ARTICLE

'Towards a Feminist Consciousness': Digitalising Leadership

Sara Soumaya Abed[a]

Available online 13 April 2024

ABSTRACT

This article examines the ways in which transnational and queer feminisms could conceptualise (new) meanings of leadership that are grounded in collectivism. Through being in conversation with the co-founders/running members and collaborators of Towards a Feminist Consciousness, a Pan-African queer feminist online platform from Western Sahara, this paper attempts to interrogate how their leadership praxis challenges the conventional thinking of leadership. The article demonstrates that Towards a Feminist Consciousness's collective leadership turns cyberspace into a powerful communication instrument to establish mutuality and solidarity networks -transcending the boundaries of the nation and gender. First, the paper emphasises how their leadership emerged to challenge their erasure through decentralising knowledge production, which is usually restricted to certain geographical locations. It further addresses how hierarchal power relations could be negotiated through participating in the decision-making processes, thus allowing the alternation of power and influence. Second, the article highlights that facilitating open dialogue could solidify feminist consciousness transcending boundaries. In doing so, collective leadership processes are established through expert and referent power. Expert power is exhibited through theorising their lived experiences under the Moroccan occupation, while referent power is rooted in establishing mutuality based on their shared purpose and aspirations. The article lastly draws on emotional leadership as an integral element when theorising Towards a Feminist Consciousness's leadership praxis through the prism of political love as the way forward.

Keywords: Leadership, Feminisms, Transing, Decentralisation, Consciousness Transcending Boundaries, Political Love

---

[a] Sara is on the -AWDF project- Leading Feminist Voices in Africa Fellowship Programme at the African Leadership Centre (ALC), King's College London and Nairobi.

1. INTRODUCTION

Located in Northwest Africa between Morocco and Mauritania, the Sahrawi people of Western Sahara continue to demand their right to self-determination. They are known as "Africa's last forgotten colony" of the 21st century.[1] Writing and producing visual media content as strategies of resistance is what explicates *Towards a Feminist Consciousness's* (TFC) emergence in Western Sahara, through documenting those who have preceded them, and those who continue to be part of their ongoing struggle.

Western Sahara was previously a Spanish protectorate, administered under the Franco-Spanish Conventions of 1904. The early 1960s marked the decolonisation process under the United Nations of Decolonisation Committee, and Spain was responsible for preparing a referendum that would grant the Sahrawis their right to self-determination and independence.[2] Nonetheless, Spain "negotiated a settlement" granting Morocco two-thirds of the territory, and Mauritania the remaining one-third in 1975, although in 1979, the Frente Popular para la Liberacíon de Saguia el-Hamra y de Rio de Oro (POLISARIO) -the Sahrawi people's formal representative- and Mauritania had a peace treaty.[3]

Sahrawi women were and continue to be part of the liberation movement,[4] including leading community-building projects in exile.[5] However, the POLISARIOS's National Union of Sahrawi Women's periodic statements condemn only the violence of colonialism while negating the embedded heteropatriarchal unwritten customs. For example, there are no ratified family laws regulating marriage, divorce, and custody, therefore facilitating male domination over the divorce process.[6] Additionally, POLISARIOS's framing of gender equality excludes sexual equality. First, women's sexuality is policed and non-marital sex for women is punishable -along with "having children out of wedlock"- as it is considered against the mores of society. [7] Second, the rigid binary readings/perception of gender, suppresses all non-normative gender and sexual identities. Third, social relations are regulated in a racist/racialised feudal manner. Black bodies experience structural discrimination and exclusion: several tribes prohibit their women from marrying black men, for example.[8]

[1] Anne Lippert, "Sahrawi Women in The Liberation Struggle of The Sahrawi People", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 17, no. 3 (1992): 636, doi:10.1086/494752; Erica Vasquez, "Living Under Occupation in The Western Sahara: Women, Resistance and Self-Determination", Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace & Security, no. 6 (2014): 3, 8, https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Vasquez-Western-Sahara.pdf; Pawel Wargan, "A Forgotten Colony in the Sahara," LAP Progressive, November 16, 2022, accessed February 16, 2023, https://www.laprogressive.com/africa/forgotten-colony-in-the-sahara.

[2] Anne Lippert, "Sahrawi Women in The Liberation Struggle of The Sahrawi People", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 17, no. 3 (1992): 636, doi:10.1086/494752; Erica Vasquez, "Living Under Occupation in The Western Sahara: Women, Resistance and Self-Determination", Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace & Security, no. 6 (2014): 11, https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Vasquez-Western-Sahara.pdf.

[3] Erica Vasquez, "Living Under Occupation in The Western Sahara: Women, Resistance and Self-Determination", Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace & Security, no. 6 (2014): 8, 11-12,

https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Vasquez-Western-Sahara.pdf; Anne Lippert, "Sahrawi Women in The Liberation Struggle of The Sahrawi People", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 17, no. 3 (1992): 636-637, doi:10.1086/494752.

[4] Anne Lippert, "Sahrawi Women in The Liberation Struggle of The Sahrawi People", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 17, no. 3 (1992): 651, doi:10.1086/494752.

[5] Jacqueline-Bethel Tchouta Mougoué, "Gender And (Militarized) Secessionist Movements in Africa", *Meridians* 17, no. 2 (2018): 345-346, doi:10.1215/15366936-7176483.

[6] J. Allan, "Imagining Saharawi Women: The Question of Gender in POLISARIO Discourse", *The Journal Of North African Studies* 15, no. 2 (2010): 193-4, doi:10.1080/13629380902861103.

[7] Jacqueline-Bethel Tchouta Mougoué, "Gender And (Militarized) Secessionist Movements in Africa", *Meridians* 17, no. 2 (2018): 347, doi:10.1215/15366936-7176483; J. Allan, "Imagining Saharawi Women: The Question of Gender in POLISARIO Discourse", *The Journal Of North African Studies* 15, no. 2 (2010): 193, doi:10.1080/13629380902861103.

[8] Amrita Sher-Gil, "Al-sahra' al-gharbia: ta'amulat fi eunf al-istiemar w al-'abawiat w al-eunsuria," Towards A Feminist Consciousness, 2021, https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com

TFC -an online open-source feminist collective from Western Sahara- emerged to challenge racist, narrow, rigid and static understandings of gender equality. In challenging gender binaries and power relations that are maintained through occupation, religion, class, nation-states, and so on, feminist consciousness continues to be imperative to TFC's organizing and leadership.[9] TFC's founders/running members, along with their collaborators, contribute to the region's knowledge production through writing, translating existing literature to Arabic and producing visual media content to provide counter-narratives, but also to reduce the tension between theory and practice. The online platform allows them to connect and extend their solidarity beyond borders - against the backdrop of the Moroccan occupation and the Sahrawi heteropatriarchal regime. On their website page, TFC[10] openly recite their vision and mission:

> A queer feminist blog from Western Sahara that was established in 2017 as a (…) liberating space for discussion and deconstruction of feminist issues (…) in which oppressive regimes of colonialism, patriarchy, capitalism, racism, and asylum intersect.

> We utilise queer feminist and Marxist frameworks (…) African feminism and Pan-Africanism are our sources of inspiration when we think of our political and revolutionary praxis and mobilisation.[11]

This paper examines whether TFC provide, or could provide, an example of collective leadership that transcends boundaries. As feminist scholar-activist, Awino Okech, in an online forum titled "Global Blackness & Transnational Solidarity," asserts: to be able to transcend the separation between academia and activism, we should acknowledge and root our solidarity in the interconnection across our struggles, and hence liberation.[12]This study thus aims to provide a space to document and archive histories of resistance. But also, interrogating new meanings of leadership that could expand on existing literature and offer an example of collectivism in leadership that is drawn by transnational and queer feminist solidarity.

To this end, this paper asks: To what extent does TFC provide evidence of collectivism in leadership that also transgresses national borders? This central question is underpinned by three sub-questions: How can transnational and queer feminisms reimagine and conceptualise leadership? To what extent does TFC detach the concept of leadership from conventional notions of hierarchal relations? How is power and influence asserted and sustained? The paper uncovers that TFC's collective leadership utilises cyberfeminism to establish mutuality transcending boundaries. Their leadership model empowers their collaborators to alternate power and influence via participating in decision-making processes as an act of love, and thus negotiating hierarchal relations.

The paper is structured into five sections. Section two discusses transnational and queer feminist theory as the key analytical tool of analysis for this study. This is followed by a review of three bodies of literature, on leadership, transing the nation and gender, and cyberfeminism. Section three discusses the research methodology and reflects on my positionality as a feminist researcher. Section four analyses the data findings through the lens of transnational queer feminist theory in relation to the conceptual framework of the study: leadership, transing the nation and gender, and cyberfeminism. Section five concludes with highlighting that TFC's collective leadership model is transing the nation and gender through utilising cyberfeminism as a tool to serve this end. This is further crystalised through the prism of political love by theorising collective leadership that is attentive to emotional leadership as the way forward.

---

[9] Shahrzad Mojab, "The Politics Of "Cyberfeminism" In the Middle East: The Case of Kurdish Women", *Race, Gender & Class* 8, no. 4 (2001): 48.

[10] When using the acronym TFC, I am referring to the co-founders, members and collaborators who alternate leadership in the collective, hence the choice of referring to TFC as they.

[11]"من نحن". *Towards a Feminist consciousness*, September 4, 2018, Accessed on October 7, 2021
https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com

[12] As cited in David Mwambari, "Can Online Platforms Be E-Pana-Africana Liberation Zones For Pan-African And Decolonization Debates?, Codesria.Org, no. 5 (2021): 4, http://codesria.org/spip.php?article3130; "Global Blackness & transnational solidarity with Dr Awino Okech," *Global Affairs: King's College London,* October 21, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PjSPOLCq0k.

2. FEMINISMS, LEADERSHIP AND TRANSING

2.1. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Drawing on anti-capitalist transnational feminism, Chandra Talpade Mohanty's work centres the link between culture and the political economy of feminist theorising. Mohanty illuminates that paying attention to the lives of marginalised communities of women provide "the most inclusive paradigm for thinking about social justice," as it makes "the workings of power visible."[13] This paper is interested in the ways in which transnational feminist activism provides counter-spaces that could possibly change hegemonic narrative/s. Transnational approaches to intersectionality reveal the intertwining and multilayered histories of different communities. It also contextualises individual/s and collective experiences of oppression as much as struggle and resistance beyond borders and heteropatriarchal nationalisms.[14]

As Jennifer C. Nash eloquently puts it: transnationalism and intersectionality should be "side by side, mobilising both analytics to think in supple ways about structures of domination and their deeply contingent meanings" across national borders. Nash invites us to think of intersectionality, the same way as transnationalism: an "anti-subordination project even as it is one with specific genealogy," and thus look at the intimate interrelation between both analytics.[15] Queer feminisms, similarly, is attentive to intersectionality through uncovering the workings of power but also provides readings that are fluid, unfixed, ever-changing and multilayered of being and becoming.[16] This paper, accordingly, examines how transnational and queer feminist theory could provide a

framework for analysing leadership processes. This section, therefore, interrogates the following theoretical concepts: leadership; transing the nation and gender; and cyberfeminism, as well as the intersections between them.

