

**Is There a Propaganda of Homosexuality?  
Re-emergence of the Russian LGBT Movement in the Context of  
Political Heterosexism and Homophobia**

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## Abstract

The newly emerged laws which prohibit propaganda of homosexuality among minors confirm Russian society as being homophobic and have stimulated LGBT activism. This thesis examines the re-emergence of visible and political LGBT movement in Russia after the implementation of regional anti-propaganda laws. It examines how these laws affected and reshaped activism in Russian regions. Analysis of 23 guided interviews and 2 group discussions with activists shows that indeed state heterosexism galvanized the resistance of the LGBT community and shifted strategies and agendas of activists; however, anti-propaganda also enforced the closet for LGBT people in small cities with no activism. This research also discusses the relationships between LGBT organizations in different regions in the current circumstances of political heterosexism. It argues that anti-propaganda legislation strengthens the moderate/radical binary between the activists, which is a legacy of the post-Soviet LGBT movement in the 90s. Examination of the organization *Russian LGBT Network* as an imagined community and analysis of its patterns of networking reveals that it is “nesting Orientalism” within Russia, normalizing moderate activism and presenting radicals as non-fit. The existence of multiple networks, some of which intersect and some of which oppose each other, argues for the presence of agency of the regions, yet shows the disunity of the LGBT movement in Russia.

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I want to dedicate this work to Vladislav Toronov, 23 year old gay man from Volgograd, Russia who was raped and brutally murdered on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, 2013. His death is not only a result of severe homophobia – it is a result of overall ignorance towards the questions of LGBT and human rights in Russian society.

His name must never be forgotten and this hostility and hatred must come to an end.

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## Introduction: Re-Emergence of Russian LGBT Movement

*In the mid 1980s, I would ask everyone I could about “gays and lesbians” (my term, not theirs). Usually I was told that lesbians did not exist in Russia (ne sushchestvuet). I was told a “joke” about gay men, over and over again, repeated as a litany, a plea for me to stop asking: “In the U.S. you send all your gays to Camp San Francisco; here we send ours to Camp Siberia.”*

- Laurie Essig. *Queer in Russia: A Story of Sex, Self, and the Other*, 1999

Russian and Soviet history suggests that non-normative sexualities have an ambiguous and at times problematic position within the nation. With almost 60 years of criminalization and pathologization of homosexuality the fall of the “iron closet”<sup>1</sup> in 1993 and the emergence of LGBT activism in post-soviet Russia could be perceived as a first step towards the emergence of a solid LGBT movement. Yet, as Laurie Essig (1999) notes, it was not the birth of the movement, but rather a miscarriage (p.67) – after the abrupt emergence of the LGBT movement in the 90s by the beginning of the 2000s it was almost invisible. (Essig, 1999; Nemtsev, 2008) However, from the beginning of 2000-s along with the rise of new nationalism, homosexuals again appeared to be in the focal point of the nationalist policies of exclusion. In May 2006 the first policy against the propaganda of non-normative sexuality

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<sup>1</sup> This is a reference to the decriminalization of homosexuality in Russia, which happened in 1993 as a result of the revision of Russian Penal Code. It also refers to the heading of David Tuller’s book (1996) *Cracks in the Iron Closet: Travels in Gay and Lesbian Russia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

among the underage population<sup>2</sup> was implemented in the region of Ryazan (Ryazanskaya oblast')<sup>3</sup>. Since September 2011 such policies were adopted in the areas of Arkhangelsk, Kostroma, Novosibirsk, Magadan, Samara, Krasnodar, Kaliningrad, republic of Bashkortostan and in the city of Saint-Petersburg. The legislation states that “public actions which aim to propagandize homosexualizm (*muzhelozhstvo* & *lesbianstvo*) among minors”<sup>4</sup> must be fined. It was justified by the resolution of the Supreme Court which claimed that minors aren’t able to evaluate critically the information about same-sex relationships, thus “‘homosexual dispositions’ can easily be imposed on them”<sup>5</sup>. The vagueness of this legislation opened up the possibility for regional governors to eliminate almost all actions related to LGBT community – not only prides and other public marches, but also festivals, seminars, conferences, publishing, even the organizations themselves can be closed. Potentially, these legislative changes aim to erase all nonnormative sexualities from the public sphere to sustain the Russian nation as purely heterosexual.

Contemporary LGBT movement in Russia reemerged in response to the anti-propaganda laws; “reemerged” because the current movement as a new stage of the LGBT movement which emerged in the 90s; yet activism is being reshaped and reorganized by the newly enacted anti-propaganda policies. Various Russian LGBT organizations and sole activists in conjunction with each other or independently under these particular circumstances started to develop strategies to fight heterosexism on the legal level (which enhanced political homophobia) therefore shaping the means through which political heterosexism and

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<sup>2</sup>Hereafter I will refer to them as anti-propaganda policies/laws/legislations

<sup>3</sup>Full texts of the anti-propaganda policies, which were implemented by the time I started this research are presented in the Appendix I.

<sup>4</sup> Zakon Ryazanskoi oblasti ot 15.06.2006 N66-03 “O Vnesenii izmenenii v Zakon Ryazanskoi Oblasti “Ob Administrativnih Pravonarusheniiah” [Law of the Region of Ryazan dated 15.06.2006] N 66-03 “On the Changes in the Law of the Region of Ryazan “On the Administrative Violations”] Retrieved May 27, 2013 from the Region of Ryazan website: [http://ryazan.news-city.info/docs/sistemsj/dok\\_oeqrlo.htm](http://ryazan.news-city.info/docs/sistemsj/dok_oeqrlo.htm)

<sup>5</sup> Opreделение Sudebnoi Kollegii po Administrativnim Delam VC RF po Delu #1-APG12-11 ot 15.12.2012 [Decision of the Juridical Board of the Administrative Cases HC RF on the Case #1-APG12-11 dated 15.12.2012]. Retrieved May 27, 2013 from [http://www.vsrfr.ru/stor\\_pdf.php?id=501100](http://www.vsrfr.ru/stor_pdf.php?id=501100)

homophobia is combated and readjusting the ways of addressing various needs within the LGBT community. The main aim of this research is to understand how the strategies of the activists have changed in such situation of legitimized homophobia and how the legitimization of homophobia (which occurs through the enactment of heterosexist laws) can enhance and shape the creation of a national LGBT movement. I will show that the implementation of heterosexist laws changed not only the activists' strategies but also the ways in which activists from different regions interact with each other. However, the implementation of the anti-propaganda laws enhanced not only networking, but also the conflicts between the two dominant strategies of doing activism – moderate and radical.

In this research I present the Russian LGBT Network – the biggest umbrella-organization in the Russian Federation which makes an attempt to unite regional organizations; various regional LGBT organizations are members of the Russian LGBT Network. Because the Network presents itself as moderate, only certain regional organizations (who share moderate values) are invited to cooperate and constitute the Russian LGBT Network. Moreover, most of these organization members of the Russian LGBT Network are located in the European part of Russia<sup>6</sup>.

In relation to the latter, this research aims not only to analyze the reemergence of an LGBT movement in contemporary Russia, but also to critique the principles of networking, employed by the Russian LGBT Network and the criteria according to which LGBT organization in different administrative areas in Russia (and administrative areas without such organizations) become a matter of particular interest to the Russian LGBT Network. In effect it partially narrates the public image of LGBT activism in Russia as moderate and western (geographically and symbolically) thus making organizations/initiatives outside the

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<sup>6</sup> See the map in Appendix V: it shows, which regions are members of the Russian LGBT Network.



Network (which are concerned with other issues or doing LGBT politics differently) invisible on the national level. Thus I argue that the Russian LGBT Network is not the only network of LGBT organizations within the country: the movement is a broader structure which encompasses other multiple, multi-layered networks, which go beyond the Network itself.

### **From Political Heterosexism to Resistance: Theoretical Framework**

I situate my research of Russian LGBT movement within theories on new social movements. I argue that the Russian LGBT movement cannot be unequivocally called a sexual identity/queer movement. Laurie Essig points out that movement in Russia “represent[s] an alternative to identity politics and politics of identity. This alternative might be called a politics without identity – a sort of coalitional and contingent politics” (Essig, 1999, p.81); thus, she calls it queer. My informants also mentioned that the Russian LGBT movement is not based on a shared and stable sexual identity, more on a shared oppression: “we understand that we are all different within this movement. The most important issue to us [the movement] in this situation is our shared experience of severe stigmatization from Russian society!” (Informant i) Gamson (1995), however, argues that a claim on shared oppression represents identity politics, he argues that “clear categories of collective identity are necessary for successful resistance and political gain” (p. 391) The LGBT movement in Russia is located in-between identity and queer politics – although it demands inclusion and calls itself “LGBT” it denies fixed identities as being central for the movement. However, although sexual identity fluctuates and is not fundamental to Russian movement, the LGBT movement in Russia values a political identity which is based on the strategies and politics of LGBT organizations: moderate<sup>7</sup> and radical. In my research I see this binary as another organizing force of the movement.

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<sup>7</sup> Laurie Essig (1999) calls it ‘compromise-oriented’ (pp. 62-67)

I want to begin the discussion of my theoretical framework by making a note of the way I'm conceptualizing legal and extra-legal issues related to the implementation of anti-propaganda policies. In this research I will narrate anti-propaganda legislations which were passed in certain Russian federal subjects as political heterosexism, yet to argue that the enactment of such laws consequently legitimizes and galvanize homophobia. To disentangle the difference between political homophobia and political heterosexism I follow Tom Boellstorff's (2005, 2009) argument on the distinction between two phenomena; a number of researches employed the author's distinction, for example Ashley Currier (2010) in her case-study of post-apartheid political homophobia. Boellstorff (2005) argues that heterosexism implies the superiority and privilege of heterosexuality, while homophobia is a fear of non-heterosexual subjects. Thus, legislative elimination of homosexuals from the public sphere in Russia (implying the realm of public must be heterosexual) does not directly postulate violent (homophobic) intentions (although, as Boellstorff (2005, 2009) notes, it is commonly based on it). Yet it legitimizes, triggers homophobia: "heterosexism creates a climate where fear and hatred of nonnormative sexualities can take root" (Boellstorff, 2009, p.131).

I argue that the heterosexism of the anti-propaganda legislations derives from the "assurance (read: insistence) that humanity and heterosexuality are synonyms" (Warner, 1993, p. xxiii), which Michael Warner conceptualizes as heteronormativity. The major difference between the two concepts – heteronormativity and heterosexism – is that heteronormativity regards heterosexuality as conventional way in which people think about themselves and society, whereas heterosexism operates on the institutional level, it "operates at the level of [...] *social sanctions*" (Boellstorff, 2009, p.131 emphasis added). Thus, heteronormativity describes the way in which people think about the society as they perceive heterosexuality to be conventional; while political heterosexism implies legislative recognition of heteronormativity on the institutional level.

In order to understand through which means this homophobia is triggered by heterosexist laws, I turn to the concept of moral panic. I argue that legislative ban of the homosexual propaganda specifically among minors emerged from a moral panic, which Gayle Rubin defines as “the “political moment” of sex in which diffused attitudes are channeled into political action and from there into social change” (Rubin, 1992, p.297). Along with emerging from moral panic, the anti-propaganda legislation also enhances it: Gilbert Herdt (2002) in his work argues that commonly moral and sexual panics are enhanced by political interventions. Government is especially concerned with the future generations and its possible “homosexualization”. As Gayle Rubin notes “[t]he criminalization of innocuous behaviors [...] is rationalized by portraying them as menaces to health and safety, women and children, national security, the family, or civilization itself” (ibid., p.297) saying that various ways of depicting homosexuality as a threat might be invented; the legislation I analyze is implemented for the sake of protection of the underage population, implying gays and lesbians pose a threat to the new generation and overall moral character of Russian nation.<sup>8</sup> Such moral panic portrays homosexuals as a major threat to the nation, and, what is also important, to the future of the Russian nation. Roger Lancaster also argues that threats to children’s safety are a catalyst for moral panics. “Anything that touches upon the protection or socialization of children can serve as the stuff of panic, of course.” (Lancaster, 2011, p. 27) I think that theories related to moral/sexual panic will deepen my understanding of the homophobic legislations and on the effects they exert.

However, the anti-propaganda legislations not only enhanced homophobia in the society, the main issue of this research is that heterosexist legislations triggered resistance on the part of LGBT community. Baer in his book presents a response, which was generated by

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<sup>8</sup>Text of the anti-propaganda legislation in Saint Petersburg (see Appendix I) contains a note on what propaganda is; however, this note shows more how homosexuality does not conform to the Russian moral values of heterosexual family.

an attempt to organize a gay pride in Moscow. Some state officials claimed that they are tolerant towards homosexuality, unless it is displayed publicly, because “it shouldn’t affect us, normal people”. (Baer, 2009, 45) Thus invisibility is considered as a crucial rule for homosexuality to exist in Russian society. Contemporary heterosexist legislations intended to prohibit the propaganda of female and male homosexuality (in some regions also bisexuality and transgender) among minors; thus the government tried to eliminate homosexuality from the public sphere, to discursively construct the Russian nation as purely heterosexual, and to perpetuate heteronormativity by implementing heterosexist anti-propaganda policies. However, regional legislations gave agency to the LGBT community and activists and dragged them out of the closet in two ways. First of all, the status of LGBT people started to be widely discussed in Russian society, especially by politicians and the media.<sup>9</sup> Thus, even though regional governments desired to preclude LGBT-related issues from the public, this law dramatically enhanced the publicity of homosexuality. Secondly, severe legislative oppression dragged LGBT activists out of their political closet. Almost all activists I interviewed indicated that regional heterosexist legislation has a positive effect on the development of LGBT activism in Russia. The encountered oppression opened up an extensive field for the activists to work; and this is not a unique experience of Russian LGBT activists. As Barry, Krouwel and Duyvendak (1999) point out,

[i]nterestingly, in many countries the movement “came out” as a result of triggering event – a radio or television program dealing negatively with homosexuality, causing a storm of protest by those affected. Other forms of public attention, in politics or

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<sup>9</sup>For example: Lenta.RU published an article, which describes how Russian Media defended LGBT community after the implementation of anti-propaganda legislation: Surganova, E. (2013). Podderjka Menshinstv: Rossiiskie SMI Vstupili Za Prava Geev. [Support the Minorities: How Russian Media Started to fight for Gay Rights] Retrieved from Lenta.Ru <http://lenta.ru/articles/2013/02/22/reaction/>; Afisha Magazine even dedicated a whole issue towards homosexuality: Melnikova A., & Markhotskaia K. (2013) “Ja Mogu Vstat I Skazat: tak Bolshe ne Budet” 27 Istori iz Jizni Rossiiskih Geev [“I can Stand Up and Say: It is not Going to be that Way” 27 stories of Russian Homosexuals]. Afisha. (339). Retrieved from Afisha Magazine Web-Site <http://www.afisha.ru/article/gay-issue/>

media, also offer opportunities for initiating mobilization. An “enemy” or “opponent” and a specific symbolic event may mobilize substantial number of lesbians and gays and galvanize movement organization. (p. 347)

Michel Foucault also notes that power can be tolerated, until it is obvious (Foucault, 1980) entailing that the more visible and direct power gets the more pronounced resistance becomes. His claim can be applied to the current situation in Russia, with its revival of LGBT activism as a result of the political heterosexism.

In order to understand the ways in which political heterosexism which is articulated through the anti-propaganda legislations generates resistance on the part of Russian LGBT community, I draw upon theories of Michel Foucault and Michel de Certeau. Foucault argues that power is a complex phenomenon, which implies “the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization” (1988, p.92). Thus, he argues that resistance cannot be seen as something external to power: it is an integral part of these relations. Resistance occurs in the field of power relations, which pervade social life in general – they are not localized in some specific points; similarly resistance forms its dense network covering all social structures – including the organizations which are in opposition to the dominant discourses of power. His argument shapes not only my understanding of the re-emergence of the political LGBT movement in Russia, but also helps me conceptualize power relations within the movement itself. By looking at the contemporary Russian LGBT movement through a Foucauldian lens, I will grasp how power relations penetrate the movement and how some groups and networks emerge in resistance to the dominant narrative of activism of the Russian LGBT Network.

Michel de Certeau (1984) pointed out that resistance can be understood as the exploitation of the powerful for the benefit of the powerless. Certeau draws a line between

powerful and powerless individuals, presenting an appealing concept on how the weak can exploit the dominant discourse for their own benefit in everyday life. His theory enhances my understanding of the responses which LGBT activists in Russia had to the enactment of the anti-propaganda legislations. I argue that some of the tactics of activists “intervene in a field which regulates them at first level [...] but then introduce into it a way of turning it to their advantage” (Certeau, 1984, p.30) Moreover the introduction of homophobic policies dramatically enhanced the consolidation of local LGBT activists and groups of activists and the interaction between them – activists “used” the oppressive policies. Certeau’s theory definitely informs my argument from angle of using discourse of power for the benefit of “the weak”.

Usage of the debate on nationalism and homosexuality for my research is significant in various cases. First of all, it gives the overall idea of the ways in which nationalist discourse in Russia enhances the stigmatization of LGBT community. George L. Mosse argues that nationalism is a powerful discourse which shapes understanding of how certain sexualities are produced as non-normative. He introduces the notion of respectability which he defines as “‘decent and correct’ manners and morals towards sexuality” (Mosse, 1985, p.1) and argues that through this notion homosexuality is understood as unrespectable, and thus not suitable as a national body. The author points out that homosexuality was considered abnormal, perverted, didn’t fit into the category of respectability, and was claimed to lack manliness and bodily strength. Moreover, the debate on nationalism narrates various types of resistance which might occur within this specific context; it will help to conceptualize gay and lesbian resistance as a response to a newly emerged Russian nationalism of the 2000s. While continuing with his reasoning on respectability, Mosse points out the fact that dominant discourses of the unfitness of homosexuality led to a specific type of resistance: homosexuals made an attempt to fit into the acceptable standard “[h]omosexuals used various

strategies in trying to prove their manliness” (Mosse, 1985, p. 41). Yet the dominant narrative of exclusion and responses to it are addressed differently in other theories. Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman (1992) argue that nationalism through its exclusionism can result in anti-assimilationists practices. They conceptualize the Queer Nation movement which emerged in response to the all the intolerance and violence aimed towards homosexuals within the US nation-state. This movement tried to expand the notion of citizenship and argued for the coexistence of different kinds of bodies within one nation. Resistance was shaped by their desire of not trying to fit homosexuality in the norm, but to redefine the norm itself; it was “anti-assimilationists narrative about the anti-assimilationists movement” (Berlant, Freeman, 1992, 154).

Certain authors understand the position of homosexuals within the discourse of nationalism differently. David A.B. Murray (2009) argues that there are diverse attitudes towards homosexuality which could be produced within various nation-states. He questions the precautionary-negative perception of Nationalism as a discourse in which homophobia gets amplified. “[H]omosexual is becoming a new model of citizenship in some nationalist discourses while occupying the role of pariah in others” (Murray, 2009, p.7) Similarly, Jasbir K. Puar support the idea that gays and lesbians can be accepted as citizens in a nation state, yet this inclusion is often achieved at the cost of the production of a politics that she calls “homonationalism”. Homonationalism comprises gays as national bodies, includes them into the image of a decent citizen, however generate a discourse of normativity, as bodies, before inclusion, and should be normalized (for example through gay marriage) by these means sustaining the discourses of exclusion. Puar argues that acceptance of homosexuality in the US “is simultaneously able to castigate the other as homophobic and perverse, and construct the imperialist center as “tolerant” but sexually, racially, and gendered normal.” (Puar, 2005, p. 122) In is obvious that Puar’s contemplations refer back to Mosse’s argument on the

normalization as a way of inclusion, yet performed not by subjects, but by the state. Although Russia doesn't qualify as nation which prioritizes gays and lesbians as citizens, I find this understanding of homonationalism incredibly useful for this research. I suggest that a similar process happens within Russian LGBT Network – it invite the organization to network only if it is moderate or the Network itself establishes a regional moderate organization; thus it excludes radical activists as participants of the national network. I'd like to bring this debate on nationalism\homonationalism to a new level and to talk about the movement itself in these terms; theoretical reasoning on homonationalism will shape the understanding of the intrusion of national LGBT politics in the local spaces and on the spirits of separatism among activists.

Theory of social imaginary is also extremely important, as I would like to conceptualize an organization, members of which are geographically distanced from each other. Charles Taylor defines social imaginary as “the ways people imagine their social existence” (Taylor, 2004) and I presuppose that this is a perfect understanding of the membership of Russian LGBT Network, as these activists imagine their social existence as combating homophobia together. I'd like to conceptualize Russian LGBT Network as an imagined political community – “imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson, 2002, p.6) – about which Benedict Anderson's work is talking about. An imagined community of activists, who belong to the Russian LGBT Network, is created as a result of several factors, which are: geographical distance between the organizations-members, shared values, and shared experience of resistance towards the anti-propaganda legislations and towards homophobia in general. By drawing upon the concept of social imaginary I will argue that the Russian LGBT Network is an imagined political community and show how it unites activists. Besides, these theories will also help me to argue this major network generates resistance towards the values and ideas it postulates, because, as Anderson



notes, the imagined community is always a limited one, it has “boundaries, beyond which lies other nation” (ibid., p.7). The Network is limiting itself by narrating itself as moderate, by this way it excludes radical activists from this official national network.

## **Methodology**

To reach the postulated aim of this research, I employed an ethnographic methodology, such as guided semi-structured interviews with LGBT activists in four regions of the Russian Federation where the anti-propaganda legislation was already enacted during the time of my fieldwork (July and August 2012) – in the geographical areas of Kostroma, Arkhangelsk, Novosibirsk and in Saint-Petersburg as a sole administrative unit. Methods of qualitative research, such as guided interviews, helped me to reveal how people see/understand/interpret structural and geopolitical changes in the LGBT movement in Russia. The ethnographic approach offers theories and methods that can help work through the multiple and intersectional perspectives on my topic. The advantage of using qualitative research methods is that they can provide a deep understanding (Creswell, 1998) and a dense description (Geertz, 2000) of the topic while also provides comprehension of how interviewees understand and experience the topic at hand (Kvale, 1996). Except for the interviews, Participant observation was also an important part of my ethnographic fieldwork, which gave me an opportunity to observe and understand the structure and routine of the LGBT organizations. Within the 1.5 months of my field research I was not only conducting interviews, but was also engaged in various activities within organizations as a volunteer/moderator of public discussions. All this helped me to achieve a better understanding of the structure of different organizations and relationships between activists - between different regional organizations, and within one organization. Consequently, the information I’ve gathered for the analysis is constituted from interviews with 23 LGBT activists (individual activists and members of various organizations); 2 group discussions

with volunteers in LGBT organizations in four areas where the anti-propaganda laws were implemented; field notes from my participant observation.

