

**CONNECTIONS OF QUEER POLITICS AND LIBERALISM AS SEEN IN
GEORGIAN LGBTQ ACTIVISM**

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Abstract

Criticisms of liberalism by Anglo-American queer thinkers have been an important part of Western queer political theory. Revisiting the ambiguous relationship between queer theory and liberalism, in my thesis, by looking at LGBTQ politics and political parties' policies and their ideologies in Georgia, I will argue that liberal political thought, more than any other political system, is necessary for queer politics.

I will particularly look at the two major LGBTQ events in Georgia - LGBTQ rallies held in Tbilisi in 2012 and in 2013 - and the public and political debates happening around these events. As long as these two rallies were held under two different political parties in power at the time, I will look at their responses to LGBTQ activists' needs, and also their discourses used in responses to general society through the media, and I will analyze them in terms of their political ideology. My main aim is to analyze the main discourses of argumentation evolving around these rallies and other social events happening around this event based on the political ideology, and considering country's historical, geopolitical and cultural atmosphere, to argue that in this environment liberal political environment is necessary for LGBTQ activism in Georgia.

My final aim is to show that even though queer theory has lots of valid criticism towards liberalism, this criticism speaks of not actually liberalism's inherent flaw, but liberal politics not being liberal enough; and liberalism has the potential to be rethought in a way that would make it more compatible with queer theory. And finally, my aim is to contribute to an argumentation for scholars interested in the relationship between queer politics and liberalism based on Georgian example where I will argue liberal individualism is crucial for queer politics. I hope that this thesis will contribute to the process of rethinking the relationship of queer politics and liberalism for activists and scholars working on the issue.

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Introduction

In the beginning of thinking about my thesis, I was excited with on the one hand, by being a member of Georgian LGBTQ activism and thus being familiar to and having experience in it, and on the other hand, as a gender studies program graduate student, by having an academic theoretical knowledge in queer theory through which I would be able to analyze sexual politics in Georgia. Coming from this background, in my observation, most of the activists in Georgia do identify as leftists, that is, opposing and being hostile to capitalism, (neo)liberalism, and individualist approach to human rights, etc. But what was striking for me was that the same anti-liberal discourse was actually being used by conservatives for fighting against LGBTQ activism: even though they would never name their politics as left wing, the discourses that were used by them would perfectly fit into communitarian, collectivist interests. For example, the criticism coming from the conservative politicians using populist discourses to gain votes, were using the anti-liberal discourse where they were usually criticized the government for being ‘too liberal’ in terms of human rights towards minorities and thus being too individualistic. This was framed as European liberal pro-minority approach, which was violating Georgian traditions and majority’s interests. So in any case liberalism was blamed for either being too progressive or being not enough progressive.

Having this discussion in mind, after coming to the CEU gender studies MA program, I also found out that the majority of my classmates during arguments in the classes were critical of liberalism, and defended left ideologies and position themselves on the left side. Most of the queer thinkers that we have engaged with during classes are critical of liberalism but they do not distance themselves completely from it. But criticism, in my academic environment, was usually understood as them being supportive of left, anti-capitalist, anti-globalization ideologies.

Michel Foucault can fairly be said to be one of the founders of, and canonical figure for queer theory. *The History of Sexuality* (1979) – the book where he presented his radical analysis of power relations and discourses and their implications on sexuality, has been the founding text for scholars to rethink the essentialist and foundationalist theories of sexuality. This of course affected the understanding of politics and political aims of such movements because if sexuality had a history and was a result of power relations, this could open a potential for radical subversive politics that would challenge the whole social heterosexual order as the very heterosexuality was also undermined from its grounding power of claiming to be the ‘norm’. As queer politics is founded on Foucault’s analysis of power relations his political viewpoints become significant as well. While reading his texts about sexuality, freedom, subjectivity and governmentality, personally I saw in his notion of liberty and aesthetics of life a purely liberal notion of freedom. Therefore, I decided to explore the relationship of queer theory and liberalism in more details. And particularly looking at Georgian LGBTQ activism, since I am more familiar with that, was seductively interesting and full of potentials. Even though Georgian LGBTQ activism is more LGBT activism than queer activism (I discuss this in the chapter on background of Georgian activism) I still use it for my analysis for queer activism because firstly, I don’t see queer politics as radically opposed to LGBT politics but rather as its critical addition; and secondly, due to the fact that Georgian LGBT activism does not have a big history, and due to the homophobic environment in Georgia, any LGBT political activism has a huge subversive potential. Thus, LGBT activism has a strong queer radicalism in itself, so in this case they become inseparable and suitable for exploration. And finally, in addition to these two reasons, Georgian LGBT and queer activism cannot be separated as LGBT movement does possess a lot of critical self-reflectivity on many issues that is usually coming from queer thinkers in the West against LGBT politics.

This has been the background of my aim and motivation to explore this issue and write this thesis. In addition to an academic research aspect of this thesis where I use discourse analysis to

explore and demonstrate the queer – liberalism relationship, aim of this thesis, as long as I have not found any texts that would inherently deal with this issue, is also to argue for reconsidering the position on liberalism and queer activism that is accepted in (queer) academia and movement to some level.

In the first chapter I provide the analysis of Georgian context for the reader to be able to understand how my arguments can be situated in the country's reality, and what the implications of my argument are. Along with providing a brief history of Georgian LGBTQ activism, I provide an overview of the country's political, socio-cultural, and geopolitical analysis for informing the reader about the background. Then I discuss the two LGBTQ demonstrations in Georgia in 2012 and in 2013. These demonstrations were held under different political parties, which had relatively different political ideologies. In second chapter, by looking at the media, the interviews and talk shows of politicians discussing these two events, and also by looking at direct communication between governments and LGBTQ community, I will analyze the discourses and show what kind of political ideology was used in each case by each government to justify their homophobic and/or anti-homophobic, also supportive and non-supportive behaviors both to LGBTQ activists, and to the general public.

In the third chapter I explain my usage of the terms 'queer politics and theory', and 'liberalism'. These terms have been used differently in various texts. For example 'queer' sometimes has been used as a synonym for LGBT people and activism (for instance, it is not hard to recall all the LGBT events and places such as bars or cafes, and various products such as TV shows, porn web-pages, etc., where 'queer' is used as an umbrella term for branding), sometimes as its complete opposite – where LGBT is a synonym for old fashioned, essentialist and assimilationist identity politics. Also liberal political thought has a huge body of texts some of which might even be contradicting each other. Thus in the first chapter I define what I mean by queer politics and which kind of liberalism I use for my analysis.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the disagreements of queer theory with Liberalism – the notions of freedom and subjectivity – and propose their reconciliation – Liberalism without presupposed free subject. I look at Foucault's political thought – his ideas about governmentality, resistance, subjectivity and aesthetics of self, and his attitude towards liberalism. And finally, based on the analysis given in previous chapters I present my main arguments. I take concrete issues that are prevalent while discussing LGBTQ human rights in Georgia and, by analyzing how different political groups approach to these issues, I argue why Liberal approach is crucial for Queer politics.

Literature Review

Much of the literature covering the connections of liberalism and queer politics mostly focuses on the criticism of liberalism. For example, Shane Phelan discusses the queer literature on liberalism where most of the authors discussed by her show that “[p]utatively neutral subject of liberalism, as many critics have shown, turn out to be a member of dominant groups whose notions of reason work to silence others rather than include them.” (Phelan 2000, 431). As she shows in her article, “[t]he problems of orthodox liberalism led gays and lesbians, along with other new social movements, to explore other theoretical resources” (432). One of the authors discussed by her, Valerie Lehr, in her work *Queer Family Values* (1999) provides a critique of ‘rights talk’; her argument is that “...conceptualizing freedom on terms of rights keeps us from asking what freedom means” (2000, 436). In another section, Phelan discusses Jeffrey Weeks’s book *Invented Moralities: Sexual Values in the Age of Uncertainty* (1995) where she says that

If Weeks's largest concerns are communitarian, his particular awareness of marginalization and oppression leads him to a healthy respect for individual rights. Like Lehr, Weeks's concern for care and his appreciation of contingency and construction take him beyond individualism. Unlike Lehr, however, Weeks's rejection of individualism does not lead him to abandon rights; as he says, "the inadequacy of rights-based arguments lies not in the claim to right in itself, but in the absence of a wider social context in which the notion of rights becomes meaningful. Rights should not be seen as the possession of sovereign selves but as an element in the shape of relationships between incomplete and vulnerable selves (p. 141).

It seems that the authors discussing liberalism from queer perspective have quite complicated relationship with it, especially with the parts about subjectivity, and 'rights'. While some are more critical towards liberalism and individualism and suggest complete abandonment of it, others criticize liberalism in order to create a scholarship that would enable rethinking of liberalism and its potentials for lesbians and gays movements. For example, about the issue of subjectivity and individual self, Phelan writes:

We might imagine sovereign selves in sexuality as in politics, indeed, many desire exactly that; but bisexual, lesbian, and gay theorists in all fields have made clear the centrality to sexuality not only of relationship but also of vulnerability. For some this relationality seems to mandate a rejection of liberalism, but just as powerful is its reformulation with stronger "communitarian" ontologies. Basing rights not in a sovereign self but in a constructed and vulnerable one makes all the difference. This vulnerable self does not demand privacy, but needs it in order to associate with the intimate and perhaps not-so-intimate others who make up its world. As Morris Kaplan shows us in *Sexual Justice*, this vulnerability fosters what is best in liberalism over its atomistic contenders. (438)

Discussing Morris Kaplan's book, and his position on liberalism, Phelan continues:

His aim is "to go beyond the thin conceptions of legal personality and negative freedom that inform liberal theory and to insist on the concrete social dimension of the assertion of equal citizenship by lesbians and gays" (p. 13). This is quite explicitly not a repudiation of liberalism but a renewal. Kaplan begins from the three "moments" or kinds of claims currently being made: for decriminalization of acts between adults; against discrimination in housing, employment, and accommodations; and for "legal and social recognition of the ethical status of lesbian and gay relationships and community institutions" (p. 14). He demonstrates how these may be justified through (quite different) liberal principles. The first claim may safely rely on negative liberty and the "right to be let alone," but the

others require quite different grounds. The second, in common with other civil rights struggles, asks the state to function as a positive guarantor of fairness. The third, as many opponents correctly suggest and defenders often hedge about, requires a commitment to "the moral legitimacy and ethical validity of lesbian and gay ways of life (p. 17)." (440)

As she shows, the positions of queer thinkers vary from extremely critical to defensive. There is no one viewpoint that would be accepted among queer thinkers:

