

# Çankaya's 'Resentful' Residents: A Voyage to the World of LGBTI+'s of Çankaya

## Outcome Report of Being LGBTI+ in Çankaya Meeting

**November 2, 2020**

**Prepared by: Ali Alp Odabaş**

### **Introduction**

Çankaya's Resentful Residents<sup>1</sup> research is a collective study of the Terra Development Cooperative Urban Rights Research and Monitoring Workshop. The subjects of the study are LGBTI+'s, women, the elderly, and the people with disabilities. The part of the mentioned research which is related to LGBTI+'s living in Çankaya was discussed in this report; and the report is prepared to describe the LGBTI+'s sense of belonging to the city, security, urban mobility and the difficulties they experience in accessing urban services.

### **Purpose of the Research**

Since Terra Development Cooperative is an organization that adopts a horizontal organization structure working on the basis of human rights, this study aims to describe the experiences of LGBTI+'s, disabled individuals, women and elderlies who are ignored and discriminated against in urban policies and services, and to produce data sensitive to gender equality within the framework of urban rights of these groups, and aims to encourage a transformation through this produced data. In addition, since the study was conducted from gender and urban perspective, the notions of "security" and "belonging" were also included in relation to this perspective.

### **Theoretical Framework**

---

<sup>1</sup> For detailed information: <http://www.yeryuzukalkinma-koop.org/detay.php>

In this research, the first stop in the context of the theoretical background and conceptual framework is Henri Lefebvre's concept of right to the city<sup>2</sup>, who is one of the important names of urban studies. According to Lefebvre, it is the acquisition of the space created together and the city is an area where all citizens can claim rights. Then, the second stop is the concept of "urban mobility" or in other words, "motility". Motility<sup>3</sup> is a concept that reveals the mobility of individuals living in the center of the city or in a city. The third stop is Richard Sennett's work, *The Fall of Public Man*<sup>4</sup>. According to Sennett, the distinction between private and public spaces became more evident with industrialization, and they even started an unbalanced relationship. However, interactions between individuals have increased in social life and the public space has turned into a place of summoning. As a result, the distinction between public and private has disappeared and a network of interpenetrating relationships has been woven. Another stop; Based on Sennett's idea that the distinction between public and private has disappeared, the feminist movement, which in fact started to rise again in the 1970s before Sennett, has spread to the field of urban studies as in every other academic field and has become a field where the private/public distinction is questioned. In this context, Caroline Moser<sup>5</sup> emphasized that a new perspective should be developed that focuses on the transformation of gender relations in space rather than mainstreaming gender equality in terms of gender perspective, which constitutes the methodological dimension of this study. The underlying reason for this emphasis is that the need for equality based policies and services, which include the concerns of different groups in the city are not yet met. In the context of rights violations that came to the agenda as a reflection of this unsatisfied need, Tovi Fenster developed the definition of "incomplete citizen"<sup>6</sup> while Cenk Özbay-Maral Erol came up with the "impossible citizenship"<sup>7</sup>. As a result, this study was named as "Çankaya's 'Resentful' Residents" within the scope of the specified theoretical framework.

---

<sup>2</sup> Lefebvre, H. (2015). *Şehir Hakkı*. İstanbul: Sel Yayıncılık.

<sup>3</sup> Kaufmann, V. (2002). *Re-thinking Mobility*. Ashgate.

<sup>4</sup> Sennett, R. (2013). *Kamusal İnsanın Çöküşü*. İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları

<sup>5</sup> Moser, C. (2016). Gender transformation in a new global urban agenda: challenges for Habitat III and beyond. *Environment & Urbanization*, 29(1), 221–236. DOI: 10.1177/0956247816662573.

<sup>6</sup> Fenster, T. (2005). The Right to the Gendered City: Different Formations of Belonging in Everyday Life. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 14, 217-231

<sup>7</sup> Özbay, C. ve Erol, M. (2018). Vatandaşlık Rejimi, Cinsellikler ve Beden Siyaseti, *Cogito*, 90, 201-204.

## Method of the Research

The method of the research is mixed methodology (convergent parallel model). In other words, while qualitative and quantitative studies are analyzed separately and internal and external interpretations are developed, the findings of both studies are considered together. We decided to conduct the research in Çankaya region as Terra Development Cooperative Urban Rights Research and Monitoring Workshop in July 2019, before this study. The reasons for this can be listed as the high number of contacts due to the central location of Çankaya, being on the focus of transportation networks and being the only district in Ankara that has a local equality unit in its local government (municipality).

