

**THE EMERGENCE OF THE FIRST GREEK LGBT MOVEMENT 1978 – 1989:
GLOBAL INFLUENCES AND LOCAL OBSTACLES**

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Abstract

The first Greek LGBT movement was formed in 1976, two years after the fall of the military dictatorship and the restoration of democracy. In respect to the emergence of the movement in the beginning of the thesis I map out the institutions of state, family, society and church that worked together as oppressive factors when it came to non heterosexual practices in Greece. Based on 9 in-depth interviews with people who were affiliated with the first Greek LGBT movement or helped creating it I start the second chapter by analyzing the reasons behind its emergence as well as map out the history of its existence. I argue that the ideology of the movement relied on leftist and anarchist politics which shaped its rhetoric and structure. I also claim that there were disagreements within the movement in relation to gender and non conforming gender identities. I conclude my thesis with the last chapter where I map out the reasons behind the disintegration of the movement and show how my interviewees perceive the legacy of the movement and its continuity in respect to contemporary LGBT organizations.

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Introduction

The history of the twentieth century Greece has been very dramatic: civil war that was fought between right wing government and communists that led to the defeat of the latter and numerous exiles; and later on 1967 “coup d’etat” which established a military junta or the regime of the colonels that lasted for 7 years. During the military regime civil rights were suspended and citizens lives were policed as well as people of non heterosexual orientation were extremely marginalized. Junta had initiated police raids that were directed towards transgender prostitutes and gay men who cruised for sex, as well as carried out raids to homosexuals’ houses and publicly spoke against non heterosexual sexuality. The right wing government though was only one locus of oppression. Christian Orthodox Church and patriarchal Greek family values had also attributed to a very difficult environment for gay, lesbian and transgender people. I am interested in exploring the difficult political, cultural and religious contexts and emergence of resistance to them by LGBT people despite their complexity.

The aim of this thesis project is to analyze the reasons and politics of emergence and existence of the Greek LGBT movement in the following timeframe: 1976 – 1989. I argue that oppressive works of institutions, such as state, society, family and church despite their policing and disciplining powers when it comes to sexuality and in particular case non heterosexual sexuality are also productive, in a sense that they produce resistance which leads to the emergence of new shapes of politics and identities. Following my argument I use 3 main research questions: a) for what reasons the Greek LGBT movement emerged and what triggered it? b) How did it organize itself? c) What were the tensions (if there were any) within the movement and in relation to the rest of society and what they led to?

I anticipated finding out what triggered the birth of the first Greek LGBT movement as well as that it was not a homogenous movement and that there were conflicts within it which fractured the movement and led to its dissolution. My research provided me with answers to all these questions, though I do not perceive them to be complete facts but rather opinions of the people who were one way or another engaged with the movement and offered their descriptions and explanations on the matter.

To conduct my research I used qualitative methods such as semi structured, in depth interviews and discourse analysis that I applied to a few newspapers of the time as well as the first Greek gay magazine *Amfi* and also magazine *Kraximo* that started being published in the 80's. I was able to conduct nine interviews during the period of two weeks in Athens, Greece. All the interviewees were closely affiliated with the movement: either they were the members of AKOE¹ or people who followed the workings and publications carried out by the movement. The interviews were conducted in the preferred language of respondents which in the eight cases were their native language, Greek, and one interviewee chose to speak in English. Interviews took place in the environment that was chosen by my respondents and varied from the cafeterias and offices to their homes. I had a few limitations in mind when it came to carrying out the interviews; one of them was the age difference and another one me not being proficient in Greek language. In the end none of these factors interfered with the interview process.

The reason I chose this topic for my research is partially personal, in a sense that I have been living in Greece for four years and following the events organized by local LGBT organizations; there I learned about AKOE, the first Greek LGBT movement. Since it has barely been researched I thought that it would contribute to a few existing accounts done on

¹ The acronym stands for: Apelevtherotiko Kinima Omofilofilon Elladas (The Greek Homosexual Liberation Movement)

the particular movement. I found this topic interesting and relevant because it can tell us a lot about how social movements emerge in difficult circumstances in order to resist the oppressive system and then in the process of negotiation dissolve or get reshaped as well as sometimes embody the exact same things it was resisting.

I split my thesis into three chapters; in the first one divided into three smaller sub chapters I analyze the institutions of state, society, family and church that serve as repressive and disciplining factors when it comes to non heterosexual sexuality. I argue that these institutions collaborate informally which makes hard to distinguish them and locate the source of oppression. At the same time I argue that the repression of non heterosexual sexuality is productive. The first sub chapter is dedicated to the state and the politics of military junta in general as well as towards non heterosexual practices; in the second sub chapter I draw upon the family and society and the importance that Greeks attribute to the family; the third and last sub chapter is about the Greek Orthodox Church and its wish to influence previously mentioned institutions. I finish with an argument that state, family, society and church depend on each other, use similar moralizing rhetoric and policing when it comes to non heterosexual sexuality, thus maintaining the image of LGBT invisibility.

In the second chapter that is split into three sub chapters I argue that workings of power through the institutions mentioned above served as productive as well as repressive resulting in the emergence of the first LGBT movement AKOE, thus creating resistance and new discourses on non heterosexual sexuality as well as identities. In the first sub chapter I draw upon the reasons that led to the emergence of the movement, global influences that shaped the ideology of the movement and activism. In the second sub chapter I write about the first gay magazine *Amfi* and I argue that it was a very important part of the movement through which AKOE translated their ideas that served as a counter discourse to the prevalent ideas about homosexuality in Greece. Also I argue that the ideology of AKOE was closely

linked to the leftist ideas that were popular among many social movements during the described period though I note that Greek leftist political parties were not too supportive and some were strongly against AKOE. In the third sub chapter I discuss identities and gender dynamics. I argue that the identity of a homosexual was somewhat foreign to Greeks since people were relying on sexual active/passive division which stigmatized the passive partner disregarding the behavior of the active one. I draw upon transgender and lesbian participation in AKOE and show the disagreements that occurred within the movement because of the gender differences.

The third, and the last, chapter is about the disintegration of AKOE and the (dis)continuity of its ideas. In the first sub chapter I draw upon few of the reasons that led the movement into dissolution. Among them is the shift to neoliberal politics and professionalization of the movement which led to disagreements between the older activists who wanted to maintain an autonomous organization and the younger ones who felt a need for more professional organizing that would allow lobbying as well as moving to the political level when it came to LGBT rights. In the second sub chapter I draw upon another reason that contributed to the disintegration of AKOE which was AIDS. I argue that the reason behind the reluctance of AKOE to deal with AIDS lied in its inability to deal with more homophobia and stigmatization that the movement had already endured through its short period of existence. I finish my thesis with the third sub chapter where I discuss my interviewees' thoughts on the legacy of AKOE and its influence on contemporary LGBT organizations in Greece.

I situate my main argument in Foucault's theory of power and resistance: according to him power should not be understood in terms of singular dominating unit that subjugates individuals that are below it, rather it must be thought of as 'the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization'

(Foucault, 1988, p. 92). Foucault claims that power is relational therefore it is constantly negotiated rather than imposed from above. Resistance is a part of these negotiations which according to Foucault situates it within the power relations rather than outside of it (Foucault, 1988, p. 95). This theory helps build my argument that the institutions I draw upon: state, family, society and church are completely intertwined and they collaborate in policing and disciplining the non heterosexual sexuality and through this repression they produce resistance and the discourse on non heterosexuality; as well as through this negotiation new identities are being shaped.

To show the interconnectedness of these institutions more clearly I also incorporate George Mosse's theory of respectability when it comes to nationalism's relationship to sexuality. According to Mosse the birth of nationalism is closely related to repression of sexuality through the notion of respectability that helped middle class to situate themselves in between the "lazy" lower classes and decadent aristocracy (Mosse, 1985, p. 5). The concept of respectability as argued by Mosse is important to the building and maintaining of the nation and in my research, it helped seeing how all the institutions are connected through this notion.

The topic of my research, as mentioned in the beginning of the introduction, had been researched in depth neither by the Greek scholars nor by the foreign ones. The two accounts I was able to locate that draw upon AKOE were PhD works by Panayis Dendrinis and Brian Riedel. The title of Panayis Dendrinis PhD thesis published in 2008 is "Contemporary Greek male homosexualities: Greek gay men's experienced of the family, the military and the LGBT movement". Dendrinis provides one chapter to discuss Greek homosexual activism where he draws upon the emergence and work done by AKOE. He provides a lot of important facts about the movement but does not go into deeper analysis. The same could be said about Brian Reidel's account on AKOE. The title of the thesis is "Elsewheres: Greek

LGBT Activists and the Imagination of the Movement” published in 2005. Reidel also provides one chapter on AKOE, but differently then Dendrinis does not give many details nor he goes into deeper analysis of the emergence and existence of the movement, rather he emphasizes the AIDS appearance in Greece and its impact on AKOE and LGBT as well as society in general. My thesis in respect to these works should add a deeper analysis on the oppressive structures as well as reasons for emergence, existence and dissolution of AKOE.

Despite of the lack of academic work done on AKOE and other Greek LGBT movements many scholars had written about LGBT movements outside Greece. Among them “Global Emergence of Gay and Lesbian politics” (Adam, Duyvendak & Krouwel, 1999) provide accounts on the emergences, workings and continuations of LGBT movements worldwide. Stephen Engel in “The Unfinished Revolution” (Engel, 2001) draws upon the beginnings of American and British LGBT movements where he analyses the reasons behind them as well as gender dynamics, political dialogs with the state as well as the influence that the American LGBT movement had on the British one. Jeffrey Weeks in “Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain, from the Nineteenth Century to the Present” (1990) drew upon the politics in Britain regarding homosexuality that in the nineteenth century shaped a new homosexual identity that was based on juridical and psychology/sexology discourses. My analysis of the Greek LGBT movement will touch not only upon the state in relation to LGBT people and movements, as these works have emphasized but also to church, family and society.

Chapter 1. Locating oppression: state, society, family and church

The title of my chapter should not be perceived as an attempt to locate the source of power or power itself. The intent here is to map out the institutions that work as a medium which carries out the oppressive rules of power. In the “History of Sexuality” Foucault argues that sexuality is repressed and its censorship operates through various institutions; at the same time he sees power as not only repressive and silencing, but also productive (Foucault, 1988). This means that by putting all the energy to repress, non heterosexual sexuality for example, it creates a whole discourse about the particular sexuality. Therefore, here in the first chapter, I would like to argue that in the case of modern Greece the repressive workings of power towards sexuality, and in this particular case non heterosexual sexuality are exercised through the institutions of state, society, family and the Greek Orthodox Church; as well as show how intertwined they are thus reflecting the Foucauldian theory of untraceable power.