## **Limitations**

Although the results of my fieldwork allow answering the research questions, I am fully aware of the existence of certain limitations. First of all, my fieldwork didn't include rural areas, due to the fact that LGBT organizations are located in the regional capitals. Yet by this forced exclusion in my research provides only an "urbanized" perspective on homophobic legislations and related activism in Russia, whereas homosexuals in rural areas might experience this issue differently and have other priorities in relation to their identity. "Ruralness" of homosexuality might determine other attitudes towards personal sexual orientation (i.e. internalized homophobia) therefore perceive legislations from a different angle, and possibly do not prioritize political activism as much as urban gays and lesbians. Moreover, most of my informants are in the age group of 23-35, small number of them - in the age group 36-45. This excludes the information on how non-propaganda legislations affects young gays and lesbians (whom the government wants to protect from propaganda); also it excludes the older generations of homosexually-identified people, who could compare Soviet Legislations on homosexuality to those currently implemented. Finally, I'd like to mention the "educational limitation"/class issue: most of my respondents had bachelors degree or higher (MA, PhD etc.) and they are mostly middle class in term of their occupation. On the basis of this one can conclude that involvement into LGBT activism implies a specific education, yet because of this fact my research lacks, for example, a working class perspective on LGBT activism/new legislations. Similarly to the rural homosexuality, the working class perspective might have different priorities towards politics and might prefer activists to address everyday activities more than politics.

## Chapter Outline

I've divided my thesis into three chapters. Starting with the history of homophobia and heterosexist legislations during Soviet times, at the beginning of the first chapter I will talk about the genesis of LGBT activism in Russia and the ways in which non-normative sexualities were addressed by the state and by activists after the fall of Soviet Union. By bringing in the experience of other post-socialist/post-communist countries, I'd try to map out the similarities and differences in experiencing the reality of "post" by LGBT-communities and the importance of the post-socialist discourse for the emergence of the movement. Consequently, the last part of the first chapter is aimed to open up the discussion about contemporary LGBT movement in Russia; by drawing an overall picture of gay\lesbian activism I'll try to give a profound explanation as to my understanding of the contemporary Russian LGBT movement as a reemergence, and point out the fact this re-emergence was provoked by the implementation of heterosexist legislations.

The second chapter of this thesis is dedicated to a more detailed analysis of the re-emergence of the Russian LGBT movement in response to the implementation of the heterosexist policies. I will conduct a step-by-step analysis of the ways in which anti-propaganda policies reshaped politics of regional LGBT organizations. This chapter is going to show how agendas of various gay\lesbian activists differ from one another; how the legislation and differing regional context shapes the ways in which politics of LGBT activists are played out.

Finally, in the last chapter of my thesis I'm going to develop an argument about the networking principles among Russian LGBT activists. I will start out by outlining the principles of networking of the Russian LGBT Network. I will present its agenda and show how the Network defines itself as moderate by opposing itself to examples of radical activism. Relying on this information, I will show how the Network is an imagined political

community and how it imagines itself as a national movement and thus tries to narrate the movement as moderate and exclude radical activists. The last section is going to show the actual picture of how organizations I studied interact with each other; thus I will show that currently in Russia there are LGBT networks that are interacting, intersecting, competing and cooperating.

## **Chapter 1. Homosexual Outlaw and Resistance: Russia in the Time of Change**

This chapter aims to show the emergence of the LGBT movement in Russia. By mapping out the history of the complex relationship with homosexuality in Russian society I will show the ways in which various methods of legislative stigmatization, as well as heteronormative pressures, stimulated resistance. I'm going to look at this relationship in a historical perspective, trying to map out crucial issues which significantly affected the establishment of the LGBT movement, shaped its goals and strategies in contemporary Russia. By bringing in the experience of other post-socialist/post-communist countries, I will demonstrate the uniqueness of Russian struggle for gay/lesbian rights.

### **1.1. Tsars and Secretary-Generals: Regulation of Same-Sex Desire Before and After 1917**

Tsarist and Soviet Russia have a long history of complicated and controversial relationship with homosexuality. In this part I will present how “othering” of homosexuals happened and how it led to criminalization and pathologization of homosexuality. In the next few pages I will map out the key milestones of gays and lesbians being stigmatized; moreover, I'll explain how and through what means the community was established and functioning. Anti-homosexuality laws had an equivocal role for the non-heterosexual community in Russia: “it destroyed lives of thousands of people, yet forced them to understand their unity meanwhile. Russian sexual minorities, being an oppressed social group, established a subculture, which effectively would “came out” in Perestroika time. Thus, the state oppression was a factor of creation of the subculture” (Nemtsev, 2008, p.21)

In the beginning of his book, Dan Healey claims that “[i]t is heterosexist and nationalist chauvinism to claim that in tsarist Russia or in the USSR, this homosexual

subculture was imported from abroad or created by Communist misrule” (Healey 2001, 48). The author points out that same-sex relations and subculture were present in Russia for centuries. Same-sex desire between men in pre-revolutionary Russia found diverse responses in different institutions. For example, the Orthodox Church was reprobating all sexual relations outside the marriage; therefore sodomy was considered a sin not worse than adultery. (Healey, 2001; Kon, 1998). The first state response to homosexuality, which replicated the European one, was introduced during the reign of Peter the Great and forbade same-sex practices in the army and navy; only after almost a century was this law spread to all other men. (Healey, 2001; Engelstein, 1992) Before 1832 homoeroticism was a moral/religious issue, yet had no *corpus delicti*; the new criminal code introduced prosecution for anal intercourse between two men (*muzhelozhstvo*). Even though the pattern of criminalizing same-sex practices and desire was appropriated from the west, Russian legislators were eager to keep the laws in the penal code, claiming that *muzhelozhstvo* was unnatural and offensive for its witnesses if performed publicly. (Kon 1998 ; Kozlovskii 1986 ; Engelstein 1992). Female homosexuality was seen as a medical, but not a criminal case in pre-revolutionary Russia; lesbians were forced to get medical (psychiatric) treatment but were rarely imprisoned. (Healey, 2001) This relative “tolerance” towards female same-sex desire derived from various factors. Women are commonly perceived as being more emotional than men, as being predisposed close relations with their female friends. Lesbianism was perceived as based on sentiments whereas male homosexuality was perceived as a conscious choice and thus problematised and criminalized.<sup>10</sup> Laurie Essig also notes that female same-sex desire in USSR was not a crime, but a disease. She relates it to the discrepancy in statuses of men and women within the state: “women were treated as less than

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<sup>10</sup> Michel Foucault notes this fact in his interview, entitled “Friendship as a Way of Life”. He points out that what is perceived as disturbing is not the sexual act between two men itself; it is the strong emotional attachment between two men that makes such relationship being problematic.

full legal subjects, weaker and therefore more susceptible both to perverse desires and their necessary correctives” (Essig, 1999, p.4)

There is a need to note that during pre-revolutionary times not all men who were engaged in same-sex practices are consistent with the current understanding of homosexuals. Some same-sex practices had more similarities with status relations in Ancient Greece where a man performing sex with another man was not counted as homosexuality, but was the exercise of power. (Halperin, 1990) Such relationship between two men resembled sexual economy – one man performs sexual act with another in exchange for material wealth. (Healey, 2001) Yet not only were the penetrating men not considered homosexual, but also the penetrated did not want to identify as such, making an attempt to preserve their masculinity. “Outsiders might refer to these sexually available men as “pederast-prostitutes”, “commercial catamites”, and later on, as “homosexuals”, but their apparent refusal to name themselves underlines their tenuous claim to masculine respectability that rested on keeping their sexual activity hidden.” (ibid., 42) On the other hand, authors don’t deny the existence of a form of community of men, who practiced same-sex relations, even in pre-revolutionary Russia. (Healey, 2001; Kon, 1997; Kon, 1998) It was composed of mostly aristocracy and bourgeoisie, who had the financial ability to host balls, evenings in their apartments and salons, by that means establishing certain public and private spaces for homosexuality and homosexual cruising. Although homosexuality wasn’t an issue of class/status, there is a need to acknowledge that “community-building” was in a sense a privileged activity. Spaces in which gatherings occurred belonged to rich gay men; even though people from lower classes visited these private parties, on the surface the community was perceived as a group of aristocrats. This fact laid the ground for the communist critique of bourgeoisie as a perverted class. A number of symbols and gestures were ascribed with new shared meanings which were recognized by other homosexuals; there were even prerequisites for a shared identity, as

men started addressing to each other in similar terms – like “tetka”<sup>11</sup> or “nashi ludi (*our people*) (Healey, 2001)

“Unlike their male counterparts, Russian [homosexual] women [...] had less access to the public sphere and so were less able to construct for themselves a coherent subculture with the attributes of the male homosexual world” (Healey 2001, 50) Female same-sex desire could be commonly found in brothels and cathouses; lesbians also presented themselves as relatives in making an attempt to hide their sexual relations, yet there is no evidence of forming any lesbian communities in the private sphere during that time. It might be true that female same-sex relationships had no space to be expressed, yet female gatherings and close relationships between women were always present and not as unique, visible and suspicious as male gatherings in private. Female homosexuality (*lesbiianstvo*) was almost invisible. After the Great October Revolution it was associated with the shift in female role and a departure from patriarchal values; masculine lesbians were even tolerated as they were associated with the emancipatory movement (ibid.).

The October Revolution in 1917 changed the position of gays and lesbian in Russia, first and foremost because up until 1933 there was no criminalization of homosexuality. Some western authors (Lauristen, Thorstad, 1974; Healey, 2001) argued that this was a conscious step of newly established Soviet Government. The most common view on the abolition of anti-gay legislations however is that after the revolution all the Tsarist legislation was revoked; consequently the criminalization of homosexuality wasn't present anymore. (Kozlovskii, 1986; Healey, 2001) Although the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1917 can be conceptualized as an accidental outcome of the revolution, this fact might be read from another perspective. The Soviet government, similar to Nazi Germany, attributed homosexuality and other perversions to the aristocracy, bourgeoisie, royal elite and people

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<sup>11</sup> Tetka (rus) – is a Russian derogatory term to designate a simple woman, commonly from the rural areas, usually poor; here it refers to a passive homosexual.



who were close to them, and foreigners. (Kon, 1998; Mosse, 1986; Engelstein, 1992)

“Across the political spectrum, Russians were more comfortable to explaining sexual turpitude as a function of class privilege than of social and cultural deprivation.” (Engelstein 1994, p. 154) It is possible to call the October Revolution “a revolution of sex and sexuality”, because such political change and the rule of the working class should have erased homosexuality, just as it erased bourgeoisie. Homosexuality was depicted as a problematic aspect of bourgeois life, therefore as the working class eliminated all the upper classes through the revolution, there would be no perversion in the Soviet State. All the relics of the past were ascribed to the inadmissible class, to the one which must be eliminated. (Healey, 2001) Working class morality, similarly to Nazi middle class morality (Mosse, 1986), implied only procreative sexuality, while “[t]he Soviets continued to regard homosexuality as a vestige of bourgeois mentality analogous to the exploitation of workers” (Essig, 1999, p. 6). Order and morality in the Soviet Union was attributed to the working class, while exploitative upper classes were thought to be perverted due to their economic conditions. Working class morality was based on hard work and efficiency in production; gayness was perceived as decadent and non-productive in a communist understanding. Thus, after the revolution, as there was no longer an upper class, homosexuality was no longer an issue for Soviet officialdom: “[c]onventional morality that proscribed homosexuality [...] was the product of a discredited and (at least in the Soviet Union) disappearing bourgeois society” (Carleton, 2005, p.60)

The period of the most severe criminalization of male homosexuality, which started in 1933, is commonly related to the overall toughening of the Soviet regime. In the beginning of the 1930s, due to a number of economic problems and lack of food, people migrated to the cities hoping to find jobs there. Growth of the urban population triggered actions on the part of the government termed “chistka” (cleaning) which aimed to eliminate all the “social

anomalies”<sup>12</sup> from the urban space that posed a threat to the morality of the nation. According to Healey (2001) homosexuals were one of the first “abnormal” groups to be arrested and charged. Although it was said that gay men formed groups, which were considered to be the ground for potential espionage, espionage was only a part of the overall problem related to homosexuality and the new urban subculture. Healey points out that mostly Soviet Officialdom was concerned with potential moral degradation this abnormal city subculture could bring to the nation. Visibility of cruising homosexuals became a threat to the “working-class/communist morality”; gays were constantly accused of the “recruitment and corruption of totally healthy young people, Red Army soldiers, sailors, and individual students” (Healey, 2001, p. 185) implying that citizens of USSR were potentially exposed to these perversions. Thus, the anti-gay legislation aimed not only to erase homosexuality from the public realm; it also attempted to “purify” and control the nation, in any possible way. Prohibition of homosexuality in the USSR can be seen as a manifestation of rooted intolerance towards any non-conformism, not only same-sex relations (Kozlovskii, 1986) – other “abnormal identities” were regulated and “cleaned” from the urban space in the Soviet Union. However, implementation of the anti-gay legislation managed to “effectively [introduce] the idea of homosexuality as a crime into mass consciousness” (Nemtsev, 2008, p.19). All the information related to same-sex relations/desire was eradicated from public use; as Mikhail Nemtsev (2008) points out “the state did everything it could to de-sexualize art and media” (p.18). Even the criminalization of homosexuality was silenced by the State. Moreover, homosexuality was hidden not just from the media: trials of gay men were never public; by these means state authorities sustained the image of the un-perversed working class and society. In comparison to male same-sex relations, female homosexuality has no history of criminalization, yet it was constantly pathologised; women, who were diagnosed with

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<sup>12</sup> According to Dan Healey (2001), “social anomalies” in the USSR along with cruising homosexuals included prostitutes, professionalized paupers, homeless people and various criminals.

lesbianism, were sentenced for compulsory involuntary treatment. Healey (2001) argues that the Soviet government was more afraid of male efiminization then female masculinisation, due to the proclaimed equality and due to the fact that Bolshevik movement was considered more masculine. Moreover, he points out that there was almost no geography of female homosexual relations, lesbians were almost completely invisible (except for the a small number of extreme cases of female masculinity), which could be a possible explanation why lesbians were only pathologised, but not criminalized during Soviet times.

Despite severe criminalization and pathologization, gays and lesbians were still a part of Soviet Nation; yet hidden in the private sphere. “Though Soviet Gay life had receded from public view, it did not disappear altogether. Throughout the fifties, sixties, seventies and eighties, men continued to meet and gather in city squares, at the banya (public baths), and in private apartments.” (Tuler, 1994, p.97) The official ideological claim of the communists was to erase completely the boundary between the public and the private spheres by transferring everything to the realm of public. Thus, the life it was possible to lead in public was the one which fitted into the ideology, not the actual one; people had to hide their homosexuality in the realm of the private so as not to be imprisoned. While the lives of people were taken under the control of the state by enforcing a “no privacy” ideology, people managed to create a realm of hidden privacy, where they were able to ‘liberate’ their state-objectionable identities. “Every Russian seems to grow up two personae, public and private, which are diametrically opposed in many ways” (Moss, 1994, p.230) As David Tuller pointed out, “trapped in the system that sought to destroy every barrier between citizens and the state, between the personal and the political, many people nurtured a refined sense of the private – and honored that sense in relations with others.” (Tuller, 1996, p. 260).

Thus, the community I was talking about in the beginning of this chapter should be understood in relation to Russian and Soviet spatiality. Communities were (and still are)

mostly one city-based; Mikhail Nemtsev ( 2008) argues for defining community as “many small groups as well as individuals, often having no information about each other or connected only by personal acquaintance between “old” participants of the group” (p.23). Despite such distance, communities were prominently functioning at a local level. Homosexuals, because of their inability to visibly display their identity, developed a system of shared signs and symbols, specific argot/slang. Moreover, cities had certain spaces which were appropriated by homosexuals for cruising/meeting – “pleshkas”. Therefore, notwithstanding criminalization, homosexual communities were present in the USSR, even creating their own privacy, thus giving the possibility for a gay/lesbian liberation movement to emerge in the late 80s.

## 1.2. Post-Soviet LGBT Movement: Radical Politics and Community Needs

The end of 80s was characterized by the overall liberalization in the USSR. “The homosexual underground” (Nemtsev, 2012, p. 37) started to reveal itself, making various attempts to go public. The first attempt to create a movement<sup>13</sup> occurred in 1984 and was connected with the discourse on AIDS in the former USSR. In 1984 a group of gay people in Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) created *the Gay Laboratory* (Gei Laboratoriia); this undercover organization had two main goals – to spread knowledge about the plight and position of homosexuals in the USSR and to popularize HIV/AIDS prevention discourse (which had no place in Soviet medicine). (Kon, 1998, 1997; Essig, 1999) Yet they were detected by KGB agents, who found it problematic not only that a gay and lesbian rights group was established, but also that members of this group had connections with foreigners. (Kon, 1997) Thus, after many political, ideological accusations, threats, fearing potential repressions the Gay Laboratory was disbanded, and its members had to keep silent or even

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<sup>13</sup> I designate movement here as all sole activists and activist groups, which emerged to claim rights, to decriminalize male homosexuality along with all activities, oriented towards community building and even leisure activities.

immigrate. (Kon, 1997; Essig, 1999) These first attempts, although unsuccessful, designate not only the presence of homosexuality in the USSR (although rooted deeply in the private sphere), but also the desire of gays and lesbians to be present publicly, to claim their citizenship, to build a community (even being a part of a transnational one).

The second attempt, which was actually successful, emerged at the end of 80s/beginning of 90s and was connected directly with the phenomenon of Glasnost'. During the first years of the freedom of media and press publications over sex and sexuality captivated the USSR. The Soviet media was sexless and genderless as a result of severe censorship in the USSR; after censorship was officially repealed "sex [...] was a newcomer not only to the pages of the Soviet press but to printed (and printable) discourses of any sort: political, literary, scientific" (Gessen, 1995, p. 199). However, at that time (1987) no one aimed to talk about homosexuality in positive terms. (Gessen, 1994; Kon, 1997) In the beginning of Glasnost, homosexuality was addressed in terms of the discourse of HIV/AIDS; various newspapers, following political discourse of that time, claimed that this epidemic was not a threat for the "pure" Soviet nation, as there is no homosexuality. Masha Gessen (1994) even quotes a state-official's speech on HIV/AIDS, who said: "One of the achievements of our social system is the very reality that the sphere of intimate relations, the family and its everyday life are, both legally and intuitively, as it were, protected from various sorts of "sex-revolutionary" – and, as we can see from the example of the West, catastrophic – cataclysms." (p.205) Homosexuality was commonly discussed as a problem, using the term "unnatural" and investigated, as if someone could be blamed for introducing gayness into Russian society. Gessen (ibid.) in her article says that a list of the "causes" of homosexuality in Soviet people's minds included the US and the feminization of the teaching profession). Certainly, homosexuality, stigmatized both through medical and legal discourses and silenced for almost 50 years, was discussed as problematic in the press. Yet the time of Glasnost gave

the opportunity for alternative media to emerge. One of such was the newspaper “Tema”, which aimed to write about sexuality openly and resolve myths about gays and lesbians. (Gessen, 1994; Kon, 1997, 1998; Essig, 1999; Nemtsev, 2008) The publisher, Roman Kalinin, who is probably the most well-known soviet/post-soviet gay-rights and political activist, created the newspaper, which “was a hodgepodge of material that reflected the varying needs of Soviet gays, just beginning to define an identity and a movement” (Gessen, 1994, p. 223). “Tema” actually showed the ways in which the beginning of liberalization opened up the possibility for homosexuality to become a public and political matter; the nascence of this newspaper can actually be regarded as a foundational point of the Soviet/Post-Soviet LGBT movement and shows how influential media can be for the social movement.

### **1.2.1. Activism in the Two Capitals: Cases of Moscow and Saint Petersburg**

Glasnost and Perestroika, as incentives for the gay/lesbian movement, gave the ability for Russian gays and lesbians to start engaging in activism. Mostly, homosexual liberation initiatives occurred in the western part of Russia (namely Moscow and St. Petersburg) - “[t]he capital cities had the biggest concentration of these activities” (Nemtsev, 2008, p.50) as all political actions in the beginning of 90s happened in the capital cities. People in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, because of being present in the same space where the governors were, shared an impression that they could directly influence the new state policies. In this part I will discuss four major LGBT organizations which were established after the collapse of the Soviet Union –the Association of Sexual Minorities (ASM) which after 1993 was replaced by *Treugolnik* (Triangle) in Moscow, *Krilya* (Wings, Saint Petersburg) and *Tchaikovsky Fund* (Saint Petersburg). (Essig, 1999; Kon, 1998; Nemtsev, 2008)

In 1989 the ASM (Association of Sexual Minorities) was established, as the first organization aiming to fight for sexual minorities' rights. (Kon, 1998, 1997) Publication of the newspaper "Tema" became a part of this organization's agenda. ASM followed the western pattern of identity politics and was working in the "radical political trend" (Nemtsev, 2008). Radical here means that such activists were not oriented towards the community needs they were interested in politics; they also claimed minority right from the state without any aspiration to improve the position of homosexual in the Russian society. Such activists were mostly concerned with becoming politically involved and about inclusion into the new democratic parliament, then with community needs. "Not every group of activists would need to enter the political field. However, sometimes the group finds it necessary to attract public opinion to achieve its basic objectives." (Nemtsev, 2008, p.54) By "political" in this work I mean struggle with the government for the elimination of legal repressions. After a certain time and due to the inner conflicts it was renamed the Moscow Association of Gays and Lesbians, yet the change in the name didn't change its agenda, just narrowed down the range of addressed problems – from all sexual minorities (including prostitutes) to homosexuals precisely. (Essig, 1999) It was lead by Evgeniia Debryanskaya (liberal democratic activist) and by Roman Kalinin, who also, by 1990 had officially registered "Tema". This organization wanted their activist to be open about their sexuality, perceiving coming out as a direct political action, despite the fact that homosexuality was still criminalized at that period in time. (Essig, 1999; Nemtsev, 2008)

However, it was barely functioning by the end of 1993; *Russian Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Organization Center Triangle* replaced it. Triangle was "no longer a Moscow-oriented group of activists" (Essig, 1999, p. 61) - it was founded in 1993 in Moscow, and was the first NGO established to fight for the rights of the non-heterosexual community, yet still with an emphasis on politics. "The Centre Triangle's strategy was to influence the political

decision making in fields which were important for the community” – decriminalization, adoption rights, marriage rights. (Nemtsev, 2008, p.58). Not only was it planned as a non-governmental structure, but also, and most importantly – as a nation-wide umbrella organization, which would have branches in numerous regions in the Russian Federation. Yet it was shut down in 1996, as it commonly happened that time – due to conflicts between members, organizational, and financial difficulties. This organization received a grant from ILGA, yet it squandered all the money and wasn’t even registered when the money was gone. “Tema” got also shut down; Roman Kalinin claimed that “Tema marked a significant turning point in Russian culture” (Essig, 1999 p.59). Interestingly, Kalinin assigned only historic mission to his paper, despite the fact that for many Russian homosexuals it was the only source of information about non-normative sexualities.

