's "Big Society" program. "Big Society" program is a volunteer program designed to make up for the cuts in social services his administration made in the name of the economic crisis. Federici and Caffentzis describe the program's goal as follows:

"The Big Society" programme instructs government-sponsored organizations (from day-care centers to libraries and clinics) to recruit local artists and young people who, with no pay, will engage in activities increasing the 'social value', defined as social cohesion and above all reduction of the cost of social reproduction. This means that non-profit organizations providing programmes for the

¹⁴⁷ Silvia Federici, *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*, 4.

¹⁴⁸ Caffentzis and Federici, *Commons Against and Beyond Capitalism*, 97.

elderly can qualify for some government funding if they can create “social value”, measured according to a special arithmetic factoring in the advantages of a socially and environmentally sustainable society embedded in a capitalist economy.¹⁴⁹

Governments frequently call for solidarity, particularly in times of economic crisis. However, in the practices that follow these calls, we occasionally come across practices that we are familiar with from the commons. The example given by Federici and Caffentzis is just one example of how governments manipulate commons practices for their own advantage. Governments and the market deftly use many commons’ practices, especially in crisis situations, by demonstrating reasons such as solidarity and increasing social value, and they do so while using the commons’ language and values. In this way, communal efforts to build solidarity and cooperative forms of existence, outside the control of the market, can be used to cheapen the cost of reproduction and even accelerate the layoffs of public employees.¹⁵⁰

Furthermore, in this way, states have the opportunity to avoid both their own responsibilities and the costs of these responsibilities in this manner. Governments even utilize civil society as a sector that can take the government’s responsibilities in the case of social services. Situations like these prove that the market and states are well aware of commons practices and can exploit them when the opportunity arises.

Returning to the feminist commons I mentioned in the previous sections and the solidarity practices I mentioned as an example will help to understand some of the risks better and more broadly. Such risks exist in the practices and examples I mentioned in the previous sections. It is possible to say that such commons can easily constitute a new form of the enclosure when we consider a common where women will take back control over their reproductive processes.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

Today, a common that aims collectivizing households can indirectly cause women's labor to take part in production processes as a cheap labor force and reduce the cost of reproduction. Thus, both the capital and the states will benefit from such a situation. While capital is rediscovering labor that it can exploit, governments will remain unresponsive in an area where they must essentially make policy.

In particular, when considering a solidarity kitchen as a common in Turkey with the support of non-governmental organization, there are several risks to consider. The first risk is directly related to the political sphere in Turkey, where is currently in a crisis not only economically but also democratically; non-governmental organizations can only work in specific fields and in ways that the government finds "appropriate." While non-governmental organizations that are in good relations with the government can receive public support, the other organizations working in areas such as democracy, human rights, and advocacy face serious funding problems. In addition, they undergo heavy control.

Accordingly, when constructing a common, the question of what kind of cooperation the common will have with which non-governmental organization should be thoroughly considered. Besides, a common that is only supported by civil society and dependent on the funds to come from it will not be sustainable. Moreover, in Turkey, where there is no stable democratic and economic order, non-governmental organizations can easily be closed down and even criminalized. In such a case, the commons will also be affected by attacks on civil society.

Furthermore, although it is not a risk, there is a criticism that should be addressed from a feminist perspective in a common aiming at the collectivization of reproduction. This is a criticism of reinforcing gender roles, as women will play the most critical role in the commoning of reproduction, and thus housework will be kept seen as women's work. Undoubtedly, this criticism needs to be discussed carefully and from a feminist standpoint. Regarding this criticism, Federici argues that:

It remains to be clarified that assigning women this task of commoning/collectivizing reproduction is not to concede to a naturalistic conception of femininity. Understandably, many feminists view this possibility as a fate worse than death. It is deeply sculpted in our collective consciousness that women have been designated as men's common, a natural source of wealth and services to be as freely appropriated by them as the capitalists have appropriated the wealth of nature. But, to paraphrase Dolores Hayden, the reorganization of reproductive work, and therefore the reorganization of housing and public space, is not a question of identity; it is a question of labor and, we can add, a question of power and safety.¹⁵¹

