

Beyond nonhuman animal rights: a grassroots movement in Istanbul and its alignment with other causes¹

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Abstract

This paper aims to shed light on the way the nonhuman animal rights movement in Istanbul aligns itself with other progressive leftist causes. This alignment manifests itself on different levels; other struggles are incorporated both intellectually and practically. Intellectually the relation between speciesism and other forms of discrimination is emphasized through the use of philosophies that theorize this relation. These philosophies are often further developed and debated. The practical dimension involves networking with other movements, campaigning for other causes and joining other movements' protests. But discrimination against disadvantaged groups also causes disputes within the nonhuman animal rights movement itself. What do these debates reveal about inconsistencies within the movement? And to what extent is the nonhuman animal rights cause acknowledged in other movements? I seek to find answers to these questions through ethnographic research. The grassroots character of the movement appears to be a major influence with regard to its radical, progressive, ethical vegan advocacy and its stimulation for further knowledge and self-improvement.

Keywords: social movements, nonhuman animal rights, Turkey, grassroots activism, alignment, Istanbul, veganarchism, abolitionist approach

Introduction

In June 2013 the Gezi Park protests mobilized thousands of citizens to the streets of Istanbul and other Turkish cities. Although the protests started as an environmental, rights-to-the-city movement, it soon represented a myriad of individuals, groups, and social movements. Part of this heterogeneous mass was a movement that had appeared relatively recently on the Istanbul activist scene: the nonhuman animal rights movement. For these (mostly) ethical vegans the

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Gezi incident appeared as a political opportunity to protest against one of the most pervasive systems of discrimination in society: speciesism, i.e. discrimination based on species membership. Some of these activists, under the name of Diren Vegan (Vegan Resist), had started a vegan food booth in Gezi Park. They organized a range of vegan forums to debate nonhuman animal rights philosophies, protested against other Gezi protest participants that were selling meatballs and milk, and tried to convince people not to consume those products.

The Gezi incident has been identified by Turkish nonhuman animal rights activists as a major turning point through which the movement gained momentum. GülceÖzenGürkan and BerkeEfeAltınal, the founders of Diren Vegan², observe that other liberation movements' previous perception of vegan activists as 'elitist' and 'middle class bourgeois' largely fell to pieces after the Gezi protests (Altınal and Gürkan 2013). It can also be said that, because so many different rights-based movements joined the Gezi protests, they were a unique opportunity for the ethical vegans to align themselves with other movements.

This paper looks at the way in which the nonhuman animal rights movement in Istanbul aligned itself with and incorporated other struggles against discrimination. I attempt to show how the grassroots nature of the movement facilitates this alignment. Alignment with other progressive leftist movements manifests itself on different levels; other struggles are incorporated both intellectually and practically. Intellectually the relation between speciesism and other forms of discrimination is emphasized through the use of philosophies that theorize this relation. These philosophies are often further developed and debated. The practical dimension involves networking with other movements, campaigning for other causes and joining other movements' protests. Activists who have membership in multiple movements play a particularly significant role in the process of networking. They bring in their unique perspectives to each movement that they are a part of. They are also likely to contribute to the (future) legitimacy of the nonhuman animal rights cause. This leads us to the following question: to what extent are speciesism and the urge to counter it acknowledged, or in the process of being acknowledged, in the larger Istanbul activist scene? And how are other causes debated within the nonhuman animal rights movement itself? Internal debates and disputes allow us to see where there is still room for improvement when it comes to an inclusive approach.

²Diren Vegan is currently known as Abolisyonist Vegan Hareket (Abolitionist Vegan Movement).

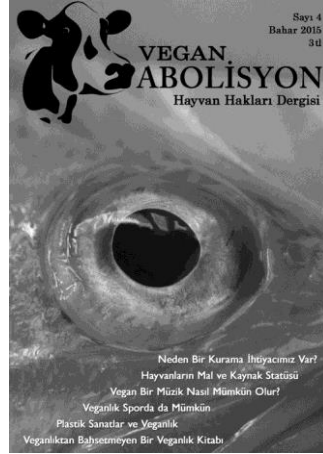


Figure 1: the magazine of Abolitionist Vegan Hareket (Abolitionist Vegan Movement, AVH). This magazine is published four times a year. Source: the website <http://abolisyonistveganhareket.org/>

I am trying to answer these questions through extensive fieldwork. In October 2014 I immersed myself in the nonhuman animal rights activist scene in Istanbul. I attended events, protests, formal and informal meetings, and other activities. I also carried out ethnographic interviews with fourteen activists and one vegan restaurant owner.³ Some of the interviewees chose to stay anonymous; when I quote them I use pseudonyms. Others preferred to be quoted by their real names. The research is further supported by a textual analysis of the groups' official approaches found on their websites, manifestos, Facebook pages, and other written and visual works.

Background and conceptualization of the nonhuman animal rights movement

In this study I use the term 'nonhuman animal rights movement' to denote the groups and individuals that organize themselves to combat speciesism and that regard a vegan lifestyle as an ethical necessity. While the term 'animal rights' is more common in mainstream discourse and even in much of the academic work dealing with this topic, it can be problematic in that it denies the fact that humans are also an animal species. To avoid a speciesist terminology and to acknowledge that the boundary between humans and other animals is a social construct, I therefore use the term 'nonhuman animals' and 'nonhuman animal rights', even though this is not a popular practice among activists in Turkey or elsewhere.

³ Some of these interviews were done in Turkish and some in English. Prior to the fieldwork, in May 2014, I had gathered activists' personal positions through e-mail and Facebook correspondence. In this paper I use citations from only seven of the interviews.

Another terminological controversy is whether to use the term ‘nonhuman animal rights’ or ‘nonhuman animal liberation’. While many of the groups and activists that are the subjects of this research use ‘animal liberation’⁴, this is a contested term. The controversy has to do with the history of the modern nonhuman animal movement in the geographical areas where it originated, i.e. the Anglophone countries, as well as with the history of this movement in Turkey itself. When I asked Gülce Özen Gürkan⁵ which term would describe the nonhuman animal movement in Turkey more accurately she explained:

For a very long time, the term 'animal rights' was only used for the rights of cats and dogs. When it started to be realised that there are lots of animals suffering because of humans, the term 'animal rights' was rejected and animal people started to use the term 'animal liberation', which was taken from Peter Singer.⁶ The thing is, Peter Singer is not a vegan and he promotes 'happy' exploitation. And now vegans are getting the term 'animal rights' back from the narrow area it pointed to for a long time, and expand it to all animals. That's why it's better to use the term 'animal rights' for the movement in Turkey, because many of the animal people are vegan, as it is required to be (Correspondence on Facebook with Gülce Özen Gürkan on 13 March 2015).⁷

The tension between the terms ‘animal rights’ and ‘animal liberation’ that Gülce identifies is related to the most fundamental split within the nonhuman animal movement: the welfare approach versus the rights-based approach. While welfarist organizations aim at modification of nonhuman animal use, rights-based organizations aim at abolition of nonhuman animal slavery altogether. The welfare approach holds that it is justified to use nonhuman animals as a means for human ends as long as the nonhuman animals are treated ‘humanely’⁸ (Shostak 2012). This approach was the dominant approach when the nonhuman animal protection movement emerged in 19th century England. Until now this approach continues to have a strong influence within the movement, even on those organizations that claim to have abolition of nonhuman animal use as their ultimate goal. These moderate organizations

⁴ In Turkish ‘hayvanözgürlük’.