As noted above, it might not be entirely correct to view these institutions as completely separate loci of power because they are too interconnected. For example, nation-state and Orthodox Church; historically the Orthodox Church was very involved in the nation building and is perceived as an institution that protected the Greek identity and language during the Turkish rule that lasted around 400 years from 1453 to 1832 (Koliopoulos & Veremis, 2007, p. 154). According to Adamantia Pollis, the Western understanding of human rights which is rooted in an autonomous individual is alien to Greek Orthodox Church and society: “not individualism, but one’s position in the extended family defined the self” (Pollis, 1987, p. 590). This shows one’s dependence on the kin and reveals the importance of it to Greeks. Even though it is hard to distinguish between the above mentioned institutions, I would like to draw upon them one by one reflecting on the scholarship that was done on these subjects and the memories of my interviewees. The understanding of these power

mechanisms and their relation to sexuality is crucial to theorize resistance and the building of the first LGBT movement in Greece that will be presented in the second chapter.

1.1. State and non heterosexual practices

In 1967, almost 20 years after the civil war tragedy in Greece, democracy was compromised by a coup d'état. A few colonels who were not the bearers of the highest rank seized power and forced the government officials as well as the Greek monarchs into exile and imposed a military dictatorship (Woodhouse, 1991). None of the colonels maintained the administrative skills; therefore a team of lawyers was hired to create a new constitution, which appeared to mark the end of democracy in Greece. Freedom of speech was undermined and any type of publication could be censored; as Woodhouse puts it "Most of the articles of the constitution guaranteeing personal rights were suspended: these included freedom of assembly, the formation of political parties, rights of asylum, and freedom from arrest without warrant" (Woodhouse, 1991, p. 296). The colonels' explanation of the coup was that it was a preventive measure because the communists were plotting for a takeover of the government; the military dictatorship according to them was a temporary state and democracy would be reconstituted after society would be reeducated (Clogg & Yannopoulos, 1972, p. 36).

Civil rights in Greece were suspended during the regime of the colonels which means that any type of oppositional thinking or movements that would undermine the ideology of dictatorship could not exist. Therefore the military junta had a big impact on the groups of people living on the margins of the society and whose political views or "non normal" gender

behavior did not conform to the ideals of the junta, especially gay men and *travesti*². This does not imply though, that before the military junta government was pro non heterosexual practices. In the early 19th century, after the Greek struggle for independence from Ottoman rule it was decided that a monarch should govern the country. With the help of supporting countries such as Great Britain and Russia, Bavarian prince Otto assumed the throne bringing the Bavarian administration along to Greece (Woodhouse, 1991). Soon after the crowning of Otto, the Bavarian administration implemented a certain law, penalizing homosexuality as well as seduction of minors; a person found guilty had to serve one year in jail and stayed under the observation of police (Dendrinos, 2008, p. 129). Greek government did not touch the issue of homosexuality, only until 1951, when it was decriminalized. According to Reidel, after the Greek civil war, the country underwent a lot of changes and the legal apparatus was not forgotten. The Bavarian law criminalizing homosexuality was changed, where the consensual sexual relationship between two men was not penalized per se, but rather limited (Reidel, 2005, p. 82). A seduction of a minor (consensual age 17 was higher than heterosexual which was 15) coercive sexual acts and male prostitution, were penalized (ILGA world legal survey, 2004). The decriminalization of homosexuality did not bring freedom for people engaging in non heterosexual practices neither did it end the debate on homosexuality and its place in society or the juridical system; According to one of my respondents, Irini, it was pathologized and referred to the institution of psychiatry as well as judicially reconfigured. The legal apparatus of the Greek state emphasized homosexuality, meaning sexual relationships between men. It seems that lesbianism was overlooked and nothing about female same sex relationships was mentioned in the law. The invisibility of lesbianism was not something that was specific to Greece; rather it was common to many

² The term *travesti* is used in the Greek language to refer to a man who cross dresses as well as adopts a female name. It is very similar to Brazilian term *travesti* which according to Kulick refers to a man who adopts a feminine outlook: clothes, make up, and even uses hormones and silicone to obtain female body features. Despite the fact that they do not identify as women and do not remove penises (Kulick, 1998).

European countries. In Spain the anti sodomy laws did not mention lesbians, only homosexual men (Llamas & Vila, 1999, p. 216); as well as Britain's attempt to criminalize same sex relationships among women in the early twentieth century was denied in the House of Lords because lesbianism was viewed to be a mental disability, therefore involuntary (Weeks, 1990, p. 106).

Some of my interviewees who were in their adolescence during the regime of colonels (from 1967 to 1974) referred to the junta as medieval, racist³ and boring. Markelos, one of the people who later on contributed to the creation of AKOE and the magazine *Amfi* said that the junta wanted to suppress anything progressive, whether it was music, theatrical productions, ideas and etc. He also referred to the “law” that allowed policemen to arrest gay men for inspection to check if they have any diseases. Another respondent, transsexual Betty, when talking about the lives of *travesti*, remembered the police raids which she referred to as an “endless safari”. *Travesti* suffered a lot from these police raids that were called “operation virtue” and were directed towards *travesti* sex workers and gay men that were cruising. The reason I have put the word law that Markelos used to address “operation virtue” in inverted commas is that I did not find the operation virtue to be a part of an actual law but rather an informal practice sanctioned by the colonel Ioannis Ladas who was a secretary-general of the Ministry of Public Order during junta. Panayotis Dendrinis writes that police would raid the cruising areas such as parks or public toilets and the captured men would have their heads shaved, were abused verbally and physically, exposed to their families and some even exiled to uninhabited Greek islands together with political dissidents (Dendrinis, 2008, p. 132).

³ According to Reidel in Greek language such words as *ratsismos* (racism) and *omofobia* (homophobia) usually overlap and appear to mean the same thing. *Ratsismos* does not always imply racism in a strict understanding of the word as someone who discriminates a person based on his/her race, but it rather stands for “general unjustifiable prejudice” (Reidel, 2005).

As mentioned above the censorship imposed by the junta was enormous and the regime was policing peoples' private lives. Public and private gatherings with more than five people were forbidden and anyone's house could have been raided by police without a warrant. Previously mentioned Colonel Ladas, the person behind "Operation Virtue" made a press conference to announce that thirty homosexuals were arrested after an operation carried out in one house, because of their intent to engage in orgies; he then said that the people arrested should be thrown off of Kaiadas, a place on the mountain in Sparta where ancient Spartans would get rid of criminals, prisoners, disabled people and etc. (Dendrinos, 2008, p. 137). The junta was preoccupied with Greek history, which is well known to contain sources on male to male sexual behavior in Ancient Athens. Colonels tried to delete this part of history by censoring any type of writing about it. Peter Loizos gives an interesting account on the already mentioned, colonel Ladas, who physically attacked an editor and the journalist who wrote in one weekly newspaper an article about famous ancient Greeks who had engaged in homosexual sex (Loizos, 2005, p. 71).

This account reveals the political ideology of the junta. Papadopoulos, one of the colonels, had coined the slogan *Ellas Ellinon Christianon* (Greece of the Christian Greeks) and all the colonels spoke of rebuilding the fallen nation and bringing back the Christian values, honesty, decency and order into Greek society: "We want to fashion a new man...he must have the strength to do absolute good" (Clogg & Yannopoulos, 1972, 44-45). As Mosse theorizes nationalism and sexuality in Germany, he notes that during the 19th century, in the midst of a Greek revival, the statuesque Greek male body became a symbol of manliness. Because of the concept of respectability and decency, so intrinsic to the popular perceptions of sexuality and the human body in the 19th century, as the author emphasizes: "The Greek ideal was stripped of any lingering eroticism" (Mosse, 1985). Mosse's idea of respectability seems to be very close to the agenda of the colonels, who obsessed with history, were very

selective and tried to form a nation that would be a mixture of ancient and Christian values; in that nation though there was no room for people with same sex desires.

From the discussion above it can be seen that the military dictatorship in Greece was like any other authoritarian government that wanted to control every aspect of citizens' lives by censorship and surveillance. Every progressive idea or behavior that would have compromised the politics of the state were penalized and censored. The Foucauldian "logic of censorship" was at work where homosexuals were forced "not to appear if they did not want to disappear" (Foucault, 1988, p. 84). Even more, colonels felt the need to "clean" Greek history from the facts of homosexuality that threatened their vision of the respectable Greece of Christian Greeks.

1.2. Social structures and sexuality

Adamantia Pollis, discussing human rights in modern Greece hypothesizes the failure of implementation of foreign legal structure in Greece by foreign allies. According to her: "a highly centralized administrative structure was superimposed upon a traditional, fragmented society with localized loyalties, and communal values bounded by the extended family and/or the village" (Pollis, 1987, p. 589). Kinship and family was fundamental for Greeks, who do not define themselves outside the family, but always in relation to it. The importance of familial existence to Greeks and other Mediterranean societies was reflected in anthropological studies done on the matter (Campbell, 1974), (Loizos & Papatachiarchis, 1991). Kinship is considered to be the base of the Greek society and is surrounded by strict rules of behavior that could lead to honor or shame (Loizos & Papataxiarchis, 1991, p. 3). It is important to mark that the concepts of honor and shame are highly related to gender. *Timi*

(honor) is equated with men and it is usually linked to any kind of worth be it economic or social; *dropi* (shame) on the other hand is associated with sexual shame of women (Campbell, 1974, p. 268-269). According to Herzfeld: “Shame centers on the revelation of matters considered as unfit for wider consumption; honor has to do with the aggressive presentation of an idealized self” (Herzfeld, 1999, p. 64). Therefore any transgressed sexual taboos, if revealed to the public, might bring the shame on the family.

Dendrinios accurately defines the Greek emphasis on family. According to him people do not think of family in terms of temporality. Differently than in other parts of Europe people tend to live with their parents for much longer and not only because of economic reasons; family is understood as a commitment and a supportive network. Even if someone goes to study to another city or country and leaves his/her family, it is anticipated that this kind of existence will not last long and a person will marry someone to create his/her own family (Dendrinios, 2008). This claim was supported by one of my informants D, who moved to Athens from a city in the North of Greece to study. He said that his parents are still waiting for him to get married.

Family is a microcosm of society and it is hard to make a distinction between the two institutions. Especially when talking about the honor/shame division, because it only makes sense in relation to other people in society. All my interviewees, when asked to remember their adolescence or around the time they became aware of not having any interest in heterosexual relationships and the societal climate back then had mostly negative descriptions. According to Grigoris, a human rights activist and a politician, society was and is very racist (means homophobic as explained in the 2nd footnote). The general impression I had from analyzing the interviews is that homosexuality was a taboo topic in Greek society and if someone showed any signs of non normative sexual behavior he or she were highly stigmatized. My interviewees were not very explicit about the ways of stigmatization but it

can be seen in the letters of homosexual men sent to the first gay magazine *Amfi* (the publication of the magazine will be discussed in the second chapter) where they talk about fear of leaving the house or joining the military where they for sure would experience verbal and sometimes physical abuse, such as beatings or even rape; as well as difficulties they experienced while looking for work (Theodorakopoulos, 2005).

