Let’s Design Equality Together
The Push*Back*Lash
Cartoon Series

Divide & Conquer – Perspectives on Digital Disconnection

The online world is a highly polarized space in which complex issues are oversimplified and miscommunication happens frequently and easily. The two cartoons capture these aspects based on our research in the PUSH*BACK*LASH project.

The first cartoon, 'Divide & Conquer' highlights that the *Gender* is framed and discussed in various ways. On the one side, people are talking about *Gender* and intersectionality in relation to equality and what it means to create an equal world for all genders. Intersectionality is the idea that different parts of a person's identity—like race, gender, class, sexuality, or disability—can overlap and create unique experiences of discrimination or privilege. It means people can face multiple kinds of unfair treatment at the same time, and those experiences are connected. The included emojis reflect this by showing people in non-traditional gender roles and portraying people with different skin colors and backgrounds introducing an intersectional lens. On the other side, people talk about *Gender* and the associated intersectional topics as an annoyance that obtains too much or unnecessary attention. This is reflected in the emojis that show negative sentiments.

Related to that, the second cartoon, 'Digital Disconnect' highlights how actors use *Gender* to coopt online debates independent of which societal issue is discussed. This emerges in two ways. First, instead of constructive debates about reasons for societal problems and potential solutions, *Gender* including affirmative action to increase gender equality is blamed for all kinds of societal problems. The online discourse frames *Gender* as the key issue of the current time and every debate can be associated with it. Even - as the last bird shows - a discussion about coffee. Second, backlash and negative comments towards politicians on social media are gendered. The politician's gender is used to insult them and devaluate their social media posts independent of the topic discussed in the post.

In combination, the two cartoons show how parallel universes exist online, that is how people are trying to talk about important social issues but are lacking a common ground. Debates about gender equality are important and necessary, but often *Gender* is coopted by actors – including anti-gender movements - as a scapegoat for other pressing societal issues.

More information

Key themes explained

What is gender? Listen to Judith Butler's thoughts to learn more: click here

Are constructive political debates online possible? click here

What is intersectionality? Watch this video to learn more: click here

Gendered hate online

Intersectionality plays a key role in understanding who is disproportionally impacted by online hate.

For a brief introduction: click here

For a deeper focus on the impact of gendered hate against politicians: click here

Anti-gender movements

Anti-gender is an umbrella term to describe a loose network of actors that oppose gender equality.

For a brief introduction click here

For an in-depth report by the United Nations Institute for Societal Development: click here

The Cartoonists

Beldan Sezen is an artist and writer. Her work includes graphic novels, artists' books, drawings, essays, and installations. She is the creative director and co-founder of Cypher, a digital comics magazine that brings audiences into the radical lives and dangerous work of human rights defenders around the world. She lives and works in Amsterdam and New York.

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PUSH*BACK*LASH

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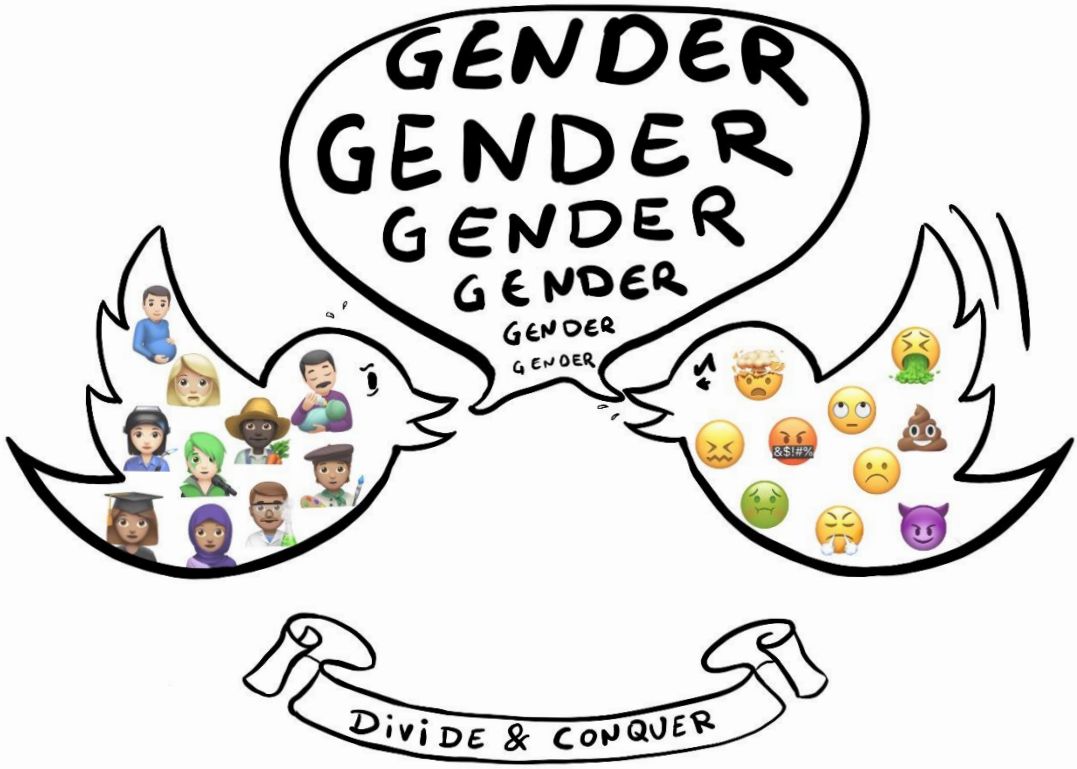