⁵ Gülce Özen Gürkan is one of the founders and active members of Abolisyonist Vegan Hareket. She is also one of the interviewees for this ethnographic research. The explanation provided above was given through e-mail correspondence on 13th March 2015.

⁶ Peter Singer’s book *Animal Liberation* was published in 1975. Singer uses a utilitarian approach towards animal rights, as opposed to the rights-based approach that was advocated by Tom Regan (1983) and later by Gary L. Francione (1995). For more information about the differences between these approaches, see Roger Yates: <http://roger.rbgi.net/singer%20regan%20francione.html>.

⁷ While many of the groups and activists generally refer to their cause as ‘animal liberation’ I choose to define the movement, as a collectivity, by the term of ‘nonhuman animal rights’.

⁸ This is what Gülce referred to as ‘happy exploitation’.

tend to opt for reform strategies. For instance, they pressure governments to alter the laws that regulate the use of nonhuman animals in the livestock industry. Or they give out awards to corporations that have switched to 'more humane' farming, e.g. farms that captivate nonhuman animals in bigger cages. Such organizations are defined as 'new welfarist' by activists who argue that this kind of compromise is in fact harmful to nonhuman animal rights instead of being more effective.

Gülce's reference to the international context of the terminology reveals that we cannot comprehend this movement in Turkey without recognizing how it is part of a larger, transnational movement. Social movement scholars have observed that the rise of new media and communication technologies has impacted cross-border networking profoundly (Maiba 2005, Della Porta and Tarrow 2005). More widespread access to the internet has stimulated the diffusion of movement ideas, practices, and frames from one country to another (della Porta and Tarrow 2005). The nonhuman animal rights movement in Istanbul is exemplary of this. Ideologies, frames and tactics that originate from abroad have been adopted by the movement. Many of the local debates also take place in other countries, particularly in the Anglophone countries where the modern nonhuman animal rights movement first arose. As we will see, it is predominantly the more progressive, radical⁹ ideologies and tactics that resonate with the activists in Istanbul.¹⁰ I argue that there are two main reasons for this: (1) the period in which these groups emerged, and (2) the grassroots character of the groups, as opposed to professional organizations.

Professionalization versus grassroots activism

The activists with an explicitly radical, anti-speciesist and ethical vegan outlook started to organize themselves relatively recently in Istanbul¹¹, between 2010 and 2013. They are small-scale, grassroots, non-hierarchical groups. This character of the movement as a bottom-up, on the ground, movement is in stark contrast to the mainstream institutionalized professional nonhuman animal rights organizations that we see in the United States, Australia and much of Western Europe. While grassroots movements also exist there, they are relatively marginalized and often portrayed as 'extreme'.

The trend towards professionalization of nonhuman animal rights organizations in these countries has not gone unnoticed by scholars studying the movement (Munro 2005, Wrenn 2013). It has also been pointed out that this trend has proved detrimental for the movement's authenticity, efficacy, and for its aim to

⁹ With 'radical' I mean a style of approach that seeks out the root of a problem instead of making concessions (see Brian A. Dominick's definition, 1997). Brian A. Dominick notes that radicalism is often incorrectly seen as synonymous with extremism.

¹⁰ These ideologies are by no means homogenous, however.

¹¹ And in some other Turkish cities, but I have limited the scope of my research to Istanbul.

bring about cultural change. Professionalized movement organizations tend to prioritize resource mobilization over tactical efficacy (Torres2007, cited inWrenn 2013). Their focus on financial donations and media representation has led to moderation, compromise, and a 'self-imposed inflexibility' (Wrenn 2013). It is thus not surprising to see that many mainstream organizations have adopted 'new welfarist' frames and that they are reluctant in promoting veganism. Moreover, they disparage uncompromising activists for being too radical and unrealistic.



Figure 2: A group of activists painting 'vegan ol' (go vegan) on a wall. Source: the Facebook page of one of the activists.

Radical factions within the movement therefore face hegemonic exclusion by these mainstream organizations. Activists can overcome this marginalization to some extent by the use of affordable, free-access media resources such as self-printed literature and the internet (Wrenn 2012). The internet and new social media then play a significant role in the spread of counter-hegemonic factions. Wrenn notes that the abolitionist movement, initiated by Gary Francione in 1995, only started to have a sizeable audience from the moment that Francione entered the internet. In 2012 she writes that 'the Abolitionist movement, comprised of grassroots and often localized individuals and small groups self-identifying according to Francione's theory, is less than a decade old' (Wrenn 2012, 438). Wrenn suggests that 'the relative newness of the abolitionist

movement and strong countering from the mainstream nonhuman animal welfare movement has prevented abolitionism from obtaining a large presence within the nonhuman animal rights movement' (Wrenn 2012, 439).

Radical nonhuman animal rights activists in Istanbul, however, seem to be largely exempt from this hegemonic exclusion. Professionalized nonhuman animal rights organizations are not very established in Turkey. The exception is the nation-wide federation Haytap¹², but this organization seems to appeal more to 'animal lovers'¹³ rather than to people in the activist scene. Haytap was only established in 2008, thus not much earlier than the grassroots groups. Furthermore, there seems to be little interaction between Haytap and the groups that I have studied.¹⁴ Hence, the Turkish groups with a rights-based, ethical vegan character do not experience the same degree of opposition as their counterparts in many 'Western' countries. Furthermore, because they have emerged relatively late they are not bound by 'path dependencies whereby movements become locked into procedures and repertoires initiated many years prior' (Wrenn 2012, 33). On the contrary, the movement is currently experiencing a process in which ideologies, frames and tactics are being not only adopted, but also further developed, questioned and internally debated. The nonhuman animal rights movement in Istanbul has emerged at a time in which internet, and thus information, is highly accessible. As Wrenn has pointed out, the role of the internet is significant in the spread of radical, progressive ideologies. Therefore it is not surprising to see that it is exactly these ideologies that are adopted by the newly emerged movement in Istanbul.

Grassroots activism is also distinctive from professionalized organizations with regard to mobilization and organization. The nonhuman animal rights groups in Istanbul have no formal leaders. Besides, the movement consists of a considerable number of 'independent' activists.¹⁵ Paolo Gerbaudo notes a similar tendency in the resistance movements that emerged in Egypt, Spain and the US in recent years. He finds that 'stable membership in an organization is substituted for a continuous communicative engagement with the 'movement' at

¹² Hayvan Hakları Federasyonu, Animal Rights Federation.

