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SEXISM: NAMING A PROBLEM, BECOMING A PROBLEM

Abstract. *In this article, we analyse practices of naming sexism based on empirical data. The analysis is based on the concept of a 'wilful subject' as discussed by Sara Ahmed. In the analysis, we are particularly interested in the contextual characteristics of naming sexism, that is, when and how does the naming occur, and when is the naming absent. We are also interested in the 'backlashes' the one who is naming sexism is confronted with. Those backslashes function as attempts to legitimise already named and problematised sexism by addressing the subject doing the naming as a wilful one or a feminist killjoy. Thus, by naming a problem, the subject who is naming it may themselves become a problem.*
Key words: *sexism, higher education, wilful subject, self-silencing, feminist killjoy*

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Introduction

Considerable research (Romito and Volpato, 2005; Monroe et al., 2008; Arsenjuk et al., 2013; Ule, 2013; Jogan, 2014; Arsenjuk and Vidmar, 2015; Fritsch, 2015) shows the continuous presence of sexism in academia, which can then be understood as a gendered and gendering institution (Acker, 1990; Martin Yancey, 1992; Holmes, 2005; Holmes, 2006; Ridgeway, 2011). As such, academic institutions consist of and mirror wider social dynamics based on gender binarism and its power relations, meaning that their internal dynamics are embedded in social gender power relations, but also that they function as a gendering mechanism by interpellating subjects into normatively gendered positions, calling on them to enact normative gendered practices (Lester, 2008). The latter are then understood as an effect of an intelligible and fixed (assigned) gender, thereby naturalising the gender performativity and constituting the illusory position of being always-already-gendered as the cause of those practices (Butler, 1990/2001).

In this article, we draw on personal experiences with sexism in academia, particularly on the practices of *naming* the sexism – naming that not only acknowledges sexism but also problematises its existence and widespread prevalence that is difficult to challenge due to habitualised dynamics

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of social life (Bourdieu, 1972/2013). In exploring the practices of naming, we are interested in the dual processes they entail, that is, the characteristics of naming a problem, and the negative sanctions one may be confronted with when naming sexism, that is, *becoming* a problem (Ahmed, 2015). As naming an instance of sexism is conditioned by the perception that certain dynamics are sexist, it is also framed by the context in which specific dynamics occur, namely the concrete and formalised power relations of the academic hierarchy, the explicitness/subtleness of the sexist dynamics, as well as the formal position of the subject who names a problem. These conditions sometimes make the naming difficult or even impossible, thus leading the subject to self-silence herself (Swim et al., 2010).

We are interested in the dynamics of *naming* a problem, that is, when and how naming occurs, and its relation to *becoming* a problem that entails being positioned as a wilful subject, the one who wills wrongly or too little or too much and who in the context of the sexism is then addressed as a conflictive (man-hating lesbian) feminist killjoy (Ahmed, 2014). Based on S. Ahmed (2014), the subject is negatively addressed as wilful when she is 'straying' away or disorienting herself away from what is expected and what is, as such, considered as a 'good will' – the wilful subject is then unwilling to will in the 'right' way. The dynamic of *naming a problem – becoming a problem* (Ahmed, 2015) by being negatively addressed as a wilful subject (Ahmed, 2014) is neither inherently determined nor foreclosed, but is frequent and serious in its effects as becoming a problem is framed in gaslighting dynamics that de-realise and de-legitimise and thereby attempt to neutralise the practice of naming as such and, along with that, also its effects of disorienting the existing social relations in the direction of becoming otherwise (Butler, 2004; Ahmed, 2006; Abramson, 2014).