Another problem was the invisibility of non normative sexual identities. Irini, Evagelia and D noted that there was no information about homosexuality or lesbianism. Irini remembered: “I had figured it out quite early that heterosexual relationships will not interest me, but in the environment where you did not have images, you did not have stimuli, you did not have anything. And the only thing you knew, from the book case that was in the house that it is a sickness, you asked yourself what was to be done, eh, better not to speak about it, I will leave it to pass and then we see.” D had a similar experience, he said that he always used to play with girls more and had experienced some *kraximo* (verbal abuse) because of that. He mentioned that when he finally started thinking about being different from other people he did not know how to define it, because he did not know any homosexuals, according to him: “they did not exist in society”.

The reason behind this invisibility lies in the vicious circle of state-family-society interconnectedness. People would stay in the closet because there were no examples of other people like them and the only source of information for gays and lesbians coming of age was the pathologized version of homosexuality in medical books. This, as well as the concepts of honor and shame deeply rooted in Greek society were, and partially still are, the reasons behind not coming out. Dendrinis mentions this tension between a homosexual/lesbian and their families. His respondents were talking about the shame brought on their families after the disclosure of one’s sexuality (Dendrinis, 2008). Irini, one of my respondents also remembered that her parents were worried about “what will people say” after she disclosed

her sexual preferences. Most of my informants though did not have tragic experiences after coming out to their families except Betty and Paola who were both *travesti*. Betty who comes from a rural area said that the reaction of her parents was only negative and that she left the village in a very young age in the mid 60's. She made an effort to contact her mother in 1998 over the phone, but her reply was: "I gave birth to 5 men and I recognize 5 men", disapproving of Betty's identity as *travesti*. Betty has not seen her family since she left the village in 1965 and claims that she cannot justify the behavior of her family and that it is not only them that are responsible, but the whole village. Paola's family reaction in her own words was very bad, but still her mother never became too distant and only with her she maintained a relationship.

Despite the somewhat successful coming out stories of Grigoris, Irini and Evagelia where after some time their parents accepted their children for their non conforming sexuality, coming out is not really popular to this day. One of my respondents, D, who is in his forties had not come out to his parents. He mentioned that his whole family is atheist but they are also homophobic therefore he does not see the need for them to know about his sexuality, especially since, he had moved to Athens to study many years ago and still lives here and visits his family only during some holidays. During the period of my research I have conversed with a few gay men in the house parties. One of them, a doctor from Athens was shocked that I figured out he is gay and admitted he had not come out to his parents without giving more details. Another one, an acquaintance who I thought was definitely open about his sexuality with his family, to my surprise told me that he is not. He did not seem too distressed about his decision to keep it a secret even though he lives in the same house with his parents. According to him one of his brothers is also gay and probably it would be hard for parents to handle the news about his sexuality too, therefore he does not see the point in stressing them, since they also do not inquire about his private life too much.

The compromised family honor is one of the key elements in more traditional families influencing the reaction of parents that is concluded with acceptance or rejection. Dendrinis provides a touching example of a situation like this in the times of the military junta. It is important to note here how the workings of power are connected; as mentioned above the politics of homosexual stigmatization during the junta years were influenced by the traditional importance of family as the reproducer of the nation and the concept of honor and shame, or rather these concepts and traditional beliefs were used as tools of stigmatization, discipline and regulation. The account that Dendrinis provides is of a man who had experienced the particular tactics of the junta. He was caught in *Zapeion*, a park in Athens known as a cruising area for gay men and taken to the police station with other people, where everyone's identity cards were collected they all were verbally and some physically abused. The worst part of these police operations was not that though, it was outing gay men to their families. Antonis, the man who experienced this, noted that most of the people were known as heterosexuals and that they had not come out to their parents because such disclosure would bring more harassment from the parents and sometimes end up in forced marriages. His outing ended up with him leaving the country permanently, after a couple of days, using a plane ticket his father gave him for that purpose (Dendrinis, 2008, p. 136). This example shows how society, family and the state worked together as disciplining factors when non heterosexual sexualities were disclosed.

Analyzing people's memories of coming out to their families I could see that certain factors might have contributed to the consequences resulting in acceptance or rejection. Most of the interviewees who were born and raised in the capital, Athens, had a much better outcome after the disclosure of their sexuality to their families. The factor of class might have had a relevant part in it as well as gender, taking into consideration that the stories of 2 *travesti* had a much less pleasant outcome. The difference between urban and rural was and is

present up to this day; people living in the big cities tend to be less worried about traditional values or the opinion of neighbors. Kath Weston in her essay on gay/lesbian migration from rural areas to big cities in the US provides the accounts of people saying, as my respondent D, that they had a feeling of being the only ones, meaning that other people like them did not exist. Weston shows how difficult it can be for a young homosexual or lesbian in small villages or towns where there is no information on non heterosexual sexuality or community not to mention a gay bar and how the countryside is associated with tradition and neighborly surveillance (Weston, 1998).

The importance that Greeks attribute to family and its ties to society interferes a lot with the quality of life of the homosexual, lesbian or *travesti*. Not being able to disclose ones sexuality keeps the vicious circle going. This means that the unwillingness to come out is caused by the disciplining and punishing state, family and society to whom a person is tied to and it maintains the discourse of invisibility, leaving an individual to struggle with his/her non conforming identity in secrecy, thus maintaining the image of invisibility. Mosse in respect to Foucauldian theory of power argues that family is central to the nation state as the unit which reproduces the nation, therefore according to him, it becomes a “policeman on the beat, an indispensable agent of sexual control as directed by physicians, educators, and the nation itself” (Mosse, 1985, p. 20). There are of course multiple reasons behind the reluctance of coming out but the shame that can be brought on the family or the fear of rejection usually turn out to be the primary ones. This, as mentioned above, has to do with society, since friends or neighbors would come to know something that is supposed to be kept secret and not be bragged about. A disclosure of non normative sexuality threatens the institute of the family, as well as society and the nation state, because lesbian and gay relationships are understood to be non procreative which means that the family, as well as the nation state will not be reproduced.

1.3. Orthodox Church

In the beginning of the first chapter I have mentioned the importance of the Greek Orthodox Church while thinking of nation state building and Greek national identity. In the following sub chapter, I would like to demonstrate how the patriarchal and heteronormative stance of the church links it closely to the family and the nation state and how this interconnection, especially during the junta period, shaped the societal views on non normative heterosexual practices.

The Greek Church was established in 1833 when King Otto declared its independence from the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and since then it has been struggling with its place in the state, where it was made subordinate to the government, under the supervision of a ministry (Kolioupoulos & Veremis, 2007, p. 153-154) which means that it was not an independent institution and had to work together with the state. After the First World War when Greeks began to engage more with a modern European lifestyle and fashions, such as frequent beach going, dance parties, cinemas, women's excessive use of lipstick and bathing suits worn by both genders sparked a moralizing outburst from the church, that blamed foreign influences threatening the decency of Greeks (Anastassiadis, 2010, p. 46). This though, was not the first time when the Orthodox Church expressed their opinion on the West as a place full of bad influences and tried to educate Greek society. According to Richard Clogg, Athanasios Parios, a well respected monk, in the beginning of the 19th century lectured Greek parents to keep their children in Greece and not send them abroad where they might pick up bad habits and become atheist or even convert to Roman Catholicism (Clogg & Yannopoulos, 1972, p.40).

The church's wish to influence and contribute to the building of the values of Greek society has been present to this day, but the legitimization of the power and importance of the

Greek Orthodox Church in nation building was especially emphasized during the junta. The colonels were constantly referring to Helleno-Christian civilization which should be perfected, because it had a downfall: “We had become estranged from all the ideals, from every Christian institution, from every written and unwritten law, not as social beings, but as beings motivated only by instinct” (Clogg & Yannopoulos, 1972, p. 44). The Colonels were referring to Greeks as the “elect of god” and their plan was to bring people back to the Orthodox Christian virtues. This was followed by a legal order that ordered school children together with their teachers to attend church on Sundays (Clogg & Yannopoulos, 1972, p.40-41). The moralizing rhetoric of the church became really handy to colonels since they could legitimize the dictatorship using the religious aspect which was a big part of Greek identity as well as it did maintain the heteronormative views on family values that fit the junta’s agenda.

The historic overview is helpful in seeing the rigid moral stances of the church as well as its influence and connection to the nation state, society and family, for example the Orthodox Church’s views on abortion and the female body. Eleni Sotiriu quotes the words of church officials from the meeting of the bioethics committee in the late 90’s where they state that the female body exists only for the reproductive function and motherhood. Abortion is understood not only as a sin against god but as a sin towards the nation, since it threatens its reproduction (Sotiriu, 2010, p. 143-144). Mosse mentions the very same church and state cooperation in Germany, when Catholic bishops stated that procreation is not only a Christian obligation but a patriotic one as well (Mosse, 1985, p. 27). Another one of the Orthodox Church’s views, with which it was quite consistent, the discourse of the poisonous west which was also taken up by the junta, is still prevalent to this day. In 2000, the European Union proposed a new charter on fundamental human rights that included the protection of gay and lesbian rights. The Greek Orthodox Church reacted against this proposition and the EU, when Archbishop Christodoulos argued that homosexual couples could not have the

same rights as heterosexuals and that this law would mean “legalizing the sin” (Payne, 2003, p. 268).

Most of my interviewees were very critical of the church and its politics against change and especially when it came to matters of sexuality, and a few mentioned its connection to the state. Grigoris referred to the Greek Orthodox Church as quite fascist probably referring to its ties and the similarity of rhetoric to the junta; and Markelos said that the church always went with the state, emphasizing the period of the junta. Irini and Evagelia both acknowledged the church’s right to have its own canons, even if they, for example consider homosexuality to be a sin, but the problem according to Evagelia is the church’s wish to interfere and influence society, education and even the legal state apparatus; she also found it problematic that the Ministry of Education is together with Religious Affairs which probably interferes with the governments decision on including the classes of sexual education in schools. Only Paola said that she did not find church to be too tough on people and that it had never bothered her.

The importance of Orthodox Christianity in Greece as a big part of national identity makes it quite difficult to see Greece as a secular state. N. Diamandouros, a political scientist, in a vein very similar to my interviewees, summarized the church’s stance in Greece arguing that there exist two points of view: modernizing ideas that come from enlightenment and the stance of the Orthodox Church that refuses progress and is rooted in Byzantium and the Ottoman Empire (Makrides, 2010, p. 41). This troubling relationship makes it hard to separate the nation state and the church and its wish to influence society.

In this chapter I tried to analyze the institutions such as state, family, society and church that carry out the repressive and disciplining as well as productive workings of power. I argued that they are interconnected and work very well together in policing non

heterosexual practices. Showing the importance of the family in Greek society and concepts of honor and shame linked to sexuality that stem from a traditional understanding of what aspects of life can be disclosed and which ones should stay a part of the private life, I argued, that with help of the moralizing church and state it keeps the vicious circle of the invisibility of non heterosexual sexual acts intact.