At the same time, two major LGBT organizations emerged in Saint Petersburg. The LGBT organizations in Saint Petersburg were addressing various issues: not only the decriminalization of male homosexuality, but also community needs and were providing legal support for homosexuals. Mikhail Nemtsev (2008) in his work comments that St. Petersburg had a long “underground gay life” (p. 46) and this partially explains such an abrupt establishment of two LGBT-rights and community-building organizations. Although they emerged simultaneously, *St. Petersburg Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Center Krilya* and *Tchaikovskii Fund for Cultural Initiatives* didn’t cooperate with each other. Interestingly, they used the same ways to claim their national belonging, which can be discovered from the titles; both organizations were making an attempt to write themselves into Russian cultural history with the help of specific techniques of naming. One of the strategies for gays and lesbians in post-Soviet Russia to search for cultural roots was to “reconstruct the national history of non-normative sexuality” (ibid., p.67) and, consequently, write homosexual into it. Hadley Renkin, in his researches on post-socialist Hungary analyses the phenomenon of



reclaiming gay/lesbian national belonging through “inserting gay into a specifically national history” (Renkin, 2007, p. 55); in the post-Soviet case, national belonging was claimed through inserting homosexuality into the rich national cultural heritage, thus making homosexuality historically and culturally present. The Fund for Cultural Initiatives used the name of the famous Russian composer – Piotr Tchaikovsky, who was a homosexual although a closeted one, as he could not accept his sexuality because of the prejudices towards same-sex desire. (Kon, 1997; Sokolov, 1995) His music is of a great importance for Russian cultural heritage, so his name is discursively used to claim national belonging – to point out that part of the heritage about which the nation is so proud is, actually, homosexual. Naming the LGBT-organization “Krilya” is also a strategy of claiming belonging. *Krilya* was the first homoerotic novel, which was written during the pre-revolutionary times (1908) by poet Mikhail Kuzmin, who contributed to the formation of the Silver Age of Russian Poetry. Reworking of history and memory is a commonly used strategy in post-socialist space for sexual minorities to integrate into national discourse. (Renkin, 2007) Such usage of Russian cultural (and, what is more important, national) heritage in naming and LGBT-rights organization is, as a matter of fact, an extremely perspicacious move – it rewrites national cultural symbols in terms of their sexuality. By adding the component of sexual (homosexual) belonging to such important figures, as Tchaikovsky and Kuzmin (although not he personally is narrated as homosexual, but his writings are “queered”) LGBT organizations discursively embed themselves into national identity.

### **1.2.2. LGBT Movement in the Center: Conflicts in Strategies**

In this section I intend to investigate the various conflicts between groups and organizations in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. In the previous section I looked at the largest organizations in the two capitals. Here I plan to show how these organizations were in

conflict with each other (on city and intercity levels) and how smaller organizations and initiatives in the two capitals emerged to resist agendas of the large ones.

The previous section shows that two major LGBT organizations existed simultaneously in the beginning of 90s in Saint Petersburg: Krilya and Tchaikovsky Fund. Although both organizations used the same strategies to claim their national belonging, their strategies in dealing with LGBT-related issues differed dramatically – I mentioned this earlier, briefly – these organizations were not working in conjunction with each other. Diametrically opposed to each other, Krilya worked towards the improvement of the conditions and position of homosexuals in society (Nemtsev, 2008). This organization didn't support radical political activism which for post-Soviet Russia meant to claim rights from the state without paying attention towards the needs of the LGBT community and the overall homophobia within Russian society, to hold rallies and protests, to demand the immediate decriminalization of homosexuality; radical activism in Russia was not oriented towards reaching a compromise with the government. However, all groups were oriented towards decriminalization of homosexuality as most of activists that time: members of the Tchaikovsky Fund were radical and Krilya were compromise-oriented, yet both aimed towards the decriminalization. (Essig, 1999; Nemtsev, 2008) Two activist groups were in constant opposition, following each other's achievements and critiquing ways of addressing various significant issues, such as criminalization of male homosexuality and HIV/AIDS prevention.

Organizations in Moscow and St. Petersburg were also working separately; organizations within each city aimed to distance themselves from each other. One explanation of this phenomenon is the issue of rivalry for the foreign grants (Nemtsev, 2008). During post-Soviet times, money for such initiatives were coming from the West, therefore activists were competing over resources. Igor Kon, on the other hand, points out that in the

post-Soviet space, the emergence of any big movement consequently led to its disentanglement into fractions and groups of people with opposite opinions. (Kon , 1997; 1998 ), which is analogous to the explanation Laurie Essig gives: a number of organizations having exact same goals, but not having similar thoughts and approaches on reaching them. (Essig, 1999) Both of them accentuate on the fact that in post-Soviet Russia resistance occurred not only towards the dominant power of the State, but also within the movement itself.

The first discourse which emerged on homosexual rights and decriminalization of male homosexuality used aggressive political strategy (ASM and then Triangle and the Tchaikovsky Fund). Members were more interested in Russian politics than in what LGBT people in Russia actually needed during that period. Consequently it provoked resistance within the movement itself towards the dominant way of doing activism. Resistance emerged in a number of fields; first and foremost to the growing aggressiveness in the politicization of the movement. “Compared to compromise-oriented activists [...] radical queers want to move quickly and decisively. Compromise-oriented activists, however, do not want to make public opinion on homosexuality any worse than it is. Instead they prefer moving slowly, but more safely.” (Essig, 1999, p.63) Vladislav Ortanov, an LGBT activist from Moscow, created an activist group and journal RISK (Ravenstvo, Iskrennost’, Sodrujestvo I Kompromis), which aimed to work with informing government and society about homosexuality and integrate rather than alienate themselves further as major Moscow activists did. (Essig, 1999; Nemtsev, 2008) In St. Petersburg Krilya, led by Alexander Kukharskii, were also opposing themselves to the political strategies of Tchaikovsky Fund, as they aimed to change public (and governmental) opinion of homosexuality slowly. (Essig, 1999) The greatest concern of so-called “compromise-oriented activists” was that radicals only aggravated the position of homosexuals in Russia and exacerbated the existing conflict with the government.

The LGBT movement, which emerged in Russia after the fall of the Soviet State, was a male-dominated movement as a result of only male homosexuality being criminalized. As a result of the non-criminalization of lesbianism during the Soviet era, homosexual women were discursively excluded from a struggle for decriminalization. Although many homosexual women were engaged in political struggle for the decriminalization (like Debrianskaia, who was a leader of Treugolnik), some felt a need to concentrate on other issues. Therefore, some lesbians were more concerned with the social/cultural aspects; they didn't develop a strong connection with political LGBT movement in their activism. They gained the desired representation by founding the Moscow Organization of Lesbians in Literature and Art "MOLLI" consequently making all their activities women-centered and cultural rather than political. (Essig, 1999; Nemtsev, 2008)

### **1.2.3. Local Initiatives and the "Anti-Integration" Trend**

I showed in the previous section that various groups in the two main cities in Russia were in conflict with each other; they found themselves to be in a severe disagreement over the strategy by which to reach the shared aim of decriminalization. However, the issue of non-cooperation and "anti-integration" (in terms of making one major Russian network) occurred not only in Moscow and St. Petersburg: this section aims to show that LGBT activism in the 90s existed in the provincial regions too, however it didn't constitute a solid network. Homosexuality-related activism emerged separately in central Russia and Siberia; relatively little information exists about activism in the eastern part of Russia, although Primorskii krai was known in the beginning of 90s for its gay-culture and a number of gay-clubs<sup>14</sup>. Local initiatives came forward in Omsk - Omskaia Tema, in Krasnoiarsk – the Siberian Association of Sexual Minorities; in Barnaul – a regional NGO Siberian Initiative.

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<sup>14</sup>I want to thank Evgenii Belyakov for his insights on LGBT community in Vladivostok and Primorskii krai in the 90s.

(Essig, 1999) Those organizations , or even projects, were definitely community-oriented and community building initiatives; the main interest of the latter was, for example, HIV/AIDS prevention, which was commonly not the case for activists in the two capitals, who didn't want homosexuality to be constantly associated with AIDS epidemics. Thus, many small community-oriented organizations emerged all over Russia, yet they didn't network with the visible activism in Moscow and St. Petersburg. (ibid.)

Geographical distance made the cooperation between the local initiatives and the activist groups in the capital almost impossible. Being the world biggest country (Russia occupies 17.1 million square kilometers) it has 83 federal regions which are significantly distant from each other. Geographical distance and different approaches to LGBT-politics (political, cultural, and/or community-based) lead to the fact that organizations were not working jointly. The movement and the establishment of various LGBT organizations commenced in different regions simultaneously in the 1990s, yet, these organizations didn't emerge in relation to each other, and didn't cooperate much. Those establishing regional LGBT initiatives "knew about organizational processes in other cities, but [were] autonomous in commencing this activity." (Nemtsev, 2008, p.49) David Tuller notes that some of his respondents in central Russia were referring to Moscow and St. Petersburg as Europe, "as if Russians from Moscow or St. Petersburg were more European than Russians" (Tuller, 1996, p.254). Tuller raised an important issue, that Russian people in the regions commonly do not relate themselves to the capital of the country: they think of themselves differently. Moscow is the space where political struggle happens, and the regions, because of their remoteness, assume they do not have any influence on the state politics; this is the reason why LGBT activism in the regions in the 90s was mostly community oriented. Local organizations at that time were trying to work with local communities and were not particularly engaged in major state politics or getting places in the parliament: that was

happening in Moscow and St. Petersburg. Geographical distance from the capital cities created not only the quantitative discrepancy in the LGBT initiatives, but also structural differences in understanding the necessity of such politics.

As has been shown, regional organizations and initiatives were not working in conjunction with activist groups in two capitals – similarly the organization in Moscow and St. Petersburg experienced severe schism. “[P]ost-Soviet Russia has not seen a mass movement of sexual identity develop. Instead, a small and disparate group of organizations appeared less vital with each passing year.” (Essig, 1999, p.56) After a brief reasoning on the LGBT activism in post-socialist space in the next few pages I will conclude this chapter by showing how this fragmentation influenced the attenuation of the post-Soviet LGBT movement, and why “in five years after it began, identity politics was floundering rather than flourishing” (Essig, 1999, p.66); why Triangle didn’t succeed as a national Russian network, unlike the subsequent national LGBT organization, the All-Russian LGBT Network, which emerged only in 10 years (after the fall of Triangle in 1996).

### **1.3. Re-Emergence of the LGBT Movement in Russia: Short and Long Term Prerequisites**

The LGBT movement in post-Soviet Russia is commonly perceived as having only two stages (Essig 1999; Nemtsev 2008) – the stage of its emergence (1987(84)-1996(98)) and the stage when the movement faded (1996(98)-mid 00s). However, due to the recent legislative changes, I would like to argue that contemporary Russian activism should be perceived as a reemergence of political activism, thus a whole new stage of development of the post-Soviet LGBT movement. Since the adoption of anti-propaganda legislation in Saint Petersburg in 2011, which was preceded and followed by similar legislative efforts in other

regions, the LGBT movement abruptly became visible and active in its resistance towards state legitimized homophobia.

I gave an elaborate description of the emergence of the post-Soviet LGBT movement in the previous section, pointing out various goals and strategies of activists in Moscow and St. Petersburg. I also depicted the conflict between groups and initiatives and showed the existence of LGBT activism in the regions. In this section I will talk about the apolitical stage of the post-Soviet LGBT movement, its prerequisites and the reasons why in the mid 00s the movement re-emerged as a political one.

### **1.3.1. Sudden Decriminalization: Prerequisites of the Depoliticization of the Movement.**

By the year 1993 the LGBT movement in post-Socialist Russia could aptly be described as diverse. As I've pointed out previously in the text, activists and activist groups were addressing a range of issues related to homosexuality: improvement of gays'/lesbians' position in society, HIV/AIDS prevention, and community development. Yet, "the whole politicization of movement began as consolidation in the struggle for decriminalization." (Nemtsev 2008, p. 55) Despite the fact that interests and strategies of activists were commonly in conflict with one another, different groups were in agreement on one important issue – homosexuality should be decriminalized in the post-Soviet space. "One of the effects of struggle for decriminalization was temporary unification of lesbian and gay groups in their political struggle." (ibid., p.55) Only groups in the two capitals –St. Petersburg and Moscow were engaged in direct action related to this issue; regional activists were more concerned with building gay/lesbian communities and were also distanced geographically. Most political struggles, debates, demonstrations, protests in the beginning of 1990s happened in Moscow at Red Square or next to the White House; LGBT activists in the capital cities were in the right geographical space. Some activist groups (Triangle, Tchaikovsky Fund) were

more interested in the high state politics, while such organization as Krilya were looking beyond simple decriminalization, arguing that there is also a need to shift the general public's perception on homosexuality – leaders of Triangle and Tchaikovsky Fund were dedicated to participate directly and enhance the abolition of the law thus to “sneak” into politics and to gain power.

The decriminalization of homosexuality occurred without activists' participation at all, although they were directly addressing this issue for a certain amount of time. The abrogation of the law against male homosexuality occurred on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May, 1993; it happened as a result of the pressure of international public opinion; it also was highly beneficial for Russia – changes in the penal code improved the country's position on the world scene – as a result Russia became a member of the Council of Europe. (Kon, 1997 , 1998 ) Decriminalization of homosexuality was a strategic political decision of the governmental authorities; it appeared to be almost invisible to society and activists. “It was not at all an answer by the state authorities to the activism, but as a part of routine bureaucratic procedure.” (Nemtsev, 2008, p. 56) Consequently, political activists, like Kalinin, Debryanskaia, Zhuk, who were at that time the most active and visible, lost their aim completely. Their goal was to enhance the abolition of heterosexist law thus to gain extra political weight and to engage themselves in state politics; consequently, as the abolition of the law happened without any reference to the movement, political activists lost their orientation in the struggle – actually, there was no struggle left for them. All the political actions of the Triangle and the Tchaikovsky Fund at once became meaningless; political LGBT activism began to vanish: as a result of such unexpected legislative change the political stage of the post-Soviet gay/lesbian movement was almost over. “In the moment of the article's repose, this powerful factor of gathering and cooperation vanished.” (ibid, p. 55)



### **1.3.2. LGBT Activism after the Fall of State Socialism: Varying Experiences**

In this section I'd like to disentangle similar experiences of LGBT activists in other post-Socialist/post-Communist states. My aim here is to understand how the fall of state Socialism enhanced the movement, which obstacles and incentives activists had in their attempts to change the status of homosexuals – both legal and social. I will show how the liberal democratic institutions, similar to the Russian case, enhanced decriminalization of homosexuality and how the resistance of religious institutions towards the inclusion of LGBT people in the sexual citizenship didn't let the LGBT movement fade away. Finally, I aim to contrast the experience of post-socialist countries and Russia to present my understanding of the reasons as to why the 90s LGBT movement was invisible during the late 90s-early 2000s.

The European Union became tremendously influential and powerful in terms of the enhancement of the decriminalization in post-Socialist countries, similar to the Russian case, where decriminalization happened because of the requirements of the Council of Europe. In a number of post-socialist countries homosexuality was decriminalized because of the standards of the European Union membership. (Sokolova, 2005; Greif, 2005; Woodcock, 2011). However influence of the European Union didn't shift the position of homosexuals within the society. . As Stulhofer and Sandfort (2005) note, international pressure enhanced decriminalization, yet it didn't eliminate homophobia in post-Socialist countries. Interestingly, the intrusion of the EU into sexual politics of post-socialist countries triggered resistance and the growth of nationalism, which was enhanced by the power of religious institutions. Roseneil and Stoilova (2011) note that "the wider process of rapid Europeanization that is affecting much of contemporary Europe" (p.184) triggered LGBT activism in many ways, mainly because decriminalization wasn't followed by overall acceptance of gays and lesbians. EU intrusion changed the legal status of LGBT community, yet after these local activists had to improve their social status themselves (ibid.)

Nationalism plays out an important role in 'othering' LGBT people in post-Socialist countries – it excluded non-normative sexuality by narrating them as extraneous to the respectable east. State referring to themselves as an opposite of the perverted west: homosexuality was talked about as “‘foreign’ and ‘alien’” (Kulpa, 2011, p.50). Homosexuality within the discourse of nationalism is constantly produced as foreign and western, which in these circumstances is a synonym for perverted. For example, as Mizielinska (2011) pointed out how during presidential debates “polish national traditional morality” (p.87) was tighten up with homophobia and commonly “contrasted with EU ‘immorality’” (ibid.) Argumentation about the traditional moral society and the intrusion of the western immorality promoted pure heterosexuality (and thus morality) of the national subjects. "Within the construction of [...] national identity, the discourse about the crisis of moral values is prevalent, oriented against all "different" lifestyles and identities, especially the ones that are the consequence of the emancipatory movements of the past decade" (Greif, 2005). Robert Kulpa (2011) argues that nationalism is closely related to heteronormativity. Equation of nation and heterosexuality deprives homosexuals from sexual citizenship. Homosexuals are presented as a dual threat - as a political opponent to the state and as a moral threat to the nation. (Lalo; Schitov, 2005)

Religious discourse also perpetuated heteronormativity; it "continued to play the role of moral authority [...], thus influencing and shaping social and political life" (Blagojević, 2011). In almost every post-socialist country (except the Czech Republic) attempts by gays and lesbians to be acknowledged and/or decriminalized encountered severe resistance on the part of conservative institutions. Considering itself the only 'bastion' of morality in the state, religious institutions didn't give up for the overall liberalization of the institutions, and were fighting against homosexuality being decriminalized in the state; thus enhancing nationalism. Religion's discourse was unquestionable in relation to the questions on sexuality, gender and

morality (Hauser, 1995). States where religion didn't have such a powerful influence on the national identity (case of Czech Republic. Sokolova, 2005) decriminalization of homosexuality went much more easily, mostly because of the absence of obvious resistance on the part of the Church. Within the religious discourse homosexuals were presented as immoral and promiscuous and contrasted with the religious morality and respectability of the traditional heterosexual family. (Nachescu, 2005; Grief, 2005)

If we compare post-Soviet and post-socialist experience of LGBT activism and resistance, one could see that the actors of the conflict were almost the same and that decriminalization occurred not as a result of the demands of LGBT activists, but as a necessary political maneuver of the post-socialist state. However right after the fall of the Soviet state, in contrast to the situation with the post-Socialist states elsewhere, there was no visible resistance to homosexuality on the side of the Church. Russian Orthodox Church was not that powerful in the beginning of 90s, when the LGBT movement emerged. During the first few years after the fall of the USSR, the Church "weakened by the years of suppression" (Papkova, 2011, p.7) didn't yet have much power within the state. My hypothesis is that such enormous resistance to the possible acceptance of gays and lesbians on the side of the Church can also be perceived as a reason for the successful foundation of the LGBT movement(s) in various post-socialist states. Even though the state decriminalized homosexuality, the Orthodoxy constituted (and still does) an extremely powerful opposition; while no such obvious resistance, which was based on claims of immorality, was present in Russia until current times. I definitely need to note, that even though the Church itself was not powerful and despite compulsory atheism in the Soviet Union, religion had and still has tremendous influence on popular morality – thus Russian society was and still is a society with is extremely receptive to heterosexism and homophobia, however here I'm talking about the presence of an institution as a symbol of resistance. In the 90s Orthodox Church was not a

visible symbol of resistance, yet in contemporary Russia the visibility of the Church increased dramatically. I'm going to talk about the current role of the Orthodox Church in Russia later in the text, while discussing the re-emergence of the LGBT movement.

### **1.3.3. The Apolitical Stage: Invisibility of the LGBT Movement in post-Soviet Russia**

“One of the obvious distinctions between the first and the second period of the movement is their relation to (imaginary and projected) intervention into state inner politics.” (Nemtsev, 2008, p. 54) The second phase of the post-Soviet LGBT movement, in comparison to extremely politicized beginning of the 90s, can be described as an invisible stage. However, as the movement in Russia started out as a struggle for decriminalization, the abolition of the anti-gay law led to the invisibility of the LGBT movement: radical political LGBT groups disbanded and only initiatives which provided assistance for LGBT community “without the costs of a politically and/or economically marketable identity” (ibid., p.80) remained. Essig (1999) points out that absence of shared identity was the issue that kept LGBT movement of the 90s from complete disappearing. Even certain disorganization of the groups couldn't destroy it “since they [were] not dependent ... on an organizing identity” (ibid., p.80). The LGBT organization in the capital city (Saint Petersburg), which continued working from the previous “politicized” period, was Krilya (which remains the oldest LGBT organization and still exists today): “the “traditions” of human rights support was continued by the Krilya, led almost in solitude by Alezandr Kukharsky.” (ibid., p. 60) As I pointed out earlier, Krilya was not planned as a politicized union of radical LGBT activists; it was addressing issues which went beyond politics, concentrating on the betterment of homosexuals' position in society. Krilya also was among the small number of organizations, which managed to obtain registration<sup>15</sup> and this could be

<sup>15</sup> Although both Laurie Essig (1999) and Mikhail Nemtsev (2012) claimed that more than one LGBT organization was registered during the 90s, the official webpage of the LGBT organization Krylia

another reason for its continued existence in the field of LGBT rights as other organizations vanished after the unexpected decriminalization of homosexuality.<sup>16</sup> Yet, one local and small group of activists didn't desire to form a major movement – according to their website<sup>17</sup>, they were and still are oriented towards the needs and rights of the gay/lesbian community in St. Petersburg. As shown previously all the radical (political) initiatives vanished and compromise-oriented ones became invisible; Essig (1999) argues that most successful initiatives were the ones “which demands public space for interaction but not for political action” (ibid., p.80). Mikhail Nemtsev (2008) in his work on the emergence of post-Soviet sexual minorities' movement notes, that in the beginning of 00s there was no LGBT community which could share ideas and interest; the community which existed was “imagined”, had no representation and consequently was invisible. Thus, this second stage can be understood as having no solid movement, only separate and scattered organizations, mostly community oriented and invisible in the public sphere. However, I will argue that this phase of invisibility does not continue today.

#### **1.3.4. Re-emergence of the Political LGBT Movement: Present Times**

The re-emergence of the solid, strong and, what is more important - visible LGBT resistance occurred in Russian Federation not that long ago – in the beginning of 2010s. In my opinion it was facilitated by two major events: the foundation of the All-Russian LGBT Network in 2006 and the commencement of adoption of the regional heterosexist legislation on the non-propaganda of homosexuality (2006, Ryazanskaya oblast). The foundation of the All-Russian LGBT Network can be seen as a second attempt (after the disintegration of the

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<http://www.kriliya.sp.ru/> states that Krylia was the only LGBT organization, which managed to obtain official registration.

<sup>16</sup> Essig (1999) points out that obtaining official registration was an important goal of the LGBT organizations – it symbolically meant that the State recognizes presence of LGBT activism in Russia.