To highlight these dynamics of naming a problem as such and its relationship to becoming a problem, we analyse data from qualitative research conducted in 2015–2016 in a Slovenian university. The research focuses how pedagogical and non-pedagogical professional workers in higher education perceive sexism. The research questions include the following topics: perception of gender and relations between genders, perception of sexism, potential personal in/direct experiences with sexism, and the responses (or lack of them) to sexism experienced, as well as the self-interpretation of the interviewees' trajectory of sensibility to sexism and other forms of social subordination. The sample consists of two types of subsamples, including non-probability snowball sampling, comprising people who had reported personal in/direct experiences with sexism, and non-probability purposive sampling on the criteria of gender and formal position in academia. Altogether, 26 people were interviewed, 15 of them identified as women, while the rest identified as men. Their pedagogical positions in academia are

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mixed, ranging from assistants to full professors, while the non-pedagogical professional positions include researchers and administrative workers. The gathered data were analysed according to the established principles of qualitative data analysis, organising data into categories based on themes and concepts (Neuman, 2014).

Naming a problem: when (and when not) and how?

Naming a problem, that is, sexism, in itself contains and manifests *freedom to* as conceptualised by Grosz (2010). Freedom to is – in comparison to 'freedom from' – more positively defined as "the condition of, or capacity for, action in life" (Grosz, 2010: 140) and the activities one undertakes to create a future unlike present (Grosz, 2010). 'Freedom to' is not only connected to creating a future unlike the present but, foremost, also to 'no-saying' to the self or, to *not* being willing to go along with the *status quo*, that is, not being willing to join in what is wrong, not being willing to perpetuate "bad world" or "bad life" with its structures and categorisations through which lives are differentially valued (Grosz, 2010; Butler, 2012: 17; Ahmed, 2014). Saying 'no' to the present (as well as to the complicit part of the self) happens simultaneously as saying 'yes' to the alternative direction (which can be seen as a misdirection in relation to the *status quo*) and the future which is already in the making at the same moment as one rejects the present and therefore points to the potentiality of the already residually present future. Naming a problem thus contains these moments of rejecting the present, making the 'here' and familiar strange while creating disorientations (Ahmed, 2006). Through these disorienting practices and creating a disturbance, a subject may be positioned as a wilful one (Ahmed, 2014). Subjects are labelled as such when they are unwilling to be agents of their own harm; naming sexism as a problem is such a rejection of providing the "tyrant with the organs of his power" (Ahmed, 2014: 139).

When not, or, assessment of the risks: power relations and the nature of the sexist dynamic

Research in the context of problematising sexism show traces of being wilful by naming sexism, thereby exposing and destabilising it, as well as traces of self-silencing whereby subjects recognise a certain dynamic as sexist but cannot name it that way due to the contextual factors (Swim et al., 2010). Self-silencing can be understood as a (conscious) form of self-censorship that is social in nature (Swim et al., 2010) or, as Bourdieu (1991) puts it, is structurally enabled by regulating access to expression and the form of expression. Accordingly, it functions in a pre-reflexive, unconscious

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manner, not in the expressive form of externally imposed censorship (Bourdieu, 1991). Namely, its regulative functions are internalised through schemes of classifications and perceptions that render some communication difficult to express, considering the dynamics of the social power present in the field, and its medium of sanctions (Bourdieu, 1991). Conscious self-silencing was also evident in the interviews that were conducted. For example, Jasna and Luka said:

/.../ I was in some sort of internal conflict because, on one hand, I wanted to say 'What, did you all lose your marbles?' but, on the other hand, I was caught up in ... ok, I'm not even permanently employed here and everyone else is laughing. I'm probably the only one who does not find that funny. And I didn't react at the time (Jasna, 2015).

Nobody said anything. Even now, I feel a little ... We were all looking at each other, even sending text messages to each other at this meeting. Because it was ... We didn't know how ... I have to confess, I didn't know how to intervene. I felt powerless, I didn't know, none of us knew (Luka, 2016).

In both cases, we can see the traces of self-silencing in the imposition of established forms of expression, as with Jasna when everyone was laughing at the sexist "jokes", which left her isolated in her own wilfulness, that stood in opposition to the *doxic* forms of expression. In Luka's case, a silent naming of sexism was present, but it was only voiced via safer forms of expression that went unnoticed by the persons producing the sexism. The wilfulness was therefore only voiced through an instantly established coalition of subjects who were being wilful together, albeit not recognised and addressed as such (Ahmed, 2014).