2.1.1. Leadership

Leadership is an interactive interrelational process that entails the assertion of influence that develops between leader(s) and follower(s). Leadership is not primarily based on an individual's personal characteristics, the position of authority that they hold, or on the outcomes that are achieved.[17] Instead, in the context of who can assert power and influence, leadership as a process should not only be focused on leaders but also followers, especially when understanding the complex relationship between group members pursuing a shared vision/purpose/goal. The notion of mutuality as a spectrum is significant, as Funmi Olanisakin highlights, it looks at how peoples' vision and aspirations within a given context are "mutually linked,"[18] particularly when the leadership model is based on solidarity building. As this paper is interested in collective leadership, Grace Thomas makes an important point regarding the possibility of leader/s alternating roles to being follower/s within a group and the vice versa, in response to a particular context/situation. Thomas further emphasises the notion of consent when tackling leadership as it demonstrates the level of 'willingness' to cooperate and 'engage' in leadership.[19]

Conventional thinking on leadership often considers leaders to be the noticeable "candidate" in asserting power and influence. However, power and influence can, in fact, be asserted and sustained simultaneously by

[13] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, ""Under Western Eyes" Revisited: Feminist Solidarity Through Anticapitalist Struggles", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 2 (2003): 509-511, doi:10.1086/342914.

[14] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, ""Under Western Eyes" Revisited: Feminist Solidarity Through Anticapitalist Struggles", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 2 (2003): 522-523, doi:10.1086/342914; M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Cartographies of Knowledge and Power: Transnational Feminism as Radical Practice", in *Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis* (New York: SUNY Press, 2010), 23-45; Anneeth Kaur Hundle, Ioana Szeman and Joanna Pares Hoare, "What Is the Transnational in Transnational Feminist Research?", *Feminist Review* 121, no. 1 (2019): 3-8, doi:10.1177/0141778918817525.

[15] Jennifer C Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality* (Duke University Press, 2018), 108-109.

[16] Lucie Fremlova, "Non-Romani Researcher Positionality And Reflexivity", *Critical Romani Studies* 1, no. 2 (2018): 98-123, doi:10.29098/crs.v1i2.25.

[17] Bernard M Bass, Ruth Bass and Ruth R Bass, *The Bass Handbook of Leadership* (Riverside: Free Press, 2008); Keith Grint, *Leadership: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[18] 'Funmi Olonisakin, "Towards Re-Conceptualising Leadership for Sustainable Peace," *Leadership and Developing Societies* 2, no. 1 (2017): 20, https://doi.org/10.47697/lds.3435001.

[19] Grace Elizabeth Thomas, "Re-Imagining Framework for Leadership Analysis", *Leadership and Developing Societies* 5, no. 1 (2020): 73-75, doi:10.47697/lds.34348005.

different group members over time and space in pursuing their common goals. French and Raven have identified five bases of social power that a leader or leaders can draw upon to assert influence within a given situation: coercive power (asserting influence via punishment); reward power (asserting influence via rewards); legitimate power (asserting influence via being in a respected position of authority); referent power (asserting influence on the basis of likeability); and expert power (asserting influence on the basis of being recognised as an expert in particular areas).[20]Social bases of power consolidates our understanding of how TFC redefine collective leadership and establish mutuality. Put differently, how they assert and sustain their power and influence in ways that negotiate hierarchal relations beyond borders.

This paper uses the concept of leadership as a process to interrogate the multilayered dimensions of TFC's collective leadership. The paper is interested in interrogating how collective leadership could possibly oscillate and assert one or more powers simultaneously. Through equally examining the role of follower(s), that is collaborators, the paper examines how power and influence are asserted and sustained between TFC's founders/running members and collaborators against the backdrop of occupation and heteropatriarchal capitalism. This allows us to understand how collective leadership could blur the line between being a leader, a member, a collaborator who could also be a follower.

2.1.2. Transing the Nation, Transing Gender

Through engaging with the concept of transing, and how it intertwines with notions of passing and being read, Alyosxa Tudor contextualises the former as a "critical move rooted in specific political movements." Through bringing together transnational feminism and transgender studies' shared-investment in the concept of 'trans,' the notion of 'transing' interrogates intersectional power relations through moving/going beyond (particular) categories, including questioning, as well as deconstructing them. In transing gender, Tudor

asserts that many (not all) queer, lesbian and dyke positionings and self-identifications disrupt stable and pre-existing gendered categories through challenging the notion of 'cis' by not reproducing the gender binary. Similarly, in transing the nation, Tudor suggests examining notions like 'belonging,' through the lens of solidarity and "risk in political struggle," and thus offering a new way of re-thinking transnational approaches to intersectionality.[21]

When we speak of the interplay of gender, class, race, nation, sexuality and so on, we should view these social locations and positionings as not only sites of differences but also sites of power.[22] Chandra Talpade Mohanty recaptures the "fuller meaning" of the notion of difference through drawing on its relation to the universal. In that, understanding differences and particularities allow us to uncover interconnections and commonalities, and thus build solidarities beyond nations, as "no border or boundary is…rigidly determining."[23]

Tudor complicates the fact that notions of transgender do not automatically mean being critical of gender binaries and/or heteronormativity. Border crossings, similarly, do not only produce subject-beings that are opposing to nationalism and/or the nation-state. Nonetheless, even though some framings of 'trans' do not deconstruct categories but reproduce them, it is also vital to emphasise that choosing to belong to one side of the gender binary is not inevitably the same as being nationalist. As Tudor writes, it is "the mobilisation of nationalist, sexist and racist logics for achieving the goal of 'being at home' in a binary gender category" is what we should oppose/resist.[24]

Through de-essentialising and transing the category of the nation and gender, this paper employs Chandra Mohanty's concept of "common difference" as the basis for what she calls the feminist solidarity model. This model is anchored on mutuality, co-responsibility and common goals and purposes across "differences and

[20] John French and Bertram Raven, "The Bases for Social Power", in *Studies in Social Power,* ed. Dorwin Cartwright (University of Michigan: Institute for Social Research, 1959), 150-167; Grace Elizabeth Thomas, "Re-Imagining Framework for Leadership Analysis", *Leadership and Developing Societies* 5, no. 1 (2020): 73-77, doi:10.47697/lds.34348005.

[21] Alyosxa Tudor, "Dimensions of Transnationalism", *Feminist Review* 117, no. 1 (2017): 20-40, doi:10.1057/s41305-017-0092-5.

[22] Michèle Barrett, "The Concept of 'Difference'", *Feminist Review*, no. 26 (1987): 35, doi:10.2307/1394733.

[23] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, ""Under Western Eyes" Revisited: Feminist Solidarity Through Anticapitalist Struggles", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 2 (2003): 505, doi:10.1086/342914.

[24] Alyosxa Tudor, "Dimensions of Transnationalism", *Feminist Review* 117, no. 1 (2017): 20-40, doi:10.1057/s41305-017-0092-5.

unequal power relations.".[25] As Lara Özlen writes: there is a lot of "hard work" to be done when it comes to building political alliances, as "it takes time, self reflection, being open to dialogue, and being able to see the commonalities."[26]

2.1.3. Cyberfeminism

Cyberfeminism, from its name, lies on the nexus of gender and cyberspace, but more importantly, a significant tool of communication for social mobilisation and activism.[27] Saskia Sassen highlights the "embeddedness of the digital in the physical, material world."[28] Similarly, Jessie Daniels argues that the cyberspace, in many instances, is utilised by girls and self-identified women to "transform their material, corporeal lives in a number of complex ways that both resist and reinforce hierarchies of gender and race."[29] Though women are often located at the "bottom of the global economic hierarchy,"[30] the cyberspace has been offering women new economic opportunities. For instance, the class dimension is not inevitably an obstacle today for many working-class women in Egypt who have utilised the cyberspace as a way to enhance their livelihoods.[31]

Nevertheless, the cyberspace is increasingly becoming a place of surveilling and punishing certain bodies, simultaneously. This is demonstrated in the case of Egypt's crackdown on working and lower-middle class TikTok women influencers -who established fame- under the guise of morality.[32] Similarly, social media platforms censoring sex workers or certain political movements' content, such as those in solidarity with Palestine.[33] Likewise in Turkey, with the unprecedented media suppression, the moment journalists and/or dissent "enter" the cyberspace, they are under state surveillance.[34]

Radhika Gajjala examines the notion of agency and its relation to excluded communities from mainstream society through utilising the cyberspace to include themselves on their own terms.[35] As Gajjala eloquently puts it: "they can see themselves as protagonists of the revolution."[36] This model of cyberfeminism is demonstrated, for example, in India, as the cyberspace

[25] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, ""Under Western Eyes" Revisited: Feminist Solidarity Through Anticapitalist Struggles", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 2 (2003): 518-521, doi:10.1086/342914.

[26] Lara Özlen, ""No Terfs On Our TURF:" Building Alliances Through Fractions on Social Media In İstanbul", *Kohl: A Journal for Body and Gender Research* 6, no. 3 (2020): 369-386, doi:10.36583/2020060316.

[27] Jessie Daniels, "Rethinking Cyberfeminism(S): Race, Gender, And Embodiment", *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 1-2 (2009): 102, doi:10.1353/wsq.0.0158.

[28] As cited in Jessie Daniels, "Rethinking Cyberfeminism(S): Race, Gender, And Embodiment", *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 1-2 (2009): 102 doi:10.1353/wsq.0.0158; Saskia Sassen, "Towards A Sociology of Information Technology", *Current Sociology* 50, no. 3 (2002): 368, doi:10.1177/0011392102050003005.

[29] Jessie Daniels, "Rethinking Cyberfeminism(S): Race, Gender, And Embodiment", *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 1-2 (2009): 102 doi:10.1353/wsq.0.0158.

[30] Jessie Daniels, "Rethinking Cyberfeminism(S): Race, Gender, And Embodiment", *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 1-2 (2009): 106, doi:10.1353/wsq.0.0158.

[31] Marina Samir, "The Women of TikTok: Their Freedom is my Freedom." *Kohl: A Journal for Body and Gender Research* 5, no. 3 (2020): 21-28.

[32] Marina Samir, "The Women of TikTok: Their Freedom is my Freedom." *Kohl: A Journal for Body and Gender Research* 5, no. 3 (2020): 21-28; Egyptian Streets, "From Tiktok To Jail: Popular Egyptian Influencer Arrested For 'Violating Family Values'", Egyptian Streets, May 16, 2020, https://egyptianstreets.com/2020/05/16/from-tiktok-to-jail-popular-egyptian-influencer-arrested-for-violating-family-values/.