Although these authors range in their attitudes toward liberalism, from Kaplan's defense to Lehr's critique, in the last analysis they do not so much dispose of it as transpose it to another key. This transposed liberalism allows for complex melodies of interdependence in which that interdependence requires not conformity and unity, as more faithfully communitarian siren songs have claimed, but proliferation of opportunities for self-creation. As radical democrats such as Chantal Mouffe (1993) argue in criticizing Rawlsian liberalism, and as Seidman and Weeks emphasize, this proliferation does not lead to chaos but to new counterpoints that enrich the theme of liberty and equality. Social change is enabled, as well as blocked, by the institutions of liberal democracy. These institutions, in turn, depend upon citizens' understanding of their importance for their lives as individuals and as a community. (441)

Gert Hekma, Harry Oosterhuis, and James Steakley, discuss the historical relationship of homosexual rights' groups and political parties. They demonstrate that even though left-wing political parties have frequently been ones to support the movements, within history there have been lots of cases when left-wing political forces were actually hostile towards such movements, and/or when liberal or libertarian political forces were the ones to support those movements (Gert, Oosterhuis and Steakley 1995). Especially, in the West, in 70s and 80s Social Democracy had done very little to advance gay liberation, but in socialist countries the situation was far worse

(5). However, they claim that the most of gay and lesbian liberation groups after Stonewall rebellion in 1969 were leftist (2 & 6). They argue that early homosexual emancipation advocates embraced socialism as the

...sole force that posed a comprehensive challenge to bourgeois society. To then, liberalism seemed limited to freedom of the marketplace; when it came to questions of sexual freedom, liberalism was too closely tied to bourgeois respectability to open the perspective of radically restructuring all social relations (6).

Texts focusing on the connections of sexual movements and politics, with political parties and their ideologies in eastern Europe and/or in post-socialist countries, are quite scant. Most of the texts speaking about eastern European or post-Socialist sexual movements do not at all, or scarcely, speak about the political contexts, ideologies, and their significance for the movements. As Gert Hekma, Harry Oosterhuis, and James Steakley argue in their historical overview,

[L]ong before the collapse of 'really existing socialism' in Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union, gay and lesbian movements began developing their own autonomous politics independent of parties. They moved in this direction in part because the coalition with leftism so frequently led to disappointment, particularly when gays and lesbians working within socialist parties were called upon to subordinate or abandon their own goals in favor of party platforms. (31)

After the collapse of Soviet Union the visibility of homosexuality spread in the post-Soviet countries. For many Russians, as Brian James Baer suggests, the sudden appearance of homosexuality in the media suggested that homosexuality came into being, rather than it become more visible (Baer 2013). The same can be said to have happened in Georgia. As Mikhail Nemtsev discusses in his essay about sexual politics in Post-Soviet Russia, after the collapse of

the Soviet regime, the libertarian party the first party to acknowledge the LGBT rights publicly (Nemtsev 2008). Additionally, Baer speaks in his essay that in post-Soviet Russia liberal political forces express similar ambivalence over gay visibility and the compatibility of gay identity with Russianness (Baer 2013). “In Russia today, left -leaning writers and journalists, including self-identified gay cultural figures, participate in the ritual erasure of homosexual identity no less, perhaps, than Russia’s conservative, openly homophobic commentators” (42) He is arguing that the ambivalence over the LGBT issues both among liberals and conservatives distinguishes post-Soviet political discourse from its Western counterpart (47).

In his chapter Stanimir Panayotov discusses the situation in Bulgaria and touches upon the issue of the political parties and their attitudes towards homosexuality where he mentions the Green Party to be a pro-gay liberal one (Panayotov 2013). He speaks about the usage of liberal discourse when politicians are discussing homosexuality, but only in terms of liberal private/public discoure when politicians aim to reduce homosexuality into a private sphere (163). Stanimir also mentions how gay rights is associated with liberalism in the society.

Conor O’Dwyer and Katrina Z.S. Schwartz discuss the recent backlash against gay rights in 2 post-Socialist countries - Poland and Latvia (O’Dwyer and Schwartz 2010). They

...argue that antigay mobilization in these countries constitutes illiberal governance (and thus a failure of europeanization) on three grounds: failure of institutional protections for sexual minorities, broad inclusion of illiberal elites in mainstream politics and virulence of antigay rhetoric by political elites in the public sphere (220).

They discuss the widespread attitude within political officials and link some of the problems that LGBT marches have faced in those countries (for example, banning of the march) to these negative positions. The discuss some of the political parties that have been more supportive to

LGBT activists and the others who were more hostile and they indicate which ideological background each party has. Even though they do inform the readers about which party has which ideological basis by naming them either on the left or right side of political ideological spectrum (for example, they mention that Poland's center-left party participated in Warsaw pride in 2006), their usage of the word 'liberal' and 'illiberal' is used to name certain political actions to be more progressive or less progressive.

In his article Ronald Holzacker is discussing the national and transnational strategies of five European LGBT organizations campaign focusing on three modes of interaction between NGOs and their political environment (Holzacker 2012). He discusses political environment in 5 European countries: UK, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, and Poland. In Hungary it was the "[t]he Liberal Party raised the issue of extending marriage rights after the Pride event, and said that full marriage with adoption was their goal." (38). "The bill was supported by the Socialists (although four Socialist MPs voted no, and five abstained) and the Liberals. " (38). In the rest of the countries he does not explicitly mention which party or party official had what position towards LGBTQ activism mentioning their political ideological backgrounds.

In her article *Contested terrain of sexual citizenship: EU accession and the changing position of sexual minorities in the post-Yugoslav context* (2013) Katja Kahlina talks about "...the ways in which the tensions between nationalism and nation-building related to the disintegration of SFR Yugoslavia and transnational process of EU enlargement influence the changing position of sexual minorities in Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro." (1). Kahlina is indicating that in Ljubljana democratic libertarian youth initiatives included gay movement in 80s (6). She is also mentioning that in 2000 in Croatia and FR Yugoslavia liberal political forces gained the power, leading the countries to get closer to EU, which influenced the situation for LGBT people (8&9). She talks about how the discourses about 'Europeanness' and European liberalism influenced the local nationalist discourses:

The implementation of these allegedly European liberal democratic values served as ‘proof’ of ‘Europeanness’ and a desired ‘European’ future. Under the influence of EU enlargement politics and rhetoric, sexuality and the rights of sexually marginalized people were incorporated into the newly emerging liberal democratic yet nationalist imaginary. (10&11)

Kahlina is talking about the marches held in Zagreb and in Belgrade where she mentions that both of them were attacked violently from counter-demonstrators (16&17). Zagreb pride, unlike Belgrade one had a support from the ruling pro-EU government (17). As she is arguing, pride Marches in the past decade have increased the violence against LGBT people, which was influenced by homophobia coming from right-wing parties, nationalist groups and the church. (20)

Panayote Dimitras and Nafsika Papanikolatos in chapter *Reflections on Minority Rights Politics for East Central European Countries* (2002) discuss what kind of challenges liberalism faces in East Central European countries in terms of human rights. They mainly focus on ethnic minorities rather than sexual minorities (they only mention sexual minorities only once in the text). They mainly discuss how nationalism shapes the cultures in a way that it makes hard to implement liberal multiculturalism; and how the minorities negotiate within the existing environment in those countries (former Yugoslavia countries, Greece and Bulgaria). Their main argument is that “[a]s long as ECE states continue to cultivate the myth of belonging to the founding historic nations, the evolution to ‘multination’ or ‘multicultural’ states to accommodate ethnocultural diversity will be viewed as tantamount to undermining the foundation of these nations.” (Dimitras and Papanikolatos 2001, 186).

And finally, Nanette Funk in her article *Feminist Critique Of Liberalism: Can They Travel East: Their Relevance In Eastern And Central Europe And Former Soviet Union* (2004) speaks about liberalism and its importance in context for Eastern-Europe, especially in post-socialist countries (Funk 2004). She speaks about how criticism of gendered aspects of liberalism (coming from feminists) in the West doesn't fully apply to the context of Eastern European countries; and criticism coming from the feminist in the West is not "a universal criticism of general liberalism" but rather of concrete liberal political traditions dominant in that region (597). She explains that many ideas within liberal political thought have different significance in Eastern European context, and function differently than in the West. Also, it is important to mention that she radically opposes the idea that liberalism and liberal ideas are purely Western ideas (that might some think are imposed on Eastern Europe) by showing a big tradition and history of liberal thinkers and their texts coming from Eastern European countries. Even though the author primarily might not identify as 'queer author' or be writing from queer perspective, this article is still significant as feminism and queer scholarship share a lot of key ideas coming from poststructuralist body of thought. Also the significance of this article lays in the fact that the author speaks about liberalism and its critique within post-socialist countries.

Some of the authors discussed here might not primarily identify as queer authors but I included them here in this review as those authors speak about sexual politics and movements in post-socialist countries, and its relationship with the political parties. I will focus more on queer authors and queer scholarship and its relationship with liberalism in the chapter where I exclusively speak about queer politics and its agreements and disagreements with liberalism.

Queer Politics and Liberalism: Usage of the Terms

Queer and LGBT Politics

This section takes the terms ‘queer theory’, ‘queer politics’ and ‘LGBT politics’ as its starting point for inquiry. Since both are only seemingly self-evident, and actually due to their usage with various meanings, my usage of these terms are defined here for the reader not to be misguided throughout the text. This section is not intended to be an exhaustive overview of the literature on queer theory, queer activism, and LGBT activism. It rather tries to explicate the term and define the way in which the terms will be used in this thesis.

The word ‘queer’ has a quite big history in LGBT context (Beger 2009, 40). It has been used (and sometimes still is used) as a slang homophobic abusive term for homosexuals (40). Since 1990, ‘queer’ has been reclaimed by LGBT activists and used as an umbrella term for any non-heterosexual (or better say – non-heteronormative) sexualities (40). It is also highly connected to AIDS crisis in the West, and respectively to AIDS activism. The term ‘queer’ is also connected to ACT-UP split-off QUEER NATION, which was a radical AIDS political activist group that formed itself in response to marginalization of gay men in ACT-UP (40).

While being embedded in the history of activism, ‘queer’ has also become a term for new academic theories. Queer theory is a radical theory embedded in poststructuralist and postmodern body of thought, highly connected to Michel Foucault and his understanding of sexuality and power as demonstrated in his book *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1*. For the first time in academia the term was used by Teresa de Lauretis in 1991 in her paper in *Differences: Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* (41). Nowadays it is used to describe a body of theory that critically views the notions of essential identities, ‘normal’ and heteronormativity, and politics of inclusion.

