Pride 'On the Edge of Europe?'

LGBT Activism and Nationalism in the Context of Hungary

By Margit Barna

Submitted to
Central European University
Nationalism Studies Program

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Advisor: Professor András Pap

Budapest, Hungary
2015

ABSTRACT

In the context of Hungary, the public and political discourse on non-heteronormative sexualities is strongly linked to the symbolic categories of *East* and *West.* Right-wing political discourse repeatedly defines the meaning of the West as a morally decaying world, while excluding LGBT people from the national imaginary. I conducted qualitative research to understand how this context affects the experiences and politics of local LGBT activists. I found that the exclusionary politics of the political elite functions as a main point of reference. This changes the meaning of Hungarian activists' desires to see the LGBT movement more like those in Western settings. This finding has important implications for the existing theoretical framework on discourses around homonationalism, while it contributes to the understanding of nationalism and sexuality in the CEE region

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor András Pap for his support and guidance. Furthermore, I am very grateful for the clarifying comments of Anikó Horváth and Professor Luca Váradi. Finally, I would like to thank the support of my friends, especially Naomi, Tanja and Dóri, and the endless love and patience of Anna.

I dedicate this thesis to Darell.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction

In the past decade, the Budapest Pride March has been repeatedly attacked by right-extremists, threatening the life of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people and their allies who want to celebrate and protest for equal rights. Similar to Budapest, Belgrade, Split and Bucharest Pride have also been targeted by militant counter protesters. In the past decade several countries in Western Europe, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Spain and the Netherlands among others, legalized the institution of marriage for same-sex couples.

Is there a clear line dividing the hostile Central and Eastern European (CEE) region from the progressive and tolerant West? In order to explore this question, I conducted qualitative interviews with Hungarian LGBT activists. By examining the local specificities of the Hungarian LGBT movement, I would like to contribute to the deconstruction of the simplistic interpretation of the CEE region as a homogeneous site of homophobia, a region trailing behind the West.

Looking at the literature written on the subject of nationalism and sexuality in the last decade, we see that the traditional understanding of nationalism as an essentially heteronormative ideology, relying on the idea of reproduction, is being contested by several authors. The phenomenon of non-heteronormative nationalism was termed as *homonationalism* by Jasbir Puar, a U.S. based queer theorist. Puar argues that incorporating LGBT citizens into the national imaginary allows the nation-state to promote itself as *progressive* and *modern*. However, as Puar argues, the same discourse is being deployed for Islamophobic ends, portraying Muslim immigrants as uncivilized and backward, thus, a threat to the liberal state.[1] Puar's theory of homonationalism is breaking new ground in the research on nationalism and

---

[1] Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Duke University Press, 2007).

sexuality mainly in the context of the U.S. and Western Europe. However, in the context of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), there is a great scarcity of research.

Yet, homonationalism is not a term with relevance only to the U.S. and Western Europe. As several authors pointed out in recently published literature on the subject, Western Europe's relation to the Central and Eastern European region shows parallels with the relation between Western Europe and its Muslim other.[2] Statements made by European Union institutions and transnational LGBT organizations repeatedly portray this region as a homogeneous place characterized by homophobia and intolerance.[3]

This discourse defines acceptance of sexual minorities as a *European value*, which is already achieved by the West, but still far from being achieved by the CEE region. The binary discourse turns CEE into the *homophobic other* of the West, while reinforcing Western dominance by promoting a picture of Western Europe as a site of progress and modernity. Thus, the critique of homonationalism can also be applied to the relation of Western Europe to the CEE region.

The broader construction of the East/West hierarchy is reflected in the Hungarian political and public discourse as well. Both pro-LGBT and homophobic discourse connects the LGBT movement to the idea of *Europe/the West*. However, in the former case, the *West* stands as a reference to follow, where sexual freedom is already achieved, while in the latter case it is framed as a threat, antagonistic to the idea of the *nation*.

Thus, on the one hand, the polarizing East/West discourse is salient on a broad, transnational discursive level, defining *European values*. On the other hand, it deeply affects the local, Hungarian public and political discourse as well.

---

[2] Moss, Kevin, "Split Europe: Homonationalism and Homophobia in Croatia," in *LGBT Activism and the Making of Europe : A Rainbow Europe?*, ed. Phillip M. Ayoub and David Paternotte (Palgrave, 2014).

My thesis aims to understand how these discursive constructions of *East/West* hierarchy affect Hungarian LGBT activist sites. I carried out a qualitative research project, conducting interviews with local LGBT activists based in Budapest. Through the in-depth analysis of the interviews, I am going to argue that the polarizing discourse deeply affects local activists, and has an impact on local LGBT politics. Examining the intersections between the political discourse on the LGBT movement and between personal narratives of LGBT activists contributes to the understanding of nationalism and sexuality in the CEE region.

In the second chapter of this thesis, I will give an overview about the polarizing East/West discourse in Europe. Secondly, I am going to position the critique of homonationalism as part of the broader discourse on the East/West hierarchy. Thirdly, I focus on nationalism and sexuality in Central and Eastern Europe, with particular attention to Hungary. These theoretical chapters are crucial to introduce the empirical part of my thesis. In the second part, I analyze the qualitative interviews I conducted, and discuss the main findings and conclusions.

2. The discourse on the East/West binary in Europe

In the first chapter of my thesis, I am going to give an overview about the emergence of the polarizing discourse creating a division between a developed and civilized *West*, and a less advanced *Eastern* region in the context of Europe. As I am going to point out, the discursive pattern, which equates the *West* with progress and modernity, while defines the *East* as less advanced, is not a new phenomenon. The hierarchy is perpetuated by political and public discourse, moreover it is also reproduced by academia. However, several authors warn about

the risk of such homogenizing rhetoric, and point at the possible political implications of such discourse.[4]

In the following chapter, firstly I am going to give an overview about East/West typologies of nationalism, while addressing the problematic aspects of these theories. Secondly, I am going to give an overview about the polarizing East/West discourse in the context of Hungary. This chapter serves as a necessary basis for the subsequent chapters on nationalism and sexuality. To understand the recent phenomena of defining LGBT rights as a marker of developed, civilized Western nation states and regions, first it is crucial to explore the roots and history of East/West dichotomies.

2.1. *Eastern* and *Western* nationalism typologies

There is a broad body of literature seeking to create a typology of the characteristics of *Eastern* and *Western* types of nationalisms. The common pattern that these typologies follow is that they characterize the *West* as the developed, civilized region to follow, while the *East* is its backward counterpart. In this context, *Eastern* nationalism is interpreted as an irrational, exclusionist, hostile sentiment, while *Western* nationalism is framed as being rational, civilized and inclusive. The dichotomy is highly problematic in many respects. In the following, I will give an overview about the most cited East-West typologies, and the main critiques problematizing them. I use these examples to show evidence that the East/West typologies, creating a polarizing discourse between the two regions, are not a new phenomenon. However,

---

[4]Attila Melegh, *On the East/West Slope: Globalization, Nationalism, Racism and Discources on Eastern Europe* (New York: Central European University Press, 2006); William Outhwaite, "Europe Beyond East and West," in *The SAGE Handbook of European Studies*, ed. Chris Rumford (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2009), 52–69; Rogers Brubaker, "The Manichean Myth: Rethinking the Distinction Between 'Civic' and 'Ethnic' Nationalism," in *Nation and National Identity: The European Experience in Perspective*, ed. Hanspeter Kriesi and Klaus Armington, Ruegger (Zurich, 1999), 55–71.

as I am going to show, despite the essentialist nature of the polarizing discourse, the notions of *civilized* and *backward* do not have fixed meanings.

One early theorization of East/West dichotomy was given by Hans Kohn in 1994.[5] Kohn claims that in Western Europe nationalism was a social project based on a political reality, while in Eastern Europe it had to be actively created out of myths of the past and propaganda, as the Eastern region was at a more backward phase of social development. In this process the West is on one hand present as the example to follow, while at the same time seen with hostility because of its superior status. Similarly to Kohn, John Plamenatz's typology of Eastern and Western nationalisms also describes the same ambiguous attitude of the East toward the West, as being imitative and hostile at the same time.[6] Plamenatz interprets hostility as the frustration of not being able to fit the dominant standards ruled by the West.

The distinction used by Antony Smith is more sophisticated, as it does not seek to categorize entire regions of Europe in a dichotomist East-West system.[7] However, the distinction between civic and ethnic nationalisms is similarly problematic. The general argument behind these typologies is that in the *West,* the formation of the nation state was preceded by political development, while *Eastern* societies were at a less advanced stage, thus, the idea of the nation was constructed in a more artificial way.

In *Rethinking the Distinction between Civic and Ethnic Nationalism*, Rogers Brubaker brings attention to both the analytical and the normative problems of such distinctions.[8] He claims that rather than being a useful analytical tool, the dichotomy serves political aims,

---

[5]Hans Kohn, "Western and Eastern Nationalism," in *Nationalism*, by Smith, Anthony and John Hutchinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 162–165.

[6]John Plamenatz, "Two Types of Nationalism," in *Nationalism: The Nature of an Evolution of an Idea*, ed. Eugene Kamenka (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1975), 23–31.

[7]Anthony Smith, "The Varieties of Nationalism," in *Theories of Nationalism* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1983), 211–29.

[8] Brubaker, "The Manichean Myth: Rethinking the Distinction Between 'Civic' and 'Ethnic' Nationalism."

legitimizing some state projects and discrediting others. The author also warns about the 'neo-orientalist flavor' of contrasting modern tolerance with ancient hatred.

However, the East/West division is still very salient in Europe's representation of itself. As William Outhwaite points out in *Europe Beyond East and West,* the East/West divide is fundamentally shaped and influenced by the idea of Western superiority.[9] According to Outhwaite, the East/West division, which corresponds to the Iron Curtain, is a matter of historical memory and it is still salient in Europe's representation of itself. The author cites Étienne Balibar who draws attention to the illusion of characterizing certain nations as inherently open and tolerant, while claiming that others, due to their historical specificity are intolerant and exclusionary.[10].

When it comes to finding the roots of the discourse perpetuating the East/West dichotomy, there are several scholarly explanations offered. As Larry Wolff claims in *Inventing Eastern Europe*, the project of constructing Eastern Europe as the counterpart of the civilized West dates back to the period of Enlightenment, when the idea of civilization emerged. According to Wolff, the invention of Eastern Europe is a '*self-promoting event in Western intellectual history*'[11] which placed Eastern Europe in an *emphatic subordination*. Emphatic subordination means that the *West* maintains its superior status by advocating its moral responsibility for helping out less developed *Eastern* regions to 'catch up'.[12]

---

[9]Outhwaite, "Europe Beyond East and West."

[10]Étienne Balibar, *We, The People of Europe?Reflections on Transnational Citizenship* (Princeton University Press, 2004).p24

[11]Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, 1 edition (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994).p360

[12] This same idea is reflected in Kulpa's term, *Western leveraged pedagogy*, explained on the ..page of this thesis.