[33] Jihen Mzoughi and Jihen Mzoughi, "Activists Are Fighting Social Media's Shadow Ban on Palestinian Voices", Mille World, 2021, https://www.milleworld.com/social-media-shadow-ban-palestine/; Brit Dawson, "Instagram's Problem with Sex Workers Is Nothing New", Dazed, 2020, https://www.dazeddigital.com/science-tech/article/51515/1/instagram-problem-with-sex-workers-is-nothing-new-censorship.

[34] Shahrzad Mojab, "The Politics Of "Cyberfeminism" In the Middle East: The Case of Kurdish Women", *Race, Gender & Class* 8, no. 4 (2001): 54.

[35] Radhika Gajjala, "South Asian Digital Diasporas and Cyberfeminist Webs: Negotiating Globalization, Nation, Gender and Information Technology Design", *Contemporary South Asia* 12, no. 1 (2003): 49, doi:10.1080/0958493032000123362; Jessie Daniels, "Rethinking Cyberfeminism(S): Race, Gender, And Embodiment", *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 1-2 (2009): 106, doi:10.1353/wsq.0.0158.

[36] Jessie Daniels, "Rethinking Cyberfeminism(S): Race, Gender, And Embodiment", *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 1-2 (2009): 106, doi:10.1353/wsq.0.0158; Radhika Gajjala, "South Asian Digital Diasporas and Cyberfeminist Webs: Negotiating Globalization, Nation, Gender and Information Technology Design", *Contemporary South Asia* 12, no. 1 (2003): 49, doi:10.1080/0958493032000123362.

has turned to be a space for feminist activism.[37] Similarly, in Iran, several women consider the virtual world to be a "safe space," as it provides them with a space to challenge gender oppression experienced in their daily offline lives.[38] As for many self-identified queers and trans people, the internet could turn out to be a transformative space of knowledge sharing.[39] More recently, the 2020 Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests used cyberspace as a tool of resistance, centring the conversation around intersectional feminism, and on questions of race, injustices, and the fight against white supremacy, which furthered their traction worldwide.[40]

Shahrzad Mojab, on the other hand, argues that the cyberspace cannot create feminist/social movements but can only assist movements on the ground to better mobilise. This is because how the class dimension curbs the presence of illiterate working-class women to be part of the movement. Mojab based her argument on the case of the Kurdish feminist movement, in their struggle against four nation-states, as well as fighting repressive religious traditions and heteropatriarchal nationalism.[41]

This paper looks at the ways in which these three concepts: leadership, transing the nation and gender, and cyberfeminism, could possibly come together in relation to the study findings. The paper intends to expand on and address the gap within the literature on collectivism in leadership through the lens of transnational queer feminism/s. The paper addresses how TFC's leadership turns a tool of communication into an empowering/powerful network of mutuality and solidarity building across (non)Arab-speaking women and queer bodies. This paper thus looks at how cyberfeminism can convey TFC's leadership vision that

is tied up to the notion of transing the nation and gender (see Fig. 1). In particular, situating leadership with these concepts allows us to imagine and conceptualise collective leadership processes.
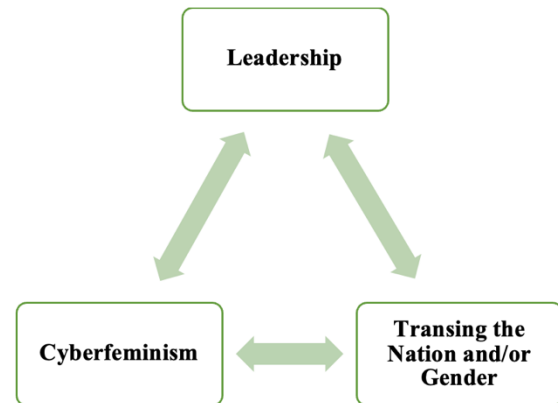

Fig. 1 Leadership, Cyberfeminism, and Transing the Nation

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This paper employs a case study research design to examine the influence of the cyberspace in the context of TFC emergence and leadership processes. This method fosters in-depth analysis through drawing on the interlocutors' perspectives of their lived-realties and experiences, how they intersect and overlap, in that uncovering the workings of power.[42]

The paper relies mainly on qualitative primary data and is based on eight individual virtual semi-structured interviews via Microsoft Teams during the months of November and December 2021.[43] Semi-structured interviews give flexibility to the interlocutors to reflect on various dimensions without being restricted to a

---

[37] See Sujatha Subramanian, "From the Streets to The Web: Looking at Feminist Activism on Social Media", *Economic and Political Weekly* 50, no. 17 (2015): 71-78.
[38] Jessie Daniels, "Rethinking Cyberfeminism(S): Race, Gender, And Embodiment", *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 1-2 (2009): 108, doi:10.1353/wsq.0.0158.
[39] Jessie Daniels, "Rethinking Cyberfeminism(S): Race, Gender, And Embodiment", *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 1-2 (2009): 118, doi:10.1353/wsq.0.0158.
[40] David Mwambari, "Can Online Platforms Be E-Pana-Africana Liberation Zones For Pan-African And Decolonization Debates?, Codesria.Org, no. 5 (2021): 1-2, http://codesria.org/spip.php?article3130.
[41] The feminist Kurdish movement, like most movements, builds on a history of oral and face-to-face interactions, utilising posters and leaflets, and lately the internet as a tool to archive their histories, towards creating an online Kurdish

women's library. Shahrzad Mojab, "The Politics Of "Cyberfeminism" In the Middle East: The Case of Kurdish Women", *Race, Gender & Class* 8, no. 4 (2001): 54, 56.
[42] John W Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2007), 74-77; Robert K.Yin, *Case study research: Design and methods*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2014); Lawrence Neuman, *Social research methods: qualitative and quantitative approaches*, (Needham Heights, MA: Allen and Bacon, 2011); Winston Tellis, "Application of A Case Study Methodology", *The Qualitative Report* 3, no. 3 (1997), doi:10.46743/2160-3715/1995.2015.
[43] Interviews were conducted online due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, but it would have also been difficult to bring everyone in one place. Each interview lasted between two to three hours. Interviews were conducted in the language of the interlocutors' choice (mostly Arabic), and translation of the transcriptions are my own.

rigid format, as well as facilitating follow-up questions.[44] Shams and Nadia, the two main running members/founders of TFC, along with Wardah, a member of the group and a collaborator based in Western Sahara, and five collaborators: Mariam and Razan are Palestinians, Alvin, a trans feminist activist from Saudi Arabia, Mihira, a black lesbian Sudanese feminist based in Cairo, and Ronnie, a black lesbian feminist from Sudan (see appendix 1).

Although online interviews comes with its limitations,[45] it is not excluding relevant voices, as TFC's platform fundamentally exists online, and hence its members/collaborators have, to a certain degree, a reliable internet access and electronic devices.[46] As for the ethical consideration, each interlocutor was provided with written informed consent sheet before the interview date.[47] Most names are replaced with pseudo names for confidentiality and animosity,[48] with the exception of Alvin and Ronnie upon their request.

The research employs the snowballing technique to identify interlocutors due to the animosity of the founding members and most of their collaborators to the public. This technique is useful, in this context, as it

relatively establishes a "less suspicious" and "more trusting" interaction.[49]The paper utilises inductive thematic analysis (data-driven) as it assists in understanding experiences through actively constructing patterns (or shared meanings), and thus themes, from the data.[50] The author generated a thematic map of the findings,[51] supplemented by TFC's available published material on their blog/website, along with scrutinising secondary sources to contextualise the study findings.

The author afterwards shared the final themes/findings with the interlocutors for discussion over their meanings.[52] The goal was to simultaneously bypass issues of (mis)representation and/or misquoting, and to facilitate thinking and analysing with and through them as collaborators and co-theorists of this paper.[53] This extended their/our collective consciousness around the possibilities of reimagining collectivism in leadership, that is informed by transnational and queer feminist teachings. A concept (leadership) most of them avoided, though they constantly question the notion of power sharing while making decisions.

3.1. Positionality and Reflexivity

[44] William Adams, "Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews." In K. Newcomer, H. Hatry and J. Wholey (eds.), *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation*, (Carlifornia: Jossey Bass, 2015)

[45] Kanisha Bond et al., "Lessons from Conflict Studies on Research During the Coronavirus Pandemic", Items, 2021, https://items.ssrc.org/covid-19-and-the-social-sciences/social-research-and- insecurity/lessons-from-conflict-studies-on-research-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/.

[46]Online interviews limitations range from only accessing those who have access to electricity, let alone having a smartphone or a laptop, as well as reliable internet connection. David Mwambari, "Can Online Platforms Be E-Pana-Africana Liberation Zones For Pan-African And Decolonization Debates?, Codesria.Org, no. 5 (2021): 5, http://codesria.org/spip.php?article3130.

[47]The semi-structured interviews -conducted by the author-was recorded with the permission of the interlocutors, then transcribed and stored in a Microsoft Word document to ease the analysis process. All the interlocutors had the right to withdraw participation at any time before the publication date of this article.

[48]Robert K Yin, *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish* (New York: Guilford Press, 2011), 46.

[49]Although snowballing sampling could create a "hidden population" from within existing "hard to reach" participants, this was not the case - given TFC's platform has identified members and collaborators, and hence their participation is solely based on their approval/consent; Kath

Browne, "Snowball Sampling: Using Social Networks to Research Non-Heterosexual Women", *International Journal Of Social Research Methodology* 8, no. 1 (2005): 53-54, doi:10.1080/1364557032000081663.

[50] Michelle E. and Lara Varpio, "Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131", *Medical Teacher*, (2020) DOI: 10.1080/0142159X.2020.1755030

[51] Colin Robson, *Real World Research* (Oxford: Wiley, 2011), 475-476.

[52] This second round of discussions was conducted during the months of December 2022 and March 2023. Five interlocutors chose to do it via video calls while the other three via emails.

[53] Elaine Porter et al., "Reciprocal Peer Interviewing", *International Review of Qualitative Research* 2, no. 2 (2009): 291-312, doi:10.1525/irqr.2009.2.2.291; Kath Browne, "Negotiations and Fieldworkings: Friendship and Feminist Research", *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 2 (2), 132-46, https://acme-journal.org/index.php/acme/article/view/690; See Margot Weiss, "The Interlocutor Slot: Citing, Crediting, Cotheorizing, and the Problem of Ethnographic Expertise," *American Anthropologist* 123, no. 4 (2021): pp. 948-953, https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13639; Ahmed Ibrahim, "In and/or/plus out: Queering the Closet," *Kohl: A Journal for Body and Gender Research* 6, no. 3 (2020): pp. 290-306, https://doi.org/10.36583/2020060307, 299.