<sup>17</sup> Official webpage of the St. Petersburg LGBT Human Rights Center “Krylia” (the Wings): <http://www.kriliya.sp.ru/>

Triangle) to create a national in-country network and unite variously oriented LGBT support/rights groups to share knowledge and help each other. “The gay and lesbian infrastructure began to develop itself according to the new logic of personalized NGO and (latterly) social movements.” (Nemtsev 2008, p. 62) What is important in my understanding is that primarily this organization wasn’t thought of as political, and for the leaders it wasn’t a struggle for high politics or places in parliament. The Network was formed as an NGO, which is dedicated to establish not only LGBT community, but also an interregional community of LGBT activists; to fight homophobia in society and to address needs of the community. However, the abrupt implementation of the regional legislation which prohibits propaganda of homosexuality (starting from 2006) rearticulated LGBT activism as political again. After the implementation of the non-propaganda legislation in Saint-Petersburg the Network became publicly politically active in term of fighting for the abolition of the legislation, which provoked homophobic attitudes, but this struggle didn’t cancel other activities of the NGO.

In 2006 in the region of Ryazan the very first law, which prohibited propaganda of homosexuality<sup>18</sup> amongst minors was implemented. Interestingly, this act didn’t get a great deal of public attention at that time: only in 2009 two activists organized individual pickets – they were standing with placards next to the school and next to children’s library. Placards were saying “Homosexuality is a norm” and “I’m proud of my homosexuality! Ask me about it!”<sup>19</sup> Activists were fined for their pickets; however they managed to appeal the court

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<sup>18</sup>The actual legislation doesn’t contain the word “homosexuality”; it uses the word “gomoseksualizm” which, in the discourse of Soviet medicine narrated homosexuality as illness. After depathologisation of homosexuality the term “gomoseksualizm” wasn’t used until 2006, when it appeared in the legislation in Ryazan. Currently, all the anti-propaganda legislation in Russia use the medicalized term “homosexuality”, discursively implying that homosexuality is pathological.

<sup>19</sup>Lesbiyanka obzhalovala v OON ryazanskii zapret na propagandu gomoseksualizma detyam [A Lesbian appealed against Ryazan's Ban on the Promotion of Homosexuality Among Children to the UN Human Rights Committee] (2010, February 11). Retrieved May 23, 2013, from BaltInfo website: <http://www.baltinfo.ru/2010/02/11/Lesbiyanka-obzhalovala-v-OON-ryazanskii-zapret-na-propagandu-gomoseksualizma-detyam--129594>

decision not only on the state level, but also filed a grievance to the UN Committee for Human Rights.<sup>20</sup> Even though the committee made a decision in favor of the activists (saying that the legislation contradicts at least two articles of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights<sup>21</sup>) the regional legislation is still present. The next region where the anti-propaganda law was consummated, was the region of Arkhangelsk. The initiators of the law in 2011 were members of the Academic community in Arkhangelsk and representatives of the Orthodox Church<sup>22</sup> According to the deputies in the region of Arkhangelsk, with such legislation they aimed to restrict the work of the local LGBT organization “Rakurs” (which I examine in this work), which is claimed to be promoting homosexuality as being necessary for leading a successful life and destroys family values.<sup>23</sup> In December 2011 regional administration in Kostroma implemented the anti-propaganda law, in response to which, activist from the All-Russian LGBT network and some volunteers from Kostroma held individual protests in front of the Regional Library for Children with placards saying “Homosexuality is a Norm!” and “Who is going to protect homosexual adolescents?”<sup>24</sup> All of them were arrested, however the court found them not guilty of promoting homosexuality.<sup>25</sup> In June 2012 the anti-propaganda legislation were implemented in the region of Novosibirsk.

<sup>20</sup>V OON Priznali Oblastnoi Zakon o Zaprete LGBT-Propagandi Narusheniem Prav Cheloveka [The UN has Recognized the Regional Law Banning LGBT- advocacy as a violation of the human rights] (2012, November 26). Retrieved May 23, 2013, from ZakS.ru website: <http://www.zaks.ru/new/archive/view/103051>

<sup>21</sup>ibid.

<sup>22</sup>For example: Sidorenko, E. (2011, September 28). Prosto Hotim Zashitit Detei [We Just Want to Protect Children]. Retrieved May 23, 2013, from Vzgliad (Gaze) website: <http://www.vz.ru/society/2011/9/28/526071.print.html>; V Arkhangel'skoi Oblasti Zapretili Propagandu Gomoseksualizma [Homosexual advocacy has been Banned in The Region of Arkhangelsk] (2011, June 30). Retrieved May 23, 2013, from Regnum IA website: <http://www.regnum.ru/news/society/1420783.html?forprint>

<sup>23</sup>ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Skudaeva, A. (2011, Desember 27). Kostromskie Deputati Priniali v Pervom Chtenii Zakon o Shtrafah za Propagandu Gomoseksualizma [The Deputies Passed the First Reading of a Law on Fines for Homosexual advocacy in Kostroma]. Retrieved May 23, 2013, from RIA Novosti website: <http://center.ria.ru/politics/20111227/82582754-print.html>

<sup>25</sup>For example: Kostromskoi Sud Priznal Osnovatelya Moskovskogo Gei Parada Alekseeva Nevinovnim v Propagande Gomoseksualizma [N. Alekseev was acquitted on a charge of Homosexual advocacy by the Kostroma's Court] (2012, March 23). Retrieved May 23, 2013, from Echomsk website: <http://www.echomsk.spb.ru/news/politika/kostromskoy-sud-priznal-osnovatelya-moskovskogo-gey-prayda.html>; Gei-aktivisti Gotovi Piketirovat Detskie Uchrezhdeniia Peterburga [Gay activists are ready to picket children's centers in St. Petersburg] (2012, March 24). Retrieved May 23, 2013, from SeverInform website: <http://www.severinform.ru/?page=newsfull&date=24-03-2012&newsid=158024>

The initiative is attributed (by my informants) to the representatives of the Orthodox Diocese in Novosibirsk.<sup>26</sup>

Implementation of the anti-propaganda legislation in Saint Petersburg (March 2012) gained major resonance not in Russian society.<sup>27</sup> Heterosexism of the state became publicly known through this legislative change in this city. Being one of the Russia's two capitals, a cultural center of Russia and an attraction for tourist St. Petersburg became a center of the world's attention as a result of the legislative injustice towards LGBT people. Vitalii Milonov, a politician who became widely known because he was the initiator of this law in St. Petersburg, and other authorities claimed that his aim was to protect children from detrimental influence of homosexuality, and to preserve the primordial Russian values, which are postulated by the Orthodox Church<sup>28</sup>. The anti-propaganda legislation in Saint Petersburg showed itself to be a catalyst for the Russian LGBT Movement to re-emerge: it received a lot of attention. Governmental heterosexism in St. Petersburg brought public attention to the problems of other regions.

The religious and moral values of the Russian nation were and still are presented as a justification for the implementation of anti-propaganda legislation. Since the beginning of the 90s, the Church started gaining power and visibility in public discourse and currently is a tremendously powerful institution in Russia. It postulates traditional values, which include patriarchal nuclear family and condemnation of same-sex relations, thus constructing national

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<sup>26</sup> Full texts of all the regional anti-propaganda legislation can be found in the Appendix I.

<sup>27</sup> For example: G.Yavlinskii: Priniatii deputatami Zaksobraniia Peterburga Zakonoproekt Nesostoiatelen v Pravovom Otnoshenii i Razviazhet ruki Pedofilam [G.Yavlinskii: The Law Passed by the Legislative Assembly of St. Petersburg is Untenable in Legal Terms and Will Untie the Hands of Pedophiles] (2012, March 01). Retrieved May 23, 2013, from Yabloko Russian United Democratic Party website: [http://www.yabloko.ru/regnews/Spb/2012/03/01\\_1](http://www.yabloko.ru/regnews/Spb/2012/03/01_1); Nash Flag ne Budet v Gosti k Vam [LGBT Community Urges to Avoid Travel to Russia] (2012, March 01). Retrieved May 23, 2013, from Grani.ru website: <http://grani.ru/Politics/Russia/m.196062.html>

<sup>28</sup> For example: Zhurnalists Kostuchenko: Zakonoproekt o Propagande Gomoseksualizma Paralizuet LGBT-dvizhenie Peterburga [E. Kostuchenko (reporter): A Draft Law on the Promotion of homosexuality paralyzes the LGBT activity in Saint Petersburg] (2011, November 16). Retrieved May 23, 2013, from Gazeta.ru website: [http://www.gazeta.ru/news/lenta/2011/11/16/n\\_2098117.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/news/lenta/2011/11/16/n_2098117.shtml); Gubernator "Severnoi Stolici" Podpisal "Gomofobnii" Zakon [The Governor of the "Northern Capital" has Signed a "Homophobic" Law] (2012, March 11). Retrieved May 23, 2013, from RBC website: <http://top.rbc.ru/society/11/03/2012/641148.shtml>



identity as compulsorily heterosexual. The Russian Nation is commonly narrated by state officials as a respectable community, which constantly finds itself under the threat of intrusion by perverted western values (such as homosexuality). Homosexuality is often depicted as a western invasion into the “pure” and respectable Russian nation. Thus, the Russian Nation is opposing perverted Europe and the West because of its religious views and morality. Religion is being transferred into a national idea; the alliance of these two social constructs (which are mutually affecting one another) becomes a ground for legal stigmatization of homosexuality which enhances homophobia in society, thus it provokes resistance. Experience of other post-socialist countries (Nachescu, 2005; Blagojevic, 2011; Mizielinska, 2011) argues that emergence of LGBT activism stimulates severe resistance on the part of the church; consequently, powerful religious institutions enhance resistance of LGBT activists.

My informants also argued that anti-propaganda legislation is an outcome of the overall political situation in Russia – the rise of nationalism as a result of the coalescence of Russian Orthodox Church and the State. “This call for the abolition of the secular State severely enhances nationalism” (informant K) Some of them pointed out that because of the dramatic increase of the power of the Russian Orthodoxy values of Russian nation being equated to the moral values, which are postulated by the church.

What I see as an enhancing factor for the reemergence of LGBT activism in Russia is the shared experience of the implemented legislation. It was in the way the legislation was enacted that helped the movement to emerge. The law, which prohibits propaganda of homosexuality, was not implemented on the level of the state; it was enacted regionally, therefore it enhanced activism in particular regions. Consequently regions share experience in dealing with homophobia, which was legitimized by the state. Political struggle against anti-gay legislation in the penal code in the 90s was experienced mostly by activists in the two

capitals –Moscow and St. Petersburg. Because of the geographical distance between regions and due to the fact that decision-making process on all the changes which accompanied the times of Perestroika and which people tried to influence occurred in Moscow. Activists in the regions were alienated from the struggle itself because they simply couldn't reach the place. In contemporary circumstances, regional LGBT activist, by having their “personal space” and local struggle, become the actual participants of the movement, not just spectators.

Hence, there are three major substantive items, which characterize the public and political re-emergence of the LGBT movement in Russia in contemporary circumstances: firstly, the foundation of a new umbrella organization All-Russian LGBT Network; secondly, the “chain” implementation of the anti-propaganda legislation in a number of administrative regions in the Russian Federation; finally, the experience of “real” activism by the members (organizations and sole activists) of the movement. Here I need to note, that I don't perceive the contemporary stage of the Russian homosexual activism as a new struggle, it is rather a re-emergence. As I attempted to show, LGBT activism never actually disappeared in the post-Soviet space; it was just modified and stayed closeted and invisible for almost a decade. It happened after the unexpected decriminalization of homosexuality when many activists were confused and lost because the main problem and the fundamental issue upon which almost all activism was established disappeared. The re-emerged movement of the 2000s tries to deal with problems with which the activists from the 90s also tried to deal, just by applying strategies which are more thought-out and sophisticated. Although the non-propaganda legislation is currently the focal point of activist's agenda today, my research shows that it does not diminish the importance of everyday community needs. The following chapter aims to elaborate more on the current activities, related to the struggle with heterosexist legislation in four regions of the Russian Federation: Novosibirsk, Arkhangelsk, Kostroma, and Saint-Petersburg.

## **Chapter 2. Impact of Anti-Propaganda Legislations on Regional LGBT Activism**

As I pointed out in the previous chapter, after the emergence of a visible post-Soviet LGBT movement in the 90s, in the beginning of 2000s LGBT activism in Russia (as well as the LGBT community) was hidden in the private sphere and almost invisible. Regional LGBT initiatives were mostly community-based and community-oriented, with almost no involvement in public politics. Reluctance towards visibility and participation in politics was caused by severe homophobia in Russian society along with the fear of triggering repression from the state if homosexuality made an attempt to cross the boundary between the private and public spheres. Since the middle of the 00s (2006-2008) capital cities in the western part of Russia (Moscow and St. Petersburg) established LGBT organizations: Vihod and the Russian LGBT Network. Brian Baer even points out that in 2005-2006 in Moscow some group of activists made an attempt to organize a gay pride. (Baer, 2009) However, as I already demonstrated in the previous chapter, all the political action usually happened in the capital cities of Russia; it was and still is extremely complicated for regional activists to take part in such activities, because reaching the capital city is challenging, both in terms of distance and the possible expenses. Thus, activism in the regions, even though it existed, was almost invisible in terms of state/regional politics, before recent times, when the anti-propaganda legislation was implemented.

The re-emergence of a political LGBT movement in Russia coincided with the emergence of political opposition to the toughening regime. Brian Baer in his book called it a “consolidation of a new authoritarianism under Vladimir Putin” (Baer, 2009, p.13) However, any resistance towards the dominant regime provoked an immediate and aggressive response from the government. For example, after the parliamentary elections in 2011 and presidential

elections in 2012, the opposition organized demonstrations in Moscow and Saint Petersburg<sup>29</sup> (probably the first one in the newest history of Russia) the government dramatically increased the penalties for violating the “law on public rallies”<sup>30</sup>. Thus, one might note that currently in Russia any form of public protest is followed by amplification and centralization of power. Commonly, the situation in Russia is understood from what is happening in the capital cities. However “the national picture masks enormous regional variation” (Robertson, 2011, p. 69) One interesting fact about the public rallies in 2011-2013 is that they occurred not only in Moscow – demonstrations were also held in regional centers.<sup>31</sup> Although most active in showing the dissatisfaction with the election results were people in the capitals, people in regions also joined the movement. People in opposition displayed their discontent with the results of elections all over Russia. This information argues for the overall heightening of political consciousness, even in the regions. Exploration of LGBT activism through a Foucauldian lens suggests that articulation of power in such a radical way (in a form of oppressive, heterosexist legislation) enacts immediate resistance on the part of LGBT activists. Michel Foucault argued that “where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault, 1988, p. 95) and this perfectly explains the current situation with the LGBT movement in Russia which emerged in a number of regions as ambitious and political after the implementation of the anti-propaganda legislation. This power can also be seen as emerging as a result of an attempt by homosexuals to cross the boundary between the private and

<sup>29</sup> For example: General report from demonstrations in Moscow and St. Petersburg: Rallies after Putin wins Russia election (2013). Retrieved from: BBC News <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17261136>; Business Newspaper Vzgliad (Gase): Series of articles Mitingi na Bolotnoi [Bolotnaya Rallies]. Retrieved from Vzgliad Web-Site <http://vz.ru/tags/5854/>

<sup>30</sup>“Lenta.Ru (2012). Zakon o Mitingah Vstupil V Silu. [The Law on Public Rallies Came into Force]. Retrieved from Lenta.Ru <http://lenta.ru/news/2012/06/09/inforce/>

<sup>31</sup> For example: anti-election protest in Nizhnii Novgorod. Coomarasamy, J. (2012) Russia: Protests and Opposition to Vladimir Putin. Retrieved from: BBC News <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-16864893>; Review: “Rallies “Lets Save Russia Together” in Russian Cities” <http://ria.ru/riatv/20120204/556739669.html>. Demonstrations “For the Honest Elections” in Russian Regions <http://ria.ru/riatv/20120204/556414108.html> Regional demonstrations against election results were held in various forms: for example, Toys Demonstration in Barnaul. Russia Mayor Bans Election Activists' Toys Protest. (2012). Retrieved from: BBC News <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17049745>.

public spheres because, as I pointed out, homosexuality in Russian society can only be “tolerated” while it is invisible.

In the following chapter I will explore LGBT initiatives/groups/regions in four regions in Russia, seeking to reveal the overall strategy of their activism along with the changes which regional activism underwent after the implementation of legislation. I will reveal the shift which regional LGBT activism experienced as a result of the implemented laws. I organize my chapter in the following way. At first, I will touch upon the issue of geographical location of the regions. I introduce this section to map out the geopolitical specificities of the regions I researched. The analysis of the activism in the regions I will commence with Vihod, which is located in Saint Petersburg, because it is the strongest and the best known organization in Russia<sup>32</sup> and it is located in the capital city. All other the regional initiatives and groups I present in accordance with its year of their establishment – thus Rakurs in Arkhangelsk is the oldest organization, groups and initiatives in Novosibirsk and the next and one recently emerged activist in Kostroma comes up last in this chapter.

## **2.1. Vihod and its Volunteers: LGBT activism in Saint-Petersburg**

Saint-Petersburg in my research is a tremendously valuable region as it is historically considered a gay-capital of Russian Federation. (Kon, 1997) As I showed in my first chapter, Saint-Petersburg since the beginning of the 90-s had an extensive structure of LGBT organizations. Saint-Petersburg is the second biggest cities in Russia and the second capital of Russia. It is a federal city, which means it is a sole administrative unit and has its own legal system. Thus, in this thesis I’m talking about Saint Petersburg only, and not about the region of Saint-Petersburg (Leningradskaia oblast) where the anti-propaganda legislation is

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<sup>32</sup>Ciopa, A. (2012) Zapret “Propagandi” Omrachaet Zhizn Geev V peterburge [Anti-propaganda legislation Ruins Life of Gay People in Saint Petersburg]. Retrieved from: BBC Russia [http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/russia/2012/03/120329\\_gay\\_st\\_petersburg.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/russia/2012/03/120329_gay_st_petersburg.shtml)

not enacted. This city is located in the north-western part of Russia, and because of its status it is connected with many other regions by train and by air.

This part presents an elaborate description of the activities of a regional organization which bases itself in Saint-Petersburg - the biggest and best known organization not only in Saint-Petersburg, but also in Russia – Vihod (Coming Out). The data shows how Vihod is dealing with oppressive legislative change.

Since 2008 Vihod has been working with the state and in society for the betterment of LGBT people's position. Vihod, which is officially registered as an NGO, employs nine people, who work as project coordinators; all the other people are volunteers. Mikhail, one of the project managers in Vihod stressed that it encompasses a number of projects<sup>33</sup>. Currently the organization has three major areas in which activists work. The first area aims at the LGBT community itself. It includes psychological and juridical services for homosexuals, bisexuals and transgender people. This "branch" mostly aims to resolve issues with self-identification, internalized homophobia, coming out; experienced psychologists, who work in this organization create training programs and seminars and are able to provide individual consultations for LGBT people. It also includes programs for specific groups, like "Transgender in Action" and "LGBT parents", which aim to clarify specific issues and resolve the problems of a particular group of people. For instance, the "LGBT parents" project provides information on IVF, adoption and legal issues related to these procedures. These projects also commonly address a crucial question of "parents-to-children" coming out – regular discussions and seminars are conducted to cover this topic. Within the framework of the "community-aimed" project, Vihod also designed a unique program to work with parents of LGBT people, to enhance understanding and acceptance of their children; parents

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<sup>33</sup> All the information, which is presented in this text comes from the interviews, I conducted during my fieldwork. Information about the previous, current and prospective projects can be found on the organization's web-page <http://www.comingoutspb.ru/ru/home>

are able to meet every month and address different issues they are concerned about regarding their children's' sexuality. Activists from Vihod told me that this project is very popular; they also pointed out that some members of this group also became participants of the public demonstration<sup>34</sup>, which Vihod organized to protest the legislation. One informant pointed out that this is an unusual situation for the “traditional” LGBT activism in Russia, because parents commonly do not know about their children's' sexual orientation. Thus, working with parents, they argue, might become beneficial not only for the community, but for public activism as well.

The other two groups of issues which Vihod addresses are oriented towards non-community issues. One project they called “working with public opinion”; it is aimed at the professional groups which have powerful impact on society and public opinion about sexual minorities: journalists, doctors, teachers at schools. Vihod organizes educational seminars which cover the questions of sexuality and gender identity. Activists say that these projects aim to shift the stereotypical and homophobic perception: “we want to educate and enlighten these groups so they can spread the right information about the LGBT people” (informant b, Vihod). In another project oriented outside the community, Vihod works with the government – with legislative and executive authorities, with the commissioner for Human Rights in Saint-Petersburg. Mikhail, an activist who is responsible for the advocacy and lobby for LGBT rights in Vihod, told me that they have a long history of working with the administration even before the non-propaganda legislation was implemented. He told me that they consider themselves as being a compromise-oriented organization, and they want to resolve problems in a dialogue with the government; Vihod doesn't want to be engaged in radical activism, which he perceives as “asking for the immediate abolition of the laws

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<sup>34</sup> Ciopa, A. (2012). Zapret “Propagandi” Omrachaet Zhizn Geev V peterburge [Anti-propaganda legislation Ruins Life of Gay People in Saint Petersburg]. Retrieved from: BBC Russia [http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/russia/2012/03/120329\\_gay\\_st\\_petersburg.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/russian/russia/2012/03/120329_gay_st_petersburg.shtml)

without any negotiations” (informant Mikhail, Vihod). Members of Vihod also stressed that they would like activists in Saint-Petersburg to unite and work together. They’ve argued that in such circumstances their unity and one strategy can lead to greater achievements than discrepancy in goals and strategies of activists.

Thus, the data I’ve gathered shows that LGBT activism in Saint-Petersburg is well-established and developed. Activists from Vihod told me there were not many changes in the organization’s politics after the legislation was implemented. Mikhail told me that Vihod currently places a greater emphasis on working with society on the whole to prevent the outburst of homophobia, however activist do not leave aside community needs as they understand that LGBT community, as a result of this legislation, is getting more and more vulnerable. “We did not establish any new tracks for Vihod, and currently we are not planning to do so. The only change that occurred is that we started paying more attention to certain issues, like negotiations with governmental authorities.” (informant Mikhail, Vihod). Activists in Vihod don’t need to restructure the organization and its agenda; they have no need of developing new branches. The structure of the organization enables its members to respond immediately to the articulated oppression. The major change which members of Vihod acknowledged is that the number of people who would like to volunteer increased drastically. Most of the volunteers never took part in any Vihod’s activities before, although it was functioning since 2008. I managed to meet with several of them to ask why they decided to volunteer for an LGBT organization now. One of the volunteers told me:

I am a teacher [pause] a kindergarten teacher. If someone among the parents will find out that I am a lesbian I’m going to be fired [...] because no one can find out I’m a lesbian if I want to work with kids. And I think this is unfair. And I want to change it. I have friend, who works with kids too and we are thinking that we could establish some



project together [...] Something like “LGBT Teachers” [...]