2.2. The East/West debate in the context of Hungary

András Kovács, Anikó Horváth and Zsuzsanna Vidra give an accurate account on the public, political and intellectual debates concerning Hungary's position within Europe. As the authors claim, in the context of Hungary, questions of European identity have always been deeply connected to modernization.[13] As they argue, identifying Europe with the symbolic meaning of *West*, as a place of progress, rationality and civilization, while portraying *East* as the backward, uncivilized *other* was always present in the discussion about European civilization.[14] The discourse on whether *Hungarians* are compatible with progressive and modern *Western* political settings, appeared during the period of 19thcentury nation building. During this period the gap between modern Western nation states and the Hungarian social and political reality was widely discussed.[15]

After WWII, in the process of 'sovietization', the top-down approach defining Hungary's place in Europe favored an interpretation which emphasized the sameness of Eastern European countries, to justify the new Soviet regime and the East-West division of Europe.[16] Critical voices, questioning the notion of a homogeneous Eastern European region, started to emerge in the 1960s and '70s. This discourse argued that the Western borders of Eastern Europe are more developed, more similar to Western Europe than the rest of the region. The idea of Central-Europe, which deconstructed the homogeneous interpretation of Eastern Europe

---

[13]András Kovács, Anikó Horváth, and Zsuzsanna Vidra, "The Ferry-Country between East and West: Debates on Modernity and Europe in Hungary," in *Europe, Nations and Modernity*, ed. Ichijo, Atsuko (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 158–82.p159

[14]Ibid.p176

[15]Ibid.p161

[16] Zsuzsanna Vidra, Anikó Horváth, and Jon Fox, "Tolerance and Cultural Diversity Discourses in Hungary," in *Addressing Tolerance and Diversity Discourse in Europe Comparative Overview of 16 European Countries*, ed. Ricard Zapata-Barrero and Anna Triandafyllidou (Barcelona: Barcelona Centre for International Affairs, 2012), 317–43.p321

promoted by the Socialist regime, became prevalent in the 1980s, advocated by historians and intellectuals from the region.[17]

The East/West binary division became particularly salient in the 1990s, as Europe emerged as a key political actor.[18] This discourse further reinforced the identification of *Europe/the West*, with progress, freedom and modernity, while interpreting Hungary's European Union (EU) accession as a chance to make up for the lost years of modernization Hungary had to suffer during socialism.[19] Thus, as Kovács, Horváth and Vidra show evidence, in the Hungarian context *Europe*, the *West*, and *progress* are deeply intertwined concepts.

The explanatory framework used by Attila Melegh, applying theories of post-colonialism is slightly different. The idea of the *East/West slope,*[20] describes a symbolic and cognitive structure mapping the relation between the *East* and the *West*. Melegh argues that the cognitive structure, which became prevalent at the end of the 20th century, shows global patterns, and it is shared by both Eastern and Western public and political actors, resembling the orientalist discourse dividing the world into civilized, rational and active *West*, and barbarian, irrational and passive *East*. Applying theories of post-colonialism, Melegh argues that the discourse of the descending scale has a significant role in perpetuating and reproducing the power structure which positions the *West* as superior to the *East*. The author argues that in Central Europe, the discourse returned after the fall of the Soviet Union, and served the aim to legitimate the ideological base of the formation of a new capitalist world order.[21]

However, so-called *European/Western* values, which have been associated with concepts like *progress*, *freedom*, or *diversity* from the emergence of the polarizing discourse,

---

[17]Ibid.p321
[18]Ibid.p320
[19]Kovács, Horváth, and Vidra, "The Ferry-Country between East and West: Debates on Modernity and Europe in Hungary."p177
[20]Melegh, *On the East/West Slope*.
[21]Ibid.p24

do not have a fixed meaning. As I am going to point out in the third chapter of this thesis, it is a recent phenomenon that LGBT rights entered the category of progressive values associated with civilization, and became a marker of modernity.

3. Nationalism and sexuality

In this chapter I am going to examine the relation between nationalism and sexuality, reflecting on the changes and regional differences in the context of Europe. First, my overview focuses on the changing discursive patterns of how non-heteronormative sexualities are framed and positioned in relation to the *nation* by political discourse. I then go on to focus on literature examining nationalist discourse and exclusionary practices within the LGBT movement in Europe. I argue that the practice of defining sexual rights as a marker of modernity reinforces the East/West hierarchical structure discussed in the previous chapter.

Looking at the relevant literature, in the context of Western Europe, this discursive strategy is mostly discussed in relation to Islamophobia.[22] In this context, the modern, tolerant state is contrasted to Muslim immigrants, who are portrayed as backward, uncivilized, and a homogeneously homophobic group. The same discourse defines LGBT rights as a *European value*, and constructs Muslim immigrants as a threat. However, as Nicole Butterfield argues, LGBT rights entered the human rights discourse only recently.[23] Moreover, LGBT issues are marginal within EU policies, and there is no existing European consensus about them.[24] As a

---

[22]Moss, Kevin, "Split Europe: Homonationalism and Homophobia in Croatia." 213

[23]Nicole Butterfield, "LGBTIQ Advocacy at the Intersection of Transnational and Local Discourses on Human Rights and Citizenship in Croatia" (Central European University, 2013). P225

[24]Ibid.p234; Phillip Ayoub and David Paternotte, *LGBT Activism and the Making of Europe: A Rainbow Europe?*(Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).p3

number of scholars pointed out in recently published literature, the Central and Eastern European region is generally left out from the discussion on nationalism and sexuality.[25]

However, when it comes to LGBT rights, or the acceptance of sexual minorities, Europe can barely be treated as a homogeneous place. This heterogeneity is present in the political discourse as well. Based on discourse produced by EU institutions and transnational LGBT organizations, the Central Eastern European region is often portrayed as a less civilized place, where homophobia is still prevalent, thus it is homogenized similarly to Western Europe's Oriental 'other', the Muslim immigrants.[26] This discourse equates the *West* with *Europe* itself, marginalizing the Central and Eastern European region. Ayoub and Paternotte call this phenomenon a '*European form of sexual nationalism*'.[27]

In the following chapter, firstly I am going to explain the relevant concepts in the field of nationalism and sexuality, such as *homonationalism* and *homonormativity*. These terms were first conceptualized in the context of the United States, and applied to the political reality of Western Europe, thus, the first part of this chapter is going to focus on the Western this region.

3.1. Nationalism and the LGBT movement in the *Western* context

In 2010, Judith Butler, a well-known queer theorist, refused to accept a prize offered by CSD Berlin, the association organizing Berlin Pride, one of Europe's biggest LGBT festivals.

---

[25]Robert Kulpa and Joanna Mizielinska, "Why Study Sexualities in Central and Eastern Europe," in *De-Centring Western Sexualities* (Farnham ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011), 1–9. P1

[26] Robert Kulpa, "Western Leveraged Pedagogy of Central and Eastern Europe: Discourses of Homophobia, Tolerance, and Nationhood," *Gender, Place & Culture* 21, no. 4 (April 21, 2014): 431–48,; Moss, Kevin, "Split Europe: Homonationalism and Homophobia in Croatia"; Butterfield, "LGBTIQ Advocacy at the Intersection of Transnational and Local Discourses on Human Rights and Citizenship in Croatia."

[27] Ayoub and Paternotte, *LGBT Activism and the Making of Europe*. p16

"I must distance myself from this racist complicity, (...) the organizers don't understand antiracist policies (...). We have to recognize that LGBTQ people can be used from warmongers involved in cultural wars against immigrants through Islamophobia."

Butler gave voice to the concern that CSD Berlin is *homonationalist*, because it is engaged or at least does not distance itself from the strong anti-immigrant discourse which targets immigrant communities in the name of the fight against homophobia.[28] After Butler's public speech at the festival, homonationalism became a buzzword in Western European queer scenes. It is also important to note, that in many of these countries, as well as in Berlin, there already exist alternative, critical queer groups questioning the politics of mainstream LGBT organizations.

Another illustrative example of homonationalism is that of the East End Gay Pride (EEGP) in the United Kingdom. In April, 2011, as a response to a homophobic sticker campaign, a group of people organized an event called *East End Gay Pride* (EEGP), a march through the streets of Tower Hamlets, a district in East London, which is home to the largest Muslim community in the UK. The homophobic stickers contained Muslim religious reference. However, both the local Mosque and LGBT Muslim support groups publicly condemned them.[29] Soon after the EEGP March was announced, it became controversial. It turned out that several organizers had links to overtly Islamophobic groups, such as the English Defence League (EDL). The organizers associated to EDL resigned right after their affiliations came to light, and the rest of the organizers disclaimed any links with right-extremist groups. The event was eventually cancelled.[30] However, several Muslim LGBT groups expressed their concerns

---

[28]"Judith Butler Refuses Berlin Pride Civil Courage Prize 2010," accessed March 11, 2014,
   http://nohomonationalism.blogspot.hu/2010/06/judith-butler-refuses-berlin-pride.html.
[29]"Safra Project Statement on East End Gay Pride," accessed May 20, 2015,
   http://nohomonationalism.blogspot.hu/.
[30] A. Zanghellini, "Are Gay Rights Islamophobic? A Critique of Some Uses of the Concept of Homonationalism in Activism and Academia," *Social & Legal Studies* 21, no. 3 (September 1, 2012): 357–74.

about the EEGP initiation, claiming that racializing homophobia further increases the alienation of the Muslim immigrant community, by portraying them as a homogeneous group, intolerant toward sexual minorities.

The phenomena of nationalist, exclusionary discourse or practices within the LGBT community, and the deployment of LGBT rights for Islamophobic ends, was first addressed and termed as *homonationalism* by Jasbir Puar, a US-based queer theorist, a decade ago in *Queer Times, Queer Assemblages* in *2005, and Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* in 2007.[31] Puar defines the meaning of homonationalism as the following*:*

Queerness is proffered as a sexually exceptional form of American national sexuality through a rhetoric of sexual modernization that is simultaneously able to castigate the other as homophobic and perverse, and construct the imperialist center as a "tolerant" but sexually, racially, and gendered normal.[32]

Thus, according to Puar, the rhetoric of sexual modernization advocates the idea of a progressive nation which accepts, and as a consequence, normalizes alternative sexualities.

However, Puar argues that the discourse of legitimating the LGBT community on a national level is being used by the state to justify anti-immigrant practices. According to Puar, *homonationalist* discourse categorizes Muslim immigrants as a homogeneously homophobic group, thus, as a threat to the progressive, tolerant state. Racist discourse and exclusionary practices are thus legitimized in the name of the fight against homophobia.

Following Puar's foundational work, numerous queer scholars addressed these phenomena, contributing to the understanding of homonationalism in the context of the United States and Western Europe.[33] The notion of homonationalism contested the original idea that

---

[31]Jasbir Puar, "Queer Times, Queer Assemblages," *Social Text* 23 (2005): 121–40; Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*.

[32]Puar, "Queer Times, Queer Assemblages."p122

[33]Hiram Perez Perez, "The Rough Trade of U.S. Imperialism," *Journal of Homosexuality* 59, no. 7 (August 1, 2012): 1081–86; Dean Spade and Craig Willse, "Sex, Gender, and War in an Age of Multicultural Imperialism," *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*, 2014, 5–29.

described nationalism as something essentially heteronormative. As George Mosse argues in *Nationalism and Sexuality* written in 1985,[34] the original understanding of the relation between nationalism and sexuality defined homosexuality as a threat to the nation, because of being outside 'normal' reproductive sexuality, which is supposed to contribute to the growth of the national community. The term *homonationalism* describes how originally heteronormative nationalism can include the homosexual subject into the national imaginary.

The research conducted by Paul Mepschen, Jan Willem Duyvendak and Evelien H. Tonkens in 2010, describes homonationalism in the context of the Netherlands. The authors claim that there has been a remarkable shift in the social and political location of LGBT people in recent times.[35] The study argues that the discourse on sexuality relates to the growing anti-immigrant sentiments in Europe, as it frames LGBT rights as a *European value* and symbol of modernity, while portraying Muslims as non-modern, backward and homophobic subjects, threatening values essential to the modern state.