Positionality reflects the researcher's ways of knowing, complicated with her social location which is not fixed, but rather ever-changing through the interactions between the researcher and the interlocutors over the course of the project. Self-reflexivity, in this light, is an ongoing process that should be employed throughout the research processes.[54]

As Stuart Hall puts it: "there's no enunciation without positionality. You have to position yourself somewhere in order to say anything at all."[55] Although the author is an insider to the Egyptian feminist movement circles, as she shares similar lived-realities despite the movement members fluid and varying social locations, she could be an outsider to feminist movements outside Egypt. Nonetheless, she shares more or less their vision in imagining the world. The line between being an insider and/or outsider, in this context, could be blurred; and it should not be conceived "as a binary opposition," but rather "conceptualise the role of the researcher on a continuum."[56]

This paper is influenced by the researcher's commitment to ground queer feminist scholarship within anti-capitalist transnational social movements, and hence building connections between theory and practice.[57] Through the lens of common difference, the author's positionality and politics, as a feminist researcher, overlaps with TFC's vision, opening up room for solidarity in their activism but also research collaboration.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section focuses on three main themes generated from the data collected. Each theme is scrutinised through the ways in which the concept of leadership, transing the nation and gender, and cyberfeminism interact together.

The first theme titled "decentralisation" redefines collective leadership through the prism of decentralising geographical knowledge production. The first theme is underpinned by two subthemes: erasure and decision-making processes. The notion of erasure uncovers how TFC are resisting the erasure of particular geographical locations' histories of struggles and resistance. It reveals how TFC's leadership is utilising cyberfeminism as a tool that is transing national boundaries and gender through solidarity building. Decision-making processes, additionally, shed light on the extent to which TFC's collective leadership challenges hierarchal relations through establishing dialogue, allowing members/collaborators to participate in the decision-making processes transing borders, and thus alternating (co-)leaders.

The second theme titled "consciousness transcending boundaries" looks at how TFC offer a space to transcend their/our consciousness through two-way discussions grounded in their/our lived-experiences and realities. The subtheme: alternative tool, similarly, mirrors how TFC's leadership model interacts and ties in with the concept of transing the nation and gender through utilising cyberfeminism as an alternative tool of resistance. The cyberspace thus facilitates coalition building (and extending solidarity) via different forms of collaboration that transcends the boundaries of the nation and gender.

The third theme titled "political love" details how TFC's leadership is rooted in expressing love through creating spaces of resistance, but also rage. This theme interrogates ideas articulated by TFC's collaborators, in their attempt to express their love and solidarity for the space they consider home. It uncovers how transing the nation disrupts conventional meanings of belonging. This theme further demonstrates how its subtheme: subverting mis/readings disrupt and transcend the nation but also gender, sex and sexuality. It consolidates meanings of political love -that is anchored on transnational queer-feminist teachings- as a tool of resistance. Cyberfeminism is once again utilised as a tool to make these interactions possible.

4.1. (De)centralisation

54 Lucie Fremlova, "Non-Romani Researcher Positionality And Reflexivity", *Critical Romani Studies* 1, no. 2 (2018): 101-102, doi:10.29098/crs.v1i2.25.
55 Stuart Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora", in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence & Wishart., 1990), 18.

56 Lucie Fremlova, "Non-Romani Researcher Positionality And Reflexivity", *Critical Romani Studies* 1, no. 2 (2018): 101, doi:10.29098/crs.v1i2.25.
57 Chandra Talpade Mohanty, ""Under Western Eyes" Revisited: Feminist Solidarity Through Anticapitalist Struggles", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 2 (2003): 505, doi:10.1086/342914

The notion of decentralisation is a pertinent theme that was raised by both the founders/running members of TFC as well as their collaborators. This theme consolidates how TFC's collective leadership -that is rooted in transnational queer feminist teachings- is determined to produce knowledge that is inclusive of marginalised societies' perspectives. In this way they transcend the nation and gender through utilising cyberfeminism as a tool to serve their leadership vision: solidarity building. Nadia, co-founder/running member of TFC, makes a compelling point regarding decentralising knowledge production through centring and including marginalised geographical locations' perspectives into the conversation, and hence the feminist movement/s:

> We believe that we can only move forward if our solidarity transcends borders. Through including the voices of marginalised societies, such as Western Sahara, Mauritania, Chad and so on. We aspire to build an inclusive queer and feminist movement that surpasses the centre/periphery dichotomy. People used to talk about the land (Western Sahara) without talking about its people. So, we were keen to have a movement that talks about us by us.

Shams, co-founder/running member of TFC, further interrogates and corroborates Nadia's point on decentralisation through tying it in with the concept of collective leadership, she recounts:

Although I rarely thought of our work through the lens of leadership, the platform aspires to provide a leadership model grounded in collectivism, with all its messiness. The leadership of the marginalised…opening a space that is keen to make feminist knowledge accessible to the public.

TFC are keen to continue opening spaces to participate in knowledge production. They intend to break the centrality of (geographical) knowledge production through including, for example, Sahrawis, Mauritanians, Algerians, Chadians[58] voices and experiences. This collectivism in leadership style mirrors how TFC's praxis is transing national borders through solidarity building, that also utilises cyberfeminism as a powerful tool in serving this end. As Shams puts it: "through writing ourselves, we are leading our own narratives…and together we aspire to continue breaking those barriers." TFC are further providing a space to break the boundaries of knowledge accessibility. Through providing (immature) writers, as Nadia and Shams call themselves, to have the opportunity to express and engage with existing literature. They are thus destabilising the hold and centralisation of knowledge beyond closed spaces, such as academia.

TFC's target-group and audience initially focused on the shared histories and experiences among Sahrawi and Mauritanian[59] women and queer people. A few months after launching their platform online, they were surprised by the amount of love and support they received beyond borders.[60] This eased their vision to be

---

[58] See, for example, *Towards a Feminist Consciousness*'s Instagram post in solidarity with Chadian Women of Sandana village protest:
https://www.instagram.com/p/CZ6tfuXsXv8/

[59] See, for example, *Towards a Feminist Consciousness* publication on Mauritania: Noura Tolba, "Tarikh al-nidal al-naswi al-muritanii", *Towards A Feminist Consciousness*, 2020, https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/

[60] Through my (separate) conversations with Nadia and Shams, along with Wardah, a member of the private group and a collaborator/contributor to the platform from the occupied territories of Western Sahara, it is evident that their collectivism is multidimensional. This is demonstrated in their two interrelated groups: the first is a private group (on a messaging app) that connects together women and queer people from Western Sahara (either based in camps or in the occupied territories or in the diaspora) and Mauritania. This group was formed in an attempt to open dialogue through discussing suggested topics from a feminist and queer lens,

along with collective book readings and film discussions. The group started with 30 to 40 members and have now reached more than 100 members as they expanded through group members' referrals. Nadia and Shams's online feminist activism through *Twitter* and *Facebook* initially played a key role in bringing this group to existence.
The group discussions and activities motivated Shams and Nadia to initiate the idea of existing online, and thus they created the blog titled *Towards a Feminist Consciousness* on *WordPress*, along with four members/founders from Western Sahara and Mauritania, as a way to document and interconnect movements across the confines of national borders. However, TFC, as an online blog/platform, is currently co-run by Shams (editor and writer) and Nadia (technical assistant, translator, proof-reader and writer), due to the withdrawal of the other four members for personal reasons, and hence the weight of sustaining the platform existence rests mainly on both of them.

manifested through extending their solidarity and decentralising knowledge that is usually produced on particular geographical locations,[61] and thus destabilising the centre/periphery binary. TFC's feminist solidarity model is grounded, as Mohanty calls it, in the notion of common difference. In that, understanding differences and particularities, in terms of gender, race, class, nationality and so on, in order to make sense of the commonalities and interrelatedness within feminist movements. This allows TFC to envision universal social justice through pushing against isolation and discrimination that is wielded through the interplay of "colonialism, patriarchy, capitalism, racism, and refuge/asylum,"[62] as stated on their platform.

Their power and influence, as presented in their outreach, continues to be gauged through their number of collaborators who are usually on the rise,[63] similarly their followers on their social media accounts. As Razan, a Palestinian feminist based in Lebanon and a founder of another online queer-feminist platform, puts it: "they have gone wild with their reach, extending their leadership beyond Western Sahara." Likewise, Mariam, a feminist collaborator from Gaza, Palestine, stated: "at first, I had only two mutual friends following them, now I have alone more than 200 friends following their social media accounts…most of my network in Palestine knows of TFC though they do not necessarily know who is behind it." Transfeminist activist and a collaborator from Saudi Arabia, Alvin, similarly, recounts: "several members from my extended family or acquaintances, who were usually not interested in feminist or human rights issues, started to make comments on some of the articles I share or retweet, and how they never considered these issues in such ways, their comments were positive."

This demonstrates the extent to which TFC are establishing mutuality and expanding beyond feminists and human rights activist communities' circles. In that, mutuality is developed on the basis of "mutually connected"[64] goals/interests/concerns, but also utilising writing as a tool of conscious raising, and thus increasing their likability and sphere of influence (referent and expert power). Nonetheless, Ronnie, a black lesbian feminist collaborator from Sudan, highlights the importance of producing more visual content, like reels or YouTube videos, as it assists in magnifying outreach by further assisting TFC to expand their influence beyond borders. However, this could reveal the group's identities and put them under a security risk.

4.1.1. Erasure

The notion of erasure is salient when looking at TFC's leadership emergence. TFC emerged in a context of ongoing erasure of their resistance against the Moroccan occupation, but also the ongoing denial of the patriarchal relations within their society.[65] They foreground transnational solidarities through, for example, connecting and extending their struggle for liberation with Palestine, as Mariam has underlined.[66] This consolidates how their leadership is simultaneously rooted in resisting their continuous erasure, as well as redefining the concept of belonging through transing national borders, that is facilitated through cyberfeminism.

In the same light, Mihira, a Sudanese black lesbian feminist based-in-Cairo, "a diehard fan" of the collective as she calls herself[67], underscores the significance of intergenerational solidarity and how such solidarity prevents erasure:

[61] As noted by Nadia, Shams and Mihira: the centre of knowledge is mostly produced on Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, Palestine, and recently Jordan in the MENA Region. While in Africa, knowledge is mostly centred on South Africa, Ethiopia, Kenya and Ghana.
[62] "من نحن". *Towards a Feminist consciousness*, September 4, 2018, Accessed on October 7, 2021 https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/2018/09/04/%d9%85%d9%86-%d9%86%d8%ad%d9%86/
[63] They continue to receive numerous collaboration requests from Algeria, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Lebanon, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan, to count a few.
[64] 'Funmi Olonisakin, "Towards Re-Conceptualising Leadership for Sustainable Peace," *Leadership and Developing*

Societies 2, no. 1 (2017): 25, https://doi.org/10.47697/lds.3435001.
[65] Amrita Sher-Gil, "Al-sahra' al-gharbia: ta'amulat fi eunf al-istiemar w al-'abawiat w al-eunsuria," Towards A Feminist Consciousness, 2021, https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com
[66] See, for example, *Towards a Feminist Consciousness* publication on Palestine: Feminists from Gaza. "Al-nisa' yaqtuln maratayn: 'an al-istiemar wa al'abawia wa Filastin," *Towards A Feminist Consciousness*, 2021, https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/
[67] Mihira expanded her role with TFC and is now a collective member and editor as from early 2022.