¹³ 'Animal lovers', or 'hayvan sever' in Turkish is a term that many people in Turkey, including the media, use when they refer to nonhuman animal rights activists. According to most of the activists this term degrades the movement because it makes it seem as if it is about 'loving' rather than about rights. A similar discussion has also occurred in the 'West'. However, many of the volunteers that support Haytap would call themselves 'animal lovers'. They are usually concerned with the wellbeing of companion species such as cats and dogs, but they often do not criticize the use of other species for food.

¹⁴ However, some of them may meet during demonstrations around the well-being of stray dogs and cats or other joint campaigns.

¹⁵ There is also a group by the name of 'Independent Animal Liberation Activists' (Bağımsız Hayvan Özgürlük Aktivistleri, BHÖA) and another group by the name of 'Independent Nature-Animal Activists' (Bağımsız Doğa-Hayvan Aktivistleri, BADOHA). By 'independent activists' I do not mean people belonging to these groups; I mean activists that do not affiliate themselves with any group in particular.

large' (Gerbaudo 2013, 136). He calls this 'disintermediation', a situation in which 'individual activists rather than groups are seen as the basic units of the movement' (ibid). In Istanbul many nonhuman animal rights activists do not associate themselves with any group in particular; they attend different events regardless of which group organizes it. It is for this reason that a certain group may only have about twenty or thirty core members but is able to mobilize more than eighty activists for a protest. Individual activists are thus vital for the movement. Besides, protests and events are often a joint alliance of different groups. These factors suggest that the fluid nature of the movement leads to a high degree of interaction between the groups, and, as we will see later, with other movements. Various connections also exist between activists in Istanbul and their vegan counterparts in other big Turkish cities, such as Ankara and Izmir.

Philosophical alignment

Many of the groups in Istanbul are based on the philosophies of grassroots nonhuman animal rights factions that originated in the US in the 1990s. These progressive factions have a more explicitly vegan outlook than most institutionalized nonhuman animal rights organizations. Professional nonhuman animal rights organizations heavily rely on financial donations and on media campaigns that are directed at a mainstream audience. The way they frame their cause is often adapted to match society's dominant cultural frameworks. This leads to policies of moderation and compromise. Grassroots groups however generally lack the mainstream media infrastructure and their survival is not dependent on financial donations. Such groups are therefore more likely to be radical and straight to the point. This explains why professionalized nonhuman animal rights organizations are often focused on modification of nonhuman animal use and a decrease in meat consumption, whereas grassroots groups have fewer barriers in directly pursuing a vegan advocacy.

Francione's abolitionist approach is one of the factions that have recently gained ground in Istanbul. Another ideological faction that enjoys considerable support in Istanbul is the anarchist-based philosophy of veganarchism. Many Turkish veganarchist groups and individual activists have also joined the transnational Direct Action Everywhere (DxE) network. DxE organizes protests at locations that engage in nonhuman animal exploitation such as restaurants, fast food companies, and supermarkets.

Video link: *Direct Action Everywhere (DxE) on 6 December 2014 in Istanbul. Protest at Burger King, Kentucky Fried Chicken and MacDonalds:* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iddbEkuqvK>

Radical factions such as the abolitionist approach and veganarchism make great efforts to undo the nonhuman animal rights movement's marginalization by the left. They generally do this by pointing out that injustices or discriminations against nonhuman animals and other injustices or discriminations are equally important and interconnected. This is also reflected in many of the articles and posts on their websites and Facebook pages, which often address injustices against a variety of human groups.

However, they are neither the first nor the only activists to emphasize the relation between speciesism and other forms of discrimination.¹⁶ A similar connection was made by their precedents in the 1970s. It was then that the term speciesism was introduced by Richard Ryder. He defined it as 'the prejudice against nonhuman animals that arbitrarily assigns varying values and levels of moral worth' (cited in Wrenn 2012, 440). In 1975 Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* was published, in which the author compared speciesism with racism and sexism. At the time, Singer's utilitarian position, which Yates calls a 'radical version of welfarism' and which Francione calls 'new welfarism' became a popular philosophical resource for second wave nonhuman animal advocacy. The mainstream nonhuman animal rights movement still largely follows Singer's approach; an approach that is focused on reform policies with the intention of eventually reaching abolition of nonhuman animal use. The nonhuman animal rights movement has however largely failed to pursue an activist agenda that is effective in aligning itself with other progressive leftist struggles. Neither has it succeeded at influencing public opinion with regard to nonhuman animal rights principles (Donaldson and Kymlicka 2013).¹⁷ What follows now is a brief overview of how the newer, progressive approaches adopted by the Turkish nonhuman animal rights groups relate to injustices against humans.

The Abolitionist Approach

The Abolitionist Vegan Movement (Abolitionist Vegan Hareket, AVH) was established during the Gezi Park Protests under the former name Vegan Resist (Diren Vegan). As of October 2014 AVH had twelve active members. In line with Francione's approach, the organization holds the principle that 'humans or nonhumans, have one right: the basic right not to be treated as the property of others'.¹⁸

¹⁶Many of their theories are also based on nonhuman animal rights defenders from outside Turkey.

¹⁷This is not to say that they have not made the public aware about nonhuman animal welfare, but welfare and rights are clearly not the same thing.

¹⁸ <http://www.abolitionistapproach.com/>



Figure 3: This is the vegan information stand by Abolisyonist Vegan Hareket (at the time still known as Diren Vegan). They do these type of actions regularly (every week or once a two weeks). Source: the website <http://abolisyonistveganhareket.org/>

Principle number 5¹⁹ of Francione's abolitionist approach emphasizes speciesism's relationship to other discriminations: 'Just as we reject racism, sexism, ageism, and heterosexism, we reject speciesism. The species of a sentient being is no more reason to deny the protection of this basic right than race, sex, age, or sexual orientation is a reason to deny membership in the human moral community to other humans'²⁰In the article 'A Movements's Means to Create its Ends' co-written by Francione and Tom Regan²¹ they assert that 'the philosophy of animal rights necessarily calls for human, not only animal, liberation.

(...) The Philosophy of animal rights is an inclusive philosophy. Rights for nonhumans only make sense if we accept the total inclusion of our human sisters and brothers as full and equal members of the extended human family, without regard to race, sex, economic status, religious persuasion, disability, or sexual preference. Thus the philosophy of animal rights entails far reaching social change. Animal liberation is human liberation' (Francione and Regan 1991, 43).

