

Saving My Activist Selfhood

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My community is not there

***Ines Lukac :** I have been writing a lot about this concept called “Academic Migration” which was my case. I guess different individuals belonging to queer community especially from non-European Union countries, use different strategies and mechanisms in order to provide safety for themselves. In my own case that strategy was student internships, undergraduate studies, graduate studies and taking different courses just to be outside of the context in which I experienced discrimination, abuse and violence.

In that process, you meet other queer people who actually share some identity categories with you and maybe their life story. You see that your activism is not done at the moment when you are safe. So I'm in Sweden now and I don't have a need to do activism because my biggest inspiration is when there is a need for it. “I have to do this! For my friends, for my queer community, for my trans sisters, I have to do this for”. It becomes activist selfhood that simply do not evaporate and it doesn't go away regardless of your work.

Before it was mostly throughout my research and academic writings afterwards during the activist works in different NGOs. Now my work has nothing to do with the actual NGO or university setting. I am working in a queer club and I hosting the queer events. Still as a form of activism, providing a safe space for people.

My experience was terrible. When I'm talking about academia in the context of academic migration, I am talking about the gender studies departments all around Sweden where the student's body is mostly comprised by non- queer people who are entering and learning like what actually means to be queer. Maybe it has to do with my expectation. When I started with gender studies master program I was looking so much forward to it because I thought I will find my community there. My community is not there, in terms of in structure, in terms of students.

In Sweden particularly, I have never had a problem with my writing and papers that have to do with the transgender rights, because first of all I was the only trans person in my class and they were interesting to know the perspective in transgender studies and I always used my exoticification in a good way but the bad thing that really surprised me was when I started to deal more with sex work studies, how and from where discrimination is coming from, exactly come from the Department.

Include us, give us space, don't treat us as too much, don't invite me to give a lecture when you need some particular topic. Don't invite me for exotic things. Give me a job.

Ramona Dima,

Basically, I'm not formally trained in either gender studies or queer studies. I started in a informal way just I was lucky to find some persons who later on became my friends and they were hosting a feminist reading circle around some discussions over the text staff and developed to different activities like grassroots protests. Later, I applied for a PhD at the university to find what's going on with the queer culture in Romanian. After taking my title, I came here. So, I am a queer migrant from Eastern Europe and I want to develop my project through academic, artistic and activist area. I have given some lectures about what is

happening in Romania and have organized the first queer and feminists conference in Bucharest in Romania.

***Ines Lukac:** Ines Lukac is a Serbian performative practitioner, gender studies scholar, and a transfeminist activist. In her professional and activist work, Ines is focused on transgender studies, sex work studies, and conceptual performative presentations of her activism. She lives and work in Stockholm, Sweden.