> You can't completely dismiss the notion of leadership because you have issues with existing forms of leadership… And also complain and joke about every generation, and how they think they are inventing the wheel. How they're erasing the labour of elder feminist generations. We should think of our responsibility towards preventing such erasure from happening across generations, and that is for me what *Towards a Feminist Consciousness* are doing, they stepped up. They don't necessarily call themselves leaders but they stepped up.

Intergenerational solidarity is an ongoing challenge experienced by Nadia and Shams when they speak about the lack of/minimal documentation of previous work done on the ground by Sahrawi women, making it a huge challenge for them to relatively start from scratch. This, thus, demonstrates the importance of TFC, as it acts as a site of resistance through archiving and documenting their histories of struggle and resistance.

TFC's collective leadership model ties in with the transnational feminist and intergenerational approach, that is mentoring. Through creating spaces of exchanging knowledge/skills with younger generations, TFC detach 'leadership' from the notion of national hierarchy to smooth the path towards collectivism in leadership. This is demonstrated in how Ronnie reflects on her experience with TFC: "I continue to learn a lot through working with them, I am able at a young age to pursue writing."

4.1.2. Decision-Making Processes

The subtheme: decision-making processes highlights how TFC's collective leadership continuously works towards challenging and negotiating hierarchal power relations. This is demonstrated in how their members and collaborators are involved in the decision-making processes beyond borders and genders. This confirms the extent to which the cyberspace is utilised as a communication tool to make such processes possible.

TFC challenge the notion of the individual leader, as Wardah, a member and a collaborator/contributor from the occupied territories of Western Sahara highlights: "we all participate in the process…all ideas are welcomed for discussion without the fear of being judged." The decentralisation of power is a key feature of the platform's leadership and decision-making processes within the private group. Similarly, the online platform is grounded in collective efforts in the form of individual collaborators utilising the space to publish their texts and/or engaging with and translating feminist and queer literature into Arabic[68]or working with other groups/platforms towards launching social media campaigns.[69] This model unpacks how collective leadership processes strive on establishing dialogue to allow their members and/or collaborators to alternate (co)-leaders. But also, share, oscillate, and utilise expert and referent power simultaneously, discussed further under the theme "consciousness transcending boundaries."

Wardah and Razan corroborate the extent to which TFC is a space for learning together. This is demonstrated in how TFC give space for their collaborators to assert power and influence through the exchange of expert knowledge on particular topics. As Razan puts it:

> It is a kind-hearted space…when my piece was published, they shared with me all the feedback and comments they received from their followers. Our relation has developed into companionship and we always exchange resources and

---

[68] See, for example, *Towards a Feminist Consciousness's* translation of Amina Mama's text "Where we must stand: African women in an age of war": Mena Souilem, "'Ayn yajib 'an naqfi: al-nisa' al-'afriqiaat fi zaman al-harb", Towards A Feminist Consciousness, 2021, https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/ Also see *Towards Feminist Consciousness* translation of Srishti Pandey's text "'Am I Enough?" I am Enough – Body Imagery and Disability": Wafaa, "Hal 'ana kafiatun? surat al-jasad w al-'ieaqa", *Towards A Feminist Consciousness*, 2021, https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/

[69] See, for example, *Towards a Feminist Consciousness's* participation in the Saudi White Ribbon Campaign: https://www.instagram.com/p/B5Shy5-Aur_/?utm_medium=copy_link Also check, *Towards a Feminist Consciousness* participation in launching a joint campaign with feminist groups from Saudi, Algeria, Libya, Sudan, Kuwait, among others, mourning the martyrs of feminicide: https://www.instagram.com/p/CDrGU4hg6Ri/?utm_medium=copy_link They also actively participate in keeping hashtags alive as an expression of solidarity with various movements.

opportunities…when I want to learn about something they are well-conversed in, we end up having long conversations. They also do the same when there's something that is my domain of work or interest.

Drawing on transnational feminist and queer approaches to intersectionality as reflected in their work, TFC subvert the notion of belonging through extending solidarity beyond national borders. Similarly, they destabilise the essentialisation of gender but also sex -in their publications and private discussions- in an attempt to counter the policing of women and queer bodies through destabilising the gender binary.[70] Their model of collective leadership is grounded in community-building through contributing/participating in the feminist movement/s beyond borders.

4.2. Consciousness Transcending Boundaries

Consciousness transcending boundaries reflects on how TFC's collective leadership goes beyond transing the nation and gender. This is exhibited in how TFC offer a space where they/we can transcend boundaries in relation to their/our feminist consciousness. This is facilitated through cyberfeminism that is utilised as a tool to ease the process of connecting peoples and struggles. Alvin, Mihira and Razan, for instance, had no previous knowledge about the ongoing/active occupation of Western Sahara; it was only through TFC's writings and publications that they became conscious about it. Razan further highlights that it was rarely brought up within feminist and queer circles within transnational spaces. As she powerfully puts it: "…they're standing in solidarity with me, with Palestinians, and I almost knew nothing about them." Their expert power is thus displayed through writing and theorising their lived-experiences under the Moroccan occupation.

In a similar vein, Mariam describes TFC as a manifesto, in which they stepped up:

> They took the initiative to tell us that we can collectively work together …When I think of their leadership, they threw a seed, and then we were all like magnets, you and me, and everyone who shares a similar vision and dreams of the world …they're targeting the people who share similar experiences of marginalisation.

This uncovers how TFC's referent power is grounded in establishing mutuality - on the basis of collective effort and shared purpose- through providing a space for their private group-members and collaborators to own and lead their own narrative. As Mariam tells us, it "provides a space for ongoing growth." This model of leadership thus offers a space for their/our consciousness to transcend boundaries.

The notion of transing borders and/or gender and their interconnectedness with their/our collective consciousness is salient under this theme. As Alvin argues that human beings are often transing from one place to another in relation to their ideas and consciousness:

> We're always moving from one stage in our lives to another, whether by choice or force, it is like transing from one planet to another, especially the stage when we move from being teenagers to adults, it comes with its own changes, even our ideas are ever-changing. But this requires flexibility and openness, and that's why conservative people often tend to be more inflexible with transcending boundaries.

This echoes Halberstam's daring proposition: "we are all trans: we have already surgically, technologically, and ideologically altered our bodies, our identities,

---

[70] See the following articles, as examples, published by *Towards a Feminist Consciousness* platform: "Al-jinsaniat w al-wasm fi al-mujtamae al-sahrawi," *Towards A Feminist Consciousness, 2021,* https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/ Mariam Kollontay, "Man qal 'anani lam 'asheur bal-khawf," *Towards A Feminist Consciousness*, 2020, https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/ Mariam Kollontay, "Han al-waqt li'iinha' al-tahmishi!," *Towards A Feminist Consciousness*, 2020,

https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/ Alvin, 'Laqad jaealuni mnafqaan, al-haweia al-qasria katahrid 'alaa al-dhaat," *Towards A Feminist Consciousness,* 2021, https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/ Kehlany and Souad Souilem, "Al-'urud al-astieradia w al-misahat al-kuiria al-mutakhayala", *Towards A Feminist Consciousness,* 2021, https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/

ourselves."[71] This way of knowing but also being and becoming offers a space where we can constantly trans - whether collectively and/or individually- and move beyond categories of nation, gender, and so on, in relation to our consciousness.

Feminist consciousness, as Mihira puts it: "is not a one-sided conversation, you will walk out of the circle with more questions, and this is what I believe *Towards a Feminist Consciousness* are doing." The choice of TFC's name is a reflection of their vision, which is building a community that seeks to connect theory and practice through, for example, working on social media campaigns, as well as grounding their writings in their collective lived-experiences. As Nadia corroborates: "it is a self-explanatory name…we wanted to create a space for building solidarity and to contextualise our experiences within the region." TFC, in this light, are willing to take political risks as they are rooting their praxis in consciousness transcending boundaries of knowledge inaccessibility and erasure, as Razan puts it:

> These are really important spaces for building consciousness…their translation work to Arabic is crucial. And they (…) take their time to complicate our understandings of many issues, such as their writings on transformative justice.[72] They also bring African and black feminisms[73] theorising to the table within the Arab-speaking world.

This uncovers how TFC engage and extend their capacities to different spaces. As Razan highlights that although their choice of their platform name is very ambitious, their name choice is mirrored in their work praxis. This echoes Tudor's suggestion in taking political risks to challenge nationalist, racist and sexist logics of belonging through solidarity building, and thus utilising writing and translation as tools to serve their shared purpose. This illustrates how TFC's framework of collective leadership ties in with the notion of transing

the nation and gender, and how cyberfeminism facilitates this interaction.

4.2.1. Alternative tool

Although their work so far exists online, Shams and Nadia do not identify with cyberfeminism as a theoretical framework in guiding their work, but rather as a powerful tool to contribute and participate in the movement. Most importantly, facilitating transnational solidarity through the elimination of national borders, especially for those who have security barriers (e.g., occupation) to mobilise on the streets. This validates the ways in which the notion of collective leadership interacts with the notion of transing the nation and gender through utilising the notion of cyberfeminism as a tool rather than a main theoretical foundation.

As Mariam puts it: "online feminism is our online streets… we're holding online protests… now I can meet Nadia and Shams, we could have not met otherwise." This framing allows us to transcend, perhaps blur the line between online and offline spaces when mobilising. As Mihira highlights it is crucial to challenge "the duality between the online and offline spaces" - though she is generally not fond of utilising the term cyberfeminism. Online activism, therefore, should not be thought of as a less radical way of mobilising. As Shams and Nadia, along with Mariam highlight a very crucial point: how empowering of a tool it is in accessing knowledge beyond the hierarchy and inaccessibility of academic language.