The shift in the political location of LGBT people described by Mepschen, Duyvendak and Tonkenscan can also be generalized outside the context of the Netherlands. In their openly Islamophobic video clip, the right-wing populist Danish People's Party uses a picture of a rainbow flag to symbolize equality, portrayed as one of the fundamental values of the country, which, according to the video is threaten by Muslim immigrants.[36] David Cameron, Prime Minister of the U.K. and leader of the Conservative Party recently announced that the U.K. will cut aid from African countries that persecute LGBT people.[37] These are certainly not the only

---

[34]George L. Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (Howard Fertig Pub, 1985).

[35]Paul Mepschen, Jan Willem Duyvendak, and Evelien Tonkens, "Sexual Politics, Orientalism, and Multicultural Citizenship in the Netherlands," *Sociology* 44, no. 5 (2010): 963–79.

[36]*Denmark: People's Party Video - I Am Denmark*, n.d., https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGAH1wGNqJM&list=PL9yAeO7re9C59Bd8Y4TlUh0XCEho7h024.

[37]"Cameron Warns of African Aid Cuts to Anti-Gay Countries," accessed May 20, 2015, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-15243409.

examples about right-wing conservative politicians standing up for LGBT rights justifying exclusionary practices by pointing to the *homophobic other*.

It is also crucial to mention how global patterns of LGBT movements make this procedure possible: from a radical oppositional status the movement becomes mainstream and commercialized, by favoring certain claims and discourses which are compatible with the dominant society, such as marriage equality, adoption rights, etc.[38] Thus, claims which represent normative patterns of the dominant society are more visible in the movement than those that criticize the system on the whole by addressing its oppressive nature. Through gaining equal rights, the LGBT community finds its place *within* and not in opposition to the system, accepting its rules. The notion of *homonormativity* marks this process. The politics of homonormativity does not question heteronormative assumptions and institutions but upholds them.[39] As a consequence, homosexuals who are in line with majoritarian normative societal values become part of the national project.

This shift can be observed in many European LGBT movements. At the present time, Pride marches, especially in Western Europe, resemble street carnivals, where LGBT people and their heterosexual allies happily celebrate together. However, these marches originally exist to commemorate New York City's Stonewall uprising, a series of violent demonstrations against the police that took place in 1969. Alternative, critical queer scenes often problematize this transformation, claiming that the movement has been depoliticized, even though equality is far from being achieved, especially for the less privileged members of the LGBT community.[40]

---

[38]Lisa Duggan, "Queering The State," *Social Text*, 1994, 2–14.

[39]Lisa Duggan, "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism," in *Materializing Democracy. Towards a Revitalized Cultural Politics* (Duke University Press, 2002).

[40]This argument resembles Nancy Fraser's work, Rethinking Recognition (2003). Fraser argues that at the turn of the century, there was a change in struggles for recognition. The notion of *revaluing identities* became a central theme, while claims for egalitarian redistribution declined. This new form of identity politics became silent on economic inequalities

Introducing the notion of homonationalism can deconstruct the myth of the modern, tolerant West, where *ancient hatred*, racism and homophobia are no longer present. Homonationalism problematizes the definition of LGBT rights as a marker of modernity and progress. It shows evidence that the promotion of gay rights is often deployed for racism and Islamophobia, and that racism is present within the LGBT community as well. Implementing a sexually more inclusive concept of citizenship can still – and often is – accompanied by racially exclusionary practices.

The vast majority of the work written on homonationalism and heteronormativity explores the context of the U.S, or Western Europe. However, it is questionable, whether these trends can be generalized to the context of the Central and Eastern European countries. As Moss argues, contrary to Western Europe, this region is characterized by '*good, old, heteronormative nationalism*'[41], and right-wing political discourse repeatedly positions LGBT people outside the national community. In the following subchapter I am going to explore this question, giving an overview about the literature examining questions of nationalism and sexuality in the Central and Eastern European region.

3.2 Nationalism and sexuality in Central and Eastern Europe

The relation between sexuality and nationalism in the context of Central and Eastern Europe is a highly under-researched area, as the majority of academic literature written on homonationalism represents the context of the U.S., or Western Europe.[42] However, in the past

Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking Recognition: Overcoming Displacement and Reification in Cultural Politics," in *Recognition Struggles and Social Movements: Contested Identities, Agency and Power* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 21–32.
[41]Moss, Kevin, "Split Europe: Homonationalism and Homophobia in Croatia."p215
[42]Kulpa and Mizielinska, "Why Study Sexualities in Central and Eastern Europe."

couple of years, the specificities of the CEE region have attracted the attention of a growing number of scholars.

As I pointed out previously, in the context of Western European, political discourse, LGBT rights and acceptance of sexual minorities are often framed as a fundamental value of the state, a *European value*, associated with progress and modernity. The same discourse is used to target groups who are portrayed as homogeneously intolerant. Another problematic aspect of this discourse is that it treats *Europe* as a homogeneous place characterized by the same, normative values. However, regarding LGBT politics, the social and political realities of European countries are different from each other.

Looking at the situation of LGBT rights and tolerance of sexual minorities in the context of Europe, statistical evidence points at a division between Western and Eastern European countries. Starting from 2012, ILGA-Europe,[43] a leading organization campaigning for lesbian, gay, and intersex rights, issues an annual review of the human rights situation of LGBTI people in Europe.[44] As Judit Takács and Ivett Szalma pointed out, the findings of ILGA do in fact correspond to the division of a tolerant West and a homophobic East: the 'rainbow map' turns green on the left, and red on the right side.[45]

As a number of scholars argue, the discourse defining LGBT rights as a *European value* targets Central and Eastern European countries similarly to the way it targets Muslim immigrants. They are portrayed as lacking certain normative values, and are thus backward and

---

[43]ILGA, founded in 1978 is a world wide leading organization consisting of more than thousand members from 110 countries campaigning for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex rights. ILGA-Europe, established in 1996 represents the European region of ILGA bringing together 407 organizations from 45 European countries. Since 1997, the non-governmental umbrella organization has a participative status at the Council of Europe
[44]http://www.ilga-europe.org/home/about_us/what_is_ilga_europe;
https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/15245131/Annual%20Review%202014%20web%20version.pdf
[45]Judit Takács and Ivett Szalma,
"HomofóbiaÉsAzAzonosNeműPartnerkapcsolatokIntézményesítettségeEurópában," *SZOCIOLÓGIAI SZEMLE* 22, no. 1 (2012): 61–88.

uncivilized. In the following subchapter I am going to explain and expand this argument, using literature examining nationalism and sexuality in the context of Central and Eastern Europe.

3.2.1. Central and Eastern Europe as the 'homophobic other'

In 2010, Marja van Bijsterveldt, the Dutch minister of Education, gave a speech at the annual conference of ILGA Europe in The Hague. Van Bijsterveldt concluded her speech with the following sentences:

"Every person deserves the right to live in freedom. I am saying this to you all, and in particular, to the forty representatives from East and Central European countries who, with our support, have had the courage to join us here today. As the playwright Oscar Wilde once said: 'Be yourself; everyone else is already taken.' Together, we have the responsibility for creating a society in which everyone counts. We have to achieve this together, side by side and with firm belief." [46]

This excerpt is a very illustrative example of the discursive construction of Western superiority when it comes to LGBT activism. It illustrates the portrayal of homophobia as a feature of the backward, Central and Eastern European region. According to the Dutch minister, activists from Central and Eastern Europe need the support of the *West* in order to have enough courage to join the ILGA Europe conference. *Freedom* in this context becomes the marker of modernity, already achieved by the *West*, to be achieved by the *East*.

Robert Kulpa's term, *Western leveraged pedagogy* describes this phenomenon in an elaborated manner. Kulpa conceptualized the term in *Western leveraged pedagogy of Central*

---

[46]"Speech of Marja van Bijsterveldt," accessed October 4, 2015, http://www.ilga-europe.org/home/about_us/annual_conference/the_hague_2010/day_by_day/opening_reception/marja_van_bijsterveldt.

and Eastern Europe: discourses of homophobia, tolerance, and nationhood.[47] According to the author, when it comes to the discussion about homophobia, sexual politics and nationhood, Central and Eastern Europe is often framed as a region which has to be mentored, taken care of by the more advanced *West*. According to Kulpa, this discursive strategy, which constantly refers to Central and Eastern Europe as *post-communist, in-transition*, thus, 'not liberal enough', 'not there yet', reinforces Western hegemony.[48]

Furthermore, Kulpa problematizes the fact that within this discourse Central and Eastern European actors are denied agency, as the authority to decide when the process of transition ends, belongs to the West.[49] This argument resonates well with the excerpt from Marja van Bijsterveldt's speech. For Van Bijsterveldt, the position of being an LGBT activist in the CEE region is defined from a Western point of view, as lacking agency, and in need of saving.

Kulpa's work is part of the growing number of recently published academic texts which claim that the LGBT movement and LGBT activism in Central and Eastern Europe is strongly linked to the idea of a set of ideas which are interpreted as *European*. However, in this context, the meaning of *European* is strongly connected to Western dominance, as it refers to standards yet to be achieved by the CEE. Taking this approach to examine the discourse about LGBT rights and homophobia in the European context, a number of scholars argue that the promotion of a modern, tolerant *West* defines Central and Eastern Europe in a similar way as it targets supposedly backward Muslim communities.[50]

However, while the Muslim 'other', as a supposedly homogeneous, homophobic minority is portrayed as frozen in time, and inherently different from the modern *West*, the CEE

---

[47]Kulpa, "Western Leveraged Pedagogy of Central and Eastern Europe."
[48]Ibid.
[49]Robert Kulpa and Joanna Mizielinska, "Contemporary Peripheries: Queer Studies, Circulation of Knowledge, and the East/West Divide," in *De-Centring Western Sexualities: Central And Eastern European Perspectives*, ed. Robert Kulpa and Joanna Mizielinska (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 11–26.p19
[50]Moss, Kevin, "Split Europe: Homonationalism and Homophobia in Croatia."p215

18

region is constructed as underdeveloped, but being on its way to 'catch up' with the West. In Kulpa's words, the '*Western present [appears] as the CEE future to be achieved'*. [51] While the *Muslim other* appears as resistant to progress, thus, a threat to *Western values*, Eastern Europe has to be helped, mentored.[52] The Muslim other is fundamentally opposotional to Western values, but the Eastern Europe has the capacity (and the presumed desire) to catch up. This discourse constructs *West* and *East* as two homogeneous regions, the former characterized by tolerance, the latter by homophobia. This simplistic division obscures the complexity of the political reality in both contexts.