Chapter 2. Restoration of democracy and the first steps of LGBT activism in Greece

In the previous chapter I tried to map out the workings of power through the institutions of state, family, society and church and show how they collaborate when it comes to policing and disciplining non normative sexual practices in Greece. In this chapter I would like to argue that the suppression of non heterosexual sexualities was at the same time productive in the Foucauldian sense and that it resulted in resistance when the political environment provided a possibility for change. I will try to draw upon the particular reasons that sparked the LGBT resistance towards oppression and show how the first LGBT movement was born and how complex it was, bordering on something that we could call queer politics and normative politics of inclusion drawing upon the ideological influences and the issues the movement faced when it came to the question of gender and sexuality; and how the oppression roused the resistance of people of non heterosexual sexualities that resulted in the production of new identities.

November 1973, Greek students occupied the polytechnic university of Athens in protest which resulted in the colonels sending armed soldiers in tanks in order to disperse the sit-in. Over twenty people were killed and this marked the beginning of the end that was approaching for the junta (Woodhouse, 1991, p. 303). The regime of colonels collapsed a year later and Konstantinos Karamanlis who had been a prime minister before the junta, from 1955 until 1961, returned from Paris. He had changed the name of his right wing party to *Nea Dimokratia* (New Democracy) and won the elections (Koliopoulos & Veremis, 2007, p. 111). After the restoration of democracy there was a wave of relief. Markelos, one of my respondents said that there were gay bars opening in Plaka, the old town, below the acropolis hill; the police raids that were called “Operation Virtue” or informally *skoupa* (a broom), as remembered by my interviewee Evagelia, still lasted a couple of years but in comparison to

the junta they were not as frequent. This shows that police continued the raids that were not explicitly sanctioned by the state anymore but could have been exercised by policemen informally. The informal police raids that were continuing can serve well to prove the Foucauldian critical approach to power which is understood to be exercised from top to bottom in the form of a law for example. Foucault as mentioned in the first chapter rather suggests viewing power as always omnipresent and coming from everywhere (Foucault, 1988, p. 93). Therefore the change in the level of state politics does not necessarily imply the change in society.

The government of Karamanlis, unexpectedly, since the oppressive workings of junta were thought to be in the past, in 1976 announced the review of law that was drafted during the military regime by the colonels. A law that was called *Peri ton afrodision nosimaton* (for the prevention of venereal diseases) stated that anyone who would be strolling around in parks, streets and public centers with an intent to seduce men could be arrested and would face up to one year imprisonment and even exile; additionally, identities of the arrested people would stay on a special police record (Amfi, 1978, p. 31). There was no explanation why Karamanlis' government decided to bring up a law that was produced by the junta, but my interviewee Betty speculated that it could have been because of the upcoming elections and Karamanlis' wish to get votes from middle class people. This law seems to be very similar to the one drafted in Britain during the Victorian era in 1864. Contagious Diseases Act stated that policemen, based on their judgment could determine if a woman was a prostitute and was loitering with an intention to solicit men. They then could arrest her and take her for medical examination and if proved to be carrying syphilis or any other contagious venereal disease a woman would be closed to a specified hospital for treatment lasting 9 months. The definition of a prostituting woman was very unclear and it relied on the

judgment of police officers which also put women who had not thought about themselves in that way into the category of prostitute (Walkowitz, 1980, p. 1-2).

The reasons behind the Greek law for the prevention of venereal diseases seemed to be quite unclear. Although it stated as in the Victorian British version that intent to solicit a man for sex will be punishable, it was obvious that the determining of such intent will lie in the hands of policemen. It would seem that the law was punishing male prostitution, but again, this was not clearly stated and that meant that cruising gay men could have been perceived as prostitutes. According to Jeffrey Weeks who reviewed how the state regulated prostitution and homosexuality in 19th and early 20th century Britain, laws concerning prostitution and homosexuality sometimes were overlapping and this equated homosexual men with prostitutes, where it became hard to distinguish between a male prostitute and a homosexual man (Weeks, 1991, p. 51-52).

The law that Karamanlis' government was considering to put to voting, according to all my interviewees, scared first the *travesti*, because most of them were street sex workers. Betty said that it was already too much pressure fighting with the police that were harassing *travesti* with "operation virtue" raids and now the new law was talking about exile and imprisonment. Dimitris when talking about the particular law said that it was against homosexuals. Here the ambiguity of the law becomes very obvious, it was supposedly directed towards prostitution, but as Jeffrey Weeks argued in the context of Britain, the notion of homosexuality and prostitution were intertwined, as well as in the Greek situation, which is very well reflected in the words of my respondent Irini who said that wherever you cruised or hung out close to gay bars police could arrest you and disclose your identity. This shows how the law threatened not only *travesti* prostitutes but gay men who were cruising as well.

The law for the prevention of venereal diseases can point to a complex set of issues. Its review in the parliament was truly unexpected for people since it was a bill drafted during the military dictatorship of which people were happy to be rid off. Apart from that the particular law was again to keep non heterosexual people under strict surveillance as well as discipline them. The ambiguity of the law, which basically was against male prostitution, could have incriminated gay men cruising for sex, since the policemen where the ones to decide about the nature of the crime. And as Walkowitz and Weeks theorized, could have attributed to new perceptions of homosexuals being closely linked to prostitution.

2.1. Organization of AKOE

Sexuality exists at the point where body and population meet. And so it is a matter for discipline, but also a matter for regularization (Foucault, 2004, p. 251-252).

Remembering the famous quote by Foucault “Where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault, 1988, p. 95) I would like to draw upon the reasons that triggered LGBT activism in Greece, which soon morphed into a movement that was called AKOE – *Apeleftherotiko Kinima Omofilofilon Elladas* (Greek Homosexual Liberation Movement). Following Foucauldian logic, the beginning of the movement was inevitable, because power provokes resistance. This claim though, as Foucault himself notes, should not be understood as power and resistance being two separate things but rather resistance resting within the relations of power (Foucault, 1988, p. 95). This interconnectedness helps see power as not something predetermined and permanent but rather temporary and subject to change. The mentioned power’s relationality to resistance means that it can be and usually is negotiated.

When I had asked my respondents to tell me why AKOE started, most of them gave quite similar answers, which I would like to reduce to the short and simple explanation of the LGBT activist Irini – because there was a need for it. Almost everyone noted that it was a time of social change all over the world as well as that Greeks who had studied abroad had experienced it themselves and as Betty noted: “wanted to plant that in Greece”. Among the social uprisings in the west that had a strong influence on the formation of AKOE was the May 68’ students and workers strike and the Italian LGBT movement called FUORI. I believe the Stonewall riots and the formations of LGBT movements in USA were inspirational as well. I emphasized May 68’ and FUORI because of the personal connections that the founding people of AKOE maintained with the aforementioned movements.

As noted in the beginning of the second chapter, there was a feeling of relief in society after the junta, and even though police harassment towards LGBT people stayed for a couple more years it was not as frequent and brutal. This did not mean though that societal or other institutions’ attitudes had changed and conditions were perfect for living. The new democratic environment now provided more opportunities for political or any other kind of expression. It is hard to speculate on how and when the Greek LGBT people would have finally organized (into) the movement if not the trigger coming from the government – the law for the prevention of venereal diseases, which as mentioned above threatened *travesti* and gay men with imprisonment and after repeated offence, exile.

What was later called AKOE started from a group of friends as many interviewees noted. Angered by the law that was being reviewed by the government, Andreas Velissaropoulos, who had studied in Paris and had witnessed May 68’ together with Dimitris Ksanthoulis and writer Loukas Theodoropoulos, artist Markelos Nychtas, Christos Papoulias who was affiliated with FUORI in Italy and others had prepared a declaration. Signed by the establishing committee for the Greek Homosexual Liberation Movement (AKOE) in 1976, the manifesto-like declaration asserted the roots of oppression and

inequality which according to the authors can be traced to the beginning of patriarchy, as well as stated the atrocious acts that were carried out against homosexual people throughout history, such as the nazi regime, communist actions after the October revolution in Russia and etc. Authors introduced themselves as Greek Homosexuals whose right to exist and be equal to heterosexuals is unquestionable and asked for support from progressive people or organizations (Theodorakopoulos, 2005, p. 15-17).

As Markelos, who was a student in an art academy back then said, he and other people had distributed the declaration in cafeterias, gay bars, book shops and he also took it to his university. Another step after the declaration and the naming of the movement was a meeting AKOE had organized in a theater named Luizitania. Most of my interviewees remembered it as an important event that was based on a few public speeches and a discussion mostly surrounding the topic of the newly revised law it was the first public meeting where LGBT issues were discussed. Dimitris, who was one of the organizers, added that there were unexpectedly a lot of people, among them people affiliated with the communist party of the interior [not to be confused with KKE – a communist party of exterior loyal to Moscow at the time]. Betty remembered that a famous *travesti* at the time, Aloma, pushed all the *travesti* to attend and that they also were confronted with the issue of publicity - people were afraid to get to the stage and speak since quite a few organizers (meaning gay men from AKOE) were relatively famous and closeted. According to Betty, she did not have anything to loose, since her family already knew and did not approve of her, therefore she was one of the people speaking publicly that night.

After the event in Luizitania AKOE decided to ask help from famous Greek intellectuals and one of them, a famous writer, Kostas Taktsis was later approached by Andreas Velissaropoulos. The freshly organized AKOE considered Taktsis important not only because he was a well known Greek figure but because he was also a homosexual.

Could not find any information if he had publicly come out as a homosexual, but other gay people knew him to be. The meeting was followed by a big disappointment because Taktsis refused to be a part of the movement and published a letter of refusal in *Elevtherotipia*, a well known newspaper, where he stated that there were more serious problems in society at the moment than the issues of homosexuals and especially emphasized his opposition to *travesti* being a part of the movement, because according to him what could *travesti* have known about homosexuals when they had decided to live their lives as women as well as them being sex workers according to Taktsis could have compromised a gay movement, since he saw such an occupation as not being respectable (Quoted in Theodorakopoulos, 2005, p. 27-28). His views can seem quite ironic, since after his death it was revealed that Taktsis was working as a *travesti* prostitute for pleasure; he was found dead in 1988, strangled by one of his clients (Dendrinis, 2008, p. 149). The attitudes of some gay men towards *travesti*, reveal the problematic relationship between ideology and practice when it comes to the movement. The movement that was born in resistance to oppression and hierarchies appeared to be building them within.