As David Halperin argues “[t]here is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers, it is an identity without essence” (Halperin 1995, 62). Queer theory attacks the essential and universal identities, and rather than seeing them as biologically pre-determined or ahistorical, it sees identities as socially constructed and the result of power relations. Thus identities and their significance are historically and culturally situated ideas and relationships. Foucault, in his book *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1.*, demonstrates how the discourses about sexuality evolved throughout the history (Foucault 1979 [1976]). The term ‘queer’ has become a term opposing essentialist and foundationalist understanding of identities.

This of course has its political implications: if (homo)sexuality is not an ahistorical given identity, then heterosexuality becomes an effect of power relations and discourses the same way as homosexuality, thus losing its founding grounds as an ‘original’, or ‘normal’ sexuality. In one of the founding texts for queer theory *Imitation and Gender Insubordination* (1991) Judith Butler attacks identity politics based on essentialist views about sexuality (Butler 1991). She speaks that the political activism claiming to expand the boundaries of the category of ‘normal’ so that previously excluded groups can now be included in this category, serves to re-establish oppression as the very category of ‘normal’ exists only with the category of ‘abnormal’ excluded from its boundaries. Thus re-drawing the boundary re-establishes oppression (20). She speaks about how any activism by claiming to be normal would fix the superiority of heterosexuality as the ultimate normal, as the ‘original’. Butler, instead of advocating for identity categories by “naturalizing” them, proposes to fight against the heterosexual matrix, which produces the effect of naturalness per se. Butler argues for activism against the normalizing tendency of homosexuality by having the identity categories always open, not defined what they mean (25).

This text specifically demonstrates the political aims of queer theory: fighting against the normal and correspondingly, against heteronormativity. Thus, instead of inclusion of LGBT people in heteronormative social order, queer theory is interested in showing how heterosexuality (and

heteronormativity) is normalized and naturalized. Thus the aim of queer politics is to challenge the heteronormative society itself. As Warner puts it:

'The preference for "queer" represents, among other things, an aggressive impulse of generalization; it rejects a minoritizing logic of toleration or simple political interest-representation in favor of a more thorough resistance to regimes of the normal. The universalizing utopianism of queer theory does not entirely replace more minority-based versions of lesbian and gay theory - nor could it, since normal sexuality and the machinery of enforcing it do not bear down equally on everyone, as we are constantly reminded by pervasive forms of terror, coercion, violence, and devastation. The insistence on "queer"-a term defined against "normal" and generated precisely in the context of terror - has the effect of pointing out a wide field of normalization, rather than simple intolerance, as the site of violence. Its brilliance as a naming strategy lies in combining resistance on the broad social terrain of the normal with more specific resistance on the terrains of phobia and queer-bashing, on one hand, or of pleasure on the other. (Warner 1991, 17)

Queer politics and activism thus means, for example, “visible disruptions of normality, of civil disobedience or utterances that perform the marginal, such as displaying unclear gender appearances” (Beger 2009, 51). But also, as Nico J. Beger demonstrates in his book about LGBT lobbying in Europe, queer politics means purely traditional political activism forms as well, as ignoring them would be counterproductive for any queer aims (52).

I use term ‘queer politics’ and ‘queer activism’ to denote the politics and activism that would aim to achieve the aims that have been articulated above. My usage of this term is not as something radically against LGBT politics. Rather, I use it as a critical part of LGBT activism. As Michel Warner puts it “Queer politics has not just replaced and older model of lesbian and gay identity; it has come to exist alongside those older modes, opening up new possibilities and problems

whose relation to more familiar problems is not always clear” (17). Thus in the thesis I will use terms ‘queer activism’, and ‘LGBTQ activism’ (sometimes interchangeably) where I will be speaking about political aims and activism of LGBTQ groups that would encompass both - LGBT activism, and critical analysis of LGBT activism and its political aims coming from queer theory.

Liberalism

As long as liberalism as a political philosophy features many different theories within itself, some of which might be quite contradicting to each other, this sub-chapter will be dedicated for explaining my usage of this term for the reader to be guided correctly throughout the thesis. This is not an overview of all of the different texts and ideas within liberal political thought, rather a selection of authors, texts, and ideas, that demonstrate my usage of this term.

To start with, as I have mentioned, liberalism encompasses various ideas out of which some might be contradicting each other, but one main idea that unites them under the term ‘liberalism’ is their commitment to interest in the idea of liberty (Gaus and Courtland 2011). “By definition”, Maurice Cranston points out, “a liberal is a man who believes in liberty” (Gaus and Courtland 2011). The main principle for Liberals has been the idea that humans are naturally in “a State of perfect Freedom to order their Actions...as they think fit...without asking leave, or depending on the Will of any other Man” (Gaus and Courtland 2011). Mill argued that “the burden of proof is supposed to be with those who are against liberty; who contend for any restriction or prohibition.... The a priori assumption is in favor of freedom...” (Gaus and Courtland 2011). Thus, a central question of liberal political theory is whether political authority, as it limits the freedom of individuals, can be justified, and if so, how (Gaus and Courtland 2011). One of the

key liberal thinkers, John Rawls, defines the principle of justice in following way: “Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive system of equal basic liberty compatible with a similar system for all” (Gaus and Courtland 2011).

One of the main contradictions between various liberal thinkers has been the very definition of liberty. While some philosophers have been defining liberty in ‘negative’ terms¹, “[m]any liberals have been attracted more to ‘positive’ conceptions of liberty” (Gaus & Courtland, 2011). Thomas Hill Green’s understanding of positive liberty is as it follows: “...it must be of course admitted that every usage of the term [‘freedom’] to express anything but a social and political relation of one man to other involves a metaphor... It always implies some exemption from compulsion by another...” (Gaus and Courtland 2011). Thus positive freedom for liberals means when one is free to the degree that one has effectively determined oneself and the shape of one's life (Gaus and Courtland 2011). “Such a person is not subject to compulsions, critically reflects on her ideals and so does not unreflectively follow custom, and does not ignore her long-term interests for short-term pleasures” (Gaus and Courtland 2011).

One of the most important issues liberalism deals with is justice. Rawls's work *A Theory of Justice* (1971) is focusing on developing a theory of social justice where he develops “...his famous ‘difference principle’ according to which a just basic structure of society arranges social and economic inequalities such that they are to the greatest advantage of the least well off representative group” (Gaus and Courtland 2011). “As Rawls sees it, the difference principle constitutes a public recognition of the principle of reciprocity: the basic structure is to be arranged such that no social group advances at the cost of another” (Gaus and Courtland 2011).

In a liberal understanding the society is composed of individuals that are all a little different.

¹ For example, see (Berlin, 1969) and (Hobbes, 1651).

One thing society has to offer is that we're all a little different. The great diversity of human interests, talents, and preferences is a testimony to our individualism, and society just is the manifestation of these differences as they're brought together. If everyone thought the same way and liked all the same things, society would be a much less interesting place (Skoble 2011).

And this is one of the main ideas that distinguish liberalism from totalitarian ideologies. According to Kant "society, being composed of a plurality of persons, each with his own aims, interests, and conceptions of the good, is best arranged when it is governed by principles that do not themselves presuppose any particular conception of the good..." (Sandel 1982). Respectively, individuals by liberal morals should refrain from imposing their ideas of what is good life on others (Gaus and Courtland 2011).

Happiness has a big importance in liberalism. One of the founders of liberalism (sometimes referred to as Utilitarian Liberalism), John Stuart Mill in his book *Utilitarianism* (1198) defines this principle as it follows:

The creed which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility, or the Greatest-Happiness Principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure, and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain, and the privation of pleasure (Gaus and Courtland 2011).

Liberalism does not claim to know how to establish an ideal, paradise-like system on this world. The dedication to individualism makes liberalism one of the most attractive theories for the possibility of a system where people with various ideas and ideologies what it means to have a good life, or morally adjusted life, and so on, can live under one system that can accommodate them all. In contrast with other political systems that value community over individual, (for

example social democracy, socialism, communism, etc.) liberal democracy values individual over community, and any minority (and every individual – as individual can be considered to be the smallest minority) has the same rights (and value) as any number of people. Thus in liberal democracy, the number of people cannot be used for justification of reducing an individual's or minority group's liberty and/or rights. While liberalism is individualistic ideology, it does not reject the importance of communities if created on voluntary bases. This means that people sympathizing communities can create communities and pursue their agendas within a liberal system. Political ideologies that value community's interests over individual's create a potential where for the sake of maximizing equality, which means the maximum well-being of the maximum people, that is, majority, the minorities' and/or individuals' interests will be sacrificed. As long as the length of this thesis does not allow me to go into further details of this and other examples about liberalism and other ideologies let this example suffice to give a reader a basic idea of what I mean by the distinction of liberalism from other political ideologies that privilege community's interest over individual. I will be arguing more on this regard by the end of the thesis.

Background: Overview of the Georgian Context

This chapter aims to introduce the reader to the context of Georgia in order for the reader to be able to understand the claims and arguments I make in later chapters. I start with discussing LGBTQ activism in Georgia for the reader to be able to understand why I qualify the two demonstrations as the most important ones in the history of activism. Then I move on to discuss the political and socio-cultural situation in Georgia in order for the reader to understand the significance of the arguments the government officials made around the events I will discuss later and situate them in a context. Finally I illustrate the story how the actual IDAHO demonstrations were held.

LGBTQ Activism in Georgia

LGBTQ activism in Georgia is quite a new phenomenon. As Georgia was part of the USSR, the country was separated from the processes that were going on in the West during the Soviet occupation (1921 – 1991). In the West, new, mostly youth, movements started to emerge from 60s on, that would bring diversity of discourses about sexuality (sometimes referred to as “sexual revolution”), and new (sub)cultures that would spread into popular culture and bring the ideas of diversity, for instance, the new trends of clothing that looked less heteronormative, popular rock bands where guys would have long hair and sing about liberty, and ideas opposing widespread social mores, etc. Meanwhile, Georgia was occupied by the Soviet regime and followed the path of all other soviet countries. While in this period in the West a lot of homophile movements started to emerge (the most important one – Stonewall Riots – which influenced the LGBTQ

prides and politics in the West the way we know them today) (Carter, 2004), in Georgia, as in the rest of the Soviet Union, homosexual activity or any public reference to it was illegal.