However, it is important to note that the treatment of sexual minorities as a marker of progress and civilization is a relatively new phenomenon. Analyzing texts produced by transnational LGBT organizations (e.g. ILGA-Europe) and statements made by European Union institutions, Nicole Butterfield points out that sexual rights and the protection of sexual minorities entered in the liberal human rights discourse only recently. Butterfield argues that even though both transnational LGBT organizations and EU institutions present the concept of *sexual* human rights as a fundamental *European value*, the struggle against discrimination of sexual minorities is recent, while the state's role in reinforcing and perpetuating heteronormative values is much older.[53]

As Philip Ayoub and David Paternotte argue, the definition of LGBT rights as a *European value* first appeared in activists' discourses. However, it is true, that as the result of activism, EU institutions started to endorse LGBT claims and consider LGBT rights. Ayoub

---

[51]Kulpa and Mizielinska, "Contemporary Peripheries: Queer Studies, Circulation of Knowledge, and the East/West Divide." P17

[52]Dr Robert Kulpa, "Nations and Sexuality - 'West' and 'East,'" SSRN Scholarly Paper (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, 2011), http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=1720965.p50

[53]Butterfield, "LGBTIQ Advocacy at the Intersection of Transnational and Local Discourses on Human Rights and Citizenship in Croatia."p225

and Paternotte describe this relation as reciprocal: activism results in institutional achievements, which then have an impact on the social movement.[54]

However, both Butterfield and Ayoub and Paternotte agree that despite the fact that transnational LGBT organizations repeatedly refer to the protection of sexual minorities as a *European value*, in fact there is no EU consensus about sexual human rights, and LGBT rights are still marginal within EU policies.[55] As highlighted by the authors, referring to LGBT rights as a *European* value is closely linked to an idea of *civilization,* which reinforces cultural boundaries, and promotes the idea of a progressive *West* and a less advanced, homophobic Eastern European region.[56] Following this argument, Ayoub and Paternotte draw a parallel between this form of '*European sexual nationalism*'[57] and the theory of homonationalism. The propagation of LGBT rights as a *European* value defines Western countries as proper European member states, while characterizing countries in the Central and Eastern European region as less advanced. This discursive construction essentializes the meaning of homophobia as an *Eastern* characteristic.

In this section I showed evidence that in many regards, Central and Eastern Europe can be interpreted as the *homophobic other* of the *West*. LGBT rights acquired the symbolic meaning of being a *European value,* even though the association between Europe and LGBT rights is not necessarily based on institutional categories, or even is a political reality. As LGBT groups and EU institutions repeatedly define LGBT values as a *European values*, their symbolic meaning is constructed. However, this discourse disregards the heterogeneity of political realities in the region, and reinforces the subordination of Central and Eastern European

---

[54]Ayoub and Paternotte, *LGBT Activism and the Making of Europe*.p14
[55] Ibid.
[56]Ibid.p16
[57]Ibid.

countries. In the following chapter, I am going to focus on how the discourse linking LGBT rights to the idea of *Europe* is reflected in discourses on nationalism and sexuality in Hungary.

4. Nationalism and Sexuality in the context of Hungary

The following chapter examines how discourses of homosexuality relate to discourses of nationhood, within and outside the local LGBT movement in Hungary. I am going to argue that the symbolic meaning of LGBT rights as a *European value* is salient outside and inside the LGBT community, both in the case of pro- and anti-LGBT discourse. However, as I am going to point out, the right-wing nationalist discourse defines the meaning of *European/Western* as antagonistic to the idea of the *Hungarian nation,* while pro-LGBT discourse refers to it as a standard, an ideal to follow. Thus, the "two sides" share the same vocabulary, but with opposite connotations. In this chapter, I am going to reflect on the relation of nationalism and sexuality in the Hungarian context. I will give an overview about the recent political changes, while citing and close reading relevant excerpts from political and public discourse.

4.1. Discourses on nation and sexuality in the context of Hungary

In 2013, during a debate in the European Parliament, Viktor Orbán, Prime Minister of Hungary said the following:

'There was a comment, if I remember correctly about LGBT people. If I understand correctly this refers to the rights of homosexual people. I would like to clarify something. In Hungary, we have a constitution which defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman. One of each, one man, one woman. And this is not aimed against anybody. This is about a 4000

years old tradition. We[decision makers in the EU]can have a debate about whether we should maintain this tradition or not, but you should accept one thing: this is a 4000 year old tradition. 2000 years in the Jewish culture, and 2000 years in Christianity. We would like to maintain this tradition, and I simply cannot understand why anyone in the European Parliament thinks that Hungary's right to maintain its traditions can be restricted. The Hungarian constitution does not harm anyone. It only speaks in a clear manner.'[58]

The first sentence of Orbán's comment is very telling. He expresses his confusion and uncertainty about the term *LGBT*. This discursive strategy on the one hand portrays the LGBT movement as a foreign import alien to the *Hungarian nation*, suggesting that if the country's Prime Minister has never heard of the expression, it cannot be an inherent part of the nation. Secondly, he uses this setting to rename LGBT people as *homosexuals*. The act of re-naming can be interpreted as an expression of power. Moreover, Orbán's feigned confusion about the term 'LGBT' (*'LMBT')* dismisses it as a new and unnecessary way of expressing a concept for which a satisfactory term already exists. Furthermore, his use of 'homosexuality' reduces the complexity of the inclusive term LGBT into a term referring simply to attraction to the 'opposite sex', reinforcing a male/female binary. This interpretation is in line with the heteronormative definition of family, favored by the Hungarian right-wing conservative government.

The same pattern can be observed in another, recent statement of the Prime Minister, made on the occasion of the *International Day Against Homophobia*, May 2015.

"Hungary is a serious country, built upon traditional values. Hungary is a tolerant country. Tolerance does not mean that we treat different lifestyles the same way as we treat our own. We recognize the difference. Tolerance means patience, tolerance is being able to live together. This is how it is understood in the Hungarian constitution, which differentiates between marriage between a man and a woman, and other forms of living together. I am grateful to the Hungarian community of homosexuals that they don't provoke us, like they do in many European countries."[59]

---

[58]"Orbán Viktor: A Házasság Védelmében," accessed April 26, 2015,
    https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2B0eLMF-1g.
[59] "Orbán: HálásVagyok a Magyar Homoszexuálisoknak," accessed May 20, 2014,
    http://index.hu/video/2015/05/18/orban_halas_vagyok_a_magyar_homoszexualisoknak/.

In this excerpt Orbán overtly separates *homosexuals* from the Hungarian national community, creates a division between *us*, the *Hungarian people*, a heterosexual community, and *them*, the homosexuals, whose lifestyle is not compatible with the heteronormative traditional values characterizing the country. Nevertheless, as long as the homosexuals do not infringe on heterosexuals' way of life, they can be 'tolerated' by the state and Hungarian heteronormative society. At the same time, this ideal state of balance that Orbán identifies within Hungary is contrasted with the problems of *Europe*. In his formulation, Hungary is not faced with the provocation by homosexuals as is the case in some European countries. These European countries are implied to be a threatening, morally decaying world, where LGBT people's voice is louder than in Hungary.

To understand the broader context of these two excerpts, it is necessary to give a short overview about the recent political changes in Hungary. In 2010 FIDESZ and its coalition partner, the Christian Democratic People's Party (KDNP), won the Hungarian parliamentary elections. The new government had the two-third majority of the seats in the Parliament, which was enough to replace Hungary's existing constitution. The *Fundamental Law of Hungary*, designed by the FIDESZ-KDNP government, entered into force on January 1, 2012.

The new constitution has been widely criticized. One of the controversies concerns the preamble of the constitution, which contains references to Christianity, Saint Stephen and the role of the family in preserving nationhood:

'*God bless the Hungarians. (…) We are proud that our king Saint Stephen built the Hungarian State on solid ground and made our country a part of Christian Europe one thousand years ago. (…) We recognize the role of Christianity in preserving nationhood. (…) We hold that the family and the nation constitute the principal framework of our coexistence (…).*' [60]

---

[60]"The New Fundamental Law of Hungary," accessed April 25, 2015,
http://www.kormany.hu/download/a/1c/11000/The%20New%20Fundamental%20Law%20of%20Hungary.pdf., p2

The *Hungarian nation* is a key element of the constitutional reform, and as stated in the preamble, the concept of *family* is of high relevance in this regard.

However, the Fundamental Law draws very explicit lines defining who belongs and who does not belong to the national community, and the boundaries of exclusion are overtly expressed in the definition of family implemented in the new constitution. The Fundamental Law of Hungary defines *family* on the basis of marriage, and parental-children relations. Marriage is determined as a union between a woman and a man, thus, same-sex couples and unmarried heterosexual couples are excluded from the concept, as well as married heterosexual couples who are unable or unwilling to have children.[61] This highly limited definition has social, financial and symbolic implications as well. The concept implies that symbolically, non-heterosexual or unmarried couples, and couples without children do not fit in the definition. This also implies that LGBT people are not amongst the preferred members of the national community.[62]

Regarding the case of same-sex couples it is true that their legal status has not changed with the new constitution. However, the fear of further steps back concerning their rights is not unfounded. Moreover, with the constitutional ban on same-sex marriage there is almost no chance that it could be legally recognized in the near future.[63]At the present moment, based on legislation enacted in 2009, same-sex couples are allowed to register for civil partnerships, however, they are not allowed to adopt a child together, and nor can a person adopt the child of his or her partner.[64]

---

[61]"Hungary's Constitutional Undermining of Internationally Protected Human Rights," accessed April 25, 2014, http://livewire.amnesty.org/2013/03/12/hungarys-constitutional-undermining-of-internationally-protected-human-rights/.

[62] András László Pap, "Who Are 'We, the People'? Biases and Preferences in the Hungarian Fundamental Law," in *Challenges and Pitfalls in the Recent Hungarian Constitutional Development – Discussing the New Fundamental Law of Hungary*, ed. Zsuzsanna Fejes, Fanni Mandák, and Zoltán Szente (Paris, 2015), http://real.mtak.hu/18617/.

[63]Ibid.p7

[64]"JogiGyorstalpaló - Partnerkapcsolat," April 26, 2013, http://www.hatter.hu/programjaink/jogsegelyszolgalat/jogi-gyorstalpalo/partnerkapcsolat.

As illustrated in Orbán's statements cited in the beginning of this chapter, the Prime Minister disqualifies the question of LGBT rights from the political agenda, by framing the issue as a cultural question. He defends heteronormativity as Hungary's right to preserve its cultural values. Taking the same approach, *Europe* appears as an external threat to these national values. Thus, progressive ideas coming from abroad, such as LGBT rights, are contrasted to traditional values of the *Hungarian nation.*

However, looking at pro-LGBT political discourse, the same symbolic associations are being used, only with the opposite connotation. In 2007, the opening speech of the Budapest Pride Festival was given by Gábor Szetey, a minister of state in the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP). Szetey came out as gay in front of the public:

"I believe, because I want to believe, that Hungary - we - belong to the first world, we belong to the West. We have to destroy the walls. We have to start doing it, because if we don't do it, if I don't do it, then no one will. So. I am Gábor Szetey, Minister of State. I believe in God, in love, in equality and freedom. I am Hungarian, I am European. I am an economist and a politician. A partner, a friend, sometimes an enemy. And gay. (...) And I am going to say it out loud, so that everyone can say it out loud. And then gay pride is going to be what it has to be. And then Hungary, our country, my country is going to become what it can be, a free country, where one more person is equal. I am Gábor Szetey, believer, Hungarian, European. A member of the government. Gay."[65]

The politician interprets the act of coming out as a step towards the West, the 'first world', a land of freedom where LGBT people are treated as equal citizens. The symbolic wall he refers to reinforces the binary division between the progressive West and the backward East, the further characterized by acceptance of sexual minorities, the latter by homophobia. He emphasizes Hungary's European belonging, arguing that the country belongs to the West.