The Abolitionist Vegan Movement devotes a great deal of effort to make nonhuman animal rights activists aware of forms of discrimination other than speciesism. Besides organizing seminars to discuss these issues, they also publish articles about it on their website and in their magazine. Berk Efe emphasizes the importance of an awareness of all forms of discrimination:

We really need a strong human rights perspective in the animal movement. We really need to educate animal advocates on discrimination, sexism, heterosexism, racism, colonialism etc. All the discriminations are related to each other and we need a strong perspective on this issue. Speciesism is one of the discriminations and we cannot use racism, sexism or heterosexism to prevent speciesism (Correspondence on Facebook with Berk Efe Altınal, 21 May 2014).

Adherents of the abolitionist approach argue that many traditional tactics and campaigns perpetuate discrimination against disadvantaged groups. We will return to this in the section on internal debates.

¹⁹ The Abolitionist Approach consists of six principles.

²⁰ <http://www.abolitionistapproach.com/about/the-six-principles-of-the-abolitionist-approach-to-animal-rights/#.VRv3iOGzmZM>, 1 April 2015

²¹ Tom Regan is a nonhuman animal rights philosopher and the author of 'The Case for Animal Rights', which was published in 1983.

Veganarchism

Another popular approach within the nonhuman animal rights movement in Istanbul is the anarchist philosophy veganarchism, or vegan anarchism. Many ethical vegan activists define themselves as anarchists and some of the groups have a strong anarchist outlook. The group that provided the most extensive materials for this research is the anarchist YeryüzüneÖzgürlükDerneği (Freedom to Earth, YÖD). At the time of inquiry (December 2014) YÖD had thirty official members, their regular meetings are followed by ten to twenty activists, and their street actions generally comprise of ten to seventy people.



Figure 4: the logo of YeryüzüneÖzgürlükDerneği (Freedom to Earth Association, YÖD). Source: the website

<https://yeryuzuneozgurlik.wordpress.com/2014/11/25/vegan-beslenme-tablosu/>

YÖD's motto is 'Liberation to Humans, Animals, and the Earth' (İnsana, Hayvana, GezegeneÖzgürlük). MetinKeser, one of YÖD's activists, clarifies:

Freedom to Earth, as the name says, covers broader topics than animal rights. It is an organization that envisions a total liberation of all living beings and earth against civilization and capitalism. Our activism might focus more on animals because it is usually ignored by leftists etc. all around the world, but our discourse and manifestations does not deem any living being more important than another (E-mail correspondence with MetinKeser (not his real name), 26 May 2014).

Defining YÖD simply as a nonhuman animal rights group may fail to capture the totality of the group's outlook, as its scope is explicitly broader than nonhuman animal rights. On YÖD's website the organization's aim is defined as

‘exposing all violations of rights without discriminating such as against species, race, and gender, and to carry out all kinds of campaigns in order to prevent those violations, and to have solidarity with those who are the victims of governmental, capitalist or societal dominance’ (<http://yeryuzuneozgurluk.org/>, 1 April 2015).

The veganarchist approach was introduced by Brian A. Dominick in *Animal Liberation and Social Revolution*, first published in 1995. Like the abolitionist approach, veganarchism connects nonhuman animal liberation to human liberation. It regards nonhuman animal liberation and social revolution as inevitably related with each other. Veganarchists argue that speciesism is but one part of the larger oppression that permeates contemporary society. For supporters of the veganarchist movement, speciesism is one of the oppressions that results from anthropocentrism (Dominick 1997). YÖD’s manifesto explains that speciesism and the domination of nature by the human species goes way back in history. Since the industrial revolution, however, which led to an ‘overall transformation in society to create an industrial mass-consumer society’, this domination has acquired extreme forms (YÖD manifesto). Particularly after WWII, when intensive livestock farming was on the rise, has industrialization caused immense detriment to the life quality of nonhuman animals raised for food. YÖD points to the fact that late capitalism has not only led to a mass exploitation of nonhuman animals, but also of nature and humans alike. Deforestation, pollution, malnutrition, global warming, and big conglomerates taking over the smaller companies are among the examples (YÖD manifesto). Thus, a critique of capitalism is central in the veganarchist perspective.

Veganarchists also discuss the problematic use of oppressive terminology and dichotomies of ‘self’ and ‘other’. Dominick states that ‘oppressive dynamics are always based on an us-them dichotomy, with the oppressors seen in clear distinction from the oppressed’ (Dominick 1997, 14). Examples of dichotomies given in YÖD’s manifesto are: ‘man-nature, human-animal, man-woman, white-black, adult-minor, heterosexual-homosexual, civilized-primitive, modern-traditional, beautiful-ugly, educated-ignorant, sane-insane, normal-abnormal’ (YÖD manifesto). These patterns of thinking have served to justify the domination of the ‘civilized’ white man over the ‘other’.

A YÖD speaker gives presentations at universities about speciesism. He reminds his audience that a few centuries ago, people that did not belong to the category ‘rich white men’ were not considered human. The term ‘human’ has historically been used to draw a line between ‘us’ and ‘them’. In contemporary society this term serves to distinguish humans from nonhuman animals. The YÖD activist asserts that this makes it an arbitrary term because it denies the fact that ‘we are also animals’.

Discursive deconstruction of boundaries

As we have seen in the above examples nonhuman animal rights activists are aware that the categorization of ‘humans’ vs. ‘animals’ is a social construct that is supported by oppressive language practices. Therefore they attempt to remove the symbolic boundary between humans and other species. This boundary work, which is very important in supporting the argument that injustices against humans and nonhumans require equal attention, is reflected in movementgroups’ discourses. Examples are slogans such as ‘freedom to living creatures’²², ‘we are all animals’²³ and ‘long live the brotherhood and sisterhood of the species’.²⁴ As Elizabeth Cherry points out, the dismantling of the human-animal boundary is ‘simultaneously a goal and a strategy’ (Cherry 2010, 455).

Video link: *protest in Istanbul against the massacre of stray dogs in Azerbaijan, March 2015:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X6FyOzbTqOo>

A quintessential example of this strategy is the use of nonhuman animal species names in the football club Vegan Spor (Vegan Sport) which belongs to an activist, anti-industrial football league. Each player has chosen a species. The name of the species is written on the back of their shirts and on their promotion video. Ayça, a member of Vegan Spor, explains why they do this:

We try to change peoples’ minds by using animal names, because people use those words derogatively. Like ‘donkey’ or ‘cow’. We all have an animal name. I am an ox. (...) And I was playing one time and they say: “I don’t want to say ox”. But it is not an insult. We say “it’s not an insult”. It’s something nice for us. So we try to work on this. They think that we might misunderstand if they say ‘donkey’ (Interview with Ayça (not her real name) on 13 December 2014).

This example shows that nonhuman animal rights activists’ attempts to bring about the cultural change that they seek is very challenging in a world in which speciesism is still the norm, even outside of mainstream society.

Video link: *Introduction to Vegan Spor:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ingAT7iV13c>

²² ‘Canlılara Özgürlük, a slogan by Vegan Özgürlük Hareketi (Vegan Liberation Movement).