After Karamanlis retired in the 1980's his position was assumed by conservative Georgios Rallis who decided to review the law once more which had never been put to vote after Karamanlis intention to do so, and I could speculate, based on the insights of Betty that it was disregarded because Karamanlis won the elections. The same year Rallis modified the law under which *travesti* prostitution was legalized but other parts of it such as police raids in cruising areas and the promised exile of homosexuals if they were convicted numerous times stayed (Dendrinis, 2008, p. 148). AKOE reacted again but this time more politically. In 1981, AKOE, together with *travesti* organized a first protest that took place in the center of Athens, in front of *Propylaia*, the gates of the old university where people read texts written by AKOE, Betty and Taktsis, who by the way, was also present in the protest. Most of the

people were wearing masks and sunglasses in order not to be recognized. Press was a bit ironic about that and one newspaper, *Vradini* referred to the protest as a carnival (Vradini, 1981, p. 4). After the protest, the petition, which explained the law and underlined its, as well as the Greek government's medieval and fascist thinking, signed by 250 people was handed to the government officials (Theodorakopoulos, 2005, p. 40). This event was recorded in quite a few newspapers, because AKOE had informed them about the press conference. The event was reviewed by journalists using such words as *omofilofilos* (homosexual) when referring to homosexuals and that could be regarded as an achievement of AKOE, since, as Dendrinis notes, before the event of Luizitania majority of people as well as the press used terms as *diestrammenos* (perverted) or *anithikos* (immoral), but later on derogatory terms regarding homosexuals as well as prostitutes and *travesti* had changed (Dendrinis, 2008, p. 142-143).

One of the news papers, *Apogevmatini*, mentioned that the French Emergency Committee against the Repression of Homosexuals CUARH, together with the magazine *Gai Pied* as well as the Swedish National Union for Sexual Equality sent their critical responses to the government regarding the law by telegraph (Apogevmatini, 1981, p. 2). Theodorakopoulos also notes that activists demonstrated in front of Greek embassies as well and such prominent personalities like Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, Felix Guattari and etc. publicly condemned the specific law (Theodorakopoulos, 2005, p. 36). My interviewee Grigoris emphasized the work of AKOE when informing the foreign governments or individuals about the Greek law against venereal diseases:

a lot of writers and politicians and these people, gay people, were extremely active, they organized a world lobby, there are several people that still have letters of members of parliaments and governors, ministers, philosophers, Jean Paul Sartre for instance, or whoever, people from the states that were informed and they

reacted to this project of law in the name of freedom it was very moving and it had an impact because this project of law was never voted.

It was quite obvious that the political climate was changing, since LGBT activists were protesting in the center of Athens, holding banners that said “homosexuality is not a perversion” and were even able to collect people to sign the petition with their real names and professions. The quick change in the language used publicly by people and media to describe LGBT people showed how AKOE succeeded in educating society about non heterosexual practices. Despite that, there was still a lot to be done, since many of the participants in the protest were wearing masks, so as not to be identified, as well, as unsanctioned police raids were still happening, even if not as frequently as during the junta and the restoration of democracy.

2.2. *Amfi*, ideology and the ambiguous left

Greek Homosexual Liberation Movement (AKOE) should not be thought of without *Amfi* – a first Greek gay magazine. All of my interviewees when asked about AKOE talked about *Amfi* as a very important part of the movement where it was hard to understand AKOE without the magazine, as activist Evagelia put it, all the work that was done [by AKOE] was reflected in *Amfi*. *Amfi* was first published in 1978 by the same group of people who started AKOE. As Loukas Theodorakopoulos remembers in his book, Vellisaropoulos with a few other people visited Theodorakopoulos in his house where they discussed preparing a publication; according to Loukas he already had a name ready, which was inspired by protesting movements abroad and May 68’ and it was *Amfi* which comes from the Greek word *amfisvitsi* and means “contestation” but can also mean “bi” [as, of both]

(Theodorakopoulos, 2005, p. 23). As Grigoris noted the wordplay was perfect for a gay magazine and Loukas also assumed the editor's position.

According to Grigoris, *Amfi*, the name as well as the content was a mix of sexual and political causes and the purpose of it was to write about these issues and make sure that people would start talking about their sexual desires. Quite similarly Irini noted that the goal of the movement was to show people that it [non heterosexual sexuality] was not a sickness or a sin but just a different sexuality; but due to the political climate and conservative society, they could not go out to the streets with gay pride, the approach had to be more serious and this serious image was translated through *Amfi*. The seriousness of the magazine of course lies in its content which, as many interviewees also noted, was highly intellectual. The first issue was mostly introductory, in the first page it had the declaration of AKOE that was written in 1976, and also contained articles on the Luizitania event, oppression, homosexual life in the Soviet Union, capitalism and sexual liberation and etc.

The first few pages criticized the newspapers use of terms when referring to homosexuals or lesbians. According to the anonymous author the term *trito filo* (third sex) that was used by the newspapers linked to the politics of the right, showed the wish of Greek society: to: "put gays and lesbians into the category of third sex so it could keep male and female genders intact" (*Amfi*, 1978, p. 2), which suggests a heterosexual hegemony that wants to maintain its power through creating such divisions. Another article called "Structure and Superstructure and sexual liberation" which had an obvious reference to Marx's Base and Superstructure argued that homosexuality is revolutionary and the reason it is stigmatized lies in the fear of "normals" to loose their legitimacy and centrality in society, therefore by calling non heterosexuals abnormal they maintain their position (*Amfi*, 1978). This is very close to Butler's theory on copy and original where she explores the homophobic discourse of heteronormativity which claims the originality of heterosexuality in contrast to

homosexuality. Meaning that it posits itself as original, but in order to be able to call heterosexuality original it has to have a copy that would maintain its status as such (Butler, 2004). These insights relate to queer theory and are very interesting to detect prior to the actual birth of so called queer theory. Therefore the politics of AKOE judging from the texts of *Amfi*, could be called queer, since they declare a wish to deconstruct and destabilize the heterosexual hegemony.

Translations of Foucault and similar authors, political and philosophical articles as well as information on LGBT political struggles abroad gave a very serious look to *Amfi* and also became the reason of wide criticism. As Grigoris mentioned it was highly literary and intellectual and was also read more by straight than gay people. This was also emphasized in the anonymous interview with a member of AKOE published in the British gay journal “Gay Left” in the issue of 1978/79, where the anonymous member of AKOE stated that the anarchists’ review stated that *Amfi* was for heterosexual intellectuals (Gay Left, 1978/79). Despite being blamed as elitist, the magazine was fighting with gay invisibility and had reached a lot of people. Theodorakopoulos writes about the importance of *Amfi*, when it came to gay people in rural areas as well as coming of age; the magazine was talking about homosexuality in completely different terms from popular medical or moral discourse as mentioned in the paragraph above, people that wrote in *Amfi* tried to deconstruct the stigmatizing discourses on homosexuality, as well as emphasized awareness and the slogan “private is political” (*Amfi*, 1978) and this gave strength to young homosexuals who were sending letters of gratitude to *Amfi*; where most of the letters served as coming out for some people who lived far from big cities and felt invisible. People were thankful for the different information than was usually available on homosexuality which made them feel better, for example the end of the letter sent to *Amfi* from Yorgos: “In the end, I would like to thank you

for your tremendous contribution and your battles. When I read *Amfi* I do not feel like a monster anymore. Kiss you all with love” (Theodorakopoulos, 2005, p. 58).

Amfi was read not only by the people interested in sexual liberation, homosexuality and philosophy but probably government officials or people that were against AKOE as well, since the issue B2 published in the 1979, as my respondent Grigoris noted ended up with the prosecution of its editor Loukas Theodorakopoulos. The state claimed that the poem written by Nikos Spanias which contained such expressions as *fourioziko kavli* (boisterous prick) and *dynato kavli* (strong prick) offended public morals. As Dendrinis writes, a lot of famous Greek people as well as foreigners witnessed in favor of Theodorakopoulos who in the end was cleared of all charges (Dendrinis, 2008, p. 146). This account helps realize how slowly the society was changing in respect to sexuality and especially to non heterosexual sexuality.

As my respondent Irini remembered, *Amfi* was spreading ideas of AKOE which were leftist, as noted by all the interviewees. LGBT politics being grounded in Marxist ideology was not something that was specific to the Greek movement but was prevalent in other LGBT movements in Europe in late 60's and throughout the 70's. Simon Edge, talking about the birth of British Gay Liberation Front in the 1970's notes that it was “firmly rooted in the left”; later in Britain a magazine called Gay Left was produced that linked homosexual oppression with capitalism and offered a Marxist analysis of it (Edge, 1995, p. 1-2). Movements in Spain as well as France were also relying on Marxist ideology when it came to theorizing oppression. The French Homosexual Front for Revolutionary Action explained homosexual and sexual repression in terms of unproductivity which is a main problem in the capitalist society (Fillieule & Duyvendak, 1999, p. 189, 221). This can help us see that the leftist rhetoric of AKOE mentioned by the interviewees and events of May 68' as an influence ties the Greek LGBT movement to broader European leftist politics as well as LGBT movements elsewhere in Europe

All the interviewees recognized the leftist rhetoric that was prominent in AKOE and *Amfi*. A few also mentioned that there were a lot of people in the movement that followed anarchist ideas which was reflected in the way the movement was organized, meaning that, as all of my respondents emphasized they purposely preferred autonomy from the state rather than being a legal entity as well as not having any sort of hierarchy within AKOE. In comparison to British LGBT movements who, together with homosexual liberation were engaged in class struggle, the Greek movement was not explicitly preoccupied with class issues. It spoke more generally against any kind of inequality, as reflected in the declaration of AKOE, where the organizers indicate that they do not tolerate any kind of division within the society they live in (Amfi, 1978). This means not only sexual and gender equality but economic as well. The main goals of AKOE, as confirmed by all the interviewees, were the liberation of homosexuals which became more specific and political because of the law for the prevention of venereal diseases; as well as the question of visibility and education of the mainstream together with people who did not identify as heterosexuals and did not have any role models when it came to understanding their sexuality. Therefore it stood not only for the liberation of homosexuals from the heteronormative society but the liberation of heterosexuals and sexuality in general as noted in *Amfi* from the “capitalist phallocratism and Christian patriarchy that would result in entering a new historical phase of HOMO SOCIALISTICUS” (Amfi, 1978). I could speculate that this could be equated with Marxist theory of proletarian revolution which would subvert the capitalist inequality which would result in new organization of life, in the Marxist case, communism.

Knowing the importance of the leftist ideology for AKOE and other LGBT movements all over Europe at the time, one would assume that political parties of the left must have been supportive of the LGBT struggles, but this was not clearly the case neither abroad nor in the Greek case. Many of my interviewees noticed that anarchists or the left

were supportive of AKOE, but such support was kind of ambivalent. A few of my respondents that are activists up to this day perceived the notion of support more in legal and political and in terms of rights rather than just a verbal utterance, therefore they did not consider the theoretical support of political parties as too worthy, meaning they expected some legal and political contributions when it came to LGBT rights. Most of the respondents said that the communist party of the interior was pro movement, and as mentioned above, some people had even attended the Luizitania event; later on *Pasok* (Panhellenic Socialist Movement), also *Synaspismos* (The Coalition of Left Movements and Ecology). None of my interviewees mentioned of them being too supportive on the legal state level, therefore I could speculate that it was mostly an informal support. Many people mentioned Melina Merkouri a famous Greek actress and a fierce dissident during the junta, who after the fall of the regime joined Pasok, and in 1981 became the minister of culture. According to my interviewees she not only publicly announced her support for LGBT people but was putting the question of LGBT rights for consideration in the parliament, mostly concerning the police raids.