It is also notable how religion is being used in his speech. By emphasizing his religious beliefs, Szetey claims that there is no contradiction between traditional values and progressive

---

[65]*Szetey Gábor Bejelenti, Hogy Meleg*, accessed May 20, 2015,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGspUU6fx9A.

ideas, which legitimizes the argument of Hungary's Western belonging by discrediting the discourse contrasting religion with modernity.[66] Moreover, the emphasis on religion can also be interpreted as a tool to strengthen Szetey's claim of belonging to the Hungarian nation, *even though* he is gay. However, this argumentation is partly problematic, as it reinforces the idea that Christianity is an essential building block of the Hungarian nation, which is often deployed by right-wing political discourse to exclude non-Christians from the national community. Contrary to the previous cases of Orbán's statements , here the meaning of traditional is translated as backward, while progressive is defined as modern, civilized, a state to be achieved.

Another illustrative case of pro-LGBT discourse linking sexual freedom to the idea of the West while describing homophobia as an Eastern characteristic, is an article published in 2014, right after the Budapest Pride march, on a Hungarian online news channel.[67] I would like to cite the article because it perfectly exemplifies how the East/West hierarchy can take an essentialist form when it comes to the understanding of homophobia.

 '*I realized years ago, the day I was watching the summary of the Budapest Pride in the evening news that I don't want to be associated with a very large part of the Hungarian society.'* starts the author of the article distancing herself from a certain type of people in her national community.

---

[66]It is important to note that Szetey was member of a government which was target of protest and massive demonstrations demanding the government's resignation for months, not long before the minister's coming out. In 2006, after the scandalous *Öszöd speech* became publicized, crowds of people started to demonstrate on the streets of Budapest. The violent demonstrations were followed by a disproportionate response of the police, which created a narrative about martyrdom, legitimizing violent protests, and changing the nature of street politics in the capital. I would argue that Szetey's coming out, and his affiliation with the unpopular government explains how LGBT people became a central target of right-wing extremists in 2007.

[67]"Te Mesélsz Buzivicceket, de Arról Hallgatsz, Hogy Az Asszony Nem Tette Szét Nyolc Éve," accessed November 5, 2014, http://www.hir24.hu/elet-stilus/2014/07/01/te-meselsz-buzivicceket-de-arrol-hallgatsz-hogy-az-asszony-nem-tette-szet-nyolc-eve/.

Later on she specifies who are these people she does not want to be associated with as a Hungarian, and why. She compares her experiences of the violently attacked Budapest Pride March with the LGBT Pride street celebration in Berlin, the *Christopher Street Day*.

'Wunderbar! Applauds the gray-haired gentleman next to me, as the beauty (a transvestite) turns around. (...) I felt like I am witnessing something incredible, special, and extraordinary. More precisely, something that would be extraordinary at home, in Hungary. (...) Then with a laughter, I put aside my uptight Hungarianness and joined the rainbow colored crowd.'

In this paragraph the author compares two different norms. One is the German norm where the city celebrates together with the LGBT festival, even gray-haired old men, which in this excerpt can be understood as a symbol for the most conventional 'type' of citizen. The context shows that the Pride Parade in Berlin is not a radical, provocative event, but a cheerful day to celebrate.[68] The excerpt also points to the conflict between the German, pro-LGBT normality, and *Hungarianness*, which the author has to put aside to be able to join the celebrating crowd.

'Now it's Pride again, far from Europe, close to Hungary. (...) You, who go to the march to shout 'dirty faggots', you are an asshole. And this feeling in my throat and my stomach and the metal flavor in my mouth, it is all because of the shame that I feel for having to share this country with people like you. (...) You will never understand that this (the festival) is not about provocation, it is not about you, it is about Stonewall, in '69. It is needless to explain this to you, to someone so stupid that doesn't even know if Stonewall is a city, or a state in America, or a street in London.(...) Because you think that your world is the 'normal', with beer on sale from LIDL, and 25 kg-s overweight.'

The author describes the 'Hungarian normality' as pathetic and backward compared to what she experienced in Germany. The comparison is framed in essentialist terms. The differences in the LGBT march between the two countries are interpreted as deriving from the differences between German and Hungarian citizens: the former are characterized as open and accepting, thus *European*, the latter as backward and hostile, '*far from Europe*'.

---

[68] What the author of the article describes and celebrates here is the same phenomena termed as *homonormativity* by queer theorists, explained in the previous chapter.

This subchapter explored how discourses on tolerance and homophobia are interconnected with the debate about positioning Hungary on the symbolic map of Europe, influenced by the East/West discursive chapter discussed in the first chapter of my thesis. These patterns of the local political discourse are crucial to understand the context of local LGBT politics. In the following I am going to give a short overview of the history of the LGBT movement in Hungary.

4.2. Short history of the LGBT movement in Hungary

The Pink Picnic, organized in September, 1992, is commonly cited as the origin of LGBT Pride festivals in Hungary. This lesbian and gay picnic was organized in the woods of the Buda hills near Budapest. As the location indicates, the event was not so much about visibility, nor about protesting. Rather, it was about organizing a community event for lesbians and gays amongst themselves. After the decades of socialism, the picnic was a unique event for LGBT people, and a significant milestone in the history of the movement. One year later, in 1993, the first gay film festival was organized in Budapest, on the occasion of the World AIDS Day.[69] The second film festival was organized in 1997, the same year as the first Pride March happened in Budapest. In this case, visibility was a key issue. Approximately 300 people marched through the streets of Budapest holding banners with LGBT symbols. From 1998 the film festival became an annual event, organized together with the march.

The case of the *first counter protester* also dates back to 1998, to the second Pride March, which started from Central European University in Budapest's district V and finished at Vörösmarty square.

---

[69]"Hazai Hagyományok," accessed May 20, 2015, http://budapestpride.hu/rolunk/hazai-hagyomanyok.

Figure 1 The first counter protester, 1998. Mások Magazine, August, 1998.

The man in the picture (see figure 1) became an anecdotal reference in the history of Pride

Marches. I heard about the case from one of my interviewees, and received the picture from the

archive of Háttér Society,[70] published in the *Mások Magazine*, in august 1998.[71] It is interesting

that the protester uses English to express his disapproval of the march. This might imply that in

1998 the LGBT movement, a previously unknown phenomenon on the streets of Budapest, was

perceived as a foreign import. In his bilingual use of language - the Hungarian *buzi* (fag) and

the English *go home* - he is addressing a specific type of Hungarian who has been influenced

by outside LGBT politics.

Looking at the early years, it is true that the events were organized following

international trends, or international days of commemoration, such as the AIDS day. As one of

my interviewees remembers, the idea of the march was also pressured by a member of the

---

[70]HáttérTársaság a Melegekért

[71]I received this picture i email, from the editor of the Mások magazine. This is how I know that it was published
    in August, 1998. Unfortunately, I could not find any further reference to the publication.

community who previously lived in the United States. Another interesting aspect of the story of the *first counter protester* is that ten years later the man in the picture wrote an open letter to the Szimpozion Association, a gay organization, which was published online. The letter is an open apology.

'Now I am rather neutral about this question, first of all because I see what kind of people are 'on my side'. It freaks me out to be in the same team with these people. This is why I am neutral now, even though I still maintain my original, homophobic opinion. (…) I have to ask for your apology. I did not know any of you, and my opinion was over-generalizing. Sorry. In other words: Buzi, don't go home!'[72]

Thus, he did not apologize because he changed his views on homosexuality. He wrote the letter because he did not want to be identified with right-wing extremists who attacked the Pride in 2007. This case is a good illustration of how the tensions surrounding the Pride March transformed in the past decades. In the first decade, the march was rather a peaceful event. Only later it became targeted by right-wing extremists, and became isolated from the city by security fences.[73]

According to anthropologist Hadley Renkin, the LGBT movement became the center of right-wing attention because LGBT politics in Hungary challenged the traditional concept of national belonging, by simultaneously claiming national and transnational connections. This means that on the one hand the movement operates with slogans and symbols taken over from the global LGBT movement, on the other hand it emphasizes its belonging to the national

---

[72]"Buzi Go Home?," accessed May 20, 2015, http://melegvagyok.hu/tortenet/buzi_go_home.

[73]According to annual analysis conducted by the Political Capital institute first in 2009 on the *Demand for Right-Wing Extremism* (DEREX), in the first decade of the 2000's, the number of potential right-wing extremists in Hungary doubled from the original 10 precent to 21 precent. It is a generally accepted opinion that Jobbik, Hungary's largest far-right party, managed to gain its popularity partlyby pushing the limits of what is considered acceptable in the political and public discourse in Hungary. The radicalization of public/political speech can closely be linked to the growing tensions around the Budapest Pride festival.
"Látlelet 2009. Kutatás iÖsszefoglaló a Hazai Szélsőjobboldal Megerősödésének Okairól.," accessed March 12, 2012, www.politicalcapital.hu/letoltes/20091028_PC_Latlelet_2009.pdf.

community. According to Renkin this strategy challenges existing visions of post-socialist Hungarian identity.[74]

As I mentioned before, the first atrocities happened in 2007 when the march was violently attacked by right-extremists. It is noteworthy too, that the conflicts immediately became framed as an attack on Hungary's European belonging. As Dorottya Rédai points out based on media analysis conducted after the 13th Budapest Pride March in 2008, the atrocities occurred at the march generated a heated discussion on issues of national identity and nationalism. Orientation toward *the West/Europe* vs. towards *the East* was one central topic within these debates. The author shows evidence that generally the media interpreted homophobia and the attacks on the march as anti-Europe sentiments, while portraying the march as an appeal to Europe.[75] However, I would argue that any interpretation of the tensions, which disregards the political peculiarities of the local context is too simplistic, and reinforces the discourse constructing Hungary as a "backward" country, lagging behind "Europe"/ "the West".

In this chapter I gave an overview about the recent political changes in Hungary, the political discourse on sexuality and nationalism, and the main shifts and tendencies in the local LGBT movement. This chapter will serve as an essential part to interpret the interviews I conducted with local LGBT activists. Analyzing the interviews, I am going to look at how the narratives relate to the broader sociopolitical context they are embedded in, thus, local political discourse is essential in this regards.

Due to the limited scope of this thesis, I only cited the most relevant examples of political discourse. These excerpts served as a good illustration of my arguments, furthermore,

---

[74]Hadley Z. Renkin, "Homophobia and Queer Belonging in Hungary," *Focaal* 2009, no. 53 (2009): 20–37, doi:10.3167/fcl.2009.530102.p21

[75]DorottyaRédai, "Un/Queering the Nation?: Gender, Sexuality, Nationality and Homophobia in the Media Discourse on the Violence against the 2008 Gay Pride in Budapest," *Sextures* 2 (2012): 47–64.

by conducting close-reading, I pointed out less overt meanings, which contributed to a more sophisticated interpretation. This was necessary to contextualize the subsequent chapter of this thesis, and to accurately interpret the LGBT activist narratives I am going to analyze. However, I believe that to gain a fully complex understanding on how nationalism and sexuality are interconnected and related to each other in the context of Hungary, more systematic, methodologically accurate research should be conducted on political discourse.

5. Research Design

As I pointed out in the second chapter, there is a scarcity of research on the relation of nationalism and sexuality in Central and Eastern Europe. Exploring this region is highly relevant to gain a complex understanding, and deconstruct the myth that portrays CEE as a homogeneous place characterized by homophobia, lagging behind the West. My research will attempt to give an insight into how the Hungarian LGBT community perceives its own, often homophobic national environment and how much it identifies with the view of LGBT rights being a *Western phenomenon*, alien to Hungarian national and cultural values. The analysis of this community's perceptions can function as a means of deconstructing simplistic dichotomies, and show a more complex approach to nationalism and sexuality.