Self-silencing was often reported in cases of asymmetrical power relations, found in specific situations (Swim et al., 2010), as other interviewees also emphasised:

Of course, you don't say that to everyone [that something is sexist]. *This is really important, you can't say it to everyone. Especially not to someone who is, for example, in some leadership position or function ... that can be dangerous* (Martin, 2016).

as well as in cases of subtle sexism which, despite the subtleness, was still perceived as sexist, although not named as such: "If it were an explicit threat, it would be way easier to resist. You can show and say, 'what you just said is unlawful, it's offensive'. But this is not ... You can't point a finger at it, it's really hard /.../" (Jasna, 2015).

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It is still important to stress that being self-silenced does not mean that a subject is necessarily becoming less wilful, or that they finally will correctly. Its wilfulness may reach out in spaces perceived to be safer precisely due to their already-being-wilful nature. The intersubjectivity of being wilful together therefore plays an important role for not only potentially enabling and triggering the subject's wilfulness, but also for its and the subject's survival and persistance (Butler, 2005; Friedman, 1989; Ahmed, 2014) since being expressively wilful can at times and in certain contexts be made unbearable or too frightening by the nature of its potential consequences. The dynamics of self-silencing are thus sometimes necessary in a 'bad world' for a wilful subject to survive and can be seen as a particular strategy that makes the subject's 'good life' in a 'bad world' more possible and easier to achieve and maintain (Butler, 2012)[1]:

> *You always fear the consequences, fearing that you will have troubles because of that* [naming the sexism]. *But I don't have enough power yet, and you do need it to successfully cope with that [consequences of naming sexism]. But sometimes you also need some survival mechanisms* (Eva, 2015).

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Being addressed as wilful when naming a problem – in this case sexism – is not merely perceived as negativity from the perspective of those addressing the subject that way. It may also be felt and experienced as such by the subject who is addressed, thereby adding injurious potential to what is otherwise already an injurious interpellation to a subordinated gendered position (Butler, 1997; Ahmed, 2014; 2016). This injurious potential may inhibit the continuity of being wilful in terms of one's readiness to publicly name the sexism, and shows that doing wilfulness that moves beyond saying 'no' to the self, wilfulness that turns outwardly and reaches into intersubjective space, can be exhaustive and thus may be sporadic in nature, thereby characterised by diverse temporalities that do not necessarily follow a continuous 'straight' trajectory of being expressively *against* normative gender regulations and *for* alterity (Ahmed, 2006; 2014). Being wilful can then incorporate occasional wilful *obedience* that (also) manifests in saying 'yes' to established and *doxic* gendered power relations (Ahmed, 2014). A dispersity of wilfulness in terms of its temporalities as a consequence of the burdensome

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[1] *The important dilemma here is related to the nature of the research work and presentational work of interview partners who may feel inclined to give such accounts of oneself that are perceived as desirable in the context of researching sexism. On the other hand, explicitly stating external barriers to one's potential naming of sexism may function as a rationalisation for self-silencing, including the rationalisation of risk-free status of being perceived as willing. The methodology used here does not enable us to analyse such accounts of oneself.*

nature of being addressed as wilful is also evident in the interviewees' narratives of publicly naming a problem in the framework of 'choosing one's battles wisely': "I think about which battles to fight, because it is not worth it to fight every one of them, it can be too nerve-wrecking and then it's somehow pointless" (Sabina, 2016).

Choosing one's battles wisely can be understood in this context as a form of self-silencing that is temporal in nature. The subject stays open to future possibilities of wilful practices, trying to catch opportune moments for naming sexism, a practice that does not have a fixed and solid place (Wendt, 1996). Despite what appears on the outside as practices of self-silencing that lack the direct naming of sexism, the complaint part of the self is still being rejected (Butler, 2012), which opens up spaces for outwardly oriented disorienting practices in the future, while at the same time the subject acknowledges the need to preserve themselves at this moment of self-silencing and compromising with a 'tyrant' (Ahmed, 2014), perhaps precisely to gain enough power and practical 'knowledge' to reject the existing power relations – the "bad life" (Butler, 2012) – sometime in the future.[2] Thus, despite its perceived absence, the wilfulness is still there, present in the silent naming, and it may as such 'accumulate' the power of resistance that is encouraged by the silent and self-contained continuous rejection of the present, filling in the 'archives' of being wilful through the 'unwilling obedience' of a subject who obeys the 'command' but does so with silent rejection and negation of the right of the command (Ahmed, 2014: 140): "she is enacting a yes even when she herself says no" (Ahmed, 2014: 55).