²³ *Hepimiz Hayvanız*, a slogan used by Turkish nonhuman animal rights activists during their protest against the massacres of stray dogs in Azerbaijan in the spring of 2015.

²⁴ *Yaşasın Türlerin Kardeşliği*, a slogan by Bağımsız Hayvan Özgürlüğü Aktivistleri (Independent Animal Liberation Activists).

Knowledge development

Although the ideologies of the nonhuman animal rights groups in Turkey are largely based on earlier works and on well-known nonhuman animal rights philosophers from abroad (such as Brian A. Dominick, Steve Best, Gary L Francione, Gary Youofsky, Carol Adams) the adoption and use of these ideologies is not seen as something static and given. Rather, they are negotiated and further developed. The first line in YÖD's manifesto is quintessential of this encouragement of knowledge production:

This manifesto, which is not and will never be completed and which is open to be developed not only by us but for everyone willing, is our call for all that would want to be together in the struggle (YÖD manifesto).

Debates regularly take place within the Turkish nonhuman animal rights community regarding various topics. This often leads to splits within a group or between groups, but also to the continuous development of new visions. One of my interviewees for example gathered with several other independent activists in November 2013 in Izmir at the workshop 'Where is animal liberation within veganism?' to create a self-critical manifesto. As is stated in this 'Restless Vegans Manifesto', which they published online, 'the goal here is self-questioning of people who are close to animal liberation discourse and veganism, a change of direction in a personal and political sense' (Restless Vegans Manifesto).

Practical alignment

We have seen how nonhuman animal rights activists in Istanbul align themselves philosophically with other progressive leftist causes, like their counterparts elsewhere that adhere to the same factions. But an intellectual framework that includes other causes is not sufficient to allow for an effective integration in the larger activist scene. It requires a practical component as well. Therefore I will now have a look at how the groups' perspectives are reflected in their activities.

Face to face interactions

It is very common for Turkish nonhuman animal rights activists and groups to join other movements' protests and events. This considerably increases ethical vegans' visibility within the larger activist scene. Snow et al. highlight the importance of direct personal contacts 'because they allow organizers and potential participants to "align" their "frames", to achieve a common definition of a social problem and a common prescription for solving it' (Snow et al. 1986, cited in Jasper and Poulsen 1995, 495). Metin also emphasizes that personal, face-to-face contact and actively supporting the struggles of other movements is crucial, even though the news items and campaigns on the group's website

already do a good job in attracting people from outside. He tells how personal contact stimulates mutual support:

Although we are really small but in Istanbul political struggles somehow go together. We are not isolated. I think this is caused by efforts from both sides because we are befriended, in our personal life we know each other. When there's an action for transsexual people we also announce it and if we have the opportunity we go there and then we tell like "hey you know, next week we're doing an action against leather and fur". Even if they're not vegan or vegetarian they think like "ok, these guys are fighting for transsexual people. Animals are somehow exploited and discriminated on a kind of similar level, maybe I might go there and check". So if you sincerely go there and support their cause. *Sincerely*, not with the intention that "I'm going to convert those guys and go away", then they really come (Interview with Metin Keser (not his real name) on 4 October 2014).

These interactions are likely to evoke some degree of awareness regarding speciesism within the movements that the ethical vegans are interacting with. Another platform where they may be influential is the weekly event *BombalarıKarşıSofralar Istanbul* (Food not Bombs Istanbul). Food not Bombs is an international anarchistic network which promotes 'freeganism'²⁵ by collecting free (vegan) leftovers from supermarkets and then cooking and eating these together. In Istanbul it is a joint event organized by different anarchist groups. YÖD is one of the groups that are externally connected to *BombalarıKarşıSofralar*. The free dinners are often accompanied by seminars that cover a variety of topics, such as militarism, capitalism, ecology and nonhuman animal rights.

Interactive platforms

Activists who are involved in both the nonhuman animal rights movement and one or more other movements are important actors with regard to networking. Carroll and Ratner call these kinds of multimovement actors 'cosmopolitan activists', as opposed to 'locals', who are active in only one movement. Although quantitative data is lacking, it seems that there is a considerable amount of cosmopolitan activist within the nonhuman animal rights movement in Istanbul. This includes not only 'activists', i.e. people that engage in organized political actions, but also others involved with veganism and promoting veganism. The feminist movement, the LGBT²⁶ movement, and the antimilitarist movement seem to be particularly significant in this regard. Some

²⁵'Freegans' as defined by the website Freegan.info are 'people who employ alternative strategies for living based on limited participation in the conventional economy and minimal consumption of resources'.

²⁶ LGBT stands for Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transsexual. Sometimes a Q for Queer is added.

of the cosmopolitan activists have organized themselves in Facebook groups, such as the 'vegan feminists' group and 'vegan LGBT' group on Facebook. The 'abolitionist vegan women' have also organized themselves.

These other movements, such as the feminist movement and the LGBT movement, provide potential or actual platforms where nonhuman animal rights can be discussed. Gizem, for example, is a feminist and a nonhuman animal rights activist. She is an abolitionist vegan and active for the women's rights organization MorÇatı (Purple Roof). She tells that her co-feminists at MorÇatı are very interested in her being vegan. When she brought vegan food to the organization it was received with enthusiasm. There are a few feminists in MorÇatı that are vegetarian, but not vegan. Therefore, Gizem sees it as her responsibility to inform them about it extensively and comprehensively. Her presentation about ethical veganism has already been put on the agenda of the organization's monthly workshop.

Süheyla is also a feminist, as well as an LGBT-activist and an independent nonhuman animal rights activist. She attends protest events that deal with a wide range of topics: "I go to every women's right event, every LGBT rights event, climate change, etc. I go to everything that has a connection to rights because I care about rights." Süheyla's experience is that it is easier to discuss nonhuman animal rights with people from the LGBT community than it usually is in the wider society. When she attended an LGBT meeting she noticed that a lot of people there were vegan or vegetarian or considering to become one. She narrates:

After the talk everybody was like: "are you vegan? I'm vegan too. Are you vegetarian? Yes I am thinking about it." Because when a group is kind of oppressed like LGBT people they can feel more about other oppressed groups. Like women or animals. So I think LGBT people are more prone to it. More open minded about it. They can understand it. You can just say: "I'm vegan" and they say: "okay I'm going to be vegan too". Generally people wouldn't say that (Interview with Süheyla on 1 November 2014).