I am going to explore discourses of sexuality and nationalism reflected in narratives of Hungarian LGBT activists. Looking at how these discourses affect the activist milieu is relevant, because it has implications to local LGBT politics, furthermore it contributes to the understanding of nationalism and sexuality in the region.

5.1. Research Questions

Designing my research project, I considered the following two main research questions:

1. What are the effects of the polarizing East/West discourse on local LGBT activist?

2. How does the local political discourse, positioning the LGBT movement as antagonistic to the idea of nation, affect LGBT activists?

These questions emerged from my theoretical framing. My initial working hypothesis was that the polarizing East/West discourse is internalized by local LGBT activists, and results in framing local homophobia and the atrocities happening from 2007, as an *Eastern* characteristic. However, as I gained a better understanding of the issue during data collection, my pre-assumptions changed, and further research questions emerged.

In qualitative research, this process is regarded as acceptable, the research questions often go through changes as the research develops.[76]

During the data collection, a third question emerged, concerning how critical concepts, such as *homonationalism* and *homonormativity* function in Hungarian LGBT scenes.

5.2.   Research Methods

---

[76]Steven J. Taylor és Robert Bogdan, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*, 2.kiad. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1984).p127

I used the qualitative method of in-depth semi-structured interviews. I conducted 10 face-to-face interviews. I found the participants using the technique of snowball sampling.

I structured my interviews according to the following design:

I. Introduction: *Which LGBT organizations are you involved in; what are your main activities;*

II. The LGBT movement in Hungary: *Do you see any changing tendencies; how do you see the main directions of the movement;*

III. Atrocities during the march: *What happened in 2007; what do you think about isolating the march; do you see any solutions to the conflict;*

IV. Conflict with the local context: *What is local homophobia about; can it be tackled in any way*[77]

Within each section, I asked open-ended questions, aiming to uncover hidden narratives. In the process of analysis I used the combination of narrative analysis and critical discourse analysis. I am aware that the Hungarian LGBT movement is embedded in several institutions and connected through several ties, however, the Pride March can be interpreted as a key site of local LGBT politics, thus, I centered my research questions around the phenomenon of this event. Using these constructivist approaches was adequate, since I am examining the narrative construction of categories and concepts, rather than treating narratives as giving objective account.

In order to construct typologies, I used the thematic approach of narrative analysis. As Catherine Riessman points out, this method is useful to explore and find common patterns across multiple cases.[78] The premise of narrative analysis is that narratives are embedded in their

---

[77] The italic text refers to the typical questions asked within each section
[78] Catherine Kohler Riessman, "Narrative Analysis," in *Narrative, Memory & Everyday Life* (Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield, 2005), 1–7.p3

social context, thus, the individual's personal experiences reflect socially determined schemes.[79] As Vieda Skultans argues, the researcher should focus on the nature of the intersection of social and personal in individual narratives.[80] In this context, representations of 'self' and 'others' are interpreted within the broader context in which they are produced.

Critical discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary approach, exploring both the linguistic and the socio-political aspects of narratives. To minimize the risk of open interpretation, Wodak suggests a "triangulatory approach".[81] This means that analyzing the narratives, the researcher should take into consideration both the broader sociopolitical and historical context and the intertextual relationship between discourses, as well as the immediate language, meaning the use of specific grammar and/or vocabulary.

Combining these two approaches, I am going to look at how the individual narratives reflect the political discourse on nationalism and sexuality, both within and outside the local context. I am going to look at how categories of *East* and *West, Europe, progress* and *traditions,* the in-group and the out-group are constructed. The in-depth analysis will shed light on how the construction of these categories is influenced by the discursive patterns present in the context of local political discourse, how it is affected by global schemes of the East/West discourse, and by critical concepts such as *homonormativity* and *homonationalism,* problematizing global trends in the LGBT movement.

---

[79]Gabriele Rosenthal, "The Narrated Life Story: On the Interrelation Between Experience, Memory and Narration," in *Narrative, Memory & Knowledge: Representations, Aesthetics, Contexts*, ed. Kate Milnes (Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield, 2006), 1–16.

[80]Vieda Skultans, *The Testimony of Lives: Narrative and Memory in Post-Soviet Latvia*, 1 edition (London ; New York: Routledge, 1997).

[81]Ruth Wodak, "Does Sociolinguistics Need Social Theory? New Perspectives in Critical Discourse Analysis" (Key note speech, SS 2000, Bristol, April 27, 2000), https://www.univie.ac.at/linguistics/forschung/wittgenstein/unemploy/bristol5.htm.

5.3. The Sample

I conducted interviews with 10 activists, all of them engaged in LGBT organizations or groups based in Budapest. I interviewed people from lesbian, gay, and trans* groups, as well as from the foundation responsible for organizing the annual Budapest Pride Festival.

In the discussion and analysis of my findings, I am not going to name any person or organization represented in the interviews. I chose to make this decision, partly because I would like to avoid contributing to any tension within this scene, by presenting possibly clashing opinions. Secondly, informing my interviewees about anonymity helped to create a safe environment where they could feel secure about sharing their views and opinions about sensitive questions. Thirdly, guaranteeing the anonymity of the organizations was important because it encouraged the interviewees to share their own personal opinion, and not being limited to the official standpoint of the organization they are affiliated to. As a conclusion, the personal narratives reflect the organizational standpoint, as well as the beliefs and attitudes of the individuals.

One limitation of the research is that I only had the chance to talk to people who are involved in Budapest-based organizations and groups, thus, my results only reflect on the experiences of those who live in the capital.[82]

6. Findings

---

[82]Talking to people from outside the capital could be a relevant future direction of this research, as it would shed light on how categories such as *East/West*, *progressive/traditional*, *capital/countryside* are represented in their narratives.

6.1. Reflections on *Europe/the West* as the normative context

As I pointed out in the theoretical chapters, LGBT activism in the Central and Eastern European region is strongly connected to the idea of *Europe/the West.* In the following, I am going to examine how exactly the concept of *Europe/the West* is constructed in the narratives about the Pride March and the conflicts erupted around it in 2007. I will analyze how the concept is referred to linguistically, what characteristics and features are attributed to it, and from what perspective are these attributes expressed. Based on the interviews, I identified two main directions. The first one attributes the tensions to the local context, the second one to the movement and the way the event is organized. In the following, I am going to present and analyze these two directions.

'People don't know about human rights, freedom of speech, there are so many reasons why people want to be normative [within the LGBT movement]. It would be good if they would be aware of these things, but that would take 30 years of practicing democracy that is missing. (...) But on the other hand, it works [the march] as a form of community empowerment. When people come from the countryside, you can tell that they have no experience like this, and this is very important.'
Interviewee 3.

This excerpt is part of the interviewee's explanation about the conflicts surrounding the Pride March. *Human rights* and *freedom of speech* are interpreted as universal values, indispensable standards to achieve. However, the *people*, meaning local Hungarians, are presented as underdeveloped, not ready to practice these values. Their backwardness is positioned in a time-frame, interpreted as missing 30 years of practicing democracy, constructed as a post-socialist legacy. Thus, in a hidden form, the East/West dichotomy does appear in the narrative, associated with post-socialist/ democratic societies.

At the end of the excerpt another dichotomy appears: that of the *capital/countryside,* a prevailing dichotomy in Hungary's modernity debate. In the capital, the event of the march is a

37

compromise, as it is too normative, however, for people coming from the countryside it turns into something extraordinary. The polarized narrative resembles the broader discourse on modernization and the East/West dichotomy. The East/West dichotomy and the notion of normativity are prevalent in the following excerpt as well.

"There, if the mayor does not go to the Pride the whole city is offended, and the whole thing is a huge festival, and this probably feels amazing. I would like to make it there once, to the West. But the whole society is very different, in Canada or the U.S., and here at home. It would be good if we could organize a Pride like that, but for that the attitudes of the majority need to change."
Interviewee 5.

The *West* is framed as a place where the Pride March takes the form of a *huge festival,* where the mayor is expected to be present, state politics and LGBT politics are thus in line with each other. This is probably emphasized by the interviewee because it is in stark contrast with the current Hungarian political context. The presence of the mayor normalizes the event, which, as the excerpt shows evidence, in the eyes of the interviewee is a desirable setting. He attributes the dissimilarity between the *West* and Hungary on the one hand to the differences in the attitudes of the majority, on the other hand to lack of political legitimating in Hungary. It is interesting to note that he does not refer to any connection of causality between these two factors.

The presence of politicians as a legitimating factor was a reoccurring pattern across the interviews. The following excerpt can also serve as an illustration to this claim. Moreover, it adds further elements to the narrative representation of *East* and *West*.

That year, Zagreb Pride got surprisingly ahead of us. And I remember, this was even a question of self-esteem, because the years before there were like 3000 people, and then, the same year when we, with a lot of work, managed to have 10000 people, 15000 people went to the Zagreb Pride. And it was mysterious how they managed, and there were no fences, even though it's the Balkans, and they have these things there in neighboring countries that would suggest conflicts

can happen, and yes, there is homophobia and transphobia in Croatia as well, but the Pride was a big celebration, and politicians came too.

Interviewee 4.

This narrative stages a scene of competition. The interviewee recalls the year when Zagreb Pride managed to have more participants than Budapest Pride. The case is referred to as *surprising*, as Zagreb is positioned as belonging to a more Eastern region compared to Budapest, where atrocities are more expectable to occur than successful Pride Marches. Moreover, the interviewee emphasizes that even though homophobia and transphobia are present in Croatia as well, there were politicians who came to the event. Similarly to the previous excerpt, the presence of politicians is interpreted as making the LGBT march legitimate in its local context. However, while in a Western context it is framed as normal, in the *Balkan* context, political legitimacy turns into something *surprising*.

Based on these excerpts, a symbolic map of *Europe* emerges, where the *East* is characterized by homophobia, while the *West* is a place where LGBT Prides take the form of big festivals involving big crowds of people, legitimated by local politicians. This symbolic map of Europe appeared in all of the interviews I conducted, even though some of the interviewees problematized its existence. The following excerpt is a good illustration to the critical approach.

'I don't agree with this discourse that we have to catch up with the 'West', and these 'European values' as if it was something superior and we had to fit the standards. This is about privileges, economically we will never be able to catch up with them because this is the whole point of global capitalism, and we cannot be all equal. And this whole thing is linked to cultural superiority, and sexual freedom is associated with it. And then for them [the right extremist counter protesters] it seems like someone was trying to force a foreign import on to the country. Which on one hand is not true, and on the other hand this discourse about catching up with the West really contributes to it.'

Interviewee 7.

In this excerpt the critique of the polarizing East/West discourse is framed as a critique of global capitalism. The interviewee argues that the discourse of *catching up with the West* is based on an illusion, thus, it only reinforces the inferior position of non-Western country. On the other hand, the East/West discourse links sexual freedom to this imagined Western superior status, alienating the movement from its local context. This approach interprets homophobia as a reaction to the discourse advocating modernization by following Western standards.

Thus, contrary to the previous excerpts, instead of defined as the ideal stage of development, in this case it is the idea of a developed *West* that turns the *East* homophobic. However, even though it is addressed in a critical way, the association of the West with progress and a future stage of development is present in this excerpt as well. The following example also illustrates the critical approach, which problematizes global trends in the LGBT movement.