One of the first things women need to do today to gain control over their labor is to make domestic labor visible. It is also a part of this struggle that an opposing mechanism to be put into practice in order to make labor visible emerges from the actual site of exploitation. Indeed, due to years of discrimination and exploitation, women must play a central role in such a struggle. Therefore, As Federici emphasizes, this issue goes far beyond the norms that attribute housework to woman's nature:

Arguing that women should take the lead in the collectivization of reproductive work and housing is not to naturalize housework as a female vocation. It is refusing to obliterate the collective experiences, the knowledge, and the struggles that women have accumulated concerning reproductive work, whose history has been an essential part of our resistance to capitalism.¹⁵²

Moreover, when we consider such a critique of the commons, which centers on reproduction, in the context of the solidarity kitchens I mentioned earlier, we must

¹⁵¹ Federici, *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*, 112.

¹⁵² Federici, *Re-enchanting the World: Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*, 113.

ask the following question: Do solidarity kitchens relocate women from their own kitchens to another kitchen?

While many feminist traditions will have different answers to this question, they will undoubtedly agree that the answer is directly related to gender. Answering "yes" to this question would reinforce existing roles that link women's nature with housework since it is also related to the gender roles regarding a woman's place in the kitchen. The main issue is that women choose to be in the solidarity kitchen and that their labor is waged, while the other kitchen is burdened on women's shoulders as a never-ending task. Therefore, a feminist perspective at this point would concentrate on making the woman's labor in the kitchen visible rather than reproducing the norms by criticizing the woman in the kitchen.

In short, a common aiming at the collectivization of housework and women's control of their own reproductive processes faces many risks. This risk is the capital itself. Capital is everywhere and being outside or inside capital is always a matter of degree. Forms of capitalist command and domination always affect and infiltrate our communities to some degree, be they traditional indigenous communities, communities of struggle or alternatives.¹⁵³ Through commons, capital can easily generate new forms of enclosure and continue to reduce the cost of reproduction. For this reason, it is necessary to remember that the commons will be constructed are not independent of the attacks of the capital against which they are positioned, and they should also create regulations against these risks. In addition to these regulations, it should not be forgotten that a feminist perspective is always necessary against gender-based criticisms that may be directed at such commons.

¹⁵³ Oliver De Marcellus, "Commons, Communities and Movements: Inside, Outside and Against Capital," *The Commoner* 6 (2003): 1. <https://thecommoner.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/De-Marcellus-Commons-Communities-and-Movements.pdf> (Accessed 12 June 2022)

CONCLUSION

It was critical for me to begin my theoretical discussion by asking why the commons, which is not a new concept, are at the forefront of academia, politics, and many current struggles. While this questioning revealed much about the commons, it also revealed a lot about the current capitalist order and its consequences. Besides, it also allowed me to demonstrate the importance of the commons in today's world.

While the commons provides alternatives to many of the policies that are currently having disastrous consequences, it also shows potential for a non-capitalist future. A more inclusive, democratic, and equal order of the commons is not only promising for the future but also the present. Indeed, the commons can be found wherever capitalism and neoliberal policies legitimize enclosures and displacements. Therefore, finding the commons in many anti-capitalist struggles is not coincidental.

Naomi Klein defines these seemingly separate movements that have come together around the commons against capitalism as “coalitions of coalitions.”¹⁵⁴ Moreover, she argues that the real issue is questioning what makes such a coalition possible. For this thesis, Klein’s “coalitions of coalitions” definition has two particular effects. The first one is that it responds to my earlier question about why the commons are so popular with the explanation that every aspect of our lives becomes a struggle since capitalism affixes price tags on even our basic needs. The second reason is that it encouraged me to consider feminism and the commons, two different social movements, together. Besides, therefore I often refer to the cooperation between feminism and the commons as a coalition.

Having such a discussion, which aimed to develop a better understanding of the commons and social movements around them, brought me to my main questions:

¹⁵⁴ Naomi Klein, “Reclaiming the Commons,” *New Left Review*.

Why do commons and feminism need each other? Besides, how can they cooperate?

It was necessary to narrow the framework before focusing on the movement that would emerge from the coalition of these two movements, which I have referred to as the feminist common in many parts of my thesis. As it would be difficult to discuss the construction of the feminist common on a global scale, I chose to address it in the context of Turkey. For this, I had to narrow the theoretical discussions I had started, such as the commons, capitalism, and neoliberal policies, in the context of Turkey.