Süheyla's experience with regard to how the topic of nonhuman animal rights is received in the LGBT community is promising. But the relationship between the nonhuman animal rights movement and other progressive leftist social movements is a dynamic one. The mutual incorporation of these different struggles, especially the incorporation of ethical veganism by the feminist or LGBT movement (or other movements that deal with discrimination) does not happen overnight. However, the topics of veganism and nonhuman animal rights activism have been increasingly covered in recent years by leftist news websites, such as *Bianet*, *YeşilGazete* (Green Newspaper) and the anarchist *SosyalSavaş* (Social War). Besides, a large amount of references to nonhuman animal rights activism is found on the website of the LGBT organization Kaos GL. This Ankara-based organization shows perhaps the most visible cooperation

with the nonhuman animal rights movement. On their website there are numerous articles about protests against nonhuman animal abuse. Among the topics included are veganism and vegetarianism, circuses, leather and fur, and nonhuman animal experiments. Several nonhuman animal rights groups' protests and events are covered in the articles. One of these protests for nonhuman animal rights was organized by LGBT organization ZeugMadi LGBT, which is based in the city Gaziantep.

On the 1st of November World Vegan Day 2014 KAOS GL took it a step further; it was announced on their website that from that day onwards, 'KAOS GL does not eat meat anymore' (<http://www.kaosgl.com/sayfa.php?id=17840>, 1 April 2015). In other words, nonhuman animal flesh will no longer be served at their meetings. This step suggest that Kaos GL as an organization that struggles against heteronormativity could be in the process of aligning itself with nonhuman animal rights. In terms of actual joint events there has been at least one organized with YÖD and EkolojiKolektifiDerneği (Ecology Collective Association). During this event, which was about the connection between speciesism and sexism, a speaker from YÖD gave a presentation about the relationship between meat consumption and male heteronormative dominance.

The last example that I will use here to explore the connection between nonhuman animal rights activism and other movements is KarşıLig (Against League). Karşı League was established as an alternative football league that defines itself as 'against industrial football, racism, nationalism, sexism, and all kinds of hate speech and discrimination'. Every Saturday matches are played, without referees and in mixed gender teams. It is clear that Karşı League is about more than just sports. The gatherings look like a hotbed of activism. Each week different political issues that concern rights violations are addressed with banners on the field. About sixteen teams are part of KarşıLig, each representing their own social movement. A group of nonhuman animal rights activists have organized themselves under the name of Vegan Spor, mentioned earlier in this paper.



Figure 5: This photo was taken at anti-industrial football league KarşıLig (Against League). Vegan Spor (Vegan Sport) is one of the football clubs that participate in this league. Every week there are protests against all kinds of injustices. This time they protested against the rape of a dog, which became a court case in Istanbul. Source: the facebook page of Vegan Spor.

Zeynep and Ayça²⁷, both members of Vegan Spor, remark that it took a while before the team and its cause was accepted by the other teams. Zeynep recalls: ‘They used to discriminate against us: “you don’t eat meat so you can’t play well”. For them animals always come second. But after a while we succeeded in getting accepted.’ Ayça adds:

There was no ‘antispeciesism’ word in KarşıLig but after Vegan Spor got established it was added. And now, since about a year ago, when KarşıLig organizes something that involves food, it is usually vegan. They pay attention to

²⁷ These are not their real names.

that now. Otherwise we don't join (Interview with Ayça(not her real name) on 13 December 2014).

As these members of Vegan Spor point out, the vegan lifestyle receives visibility during the KarşıLig parties. But even during the matches lifestyle choices do not go unnoticed. This is due to the fact that normally footballs are made out of leather. In the beginning when the vegan activists joined KarşıLig it was only during matches played by Vegan Spor that a non-leather, vegan ball was used. However, by the end of the 2013/2014 season KarşıLig announced a formal decision to replace every ball with artificial-leather balls starting from the new season onwards (Murat Utku in Al Jazeera Turkey, 26 April 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/al-jazeera-ozel/karsi-ligden-muhalik-goller>, 1 April 2015).

Thus it seems that the nonhuman animal rights cause is gaining some degree of legitimacy among other movements step by step. Even though many activists of other movements may not be convinced about ethical veganism on a personal level, a space has been opened for the discussion of nonhuman animal rights. Cosmopolitan activists, as well as other ethical vegans that involve themselves with other causes, are important actors in this process because they are the glue that binds different movements together; they help create the platform where different movements intersect. Their multiple missions can be regarded as an asset for any movement they take part in because of their broader perspective. But while this stimulates critical thinking, it sometimes causes and reinforces disputes. In the next section I will give examples of how discriminatory elements that are to some degree present in the nonhuman animal rights movement are being challenged. Critical approaches are often held by, but by no means limited to, cosmopolitan activists.

Internal debates regarding other causes

During my research it appeared that the topics of discrimination against disadvantaged groups cause contestations within the nonhuman animal rights movement in Istanbul. Sexism and misanthropy in particular have been identified by some activists as a major problem within the movement. This seems at odds with the philosophies and activism of the groups. But we should not forget that the nonhuman animal rights movement in Istanbul is part a larger, more heterogeneous, transnational nonhuman animal rights movement. The debates that have arisen are inseparable from the nonhuman animal rights movement in the Anglophone countries and Western Europe. Therefore it is useful to have a look at the criticisms regarding sexism and other discriminations that have been directed at the professionalized mainstream organizations in those countries.

Gender discrimination

Historically, since its emergence in 19th century England, the nonhuman animal movement had considerably more female adherents than male. Nonhuman animal rights activists came to be depicted as ‘irrational’, ‘feminine’ and ‘overly emotional’; all values that were seen as negative in the patriarchal, masculine society in which the movement arose. Rachel L. Einwohner observes that nonhuman animal rights organizations in the US tried to increase the visibility of male activists in order not to be accused of being ‘a bunch of emotional women shaking their fists’ (Einwohner 2002, 259). Grove, too, found that men are seen as a source of status and a resource for legitimizing emotions such as anger and compassion, traits which are associated with women in a stigmatizing way (cited in Munro, 2005, 109). It is also in this context that male leadership has been celebrated by movement organizations (Einwohner 2002, Munro 2005, Wrenn 2013).

Another problem relative to gender discrimination is the objectification of women’s bodies in movement organizations’ campaigning. Female vulnerability is exploited in order to garner attention from men and from the mass media (Wrenn 2013). Scholarly analysis of sexist advertisements have focused mainly on those of the world’s largest nonhuman animal rights organization PETA, but Wrenn argues that sexist representations as a resource and tactic have in fact become movement normative. She writes: ‘female objectification is a pervasive gender issue in Nonhuman Animal rights simply due to the power of larger groups and the exposure they are able to generate. These large organizations are the face of the movement: they define a movement’s agenda and help shape public perceptions’ (Wrenn 2013, 6).