As the respondents noted, all the other political parties were negative towards AKOE and especially the Communist Party of the Exterior (KKE). If the Communist Party of the Interior were somehow supportive, but as the interviewees mentioned not when it came to actual work done on the legal state level, then KKE was openly against it. As one of my respondents, Kostas remembered, he was around 18 at the time and very interested in the politics of the left; therefore he had joined KKE, but was exploring other parties as well. When he heard that there was a meeting in Luizitania to be held, where questions regarding homosexuality would be discussed, he decided to attend, although he, himself is a heterosexual, but as he told me, he believed in everyone's right for their sexual expression. According to Kostas, next day he had realized that he had been thrown out of the party

[meaning KKE] because it was openly against homosexuality. Kostas remained interested in leftist ideas and stayed a devoted reader of *Amfi*, but distanced himself from KKE which he had realized was too conservative for him.

Activist Evagelia noted that sometime around 1980's, KKE had put out big posters all over the city, which said that to be lesbian or gay is abnormal and a bourgeois perversion of rich people. Such attitudes again should not be understood as specifically a Greek phenomenon; a view on homosexuality as a bourgeois occupation was already present in Lenin's rhetoric, where he described transgressive sexual behavior as something that draws attention from the real goal – revolution (Healey, 2002, p. 354). According to my respondent Kostas, KKE were and are purely Stalinist. Therefore the negativity towards AKOE and LGBT people in general, as well as Leninist – Stalinist rhetoric can be explained by KKE's loyalty to Moscow and its politics regarding homosexuality.

2.3. The identity question and gender dynamics

The acronym AKOE, as mentioned before stands for the Greek Homosexual Liberation Movement, but the word *omofilofilos* (homosexual) was not really used in Greek public discourse as many of the interviewees remembered, before AKOE started using it through *Amfi* and public discussions. The majority used a derogatory term *poushtis* to describe a homosexual person. Loizos writes that *poushtis* refers to a man who is willing to be penetrated and seeks a relationship with another man. This role is highly stigmatized because it is associated with passivity. A man who penetrates, on the other hand, is not stigmatized, and the homosexual aspect in his case is somehow overlooked, because as Loizos theorizes: “*men fuck (i andres gamoun)* and that this is a masculine and *dominant*

thing to do and that whomsoever or whatever is so used is the subordinated and therefore inferior party” (Loizos, 2005, p. 71). These categories are closely related to masculine and feminine performances, where *andras* is a masculine man that does not deviate from the masculine performance attributed to male gender and *poushtis* is a man who does not perform masculinity and is regarded as a feminine man.

These categories *Andras* (man) and *Poushtis* is not something that emerged in modern Greece, it could be closely related to the ancient Greek perception of homosexual acts. As David Halperin argues against the romanticized perception of male to male sexual acts in ancient Greece, what we now identify as homosexuality was based on strict hierarchy rather than on free consensual relationships. Only a citizen was allowed to penetrate an adolescent boy a slave or a woman. That sort of penetrative sex was highly equated with domination where the citizen exercised his power through penetration. According to Halperin equating the penetrating citizen with the subordinate boy would not make any sense in ancient Greece since they were completely divided by the active and passive roles (Halperin, 1993, p. 419).

The *Andras* and *Poushtis* division was brought up by my respondent *travesti* Paola. She said that back in the day, referring to the 70's and early 80's, men were keener to have sex with boys, as she put it, a nice *poushtraki* with a nice body would be chased by men; it was one of Greek man's sexual urges. She was talking about Greece in general, but, since she herself was born and raised in Athens, I am not in the position to claim that this attitude was prevalent in the rural areas as well. According to Paola there was no gay liberation yet, that would name you gay. There was *poushtis* and the one who goes with the *poushtis*. It was considered to be natural, namely the ones who would go with a boy/man did not consider themselves to be homosexual and they weren't. This brings us again to Halperin's account on the sexual hierarchy in ancient Athens. And as Paola noted: “they were just having a

homosexual experience, just a sexual urge for that instant. I think this is common to all Mediterranean cultures”.

This account helps see how problematic was this division which stigmatized the behavior of one party engaging in a homosexual act (*poushtis*) and disregarded another or treated it as a natural thing (*andras*) creating something similar to the ancient Greek hierarchy. At some point this was taken into consideration by AKOE where members of the movement decided to change the meaning of the acronym and according to Grigoris, instead of *Apelefterotiko Kinima Omlofilofilon Elladas* (Greek Homosexual Liberation Movement) it was changed to *Apelefterotiko Kinima Omofilofilis Epithimias* (The Liberation Movement of Homosexual Desire). Grigoris referred to the change as a noble cause, because it was not putting people into a category, labeling them with identity to which as Paola mentioned they did not belong, as Grigoris said it was a theory incorporating all sexual expression.

Loukas Theodorakopoulos writes that AKOE contributed to changing the majority's perception of a homosexual that was constructed by the old Greek cinema, which would portray gay men in an exaggerated feminine way, because people started seeing masculine-styled guys who were not mincing but openly declared being gay (Theodorakopoulos, 2005, p. 18). The seriousness and normalness of a gay man emphasized by Theodorakopoulos was probably a strategic move in order to change the stigmatizing societal perception of the effeminate gay man, *poushtis*, but it did cause disagreements within the movement when it came to compromising on what image of a gay man AKOE should portray. According to Dimitris, one of the founders of AKOE, people had split up in two groups, one that Theodorakopoulos was demanding a behavior that would be more *androprepis* which means more manly, and Dimitris with a few others did not agree with that, as he put it they were more extreme: “we were queerer, more *adelfes*” [which literally translates as a sister, but is used to describe a gay man and has effeminate connotations].

Such disagreements were happening elsewhere, for example people behind the French magazine *Arcadie* that emphasized equality between homo and heterosexuals were advising homosexual men to behave “normally” in order to be accepted. Another organization FHAR (Homosexual Front for Revolutionary Action) did not agree with such a strategy and included all possible stigmatized behaviors (Fillieule & Duyvendak, 1999, p. 188). This disagreement that started between the members of AKOE can seem quite contradictory to the ideology of AKOE that could have been regarded as queer based on their stances on normalcy and heteronormativity. According to Michael Warner, differently from libertarian sexual politics that demand tolerance for whatever kind of sexuality practiced in private, queer politics “reject a minoritizing logic of toleration or simple political interest-representation in favor of a more thorough resistance to regimes of the normal” (Warner, 1993, p. 26). Dimitris and other men who did not want to limit the identity of homosexual to an exterior and behavior of the manly man were not understood by Theodorakopoulos and others who were insisting on the serious and masculine gay man. As much as the “queer” part of AKOE seemed radical and revolutionary they still had to live in the Greek society which stigmatized that sort of behavior, therefore, I would not like to appear as criticizing the conforming views of Theodorakopoulos, but rather emphasize how differently that sort of stigmatization might have affected different people and how it came to be contradictory with their ideology which in theory seemed to be queer but in practice appeared compliant.

As all the interviewees noted the movement began from a group of friends who were all male. The first collaboration was triggered by the law for the prevention of venereal diseases and as Markelos said it was with *travesti*. Lesbians joined later. The *travesti* appearance in the movement was quite brief and the reasons behind it, as most of the interviewees argued, among them *travestis* as well, were that they were scared by the law and for very practical reasons started collaborating with AKOE which was confirmed by my

respondent Betty: “You do understand that we panicked because of this as well as we were chased by police, the safari I mentioned and there we had a law that threatened us with exile”. When I asked Betty about her becoming political she corrected me saying that she was never into politics but rather into activism, as she perceives politics in formal, governmental level. Paola noted that *travesti* had to be under a lot of pressure to actually start doing something. Therefore the activism of *travesti* happened for very practical reasons and did not really have a continuation; since the law was never implemented they did not feel a need to be further involved politically. The reasons behind it, as emphasized by Betty were probably the rural and working class background that most of the *travesti* had; because of their gender non conformity most would just finish high school if even that, none had gone to universities and instead had to do street sex work. According to Betty, maybe she would have written something in *Amfi* but the work was unpaid and she had to take care of her survival. Therefore it could be argued that class as well as problems caused by non conforming gender behavior prevented *travesti* from being more involved in the workings of AKOE where gay men that started the movement were first of all men, who could have passed as straight, and also middle class which allowed them to obtain a higher education and get good jobs and therefore give their free time to the movement.

Although not all the *travesti* stopped being active. Paola in the early 80’s started publishing her own magazine *Kraksimo*. The word means “caw” but it is used in slang to refer to the verbal abuse of homosexuals. The content of the magazine was close to *Amfi*, meaning that it contained interviews with famous Greek artists and intellectuals, news on LGBT movements abroad and various articles. This was complimented by erotic photographs taken by Paola herself as well as a caption that showed up on every cover of a magazine which said that “every work for profit is prostitution” (Kraximo, 1987). Paola remembered that even though AKOE was very important for her in terms of learning, were she would go

to the office where AKOE would meet to listen and discuss, the people from the movement that were managing *Amfi* were not too keen to let anyone contribute with writing in the magazine, therefore she decided to start her own magazine with the help of friends, financial and in terms of writing articles or making interviews. This shows how difficult it was for *travesti* to manage the street work with activism not to mention a deeper involvement in LGBT politics. The economic problems and the hostility of police and sometimes clients they had to endure was the main reason why *travesti* stopped cooperating with AKOE after the law was never brought to a vote. Despite that, it should not be forgotten that part of their decision might have been gay men's perceptions of *travesti* since their identity was always causing distress within the movement. This is apparent in the words of Dimitris, one of the founders of AKOE when I had asked him about gender dynamics within the movement: "Trans were all silly, only few were able to speak, Betty and a few others, the rest were *trelles* (crazy). That kind of perception probably could have been influenced by overtly feminine and in general excessive behavior, Paola mentioned that *travesti* were not really the people you could communicate easily with and not because they were not educated but because they had to endure a lot of pressure while working on the street.

After AKOE was formed lesbians were very keen to join the movement, but soon after they became disappointed with gay men and as my interviewees Evagelia and Irini noted "patriarchal views". Stephen Engel who wrote about the American Gay and Lesbian movement emphasized that "Lesbians and bisexual women were in the unique position relative to gay and bisexual men of having to navigate a dual identity that suffered a dual oppression" (Engel, 2001, p. 35). This was also stressed by almost all the interviewees, men and women, who said that lesbians had to fight the oppression as women and as lesbians. The disagreements arose quite fast after lesbians had joined AKOE. When Evagelia talked about *Amfi* she mentioned that: "it was a spiritual guide for gay men and had very little to do with

lesbians”. Irini noted that the quarrel started when lesbians asked for more pages in *Amfi*. According to her, men refused saying that there were not so many of them so they could not have 50 percent of the space in the magazine.