In the first part of this study, the quantitative research part, we interviewed only 167 women and we did not check the sexual orientation or gender identity information in these interviews. In the second stage, after deciding to work with the LGBTI+ group, we used the LGBTI+ roof concept because the concept of gender refers to different power relations and experiences between gender identities and sexual orientations; while using the concept LGBTI+, we tried to point lesbian (homosexual woman), gay (homosexual man), bisexual, trans woman, trans, trans men, intersex, and other and marginalized orientations and gender identities. In doing so, during the research and interviews, we used the participants' expressed gender identity; *homosexual man, homosexual woman, lubunya<sup>8</sup>, genderless, effeminate man, trans woman, trans man*.

At the same time, in-depth interviews were conducted with 4 LGBTI+ people aged 40 and over with respect to the age variable. The reason behind that was, the individuals aged 65 and over have different experiences of inequality and discrimination due to their demographically different socio-economic status. However, individuals aged 40 and over are also considered within this framework in terms of the LGBT+'s. Because the different needs of LGBTI+'s regarding the access to services fall outside the mainstream definition of old age. In this respect, the starting point was the definition of Lubunya 40+ Initiative, which was established with the motto of "getting old together" by the Association of May 17. In the context of qualitative research, we conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews with 9 LGBTI+'s. Due to COVID-19, we continued conversations from online platforms such as Skype, Zoom and WhatsApp. Interviews took an average of 50-60 minutes. The interviews continued and the transcripts of the interviews were obtained and analyzed in NVIVO 12

---

<sup>8</sup> Lubunya is a word from Turkish queer slang language can roughly be translated as queer.

program. As a result of the analysis, the findings were discussed under 3 themes: belonging to the city and affiliation with the city, urban mobility and urban services. In addition, as in-depth face-to-face interviews were conducted with LGBTI+’s within the scope of this research and it was a phenomenological study, our aim was not to draw a universal picture. In other words, our aim was to describe a situation regarding Çankaya District through the 9 LGBTI+’s we interviewed.

## Findings

First of all, when the belonging to the city and the relationship with the city are discussed, the ideal understanding of the city for LGBTI+’s was described as an area where they *are able to be free from patriarchal oppression, able to exist as an individual and where respect for diversity is embraced*. In addition, the basic value that defines the city according to LGBTI+’s is the concept of “freedom”. In terms of belonging to the city, LGBTI+’s emphasized the necessity of developing urban services. Because, they described that the lack of urban services causes LGBTI+’s to develop a negative sense of belonging to the city;

*"You cannot provide (an example) over LGBTI’s because there is no service for LGBTI’s. Çankaya Municipality did not say anything while 43 or something other municipalities of CHP were made statements for the Pride... []... Other municipalities are making calls for collaborations... While we are going there and holding workshops... Its name is Metropolitan Municipality... []... For example, they ask, what are you doing in Çankaya. Because they know we come from an organization working with local governments, but we come from an organization that cannot work in its own local area. For example, the fact that it doesn’t do anything turns into something that ties your hands and arms ... [] ... It must also be cooperating with the non-governmental organizations ... In fact, the municipality should be worrying about this on its own. Looking at all this, a profile emerges as follows: A citizen profile that is resentful about Çankaya.” (Urban 33, age 42, lubunya)*

It has been stated that the concept of negative belonging mentioned above is shaped among LGBTI+’s through experiences such as being the target of discrimination besides the lack of services. In the context of positive belonging, LGBTI+’s from Çankaya we interviewed stated that Çankaya has positive attributes in the context of their attachment to Çankaya, as it is a region where they are comfortable at and where they can express themselves.

In the context of urban mobility, “anxiety” and “fear of being harmed” is decisive for LGBTI + people. In particular, trans participants stated that the “presence of guards” was a trigger

for them in terms of fear of being harmed. In addition, homosexual woman (urban 2) and lubunya (urban 33) stated that discrimination experiences such as restriction of organizational activities in Ankara locality and smear campaigns against LGBTI+'s had effects towards the change and decrease of urban mobility. In the context of "fear of being harmed" that came forth within the axis of these rights violations, the LGBTI+'s have stated that LGBTI+'s are using the taxi stands they are familiar with as a strategy and thus, they feel safer. Regarding the modes of transportation other than taxis in terms of urban mobility, it is an important finding occurred in the study that different difficulties in terms of "fear of being harmed" for the people with disabilities and LGBTI+'s are also present. For example, the disabled-effeminate man LGBTI+ participant (urban 4) stated that he feels the fear of being harmed "when men with brute voices try to help" because of his gender performance and visual disability.