The civil society started to form in a period after the collapse of the Soviet Union when Georgia was going through a hard economic and political transformational period. In the early 90s, due to heavy political and economic crisis, the issues of sexual rights and sexual justice were out of public debate scope. LGBTQ movement in Georgia emerged out of women's organization that was also working on LBT women in the beginning of 00s. 'Inclusive Foundation' was the first official LGBT NGO that was founded in 2006. It was a member of ILGA-Europe, had funding and various projects, ran its own web page and non-commercial magazine, and rented an office where the organization staff worked and various events were hosted for the community members. This organization does not exist anymore.

In 2010 a new organization was founded – 'Diversity research and Community Activism Association' - that still exists but has changed the name into 'Identoba' (meaning identity in Georgian). It is the only existing organization that works primarily on LGBTQ human rights issues. Other than this, one organization was founded in 2011 but due to the lack of funding and other problems it soon stopped functioning. And finally, the people that founded women's organization out of which LGBTQ movement grew, and were also working in 'Inclusive Foundation', currently runs an organization that works on LBT women.

The movement is led by the people who are familiar with the theories of sexuality, social movements, queer theory, etc.; some of them are graduate students of gender studies departments. This makes the movement quite inclusive, self-critical, and in line with the modern LGBTQ movements in the West. Due to the fact that Georgian society is extremely homophobic (I will discuss this later) almost all of the activities performed by the activists are quite radical and courageous as society is still not used to talking about homosexuality and trans issues, and responds in an extremely violent manner. Considering social context, the LGBTQ activism in

Georgia threatens the existing heteronormative order, the Georgian LGBTQ activism can be considered to have a queer (and radical) aspect within itself.

Both existing organizations have funding, staff, and offices, where they host various events for the community members. Community is diverse and encompasses people of various social and class backgrounds, various identities and genders. Both of the organizations try to reach out to marginalized groups within LGBTQ community, such as sex workers, trans* people, economically disadvantaged LGBTQ community members, etc. Most of the events and activities held by these organizations are held within the community, within the office walls, and sometimes in various public places, but still, they are mostly hidden from the wider public eye. The two most important LGBTQ events that caused a wide public attention and debate were the two attempts of LGBTQTI rallies on 17th of May in 2012, and in 2013.

Socio-cultural Context of Georgia

The end of the 80s and the beginning of the 90s was a period of rising of nationalism in Georgia. This was tied to the process of anti-Soviet attitudes and the will of self-determination as a nation that was aiming to become independent from the Soviet Union. Due to the fact that Soviet Union's anti-religious discourse, Christianity was discursively linked to the identity of the Georgian nation and its past. Thus Christianity and nationalism are highly connected with each other.

The Georgian Orthodox church, and its leader – Patriarch of Georgia – has the highest public sympathy than any other public figures, including former politicians – 93% according to NDI public opinion survey. (DFWATCH STAFF 2014) Usually politicians try to have a very good

relationship with the church in order to use its popularity to gain votes in elections. Religiousness is usually publicly displayed by politicians, they almost never criticize the church or the patriarch, and try to show to the public their close relationships with the church and patriarch through frequently participating in religious ceremonies.

The Patriarch himself and other religious servants have demonstrated their homophobic attitude numerous times in their epistles and public speeches. The church officially declares homosexuality as a deathly sin and any attempt to fight for the rights of LGBTQ people is declared as a 'gay propaganda'. On 17th May, in 2012, 2013, and 2014, Georgian Orthodox clergy organized and led people in the streets against LGBTQ 'propaganda'. They have been participating in various TV shows, preaching in church, using their own magazines and so on, to spread their opinion on homosexuality. In May of 2014, when the Georgian Parliament was adopting the anti-discrimination law, the Georgian Patriarch issued a public letter where he urged the Parliament not to adopt the law in its current form, and erase the words "sexual orientation and gender identity" from the list of possible motives of discrimination. Various church leaders held demonstrations in front of the Parliament, and also in the capital of the country, against the new law; also, some church leaders participated in the parliamentary debates threatening to curse the parliamentarians who would support the law.

The opinion promoted by the church is adding up on and contributing to social homophobic attitudes in Georgia. There have been many researches about homophobia in society that provide various results. For example, "[a]n ILGA-Europe/COC report refers to a survey conducted in Tbilisi by the Institute of Policy Studies in 2003 among 430 people aged 17-50, made up of 250 women and 180 men. The survey revealed that 84% were negative toward homosexual persons, 14% were neutral, while only 2% responded positively." (Rights 2010, 5) The last research on homophobia was conducted in 2013, which claimed that "Georgia was the third most

homophobic country surveyed, with 92.6 per cent of the population unhappy with the idea of a homosexual neighbor.” (Clarke 2013)

The violence, and the tolerance with violence, against LGBTQ people has high numbers as well. “...[P]oll found that 79% of Georgians disapproved of the anti-homophobia demonstration that LGBT and human rights activists organized on May 17, 2013. 52% approved of the counter-demonstration, which was carried out with the intent to prevent LGBT activists and their supporters from holding their brief, peaceful, and silent demonstration.” (Identoba 2013, 4) Also, by the latest study conducted by Identoba and WISG, 89% of LGBTQ community reported to have been a victim of psychological violence and every third person – to have been a victim of physical violence during 2011-2012. (WISG 2012)

Political Situation in Georgia

After the collapse of the Soviet Union Georgia struggled through many political crises. Governments would replace each other through violent attacks and a civil war. In 2003 Shevardnadze’s government (Georgia’s president during 1995 – 2003) was replaced by Saakashvili’s government (president during 2003 – 2013) through the ‘Rose Revolution’ (The Guardian n.d.). Public attitude was extremely negative towards the former government because of the high levels of corruption, unemployment, crime, and the falsification precedents in the elections (The Guardian n.d.). Saakashvili and his political partners were young and pro-European (The Guardian n.d.). These ideas that were quite popular by that time and a lot of people really admired him. Different sources estimated that around 100,000 people celebrated Shevardnadze’s resignation from his presidential post.

Saakashvili's government declared itself to be strongly liberal, pro-European, and pro-NATO. The main idea that the party was advertising was that Georgia had to get rid of the old styles of corruption that were inherited from the Soviet past and the country should become member of the EU and the NATO by establishing democratic institutions in the country (Cohen 2013). The government made radical reforms in almost every sphere – justice system, police, media, corruption and nepotism, economics, and so on. The narrative was that Georgia had been a democracy and a part of the European civilization before the Soviet Union occupied it and now we had to go back to where we 'truly belong' – back to our European family. And these ideas had a support in public.

Even though Saakashvili's government (the United National Movement) was pursuing a politics of liberal multiculturalism, and they made couple of important steps against religious fundamentalism and ethnic discrimination, during their period in the government the Georgian church became the strongest as the funding for the church from the country's budget gradually grew from 1 million (in 2003) up to 23 – 26 million (in 2009 - 2012) Georgian Lari per year. Because of the government's strongly pro-Western narrative, and its liberal ideology of multiculturalism and protecting the minorities, the individual church members gradually started blaming the government for supporting anti-Georgian values. The narrative increasingly spread among people and the government was discursively linked to the Western values that by itself was discursively linked to the values hostile to Georgian and Christian traditions. The story that George Soros was supporting Rose revolution and the Saakashvili's government for many years was also used to strengthen the conspiracy theories about the government's 'anti-Georgianness' as Soros was known for funding projects on human rights that were perceived to be against the Georgian and Christian values. In addition to various mistakes and failures of the government in many spheres in terms of democracy and human rights – about which the criticism was coming from international organizations and opposition parties, and the public opinion that they had a

conspiracy theory to ‘steal Georgian soul from Georgians’, finally led the government lose popularity among the population, which resulted in losing the elections in 2012.²

In October 2012, the new coalition ‘Georgian Dream’ was elected in the parliament with the public support of approximately 55% (the UNM received approximately 40%)³. Even though none of these political forces (especially the Georgian Dream, since it is a coalition of multiple parties with diverse ideologies) have a clear political ideology, the UNM can be considered to be a bit more consistently following liberal ideology. Usually in Georgia, even the right wing political parties use left wing ideas, especially before elections, as focusing on social issues is more popular among the society. For example, in electoral campaign the both UNM’s and the Georgian Dream’s electoral program was quite left wing in terms of economic policies.

What is the most interesting for the thesis is how and through what discourses Georgian Dream used to advance itself. This is important as it demonstrates how Georgian nation is imagined as a homogeneous community with synchronized interests and values, and then how this discourse is used against queers and queer politics.

In contrast with the UNM, the Georgian Dream declared to serve the interests of the Georgian nation, of the people. Rather than being an ‘elitist’ ruler (as they were blaming the UNM to be) the GD promised to listen more to the people. The narrative was that they linked UNM’s politics

² Another important thing that had an effect on the elections can be considered to be the “prison scandal”. Couple of days before the elections the opposition released the video footage of the violence in the prison system where inmates were tortured, humiliated verbally, and raped by the prison working staff. It was also partly linked to gender issue: because of patriarchal and male-centric culture, the violence, especially rape, of Georgian men was perceived to be the humiliation of nation through effeminization. It also resulted in fueling homophobia as this rape was blamed on the perversion widespread in the government, and to the government’s will to make the whole nation ‘pederasts’.

³ For more information please see <http://en.ria.ru/world/20121003/176371829.html>

to elitist ruling blaming them for being alienated from Georgian people's mentality. One of the majoritarian MPs of Georgian Dream, Tea Tsulukiani, while speaking about UNM (after the elections) said that 'minority was oppressing majority in the past' (Tsulukiani 2012). One of their main supporters, a journalist Shalva Ramishvili, called the UNM the 'mental minority' (also after the elections), blaming them that the government had been in total dissonance with Georgian people's mentality and their traditions. (Ramishvili 2013)

To go back to the pre-elections period, Bidzina Ivanishvili openly praised the Georgian well known far right weekly newspaper "Asaval-Dasavali"

I would like to express my gratitude to your editors and journalists for the principled positions taken in recent years... I can name only a few newspapers that are as loyal to the national interests as you are... You have a firm stance and a principled attitude on a number of issues and this deserves respect." "I have great respect for principled people and principled positions, which your newspaper has, that's why you deserve respect. (Ivanishvili 2012)

On the launching event of his movement, Ivanishvili "...criticized the authorities for, as he put it, "pseudo-reforms", saying that the country's leadership wrongly believed "that the Georgian culture is not compatible with principles of liberal democracy and rule of law." (Civil.Ge 2011) "They think that the people are dim to support changes, which benefit them," he said." (Civil.Ge 2011) With this speech he criticized UNM's policy about minorities, as these issues were formulated in society as a 'liberal agenda'. Even the term liberal was demonized in the society because of this - the new term 'liberasti' was established, which was derivative of 'liberal' and 'pederast' (a derogatory word for homosexuals in Georgian). In the next few seconds Ivanishvili personally criticized the Government of Georgia for adopting the law on granting legal status to

all religious groups in Georgia and promoting religious minority rights. He declared in this context that the “attempts to discredit the Georgian Orthodox Church and incite internal confrontation [within the Church] are one of the integral parts of the government’s policy... If not the Patriarch’s wisdom, confrontation between different confessions and nationalities would have been irreversible” (Civil.Ge 2011). Here Ivanishvili is reproducing the already existing stereotype that the UNM’s policy was liberal in a way that it was incompatible with the Georgian mentality, which means that discursively he is proposing new type of liberalism that is compatible with Georgian mentality. It can be said that this narrative is perceived by the society in a way that from now on (after the elections) Georgian community’s interest will not be rejected in the name of human rights or liberalism, as new type of liberalism (compatible to Georgian society) will be introduced.