(Informant a, Vihod)

Another volunteer said that she joined Vihod, because anti-propaganda legislation made the homophobia legitimate and that made her extremely nervous about the position of LGBT people in society:

I feel less safe now, you know. Some of my friends told me they think the law didn't change much [...] But I have this inner feeling that I'm in danger now [pause] that all gays and lesbians are. Now I can be beaten up in the street if I hold hands with my partner. And the government allows that. I never felt this unsafe before. (Informant j, Vihod)

Interviews with volunteers showed that although anti-propaganda legislation didn't change much in the structure of the Vihod, it forced various people and groups of people (like LGBT people who work with children) to volunteer. This change in the number of LGBT people who are eager to join the movement illustrates how heterosexist legislative change galvanized a resistive spirit in LGBT people in Saint-Petersburg. My research also proposes that it is not the laws, which are crucial for LGBT community, but homophobia, which gets discursively legitimized through the legislation. Following Boellstorff's (2005) argument, I argue that the political heterosexism of the anti-propaganda legislation is not homophobic per se (although they are based on homophobia in Russian society), yet it provokes homophobia in society and legitimizes it. Prohibition of propaganda of homosexuality narrates homosexuality as being not allowed in the public sphere, thus an attempt to cross the boundary between the private and public sphere might provoke homophobic aggression.

## 2.2. Northern Activism: Arkhangelsk and OOO “Rakurs”

The region of Arkhangelsk is located in the north-western part of the country; it is the biggest region in the European part of Russia. The city of Arkhangelsk is located in the northern part of the region, close to the northern border of the Russian Federation. Despite its geographical location it is quite easy to reach: Arkhangelsk has its own airport and it is connected with other cities (like St. Petersburg) through the railway.

Arkhangelsk is a small city in the northwestern part of Russia which has quite a long history of LGBT activism in comparison with other cities I’ve studied. Rakurs – the only LGBT organization there – was established in 2006 by six lesbian women. Lead by Tatiana, who works as a professor of Russian Language and Literature in the local university, this organization successfully deals with a number of issues. Rakurs represents a unique case among other regional LGBT organizations I’ve studied: not only it is an officially registered organization, but also it is registered as an LGBT organization. Tatiana, its leader, is very proud of it; she told me that at first they registered Rakurs as an NGO and after, in court, they’ve managed to add the abbreviation LGBT to their official status.

During its years of existence, Rakurs developed certain programs to help LGBT people. The most prioritized during all the years was psychological help for homosexuals: they’ve arranged seminars and training programs in order to facilitate self-acceptance and to resolve problems with internalized homophobia. Rakurs also organizes a large-scale project, which works with religious LGBT people. Tatiana pointed out that in their city many people are religious; consequently these projects have become tremendously important. When I asked about the frequency of these events, activists told me that it depends on the needs of the people – they plan an event once a month, but usually it results in two or even three, due to popular demand. Rakurs also has a separate group of activists who work with transgender people in order to assist not only psychologically, but also with appointments with doctors.

Activists from Rakurs mentioned that they started this project because one transgender person addressed the organization directly, seeking assistance in communications with the medical personnel. They have affiliation of the Federation of LGBT-Sport and two programs, aimed at HIV/AIDS prevention and assistance for HIV positive people.

When I met Tatiana and other members in the summer 2012 it had been a year since the legislation was implemented. Since then they told me, they were trying to understand the attitude of the government to the LGBT community and their activism by organizing a number of demonstrations and public events. For example, during the week against homophobia they were tying rainbow-colored ribbons on the tree in the city center to express their support to homosexuals; moreover activists from Rakurs were protesting the law next to the city hall. However, neither of these public demonstrations was ever acknowledged by the authorities or by the local media. Tatiana told me:

We had couple of actions which we planned as our attempt to see the reaction of the government. They were very simple – some of our activists were standing with posters asking for the abolition of the legislation and arguing for equality. The reaction was null. It seems like our deputies don't really understand what they implemented.

As I already mentioned, LGBT activists in Arkhangelsk were coping with the prohibitive laws for a year; this gave me an opportunity to grasp not only the short-term consequences, but also a long-term ones. Tatiana told me that right after the legislation was enacted, she felt an immediate reaction from the LGBT-community in Arkhangelsk. The LGBT community, she said, started to ask about the new legislation; they were nervous and thought that homosexuality was criminalized again, like in Soviet times.

They started to ask questions like – which kind of actions are considered to be 'propaganda'? Holding hands in public – is it propaganda or not?

The implementation of the legislation raised drastically the level of nervousness within the Community! People were writing e-mails, they called us [pause] for some time – about three month – LGBT community was ‘feverish’

Consequently first step for Rakurs in these new circumstances was to create a series of seminars which aimed to explain the meanings of the legislation to the public. There was an urgent need to calm the local LGBT community down, to say that they should not be scared and that no one can be imprisoned according to this law. The implementation of the non-propaganda law also resulted in an immediate consolidation of people. For instance, Tatiana told me that heterosexual people volunteered to help Rakurs with projects and seminars, which never happened before. Data shows that Rakurs actually benefited from the implemented legislation. This fact shows exactly how heterosexist legislation galvanized resistance not only within the community of activists, but also triggered resistance in people, who were not engaged in LGBT activism previously. For example, lawyer, who is currently working in Rakurs, also joined the organization after the legislation was implemented. He said that he would like to volunteer and to help in this fight with the severe injustice: “before the implementation of the anti-propaganda law I wouldn’t even think about going and helping Rakurs. But now I realized that my knowledge and my skills can help” (informant f, Rakurs).

During 2012, Rakurs’s politics had undergone a number of changes. The organization devoted attention towards the new range of problems. Activists told me they’ve started working with a broader group of people. Tatiana said before the LGBT-propaganda was banned Rakurs was a community-oriented organization – all their events were mostly aimed at a small number of people. Now they endeavor to work with society and enlighten people about homosexuality thus trying to prevent the emergence of public homophobia. They mentioned that currently, the main goal of Rakurs is to “introduce homosexuality to the

public”; thus activists are trying to work with politicians and journalists. Tatiana told me that during the year they attempted “to go beyond their usual performance” – by joining other organizations and groups (Human Rights organizations and initiatives/politically active youth) in their activities, events and discussions. “We do want to “insert” homosexuality in various areas of life,” – activists argued – “we’ve already established the community, but we don’t want to be distanced from the others. By inserting questions, related to LGBT people into the agenda of other activists they want to show their presence in society; they want to show their presence in every sphere of life. Tatiana and other members pointed out that they didn’t encounter any violent homophobic reactions during the events they attended, yet she told me that people commonly wanted to silence all the issues related to the LGBT community. “We want to break the silence. Sometimes it seems that invisibility is our only way to be tolerated. We don’t want things to be as they are. We want people to understand that we are here, we are present.” (Informant n, Rakurs)

As I already pointed out, Rakurs is an organization with a strong legal component – in terms of struggles in the court they are an experienced entity. By now Rakurs has done a lot for the abolition of the laws: the organization filed a lawsuit against the regional administration, claiming that this law violates human rights which are guaranteed by the constitution. Activists told me that they do understand that a decision is not going to be made in their favor, but they are ready to file an appeal to the European Court of Human Rights if the Russian courts various instances reject their suits.

However, activists from Arkhangelsk noted that the most radical change occurred within the population of the region – those changes had a twofold impact on the organization. As I already pointed out, people, both homosexual and heterosexuals, started joining the organization, started coming to the events and to offer their assistance in projects. However, some spaces where activists conducted their events were no longer available for them; for

example, in the space where Rakurs organized screenings and discussions they were no longer welcome after the law was implemented. “People [the ones, who provided places for the events Rakurs organized] are afraid to help us now,” – said one member of Rakurs, - “they are afraid that the administration is going to fine them for so-called propaganda of homosexuality”. Activists say that it is hard to understand and to balance what counts as propaganda and what does not - mostly because the term “propaganda” is extremely vague.

Analyses show that case of Arkhangelsk represents a surprisingly well-established regional group that cardinally changes its policies in response to heterosexist legislation in the region. Activists perceive the legislation not as an obstacle for them to overcome, but as an amplifier of homophobia in society. It suggests that activists from Rakurs, similar to volunteers from Vihod, see the laws as enhancing homophobia that was already present in society, rather than as a radically new issue. Thus the focus of Rakurs’s activism shifted from community to society. Similarly to the situation in St. Petersburg, members of Rakurs pointed out that they experienced increasing number of cases when people volunteered for the organization. The data I’ve gathered suggests that after homophobia gained prominence in legislation, LGBT activism in Arkhangelsk attracted more members: both homosexual and heterosexual citizens. This suggests that oppression facilitates amalgamation of different people in triggering resistance.

### **2.3. Activism to the East of the Urals: case of Novosibirsk**

The region of Novosibirsk is the only one in this research which is located in the central-eastern part of the country. The city of Novosibirsk is the third biggest city in Russia (after Moscow and Saint Petersburg), thus it is the biggest city in eastern Russia. It is quite complicated to reach, not logistically (it is a big industrial center, thus it is connected with other places by air and by railway) but in term of its being geographically distant from of the regions. For example it takes 4 hours to reach it by plane from Moscow and 2 days – by train.

At the time I was doing my fieldwork the region of Novosibirsk was the only area in the eastern part of Russia where the anti-propaganda legislation was implemented; actually the law was implemented right before I've started my fieldwork. Thus, I was able to grasp the starting point of the change in LGBT activism in Novosibirsk – activists were mostly talking about the anticipated modifications. Novosibirsk represents an almost unique situation in terms of its LGBT activism in Russian regions: while not being a capital city it has a number of activist initiatives, which appear to be in a certain disagreement with each other. This part aims to outline agendas of existing organizations/initiatives and to indicate the change they presume to undergo in response to the implemented law.

### **2.3.1. Project “Pulsar”**

Project Pulsar emerged from the series of psychological training events for LGBT activists which were held in 2002 in Tomsk (a city which is close to Novosibirsk – also in the eastern part of Russia). The leader of this ongoing project, Oleg, told that he went there, as an activist of the NGO “Humanitarian Project”; this training event was covering various topics, yet the major one was HIV/AIDS prevention.<sup>35</sup> Since 2002 group of people in Novosibirsk started working on a project aimed at HIV/AIDS prevention. After receiving a financial grant, project “Pulsar” was launched in 2008. It was planned, and until the year 2010 it was functioning as a HIV/AIDS prevention communicatory project, oriented towards young men (18-27 years old), who practice sex with other men (MSM). As an activist group they developed a number of events, which included movie screenings, discussions, lectures etc. The grant money they received was distributed between payments to rent the community space and to print certain useful literature. Yet, Oleg notes, project “Pulsar” did not only

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<sup>35</sup> The information about this training is unavailable now, however it would be interesting to see, where the financial support and the agenda of this event came from. Thus I could see the ways in which LGBT politics/community were addressed – was it from a western perspective or from the perspective of Russian experience of doing activism.

function as it was thought – it became much more than just an HIV/AIDS prevention project – it started building a community of LGBT people, which went beyond the declared target group. Although after two years the funding ended, “Pulsar” continued working, mostly because it turned out being a community-based and community-building project, even though it doesn’t have any external financial support. Currently, as Oleg pointed out, project “Pulsar” is an educational and recreational space for the LGBT community and friends:

For me it [activism] turned out to be a good pastime. [pause] An opportunity to communicate, to gather. For me activism comes down to the following: if there are people, who are really in need for help and companionship, there must be a space where these people could receive help and companionship

Oleg’s attitude towards legislation is controversial one. On the one hand he agrees, that the law is an impulse to bring activists together, at least in one city. It is a “good” starting point for activism to reclaim its presence in Russia; yet, LGBT-activism suffers more from the homophobia, which is present in society. One of the members of Pulsar pointed out that he thinks it is necessary to “transfer activism from its fixation on community needs and community building activities to a broader audience” (informant k, Pulsar) Educating people about homosexuality might help reduce homophobia within Russian society. Oleg suggested that legislation is not the center of everything; it is an iteration of an old problem. Thus, regardless of the legislation – homophobia is an overall structural problem in Russian society. The legislation, he argues, doesn’t have its enforcement practices, homophobia has just found its expression therein. He mentioned that they commonly have some joint projects with Gender i Pravo. Space, where Pulsar hosts meetings, is used by Gender i Pravo to organize seminar, lectures. “Seminars on LGBT rights, which Kseniia [leader of Gender i Pravo] does” – said one of the informant (informant m), who often comes to Pulsar’s events – “are



important for us. I'm glad someone can tell me about the rights I have as a gay man in Russia." Oleg said that after the legislation was implemented, he wants to dedicate his time and effort to create a series of seminars which addresses the implications of the anti-propaganda legislation for the LGBT community. This, he argues, is why he is open for cooperation with Gender i Pravo, because they, as an organization which work on LGBT rights can help Pulsar to develop a coherent series of events.

The leader of Pulsar argued that people are fighting for the LGBT-rights because this problem is currently in the spotlight. However, he emphasized that project Pulsar is not ready to become something more than a community center; Oleg feels that this organization has a very specific agenda, which doesn't coincide with political activism. He said:

Currently we do not plan any major, global changes. There are still lots of problems within the LGBT community in Novosibirsk. Pulsar is a safe space for people to come and speak up openly. [...] Many young people come to our meetings. We understand that Pulsar helps gays and lesbians in various ways. We want to be there if and when someone seeks assistance.

However, Oleg said that he himself participated in a demonstration next to the city hall, to protest the implementation of anti-propaganda legislation in Novosibirsk. Others who participate in Pulsar's activities said that they also participated in this protest. However, they made clear that it was their individual initiative, which had nothing to do with the organization itself.

### **2.3.2. Gender i Pravo (Gender and Rights)**

Gender i Pravo was established as an initiative dealing with legal issues related to the LGBT community; it currently represents the Russian LGBT Network in Novosibirsk. Lead

by an experienced young lawyer, Kseniia, it aims to offer legal support to various sexual minority groups. This organization does not seek to organize public demonstrations on the streets, but to work with society and with the state/regional government; they also monitor cases of discrimination against LGBT people, and inform members of sexual minorities about their rights. As a part of the organization's "educational" strategy, which aims to inform and educate gays and lesbians about their rights, the leader of the Gender i Pravo records info-videos about LGBT and human rights, posts them on YouTube and posts links to the videos in social media, thus trying to make such essential information public and accessible. It seems obvious that this organization wants to work closely with the non-heterosexual community; members claimed that it is important to take into account the needs of the community, because all the activism must be actually intended to improve the status (both legal and social) of the people.

Talking about the current situation in relation to the legislative changes in Novosibirsk region, activists of the Gender i Pravo note that after the laws were passed, they felt unity with other LGBT activists/groups:

Undoubtedly, it is important for LGBT activists in Novosibirsk to coordinate our efforts and to act together [...] And this law [pause] it affects all of us, it is our shared problem and we must deal with it all together. (Informant k, Gender i Pravo)

They argued that it is important to coordinate efforts and work in conjunction towards their mutual goal. Yet they argued that despite this political aim, their goals, methods and target groups are different from other activists in Novosibirsk – they were contrasting themselves to Pulsar, which is primarily a community-building organization. Activism in Novosibirsk is now shaped by the emerged legislation, thus volunteers of the Gender i Pravo argue that all the LGBT groups in Novosibirsk should work in conjunction with each other to resolve this

problem; yet, all the organizations in this struggle should be addressing particular issues. Volunteer S told me that “we understand that all the organizations in Novosibirsk differ from each other [...] in our methods, in our target groups. We just feel that we are [different from others]!” (Informant s, Gender i Pravo). For example Gender i Pravo’s strategy to fight the problematic anti-propaganda laws is based on their main specialization, which is juridical: they plan to intentionally violate the non-propaganda law by these means creating a legal precedent and then appeal with it to the courts of various instances and try to abolish the law. One of the volunteers said: “as no one defines what propaganda means we want to host some public demonstrations and see, for which kind of actions the government is going to fine us” (informant k, Gender i Pravo) This follows the logic of division between strategies and tactics, introduced by Certeau (1984). Anti-propaganda legislation in these circumstances is a strategy of the powerful actor (regional administration) and prospective action which violates this law is tactical. They plan to make use of the existing anti-propaganda law to repeal the law and the legal structure.

They also argued that it is extremely important to establish and maintain connections with LGBT organizations in other “problematic” regions, because of the shared experience in dealing with such obnoxious legislative change (communicating methods and strategies). Gender i Pravo represents the Russian LGBT Network in Novosibirsk, thus by being a part of this major organization, and it gives them the opportunity to share experience and communicate with other organizations-members of the Network.

### **2.3.3. GORD – Gomosexuali, Rodnie I Druzia (Homosexuals, Relatives and Friends)**

GORD and its leader Bulat is a group of the most public LGBT-activists in Novosibirsk. Their aim is to talk about homosexuality in public; to disrupt the silence. Bulat, who consider himself a political activist, is trying to create resonance in the media. He, in comparison with other groups doesn’t want to engage in a constructive debate with the

government – he wants to act directly and to provoke. He said that GORD doesn't accept the most common pattern of doing activism, which, in his opinion is funded and closeted and, according to his opinion, can change a lot. During the interview Bulat commonly called it “professionalized” activism, arguing that such form is not going to bring any results; moreover, he said that it is not activism in his understanding – “because activism is a struggle, a real fight”.

GORD's peculiarity is in its public actions – they are open, provocative and impudent. They are not doing any continuous work with community and/or government; their aim is to shock and provoke. Since the summer 2011 (the time when GORD was established) , they had two major actions which were criticized by the moderate activists. During the first one they hung a poster in a central square near the City Hall, which said “What choice do you leave your kid with, if he/she realizes he/she is homosexual?” At the day they exhibited the poster, four activists from GORD were giving out fliers which contained information on homosexuality and suicide rates for homosexual adolescents. According to Bulat, this aimed to increase parents' tolerance towards their children. The second event was organized on the bank of the river Ob, and was framed as an exhibition. It was called “Every Type of Sexuality is a Natural One” and the posters depicted species among which homosexuality can be found and contained some basic information about same-sex sexuality. These two projects aimed to educate people about homosexuality and disrupt the ignorance towards these issues. “We wanted to show that our society has some issues, which are important yet disregarded by the majority. [...] People just don't want to know that gays exist!” (informant q, GORD) However, public reaction to these actions was strictly negative. In the first case, a number of Parental Committees in Novosibirsk submitted complaints to the City Hall administration; also some individuals started addressing Bulat personally with various threats:

“We were publicly accused of encouraging children to have sex [...] Some time after this event some Parental Committee tried to sue the administration, because it was the administration who allowed this event to happen. [...] I was called on the phone by some pensioners, who said that they want me to die. Others, mostly women, attacked me via Skype and claimed that I am a pedophile.”

Bulat told me that when he came to the City Hall to get official permission to host the second demonstration, he was attacked by three people and beaten up. Also, some of the members of GORD pointed out that during the second event, they were pelted with eggs. They said that “although the police were somewhere around, they didn’t do much. These people came and started throwing eggs at us. They were wearing masks, so we couldn’t see their faces.” (informant p, GORD) This last event was held in September 2011, and since then there were no actions on the part of GORD.

#### **2.3.4. Radical VS Moderate: the Power of Categorization**

I interviewed activists from Novosibirsk right after legislation was enacted in this region, in June 2012. All three organizations/groups/initiatives referred to themselves as either “moderate” or “radical”. “Moderate” activism in Novosibirsk is represented by two groups: Gender i Pravo and Project “Pulsar”. Activists in these groups in their interviews described themselves as non-radical (and constantly opposing themselves to, what they called “radical activist group” GORD). They were making an attempt to show that their ways of doing activism are more “compromised-oriented” (Essig, 1999) than disruptive. Contemporary narratives of LGBT activists in Novosibirsk recall past conflicts between radical and compromise-oriented activists in the 90s, when. “[c]ompromise-oriented activists [did] not trust in the integrity of their more radical counterparts” (ibid, p. 64) and radical activists claimed that others were afraid to act directly because of their high social status. The

case of Novosibirsk shows that two groups – Gender i Pravo and Pulsar are starting to work together while also trying to distance themselves from GORD. Members of Gender i Pravo and Pulsar told me that they already had some joint projects – seminars, public discussions etc. – and they would like to develop a closer cooperation with each other. Constant reiteration of the division between moderate and radical discursively distanced them from GORD.

Their strategy to question the unjust legislation is to work together with government: as members told me during their interviews, they want to create working groups and to revise the legislation. Oleg from Pulsar talked about his involvement and participation in such meetings before the law was implemented in an attempt to change the situation. He said that in his opinion it is important not to be too radical with the activism, because it might aggravate the situation for the LGBT-community in the region. On the other hand, activists from GORD and Gender i Pravo, while discussing the legislative change, were narrating their strategy which differs from the one Pulsar has. They claimed that they need to create a legal precedent, which violates anti-propaganda law, to get fined and then to appeal against the verdict to the European Court of Human Rights. Kseniia, leader of Gender i Pravo even pointed out that for her there is no exact boundary between radical and moderate activism:

In Novosibirsk we have both radical and moderate activists. Currently, as a result of this legislation we have more common issues [...] probably more methods which both of us use. Before this law was enacted, moderate activists were skeptical about public actions [...] and if we had such actions they were covert – for example we had a “Rainbow Flashmob”, when a group of people came together and released rainbow-colored balloons. This was an activity for the community [pause] it was not [pause] political enough. However, now we are ready to address the

government directly and to say – we do not agree with this situation, not anymore!

However, even though activists of Gender i Pravo plan to act in a similar way as GORD, they do classify themselves as “moderate” and thus try to show that there is a distance between them and GORD’s actions. One activist from Pulsar argued that it happens as a result of GORD having political ambitions; and Bulat himself claimed that he is a political activist and his interests are broader than just LGBT rights. Some other activists I interviewed told me that leader of GORD wants to have career in politics and LGBT-rights for him are just the way to be acknowledged as a political figure. As I pointed out earlier in the text, activists from GORD told me that their projects were intended to attract the attention of the general public to particular problems. They didn’t want to work for the community – they wanted to address a larger audience. They called themselves a group of ‘radical activists’ and critiqued other groups for being not radical enough. For GORD activism “is a war, not a seminar” (ibid, p.63)

Activists from project “Pulsar” and Gender i Pravo were arguing in their interviews that they don’t know what the aim of Bulat’s actions was and were wondering if there is anything beyond just the disruption of public space. They also argued that members of GORD didn’t think about the consequences and possible outcomes of their actions. As all the public events GORD conducted were right before the law was implemented, he and his public LGBT-related events are commonly blamed for provoking the appearance of the “non-propaganda” legislation. Bulat himself pointed this out in his interview:

It is possible that anti-propaganda legislation in Novosibirsk was implemented as a result of our activism. [...] Our events were provocative enough, thus people share this opinion, that legislation was implemented as result of the growing publicity of homosexuality.