TFC have never marginalised anonymous profiles as they are highly aware of what does it mean to live under a brutal repressive regime like Saudi Arabia. As Alvin puts it: "they didn't treat them as numbers but as activists who have something to say and we must listen to them, they understand the importance of cyberfeminism for those who can't be out on the streets, and they are good at utilising it to facilitate solidarity beyond borders." Alvin is a strong believer that cyberfeminism has helped Saudis connect their

---

[71] Judith Jack Halberstam as cited in Alyosxa Tudor, "Dimensions of Transnationalism", *Feminist Review* 117, no. 1 (2017): 20-40, doi:10.1057/s41305-017-0092-5; Judith Jack Halberstam, "F2M: The Making of Female Masculinity", in *The Lesbian Postmodern* (New York: Columbia University, 1994), 215, 226.
[72] See, for example, *Towards a Feminist Consciousness* publication on alternative forms of justice: Mala Badi,

"'Iie'tiqal al-adala: al-takhali 'an nusuyt al-dawla nahw nasuyt al-adala", Towards A Feminist Consciousness, 2020, https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/
[73] Amina Mama's "Challenging Militarized Masculinities": Mena Souilem, "Tahady al-zukuria al-eskaria", *Towards A Feminist Consciousness*, 2021, https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/

struggles, but also seek knowledge beyond the confines of repressive regimes. Similarly, Razan views cyberfeminism as an alternative space for organising and mobilising differently, especially for those who cannot mobilise otherwise. The cyberspace, as Razan recounts, has the capacity to destabilise nationalist's logics of belonging:

> The digital space made me feel part of multiple feminist movements (and not only in Lebanon)…It made me realise that not everything has to be done on the streets, we can find new tools to engage and organise differently.

Although Razan was compelled by the dreams of cyborg feminists of the 90s in transcending the limitations of gender and so on in the cyberspace, she raises a very crucial challenge, that is the violence of the cyberspace, one of the reasons that held her back to launch her online platform earlier than 2020. Similarly, as Mariam notes, surveillance to smearing and cyberbullying are the new forms of misogyny.

This echoes Awino Okech's point on online aggression as a reflection of the offline violence. In that, morality and respectability tropes are used against feminists in the form of online threats, stalking, cyber-bullying, revenge porn and so on.[74] However, this hostile environment is challenged/confronted, as Razan underlines: "there's now a growing number of feminist and queer platforms that collectively support one another against this backlash." This demonstrates how feminists and queer people are repurposing the cyberspace through building transnational communities that are also disrupting "normative constructions of femininities and masculinities."[75] It further indicates that since a typical element of leadership is disrupting norms, TFC's leadership constantly intends to challenge/push against the status quo.

4.3. Political Love

Through the prism of political love and care, the notion of collective leadership is redefined. Cyberfeminism is again utilised as a tool to express political love beyond the rigidity of national borders and gender binary. And thus, it goes on to transing the nation and gender.

Political love is translated from within TFC's work. This is manifested in their usage of *el-tebra'a*,[76] a form of verses which are similar to poetry, very specific to Sahrawi and Mauritanian women's culture, in which it was/is a form of expression against colonialism and occupation, but also sheds light on solidarity across peoples.[77] This form of poetry is fluid in the sense that each person can narrate two or four lines, and then add their own experience, in an attempt to reflect on their emotions and feelings. The private group utilises *el-tebra'a* as a tool of displaying care and solidarity by tackling mental health, as Nadia corroborates: "it is too personal and emotional." These circles also utilise women's expertise -who are medical doctors- to share their knowledge around reproductive justice and health.

This echoes black feminisms' long tradition of conceptions of love "as a form of collectivity" that is rooted in solidarity and transformation, through transcending the confines of selfhood. As Jennifer C. Nash puts it: "transforming love from the personal…into a theory of justice." For instance, the group provides Wardah with love and solidarity as a survivor/victim of sexual violence. Through TFC, she came to the realisation that she was not alone. It was/is a space where Wardah can write about sexual violence, but also discuss mental health and care politics, something she believes is crucial to our feminist praxis. TFC, in this light, employ what Nash calls "love-politics" through the prism of mutual vulnerability and witnessing. They reframe mutual vulnerability on the basis of their coexistence. In that, their survival is mutually dependent,[78] and hence creating these

[74] Awino Okech, "Feminist Digital Counterpublics: Challenging Femicide in Kenya and South Africa", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 46, no. 4 (2021): 1013-1033. doi:10.1086/713299.

[75] Awino Okech. "Feminist Digital Counterpublics: Challenging Femicide in Kenya and South Africa", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 46, no. 4 (2021): 1013-1033. doi:10.1086/713299.

[76] See for example: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRQ1-ps_bIU and

https://www.instagram.com/p/CKjubMhALry/?utm_medium=copy_link

[77] See *Towards a Feminist Consciousness* Instagram post on *el-tebra'a*:
https://www.instagram.com/p/CKjubMhALry/?utm_medium=copy_link

[78] Jennifer C Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality* (Duke University Press, 2018), 115-116, 119.

alternative spaces of solidarity in their quest for social transformation and justice.

TFC's love-politics shape and consolidate their collective leadership style through their commitment and shared responsibility to create worlds of interrelatedness by connecting struggles and extending solidarity. This prospect of love inspires questions around our "deep" responsibilities towards each other "by virtue of our collective inhabitation of the social world." TFC's commitment to the notion of mutual vulnerability permits them and their collaborators and even followers to be witnesses to the structural violence committed against them/us and those they/we are bound to. For instance, through seeing and naming forms of violence, including the occupation of Western Sahara, especially when others refuse to see it. Likewise, the way they connect and extend their liberation struggle to Palestine, is "a practice of love, of tenderness, and of political world-making." [79] That's the political risk that TFC are taking to challenge the nationalist, racist and sexist logics of belonging, as Tudor tells us, through the prism of solidarity building.

TFC's different way of showing political love and solidarity is further manifested and consolidated through providing a space that narrates stories of resistance and struggle, but also looking for spaces of joy from within. As Alvin corroborates "*Towards a Feminist Consciousness* became a dream come true, it is a space with no red lines or censorship, this space reconnected me with my old passion, that is writing, I was able to write about trans people experiences in Saudi Arabia." This further confirms how their leadership -through the prism of political love and solidarity- is grounded in centring transnational approaches to intersectionality in producing knowledge.

Transcending official collaborations and partnerships, Mihira offers us a different outlook of political love, that is referrals. The power of always remembering to put their names forward in panels as an expression of political love. For Mihira, partnerships with monetary value -that could possibly support the expansion and sustainability of TFC- are also another form of political love. Although Shams and Nadia assert that the lack of financial support -mainly due to the occupation- would never halt their work, lack of materialising this form of

political love could still possibly present a challenge for the platform to sustain itself on the long run.

Similarly, Mariam highlights other ways of political love, and that is trying to launch a crowdfunding campaign to better support the technical aspect of TFC: turning it from a *WordPress* into a proper website. This will help the platform to make it easier-to-use when scrolling through their work. In Mariam's words: "…this is our platform, it is for all of us, and we should support it in all we can." This corroborates that TFC are redefining notions of belonging through fostering and stimulating transnational mutual solidarity networks - that are voluntarily established on the basis of political love.

Razan and Mihira expressed different ways of political love, that is translating TFC's work to other languages, "especially the knowledge produced on Western Sahara, as it doesn't get much attention," as Razan Highlights. This could thus extend their reach to non-Arab speaking populations. This offers new ways of valuing their work, but more importantly, possibly connecting TFC's work with other movements beyond continental and sub-regional boundaries. This could, therefore, contribute to their politics of knowledge production through breaking the inaccessibility and/or absence of knowledge produced on particular geographical locations. Nonetheless, the lack thereof would act as a barrier in limiting TFC's capacity to connect with different movements. As Ronnie has underscored, although publishing in Arabic is crucial to expand their reach across the Arab-speaking world, it would simultaneously limit their readership.

Mariam, Razan and Mihira's eagerness to express and practice political love are manifested in their aspirations and ideas to better sustain the online platform beyond individuals. It is further demonstrated in their worry about Shams and Nadia's burnout, as they are carrying most of the burden to uphold this feminist solidarity model with very limited resources, but also under such hostile environment, that is the occupation. This worry reflects how collective leadership without political love and care would risk retardation. This was previously demonstrated in the dropout of four members of the online platform.

---

[79] Jennifer C Nash, *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality* (Duke University Press, 2018), 115-116, 119.

Political love is thus not immune from political disappointments, especially when the tension between theory and praxis is inflated. This is often felt by Nadia and Shams when there is resistance from within some feminist circles -within the Arab-speaking world- in exposing the atrocities committed by the Moroccan regime against the Sahrawis for example. Similarly, Mihira and Ronnie expressed their frustration towards the hesitation of including black and queer people, along with sex workers into the conversation within some feminist circles, and thus feminist agenda -across the MENA. Nonetheless, disappointment allows TFC to identify what they seek and aspire to transform, as Mihira illuminates. Queer feminist praxis, in this light, opens up "space for each other to share, experiment, fail, and shake the taken-for-grantedness of feminism with contradicting, ever-changing performances"[80] of being and becoming.

4.3.1. Subverting Mis/readings

Subverting mis/readings further consolidates TFC's collective leadership through the prism of political love in ways that move beyond the nation and gender binary. Cyberfeminism is, similarly, utilised as a powerful tool that paves the way for such subversive mis/readings to rise. For instance, discussions around *el-malhafa*, the Sahrawi and Mauritanian dress for women, complicates our understanding around issues of passing in certain ways and/or being mis/read. Shams underlines her contradictory sentiments towards *el-malhafa,* in which it represents modes of control over her body. But also, an object of resistance against colonialism and institutionalised discrimination that is entrenched against Sahrawis in schooling, employment, university enrolment, travel and so on. For instance, Sahrawis need to have the financial capabilities to move out to Moroccan main cities to obtain a university degree, as no university is located within the occupied territories.[81]

Similarly, Nadia recalls an incident where a Sahrawi woman was attacked on social media for not wearing her *el-malhafa* on her PhD defence day. Nadia, therefore, talked back, as a response to such attacks: unpacking the patriarchal logic that requires women to wear *el-malhafa*, while men are not required to do the same. Nadia's response resulted in being called out as a Moroccan spy and a traitor to the Sahrawi social and political identity. This mis/reading of Nadia, along with fellow Sahrawi feminists, brought the topic to the forefront through social media hashtags for the first time on a massive-scale though there was a smearing campaign against her.[82] Although the incident of *el-malhafa* could be a manifestation of internet violence and policing, it simultaneously reveals how cyberfeminism can be utilised in subversive ways to shed light on a particular topic and possibly interrupt the reproduction of gendered and sexual normalisations that could also be racialised, even if it is momentary.[83]

Similarly, Razan shares how she gets mis/read, in which being a feminist automatically means you are not concerned with the anti-colonial struggle. Likewise, Mariam had several encounters with some German feminists who misread her feminism in a way that is aligned with the Israeli Occupation. Mariam, in this light, used this misreading in subversive ways to claim her existence, her multilayered struggle against occupation, but also against patriarchy within her society. Mariam narrates:

> At first, I froze but now I tell them I am fighting many fights: local patriarchy and colonialism, arms trade and so on…I come from Gaza, I lived three wars and I am angry. But even in Gaza, being a feminist is misread as being "westernised" or brainwashed by some.

This shows that no matter how many times one is being mis/read does not mean becoming.[84] Misreading/s, as

[80] Lara Özlen, ""No Terfs On Our TURF:" Building Alliances Through Fractions on Social Media In İstanbul", *Kohl: A Journal for Body and Gender Research* 6, no. 3 (2020): 385, doi:10.36583/2020060316.