For fairness it needs to be said that Ivanishvili would also state his position about minorities in liberal terms: he would say that ethnic and religious minorities should live on equal terms with the rest of the population, and LGBT people are citizens the same way as any other citizens. But these speeches in the society were considered to be merely for ‘political correctness’, as the main political force around him, by the speeches that would support nationalistic and xenophobic attitudes, would support and reinforce the explanation based on the ‘political correctness’. Ivanishvili formed a coalition where, in addition with more progressive liberal political parties, he invited politicians who were well known for their nationalistic, xenophobic, and homophobic rhetoric. For example, Majoritarian MP Candidate and the chairperson of the Georgian Dream party, no. 2 on coalition’s electoral list, before the elections declared publicly:

Georgian government considers the protection of minorities, including sexual minorities, to constitute a democracy. This kind of protection is good, but it should not be carried out at the expense of the majority... Liberalism is not bad, but it matters in what form it is presented... Defenders of [Christian] Orthodox faith should not be considered as

fascists and extremists for their alternative thinking... It appears that the country is trying to please America by protecting minorities and arresting people with alternative thinking on this issue... There are countries where marriage among cousins is allowed. This is not prohibited by our law either, but from the point of view of Orthodox ethics, no one will even think of doing such a thing. When somebody is trying to build a democracy by destroying our [Christian] Orthodox ethno-psychology and ethics, who wants such a democracy?... Everyone is considered to be an equal member of society in European countries. This is difficult for us to accept, because it goes against Orthodox ethics. (Kobakhidze 2011)

Here liberalism is further demonized without rejecting it totally. As long as the integration in the NATO and the EU was declared by Georgian nation in various public opinion surveys, the Georgian Dream couldn't totally abandon the idea of Europe and liberalism (politicians in their public speeches usually connect liberalism to the idea of the West and Europe). Correspondingly, they were trying to re-modify the idea of liberalism so that it would be more acceptable to the Georgian public. In another example, Murman Dumbadze, majoritarian MP Candidate said before the elections:

“A Georgian man must be born and should pass away as an Orthodox Christian. Muslim faith was forcibly imposed on our region and the revival of Islam will bring us no good... The revival of Islam in Adjara is in the interests of Turkey and those *pseudo liberals* that are trying to look nice in the eyes of Europe and US, saying look, we are the ones who respect religious freedom.” [emphasis added] (Dumbadze 2012)

Again, liberalism is demonized and called ‘pseudo liberalism’, while a new kind of ‘liberalism’ is being introduced, more attuned to the wider public interests. As I have already mentioned the West (the US and the EU), George Soros, and liberalism, are closely linked to each other by politicians. Another example of anti-Western sentiments would be when Shota Zoidze, majoritarian MP Candidate and no. 135 on coalition’s electoral list said:

“I will not forgive anybody who insults Rustaveli, [Queen] Tamar, and [King] David. How can the director of the National Library say that [Georgian poet] Akaki Tsereteli sucks? He spoke that way because [George] Soros paid him to say so... [George Soros] is financing the doctrine of Allen Dulles in the United States of America that is a union of Jews fighting against small nations.” (Zoidze 2008)

Also, Revaz Amashukeli, Georgian poet, active public supporter and participant of all Georgian Dream rallies, whom Ivanishvili called “the most beloved poet” said:

“I’m so desperate that I’m almost ready to kill these pigs with my own hands... This bastard Saakashvili was brought to Georgia by billionaires from San-Francisco, rich Armenians and he is their project! ... You know what is the difference between Russians and Americans? The Russians have never forced our men to marry men!” (Amashukeli 2012)

As long as the UNM’s politics was linked to the Western and the liberal ideologies, and the Georgian Dream was envisioned as its opposition, additionally, as long as some of the members of the Georgian Dream were previously known for their conservative, xenophobic and homophobic attitudes and nationalism, and as long as the main supporters of the coalition were people who were also speculating by their patriotism and “true Georgianness”, the coalition was

perceived by the society as an alternative to the Western ‘pseudo liberalism’. But this pseudo liberalism as I have already explained was actually liberalism, only ‘pseudo’ added in the beginning to express the ironic attitude towards the term. As long as the UNM was perceived to be an anti-Georgian government, its opposition - the Georgian Dream, due to these facts, created an opinion in society that ‘our, Georgian people’s government’ was coming to the power, and this government would truly listen to people and serve Georgian people’s interests, that is, would be ‘truly Georgian’. And the term ‘Georgian’ meant Georgian traditions and mores that Georgian Orthodox Church had been spreading.

This is not to say necessarily that UNM was consistent in its liberal politics, or was a good government per se. This party had a few failures in terms of consistently following liberal ideology, and also a lot of failures in human rights sphere because of which a lot of international organizations would criticize the government. Instead, my aim is to demonstrate how liberalism discursively become alienated and linked to anti-Western attitudes in the society, and a demand for new politics that would serve the Georgian people’s, as a community’s, as the nation’s interests, become strong. Liberalism, perceived to be anti-community’s interests, was gradually demonized resulting in collectivists interests wining over individual liberties. In later sections this process will be analyzed to see how this collectivist discourse was used against queer politics in Georgia.

The IDAHO Demonstrations in Georgia

What was ‘queer’ about these two IDAHO demonstrations in Tbilisi is that these demonstrations had a quite radical effect on the public: the public appearance of activists and the messages concerning homophobia had an impact of threatening existing heteronormative order as it was like a wakeup call for the society that homosexuality exists in Georgia. The issue had almost

never been discussed in Georgian society publicly, and the existing narrative was in Georgia that homosexuality did not exist. This narrative was articulated by one of the priests on 18th of May, 2012, when he said that “Georgian gays do not exist, those people [indicating towards activists] are not Georgians”.⁴ This activity can be said to have been perceived by the society as changing the whole heteronormative order as Georgian’s had to get used to the idea that gays do exist within their society (for instance, next year this narrative of impossibility to be gay and Georgian at the same time was not articulated anymore).

Also, instead of asking for the rights and inclusion, most of the posters were focusing on homophobia and the harm caused by it. The effects of these IDAHO demonstrations were mostly the revealing of the existing homophobia in Georgian society. As I have mentioned previously I do not use term queer as opposed to LGBT politics in Georgia but as its (more critical and radical) addition; thus I think that these two demonstrations had a queer aspect in itself.

For justice it needs to be mentioned that the first public event to be held on the 17th of May happened in 2011 when a small number of activists gathered near the river Mtkvari, in the capital, and launched sky lanterns (air balloons). This event was relatively small and did not capture public attention; correspondingly, no violence or public discussion occurred. After that, on the 31 of March 2012, on International Transgender Day of Visibility, Identoba organized a public event, which was also relatively small. Even though up to 20 people participated in the march due to the fact that most of the public was unaware of the terms ‘trans’ or ‘transgender’, this march also did not capture public attention and ended without any important incidents.

⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2W4zJp53Vxk>

In 2012, group of activists, mainly involved in the work of Identoba, decided to march on the main street of the capital – Tbilisi – on 17th of May with some posters that would speak against, and condemn homophobia. This was the first attempt to direct public attention to sexual minorities, and to homophobia and transphobia. Since the activists had an experience of public unawareness of certain terms, and as long as the aim of the march was to deliver message to the wider public, the activists tried to put their messages using as understandable terms as possible trying to avoid specific terms that were mostly used on the NGO realm, especially NGOs working on gender and LGBT issues. Since last 2 demonstrations passed with no or very little aggression from the society, the activists did not expect much dissimilarity on this demonstration, thus the safety measures were not discussed or planned consistently. The event had been created on Facebook and a lot of people who were known to be supportive of LGBT community were invited. Couple of days before the event office manager of Identoba called the local district police station and informed them about the event. The police, even though Identoba did not demand it, offered two police cars that would escort the activists throughout the demonstration in case any incident would occur. This offer was accepted by the organization. Identoba also wrote an official letter to the city council informing about the demonstration.

On the day of the march activists called the taxies in front of their office as they had to bring the posters, and traveling by taxies provided by official taxi companies was considered to be safer. While loading the posters in the cars the neighbors started asking questions about the posters. They seemed unpleasant and irritated but yet unsure about the exact details. Activists tried to avoid any discussion. On the way to the destination one of the taxi drivers, after finding out who his passengers were and what was their plan, stopped the car and left them in the middle of their

way. They managed to catch another taxi on the street and finally all of the activists gathered on time at the place planned before.

The agreed place was in front of the Tbilisi Music Hall, which is located in the center of the city. The final destination should have been the Freedom Square (also at the center of the city). These two spots are connected by Rustaveli Avenue, which is the central street in Tbilisi and is always busy with people. The demonstration was supposed to start in front of Tbilisi Music Hall and through Rustaveli Avenue would end at Freedom Square. While activists were gathering some of journalists were approaching them and asking questions about the event. Since the event was not promoted rigorously, and did not capture society's attention, none of the big national TV broadcasters were present at the beginning of the event.

Right after the demonstration started and the activists started to move through the pedestrians people started to verbally attack them. Activists had managed to walk the half of the way to destination when couple of priests with their supporters reached them and formed a human fence so that the LGBTQ activists could not continue marching. These priests and their supports are members of the 'Union of Orthodox Parents', a group of people who are famous for their religious fundamentalism and violent attacks on various groups on various events. They were threatening the activists and telling them that they would not let LGBTQ activists walk on the street, which is so important for every Georgian, and would not let the activists insult the churches and other holy buildings and places situated on the street. The activists were not able to move further. People started gathering around the demonstration. The two police cars that were escorting the activists suddenly disappeared. Soon the physical violence started to emerge as some citizens started beating up some activists and trying to take away the posters and break them.