For this reason, in the following part of the conceptual framework, I discussed Turkey's political sphere and neoliberal policies more specifically. Although these policies in Turkey were similar to those on a global scale, their results were much more devastating. Accordingly, I discovered that neoliberal transformations primarily affect disadvantaged groups in society during my discussion of Harvey's concept of "accumulation by dispossession." Besides, this situation makes it difficult for disadvantaged groups to practice solidarity, putting them in an even more vulnerable position. As a result of this discovery, I was able to have a more in-depth discussion about women in the following section, whom I believe are more vulnerable and disadvantaged in society.

Moreover, Mies' concept of capitalist patriarchy, which I frequently refer to when questioning the place of women in capitalism, proved that today more than ever, we need a movement that will arise from the coalition of feminism and the commons. Capitalism's ability to turn every crisis into a benefit demonstrated that capitalism's "women's labor problem" was not a coincidental issue.

Furthermore, capitalism's separation of production and reproduction processes has piled reproduction on the shoulders of women in the "private sphere" as unwaged and unending labor. This situation benefits both patriarchy and capitalism. While capitalism exploits this unwaged labor, patriarchy legitimizes this exploitation by attributing it to women's nature.

Therefore, in such a capitalist order, there was no doubt that feminism and the commons shared many mutual issues. Accordingly, I proposed the construction or reclaiming of a feminist common with women in this field, which is widespread with exploitation. Thus, I developed my arguments for the construction of a feminist common over the issue of reproduction, which I believe is the one of the common grounds between the two movements.

Before focusing on building such a common, I questioned why these two movements actually needed each other. The first response to this question was that while feminism is a powerful and dynamic movement, it sometimes falls short of offering alternative policies. While supposing this argument, I would like to point out that I am aware that feminism has made significant gains and has a long list of accomplishments, particularly in patriarchal societies. Indeed, the feminist movement established a material foundation for the criticism of reproduction and the hierarchies created by the sexual division of labor in everyday life.

However, it is apparent that we now, more than ever, require alternative policies to address this issue. At this point, I argued that the commons could effectively present these policies since the issue of reproduction is not just a struggle for feminism but for the commons as well.

Additionally, the commons and feminism essentially need each other as they can benefit from each other's methods of struggle, solid dynamics, and know-how, especially against capitalism. Besides, although the commons are interpreted as a capitalist struggle, they are not exempt from the dynamics of patriarchy, whose history is much older than capitalism, and they can discriminate based on gender. Therefore, a feminist perspective on the commons is critical.

Lastly, one of the questions I sought to answer in my thesis was how feminism and commons can co-operate. While answering such a question, I have referred to the movement that will emerge from the coalition of these two movements as a feminist common. Through constructing the feminist common, I have benefited from the

discussion in which Federici and Caffentzis mention about the characteristics of the commons aiming at collective solidarity.

However, holding such a discussion was difficult since there was no single formula for constructing commons, particularly for such a coalition. Therefore, I proposed Federici and Caffentzis' discussion for the commons that is based on collective solidarity; I considered this discussion in the context of Turkey as well. The second difficulty was Turkey's uncertain future and unstable political sphere.

In addition, a coalition that emerges from both movements faces certain risks that the commons face. The first of these risks is that such commons are not exempt from capitalism's attacks; in fact, they may be the first to be targeted. The second is that capitalism can benefit from the feminist commons for its own interests and even make them the target of enclosures. Therefore, a common struggle that brings the commons and feminism together needs to be prepared for these risks as well.

Another point that I consider among the risks regarding the feminist common, but which may be more of a criticism than a risk, is that a common built by women and which takes reproduction as an issue can also be the target of gender-based criticism. Any common feminist that aims to transform the work attributed to women's nature within practices of solidarity can also be subject to criticism based on gender. At this point, it is essential to handle these criticisms from a feminist perspective. Criticisms that are not evaluated with such a perspective may carry the danger of deepening existing gender norms.

In conclusion, a feminist common can be a tool for combating discriminatory and exploitative practices that surround our daily lives. However, such a coalition is fraught with risks. This coalition will become a target of capitalism's attacks despite the numerous possibilities in both movements for such a coalition. Therefore, constructing a feminist common is a challenging but not impossible task.

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