"These are international tendencies, in Western Europe there are alternative prides everywhere, and even the alternative prides have alternatives. Probably as the context and the general opinion are changing, companies start to advertise themselves through pride. This is happening here as well, and then those who organize the festival now, can decide whether they want the human rights approach, or this festival feeling, where companies advertise themselves, like in Western Europe."

Interview 6.

In this excerpt, alternative pride events, the emergence of an approach questioning mainstream LGBT politics, is defined as a symbol of progress, also positioned as belonging to Western Europe. The commercialization of the LGBT movement is described as an inevitable, linear process, which is happening in Hungary as well, even though Hungary is portrayed as being in an earlier stage. In this context, Western Europe acquires a double-meaning: on the one hand it is a place where the mainstream movement is more commercialized, on the other hand it is also more political, due to the emergence of alternative prides and critical scenes.

To conclude, the symbolic map of Europe, divided into *West* as a site of progress and *East* as a more backward region was salient in the narratives. *Backwardness* was often defined as a post-socialist legacy. Moreover, it was linked to the fact that in Hungary, the LGBT movement is lacking political legitimacy, in contrast to Western Europe. Part of the interviews explained local homophobia connected to these ideas. Another part of the interviews problematized the position of the *West* as the reference to follow, claiming that this approach neglects the local social reality, reinforces subordination and contributes to homophobia. An additional relevant result is that the emergence of critical, alternative LGBT sites is also linked to the idea of *Western progress*.

6. 2. Being *othered* in the context of Hungary

In the second part of my analysis I am going to examine how the interviews relate to the political discourse and practices of *othering* LGBT in the Hungarian context. As I pointed out in the second chapter, conservative right wing political discourse repeatedly positions LGBT people in Hungary outside the national community. The new constitution of Hungary openly implies that LGBT people are not amongst the preferred members of the *Hungarian nation*.

"This present government has great responsibility in creating tension, because they stigmatize different minority groups, and the security fences are also about this. They want to send the message that people have to be afraid of us, we have to be locked inside, we are not like other people."
Interviewee 5.

In this excerpt, the security provision isolating the March from the rest of the city is interpreted as an act of *othering,* reinforcing the idea that LGBT people, as well as other minority groups, are *not like other people,* thus, are excluded from the national imaginary. The presence of the fences that surround the march is attributed to this othering practice, and thus, are interpreted

41

as the responsibility of the government. Politics is recognized as an important factor determining local attitudes.

"If there were no fences, I think in one or two years the number of participants would really increase, closeted LGBT people and hetero allies would come too. And it would be beautiful, the whole city would celebrate together."
Interviewee 4.

Here the connection between the political practice of *othering* and local tensions around the Pride march are expressed explicitly. The March without fences would mean a March without tensions, the LGBT festival would no longer be a site of danger. The important elements of this imagined festival are the size of the crowd, and celebration. The fantasy resembles Western European Pride festivals.

Many other interview excerpts illustrated that the right-wing political discourse significantly affects the self-perception of LGBT activists, and the way they think about the movement. However, in the following I decided to concentrate on one interview, which illustrates most accurately the way in which the exclusionary political discourse and practices affects local LGBT politics. Nevertheless, the patterns highlighted based on this one narrative, appear in other interviews as well.

"I don't feel this urge to prove that 'I am Hungarian', and 'acknowledge me as a Hungarian', I feel this less and less. But it's true, I would like to live in a country where Hungarian identity would not be something very problematic and suspicious. I know, this is not a good parallel, but I am reading the diary of Fanni Gyarmati, who is struggling with somehow harmonizing her Hungarian and Jewish identity. And there is this internalized anti-Semitism there (…) or maybe they had this strong feeling that they are Hungarian indeed.(…) I don't want to go into the same thing, about gay vs. Hungarian."
Interviewee 1.

The excerpt illustrates how the exclusionary political discourse can have an effect on self-identification. Being *gay* and being *Hungarian* appear as two, discrepant categories. Between the two categories, it is the latter one that the interviewee abandons. The use of words in the first sentence implies that the definition of *Hungarianness* is monopolized by right-wing nationalists. One could *prove* their belonging to the national community, or actively appeal for being *acknowledged*. However, both of these words suggest that the boundaries of the national community are already set, and being Hungarian is not subject to free interpretation.

The excerpt also contains a parallel between the conflict of being *Hungarian* and *gay* and between being *Hungarian* and *Jewish*. In the latter case it is the stigmatized category – being Jewish– that is left behind, which the interviewee explains partly with internalized anti-Semitism. It is interesting to note that in the narrative, it is the category of being *Hungarian* that is interpreted as stigmatized, as it is referred to as *problematic* and *suspicious*. This suggests that the interviewee is evaluating the meaning of being Hungarian from the perspective of an outsider thus, in a way internalizing *otherness*.

The definition of *Hungarianness* as a stigmatized identity can also be interpreted as a reflection of the East/West discourse describing the region as backward. In this context, being gay vs. being Hungarian, turns into a clash between a "progressive" vs. a "backward" identity. As the following excerpts illustrate, these implications of being *Hungarian* alter the meaning of using national symbols in LGBT scenes.

"We took a photo where the whole group is standing in front of the Parliament, and we are weaving a rainbow flag. And then we received an email from a Slovenian activist who lives here, telling us off. She called us homonationalist. And then we were shocked, but later we talked about it. Our intention was rather subversive, we hung a rainbow flag in front of the 'House of the Nation', and we thought that is absurd, and rebellious. We did not think that yes, we are also Hungarians, and the Parliament and so on. Also, it was a reflection on this Norwegian fund case, that we've been called foreign agents, we've been given a counter identity."

Interviewee 1.

The interviewee recalls a recent case of taking a photo portraying members of a lesbian organization waving a rainbow flag in front of the Hungarian parliament. As the excerpt shows, the use of a national symbol in this context was meant to be a *subversive* reflection on the conservative right-wing government's statements, which referred to the members of the lesbian organization as '*foreign agents*'. As the use of expressions –such as referring to the Parliament as *House of the Nation*–suggests, the action had an ironic overtone, thus, it can be considered as a caricature of the nationalist discourse symbolically excluding the people on the picture, from the *national community*.

However, exclusion is not only present on a symbolic level, but also in practice, having real and severe consequences. When the photo was taken, the organization, as well as other Hungarian independent NGOs, were under attack by the FIDESZ-KDNP government. Without any previous warning or justification, *The Government's Control Office* (KEHI) investigated these organizations for months, undermining their operation.[83] In the meantime, the right-wing political discourse repeatedly referred to the NGOs under investigation as *foreign agents,* aiming to stigmatize and delegitimize the organizations and the social groups they represented. As the interviewee points out, the photo was a reaction to the KEHI case. Considering this political context, waving a rainbow flag in front of the Parliament can indeed be interpreted as a *subversive* action.

However, mixing LGBT symbols with national symbols immediately resulted in a foreign activist calling the action *homonationalist*. It is questionable, whether this critical concept is applicable to the concrete case. Nevertheless, being called *homonationalist* was *shocking* to the activists. This partly implies that they felt their action was misunderstood. On

---

[83]For more onthe investigation and the NGOs see
https://norvegcivilalap.hu/en/government_attacks_hungarian_NGOs

the other hand, it also suggests that the term was interpreted as an accusation, and the activists felt they need to explain themselves.

However, the use of national symbols in a political context where LGBT activism is legitimated by the political elite has very different meaning than the same action would in a different setting. As this case shows evidence, critical terms such as *homonationalism* and *homonormativity* function as if they had universal meanings, even though the same acts have very different implications depending on the local political context.

I would argue that these concepts are very influential because they are associated with activist discourses coming from the *West,* thus, they are linked to idea of *progress.*[84] The following excerpt illustrates this argument.

"In Berlin I would probably go to the alternative Pride, because the mainstream pride is like a festival, you can drink beer and have fun, but it is depoliticized. It is like, yes, we are the good gays here, we are not messy, and I don't know, this homonormativity thing, that we are also good German citizens. But at the same time, so, I think everyone has the right to be any kind of gay they want to be. (...)The critiques addressed by the alternative Berlin Pride, are not fully translatable to the local context, because here there are certain basic problems which have to stay on the agenda. For example this debate about gay marriage that we don't have to fight for that because it's stupid and homonormative, and the institution of marriage is per se oppressive. But the state should not favor any kind of partnership, in the present case I think that equal rights are important, and if someone wants to marry, they should have the option. Or the family, same-sex parents, there are more and more families like that, and part of them are very conventional yes, and they should also have rights. And part of me also wants a family like that, I see how it can give you some emotional stability. This should fit the idea of the state, but instead according to the Fundamental Law family is based on the marriage of a man and a woman."

Interviewee 1.

The beginning of the excerpt contrasts the mainstream and the alternative Pride in the context of Berlin. In this first part, the interviewee speaks from the perspective of the Western LGBT

---

[84]As I pointed out in the previous section of the analysis, in the interviews I conducted, progress was also associated with critical LGBT scenes that were questioning mainstream LGBT politics.

scene, where the mainstream pride started to lose its credibility, as it is becoming *depoliticized*, and *homonormative*. In the second part, starting with '*but at the same time*' the perspective of the narrative changes and shifts to the context of the Hungarian LGBT movement, where critical concepts such as homonormativity do not necessarily make sense. The interviewee differentiates the context of Berlin and Budapest by saying that in Hungary the LGBT movement is at an earlier stage, with *basic issues on the agenda*. In this context, the critical approach characterizing the LGBT scene in Berlin turns to be a marker of progress. Moreover, the meaning of *homonormativity* is explained in quotation marks, suggesting that the interviewee knows about the term, and knows what they are expected to think about it, but their personal opinion is different. Their personal view always starts with the word *but,* as if they had to explain themselves. Their opinion is contrasted with what they were supposed to think form the more *advanced*, more *critical* Western perspective.

In this section, firstly I illustrated that the exclusionary practices of the current political elite are reflected in the narratives. Political legitimacy is interpreted as one of the main factors bolstering the tensions around the LGBT movement. Thus, it is not the majority of society who is being accused of being intolerant, but the political elite. Without the agitation of the political elite, the March is imagined as peaceful, resembling Western European patterns.

Moreover, as I argued using a short case-study, the exclusionary discourse and practices prevailing in the current political environment, establish a central reference point that further discussions must engage with. Being gay and being Hungarian turns into a dilemma, with two contradictory categories. The definition of being *Hungarian* is monopolized by conservative right-wing discourse. Within this context, LGBT activist strategies calling attention to exclusion and marginalization can either be interpreted as a statement redefining the boundaries of belonging, or a subversive act.

46

However, one important finding shed light on how these strategies can be limited by critical terms such as *homonationalism* and *homonormativity,* which function as universal concepts. As I argued, the universalist interpretation is problematic, because it neglects the specificities of the local context.

6.3. Summary of the findings

The understanding I gained through the in-depth analysis of the interviews supported my hypothesis. The polarized discourse of *East/West dichotomy* appeared as a prevalent pattern in most of the interviews I conducted. The meaning of the West was commonly associated with *progress* and *superiority*. This result is in line with theories on nationalism and sexuality in Central and Eastern Europe, which argue that in this region, LGBT activism is strongly linked to the idea of *the West/Europe*.