After 10 - 15 minutes, as the couple of activists were calling the police frequently right after the situation become tense, couple of police cars arrived but for another 10 - 15 minutes police was

passively observing the situation and in case of violence would only mediate the fights. Even though activists expected them to detain – or at least force to move away – the aggressors, the police was trying to intervene as small as possible. Couple of activists were beaten up and almost all of the posters were broken by the aggressors. After the police realized that the situation was becoming uncontrollable they decided to intervene more and detained one of the activists (instead of the aggressors). Some of the activists expressed their anger that the police detained the victim instead of the perpetrator, and that the police was not helping the activists at all, and couple of activists went towards the road. This was formulated as violation of law as nobody has the right to block the road where cars and the transport is moving without a prior official permission, and the activists were put in the police cars (quite violently) and taken away. After this the police started to put the activists in the cars and take them away from the location to avoid the further escalation of violence. The police was quite rude to the activists, asking questions and commenting in an inappropriate and offensive manner.

On the next day couple of people organized a demonstration where they were protesting the violence and the inactivity of the police to ensure safety and ensure that the activist could have enjoyed their constitutional right of freedom of expression and assembly. As now the high officials were already informed (through the media) and the diplomatic corps also condemned the violence and called the government to take serious steps (some ambassadors were even present at the demonstration next day), on the next day's demonstration the police was mobilized in a very organized way and ensured the maximum safety of all the participants. Finally, 3 persons who participated in physical fight on the 17th May were arrested but were charged only 100 Georgian Lari (app. 60 \$) for the minor violation of the administrative law.

Next year Identoba, considering last years' experience, started planning the event almost 2 months in advance. They contacted various NGO's, some of which became co-organizers, and others – supporters and observers of the processes. Finally 3 NGOs were the official organizers of the 17th May IDAHO march.

Identoba announced its plans about the public demonstration almost 2 months before in order to see the public reaction and how the processes would evolve due to a number of reasons. First, Identoba did not know what the position of the new government on the issue would be. Secondly, Identoba was not sure if having a public demonstration would be safe, so if the threat would be too high activists would have time to assess it and create an adequate plan, or maybe even cancel it. Thirdly, one of the intentions was also to start a public discussion about homophobia and the event, and the aim to deliver correct information about the purposes of the IDAHO demonstration to the public (as the media usually used to deteriorate the information in order to make it more like a scandal and market it successfully).

The reaction was strongly negative: the church members threatened to mobilize thousands of people and not let the LGBTQ activists hold the march. Identoba, WISG, and the Women's Fund in Georgia - the three organizers of the event - started an intense communication with the government officials, including people on high positions. Diplomatic corps and international organizations that work in Georgia were also involved in this process. The government promised publicly to ensure the maximum safety of all the participants and the activists. They proposed various plans for every possible case of how to ensure the safety. As the church was mobilizing people to come earlier and occupy the territory so that the activists would not be able to have a demonstration, the officials promised to keep the counter-demonstrators on a safe distance from the venue.

On the day of the demonstration the counter-demonstrators started gathering from early morning (the IDAHO demonstration was supposed to be at 1 PM). Some priests and their supporters even went there a night before and spent all night praying. As the place became occupied by counter-demonstrators the police had to offer a different venue for the demonstration which was about 300 meters away from the previous one. The organizers were escorted by the police car to the venue. Freedom square, the alternative venue, was completely blocked on all sides by the police and only organizers were let in. As long as police was not letting anybody in, the organizers started to separate and individually go to every entrance and tell the policemen to let those people they would recognize (the demonstration supporters). The situation was quite confusing as the organizers were dependent on the police and the police was not giving much information how the activist should have behaved.

After about 45 minutes the crowd managed to break through the police human fence and started to run after the activists. Luckily Tbilisi city Mayor (from UNM) had offered busses to the Ministry of the Internal Affairs in case it would become necessary to evacuate the activists. After the counter demonstrators started running inside of the protected area the police indicated to the busses and the activists ran towards them. As all of the streets surrounding the venue were filled with people the busses could not move fast. The counter-demonstrators were punching the busses, throwing the rocks and trying to break the windows of the busses and/or enter the buses in order to beat the activists. People were shouting, "Kill those pederasts!" One of buses was almost completely destroyed as they were throwing stones and managed to break the windows. Some of the activists in the bus were injured. They were punching the activists from outside and spitting on them. The police was trying to protect the activist but the amount of the counter-demonstrators was too big in contrast with the available police. Eventually all of the busses managed to leave the crowds behind and take the activists to a safer place. They were put into police cars in small groups of 3 - 4, and distributed around the city separately so that they could go home individually without any threat that they would be recognized.

When the counter-protesters occupied the venue and got convinced that all of the activists were gone, they remained there for couple of hours to ensure that the activists would not come back after which they went to the Holy Trinity Cathedral (the biggest church in Tbilisi) and prayed together celebrating their victory.⁵

27 people were injured during this violence. None of them were the activists. All of them were the policemen and journalists. The police started investigation against 6 people, out of who 4 (all ordinary citizens) only paid 100 Lari for minor administrative disobedience. The other two were priests - one priest was released by the jury from the court without any charges, and the case of another priest started but has not ended yet. Due to the threat of violence and lack of assurance that the government would ensure proper safety of the activists LGBTQ organizations decided not to have any public activities in 2014.

⁵ More information - <http://rt.com/news/anti-gay-clashes-tbilisi-421/>
http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/18/world/europe/gay-rights-rally-is-attacked-in-georgia.html?_r=0
<http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/georgia-homophobic-violence-mars-tbilisi-pride-event-2013-05-17>

Analyzing the Discourse: Usage of individualist vs. communitarian discourses

Discourse Around IDAHO 2012

As long as the demonstration in 2012 was not as big as in 2013, and also, as long as it did not capture much of public attention, there was no wide public discussion in the media about the event, or generally, about homophobia. Right after the demonstration on the 17th the US embassy in Georgia held a round table discussion where activists and the deputy minister of the Internal Affairs participated. She told the activists that they had to inform her personally and she would have ordered to send the policemen that would ensure the activists' safety. She said that those policemen are homophobic themselves and the activists should have not expected high professionalism from them.

None of the politicians participated in any public debates after the 17th and 18th demonstrations. The only public statement from the UNM was when the oppositional party in the parliament, after these events, started to make public announcements that they would be gathering signatures all around Georgia to propose new constitutional amendments, which

...would involve several points: to further stress the role of Christianity in the constitution (the role of Orthodox Christian Church is already defined by a constitutional agreement between the state and the Church); introducing "moral criteria" that should be met by persons holding government posts; ban on disseminating such information that can be "insulting for a person's religious feelings"; to add a clause to the constitution according to which the state will "recognize and protect" that marriage is between a man and a woman. (Civil Georgia 2012)

On this statement the ruling party said that they would never support this as it was homophobic and against the human rights. The ruling party MP Lasha Tordia said

I was expecting you to make a call for being tolerant and to say that what happened on May 17 [fist-fight during the gay activists' march] was immoral and unacceptable for everyone who stands for the principle of building democratic state. (Civil Georgia 2012)

Other than that, only one person, Zurab Japaridze, who was not a member of the UNM by then, but was publicly known as UNM's strong ideological supporter, and who later became their candidate on the list for the elections, and currently is a parliamentarian from the UNM, participated in one of the political talk-shows which was dedicated to this issue. One of the guests, the director of TV station owned by Georgian Patriarchate, was blaming the demonstrators for provocation (Japaridze and Andriadze 2012). He was saying that the demonstrators were mobilized by the government to make a provocation and change the Georgian nation's mentality (Japaridze and Andriadze 2012). He was saying that gay people do not have any problems in Georgia and if some people come out in the streets Georgian nation has the right to oppose it as it goes against Georgian traditions and public morals (Japaridze and Andriadze 2012).

The communitarian discourse here can be seen through the fact that as long as LGBTQ activists were a small number of people, and as long as most of the Georgians do not like homosexuality and think that it is a sin, they should not provoke the nation as by doing it they are violating the majority's rights. I use the term 'communitarian' to refer to the logic (set of ideas) where the quantity of people plays the crucial role in granting the rights, that is, community privileged over the individual because of the quantity; and if the quantity plays the crucial role then it creates a potential that the same logic should be applied to minorities – it is better to have a situation when a larger number of people would benefit than a smaller number of people. The speculation about the numbers was vivid when he was mentioning that the demonstrators were only around 50

people and in Georgia, as long as a lot of people's rights are being violated, we should not even be talking about some 50 people's problems (Japaridze and Andriadze 2012). Here the quantity of the people is used to justify certain activities and attitudes and delegitimize others. On the other hand, Zurab Japaridze was using strongly individualist discourse: firstly, he was even opposing calling these people any kind of minorities as he said that all of the people, disregarding what community they belong to, have the same rights, so there is no need to stress any community belonging here (Japaridze and Andriadze 2012). After this individualist approach, he argued in favor of protecting the right of expression and assembly of the activists and said that the counter demonstrators should be imprisoned for violating these rights (Japaridze and Andriadze 2012). Another individualist argument used by him was that no matter how many people dislike certain group or individuals, everybody has the right to express his or her opinion publicly and nobody has the monopoly on a public space, especially to forbid anyone from freely moving on the streets (Japaridze and Andriadze 2012).

Discourse Around IDAHO 2013

The most of the discussion prior to, and after, the 17th May IDAHO, was framed through the clash of liberalism vs. communitarian approach. What I mean here is that most of the time politicians or LGBTQ activists and their supporters would argue with opponents, to support IDAHO activists, they would use strongly liberal discourse of individual rights, and the freedom of expression; and most of the time the opponents would argue against the demonstration, to support their arguments they would use communitarian approach, that is, the majority's interests and rights, the majority's culture and mores, and the majority's religion. All parties, even the church, condemned the violence; but for justifying the government's allowance to LGBTQTI

activists to have a demonstration, or when opposing the discourse of opponents as long as the majority did not want the rally to happen, the government and the activists used strongly individualist and liberal arguments opposing community's interests and their rights. Again, I use the term communitarian to refer to the set of ideas and logic which privilege the interests of a community over individual; where the quantity of people plays the role for creating the policy in a way that as many people as possible will benefit rather than merely an individual. Since the logic is that the benefit of maximum amount of people possible is a higher priority than of an individual (which can also be seen the smallest minority) this creates a potential for the same logic to be applied in the case of minorities and the majority: the aim becomes the benefit of the maximum amount of people possible. For example, prior to the demonstration, on journalist's question about upcoming 17th May, prime minister of Georgia stated:

I have said for multiple times previously that sexual minorities are the same citizens as we are... The society will gradually get used to it. I know there is part of the society which fails to accept it. There are law enforcement agencies in our state and we will do everything in order to protect rights of any minority group and that will be the case in this situation too (Civil Georgia 2013).