It becomes clear that Gender i Pravo and Pulsar's strategy to be called "moderate activists" is an attempt to distance from the negative image of activism which they think GORD created. They do not want to be associated with all the provocative actions GORD generates. Ksenia (the leader of Gender i Pravo) claimed during the interview that the LGBT community needs to be public, but doesn't have to be provocative or aggressive. However Bulat says that between activists in Novosibirsk there is misunderstanding and even jealousy on the side of the "moderate" activists towards his ideas and actions. In the interview he narrated himself as the one activist in Novosibirsk who is actually doing something.

Unlike the movement during the 90s (Essig, 1999; Nemtsev, 2008) moderate activism is a dominant narrative in Novosibirsk and radical activism emerged as a form of resistance towards it. It was tremendously interesting to see how this opposition between moderate and radical activists was constantly coming up in the interviews. "They warn the speaker and the listener not to trust "those" people" (Essig, 1999, p. 65) – the ones, who "lack consistency in their activism" (informant from Gender i Pravo about radicals) or the one, for whom activism became a profession (informant from GORD about moderates). This research shows how activists in Novosibirsk actually see the significance of labels such as "radical" and "moderate" and how each group uses these terms to add value to their work. The usage of such categories to distance one group of activists from another can be perceived as homonationalism within the community of LGBT activists in Novosibirsk. Bringing Jasbir Puar's (2005) theory from the level of the nation to the level of LGBT movement suggests that moderate activists from Gender i Pravo and Pulsar address moderate activism as a norm in contemporary Russia. Thus, through the usage of these categories, they discursively produce a homonormativity among activists. A normative activist is a moderate activist and radical GORD is being excluded from this notion.



Thus, the case of Novosibirsk shows, how anti-propaganda legislation provoked unity between two groups and exacerbated the conflict of these two groups with the third one. The unity of Pulsar and Gender Pravo is beneficial for both organizations: Pulsar, as a community-building initiative, becomes not only a platform for various discussions, but also a source of public opinion for an organization which is willing to take some direct actions – For Gender i Pravo. However, the conflict between GORD and other groups of activists doesn't allow them to work on the legislation directly –it seems like this inner conflict leads to the lack not only of joint action but to the lack of any action. Oppression, which gets articulated through heterosexist law, provokes not only resistance and cooperation in resistance: it also might trigger the major backlash towards activities that do not fit into the moderate way of doing activism ,thus exacerbating the conflict between activists.

#### **2.4. Kostroma: a Developing Region in Russian LGBT Movement**

The region of Kostroma is relatively small and located in the center of the European part of Russia; the city of Kostroma is close to the western border of the region. Despite its central position, it is much more complicated to reach Kostroma then to reach Arkhangelsk. The region of Kostroma doesn't have many connections with other cities; it has only suburban electric trains that connect them with bigger cities.

The case of Kostroma is very interesting, mostly because there was no LGBT activism before the implementation of the legislation which aimed to ban propaganda of homosexuality; thus it is a perfect example of the newly established LGBT organization. Maria, my informant, is currently the only person who is engaged in activism in Kostroma.

The first question to my informant, Maria, who is single-handedly trying to establish the very first LGBT initiative in the city, was: “what did the authorities ban, if there was never any LGBT-related event in Kostroma?” Maria laughed and told me that is the question

which she kept asking herself since she found out about this case, and decided to respond to the legislation. She told me that she found out about the law while browsing the website of the regional administration; she also pointed out that as there was no local organization to address the issue, therefore she decided that something needs to be done about that.

In the first action, in which she participated, was in conjunction with the Russian LGBT Network, members of the Network came to protest the legislation even before they were implemented. She said that about eight people participated in a demonstration against the implementation of the law in front of the City Hall; only three of them were people from Kostroma. All of them were arrested, yet the administration didn't press charges

Currently, Maria said, there are a number of projects she is trying to address. For example, she and some of her friends are trying to monitor public opinion on the issues related to the LGBT community and the new no-propaganda policies. She pointed out that the results of the surveys (which she and her friends conducted) showed that more than 60% of their sample never even heard about the legislation, which, in her opinion shows that people in Kostroma are quite indifferent towards issues related to homosexuality. Maria said she has no idea why the law was implemented; the only explanation she could give was that government in Kostroma followed the example of other regions:

I have no idea, why legislation “happened” in our region. It could be because our [regional] government decided to follow the overall trend. Laws were implemented in other regions – and our regional administration decided we should have a similar one. Yet we are a small region, we don't have many gays and lesbians here. We didn't have any activism [pause] before me! Not even a gay-club! The community is

small; it is a “kitchen community”<sup>36</sup>. It looks like there are no gays and lesbians in Kostroma.

Her other aim as an activist is to attract the attention of the media: to find a journalist who would be able to write about the actions and LGBT-related issues. Activist said that only one protest that they held received media attention and coverage, yet no one wants to write about LGBT, “especially in a contemporary situation, when everything can be perceived as propaganda”. Masha<sup>37</sup> also made an attempt to meet with the deputies who were involved in the adoption of this law. She told me she wanted them to elaborate on what propaganda is, as the law doesn’t give any explanation. However, even though she managed to schedule the meeting with some deputies, none of them actually showed up to talk to her. In the six months of her work, Maria’s biggest achievement is that she managed to file the case to the court; she said that although the judge rejected her request to abolish the law, she is planning to appeal to the courts of higher instances, hoping that it will help to improve the situation with LGBT rights in Kostroma.

Masha pointed out that, although her surveys showed that the majority (she said 73%) of people in Kostroma displayed negative attitude towards homosexuality and consider it immoral, there is no publicly displayed homophobia or homophobic violence towards the gay community. Interestingly enough, she pointed out that people in Kostroma think there are no gay people in their city: “They say that Kostroma is too poor for gay life.” People in her city are still perpetuating stereotypes about homosexuals being always rich, having fancy cars, living luxurious lives; Maria claimed that people do not have any other perception of homosexuality because it is hidden in private.

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<sup>36</sup> “Kitchen community” here means a closeted community, which can only be open about their sexuality in a small number of safe spaces.

<sup>37</sup> Maria and Masha are the two versions of the same name; in this subchapter I am talking about one person, who is engaged in activism in Kostroma.

Even though Masha's been trying to establish an LGBT organization for 6 month, she said that it is still not functioning and she is really confused and doesn't know what to do. One issue which bothers her is that there are no people who would like to fight for gay rights in Kostroma – it is only her. “If there were more people,” – she told me during the interview, - “we could share the tasks, but currently it is very hard for me to deal with everything almost by myself”. The main problem for current activism in Kostroma is the lack of human resources. Maria told me that she was hoping that people would join the organization; she was trying to attract members through various social networks, however, homosexuals in Kostroma are not eager become activists:

people say they didn't feel humiliated or offended by these laws [pause]  
 they told me that activism seems pointless for them, that Russian  
 government would never support gays [pause] maybe in 150 years  
 [pause] it seemed like they expected it to happen. They said they want to  
 keep private things private

Gays and lesbians told Masha, that they are quite comfortable with their position that nothing has changed for them as a result of the no-propaganda law, as they were a closeted group of people. “Activism implies publicity, but gays in Kostroma do not want to display their sexual orientation publicly – they would rather keep it in private, as they were doing all these years.” Roman Kuhar (2011) is talking about this issue when he presents the post-socialist phenomenon of transparent closet. He argues that LGBT people have an understanding that intimate citizenship should be a private matter; and this understanding gets perpetuated by homophobic attitudes. Consequently, Maria is struggling with establishment of an LGBT community in Kostroma and with her LGBT rights/anti-legislation project. She is currently trying to address these issues with the help of the Russian LGBT Network.

As research shows, the case of Kostroma perfectly exemplifies how the direct use of power generates resistance. Even though there was no LGBT-related initiative prior to the legislative change, the implementation of the anti-propaganda law forced the activism to emerge. Although the initiative in Kostroma is currently underdeveloped, its appearance was encouraged by the oppressive power directed towards homosexuality. LGBT activism in this region illustrates perfectly how power is inextricably linked with resistance. However, the number of activists remains quite small compared to the number of potentially affected people. This results from the invisibility of homosexuality. As I pointed out in the beginning of this chapter – homosexuality is tolerated until it becomes visible. Thus, I argue that this strategy of “not engaging” with the LGBT activism is caused by this threat of stimulated homophobia. This issue refers back to the anxiety which many activists from various regions share – that anti-propaganda legislation will perpetuate homophobia in society. Thus Kostroma as a developing region of LGBT activism reveals how legislation is working in a dual way – as provoking resistance and as aggravating the closet. The latter happens as a result of potential amplification of homophobia after the implementation of the anti-propaganda legislation.

This chapter demonstrates the various ways in which LGBT activism in the regions changed after the anti-propaganda legislation was implemented. Data suggests that after anti-propaganda legislation was implemented in Kostroma, Saint-Petersburg, Arkhangelsk and Novosibirsk, activism in these regions encountered changes; however these changes differed from one organization to another. More established organizations, like Vihod and Rakurs experienced an increase in the number of volunteers. Rakurs also had some minor structural changes within the organization – as they had to prioritize the work with society. The Region of Kostroma experienced drastic changes – as the first organization was established. My

research also argues that legislation has different impacts on LGBT people. This research makes it clear that the cardinal shift occurs in the people themselves as they start to unite with each other – whether it is volunteers who join the LGBT organization, or LGBT organizations which combine their efforts. However, some of the cases suggest that anti-propaganda laws both drag people out of the closet and push them in.

Moreover, my research also argues that anti-propaganda legislation is not the only problem that should be addressed – it is a part of a bigger issue, which is homophobia in Russian society. Many activists explicitly argued for a specific perception of the legislation; this understanding was shared by a number of my informants. They noted that the legislation itself is not a problem, but what it entails is. Activists from Rakurs and Pulsar and volunteers from Vihod suggested, that anti-propaganda legislation makes homophobia legitimate; that any public display of homosexuality after this legislation was implemented can receive verbal or physical violence. Returning to Boellstorff's logic (2005, 2009) the anti-propaganda legislation is an exhibition of state heterosexism and desire to preserve the public sphere as purely heterosexual. Yet the consequences of these laws are much more problematic for LGBT community and activists, as prohibition of propaganda of homosexuality easily works as an amplifier of overall homophobia in society. Anti-propaganda laws discursively legitimize homophobia and this is what poses a major threat to the community.

In this chapter I demonstrated the changes which each organization I researched had undergone individually as a result of regional anti-propaganda legislation being implemented. Needless to say, these organizations in current circumstances cooperate and communicate with each other; some of them are actually members of an umbrella-organization the Russian LGBT Network. Thus, in the last chapter I aim to address the issue of networking within the LGBT organizations. I'll discuss how organizations and initiatives communicate and collaborate with each other. By drawing upon the case of the Russian LGBT Network I'll

argue that the LGBT movement in contemporary Russia cannot be limited to one umbrella organization – it is a system of complex networks, which depends on a number of issues.

### Chapter 3. Networking and the Network: Critical Reflections

In this chapter I'll continue to elaborate on the changes which LGBT activism encountered with the implementation of anti-propaganda legislation, however my discussion will shift from a regional to an interregional perspective. I will draw upon the changes which occurred in the cooperation/networking of the regions where the laws were implemented, and show how these principles of networking based on geographical distance and radical/moderate divide reinforce a symbolic east/west divide. Showing the presence of a major umbrella organization in the Russian LGBT Network which aims to unite regional initiatives in the first section of this chapter will help me to argue that its politics represents an attempt to normalize a moderate trend in activism and narrate it as the only acceptable way of engaging in activism in Russia. Presenting the Network as an imagined community helps me to develop this argument. I will also argue that through these principles space to the east of the Ural mountains is constructed as underdeveloped, *neosvoennaiia* (unexplored), and rural in comparison to the so-called European part of the country; I'll carry this argument through the last two sections. Finally I will point out that, although the Network prioritizes geographical western and moderate groups, actual networking goes beyond the official boundaries, thus creating a number of complex networks within Russia, which can intersect and can be in conflict with each other. This suggests the presence of agency on the periphery which however narrates the LGBT movement as rather uncoordinated.



### 3.1. The Headquarters of the Russian LGBT Network: Agenda and Strategies

The Russian LGBT Network<sup>38</sup> is the best-known LGBT organization in Russia, which aims to unite a number of LGBT organizations and initiatives across the country to form a structured and coherent movement; it is the only umbrella LGBT organization<sup>39</sup> within the country. During my field work I visited its headquarters, which is located in Saint Petersburg to retrieve information about the Network's agenda, strategies and how regions acquire membership in this organization.

Igor, the leader of the Russian LGBT Network, told me that in 2006, when the Network was established it had only nine members; he characterized it as “an initiative like any other”. In October 2008, the *Russian Conference of Civic Organizations which Supports LGBT Community and Movement* took place in Moscow. After this event, the Network became an umbrella-organization for various regional LGBT initiatives, with its headquarters in Saint Petersburg. Because of its status of headquarters of the Network, organization in Saint Petersburg has certain duties of its own. Representatives of the Russian LGBT Network in Saint Petersburg work with society and with the government for the betterment of the position of LGBT people. Activists try to inform people about the LGBT community, to dispel homophobic and transphobic stereotypes and work towards the shift in public opinion. The headquarters of the Network accentuates its work with society on so-called “opinion leaders” – journalists, reporters, civil activists:

We want to work with educationalists of various levels. [...] It is hard to address all people, consequently we aim towards people who inform other people

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<sup>38</sup> Here, when I talk about Russian LGBT Network or the Network, I mean the head organization, which is located in Saint Petersburg, as opposed to the actual network, which is constituted from various regional organizations

<sup>39</sup> Map in the Appendix IV shows the regions, which currently are the members of the Network.

Activists from the Network conduct information campaigns and press conferences, organize round table discussions and multidisciplinary conferences and invite “target groups” there, “so they could find out that LGBT community exists, that “LGBT people are not pedophiles, not perverts, we are people and we are around and we deserve to be present” (informant v, Russian LGBT Network)

The Network also makes an attempt to negotiate the position of LGBT people in Russia with the government. In this sense the leader of the Network argues that anti-propaganda legislation has enhanced their ability to communicate with authorities. He noted that the implementation of the anti-propaganda legislation suggests that the government acknowledges existence of LGBT people in Russia:

Now they kind of acknowledged it... they acknowledged our presence in society. However [pause] in this extremely negative way. Still, it is already an acknowledgment, because before [before the legislation started to be enacted] they simply didn't see that there is a problem with homophobia [...] they didn't see us. With this legislation they acknowledged that there are LGBT people in Russia. Although society is homophobic, this legislation legitimized our ability to negotiate our position with them [with the government].

Igor told me that it is complicated to be in a dialog with the Russian government, because state representatives don't attend the events the Network hosts, even though activists constantly invite state representatives. Thus they resort to the mediation of international organizations. The leader told me that he managed to meet with some politicians in the events hosted by international organizations (he didn't specify which). The strategy to appeal against the law to the European Court of Human Rights (which various organizations I researched

are using or plan to use) also is a major component in an attempt to attract attention of the various international organizations to the current problem so they could also address Russian government.

Because of its status as headquarters of the Russian LGBT Network, the main goal of the organization in Saint Petersburg is to unite various LGBT initiatives and to form a national LGBT movement. The main argument of the Russian LGBT Network is that for such a big country as Russia it is not enough to have LGBT organizations just in the capital cities; only unity of resistance can help in the struggle against homophobia, which is present in society and which currently gets articulated through the anti-propaganda legislation. Activists from the Network argue that homophobia should be addressed on the structural level and not on the legislative:

We understand that in the constitution, in the section on human rights it is stated that all people are born equal, but in reality – it is not true! In our Russian reality – human rights are a social contract. Anything can be written in a constitution and in various international legal documents – if society doesn't support this contract – all these documents become a piece of paper and nothing more. And we can yell that we need our right as much time as we want, yet [pause] nothing is going to change. Thus we think that the process of legitimization must be accompanied with change in public opinion on the matter.

As headquarters of the Russian LGBT Network organization in Saint Petersburg represents all the regional LGBT organizations which are included in the network. The main aim of the Russian LGBT Network is to connect regional organizations and to facilitate and ease the communication between activists and their communication with authorities. The

Network is trying to simultaneously develop various projects, all of which aim to work towards the unity of regional initiatives. Currently, Igor noted, the Russian LGBT Network has two major areas of activity in terms of forming an All-Russian movement. Its first aim is to create an LGBT community within the country. The Network argues that the movement is not going to succeed if there is not going to be an LGBT community in Russia:

We need to enlighten LGBT people, to form group consciousness!

Unless there is a community – we are not getting any rights. [...] If we won't create an LGBT community – nothing is going to change!

This community, Igor argued, should not be constituted solely from gays and lesbians in the capital cities, thus the Network sees its aim to facilitate the formation of the community, which includes gays and lesbians in the center and at the periphery. Building a national LGBT community which includes the periphery can help to claim the presence of a community in the nation and thus, make specific claims of belonging. Homosexuality is commonly addressed as a phenomenon which is present only in big cities (Weston, 1998) Thus a national LGBT community will show that gays and lesbians are present not only in the center, but also in small towns and regions. Consequently, Russian LGBT Network assists regional LGBT communities: they help to create regional organizations that are supposed to work not only to advocate for LGBT rights, but also as community centers.

The leader of the Network also discussed the ways in which the headquarters helps regional organizations. The Network provides assistance for initiative groups in the regions “which want to become activists, but don't know what to do and how to do it.” Activists from the head organizations visit activists in the regions and share the experience and knowledge, which they argue the periphery lacks. Representative of the LGBT Network introduce the realm of advocacy for regional activists. Membership in the Network also makes regional

groups visible within the network (all LGBT organizations, which constitute Russian LGBT Network). Igor pointed out that this is beneficial for regional activist because broader audience gets to know about various regional initiatives:

We publish the information about regional activists on our website and in other materials, in our pamphlets; thus many people get to know about them. They can attract new members, people who would like to help them.

As many regional activists pointed out, the Network hosts conferences, where activists can meet their colleagues from other regions as well as representatives of the Russian LGBT Network and representatives of foreign LGBT organizations, and as a result facilitates communication between activists of different levels. Igor claimed that regional initiatives/organizations which want to develop into something bigger (e.g. to become more stable, recognizable) want to join the Network themselves. He argued that initiatives in the regions need a major partner which can represent them in the capital. The Network also emphasized its ability to provide moral support and share its experience with their colleagues from the regions.

It is important to note that the ideologist of the Network pointed out (similar to most of my informants) that he sees anti-propaganda legislation as being an outcome of a major structural issue – extreme homophobia in Russian society. Implementation of the anti-propaganda laws didn't change the social status of LGBT people in Russia: it just confirmed it. The law should be seen as a proclamation of the governmental position towards this issue and their embeddedness in it, meaning that government supports homophobia within the Russian nation-state. Igor drew upon the fact that decriminalization, which occurred in 1993, changed nothing for the vast majority of people in Russia – they still consider homosexuality as a crime. Activists from headquarter of the network argued that if the abolition of the anti-

propaganda legislation happens, it will not trigger a reduction of homophobia in the country. Consequently, this problem should be viewed and dealt with in a much broader sense.

To finalize my description of the headquarters of the Russian LGBT Network, I want to point out how the Network defines itself and its members in the regions in terms of a radical/moderate binary. It is interesting that the leader of the organization narrated its agenda by juxtaposing the Network to the initiative of radical activists:

In Russia we currently have two so-called trends in doing activism – the radical trend and [long pause] reformist/evolutionary one. Moscow Gay-Pride organizers and their followers in other cities represent the radical trend in activism. Their motto is “Equal Rights Without any Compromise”. Also they have a second motto, which characterizes them really well: “We don’t need your love – we need our rights”. This is the claim with which they address Russian society. Russian LGBT Network considers itself as followers of the other trend, which – and it is an extremely relative term – can be called a reformist one.

I dedicate the next section of this chapter to disentangling the consequences of such a juxtaposition for the LGBT movement in Russia. By proving that the Russian LGBT Network is an imagined political community and that it is imagined as a national LGBT organization I aim to show that by opposing activists from the network to the radical activists the Russian LGBT Network constructs moderate activism as normative for the situation in Russia.

### 3.2. Russian LGBT Network as an Imagined Community: Spread of Moderate Activism.

With the vivid descriptions of agendas of the Network's headquarters in the previous section I aimed to prepare the groundwork for the discussion about its politics of exclusion. This section draws attention to the ways in which the Russian LGBT Network invents itself as a national LGBT movement while being an imagined community, and how it constructs radical activists as 'others', thus discursively excluding them from the movement. At first in this section I'll show how the Russian LGBT Network, similar to the nation-state, is an "imagined political community" (Anderson, 2002, p.6). This analysis gives me an opportunity to argue that the Network is trying to normalize activism through its politics. I argue that through constant reiteration of a radical/moderate divide between activists, the boundary between these two categories in the situation of anti-propaganda legislation becomes even sharper. The Russian LGBT Network constructs moderate activist as normal and radical activism as "other" and thus is trying to discursively exclude radicals from the national LGBT movement.

Regional LGBT organizations are perfect examples of actual community – people know each other quite well, there are actual ties and relationships between activists. They work with each other, interact with each other on a daily basis.<sup>40</sup> Yet geographical distance between regional organizations constructs the Russian LGBT network as an imagined community. The leader of the Russian LGBT Network claimed that currently in Russia community is formed based not on identity, but on shared experience of being stigmatized and discriminated against on grounds of one's sexual and gender identity. Activists understand themselves as a part of larger organization through this shared experience of not only experiencing stigmatization, but also through the shared experience of being engaged in

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<sup>40</sup> I draw this conclusion based on my participant observation of the regional LGBT organizations

a struggle against homophobia. Other regional activists also pointed out that activism in Russia is inclusive in terms of people's sexualities:

sure, we have some special programs for transgender people, for example. This is because they have special needs. But we are still a part of sexual minority rights movement, and we want to include those who are discriminated against. Why do we need to discriminate against people even more? (Tatiana, Arkhangelsk)

Yet it is definitely imagined. From the interviews with activists who do not hold senior positions in the organizations they work or volunteer for, I found out that some of them never encountered members of Russian LGBT Network who work in other regions; “yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, 2002, p. 6). Still, they emphasized their belonging to the network, pointing out that they are a part of national LGBT movement. The Russian LGBT Network is certainly “imagined as a community” (Anderson, 2002, p.7) and this implies that activists consider the relations in the Network as “deep, horizontal comradeship” (ibid., p.6), even though the structure of the Network is actually hierarchical. This sense of comradeship is perpetuated through the idea of shared experience of homophobia and struggle with common foe. The idea of horizontal partnership is even stated in the name of this national organization – the way networking is understood and talked about by the informants suggests that in the Network, organizations should help each other and are equal participants of the organization.