[81] Erica Vasquez, "Living Under Occupation in The Western Sahara: Women, Resistance and Self-Determination", Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace & Security, no. 6 (2014): 13, https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Vasquez-Western-Sahara.pdf.

[82] As Nadia recounts: "it was the first time to open the issue of *el-malhafa* on a wider scale and to speak about the control

over our bodies through imposing *el-malhafa* the same way as *el-abaya* in Saudi Arabia, especially that Sahrawis claim to have the most advanced women's rights status in the region, but at the same time they will kill you for not wearing *el-malhafa*."

[83] Alyosxa Tudor, "Dimensions of Transnationalism", *Feminist Review* 117, no. 1 (2017): 20-40, doi:10.1057/s41305-017-0092-5.

[84] Sara Ahmed as cited in Alyosxa Tudor, "Dimensions of Transnationalism", *Feminist Review* 117, no. 1 (2017): 20-40,

Tudor asserts, complicate our social positioning, in which we keep shifting between "discriminated and privileged positionings" across borders. Through interrogating the relation between being mis/read to passing, and "reactions" to being mis/read,[85]Alvin reflects on his experiences with passing as a gay man by strangers, as he recalls: "I usually pass as a gay man, not as a transman…I never correct them, it doesn't matter whether I am gay or not, nothing is shameful about it." Passing and being mis/read as a gay man is utilised as a tactic of resistance and a tool of solidarity to subvert the perceptions of difference in given moments and contexts.[86] As Mihira powerfully puts it:

> I would like to write about femininity and dance and publish it under a pseudo name. I want my gender and sexuality to be anonymous…I will consider it a success if someone reads me as something else because it means that emotions are the highlight of the text, not my fragmented identities… that's the kind of freedom I aspire to indulge. The freedom to be whoever the character is asking you to be right now.

Passing and being mis/read, in the context of TFC's collective leadership, could be utilised as a way of building political alliances rather than being defensive to being mis/read [87] The example provided by Alvin, similarly, as *el-malhafa,* disrupt the reproduction of gendered and sexual normalisations, and thus allows TFC's leadership to transcend sex and gender but also the nation. This further consolidates how TFC's leadership utilises cyberfeminism as a tool to transing the nation and gender.

5. CONCLUSION

TFC's leadership style and processes exhibit an example of collectivism in leadership that detaches "leadership" from the notion of national hierarchy. This is manifested in TFC investment in decentralising knowledge production as it often tends to be limited to particular geographical locations, and hence erasing histories of other struggles within the region, such as the occupation of Western Sahara. Their leadership is attentive to establishing relationality across social movements, in ways that transcend and deconstruct categories, such as the nation and gender. Their leadership emerged as an attempt to prevent their erasure not only beyond national borders, but also within the feminist movement across generations in Western Sahara. This is facilitated through using the cyberspace as a feminist tool to transing the nation and gender.

TFC's collective approach in challenging hierarchal relations is, moreover, demonstrated in their open dialogue, in which every member and/or collaborator participates in the decision-making processes. This approach opens space for blurring the lines between being a leader and a member/follower as everyone can participate in the process (e.g., leading discussions and/or initiating projects). This form of collective leadership unsettles the notion of individual leadership, but also reduces the tension between theory and praxis.

TFC's published work challenges gender power relations that are reinforced through occupation but also the Sahrawi heteropatriarchal society. Through the lens of common difference, their work collectively strengthens feminist consciousness through transcending boundaries. TFC's power and influence, in this light, are asserted and sustained through referent power, in which mutuality is rooted in shared vision/purpose/goals. But also, expert power through theorising their lived-experiences under occupation. Their spectrum of influence is transing the nation and gender through cyberfeminism as a tool to strengthen their solidarity network.

TFC's work is rooted in political love through drawing on care politics by creating intimate and "safe" spaces. These spaces are paved through utilising *el-tebra'a* as a tool of expressing the self within the collective, but also utilising writing as a tool to retrieve passion and joy. Political love is also thought of as the way forward, in which TFC's collaborators are, for example, aspring to utilise translation (from Arabic to other languages) as a tool of extending solidarity. This demonstrates how TFC's collaborators view the platform as a space where they can politically dream. Mis/readings are, similarly,

doi:10.1057/s41305-017-0092-5; Sara Ahmed, "`She'll Wake Up One of These Days and Find She's Turned into A Nigger'", *Theory, Culture & Society* 16, no. 2 (1999): 96, doi:10.1177/02632769922050566.
[85] Alyosxa Tudor, "Dimensions of Transnationalism", *Feminist Review* 117, no. 1 (2017): 20-40, doi:10.1057/s41305-017-0092-5.

[86] Alyosxa Tudor, "Dimensions of Transnationalism", *Feminist Review* 117, no. 1 (2017): 20-40, doi:10.1057/s41305-017-0092-5.
[87] Alyosxa Tudor, "Dimensions of Transnationalism", *Feminist Review* 117, no. 1 (2017): 20-40, doi:10.1057/s41305-017-0092-5.

utilised as a subversive tool to extend solidarity and express political love.

TFC redefine meanings of collective leadership through being attentive to love and care politics as integral elements to their transnational queer feminist praxis and imagination of the world. This framing of leadership puts forward the significance of integrating emotional leadership when theorising collective leadership processes. TFC's investment in political love could be read as their ongoing refuge beyond the confines of national borders. Although cyberfeminism presents them with the tool (without necessarily the theoretical framework) when the offline seems to be impossible under certain repressive regimes, it continues to represent an ongoing challenge regarding their individual and collective safety simultaneously.

Although TFC's vision continues to be challenged by the continuation of the Moroccan Occupation and the Sahrawi heteropatriarchal society, they continue to build mutual solidarity networks beyond national borders -in their struggle against colonialism, patriarchy, capitalism, racism, and so forth. It is thus unproductive to examine TFC's leadership through the prism of their closeness to their goals, as their story in these historical processes is still unfolding for generations to come. This paper, instead, puts forward how TFC set an example of collectivism in leadership processes.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, William. "Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews." In *Handbook of Practical   Program Evaluation*. K. Newcomer, H. Hatry and J. Wholey. California: Jossey Bass, 2015.

Ahmed, Sara. "'She'll Wake Up One of These Days and Find She's Turned into A Nigger'". *Theory, Culture & Society* 16, no. 2 (1999): 87-106. doi:10.1177/02632769922050566.

Alexander, M. Jacqui, and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. "Cartographies of Knowledge and Power: Transnational Feminism as Radical Practice". In *Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis*, 23-45. Amanda Lock Swarr and Richa Nagar. New York: SUNY Press, 2010.

Allan, J. "Imagining Saharawi Women: The Question of Gender in POLISARIO Discourse". *The Journal of North African Studies* 15, no. 2 (2010): 189-202. doi:10.1080/13629380902861103.

Alvin. "Laqad jaealuni mnafqaan, al-haweia al-qasria katahrid 'alaa al-dhaat." *Towards A Feminist Consciousness*, 2021. https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/2021/03/31/%d9%84%d9%82%d8%af-%d8%ac%d8%b9%d9%84%d9%88%d9%86%d9%8a-%d9%85%d9%86%d8%a7%d9%81%d9%82%d8%a7%d9%8b%d8%8c-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%87%d9%88%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%82%d8%b3%d8%b1%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d9%83%d8%aa/

Badi, Mala. "'Ie'tiqal al-adala: altakhali 'an nusuyt al-dawla nahw nasuyt al-adala". *Towards A Feminist Consciousness*, 2020. https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/2020/10/19/%d8%a5%d8%b9%d8%aa%d9%82%d8%a7%d9%84-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b9%d8%af%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%aa%d8%ae%d9%84%d9%8a-%d8%b9%d9%86-%d9%86%d8%b3%d9%88%db%8c%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%af%d9%88%d9%84%d8%a9/.

Barrett, Michèle. "The Concept Of 'Difference'". *Feminist Review*, no. 26 (1987): 29-41. doi:10.2307/1394733.

Bass, Bernard M, Ruth Bass, and Ruth R Bass. *The Bass Handbook of Leadership*. Riverside: Free Press, 2008.

Bond, Kanisha, Milli Lake, Sarah Parkinson, Kanisha Bond, Milli Lake, Sarah Parkinson, Heidi Tworek, Mackenzie Israel-Trummel, Wendy Chun, and Douglas Rogers. "Lessons from Conflict Studies on Research During the Coronavirus Pandemic". Items, 2021. https://items.ssrc.org/covid-19-and-the-social-sciences/social-research-and-insecurity/lessons-from-conflict-studies-on-research-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/.

Browne, Kath. "Negotiations and Fieldworkings: Friendship and Feminist Research". *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 2 (2), 132-46.

https://acme-journal.org/index.php/acme/article/view/690.

Browne, Kath. "Snowball Sampling: Using Social Networks to Research Non-Heterosexual Women". *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 8, no. 1 (2005): 47-60. doi:10.1080/1364557032000081663.

Creswell, John W. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2007.

Daniels, Jessie. "Rethinking Cyberfeminism(s): Race, Gender, And Embodiment". *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 37, no. 1-2 (2009): 101-124. doi:10.1353/wsq.0.0158.

Dawson, Brit. "Instagram's Problem with Sex Workers Is Nothing New". Dazed, 2020. https://www.dazeddigital.com/science-tech/article/51515/1/instagram-problem-with-sex-workers-is-nothing-new-censorship.

Egyptian Streets. "From Tiktok to Jail: Popular Egyptian Influencer Arrested For 'Violating Family Values'". Egyptian Streets, May 16, 2020. https://egyptianstreets.com/2020/05/16/from-tiktok-to-jail-popular-egyptian-influencer-arrested-for-violating-family-values/.

Feminists from Gaza. "Al-nisa' yaqtuln maratayn: 'an al-istiemar wa al'abawia wa filastin." *Towards A Feminist Consciousness*, 2021.

https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/2021/03/08/%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%86%d8%b3%d8%a7%d8%a1-%d9%8a%d9%82%d8%aa%d9%84%d9%86-%d9%85%d8%b1%d8%aa%d9%8a%d9%86-%d8%b9%d9%86-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%b3%d8%aa%d8%b9%d9%85%d8%a7%d8%b1-%d9%88%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a3%d8%a8/

Fremlova, Lucie. "Non-Romani Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity". *Critical Romani Studies* 1, no. 2 (2018): 98-123. doi:10.29098/crs.v1i2.25.

French, John, and Bertram Raven. "The Bases for Social Power". In *Studies in Social Power*, Edited by Dorwin

Cartwright, 150-167. University of Michigan: Institute for Social Research, 1959.

Gajjala, Radhika. "South Asian Digital Diasporas and Cyberfeminist Webs: Negotiating Globalization, Nation, Gender and Information Technology Design". *Contemporary South Asia* 12, no. 1 (2003): 41-56. doi:10.1080/0958493032000123362.