Here he is using the liberal model of democracy where the rights of minorities should be protected; and this is used for stating the state's position opposing the public attitude. While the government was asked to ban the demonstration from the Georgian Patriarch, who described "...homosexuality as "anomaly and disease", said that holding of such rally would be "a violation of majority's right" and "an insult" to the Georgian traditions" (Civil Georgia 2013), the government did not ban the demonstration and responded using the argument of the laws that protect individuals from public will in order to justify its activities. The Prime Minister Ivanishvili said: "We will protect the rights; [planned two parallel] rallies will probably be distanced from

each other; I can't tell you specifics how it will be done, but there are police, which will stand in the middle and will not allow [anyone] to obstruct others.” (Civil Georgia 2013) Here, even though the public attitude has been expressed in clearly negative terms about the demonstration by the fact that the Georgian Patriarch and the church have a huge authority, the government's response was articulated through the rights opposed to public will in order to justify its behavior.

After the demonstration, the violence was also condemned using the liberal discourse – the right to disagree but the simultaneous obligation, and responsibility, to respect others' rights. For example, David Usupashvili, the Parliamentary Chairman, stated:

We should agree that when an opinion is expressed on such state-related issues... even if this opinion belongs to His Holiness, judging and analyzing it, agreeing or disagreeing with it is our constitutional right and our constitutional obligation; what is happening in the Church's life it's not our business, but when there is a talk about issues of secular life such as where citizens should walk or not, where they can rally or not, in such situations we should agree that voicing critical position or disagreeing and analyzing is right thing to do and it's necessary and everyone should get used to it, including representatives of the Church (Civil Georgia 2013)

In the President's case (he by then did not have much power as the government power was in the hands of the Georgian Dream), his comment can also be seen through individualist vs. communitarian dimension: in his position he opposed the rule of the majority, but because he was usually rumored to be supporting LGBT people, in order to distance himself from LGBTQ activists, he actually reproduced the communitarian argument usually used by opponents:

That small group [referring to gay rights activists], who came there for some kind of rally, everyone has the right to hold a rally – how justified it was to hold there a rally when in

the vicinity of [that attempted anti-homophobia rally] a ceremony to honor Georgian soldiers, fallen in Afghanistan, was held a day earlier – well, that’s another issue, but I am not talking about it. (Civil Georgia 2013)

But later he added: “Violence has no religious dimension. Georgia will never have a broad problem of [religious] fundamentalism; there will be a problem if the state institutions do not work and if laws are not observed by the citizens” (Civil Georgia 2013) In this case his argument is liberal as in the liberal democracy the state institutions, rather than the majority, should be taking the decisions.

For clarification it needs to be said that the Georgian constitution, especially parts concerning human rights, and the freedom of expression and assembly, are designed in the liberal structure, that is, ensuring maximum liberty unless exceptional cases when there is an immediate threat of violence. Usually, the activists and the supporters were using the argument that their constitutional right was denied to them because of the violence. For example, one of the activists on political talk show on 17th of May, which was fully dedicated to the event, said that the activists were denied their constitutional right, as there is no requirement to ask anybody for the right to have any demonstration; and that the police saved their lives is not enough as the police had to ensure their constitutional right of freedom of expression (Shubladze 2013).

On the other hand, in the same talk show, the organizer of the counter-demonstration, Giorgi Gabedava, in order to justify his and his supporters’ activities, was mostly using the arguments that could be viewed as communitarian interest arguments. For example, he was saying that in Georgia, because of the country’s past, such kind of demonstrations will never be held; and because of Georgia’s current demographic situation we should not tolerate propaganda of such kind of relationships (Gabedava 2013). In this discourse, in contrast with liberalism where the

individual is the value, the collective, and the majority becomes the value over individual; even one's sexuality should serve the nation's interests (because of the demographic issues). In another case, after couple of minutes from this statement, he used the argument of quantity again – he said: “if the majority's rights are not protected, there will not be a peace in this country” (Gabedava 2013). Again, the clash between homophobic demonstrators and LGBTQ activists is framed through the clash of individual rights vs. collective's interests, or minority vs. majority; the quantity of people on each side becomes the argument to delegitimize one group's rights.

Another defender of the Church – Lasha Zhvania, the president of the Fund of Georgian Patriarchate, articulated the same discourse. During the same talk show, he attacked the (liberal) constitution and tried to manipulate with it in order to deliver wrong information to the public. He said that the Georgian constitution does not allow ‘propaganda’ (Zhvania 2013). When his opponents disagreed with him and requested him to cite the article in constitution where constitution speaks about propaganda, he changed his sentence and reformulated it saying that the constitution should make differentiation between the freedom of expression, and the propaganda and licentiousness (Zhvania 2013).

Eka Beselia, the Georgian Dream's MP, chairperson of the human rights committee, while speaking about the violence, agreed that the minority's rights should be protected (Beselia 2013). In contrast, David Saganelidze, Georgian Dream's MP, blamed “...those 10 – 20 -30 persons sitting in the bus with happy faces...” for the provocation (Metskhvarishvili 2013). He said that it is understandable that the majority was outraged and did not accept this small group's ideology (Metskhvarishvili 2013). In the first case Beselia is using liberal democratic model of the state and saying that the state should protect the minority's rights; in another case, the quantity of a group - “10 – 20 -30” – is used to reduce the importance of their right of expression and justify the social violent response to them.

Queer Politics and Liberalism

Queer Politics and its Agreements and Disagreements with Liberalism

Continental/poststructuralist philosophy out of which most of the queer theory is coming, and liberalism, have quite a complex relationship with each other. While in this sub-chapter I will not cover all of the literature coming from queer theory that talks critically about liberalism, I aim to show some of the main patterns that come up while discussions about queer theory and liberalism.

The most common disagreement between queer theory and liberalism is that while liberalism, as I showed in the chapter earlier, presupposes a free subject in a natural state, poststructuralist theories, including queer theory, reject the inherent free subject. While the main issue for liberal thought thus becomes to protect the free subject from power, queer thinkers, on the other hand, look at how the subjectivity is produced by the power. Thus, if for liberals the subject is outside of the power, queer theory views it as produced, as the effect of the power. For example, Judith Butler, especially in her book *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997), reads Foucault alongside with psychoanalysis (especially with Foucault's contemporaries – Jacques Lacan and Louis Althusser) in order to bring Foucauldian insights into developmental psychology (Kelly 2009, 99). Butler argues for a subjectivity that is produced by the power through looking at psychoanalytical account of childhood development to show actually how does the power produce subjects (Butler 1997) (Kelly 2009). Now, there has been a criticism to Butler's understanding of Foucault's understanding of subjectivity. Mark G.E Kelly, for instance, criticizes Butler for misunderstanding the word *d'assujettissement*, which Foucault uses while speaking about the subject (Kelly 2009). In Kelly's view, Foucault doesn't simply see subject as produced by the power, but

rather the subject is created by self through its relation to itself through the power (100). It is this relation of self to self through power, as Kelly argues, not a relation of external power (as Butler proposes) that produces the subject. In any case, whether Butler is right or Kelly is right in understanding Foucault, both approaches stand far from inherent free subject as seen in liberal philosophy.

This disagreement over the subjectivity between queer and liberal theories results in various criticism coming from queer thinkers towards liberalism. For example Cris Mayo blames liberalism for presupposing a subject that is heterosexual, and also for being blind to the identities the subjects inhabit (Mayo 2006). Or Ratna Kapur, drawing on queer affect theory, also criticizes liberalism for its specific understandings of subject, and based on that – the understandings of freedom and happiness (Kapur 2013). This list of critique of liberal subject can be extremely long covering various specific topics.⁶

In this sense, queer activism becomes critical to the goal ‘protecting’ the free subject which is based on viewing liberation (of for instance – sexuality) in a linear, developmental mode, and oppression as a result of power coming from up to dawn. Rather, queer politics, as long as it doesn’t need naturally free subject (outside of power and discourse), aims to change the discourse in a way that would disrupt the existence of hegemonic discourses through politics of parody or the politics of shame (Butler 1991) (Segdwick 1993). But even though there is a major disagreement between queer theory and liberal theory, this does not mean a complete abandonment of liberalism from queer scholars. Foucault, for instance, in late 1970’s, while giving lectures at the Collège de France, presented his audiences an appraisal of (economic)

⁶ For example, see (Halberstam, 2011), (Puar, 2007), (Ahmed, 2010) and (Phelan, 1997). As long as queer theory comes from poststructuralist philosophy I also included a poststructuralist thinker (Sara Ahmed) that might not primarily identify as a queer thinker.

liberalism (Behrent 2009). Also, “[i]n a 1979 letter to the Iranian prime minister, Paras points out, Foucault mentioned “human rights” no less than four times, and “rights” an additional seven” (Behrent, 2009, p. 543). Thus, as long as Foucault is a canonical figure for queer theory, it becomes interesting how he saw liberalism in this sense. As Michael Behrent shows in his article about Foucault, Foucault himself was quite attracted by liberalism and used to show “...that liberalism’s main problem is that it is not liberal enough” (Behrent 2009, 544). Foucault himself abandoned his main argument, which he had presented in his book *Discipline and Punish* (1975) and recognized that he “...had failed to take full measure of liberty’s place in the modern economy of power” (Behrent 2009, 559). He became very critical of leftist theories, especially Marxism. As Berhert shows,

[i]n addition to dispensing with unnecessary anthropological hypotheses, utilitarian liberalism—alongside economic liberalism, which he considered to be closely related—impressed Foucault for another reason: it managed to conceptualize a liberal order by relying on no other category than power itself. For liberalism to work, Foucault suggested, there is no need to hypothesize something outside or beyond power, such as law, rights, or even liberty. Rather than a metaphysical entity or a human attribute, liberty, for the utilitarian, is simply a side effect of power—as Foucault put it, “the independence of the governed in relation to the governing (562).