It is remarkable how Russian LGBT Network uses a map to claim its presence in society. This map becomes more than a simple depiction of the geography of the movement: it shows in which ways the political community imagines its geopolitical dominion. (Andersen, 2002, p. 163-164) The Network is not distancing itself from the Russian nation-state by creating separate visual representation; the Network is drawn on the map of the



Russian federation to claim its belonging and, what is more important to claim its Russianness. Such maps “legitimize and romanticize [...] claim to a specific territory” (Cerwonka, 1999, p. 335) It is also interesting to see, how the Network visually exaggerates its actual presence on the map displayed on the official webpage of the organization<sup>41</sup>. This map indicates the regions where organizations which are members of the Russian LGBT Network are present. As I pointed out earlier, activism in Russia is extremely urbanized; usually LGBT organizations are established in the regional centers, not on the periphery. However, space of the region, where the organization-member of the Network is established is marked fully, not only one city. Thus, one affiliated organization marks the whole region as struggling with homophobia and as activists. Following Anderson, I argue that such mapping is used to claim the Network’s presence, to create a powerful visual sign, which can “[penetrate] deep into the popular imagination” (Anderson, 2002, p. 175) –into imagination of the activists. Consequently, “[n]ational territories are not mere space but are connected to claims on resources and power” (Cerwonka, 1999, p.338). It maps out the Russian LGBT Network as a part of the Russian nation, which their politics also suggests: they don’t want to simply claim their rights, they want to negotiate their presence and power within the Russian nation.

What is important is that there is no actual equality between the organizations-members of the Network: headquarters of the Network appears to be in a higher position than all other regional organizations. It is obvious, both from the interviews with regional activists and from the interview with the leader of the Russian LGBT Network, that the Network imposes its agenda on the regional organizations. Through the series of events the Network hosts (e.g. educational seminars and schools for activists) it puts forward the headquarters’ views about proper/improper activism on regional groups. In the case of Kostroma, the head

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<sup>41</sup> Official website of Russian LGBT Network <http://www.lgbtnet.ru/>; Russian LGBT Network: Regional Affiliations. Retrieved from: <http://www.lgbtnet.ru/ru/content/regionalnye-otdeleniya>

organization in Saint Petersburg simply transferred its “big city” agenda and strategies onto the recently emerged LGBT initiative in this city. Maria, being a ‘novice’ activist during my interview with her seemed to be confused by the instructions from the Network’s headquarters. This poses a major question about the ways in which LGBT politics/strategies are transferred from central spaces to the periphery. Scholars (Lalo& Schitov, 2005; Blagojević, 2011; Mizielinska, 2011) question the uncritical appropriation of patterns of doing activism from one space to another. Mizielinska’s (2001) argues that geotemporalities of east and west vary dramatically, which suggests that blind adoption of Western politics to the Eastern spaces is not going to succeed: “we cannot translate stages of Western/American development on to other contexts without risking mistakes of not noticing local specialties (thus making the American model hegemonic)” (ibid., p.102) Following her reasoning, I argue that activism in central spaces (activism in Saint-Petersburg) exist in a different geotemporality than the regional one. Not only is Saint-Petersburg the second biggest city in Russia with a large population – it also has experience in LGBT activism<sup>42</sup>; however for activism in Kostroma the current situation is just a starting point. Thus, political agendas, and stages of development of LGBT activism which are being successfully implemented in the geopolitical circumstances of the capital city, at the periphery may appear to not be productive. The case study of activism in Kostroma shows, that although the Network helped Maria a lot and gave valuable pieces of advice, currently she is the only activist in the city, which entails inapplicability of a number of recommendations from the Network. LGBT politics are being superimposed to the regions “without taking into account the local context and its specificities” (Blagojević, 2011, p.32). However this is not the case for all the organizations – some of them, like Rakurs, were well-established before they joined the Network. Consequently, here I’m not arguing for the lack of agency of regional initiatives:

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<sup>42</sup> I talked about the emergence of LGBT activism in the 90s in the first chapter, and showed that Saint Petersburg was a major center of LGBT activism.

Maria wanted to be engaged in LGBT activism and she took the initiative to contact the Russian LGBT Network, seeking assistance. However, this particular case of Kostroma shows how the blind application of central LGBT politics to the periphery can result in a certain disorientation of the regional activist – at the time of my research (august 2012) Maria said she didn't manage to enhance the consolidation of the community, because in the small city of Kostroma the anti-propaganda law made LGBT people even more closeted.

Anderson (2002) argues that there are two more aspects of how national political community is imagined: as sovereign and as limited. The postulated idea of how members of the Network have a similar experience of oppression also appears to facilitate an understanding of the LGBT community in Russia to be “imagined as sovereign” (ibid, p.6), although not in a sense of being sovereign, but as being deprived of sovereignty. Representatives of the Network argue that LGBT community's sovereignty is taken away by the anti-propaganda legislation “because the state wants to control personal lives of people and deny individual freedoms” (informant I; Russian LGBT Network), which also triggers the rise of homophobia. Consequently, the aim of Russian LGBT movement is to fight for the sovereignty of the community. I suggest that in the current situation the LGBT movement imagines the LGBT community as possibly sovereign, as a group which was deprived of sovereignty and wants to claim it back.

To prove that Russian LGBT Network is “imagined as limited” (ibid. p.7) I need to return to the radical/moderate divide, which activists from headquarters of the Network used. As cited previously, they clearly defined themselves in relation to other initiatives and organizations:

For example, Moscow Gay-Pride organizers and their followers in other cities represent radical trend in activism. [...] the Russian LGBT

Network considers itself as followers of the other trend, which – and it is an extremely relative term – can be called a reformist one.

These attempts to distance Russian LGBT Network from other activists in Russia and this discursive “othering” of the initiatives which don’t share the ideas of the Network narrates the latter as a community which is imagined as limited, and which defines its limits, following the rhetoric of the 90s post-Soviet LGBT movement.

The debate between the radicals/compromise-oriented (or moderate, reformist) LGBT activists has existed in Russia since the beginning of the 90s, when the LGBT movement first emerged: radicals critiqued compromise-oriented activists for not being political enough, while compromise-oriented tried argued that radicals, with their uncompromising and aggressive position might worsen attitudes towards homosexuality in post-Soviet Russia. (Essig, 1999, pp. 62-65). Yet this debate experienced a major shift – if in the 90s the radicals were occupying “the political limelight”, currently, moderate activists (represented by Russian LGBT Network) are the most visible actor of the LGBT movement. Despite this fact, contemporary moderate activists still narrate themselves similar to the 90s “compromised-oriented” (ibid., p. 62) stating that their main point is the overall betterment of the position of LGBT people in Russian society; radicals are presented as groups of activist who want to claim rights from the state immediately, without any negotiations.<sup>43</sup> The debate between the two also remains similar to the early 90s – moderate activists talked about their radical counterparts as behaving “in uncontrolled and inappropriate ways” (ibid., p. 64). In the current situation, this debate gets exacerbated by the implementation of the anti-propaganda legislation. Activists from the Network argued that currently, in this situation of political heterosexism in Russia, which might enhance homophobia dramatically, claims of radical

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<sup>43</sup> This is the connection I make; during the interviews activists were not comparing themselves to the activists in the 90s.

activists might cause harm for the movement and worsen the social and political position of LGBT people in Russia:

Legitimacy of LGBT people is not going to relieve us from homophobia. And radical claims can even increase the level of homophobia. We [Russian LGBT Network] don't need such equal rights – which do not actually provide any equal rights.

Thus I want to discuss the position of Russian LGBT Network in terms of its attempt to normalize Russian activism.

In the context of the Russian LGBT movement and the debate between radical/moderate activists, I argue that the Russian LGBT Network normalizes activists in terms of a radical/moderate binary and trying to establish a national “compromised-oriented” movement. As I showed earlier in the text, the Russian LGBT Network already imagines itself as a national LGBT movement, it even maps itself out on the map of the Russian Federation. It either incorporates organizations which share their moderate/reformist values (as in the case of Novosibirsk) or helps establish new organizations in accordance with the Network's agenda. By these means it perpetuates the idea of what the Network sees as acceptable strategies for activists and what it doesn't; it marks radical activists as a unfit for the Russian LGBT movement. By crossing the regional borders, the Network is making an attempt to claim itself Russian. It is already not an initiative of one city/town – it becomes a national movement. Consequently, as the organization, which claims to constitute a Russian network of LGBT organization, it constructs and perpetuates the idea that a ‘normal’ activist is a moderate one; this type of activism is the right one and makes it possible to change the situation in the country; the one which is not going to aggravate the position of homosexuals in Russia, but will improve it. Thus, the Russian LGBT Network excludes radicals already by narrating them as radical and thus non-normative activists and opposing activists from the

network to them. However, such an attempt to normalize activism generates resistance – the leader of GORD pointed out in his interview, that he decided to establish this initiative because no one else in the region of Novosibirsk was engaged in public and political actions, “no one wanted to claim rights; everyone was kind of satisfied with his/her closeted position”. Thus, by trying to promote moderate activism, the Russian LGBT Network provokes resistance on the part of radical activists. In the final section of this chapter, I will show how the topography of power works in terms of LGBT activism and relate this discussion of radical/moderate to the geopolitics of the LGBT movement.

### **3.3. Capacities of Networking: Radicals VS Moderate and the East/West Divide**

As narrated in the previous chapter, LGBT organizations\groups\initiatives in Russia currently share the experience of fighting for the abolition of the anti-propaganda legislation. However, as my data shows, the implementation of anti-propaganda legislation enhances various types of networking (along with resistance towards some types of networking) between the organizations, thus establishing a political LGBT Movement, which, in comparison to the post-Soviet LGBT movement in the beginning of the 90s, includes not only central cities like Moscow and Saint-Petersburg, but also cities on the periphery<sup>44</sup>. In this final section I will draw upon the ways in which regional LGBT organizations interact and cooperate with each other in terms of their geopolitical circumstances and show how the actual patterns of networking go beyond the umbrella-organization, in terms of resisting its power. I will also point out how these organizations see the role of the Russian LGBT Network, about which I talked in the first section of this chapter. I argue that capacities for

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<sup>44</sup> I should emphasize that I’m talking about political LGBT Movement here; thus, as I pointed out in the first chapter, there were regional LGBT initiative in Russia in the 90s, yet they lacked political aim and were excluded from the struggle for the decriminalization, which happened in the capital cities.

networking<sup>45</sup> of the organizations I studied are determined by two major factors: by membership of the organization in the Russian LGBT Network and thus being defined as radical or moderate, and by the geopolitical location of the region which the organization represents. I'll emphasize the importance of geopolitical location for the networking in this part of the chapter, and relate it to my previous discussion about the moderate/radical divide, which the Russian LGBT Network perpetuates.

As I already indicated, the organizations I studied are quite diverse in their geopolitical location. Three of them (Rakurs, Arkhangelsk; Vihod, Saint Petersburg; Maria in Kostroma) are located in the European (western) part of Russia, whereas other three (Project Pulsar, Gender i Pravo, GORD from Novosibirsk) are located in the Asian (eastern) part<sup>46</sup>. The Ural Mountains are the unofficial border between the two parts. I plan to indicate specifically how networking differs due to the geopolitical position of a particular region.

Many activists in their interviews used the east/west divide, which was applied to different part of the country. Tatiana, for example, pointed out that although Arkhangelsk is located on the North it is still in the western part of Russia, which is beneficial in terms of networking compared with the eastern one. Also Mikhail from Vihod pointed out that cooperation with eastern regions is seriously complicated by the geographical distance. Even by looking at the map of the Russian LGBT Network one can see that it prioritizes the geographical west of Russia. Even though the whole country is commonly seen<sup>47</sup> as being situated in the Eastern part of the world, an east/west boundary exists within the country. It is interesting how Russia is always narrated as having two parts: Eastern and Western (or European and Asian). Even geographical maps commonly designate space to the left of the

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<sup>45</sup> In this thesis networking means that organizations develop multi-leveled (horizontal and hierarchical) connections between each other, not only to have joint projects, but also to share their experience in of activism, fundraising, in registering NGO's etc.

<sup>46</sup> 'European' and 'Asian' is the officially accepted division of space within Russian Federation

<sup>47</sup> Lewis and Wigen (1997) argue that east/west binary is socially constructed. When I say that Russia is narrated as a country, which is located in the east, I follow the western logic (which is used in Russia too).

Ural Mountains as “Europe” and the one to the right of the Urals as “Asia”. Although, as Lewis and Wigen (1997) note, “East and West were never meant to be precisely mappable categories” (Lewis, & Wigen, 1997, p. 48), this division is used even within one country to designate specific geographical areas.

Gupta and Ferguson suggest that “spaces have always been hierarchically interconnected, instead of naturally disconnected” (Gupta, Ferguson, 1997, p. 35), thus arguing that spaces are never an autonomous and always in certain relations with each other. David Tuller’s informants from Eastern Russia argued that the geographical west of Russia (especially capital cities) must be understood as culturally, politically and “conceptually” west, as Europe (Tuller, 1996). The capital of the Russian Federation is located close to the western border of the country, thus the eastern part is exceptionally distant from the capital. There are certain quantitative differences in the geopolitics of the western and eastern parts of the country. The western part of Russia is more urbanized; population density, similar to the density of the regions, is much higher there, than in the eastern part.<sup>48</sup> This discursive divide between spaces and quantitative geopolitical difference between two parts has certain implications: it constructs the eastern part of the Russian Federation as rural, indigenous and less interested in politics. Territories, as Gupta and Ferguson argue, are always thought of as having certain political-economic determinations. (Gupta, Ferguson, 1997, p. 40) Russia’s east in this logic has less interest in national politics, because it is considerably distant from the center – Moscow and Saint Petersburg. I will show that this east/west divide is sustained by the Russian LGBT Network, specifically by the geography of membership in the Network.

At first, I will elaborate on how networking is narrated in the European part of Russia. I need to note that all the organizations I visited to the east of Ural Mountains are members of

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<sup>48</sup> According to the research “Urbanization and Economic Development in the Regions of Russia” Kolomak, E. (2012, March 21). Urbanization and economic development in the regions of Russia [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from HSE Center for Market Studies and Spatial Economics website: <http://ces.hse.ru/en/news/49688155.html>



the Russian LGBT Network. As I pointed out earlier in the text, the city of Arkhangelsk, where Rakurs is situated is located on the north of the European part of Russia. Tatiana, leader of Rakurs argued that due to their distant location they have a hard time managing the communication. Activists from this region pointed out that their remoteness from the center of the western part makes it extremely hard for them to directly interact with other organizations – their desire of networking gets mediated through the internet and social networks. “It takes quite a long time to get from Arkhangelsk to... anywhere!”, - Tatiana said. She pointed out that the region of Kostroma, in her opinion, had much better location, a central location. Even though both cities are equidistant from Saint Petersburg (where the headquarters of the All-Russian LGBT Network is located), Kostroma’s central location for activists from Arkhangelsk seemed to her to be preferable because it provides a better possibility to establish connections with other regions in the center – an opportunity which is desirable for such a well-functioning organization as Rakurs.

However, the leader of Rakurs pointed out that their membership in the Russian LGBT Network helped to overcome this problem of geographical isolation. The implementation of anti-gay legislation in the regions triggered not only resistance, but shared resistance. Activists before the Urals pointed out that their membership in the network facilitates communication between regional organizations. Tatiana acknowledged the great importance of their membership in the Russian LGBT Network for Rakurs. She even claimed that without the Network “[they] would have suffocated”, meaning that it would be tremendously hard for Rakurs to work without their status of collective participant of the Russian LGBT Network. They argued that being a part of a bigger organization provides them with a feeling of belonging; they felt like Rakurs was not alone in this struggle. The Network carries out support for regional organization in the following ways: activists from the Network organize seminars and “schools for activists”, to which they invite and where

they teach regional activists. Tatiana argued that such help is incredibly useful as “they make professionals out of people who are simply conscious of LGBT-related problems.” Tatiana also pointed out that as a result of the implementation of anti-propaganda laws they started to interact with other regional organizations on the horizontal level. She argued that

It is important to establish relationships, to communicate, to have some joint events with other activists. As a regional organization we can share our knowledge with others and gain some knowledge and skills from others.

The only LGBT activist in Kostroma – Maria – drew attention to the fact that without networking with other regions, and, especially with the Russian LGBT Network, she wouldn’t know even know both how to respond to the anti-propaganda legislation and how to become an activist. It was she who decided to seek help from this umbrella-organization at first; however, she said that activists from the Network were looking for people who would start an LGBT organization in the region of Kostroma, as the anti-propaganda law was implemented there. It is important to note that the case of Kostroma shows how the Network not simply helped, but created LGBT activism in this region in accordance with its own political views. Maria argued for the importance of the Network’s help:

When you decide to engage yourself in civil activism [pause] you barely know what to do. And the Network came and sorted out everything for me – they told me what I needed to do and it all became clear!

Maria said that the Network provides a variety of educational materials and spread the information about the initiative in Kostroma. The activist also remarked that people from the Network recommended her to register her initiative as an NGO, saying that it would enhance the public recognition of the LGBT activism/community in Kostroma. She also

pointed out that in terms of NGO registration she finds the experience of other organizations to be remarkably useful: Masha stays in contact with Tatiana – leader of Rakurs – and Tatiana shares her experience of registering a regional NGO. Maria and Tatiana met on one of the conferences which Russian LGBT Network organized; both of them (during the interviews and our informal conversations) pointed out that they found these events useful and beneficial for regional activists – as they can meet and exchange their knowledge and experience:

During such meeting, I met Tatiana, from Rakurs – you already met her [...] and she was very nice to me and very-very helpful. She told me about her experience in registering an NGO and some other stuff [...] it was good to know that there are people who went through the same things as I currently do.

Activists from Vihod (Saint Petersburg) also argued that networking is important for the LGBT movement in Russia: “it is an effective strategy – if all of us will unite and work on the same problem together” (informant f, Vihod). As I already mentioned, Vihod collaborates with regional organizations within Saint Petersburg – For example, with LGBT Movie Festival Bok-O-Bok (Side-by-Side) which has its headquarters in Saint Petersburg. They said they support this cultural initiative, yet they also make a serious attempt to go beyond activist groups in Saint Petersburg and to establish connections with regional LGBT groups and initiatives. However, the anti-propaganda legislation opened up a space for intensive cooperation: currently more groups and initiatives emerge at the periphery, thus Vihod can exchange their experience with other regional organizations. In this vein, they remarked that they network with Arkhangelsk. There are three main reasons for this cooperation: membership in the Russian LGBT Network, transportation link between the two cities, and currently they have common problem with anti-propaganda laws.

We can establish connections with some organizations, and not with others. We cooperate if there is some similar problem, or shared sphere in which we can act together with others. (Mikhail, Vihod)

Also, Vihod is the only regional organization which pointed out that they work with organizations in Novosibirsk (thus in their networking goes beyond the Urals); however, they are currently working only with Gender i Pravo, which is a member of Russian LGBT Network. It is interesting, that activists from Vihod (similar to activists in Novosibirsk) also used the radical/moderate divide to argue that they have more in common with moderate activists; thus this divide becomes a reference point of their decision about networking.

There is the Network [Russian LGBT Network] which has a moderate agenda; there are more radical activists and initiatives. We relate more to the first ones, we share their need in compromise! (informant k, Vihod)

Behind the Ural Mountains I studied three organizations in one region (the region of Novosibirsk). Novosibirsk is located in the eastern part of Russia, close to the Ural Mountains. It is the most geographically distant region from the central spaces (Moscow and Saint Petersburg) I studied. As I already mentioned in the previous chapter, the implementation of the anti-propaganda legislation in Novosibirsk reinforced the radical/moderate divide for activists in Novosibirsk; thus activists, who identified themselves as moderate (Pulsar, Gender i Pravo) united their efforts on the regional level and commenced to contrast themselves with radical activists (GORD) even more.<sup>49</sup>

It is interesting to see how differently organizations in one region narrate the importance of networking. For example, leader Gender i Pravo (members of the Russian

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<sup>49</sup> This debate between activists in Novosibirsk I discuss in Chapter 2, subsection 2.4.4: Radical VS Moderate: the Power of Categorization.

LGBT Network) similarly to all the other members of the Network argued that it is important to be a part of a major organization and to cooperate with other regions. She said that currently the organization has some joint projects with Vihod (she didn't specify which). Also the headquarters of the Russian LGBT Network in Saint Petersburg invites them to participate in seminars and schools for activists. However, she didn't mention any other regions with which Gender i Pravo cooperates. She also didn't give any substantial critique of the agenda which the Network has. Moreover, as I already showed in previous chapters, Gender i Pravo after the implementation of anti-propaganda legislation felt the need to cooperate with Pulsar, which is another regional organization in Novosibirsk. On the other hand, Bulat, the leader of GORD (which also isn't a member of the Russian LGBT Network) as I pointed out argued against the professionalization of activism. He claimed that the Russian LGBT Network in its agenda lacks direct actions and "it is just full of discussing things, which not going to lead to the betterment of gays and lesbians position in Russian society". However, Bulat also argued that he wouldn't mind working with other groups and initiatives in Novosibirsk, if they wouldn't be so critical towards what he is doing. This information suggests that networking must not be limited to the space of the Russian LGBT Network. I will illustrate this fact with the case of Project Pulsar.

Project Pulsar is not a member of the Russian LGBT Network, and its leader, Oleg, displays tremendously interesting attitude towards the agenda of the Network. He argued that an umbrella organization in Russian circumstances must be present; it is beneficial for the LGBT movement as it aims to unite and interconnect various regions in one network. The leader of Pulsar stated positive issues about the formation of the Russian LGBT Network. The national organization is being created and this is a positive move for LGBT community and for activism: it gives an opportunity for the activists from the regions to communicate; it also might trigger LGBT-related initiatives in regions/regional centers. All the events,

seminars, abilities to share knowledge, Oleg claims, seem to be beneficial for the members of the Network.

On the other hand, he critiques the relationships, which occurs within the network. The activist argues that regional organizations become dependent on the Network and this doesn't stimulate their activities, they just wait for the Network to tell them what to do: "this situation does not motivate people and they simply become leeches!" He argues against such structure and suggests that instead regions could support the head organization:

Currently everything that has been done follows the pattern – from the head organization to the members. [...] Thus it creates activists who cannot look at the situation from a different perspective. They don't understand, for example, that funds can be retrieved in the regions, that activists can get money for their projects in the regions. They could earn money here and say to activists in Saint Petersburg – "guys, you are [geographically] closer to the state authorities, let us give you money so you could work on some project!" However currently the majority of LGBT activists demands funds from the head organization [Russian LGBT Network] Such a position is parasitical and it is reinforced by the way the Network positions itself.

Oleg points out that he communicates a lot with other regional LGBT organizations which are geographically close to the region of Novosibirsk (e.g. the region of Omsk, the region of Tomsk). This, he pointed out, happens because the region of Novosibirsk is distant from the western part of Russia, thus it is distant from the organizations in the regions there. He said that there are many organizations/initiatives which do not form "the movement" which occurs in the western part of the country because they are located in the eastern part.

Oleg argues that the Russian LGBT Network isn't the only space where the networking occurs – cooperation also happens between regions which are geographically close to each other, thus one can see a more complicated picture of cooperating and network. Despite the Network's "nesting orientalisms"<sup>50</sup> within the Russian Federation patterns of networking which I presented in my research imply that regions have agency of their own, and even try to resist the power of the Russian LGBT Network, either by creating "local" networks on their own (Pulsar cooperates with regions in the eastern part of Russia) or by doing radical activism (like GORD).