In the context of self-silencing, the naming of sexism, the relationship between enacting a 'yes' and saying a 'no' as Sara Ahmed (2014) puts it, may be better understood if formulated in reverse. Namely, at the moment of saying a *yes* that appears as such only through self-silencing the already-present *no,* she is in fact already *enacting* a no, rejecting the expectations of compliance and obedience even when playing by their rules: the *no* is felt, heard and as such enacted through the affectivity that turns back on the subject and strengthens her disorientation via the impression of repressed disobedience that – although repressed – still leaves its mark. Hence, being wilful through self-silence may just be part of the subject's path of hoping and trying to achieve the intra- and intersubjective supportive resources needed for one to feel powerful enough to reach *out* in her wilfulness in unexpected places that are sometimes safer and other times more dangerous and risky.

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[2] *It stills seems important to note the potential gap between being wilful and being addressed as such as they do not necessarily align, especially when 'being wilful' still 'translates' into one's 'willing' social practices. For whom then is the silence of being wilful perceived just as a still-comfortable step towards alterity and for whom is being wilful in silence or being wilful in a way that risks the address of being such a necessity?*

The when and how of being wilful: Withholding a smile when one is expected

Along with the 'when not' in the context of repressed and self-silenced naming due to formalised power relations in academic institutions and the implicitness of the sexist dynamics one wishes to name, it is also important to consider the conditions and ways in which naming *does* occur. Research shows that the naming of sexist situations and the nature of its enactment mostly depends on power relations and the nature of the personal relationships present in a specific situation that are framing the subject's instant risk assessment in terms of potential negative consequences and expected backlashes (Monroe et al., 2008; Ayres et al., 2009; Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2014). Something similar was also emphasised by the interviewees when stating that the explicitness or subtleness of naming the sexism was adjusted in line with the potential sanctions that may come along with the charge of wilfulness aimed at them when they are unwilling to actively participate in their own subordination (Ahmed, 2014). One factor taken into consideration when naming sexism was the nature of the specific relationship in which the sexism occurred:

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> *Sometimes I try to shock him* [the person being sexist] *back because we are in a not-so-distant type of relationship so I feel less threatened by the consequences if I say something compared to someone in a leadership position [*who is being sexist]*, for example, who has more power than it looks* (Mateja, 2015)*.

A closer relationship between the persons present in a sexist dynamic therefore make the naming of the sexism easier, while relationships overwhelmingly characterised by professional context and interpersonal distance, as well as asymmetrical formalised power relations (as discussed above), make any direct and confrontational naming unbearably risky.

When a subject is considering naming something as sexism, her formal position in academia also seems to play an important role. As discussed above in the context of self-silencing, the dispersed temporalities of being (publicly) wilful can be understood as a path on which subject is filling her own archive of doing wilfulness and thus gathering experiences of being resistant and practical knowledge of doing so. Queer – not straight – temporalities of doing wilfulness are also evident when we take the subject's movement up the academic ladder into account, which includes gaining formalised and authorised symbolic power, thus granting a wilful subject the supportive resources to make less unbearable the address of being wilful:

I was observing this [sexism in academia] *when I was younger. I was hoping that once I would have higher titles and when I wrote more articles /.../ I'm not afraid of anyone now, they cannot cut me off totally, because I have still achieved something* (Katja, 2016).