Earlier in the paper I have discussed the difference between professionalized organizations and grassroots activism with regard to resource mobilization and framing. As we have seen, the Turkish groups do not rely heavily on mainstream media; neither do they focus on fundraising. It is then to be expected that sexist stereotypes are not used as much since they do not need these to survive. However, influences on Turkish ethical vegan activists aren’t entirely limited to radical, progressive factions. Considering Wrenn’s argument that female objectification has become movement-normative, discriminatory discourses can easily penetrate the Turkish nonhuman animal rights scene in the form of images and statements circling on the internet. Besides, some of the organizations and nonhuman animal rights advocates from abroad that have gained support in Turkey are accused of using sexist discourses. Berk Efe identifies sexism as a major problem within the nonhuman animal rights movement:

The animal rights movement is a disaster when it comes to animal rights. The largest organizations (such as. PETA²⁸, 269Life²⁹) are clearly sexist. I am sick of

²⁸ PETA is the largest nonhuman animal rights organization worldwide.

seeing PETA's sexist ad campaigns. And there is also Gary Yourofsky, who is a popular figure among animal right advocates, and he thinks that women who wear fur should get raped! (Correspondence on Facebook with BerkeEfeAltinal on 21 May 2014).³⁰

The organization 269Life has a branch in Turkey and Gary Yourofsky's speeches are a popular resource among Turkish ethical vegans. However, the appearance of discriminative elements is strongly countered by several movement actors. On 1 November World Vegan Day 2014 AVH organized a range of presentations in which discriminative discourses were identified and problematized. The topics of these presentations were: nationalism and racism, sexism, and heterosexism within the nonhuman animal rights movement.

Gizem presented her research on sexism and heterosexism at this public event together with two co-activists, to an audience of AVH members, sympathizers and other interested people. She became interested in exploring this topic after she saw demonstrations by the American nonhuman animal rights organization PETA and the British cosmetics company Lush. She points out that certain popular advertisements and campaigns by the nonhuman animal rights movement are characterized by a high degree of sexism and heteronormativity. Lush, a British company that sells handmade cosmetics that are not tested on nonhuman animals, had organized a demonstration with an act in which a woman was 'tortured' by a man for ten hours. PETA, as is very well known, has produced many advertisements in which women's bodies are objectified.

Examples of heteronormativity that Gizem pointed to are the book 'A Man's Guide to Vegetarianism - Eat Veggies like a Man'³¹, the ad 'Real Men eat tofu' and the ad 'Hunters have no balls – real men don't kill'. In the latter advertisement a hunter is depicted. His pants are half down; it is visible that he does not have balls, nor does he have a penis. Gizem explains how these kinds of ads are gender-biased, discriminative and targeted at the identity of transsexual people: "penis doesn't define our gender or who we are. What about transmen/women? The Vegan community doesn't get rid of the gender roles unfortunately. It is discriminatory and not sustainable" (Interview with Gizem on 9 November 2014).

²⁹ 269Life is an Israeli nonhuman animal rights organization, named after a calf that was born on an Israeli dairy farm.

³⁰ The American Gary Yourofsky is considerably popular and influential among nonhuman animal rights activists in Turkey. In an interview in 2006 he had said: "Every woman ensconced in fur should endure a rape so vicious that it scars them forever. While every man entrenched in fur should suffer an anal raping so horrific that they become disembowelled" (Haaretz.com, published on 6 September 2012).

The examples all relate to advertisements and nonhuman animal rights organizations from outside Turkey. However, some activists within the ethical vegan community in Turkey posted these ads on their Facebook accounts. The fact that these images from abroad have been circulating in the Turkish nonhuman animal rights movement makes Gizem's critiques also a critique towards the movement at home. She is not very optimistic about gender equality within the nonhuman animal rights movement, whether in general or in Turkey. According to her the ethical vegan movement is male-dominated and has a sexist perspective:

They equate veganism with manhood. Nonvegan people on the other hand associate meat with manhood. It is vice versa. PETA investigated that women comprise a great part of veganism. So they decided to get men's attention and say that 'veganism develops your manhood. You can be a real man'. The Vegan Feminist Network³² criticizes this (Interview with Gizem on 9 November 2014).

The Abolitionist vegan activists are not the only ones who problematize the discriminative elements that certain images evoke. Critical voices within the movement are on the rise. An independent activist calling himself Earthlings Dünyalı³³ wrote an article on his weblog in which he criticizes some nonhuman animal rights groups for posting sexist images on Facebook. The images in question are supposed to bring about empathy for nonhuman animals that are exploited. However, as Earthlings Dünyalı argues, they objectify women's bodies and legitimize male-dominance. One of the images depicts a naked woman tied up on a grill above a fire. The other one, which was copied from a Spanish Facebook page, is a comic in which a cow milks a woman's breasts. Earthlings Dünyalı points out that images that are permeated with sexism are counterproductive. Since sexism and speciesism, like racism, are all about the alleged superiority of one group over another there is an inherent contradiction within these images. Moreover, they are not actually going to convince people about ethical veganism. 'The world is filled with millions of human rights defenders that are still using animals', he writes. Thus he poses a crucial rhetorical question: 'what kind of influence do these images have on the relationship between the animal movement and groups that deal with other struggles ("alliance politics")?' He concludes that 'in order to establish alliances

³²The Vegan Feminist Network was formed by abolitionist vegan women. The website veganfeministnetwork.com aims to give voice to those that are oppressed or marginalized within the nonhuman animal rights community.

³³Earthlings Dünyalı is his Facebook name. 'Earthlings' (dünyalı is the Turkish word for this) refers to the documentary film with the same name in which the suffering of nonhumans in industries was revealed through footages.

and to get united with groups that work on liberation struggles a total liberation (liberation of humans, animals, and the earth) is unavoidable'³⁴.

Video link: *vegan advocacy video in Turkish and English created by independent activist 'Earthlings Dünyalı':*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7K1POA09kc>

Single-issue campaigns and discrimination

In order to avoid discriminations of any kind, Abolitionist vegans are opposed to single-issue campaigning. Gizem states that 'single-issue demonstrations are always open to discrimination. Most of the time against women'. She mentions protests against fur and against cosmetics that are tested on nonhuman animals as examples of protests that are mainly directed at women.

Discrimination against disadvantaged groups, of which female objectification is but one example, is not uncommon in single-issue campaigns. In recent years the American nonhuman animal rights movement has been criticized by some progressive nonhuman animal rights activists for lacking an intersectional perspective. Doris Lin argues that because of this 'we sometimes see racism and sexism in our movement' (Lin, 2014). Opting for intersectionality in the movement, she concludes: 'intersectionality in the animal rights movement is about including historically marginalized groups of people, recognizing how our own biases manifest in our movement's campaigns, networking with diverse social justice groups, and working toward a more just world for humans and animals' (Lin 2014).

Garrett M. Broad comes to a similar conclusion in his analysis of the controversial Michael Vick dogfighting case. Vick, an African American basketball player who was jailed for engaging in dogfighting and later released, was vilified by mainstream nonhuman animal rights organizations. The media, too, depicted him as cruel and unfit for society. Vick's socially disadvantaged context was not taken into account. Moreover, it made the practice of dogfighting seem worse than other cases of nonhuman animal use. Francione calls this 'moral schizophrenia' around nonhuman animal issues in American society. He poses the question: "How removed from the screaming crowd around the dog pit is the laughing group around the summer steak barbecue?" (cited in Broad 2013, 790).