Mostly though as both Irini and Evagelia argued the problem lied in the clash of patriarchal and feminist thinking and what Evagelia referred to as *lesvofovia* (lesbophobia); all these disagreements, that were probably sparked by the lack of gay men’s understanding about this dual oppression that lesbians were facing led them into leaving AKOE and joining the feminist movement. This again was not an exceptionally Greek situation, homosexual movements in Spain did not have many lesbians and the ones that were active had left to join women’s movements, giving the same reason of a dual oppression (Llamas & Vila, 1999, p. 220). As well as lesbians in the United States felt the consequences of the mentioned dual oppression where gay men tended to overlook the misogyny faced by lesbians and that was the reason they started distancing themselves from the gay movement (Engel, 2001, p. 44).

As Dendrinis writes, lesbians stayed with the women’s movement just for a few years, because the cooperation was troubled by many heterosexual women who were worried that lesbian existence in the movement might interfere with the movement’s success (Dendrinis, 2008, p. 161-162). The reason behind heterosexual feminist lesbophobia, as Evagelia labeled it, according to Taylor and Whittier stemmed from the societal discreditation of feminist work by equating them with lesbians (Morris & Mueller, 1992). It can be argued that in order to keep their political agenda intact feminists chose to disregard sexuality. Such hostility towards lesbians within the women’s movement was well known in the states where Betty Friedan spoke against including lesbians into the feminist movement as it supposedly threatened the movement’s credibility (Engel, 2001, p. 44). Despite the previous disagreements, some lesbians did come back to AKOE during the late 80’s and Irini

Petropoulou, who had studied abroad and had just come back to Greece, became the new editor of *Amfi*.

As argued in the beginning of the chapter, the main reason for the quick organizing of AKOE could have been the law for the prevention of venereal diseases that officially was against male prostitution but incriminated cruising gay men as well. The organizing of the first LGBT movement was possible because of the change in politics, the restoration of democracy after the military junta. AKOE and their magazine *Amfi* was inspired by the leftist ideology as well as anarchist; such movements as May 68' and the Italian LGBT movement FUORI were the main inspirations for gay men who started AKOE. Despite the theoretical views of the movement that were for equality and against any type of hierarchy as well as liberation of homosexual(s) desire, members of AKOE experienced a range of disagreements that were mostly based on gender and sexuality when it came to *travesti* and lesbians, as well as compromising what image of homosexual the movement should convey.

Chapter 3. There is still work to be done or the movement that did not end

In the previous chapter I focused on the beginning of AKOE which was triggered by the law for the prevention of venereal diseases that was revised in parliament and threatened the rights of *travesti* sex workers and cruising gay men, as well as the organization of the movement by the people who had studied abroad and were influenced by foreign social movements. I also drew upon the ideology and goals of AKOE together with the identity issues that include an ambiguous perception of homosexuality in Greece; also the gender dynamics within the movement. In this last chapter I would like to draw upon the reasons that led to the disintegration of AKOE, its legacy and the contemporary situation of LGBT rights in Greece. I will argue that the reasons for disintegration were multiple but the biggest ones were the shift to neoliberal politics that interfered with AKOE's wish to stay autonomous and non hierarchical; as well as the arrival of AIDS to Greece.

As mentioned in the previous chapter the first public demonstration organized by AKOE in front of *Propylaia* against the infamous law was held in January 1981, still under the government of Karamanlis and New Democracy. The elections were approaching and later that year in September Andreas Papandreou, the leader of PASOK with the slogan *Allagi* (change) won and formed the first socialist government in Greece (Woodhouse, 1991, p. 319). The change in the government brought a change in communication. PASOK decided to drop the law for the prevention of venereal diseases and invited the members of AKOE to participate in creating a different one (Dendrinis, 2008, p. 151). This was the first time when the government began taking into consideration the opinions of the marginalized citizens. Even before the elections Papandreou announced to the press that one of the goals of the party will be the abolition of inequality among Greek citizens where minorities should be able to have the same rights as the rest of the people (Stathopoulos, 1981, p. 12).

Even though the law was dropped the police raids still persisted and *travesti* organized another protest, this time in front of the house of Prime Minister Papandreou. After that the minister of public order, Yannis Skoularikis, apologized for the police brutality and stated that one of the goals of the socialist government will be to raise the level of education for policemen, which at the time did not require for a policeman to even have a high school diploma (Theodorakopoulos, 2005, p. 42-43). The new approach of the government towards the LGBT issues seemed to be very promising, and as cooperative as the state seemed, it did not mean that the police raids stopped completely after the public apology by the minister of public order, or that societal attitudes towards homosexuality became more positive. A good example of this was the people who were writing in *Amfi* – they were still using pseudonyms and were not too keen to be openly homosexual.

3.1. The disintegration of AKOE

People's wish to write incognito in *Amfi* was problematic since the magazine was based on the values of AKOE which literally stood for liberation of homosexuals and later on homosexual desire; therefore people who were involved in liberating others were not so liberated themselves, since they were not openly gay. According to Grigoris they were also afraid of the lawsuit that *Amfi* had experienced and Loukas Theodorakopoulos as its editor was prosecuted for offending public morals. This was the time, around 1985 that Grigoris Vallianatos joined AKOE and *Amfi*. As he told me himself, he came from a middle class Athenian family and had studied and traveled abroad. He had come out to his parents relatively early and did not receive any hostility from his family. Therefore confident and openly gay Vallianatos was not afraid to give his identity to AKOE and *Amfi*.

As Grigoris mentioned, the time he joined AKOE, people were having financial troubles that were restricting the publishing of the magazine. In addition the whole situation had turned into a vicious circle: people were not publicly out as gay and demanded to work in disguise, therefore they could not do any lobbying to finance AKOE and the publication of *Amfi*. As Dendrinis notes Vallianatos had the position of the public relations officer in the ministry of education and religious affairs when he joined AKOE; he was also giving interviews to the lifestyle magazines; showing up on TV (Dendrinis, 2008, p. 157-158). Grigoris' profession, as an expert on public relations was very useful to AKOE since he was using his skills to enhance gay visibility and fund raise for publishing *Amfi*, which as he proudly remembered were selling around 10 000 issues monthly under him being an editor.

As many interviewees noted *Amfi* was a very intellectual magazine, or as Grigoris put it “quite theoretical”. He told me, he wanted to change it, to make it less elitist and more available to a wider audience. Dendrinis gives a slightly different account, according to him, the reason why Vallianatos wanted to make the magazine less intellectual was his wish to make it more commercial so it would stay longer in the market. Theodorakopoulos did not wish to lower the intellectual standards of *Amfi* and from then on disagreements began (Dendrinis, 2008, p. 159). The commercialization or making *Amfi* less intellectual was not the only clash between the older generation of activists and Vallianatos, as noted by himself, was also accused for wanting to Americanize the Greeks: “I tried to change it and I was accused, to give you an example, the word gay was not popular these days, it was *omofilofilos*, that's why I introduced the word gay, it was a revolution. I was accused of Americanizing Greek, whatever. I prefer liberalizing myself, but anyway [laughs]”.

It is hard to say why some of the founders of AKOE and *Amfi* disapproved of a new term that came from the west, because interviewees did not elaborate on that but it could be associated with some of the people's leftist stances as well as the problematic definition of

homosexual in Greece. As mentioned in the previous chapter the word *omofilofilos* (homosexual) was relatively new to the public discourse as to the majority of homosexuals themselves since before AKOE started using it excessively no one in the media or society would address homosexuals using this term; the words used were derogatory, such as *pouhstis* (fag) or *anomalos* (not normal) and etc. Therefore a transition to this new concept coming from the west might have been confusing to people in a sense of not being sure what it stands for since there was no such word in the Greek language. Martin F. Manalansan IV similarly touches upon globalizing effects on local identities in Philippines. He shows how certain concepts such as coming out are foreign to local gays and lesbians and by some people are perceived as a colonizing attempt (Manalansan, 1995).

The disagreements between the older generation and Vallianatos pushed him into leaving AKOE to form another organization called EOK. As Grigoris himself told me, EOK stood for *Evropaiki Omofilofiliki Koinotita* (European Community of Homosexuals) the acronym was an ironic play with European Union, since in Greek EOK stood for *Evropaiki Oikonomiki Kinotita* (European Economic Community). EOK was formed in 1988 and as Grigoris emphasized, differently from AKOE it was a legal entity. D, who had joined EOK in the early 90's said "it was nothing like AKOE". EOK according to him was not doing much activist work, people would just meet in the office to discuss and support each other. They have tried to establish a phone support line, but due to financial problems and lack of advertizing it did not work out. Another thing that D found problematic was Vagelis Geiannelos' presidency and a wish to keep his position: "At some point we had a meeting to discuss the change of this position, so it would not be called presidency, but for example, a secretary of policy planning. He said no, it will not work that way, we will have a president and I will be the president [laughs] and this is not up for discussion." After that, D, troubled by the hierarchy and the lack of democracy within EOK left the movement.

One of my interviewees, the late editor of *Amfi*, Irini Petropoulou noted that in the mid 80's new mainstream life style magazines started showing up which sometimes would put articles on gays or lesbians, nothing serious, from a life style perspective, but people were buying them. *Amfi* on the other hand remained very serious. Irini thought that the movement had reached the point of a crisis where according to her, there were two ways, either to make AKOE and *Amfi* more professional, meaning to make it a legal entity and enhance the quality of a magazine where people would use their real names or to leave it as it is and see how long it will last:

The majority wanted to leave it as it is and see how long it will last, because they did not want AKOE to be organized. From that point the decline started, in my opinion. You can't hold a movement who is not a movement and organization that is not an organization because from there on, if you want to do lobbying with politicians you need to show them the statute [of the organization]. What will you show them? You will tell them that we are like that because we like it that way, anarcho-autonomous. Anarchy is great as well as autonomy but...it did not last.

This account, as well as the one provided by Vallianatos and other interviewees might suggest the change in the perceptions of activism and politics of sexuality in general. The younger generation's demands to organize AKOE more professionally come very close to neoliberal politics. As Diane Richardson argues in a neoliberal setting an LGBT organization has to structure itself in a way as to agree with the demands of the market, to be acceptable to politicians, society and benefactors as she puts it: "One that can represent both lesbians and gay men, and *lesbian and gay social movements* as no longer 'troubling' to mainstream society. One that can not only render intelligible and acceptable the idea of the 'normal lesbian/gay', but also can 'normalize' the lesbian and gay movement itself" and she calls it a "professionalization of sexual politics" (Richardson, 2005, p. 524). This shift to neoliberal organization was noted by my interviewee D:

The revolutionary aspect of AKOE does not exist anymore in Greece, [means the contemporary LGBT organizations lack this aspect]. Here in Athens [talks about pride] things are more commercial, they do not put up questions of liberation and sexual revolution. They are more into liberalism, we are fine, we are accepted, we

just want more openness and vote for the law on civil marriage and we are happy, that's it. I am also for that but these movements in Athens go only that far, that's why I do not belong to any LGBT organization now.