An important question then arises: who can risk breaking the injurious attachments by which one is positioned as subordinated? Although wilfulness is sometimes a necessity by which one's life is only made liveable (Butler, 2012; Ahmed, 2014) by "breaking with what breaks you" (Butler, 2015: 9), the resources for not only making such a break but also surviving it are not equally distributed, hence raising the question of what kind of breaks, accomplished through a subject's practices of wilfulness, can she make and despite them still survive (Butler, 2015). As some interviewees emphasised, the possibility of surviving the address of being wilful (and being punished as such) when one names sexism grows as one acquires more formal and institutionally recognised power. The interviewees thus acknowledge the importance of the unequal distribution of supportive and infrastructural resources in the forms of symbolic power by which the address of being wilful is made less unbearable and, thus, more possible to live through it, thus better enabling stepping out from the shadow-life of self-silencing and publicly naming the sexism due to the buffering effects of institutionally granted and recognised symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991; Butler, 2012; Ahmed, 2014; Butler, 2015), demonstrating that the wilful subject concept should include the acknowledgment of unequal social positions and resources of those who are addressed as wilful.

As evident above, practices of doing wilfulness are shaped by the infrastructural context in which they appear. Accordingly, we can speak of plural ways of doing wilfulness and creating disturbances in what is socially constituted as a 'good will', that is, as something one is expected to will, including the will to resist those directions that are not present in the paths one should follow (Ahmed, 2014). Doing wilfulness, considered as one's orientation towards alterity and as such as one's disorientation towards present normative classifications and their practical demands and expectations, thus encompasses practices which are intrasubjective as seen in the self-silencing case, and intersubjective that are more risky in terms of being addressed as wilful. In situations of sexist dynamics, that risk is managed in different ways, but mostly via practices of subtly naming sexism and rejecting its common-sense status by withdrawing oneself from actively participating in one's own subordination, that is, by withdrawal of compliance in willing practices that are normatively expected, for example, withholding a smile when one is expected and rolling one's eyes in response to a sexist comment: "Sometimes you just keep quiet, keeping your thoughts to

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yourself, or you try to express it with the looks. Yes, like rolling your eyes and distancing yourself with that" (Luka, 2016), or as Mateja says:

> *Although it is true, that it* [sexism] *never really goes away without me reacting to it, that's a fact. It may just be a look or a comment, or most often, a smile that is expected but it's not there, there is no comment. /.../ either way, I try to let them know that we will not be doing this* [participating in the sexist dynamics] */.../* (Mateja, 2015).

Along with more subtle practices of naming a problem, there are practices of wilfulness that are more confrontational and enacted when in her wilfulness a subject is willing to risk serious consequences of disturbing the taken-for-granted gendered power relations and their sexist dynamics, hence risking her own survival due to her academic position being threatened:

> *I resisted the power /.../ Now I basically don't know what will happen to me next year. So I went into that* [exposing sexism] *very consciously, but I have felt somehow that is my calling to fight here. But I have to say that I have been quiet for 20 years. /.../ Now I'm not worried anymore, really, because I expose myself in every scandal that happens, so I have gone past the limit and I don't have any problem exposing sexism anymore* (Ines, 2016).

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Practices of wilfulness when one names sexism are hence shaped by contextual factors, including the specific type of relationship between the individuals present in a situation that is exposed as sexist, and the formal positions of the academic hierarchy characterised by asymmetrical power relations. Doing wilfulness is sometimes inhibited or limited to safer places of doing wilfulness together and to the silent naming of sexism, but sometimes wilfulness is also enacted in relation to a person who is being called out as sexist (Ahmed, 2014). With those practices, ranging from more subtle to directly confrontational, a wilful subject is willing to risk "more unbearability /.../ in the project of creating a less unbearable world" (Ahmed, 2014: 139).