"Global Blackness & transnational solidarity with Dr Awino Okech." *Global Affairs: King's College London.* October 21, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PjSPOLCq0k.

Grint, Keith. *Leadership: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010

Halberstam, Judith Jack. "F2M: The Making of Female Masculinity". In *the Lesbian Postmodern*, 210-228. Laura Doan. New York: Columbia University, 1994.

Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora". In *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, 2-27. Jonathan Rutherford. London: Lawrence & Wishart., 1990.

Hundle, Anneeth Kaur, Ioana Szeman, and Joanna Pares Hoare. "What Is the Transnational in Transnational Feminist Research?". *Feminist Review* 121, no. 1 (2019): 3-8. doi:10.1177/0141778918817525.

Ibrahim, Ahmed. "In and/or/plus out: Queering the Closet." *Kohl: A Journal for Body and Gender Research* 6, no. 3 (2020): 290–306. https://doi.org/10.36583/2020060307.

Kehlani, and Souad Souilem. "Al-'urud al-astieradia w al-misahat al-kuiria al-mutakhayala". *Towards A Feminist Consciousness*, 2021. https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/2021/07/30/%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b9%d8%b1%d9%88%d8%b6-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%b3%d8%aa%d8%b9%d8%b1%d8%a7%d8%b6%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d9%88%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d8%b3%d8%a7%d8%ad%d8%a7%d8%aa-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%83%d9%88%d9%8a%d8%b1/.

Kiger, Michelle E. and Lara Varpio. "Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131". *Medical Teacher*, 2020. DOI: 10.1080/0142159X.2020.1755030

Kollontay, Mariam. "Man qal 'anani lam 'asheur bal-khawf." *Towards A Feminist Consciousness*,

2020.https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/2020/07/13/%d9%85%d9%86-%d9%82%d8%a7%d9%84-%d8%a3%d9%86%d9%8a-%d9%84%d9%85-%d8%a3%d8%b4%d8%b9%d8%b1-%d8%a8%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ae%d9%88%d9%81/

Kollontay, Mariam. "Han al-waqt li'iinha' al-tahmishi!." *Towards A Feminist Consciousness,* 2020.
https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/2020/07/17/%d8%ad%d8%a7%d9%86-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%88%d9%82%d8%aa-%d9%84%d8%a5%d9%86%d9%87%d8%a7%d8%a1-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%aa%d9%87%d9%85%d9%8a%d8%b4/

Lippert, Anne. "Sahrawi Women in The Liberation Struggle of The Sahrawi People". *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 17, no. 3 (1992): 636-651. doi:10.1086/494752.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. ""Under Western Eyes" Revisited: Feminist Solidarity Through Anticapitalist Struggles". *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 28, no. 2 (2003): 499-535. doi:10.1086/342914.

Mojab, Shahrzad. "The Politics Of "Cyberfeminism" In the Middle East: The Case of Kurdish Women". *Race, Gender & Class* 8, no. 4 (2001): 42-61.

Mougoué, Jacqueline-Bethel Tchouta. "Gender And (Militarized) Secessionist Movements in Africa". *Meridians* 17, no. 2 (2018): 338-358. doi:10.1215/15366936-7176483.

Mwambari, David. "Can Online Platforms Be E-Pana-Africana Liberation Zones for Pan-African and Decolonization Debates? / Council for The Development of Social Science Research in Africa". Codesria.Org, 2021. http://codesria.org/spip.php?article3130.

Mzoughi, Jihen, and Jihen Mzoughi. "Activists Are Fighting Social Media's Shadow Ban On Palestinian Voices". Mille World, 2021. https://www.milleworld.com/social-media-shadow-ban-palestine/.

Nash, Jennifer C. *Black Feminism Reimagined: After Intersectionality*. Duke University Press, 2018.

Neuman, Lawrence. *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. Needham Heights, MA: Allen and Bacon, 2011.

Olonisakin, 'Funmi. "Towards Re-Conceptualising Leadership for Sustainable Peace." *Leadership and Developing Societies* 2, no. 1 (2017): 1–30. https://doi.org/10.47697/lds.3435001.

Okech, Awino. "Feminist Digital Counterpublics: Challenging Femicide in Kenya and South Africa". *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 46, no. 4 (2021): 1013-1033. doi:10.1086/713299.

Özlen, Lara. ""No Terfs on Our TURF:" Building Alliances Through Fractions on Social Media In İstanbul". *Kohl: A Journal for Body and Gender Research* 6, no. 3 (2020): 369-386. doi:10.36583/2020060316.

Porter, Elaine, Sheila M Neysmith, Marge Reitsma-Street, and Stephanie Baker Collins. "Reciprocal Peer Interviewing". *International Review of Qualitative Research* 2, no. 2 (2009): 291-312. doi:10.1525/irqr.2009.2.2.291.

Robson, Colin. *Real World Research*. Oxford: Wiley, 2011.

Samir, Marina. "The Women of TikTok: Their Freedom is my Freedom." *Kohl: A Journal for Body and Gender Research* 5, no. 3 (2020): 21-28.

Sassen, Saskia. "Towards A Sociology of Information Technology". *Current Sociology* 50, no. 3 (2002): 365-388. doi:10.1177/0011392102050003005.

Sher-Gil, Amrita. "Al-sahra' al-gharbia: ta'amulat fi eunf al-istiemar w al-'abawiat w al-eunsuria". Towards A Feminist Consciousness, 2021. https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/2021/01/04/%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b5%d8%ad%d8%b1%d8%a7%d8%a1-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ba%d8%b1%d8%a8%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d8%aa%d8%a3%d9%85%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%aa-%d9%81%d9%8a-%d8%b9%d9%86%d9%81-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%b3%d8%aa%d8%b9%d9%85/

Souilem, Mena. "'Ayn yajib 'an naqfi: al-nisa' al-'afriqiaat fi zaman al-harb". *Towards A Feminist Consciousness*, 2021.

https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/2021/11/24/%d8%a3%d9%8a%d9%86-%d9%8a%d8%ac%d8%a8-%d8%a3%d9%86-%d9%86%d9%82%d9%81-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%86%d8%b3%d8%a7%d8%a1-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a3%d9%81%d8%b1%d9%8a%d9%82%d9%8a%d8%a7%d8%aa-%d9%81%d9%8a-%d8%b2%d9%85%d9%86/.

Souilem, Mena. "Tahady al-zukuria al-eskaria". *Towards A Feminist Consciousness*, 2021, https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/2021/11/14/%d8%aa%d8%ad%d8%af%d9%8a-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b0%d9%83%d9%88%d8%b1%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b9%d8%b3%d9%83%d8%b1%d9%8a%d8%a9/

Subramanian, Sujatha. "From the Streets to The Web: Looking at Feminist Activism on Social Media". *Economic and Political Weekly* 50, no. 17 (2015): 71-78.

Tellis, Winston. "Application of A Case Study Methodology". *The Qualitative Report* 3, no.3 (1997). doi:10.46743/2160-3715/1997.2015.

Thomas, Grace Elizabeth. "Re-Imagining Framework for Leadership Analysis". *Leadership and Developing Societies* 5, no. 1 (2020): 73-77. doi:10.47697/lds.34348005.

Tolba, Noura. "Tarikh al-nidal al-naswii al-muritanii". *Towards A Feminist Consciousness*, 2020. https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/2020/08/07/%d8%aa%d8%a7%d8%b1%d9%8a%d8%ae-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%86%d8%b6%d8%a7%d9%84-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%86%d8%b3%d9%88%d9%8a-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d9%88%d8%b1%d9%8a%d8%aa%d8%a7%d9%86%d9%8a/.

Tudor, Alyosxa. "Dimensions of Transnationalism". *Feminist Review* 117, no. 1 (2017): 20-40. doi:10.1057/s41305-017-0092-5.

Vasquez, Erica. "Living Under Occupation in The Western Sahara: Women, Resistance and Self-Determination". Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace & Security, no. 6 (2014): 1-20. https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Vasquez-Western-Sahara.pdf.

Wafaa. "Hal 'ana kafiatun? surat al-jasad w al-'ieaqa". *Towards A Feminist Consciousness*, 2021. https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/2021/07/30/%d9%87%d9%84-%d8%a3%d9%86%d8%a7-%d9%83%d8%a7%d9%81%d9%8a%d8%a9%d8%9f-%d8%b5%d9%88%d8%b1%d8%a9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ac%d8%b3%d8%af-%d9%88%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a5%d8%b9%d8%a7%d9%82%d8%a9/.

Wargan, Pawel. 2022. Review of *A Forgotten Colony in the Sahara*. LAP Progressive. November 16, 2022. https://www.laprogressive.com/africa/forgotten-colony-in-the-sahara.

Weiss, Margot. "The Interlocutor Slot: Citing, Crediting, Cotheorizing, and the Problem of Ethnographic Expertise." *American Anthropologist* 123, no. 4 (2021): 948–53. https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13639.

Yin, Robert K. *Qualitative Research from Start to Finish*. Reprint, New York: Guilford Press, 2011.

Yin, Robert K. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2014.

"Al-jinsaniat w al-wasm fi al-mujtamae al-sahrawi."

Towards A Feminist Consciousness, 2021.

https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/2021/03/09/%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%ac%d9%86%d8%b3%d8%a7%d9%86%d9%8a%d8%a9-%d9%88%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%88%d8%b5%d9%85-%d9%81%d9%8a-%d8%a7%d9%84%d9%85%d8%ac%d8%aa%d9%85%d8%b9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b5%d8%ad%d8%b1%d8%a7%d9%88%d9%8a/

"من نحن". *Towards a Feminist consciousness*, September 4, 2018. Accessed on October 7, 2021 https://feministconsciousnessrevolution.wordpress.com/2018/09/04/%d9%85%d9%86-%d9%86%d8%ad%d9%86/

APPENDIX 1

Name	Age[1]	Geography	Occupation	
Shams	28	Western Sahara	Unemployed (Sociology, BA)	Founding member
Nadia	24	Western Sahara	Unemployed (English Literature, BA)	Founding member
Wardah	22	Western Sahara	Unemployed (Engineer, Postgrad diploma)	Member and a collaborator
Mariam	32	Gaza, Palestine (currently based in Germany	Social/NGO worker (Gender Studies, MA)	Collaborator
Razan	20s	Palestine (based in Lebanon	Social/NGO worker (Gender Studies, MA)	Collaborator
Alvin	26	Saudi Arabia (based in the UK)	Human Rights activist (doing his master's in businesses administration)	Collaborator
Mihira	33	Sudan (based in Egypt)	Editor and Writer (Business Administration, BSc)	Diehard Fan/Collaborator
Ronnie	18	Sudan (raised in Saudi Arabia)	Content Writer and an aspiring fine arts student	Collaborator

---

[1] Note that these are their ages during the initial field work in November/December 2021.