3.2. AIDS tragedy

The clash of generations and the new economic and political trends were not the only factors that contributed to the disintegration of AKOE. Another very serious issue that reached Greece in the mid 80's was AIDS. The first cases of what was later called AIDS were documented in San Francisco around 1979, by doctor Donald Abrams who suddenly started having a flood of gay male patients with low immune systems (Andriote, 1999, p. 48). Soon enough the unknown virus was spreading fast among gay men causing the worldwide panic. The so called "gay cancer" was thought to attack only gay men and despite the later discoveries where it was confirmed that the virus can be transmitted through blood and sex (Andriote, 1999, p. 59) which means that people of any kind of sexual orientation can be infected, the association of AIDS with homosexuality persisted.

Brian Riedel gives a very interesting account on how AIDS came to be known in Greece. He argues that the information about the virus arrived much prior to the disease itself. The mainstream media started writing not only about AIDS but also about the so called risk groups that of course included mainly gay men as well as hemophiliacs and intravenous drug users (Reidel, 2005, p. 91). This shows how panic was created without the actual disease being present yet. The information on AIDS that reached Greece before any actual case was confirmed in the country was another challenge for Greek homosexuals. AKOE was a very young movement, established just over 5 years prior to the AIDS outbreak; LGBT people in Greece had just started establishing some sort of dialog with the government, working on gay and lesbian visibility and educating the mainstream on topics of sexuality as well as trying to

shake of the stigmatizing perceptions of non heterosexual sexuality. AIDS was threatening with another wave of stigmatization and a movement which had just begun could not handle the pressure.

According to most of my respondents AIDS was a huge problem and it had a big impact on the dissolution of AKOE. According to Markelos the communication with bisexuals stopped, which he thought was important in AKOE's quest for the liberation of homosexual desire. Markelos did not explain why the collaboration ended but I could speculate that it was triggered by the panic that AIDS caused, therefore bisexuals as he referred to them might not have wanted to identify with one of the so called risk groups. Grigoris emphasized the AIDS hate that was unbearable for AKOE: "you can imagine that the climate those days was much worse then now days, homosexuals were accused of being the reason of yet another evil, and that was a main reason of withering away of AKOE". If in the united states gay men organized themselves in groups for fighting AIDs such as GMHC (Gay Men's Health Crisis) and later Act Up (Andriote, 1999) in Greece according to Reidel, the first organizing came from women social workers and doctors; AKOE, apart from publishing articles about the disease in *Amfi* and individual gay people involved had distanced themselves from the AIDS issue (Reidel, 2005, p. 96). The reason behind AKOE not wanting to deal with the AIDS burden was probably, as mentioned before, the inability to fight more homophobia than such a young movement could have handled.

Due to the lack of money *Amfi* stopped being published and AKOE stopped their meetings, since some people had already moved to EOK. Drawing upon the dissolution of AKOE it is hard to locate the exact reasons that led to that. But based on the information provided by the interviewees and other sources, I could speculate that there might have been a few. First, it was a change in politics worldwide; the new generation of activists driven by neoliberal understanding of organizing clashed with the old generation's views on how social

movements should look and what goals they should have. A wish of part of the founders of AKOE to continue the movement that had no hierarchy or legal ties to the government might have also worked against them since, as a few interviewees mentioned, people were experiencing serious financial problems that interfered with the publishing of *Amfi* as well as the funding of AKOE. And then adding up to all the financial issues and ideological disagreements was AIDS, an issue that a 6 year old movement was not able to handle.

3.3. The legacy of AKOE and contemporary LGBT situation in Greece

As mentioned above officially AKOE stopped functioning as an organization in 1989 and the publishing of *Amfi* was also terminated. When asked why did the movement finish, most of the interviewees indicated the reasons discussed in the sub chapter above, except Dimitris, one of the founders of AKOE, who was surprised by my question and answered that: “It hasn’t finished because it is a social movement, therefore it has not finished it just has different forms now”. This answer made me think of how differently people perceive social movements. Grigoris, Irini and others thought of AKOE more in terms of an organization that was created and at some point dissolved, but Dimitris’ take on it seems to be a bit different. When he says that the movement did not finish, he does not mean the formal gatherings and publication of *Amfi*, he does not view AKOE as merely an organization that came into being for some practical reasons, such as fighting the law against venereal diseases, but more broadly, as a movement that was translating some important ideas, who after the formal dissolution of AKOE were taken up by other organizations.

This so called legacy of AKOE was emphasized by most of the interviewees, who agreed that it was revolutionary for its time, the first seed of LGBT activism in Greece, that according to Dimitris: “reshaped a very characteristic period, all the decade of the 70’s and

80's", meaning that it marked an important time of political change, after the collapse of the military junta and the transition to democracy. Although most of the interviewees talked about AKOE as a pioneer movement and therefore important and ground breaking, one of my respondents D, disagreed with the continuity of this legacy, as noted by Dimitris. Talking about the organizations formed after AKOE and the contemporary situation, D stated that they have nothing in common: "I think that none of the organizations formed after could be called the child of AKOE; it did not have any continuation". According to him the contemporary movements lost that revolutionary aspect that AKOE had and now it is all commercialized. Similarly Warner writing about the LGBT movements in the US of the 90's argues that the politics of LGBT movements had been changed; small organizations are full of public relations professionals who work with the media and are involved in profit making (Warner, 1999, p. 67).

The majority of my respondents were quite skeptical of the contemporary LGBT work in Greece. Only Grigoris Vallianatos seemed quite optimistic and pleased with the LGBT situation. He mentioned an organization Color Youth, which he called "good news" and which according to their website are "The LGBT youth and their friends" and who are fighting against homophobia (Color Youth, 2010, para. 1); as well as Athens Pride that has been going on for 7 years and that last year the Mayor of the city publicly embraced the event; also that the Ministry of Culture together with a National Tourist Organization organized a rainbow week a year ago, which provided information on LGBT holiday destinations as well as restaurants and places for entertainment in Greece. Other respondents were a bit more critical of the contemporary LGBT activism and the general situation of LGBT rights. Almost all the interviewees emphasized that the new LGBT organizations lack the revolutionary aspect. According to Markelos, Evagelia and Paola things are quite dull, today's organizations lack activism, as Paola put it: "they don't care, really, they want to find

a dick, a boyfriend, to have a good time, and I understand them, life is short”. The skepticism of part of my interviews when talking about contemporary LGBT organizations can be linked back to the issue of reformist social movements in the neoliberal context that want to be tolerated and accepted by the heteronormative system and become normal consuming citizens rather than resisting the normalcy and subverting the system.

Based on the views of my interviewees on contemporary LGBT organization and activism in Greece, I could hypothesize that claims about the contemporary LGBT organizations as not being revolutionary or activist enough might lay in the generational differences as well as the nostalgic reconstruction of things experienced in their youth. This seems to be quite obvious in the memory of Markelos: “back then it was AKOE, gay liberation, something was happening back then. That is why I’m saying I had an exciting life, now, I simply live...” And the generational gap implies the popular revolutionary leftist ideas that were at the core of many European as well as American gay liberation movements in the late 60’s throughout the 70’s and which as mentioned before changed with the arrival of a neoliberal discourse.

In this last chapter I tried to map out the issues that led AKOE into disintegration, such as the arrival of the neoliberal understanding of politics and activism, introduced to the movement by Grigoris Vallianatos. This caused a lot of disagreements because of the initial plan of the movement to stay independent from the state, which in the end caused a lot of financial problems with which AKOE could not have dealt with since they did not want to comply with the neoliberal market. Another serious issue was first the panic and then the actual problem of AIDS which caused another wave of stigmatization of homosexuals and with which a 6 year old movement could not have the strength to deal with. I finished the chapter with people’s thoughts on the importance of the first Greek LGBT movement and its problematic continuity in when it came to contemporary LGBT organizations.

Conclusion

In my thesis project I aimed to find out what were the reasons behind the emergence of the first Greek LGBT movement AKOE as well as its existence, goals, dissolution and the impact it left on the later LGBT generations. I began my discussion with the analysis of the institutions: state, society, family and Orthodox Church. Drawing upon the state politics before and during military dictatorship that were policing and disciplining non heterosexual sexuality, as well as the institute of family which is of high importance to majority of Greeks and the moralizing stance of the church I found out that these institutions can hardly be viewed as separate when it comes to exercising power over non heterosexual practices. What links them together are the traditional concepts of honor and shame that are related to sexuality and refers to topics of sexual taboo's which are suppose to be kept in secret in order not to draw shame on ones family. The church's idea of non heterosexual sexuality being a sin since it is not reproductive linked it closely to the colonels' agenda of building a respectable nation of Christian Greeks.

This analysis led me to argue in the second section on my thesis that these repressive factors led to resistance on the part of LGBT people who had organized in a movement which started creating a counter-discourse and revaluation of non heterosexual practices as well as building new identities. I established the main reason behind the first organization of Greek LGBT movement which was the law for the prevention of venereal diseases that was being reviewed in the government that incriminated male prostitution as well as cruising gay men. I also determined the foreign influences that made an impact on the organization of AKOE that were social movements abroad such as May 68' and Italian LGBT movement FUORI. Through analyzing the declaration of AKOE and their magazine *Amfi* I was able to define the ideology of AKOE that was rooted in the left; as well as goals that were about sexual

liberation through awareness and deconstruction of heteronormative system. Based on the memories of my interviewees I discovered inconsistencies in the ideology of AKOE when it came to practice, meaning that the issue of gender as well as gender appropriate behavior when it came to gay men provoked disagreements within the movement and led lesbian members into leaving the movement.

In the last chapter I determined the reasons that led to disintegration of AKOE, which were economic, but more importantly exposed the problems that led to inability to continue and fund the movement together with a magazine *Amfi*. These issues were mainly disagreements upon the organization of the movement that also disclosed the shift to neoliberal politics in general, where some of the founders of AKOE were against the neoliberal model of professionalized organization that was offered by a fairly new member to AKOE Grigoris Vallianatos. People that disliked the new approach of Vallianatos wished to maintain the initial set up of the movement that was an autonomous non hierarchical organization. This decision forbade the movement to seek funding or political demands from the government in a neoliberal setting. Analysis showed that these were not the only problems that led to the dissolution of the movement, another issue was the appearance of AIDS in USA and later on in Greece that caused a panic in society and stigmatized homosexuals. I finish the chapter with my interviewees' thoughts about the legacy of AKOE where it becomes apparent that most of the interviewees, although emphasizing the importance of the work done by the first LGBT movement in Greece, see a gap between the contemporary politics of tolerance of Greek LGBT organizations in comparison to AKOE's transformative politics.

The first Greek LGBT movement AKOE came to existence after the restoration of democracy that marked the change in politics as well as civil rights that were suspended during junta. The organization was sparked by the law reviewed by the new democratic

government that threatened LGBT people with criminal offence and even exile. Its existence was very important for LGBT people who were deemed to invisibility by the oppressive state, church, family and society. It created a different discourse on non heterosexual practices which previously were stigmatized by heteronormative institutions mentioned above; that allowed people to view themselves differently. I would also like to add that it is important to view LGBT movements in a broader context, rather than focusing only on the penalizing state which most of the researches tend to do. Exploring the workings of power on a more informal level, including society, family and religious institutions can give us a better understanding on how LGBT movements tend to work and shape themselves.

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