Becoming a problem: becoming an unhappy and conflictive (feminist) killjoy

As we have seen above, sexism was sometimes named and contemplated but not directly addressed in a confronting way. The lack of directly addressing sexism is also evident in other research studies, showing that explicit naming is not only inhibited by formalised power relations, the

explicitness/subtleness of the sexist dynamic and the fear of sanctions, but also by the subject's group membership, with those belonging to subordinated social groups that are targeted by sexism in its various forms (including cissexism and heterosexism) often self-silencing themselves due to the fear of being judged negatively and perceived as conflictive, aggressive and overly sensitive (Hyers, 2007). This fear is – as numerous research studies show – justified. Namely, studies demonstrate that the naming of sexism is often derealised and therefore denies reality and truth by resignifying practices of *naming* a problem as *being* a problem (Butler, 2004; Ahmed, 2014): the one who is naming a problem is therefore becoming a problem (Ahmed, 2014). Such derealisation in the case of sexism mainly functions through referencing to humour ('don't you get the joke?') and/or by devaluing feminist practices and identities (doing and being) by resignifying them as manifestations of the subject's conflictual, wilful nature and 'hateful' orientations towards men (Bergmann, 1986; Ford, 2000; Mills, 2008; Townsley and Geist, 2009; Abrams and Bippus, 2011; Holland and Cortina, 2013; Anastosopoulos and Desmarais, 2015).

In the case of sexist humour, the responsibility for someone naming a problem (sexism) is individualised and reduced to a *subject who does not get a joke* as framing a situation as humorous enables one to utter content which is deemed more or less un-utterable in other non-humorous contexts (Abrams and Bippus, 2011). Despite its innocent appearance (mostly to socially privileged individuals), sexist humour can, when discussed in relation to wider social dynamics, be seen as a mechanism for reproducing unequal gendered power relations (Bergmann, 1986; Ford, 2000). It can thus be understood as a form of injurious speech that draws its interpellative power not from a single and isolated moment of utterance (of the sexist joke) but from the condensed historicity of such interpellations in relation to sedimented social structures that put a subject in 'her place' (Butler, 1997).[3] The use of a reference to humour when one has been confronted for producing sexism was also evident in the interviewees' narratives, showing that humour was subsequently used in an attempt to legitimise an utterance that was delegitimised when named as a problem (sexism) by the interviewees, for example Maja: "When you problematise something as sexist, you become a problem; it's like you don't understand humour and jokes" (Maja, 2015), and Ana (2016): "It's all about justification, I really think that the point of it [referring to humour] is to justify it [sexism] and reproduce it. And now she is the black sheep here, probably already marked as a feminist".

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[3]   As Butler (1997) warns, when thinking about words that wound, we also have to ask about who utters such words, that is, in which circumstances may the same words not be injurious if uttered by persons and in contexts that are perceived and felt as safer by participating persons who reflect on power relations and privileges.

We can already see how naming an instance of sexism is connected to becoming a problem, either through the framework of non-understanding (sexist) 'humour' and/or by addressing the subject as a wilful feminist. Those two mechanisms are often connected and thus establish a relationship between being a feminist and being conflictive: when a subject rejects orienting herself towards the 'good will' as discussed above, she becomes a 'problem' that can take on many different forms (Ahmed, 2014). In this case, the mentioned mechanisms form the figure of *feminist killjoys* who are 'not-with' the flow, not-with the *status quo* and as such are ruining the hitherto taken-for-granted sexist atmosphere: "Feminism: a history of disagreeable women!" (Ahmed, 2014: 154). Hence, addressing a subject as a feminist in this context functions as a form of address that constitutes a subject as wilful due to her "stepping out of line" (Hercus, 2004: 159). Similar experiences of being addressed as a wilful feminist are seen in the research carried out by Hercus (2004) as well as in the interviewees' narratives:

> */.../ they thought my opinion is exaggerated, or that I'm a feminist and because of that you get all other kinds of etiquettes that are usually related to feminism. If you are a feminist, people think that you hate men, that you are being radical, that you want to destroy men's world and to establish women's dominance, and that you are a lesbian. In short, very negative stereotypes are linked to it* (Maja, 2015)*.*

> *I think that in such situations there is an etiquette of feminism attached to it, so that a person who problematises sexism can be discredited or positioned as a court jester. By that, what is a person saying doesn't need to be taken seriously. Now, it cannot be said, 'that's because they are women or students', so it's easier to attach an etiquette of feminist ideology to it* (Gorazd, 2015).