The LGBTI+'s have stated that their experiences in regarding organizing and opening up spaces are transformative. For example, according to the participant who defines himself as genderless (Urban 20), mobility of LGBTI+'s in urban life increased and their fear of being harmed relatively decreased due to the existence of LGBTI+ friendly places or having places that are frequently visited by LGBTI+'s (queer contacts). In the context of organizing, urban 14 (trans men) stated that he felt lonely and afraid in urban life when he first came to Ankara, Çankaya, but these fears and loneliness decreased when he got organized under the roof of LGBTI+.

Finally, regarding urban services, LGBTI+'s have emphasized the need for improvements in the following services;

- **Awareness-raising:** LGBTI+ participants stated that the work done since 2017 should be improved and be delivered to a wider audience, and at the same time, they emphasized the necessity of group workshops, seminars and symposiums where LGBTI+'s are trainers and share their experiences.
- **Services for Sexually Transmitted Infections and Bio-Psycho-Social Wellbeing:** Urban 20, who enjoyed the psychologist and oral and dental health services of Çankaya Municipality, stated that they are satisfied with these services and their capacities should be increased. In the context of STI's, it was stated that there is only a HIV test-diagnosis center in Çankaya Municipality and this is not inclusive for many of the STI's (syphilis, gonorrhoea, HPV). At this point, it was emphasized that the capacities of these diagnostic centers should be developed in this direction.

- **Shelters:** Homosexual woman participant (urban 2) stated that since LGBTI+’s are not included in the mainstream policies, and only the identity given by the state is being considered in shelters while admitting women (individuals with pink identity), raises difficulties especially for trans women.
- **Employment:** According to the trans woman participant (urban 24), among LGBTI+’s, trans women are the most exposed to discrimination. For this reason, as a suggestion, she emphasized the need for studies to increase the visibility of trans people in this regard.
- **Cultural Services:** LGBTI+ participants emphasized that the municipality has an important role in developing these services and providing LGBTI+ visibility in society. However, it has been stated that there are situations such as allocating less budgets for cultural activities of LGBTI+’s, such as theaters (urban 2, homosexual female), inaccessible places in terms of transportation (urban 4, effeminate man, visually disabled).
- **Transportation:** Although we see that taxis are preferred especially in the context of the fear of being harmed, urban 14 (trans man), one of the LGBTI+ participants who use other public transport modes such as buses, stated that the gendered voice in the mechanisms where the public transportation cards are read according to legal identity, disturbs him.
- **Public Toilets:** It was stated by the urban 14 that the gendered toilet issue is a two-sided issue for LGBTI+’s and according to them, this may create problems in terms of sexual harassment and discrimination.

### **Kaos GL and May 17 Association’s Presentation of the Research Under the Title of “Being LGBTI + in Çankaya” and Feedbacks**

One participant stated that it is important that this study has the quality of a study that is applicable to all cities (beyond local and inter-local). Especially, Kadıköy City Council stated that they will carry out such research in the axis of LGBTI+’s and this study will be taken as a reference. It was noted that this state of being a resentful citizen is also valid for Kadıköy, İstanbul.

Another participant emphasized the importance of cooperation between organizations in the development of urban services and stated that this research is an important initiative.

Another participant stated that local governments such as the municipalities are an extension of the macro hegemony and this presentation will provide significant contributions to the practice since Çankaya is a local government that feeds on the social structure. In addition, due to the central location of Çankaya, as a region where queer interactions are frequent, social services must be carried out not only for LGBTI+'s from Çankaya, but also for other LGBTI+'s who interact with Çankaya for business, social life or other reasons, even though they do not reside in Çankaya.

According to another person participating in the event, the use of space is shaped from a normative perspective and can be queerized later. They stated that Çankaya has a layered structure and whether LGBTI+'s are political or not, the inclusion of the class notion would have a developing aspect in urban and LGBTI + studies.

### Conclusion

Evidently, the increasing number of smear campaigns against LGBTI+'s and increased number of discrimination experiences have raised the fear of being harmed and uneasiness for LGBTI+ participants living in Çankaya. At the same time, the importance of LGBTI+'s involvement in urban policy and service development processes in the context of the resentful citizen profile, which emerges as a reflection of the deficiency in urban services, is also seen in their suggestions regarding the services. Also, it would be appropriate to emphasize that the studies that will be carried out with LGBTI+ organizations and academia regarding the development of services will be transformative. It can be said that encouraging the involvement of LGBTI+'s during the development of urban policies is important. As a result, in the process of progressing from impossible, resentful citizenship to equal citizenship, the stories of LGBTI+'s should be promoted and taken into consideration.