³⁴ <http://earthlingsdunyali.blogspot.nl/2015/02/hayvan-hareketinde-neden-cinsiyetcilige.html>, 1 April 2015.



Figure 6: This event took place on 4 October 2014 in Istanbul. It was a protest against the sacrifice of nonhuman animals for the Islamic sacrifice feast. It was organized by different nonhuman animal rights groups and individual activists. The Abolitionist vegans are against these types of single-issue campaigns because they are open to discrimination (in this case discrimination of Muslims). Source: the facebook page of one of the activists. He gave me permission to use this photo.

Several scholars within critical animal studies have problematized the ‘cruelty framework’ in nonhuman animal advocacy, while not all of them explicitly blame it on single-issue campaigns. Maneesha Dekha explains how the cruelty framework is related to the perception that using nonhuman animals for human ends is acceptable: ‘The broader public endorses the principle that humans do have the right to harm and kill animals for our benefit so long as we avoid ‘cruel’ and ‘unnecessary’ harm. It is this principle that opens the door to bias, since perceptions of what is cruel or unnecessary are culturally variable’ (Dekha, cited in Donaldson and Kymlicka 2013, 7). As Donaldson and Kymlicka assert, ‘customary practices are the default from which cruelty is measured’ (ibid, 14). A consequence is that one practice of nonhuman animal use is deemed worse than

another and can thus easily lead to discrimination, for example against women, immigrants, or other disadvantaged groups. According to Abolitionist vegans, focusing on the promotion of veganism as an ethical necessity avoids these kinds of pitfalls. While the other nonhuman animal rights groups in Istanbul share an explicitly vegan outlook, they generally do not see single-issue campaigns as problematic.

Video link: song 'Vegan Ol' (Go Vegan) by Gülce Özen Gürkan (with English subtitling option):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQyAXSUyh1U>

Misanthropy

The expression of misanthropic sentiments is another controversial issue in the nonhuman animal rights movement. Misanthropy seems clearly at odds with the ideologies and outlook of the groups in this study, and also with veganism as an ethical principle. The 'Restless Vegans Manifesto' says about hatred against the human species, 'since human is an animal, misanthropy for a vegan individual is cognitive dissonance. Instead of hating people, we should clarify that we are against authorities and discriminations' (Restless Vegans Manifesto, 7). Nonetheless, it has been identified as a problem by several movement actors. Berk Efe argues:

The biggest problem I see in animal groups in Turkey is misanthropy. Like a few days ago there was a question on a vegan page asking 'what do you think is the most useful way to stop animal use' and there were lots of answers saying 'we should kill all meat eaters' or 'the human species must be destroyed'. (...) a few months ago I wrote something about the military coup and death penalties in Egypt as you know there are really terrible human rights issues there and some vegans came and commented on my page and they were arguing that vegans should not promote human rights for those who are consuming animal products and in the Middle East they consume so much animals and so on. I was really shocked to see that someone is really saying that (Correspondence on Facebook with Berk Efe Altınal on 21 May 2014).

Gizem has also observed aggressive attitudes among nonhuman animal rights activists towards nonvegans. She believes that these people harm the movement and widen the gap between the movement and the rest of society, giving the movement a bad name. The scope of this paper is too limited to find out on what scale these type of attitudes exist. Moreover, it is not clear if the people who made such comments are actively involved in a particular nonhuman animal rights group or whether they are individual activists. It is to be expected that the more an individual interacts with an organization that explicitly opposes itself to all forms of discrimination, the more aware that person becomes about his or

her own discriminative attitudes. The 'Restless Vegans' also note that some vegan individuals might have fascist beliefs but that this may change as the individual learns more about nonhuman animal rights philosophies: 'Some animal liberation activists who simultaneously hold some fascist opinions might gradually become anti-fascist through discovering the parallelism between speciesism and other types of discriminations' (Restless Vegans Manifesto, 8).

Quantitative sociological research could tell us more about the extent to which hatred against the human species or discrimination against human groups exists within the nonhuman animal rights movement in Istanbul or elsewhere. That these exist does not mean that the nonhuman animal rights groups fail to address this issue. Social movements are not homogenous entities; there is always a lesser or higher degree of diversity. This is also the case with the nonhuman animal rights movement.

Conclusion

We have seen how nonhuman animal rights groups and activists in Istanbul explicitly align themselves with other progressive movements that struggle against injustices. Besides fighting speciesism, they argue against forms of discrimination such as those based on gender, age, race, class, and nation. There are various relations between the nonhuman animal rights movement and other movements in Istanbul. Cross-movement networking, which provide platforms for the discussion of nonhuman animal rights as well as other issues, is common and is facilitated by cosmopolitan activists and ethical vegans that have these broader perspectives. Alliances take the form of joint events and joining each other's protests. Sometimes it leads to an increased awareness about a speciesist lifestyle, as was the case when Kaos GL decided to 'stop eating meat'.

It is also clear that the nonhuman animal rights movement in Istanbul is not disconnected from the larger, transnational nonhuman animal rights movement. Many of the debates, disputes, terminology issues and controversies that occur in the US, Australia and much of Western Europe also take place in the Turkish context. What seems to be a major difference though with the Turkish case is the absence of a considerable number of strong mainstream professional nonhuman animal rights organizations. The short history of the movement in Turkey appears to be an advantage when it comes to the prominence of radical nonhuman animal rights advocacy. This not only makes the nonhuman animal rights movement in Istanbul slightly more homogeneous than those in 'the West', it also prevents the marginalization of and countering against the progressive grassroots activists. It provides space for an effective vegan outreach and for an explicit alignment with other progressive leftist causes. Grassroots groups, as opposed to professional organizations, are less likely to adapt their frames to the dominant culture. Furthermore, they are generally more flexible and open to change. The way many of the nonhuman animal rights groups in Istanbul define their views and the fact that they stimulate debates and further knowledge production illustrates this well.

Gülce describes the importance of critical thinking metaphorically: ‘if you are vegan you have the mistaken impression that you know all about animal rights, but of course you don’t. It’s like you’ve applied for some education. Veganism is the application. You become a vegan activist after all the education’ (Interview with Gülce Özen Gürkan on 7 October 2014).

Each social movement has its own challenges when it comes to education of its members and developing a critical perspective that does not exclude any group. The nonhuman animal rights movement in Istanbul is not an exception to this. Nevertheless, with a myriad of critical activists at its disposal and a thriving grassroots infrastructure, Turkish nonhuman animal rights activists are significant potential actors of cultural change. The future of the nonhuman animal rights movement in Istanbul, and in Turkey at large as it is already expanding to other major cities, seems promising.

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