Therefore, by not following the gendered and gendering paths that are established for a gendered subject, that is, by wandering off them by naming sexism, one quickly becomes addressed as wilful and a feminist killjoy (Ahmed, 2014). Such a mode of address serves as a mechanism of derealisation (Butler, 2004) through which the subject and her practices of naming, of being wilful, are delegitimised and not-heard (Ahmed, 2014) (including being heard but not taken seriously, therefore, not being heard in the way one wants to be heard). Along with the derealisation of naming and thus becoming a problem by being constituted as a conflictive feminist killjoy, another mode of address is also used, albeit rarely, that is, when a subject is constituted as a subject who plays too much in the established game, who in her self-interestedness is 'willing too much' and who in the process

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successfully plays the 'gender card' by naming sexism to gain advantages for herself (Ahmed, 2014; Donaghue, 2015):

> *When a woman thinks that some doors are closed to her, look, you always have to ask yourself if that her being a woman is the only reason /.../ That's why I don't like 'sexism' because it is often used and exploited by people for their own interests, to get them to their own goals /.../ I would say that women do that* [call out sexism] *more often. If a man fails when climbing up the ladder, I would say that they more often explain that with other circumstances or with the fact they are just not good enough* (Tadej, 2016).

The dynamics of naming a problem, if it occurs, and becoming a problem are closely woven together as the turn to making a problem out of a subject who names a problem functions as a mechanism for derealising the act of naming as such, attempting to render it meaningless by addressing the subject who is naming it as wilful: "it is as if she disagrees because she is disagreeable; it is as if she opposes something because she is being oppositional" (Ahmed, 2014: 154). The naming of sexism is thus delegitimised by explaining the act and the content of it with the inner characteristics of a subject, who is 'merely' being conflictive, unhappy and never satisfied, characteristics that are condensed in the figure of a conflictive (man-hating lesbian) feminist which renders her justified anger unjustified by isolating and reducing the act of naming to the so perceived unhappiness of those (feminists) who stray and reach out towards alterity.

Conclusion

As we have seen, naming a problem – sexism – depends on many contextual factors that may inhibit or support one's practices of problematising the *status quo* and destabilising it while reaching for something other-wise. When researching the 'when not' of naming sexism, the formalised asymmetrical power relations are perceived as the most important factor of inhibition that manifests in self-silencing. Taking the unequally distributed supportive resources that enable subjects to enact practices of wilfulness into the account, such self-silencing cannot be perceived as a sign of a subject's compliance. When the address of being wilful is perceived as a threat to one's 'survival' in a broader sense, that is, also encompassing the resources necessary for the subject's life not to be reduced to a *mere* life in the form of physical survival of being *barely* alive (Butler, 2012), the enactment of wilfulness can sometimes, even if momentarily, be impossible when naming a problem is tightly interlinked with becoming a problem (Ahmed, 2014).

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Having that in mind, when researching one's willing exposures to injurious addresses through her practices and re/claimed dis/identities, it is necessary to take account of not only the dis/identities by which one is exposed and made vulnerable to injurious interpellations, but the unequal distribution of supportive resources and systems with whose help the subject's exposure to social injuries may be made less unbearable and more survivable. The subtleness that plays on the borderline between being misrecognised as willing and being recognised as wilful can sometimes represent the limit of one's own stretching towards alterity, towards potentialities that in the practices of stretching are indeed already in becoming. What is more, alterity is sometimes enacted simply by living when one is not supposed to live in a world that does not grant them recognition on their own terms – naming a problem can thus be 'named' by life on its own (Butler, 2012; Ahmed, 2014). What is important, considering the dynamics of naming a problem and becoming a problem, is that we acknowledge the possibilities of standing and moving outside the socially dominant and normative paths one is expected to follow (Ahmed, 2014), that is, acknowledge the marks on the paths *in the making* that were made by wanderers throughout the past who refused to grow roots in places that were not their own, and that we reach for them, re/claim them and live them in ways that also acknowledge our own vulnerability to being addressed as wilful.

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