Additionally, in his interview when Foucault speaks about aesthetics of life, his understanding of liberty is purely liberal – he speaks of ones right to shape, invent and re-invent one’s own life:

In our society, art has become something that is related only to objects and not to individuals or to life. That art is something, which is specialized or done by experts who are artists. But couldn’t everyone’s life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object but not our life? ...What I mean by the phrase [arts of existence] are those *intentional* and *voluntary* actions by which men not only set themselves rules of

conduct but also seek to transform themselves, to change themselves in their singular being, and to make life into an œuvre that carries certain aesthetic values and meets certain stylistic criteria (Oksala 2005, 166) [emphasis added]

From here we can see that Foucault's understanding of liberty lies in intentional and voluntary actions of subjects to form their lives – which goes in agreement with liberal understanding of (positive) liberty to shape one's life without any imposition from others what it means to have a good life. Thus, because Foucault himself was a radical anti-humanist, he eventually endorsed liberalism, especially economic neo-liberalism for its non-humanism, and the potential of creating a discourse where his understanding of freedom, that is, aesthetics of life, could have been possible. In this case, it seems he saw the potential of rethinking liberalism in a way that it would not need the presupposed free subject, and thus liberalism could function having a free subject as its goal.

But while looking at the queer literature it is easy to find word 'liberalism' discursively used as negative term linked to depoliticization of LGBT movement, LGBT politics losing its radical subversive potential, and LGBT politics being co-opted into capitalism that is inherently negative - oppressive system. For example Alan Sears criticizes LGBT movements for participating in liberal capitalist system, which he discursively links to racism, sexism, ablesim, and transphobia (Sears 2005). Capitalism in his article is linked to reproduction of oppression, racism, sexism and so on. He proposes queer Marxist feminism that he believes can contribute to revive of emancipatory aspects of the movement. It is not surprising as the gay liberation movement itself was influenced a lot by Marxism, in particular by Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* (1955), where he focused on a relationship between sexuality and capitalism (Phelan 2000, 432). Most of the gay and lesbian liberation groups in the West that came into existence after 1969 Stonewall rebellion were radical leftist groups (Gert, Oosterhuis and Steakley 1995).

In this regard, the intention of following sub-chapter will be to argue that any discourse that frames human rights or the notion of ‘good life’ in terms of community interests (communitarian approach) creates a potential that individual (and any minority groups’) interests can be sacrificed for the sake of a wider public interest. In the name of community, communitarian discourses risk justifying violence over individuals in what ‘good’ and/or an ‘appropriate’ life means for a community. And as communitarian ideologies favor communities, there is a risk that the imagined community will be (hetero)normative as society is already heteronormative. Communitarian ideologies can be seen as less compatible for queer politics as queer politics is a subversive power that aims to disturb the majority and challenge what means a good, a proper, or a normal, life.

I would like to conclude this sub-chapter by a reconciliation of queer theory and liberalism where I would like to offer liberalism without a presupposed free subject. This liberalism would not require the notion of an inherently free subject as the center of its attention. Rather in this case we can rethink liberalism and the free subject can be re-imagined as not a departure point of our thought, needing of protection, but as our aim, liberalism’s final goal. And the justification for individualism would still remain in a fact that the society is composed of persons that are all at least a bit different from each other. In this case the free subject becomes the goal of the politics, not its departure point for theorizing. This means that the political system should create a space where individuals and groups can be able to invent new relationships, discourses, and aesthetics of life; and for this potential I endorse liberalism as a political theory and system. It does not mean that the individual will be seen outside of power in order to be seen as free; it means that the freedom will be seen as a power working is a system that creates a possibility for the maximum individuality and agency, and the least interdependence of individuals, thus the least possible amount of impositions by individuals on each other. As long as liberalism does not have

a pre-conception of what ‘good’ and ‘proper’ life mean it can accommodate radical (queer) activism that would constantly disturb and challenge these notions.

The Need of Liberal Political Environment for Queer Politics in Georgia

As I have mentioned earlier liberal political system prioritizes individual over community, and this is the reason I chose this political ideology to discuss in this thesis. Earlier I have discussed why queer theory and liberalism as an ideology are not incompatible to each other: even though they have different positions on specific issues I discussed how these issues can be rethought from queer perspective. In this part, drawing on the discourse analysis of Georgian queer politics – the two IDAHO events I discussed – my aim would be to provide my arguments about why liberal political system is needed for the movement in Georgia.

As I demonstrated in my analysis of the discourse of discussions evolving around the IDAHO (and the next day) rallies, it can be analyzed through individualist vs. communitarian ideologies. I tried to show that nationalism (which is very much tied to Christian Orthodox religion), the Soviet past and the post-Soviet transition processes, and the political situation in Georgia, all serve to create an image of Georgianness as a heterosexual being, and tie homosexuality and LGBTQ rights to the notion of (Western) liberalism; this has its significance for countering LGBTQ rights as correspondingly mostly communitarian argumentation is being used. Community is imagined as a whole nation and as long the nation’s history and future (future in terms of nation’s reproduction) is perceived not to allow homosexuality, individuals’ or minorities’ interests are also seen to be sacrificed to the nation’s interests. Again, my usage of the term communitarian refers to the set of the logic that privileges community’s interests over individual’s interests, that is, the quantity plays the crucial role. For example, 5 persons interest is

more valuable than 1 person's; if so then why shouldn't, say, 10000 persons interest be more valuable than 100's?

Firstly, as long as the majority of the population in Georgia has homophobic attitudes and does not support LGBTQ rights, supporting LGBTQ rights by the government is not going to be popular. Due to the fact that the parties are always hunting for voters support, the potential of them supporting LGBTQ rights openly becomes less probable. Thus, the best possibility LGBTQ activists can look forward to is that the government will merely stay neutral and will only play the role of the protector of individual rights, and of the constitution, etc. A support for this argument can be seen through these examples: in 2012 the government was focusing on arguing that that they are ensuring the constitution and the laws, rather than that they were supporting LGBTQ activists per se. Their main argument was articulated through the values of liberal democracy: that in liberal democracy everybody has the freedom of expression, even if the ideas expressed are extremely unwelcome by the majority, and nobody has the right on violence. As I showed in previous chapters they justified their position by not being supportive of LGBTQ activism but rather by liberal individualist approach to human rights. This liberal individualist discourse was not that strong in 2013. It was articulated in 2013 as well (for example by the prime minister Ivanishvili) but a lot of other officials were also articulating the argument of the 'majority'. Because the coalition is composed of various parties with different ideologies the liberal ideology was not strongly consolidated.

Secondly, while it needs to be said that communitarianism is not necessarily a discourse of exclusion but mostly a response to a discourse of rights based liberal notion of the autonomous individual that is not per se demanding not giving rights to minorities based on majority's intolerance, still, any type of communitarian approach means community's interests being prioritized over individual's interests. In the case of communitarian discourse prevailing in the political system, the problem becomes of where to mark the limit so that the minorities' rights are

protected and the system does not become the rule of the majority. Me naming the quotes from Georgian politicians I have demonstrated earlier as communitarian comes from the fact that in these quotes the politicians prioritize bigger community's interests (Georgian nation's interest) over small community's interest, that is, when the quantity of the people determines the policy. As I showed earlier, anytime the individualist approach is altered it always works against LGBTQ activists. In case of communitarian discourse the government, in best perspective, could recognize LGBTQ community as a community (minority) and would try to protect their rights through this discourse. But, firstly, as I already mentioned this is very unlikely, and secondly, even if this would happen it would mean an even higher degree of the necessity to negotiate the rights and freedoms with the government and the majority. This would mean that LGBTQ group would be seen as distinct from the rest of the society and their rights would also be somehow distinct from the rest of population. And in this case there is also a high probability that negotiating the rights in his discourse would actually end up in negative terms for the community because of the prevailing homophobia.

Also, any community entails a possible inner discrimination or inequality (for example, usually trans* communities in Georgia usually complain that their needs are not addressed enough within LGBTQ communities) and if so, it means that even a smaller community should be created to ensure the equality; and because of this process of inner discrimination the process of creating smaller and smaller groups eventually will end up on extremely small groups or on individuals as there are no or very small amount of individuals that share all of the aspects of discrimination and needs absolutely equally.

As I have mentioned, in 2014 organizations working on LGBTQ issues decided not to have any public demonstration because of the fear of violence. Some of the activists organized the Installation "Protest on Behalf of the Invisible & Against Invisibility" and as the concept suggests it, "...this "shoe protest" is a sort of revolt against invisibility and on behalf of those rendered

invisible. It speaks for those, who, last year tried to bring their voices forward to the society...” (Identoba 2014). LGBTQ activists have not been able to express their messages other way. In order for LGBTQ politics to be more successful - that is, be able to pursue its politics publicly (for instance, public demonstrations or any other public activities for a wider social dialogue between the activists and the society) – unfortunately, LGBTQ activism cannot rely on the government’s support of the movement politically; so the only way to articulate the rights becomes liberal individual approach to rights. Thus letting go of individual liberal system risks letting go of the framework of arguments and political-juridical system on which it movement relies.

Conclusion

Drawing on the context of Georgia and the discourse analysis of how the discussion was articulated around the two most important events in Georgian queer movement I tried to show the significance of liberal democracy (liberal individualist approach to rights and liberty) for the movement. My aim has been to show that queer movement in Georgia actually needs liberal political system to be able to pursue its activities for the social change. For this I needed to first give the context of Georgian political background to show what are the prevailing attitudes towards queer activism within political parties in Georgia. This was crucial in order for the reader to understand that the movement cannot rely on progressive and/or sympathetic (towards the movement) politicians that would support the movement because of the existing reality in Georgia. And during the argumentations and the campaigns the activists asking for the support from the government would be less productive and unrealistic. Thus the aim should be to demand the government to be more consistent in liberal democratic governing.

In order to argue this I also had to demonstrate that queer politics and liberalism, despite some theoretical disagreements existing, are not inherently incompatible (on a theoretical level). For this I provided my position on how the criticism coming from queer perspective can be applied to liberalism and liberalism could be rethought in a way that it could become compatible with the political aims of queer politics (both in Georgia and generally).

In this thesis, by my analysis and arguments provided in the chapters, my aim has been to show that considering the context where queer politics is applied, liberalism, due to its dedication to the notions of liberty and individualism, might be the most desired political system and framework. By studying the Georgian case my aim has been to underscore the importance of the context of the environment where queer politics functions; and coming from analysis of this

context, to demonstrate that while analyzing the relationship of queer politics with liberalism concrete examples (in this case the Georgian one) might be fundamental to be taken into account.

Finally, I hope that my exploration will contribute to the scholarship focusing on a wider discussion of liberalism and queer politics. For my literature review I have been able to find a quite scarce literature that would focus exclusively on this issue. I hope that this thesis will contribute to the process of rethinking the relationship of queer politics and liberalism for activists and scholars working on the issue.

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