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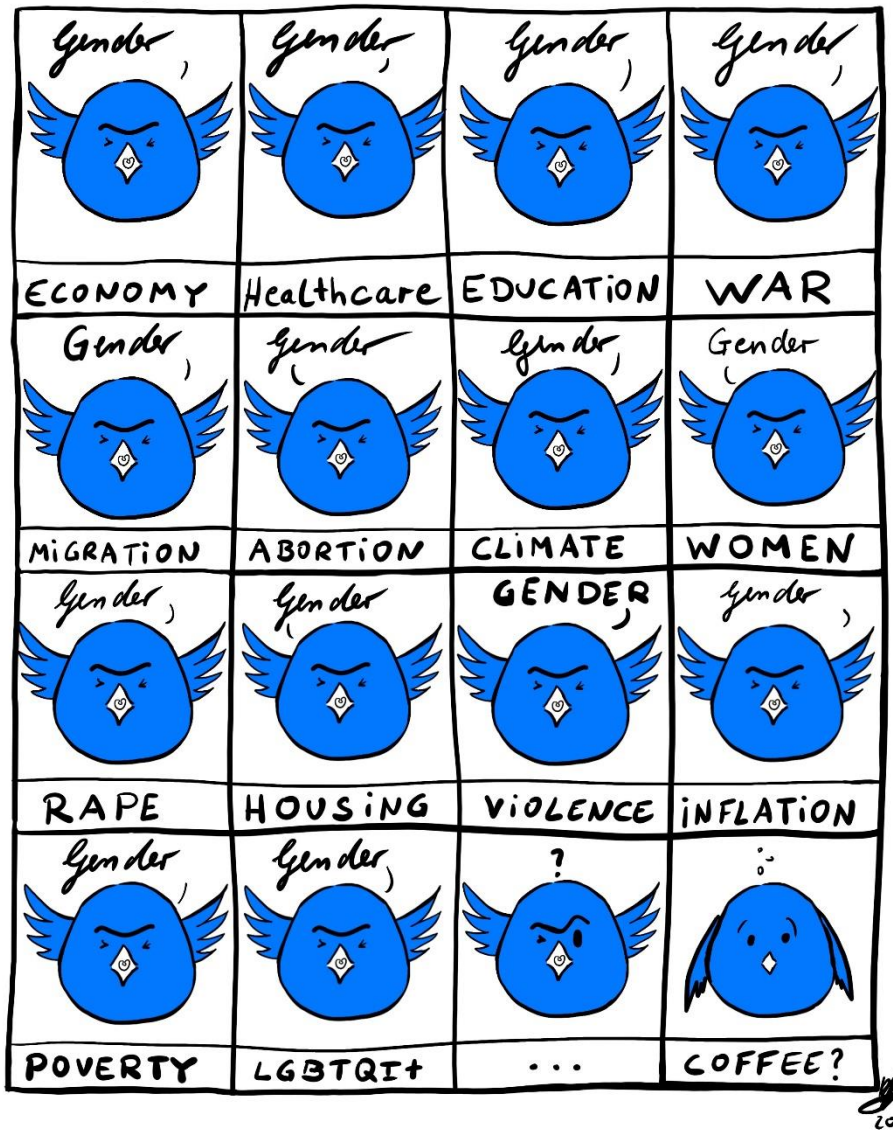
Digital Disconnect.



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