My research asserts that there are multiple ways in which networking within the Russian LGBT movement occurs. Within the Russian LGBT Network there is horizontal and hierarchical cooperation, however it spatially differs in the east and west of Russia – organizations located in the eastern part are engaged in hierarchical relations with the headquarters of the Russian LGBT network, when the western part opens up a major possibility for the organizations/initiatives/groups to interact between each other on the horizontal level, not only in the hierarchical (Rakurs and Vihod; Rakurs and Maria from Kostroma). It is interesting how these hierarchical relations are still narrated by activists from the regions in terms of horizontal bond and comradeship, about which Anderson (2002) is talking about. All of these organizations definitely are engaged in a hierarchical relationship with the headquarters of the Russian LGBT Network, yet they also interact with each other. However, my research also asserts that networking exceeds the limits of the Russian LGBT Network and happens on various bases. Cooperation occurs between the organizations in one region, despite of their membership in the Network (Pulsar and Gender i Pravo) which happens as a result of both organizations being from one region and sharing similar views on

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<sup>50</sup> Milica Bakic-Hyden calls "nesting orientalisms" "a pattern of reproduction of the original dichotomy upon which Orientalism is premised" (Bakic-Hyden, 1995, p.918) meaning that eastern spaces are commonly presented in terms of backwardness.

activism. Through my analysis it also becomes obvious that some local initiatives (like GORD) resist the dominant moderate narrative of doing activism in Russia.

Data shows that in the western part of Russia “horizontal” networking (networking between organizations-members) is intensive and happens along with the hierarchical one (with the headquarters) as a result of the high density of the regional organizations, which are members of Russian LGBT Network. This fact is conditioned by the geographical closeness of the regions to each other; it is also important that organizations which network are all moderate. The case of Gender i Pravo illustrates that; yet this organization is working with the headquarters of the Network in Saint Petersburg, which entails hierarchical networking, which Oleg mentioned in his interview. However, in Novosibirsk, which spatially belongs to Russia’s east, activists are mostly not networking with the western part (except Gender i Pravo); they rather not interact with other organizations at all (GORD) or they interact on the horizontal level with LGBT initiatives in the eastern part of Russia.

Anti-propaganda legislation reinvented regions as involved in politics, both in the geographical east and west, both radical and moderate activists. This chapter demonstrated how despite the Network’s goal to enhance cooperation between regional LGBT organizations, it also, through the spatial distribution of activists which it incorporates<sup>51</sup>, produces space to the east of Ural Mountains as Russia’s “LGBT Orient”<sup>52</sup>. The east/west divide of the country which was articulated by LGBT activists, narrates the “topography of power” (Gupta, Ferguson, 1997, p.35) of the Russian LGBT Network and of the LGBT movement on the whole which prioritizes the geographical west over the geographical east.

<sup>51</sup> Map in the Appendix IV shows that LGBT Network mostly does not incorporate in itself the so called eastern part of Russia (only region of Novosibirsk and Primorskii krai). This map was retrieved from the website of the Russian LGBT Network <http://www.lgbtnet.ru/ru/content/regionalnye-otdeleniya>

<sup>52</sup> In such naming I follow Lewis and Karen, when they call Eastern Europe “Europe’s Orient” (Lewis & Wigen, 1997, p. 58)



However, even though the Network disregards some LGBT groups/initiatives/organizations in the East of Russia, these initiatives establish networks of their own, according to their own preferences – geographical distance, similar views on LGBT politics. The dominant pattern of “moderate” activism also generates resistance and makes radical groups and initiatives emerge. I argue that a complicated multi-layered picture of networking results both from regional organization being/not being a member of the Russian LGBT Network (thus being moderate or radical) and from the east/west divide of spaces within the country and its implications. Organizations in the western part mostly limit their networking practices within the network, whereas in the eastern part there are more informal networking patterns. I argue that such division has an indubitable effect on the interactions of the LGBT organizations between each other.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Map in the Appendix IV illustrates that there are more LGBT activist groups in western part, then in the eastern one.

## Conclusion

This thesis examined the re-emergence of political LGBT movement in Russia as a result of the implementation of the regional anti-propaganda laws. I illustrated how this movement became visible as a consequence of the state heterosexism and how shared experience of oppression triggered resistance in various ways. My research revealed that heterosexist anti-propaganda laws should not be understood as something separate from overall homophobia in Russian society which is enhanced by growing nationalism and unity between the Orthodox Church and the State. This research shows that these laws are treated both as an outcome of the severe homophobia in Russian society and as an enhancer for it; heterosexism is used by the state to sustain the Russian nation as heteronormative. This work presents an insight into the sexual politics of contemporary Russia and highlights the ways in which political heterosexism stimulated LGBT activism.

By situating my analysis in a Foucauldian framework I demonstrated the ways in which heterosexist legislations that prohibit propaganda of homosexuality galvanized resistance on the part of LGBT community. I showed how different LGBT organizations in four regions of Russia (Arkhangelsk, Kostroma, Novosibirsk and the city of Saint Petersburg) responded to the anti-propaganda law. Looking at the insights of LGBT activism in the regions where anti-propaganda legislation was implemented helped me to reveal the ways in which the goals, strategies and agendas of regional LGBT organizations in Russia were reshaped by these laws. I indicated that strategies and agendas of activists shifted, that currently activism aims to address and educate not only LGBT community, but also the Russian society – by these means activists intend to reduce the overall level of homophobia. I showed that the anti-propaganda legislation stimulated the raise of the number of volunteers for the organizations I've studied which, however, also depended on how well-established

and well-known the regional LGBT organization was. Alongside, I showed different techniques of resistance which activists employ; I presented the desire of activists to break the anti-propaganda law for the sake of appealing to the European Court of Human Rights as a making use of the anti-propaganda legislation by the powerless.

The anti-propaganda legislation, despite being an enhancement for LGBT activism, strengthened a radical/moderate divide between different organizations/groups/initiatives. I argued that although an umbrella-organization the Russian LGBT Network aims to unite activists in a common struggle with homophobia, its networking practices are exclusionary both in geographical terms (it prioritizes Russia's west over Russia's east) and in terms of LGBT politics (it prioritizes moderates over radicals). Presenting the Network as an imagined community helped me to develop my argument. Through the analysis of the actual patterns of networking between the regional LGBT organizations I researched, I've demonstrated that there are multiple, politically and geographically different, networks of activists within the Russian LGBT movement, which sometimes interact and sometimes oppose and resist each other. The presence of networking outside the official Russian LGBT Network suggests the presence of agency in the periphery, not only in the central spaces; however, this fact also presents the Russian LGBT movement as segmented structure.

While I was writing this thesis, anti-propaganda legislation was implemented in other regions of the Russian Federation – including Magadan, Samara, Krasnodar, Kaliningrad, the republic of Bashkortostan. Currently the possibility of its implementation on the national level is being discussed by the parliament of the Russian Federation. These facts open up a field for additional investigation. In relation to this fact, this research could be extended both geographically and politically, in term of the moderate/radical divide. For instance, A subsequent analysis of radical activists would provide a broader perspective on the ways in which moderate/radical binary shapes process of networking. Moreover, I suggest that

engaging in further research of activist groups in the Eastern part of Russia could support my argument about the presence of multiple networks, which go beyond the official one.

Moreover, I see my research as a starting point of conceptualizing heterosexist anti-propaganda legislation and homophobia in Russia and implication of it for both activists and LGBT community. In my analysis I showed that in some cases anti-propaganda laws, while galvanizing resistance, also forced LGBT people, who are not engaged in activism, to preserve their closet. This could also be a way in which this research could be continued – to look at the effects which anti-propaganda laws has on the lives of LGBT people in Russia who are not engaged in activism.

In the context of heterosexist sexual politics and its relation to LGBT activism in Russia this research showed the ways in which activism is shaped by severe heterosexism and increasing homophobia, how it becomes more focused and visible. My research shows how movement can be identified and understood not through identity categories, but through the idea of shared experience of oppression. This has some general implications on the understanding that homophobia and heterosexism in the nation-state are interconnected, feed off each other. It also shapes the overall perception on the ways in which oppression triggers resistance and, what is also important, how political heterosexism shapes patterns of networking between LGBT activists.

## Appendix I

### Texts of the Regional Anti-Propaganda Laws

#### Saint Petersburg

Law dated March 7, 2012 N-108-18

Article 7\_1. On Public Actions, Propagandizing Muzhelozhstvo, Lesbianstvo, Bisexualizm and Transgenderims (Male/Female Homosexuality, Bisexuality, Transgender)

Public actions, propagandizing muzhelozhstvo, lesbianstvo, bisexualizm and transgenderism among underaged population (under 18 years old) are punishable by an administrative fine: on citizens in the amount of five thousand Rubles; for officials – fifty thousand Rubles; for legal entities – from two hundred and fifty thousand to five hundred thousand Rubles.

Note: Under “propagandizing muzhelozhstvo, lesbianstvo, bisexualizm and transgenderism among underaged population (under 18 years old)” in this article must be understood as focused and uncontrolled activities aimed to spread the information, which could damage health, moral and spiritual development of the underaged population (including formation of misconceptions about social equivalence of traditional and non-traditional marriage in their minds)

*Zakon Sankt-Peterburga (Saint-Petersburg Law). (2012) “O Vnesenii Izmenenii v Zakon Sankt-Peterburga “Ob administrativnih Pravonarusheniiah v Sankt-Peterburge [On the Changes in the Saint-Petersburg Law “On the Administrative Violations in Saint=Petersburg]” Retrieved from: <http://gov.spb.ru/law?d&nd=537913971&prevDoc=537913971&spack=011f1ist%3D%CD%E0%F7%E0%F2%FC+%EF%EE%E8%F1%EA%26intelsearch%3D%EF%E5%E4%EE%F4%E8%EB%E8%E8%26listid%3D010000000100%26listpos%3D0%26lsz%3D2%26w%3D2%26&c=%CF%C5%C4%CE%D4%C8%CB%C8%C8#I0> (accessed April 9, 2013)*

#### Region of Arkhangelsk

Law dated September, 30.2011. 336-24-OZ

Article 10. Measures prohibiting public actions propagandizing homosexualizm among minors.

Public actions propagandizing homosexualizm among minors are not allowed.

*Zakonprost (2012) Oblastnoi Zakon o Vnesenii Izmenenii i Dopolnenii v Oblastnoi Zakon “Ob Otdelnih Merah po Zashite Nравstvennosti i Zadorovia Detei v Arkhangelskoi Oblasti” [Regional Law on Introducing the Changes and Additions to the Regional Law “On Specific Measures to Protect Morality and Health of Children in the Region of Arkhangelsk] Retrieved from: <http://zakonprost.ru/content/regional/3/1453727/> (accessed May 16, 2013)*

#### Region of Novosibirsk

Law dated June, 14 2012. N 226-OZ

Article 21. On the protection of children from information, propaganda and agitation that harms their health, moral and spiritual development.

Government of the Region of Novosibirsk and the local authorities must take steps to protect children from the information and propaganda (including propaganda of homosexualizm) and agitation, which harms their health, moral and spiritual development.

Article 4.11. Propaganda of homosexualizm among minors.

Propaganda of homosexualizm among minors entails infliction of an administrative fine: on citizens – in the amount from four to five thousand Rubles;

on officials – from forty to fifty thousand Rubles; on legal entities – from four to five hundred thousand Rubles.

*Zakon Novosibirskoi Oblasti “Ob Administrativnih Pravonarusheniiah V Novosibirskoi Oblasti” [Law of the Region of Novosibirsk: On the Administrative Delinquencies in the Region of Novosibirsk]*

*Zakon Novosibirskoi Oblasti “O Zashite Prav Detei V Novosibirskoi Oblasti” [Law of the Region of Novosibirsk: On Protection of Children’s Rights in the Region of Novosibirsk]*

*Retrieved from: Laws Database: Konsultant Plus*

### **Region of Kostroma**

Law dated February 15, 2012. 193-5-ZKO

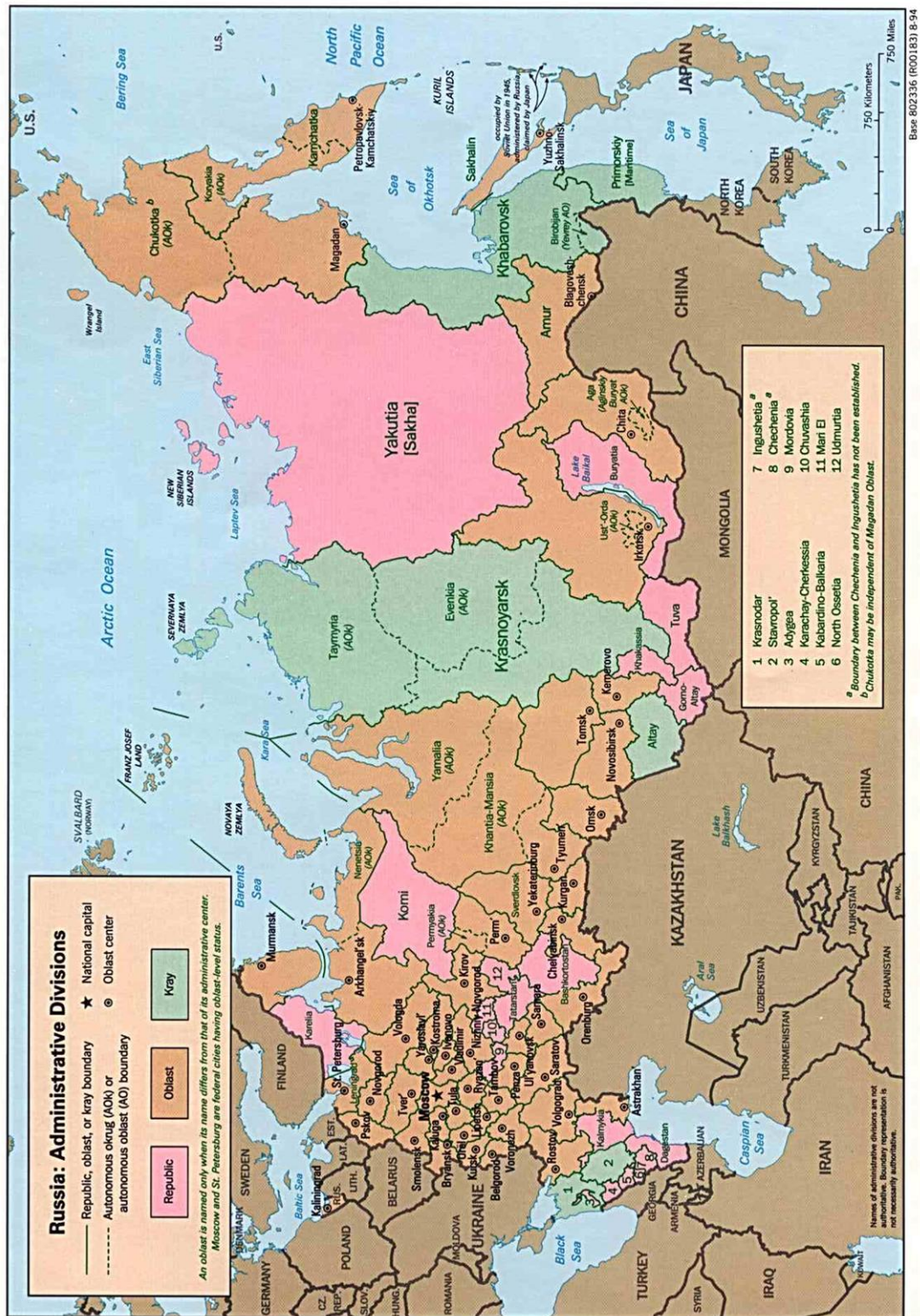
Article 19.3. On the prohibition of propaganda of homosexuality (muzhelozhstvo and lesbianstvo), bisexuality, transgenderism among minors along with pedophilia.

Propaganda of homosexuality (muzhelozhstvo and lesbianstvo), bisexuality, transgenderism among minors, along with pedophilia, is not allowed.

*Pravo.RU (2012) O Vnesenii Izmenenii v Zakon Kostromskoi Oblasti “O Garantiih Prav Rebenka” i v Kodeks Kostromskoi Oblasti ob Administrativnih Pravonarusheniiah. [On the changes in Kostroma Regional Law «On the Guarantees of Children's Rights in Kostroma Region» and in Kostroma Regional Code on administrative infractions]. Retrieved from: <http://docs.pravo.ru/document/view/22198352/> (accessed May 16, 2013)*

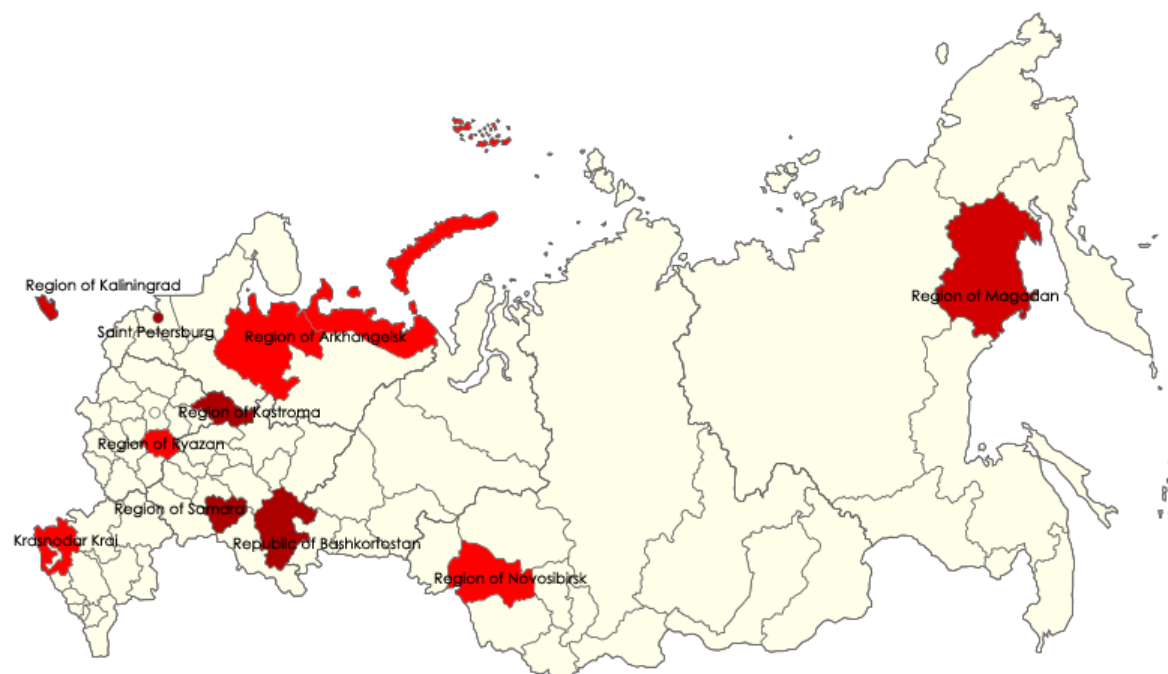
## Appendix II

### Geopolitical Map of Russian Federation



## Appendix III

Legislative Bans on Propaganda of LGBT in Russian Regions (as of May 16, 2013)



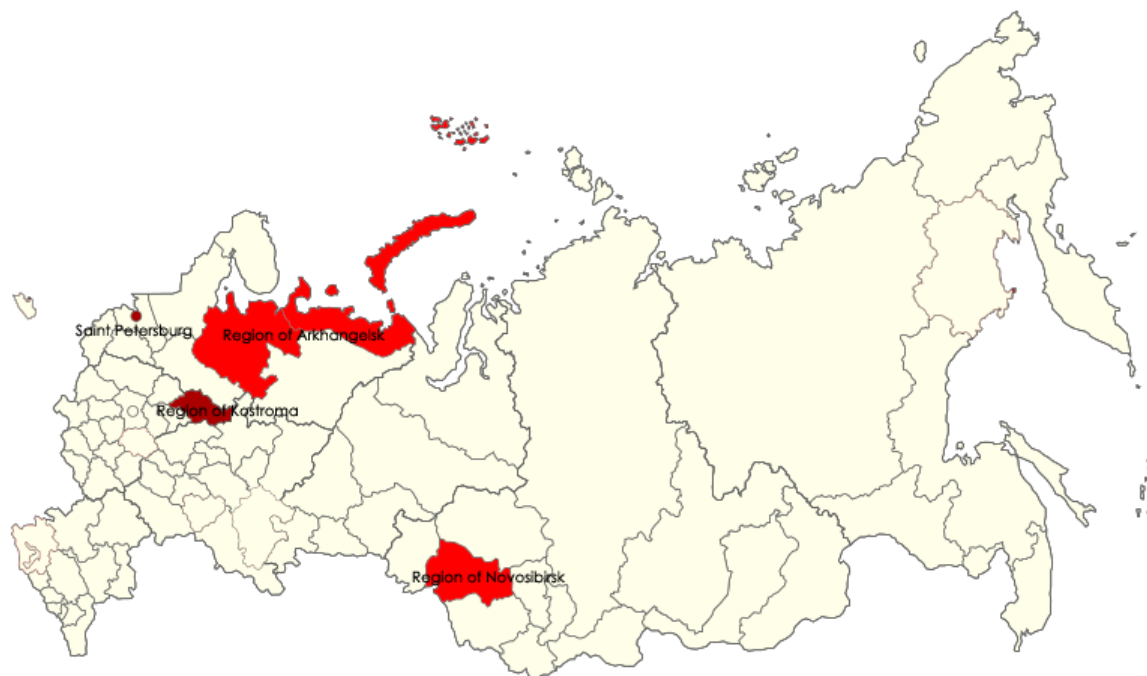
Legislative bans on propaganda of LGBT in Russian regions

- Propaganda of homosexuality, bisexuality and transgenderism is banned
- Propaganda of homosexuality and bisexuality is banned
- Propaganda of homosexuality is banned



## Appendix IV

Legislative Bans on Propaganda of LGBT in Russian Regions (researched regions/as of July-August, 2012)



Legislative bans on propaganda of LGBT in Russian regions

- Propaganda of homosexuality, bisexuality and transgenderism is banned
- Propaganda of homosexuality and bisexuality is banned
- Propaganda of homosexuality is banned

## Appendix V

Russian LGBT Network (as of May 16, 2013)



■ Regions – members of Russian LGBT Network

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### **Web-pages of LGBT Organizations in Russia:**

LGBT Organization *Russian LGBT Network* <http://www.lgbtnet.ru/>

LGBT Organization *Vihod [Coming Out]*, Saint Petersburg.  
<http://www.comingoutspb.ru/ru/home>

LGBT Organization *Rakurs [Foreshortening]*, Arkhangelsk <http://rakurs.ucoz.com/>

LGBT Organization *Krilya [Wings]*, Saint Petersburg <http://krilija.sp.ru/>