Some of the interviewees problematized the idea of *superiority*, claiming that following global trends dominated by the Western world results in neglecting the specificities of the local, Hungarian context. However, the stronger presence of alternative, political queer sites in the Western context was a reoccurring remark in these narratives. Thus, in a certain way, the definition of *West* as a place of progress was reproduced in this context as well. In other interviews the idea of the *West* as a site of progress was left unquestioned. In these narratives the *West* appeared as a place where LGBT people are accepted, and thus, the Pride March can take the form of a big celebration, without causing any tensions or conflicts.

Highlighting the fact that in the Western context the LGBT movement is legitimated by the political elite was also a very salient pattern.

I would argue that these findings can be interpreted as a reflection on the Hungarian political environment, where political leaders repeatedly refer to LGBT people as unwanted members of the *nation*. Local political discourse creates a central reference point to activist discourses and strategies. The patterns identified in the narratives, which idealize the *Western* context, can only be interpreted in their relation to the Hungarian political reality. *Politicians at the Pride March*, and *a festival without conflicts* are desirable because they are in contrast with the activists' current experiences in the local context.

Another finding of my analysis was that the misinterpretation of critical concepts entering Western activist sites from queer theory, such as *homonationalism* and *homonormativity,* can strongly determine local activist strategies, which aim to react to the nationalist discourse and exclusionary practices targeting them. I argued that these terms are especially powerful in the Hungarian context, because they are associated with *Western* activist sites.

7. Conclusion

LGBT activism and the idea of *Europe* are strongly connected. However, in this discussion the Central and Eastern European region is often framed as a less advanced, homogeneous site characterized by homophobia, lagging behind the West. My research aimed to contribute to the understanding of nationalism and sexuality, focusing specifically on Hungary, a country and a region (CEE) usually left out from the discussion. Bringing attention to how discourses of sexuality are strongly connected to discourses of nationhood is important, as it helps to deconstruct the European discourse creating a scale from *West* to *East*, from *civilization* to *barbarism*. In Western settings, the increasing acceptance of LGBT people often happens at the

expense of other minority groups. The binary division of the *West* as a land of *freedom* and *tolerance* vs. the East, a site of *prejudice* and *homophobia* is highly misleading.

In present day Hungary, the political elite openly refers to LGBT people in Hungary as less favored members of the national community. My research aimed to offer a more complex understanding of how and why the LGBT movement became a central target of right-wing conservative discourse. Close-reading the most relevant examples of political and public discourse, I pointed out that the discussion on non-heteronormative sexualities is strongly connected to the East/West debate by both pro-LGBT and homophobic discourse. In the former case, the West appears as a standard, a reference to follow, a place where homophobia no longer exist, in the latter the West appears as a morally decaying world, a threat, antagonistic to the idea of the nation.

However, in the local context, the targeting of the LGBT movement does not only happen on a symbolic level. Since 2007, the Budapest Pride March has been attacked by right-wing extremists, the March is organized under heavy security provisions, isolated from the city, and each year the police want to ban the event. I conducted empirical research, to understand how the polarizing East/West discourse and these local settings affect LGBT activist sites in Budapest. The East/West dichotomy was a prevalent pattern in the narratives. However, it was for the most part interpreted in its complexity, without reproducing the essentilizing language of the polarizing discourse. The meaning of the *West* in the narratives, strongly intersected with the activist's reflections on the local political context. The exclusionary discourse and practices create a reference point that activists must engage with. In this context, the appeals for certain Western settings, such as political legitimacy, a Pride Parade without conflicts, have different meaning: they are desirable because they are in contrast with the local political reality.

This finding has implications for theories of nationalism and sexuality in the region. The literature problematizing Western hegemonic dominance in Central and Eastern European

LGBT activist sites, labels desires for *Western* style Pride Parades as reinforcing the East/West power relations. However, as my research shows, looking at the local political context, and examining the activist's personal perspective, this criticism appears to be simplifying. As my findings suggest, desires for Western settings cannot be interpreted without taking into account the local political reality., The activists' desires for Western standards were largely expressed in self-reflexive terms, with an understanding that while homonormative and assimilationist goals such as marriage equality should not be the end goal of the movement. Nevertheless, in being delegitimized and targeted by the Hungarian political elite, they placed value on institutional recognition.

The results have important implications for the local LGBT movement as well. My findings suggested that adopting critical terms from Western activist sites might limit strategies that are not entirely transferrable to the local context of Hungary. It is arguable that keeping certain goals on the agenda and following what have been labeled mainstream Western European trends (such as a desire for a politician to attend the Pride March) is necessary for the emergence of a critical approach within the Hungarian LGBT movement, which takes into account the local sociopolitical context.

However, to discover all the competing meanings of *East* and *West* within and outside the movement, and to gain a more complex understanding of how political discourse influences activist strategies, further research needs to be conducted. As I have previously argued, a systematic analysis of changes in the political discourse on nationalism and sexuality would be a crucial step in this regard. Another limitation of my research concerns the limited number of participants and the fact that all of them were white people from the capital, thus, the sample was narrow, and rather homogeneous. A further step would be to reach activists outside from the capital, and to reflect on a more varied range of social categories such as age, gender, class, ethnicity, etc.

My research is an important step towards bringing a discussion on nationalism, homonationalism and sexuality into focus 'on the edge of Europe', in the context of Hungary and the Central Eastern European region.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ayoub, Phillip, and David Paternotte. *LGBT Activism and the Making of Europe: A Rainbow Europe?*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

Balibar, Étienne. *We, The People of Europe? Reflections on Transnational Citizenship*. Princeton University Press, 2004.

Brubaker, Rogers. "The Manichean Myth: Rethinking the Distinction Between 'Civic' and 'Ethnic' Nationalism." In *Nation and National Identity: The European Experience in Perspective*, edited by Hanspeter Kriesi and Klaus Armington, Ruegger., 55–71. Zurich, 1999.

Butterfield, Nicole. "LGBTIQ Advocacy at the Intersection of Transnational and Local Discourses on Human Rights and Citizenship in Croatia." Central European University, 2013.

"Buzi Go Home?" Accessed May 20, 2015. http://melegvagyok.hu/tortenet/buzi_go_home.

"Cameron Warns of African Aid Cuts to Anti-Gay Countries." Accessed May 20, 2015. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-15243409.

Denmark: People's Party Video - I Am Denmark, n.d. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sGAH1wGNqJM&list=PL9yAeO7re9C59Bd8Y4 TlUh0XCEho7h024.

Dorottya Rédai. "Un/Queering the Nation?: Gender, Sexuality, Nationality and Homophobia in the Media Discourse on the Violence against the 2008 Gay Pride in Budapest." *Sextures* 2 (2012): 47–64.

Duggan, Lisa. "Queering The State." *Social Text*, 1994, 2–14.

———. "The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism." In *Materializing Democracy. Towards a Revitalized Cultural Politics*. Duke University Press, 2002.

Fraser, Nancy. "Rethinking Recognition: Overcoming Displacement and Reification in Cultural Politics." In *Recognition Struggles and Social Movements: Contested Identities, Agency and Power*, 21–32. Cambridge University Press, 2003.

"Hazai Hagyományok." Accessed May 20, 2015. http://budapestpride.hu/rolunk/hazai-hagyomanyok.

"Hungary's Constitutional Undermining of Internationally Protected Human Rights." Accessed April 25, 2014. http://livewire.amnesty.org/2013/03/12/hungarys-constitutional-undermining-of-internationally-protected-human-rights/.

"Jogi Gyorstalpaló - Partnerkapcsolat," April 26, 2013. http://www.hatter.hu/programjaink/jogsegelyszolgalat/jogi-gyorstalpalo/partnerkapcsolat.

J. Taylor, Steven, and Robert Bogdan. *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods*. 2. ed. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1984.

"Judith Butler Refuses Berlin Pride Civil Courage Prize 2010." Accessed March 11, 2014. http://nohomonationalism.blogspot.hu/2010/06/judith-butler-refuses-berlin-pride.html.

Kohn, Hans. "Western and Eastern Nationalism." In *Nationalism*, by Smith, Anthony and John Hutchinson, 162–65. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Kovács, András, Anikó Horváth, and Zsuzsanna Vidra. "The Ferry-Country between East and West: Debates on Modernity and Europe in Hungary." In *Europe, Nations and Modernity*, edited by Ichijo, Atsuko, 158–82. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Kulpa, Dr Robert. "Nations and Sexuality - 'West' and 'East.'" SSRN Scholarly Paper. Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, 2011. http://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=1720965.

Kulpa, Robert. "Western Leveraged Pedagogy of Central and Eastern Europe: Discourses of Homophobia, Tolerance, and Nationhood." *Gender, Place & Culture* 21, no. 4 (April 21, 2014): 431–48. doi:10.1080/0966369X.2013.793656.

Kulpa, Robert, and Joanna Mizielinska. "Contemporary Peripheries: Queer Studies, Circulation of Knowledge, and the East/West Divide." In *De-Centring Western*

Sexualities: Central And Eastern European Perspectives, edited by Robert Kulpa and Joanna Mizielinska, 11–26. Farnham: Ashgate, 2011.

———. "Why Study Sexualities in Central and Eastern Europe." In *De-Centring Western Sexualities*, 1–9. Farnham ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011.

"Látlelet 2009. Kutatási Összefoglaló a Hazai Szélsőjobboldal Megerősödésének Okairól." Accessed March 12, 2012. www.politicalcapital.hu/letoltes/20091028_PC_Latlelet_2009.pdf.

Melegh, Attila. *On the East/West Slope: Globalization, Nationalism, Racism and Discources on Eastern Europe*. New York: Central European University Press, 2006.

Mepschen, Paul, Jan Willem Duvyendak, and Evelien Tonkens. "Sexual Politics, Orientalism, and Multicultural Citizenship in the Netherlands." *Sociology* 44, no. 5 (2010): 963–79.

Mosse, George L. *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*. Howard Fertig Pub, 1985.

Moss, Kevin. "Split Europe: Homonationalism and Homophobia in Croatia." In *LGBT Activism and the Making of Europe : A Rainbow Europe?*, edited by Phillip M. Ayoub and David Paternotte. Palgrave, 2014.

"Orbán: Hálás Vagyok a Magyar Homoszexuálisoknak." Accessed May 20, 2014. http://index.hu/video/2015/05/18/orban_halas_vagyok_a_magyar_homoszexualisoknak/.

"Orbán Viktor: A Házasság Védelmében." Accessed April 26, 2014. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v2B0eLMF-1g.

Outhwaite, William. "Europe Beyond East and West." In *The SAGE Handbook of European Studies*, edited by Chris Rumford, 52–69. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2009.

Pap, András László. "Who Are 'We, the People'? Biases and Preferences in the Hungarian Fundamental Law." In *Challenges and Pitfalls in the Recent Hungarian Constitutional Development – Discussing the New Fundamental Law of Hungary*, edited by Zsuzsanna Fejes, Fanni Mandák, and Zoltán Szente. Paris, 2015. http://real.mtak.hu/18617/.

Perez, Hiram Perez. "The Rough Trade of U.S. Imperialism." *Journal of Homosexuality* 59, no. 7 (August 1, 2012): 1081–86.

Plamenatz, John. "Two Types of Nationalism." In *Nationalism: The Nature of an Evolution of an Idea*, edited by Eugene Kamenka, 23–31. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1975.

Puar, Jasbir. "Queer Times, Queer Assemblages." *Social Text* 23 (2005): 121–40.

———. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Duke University Press, 2007.

Renkin, Hadley Z. "Homophobia and Queer Belonging in Hungary." *Focaal* 2009, no. 53 (2009): 20–37. doi:10.3167/fcl.2009.530102.

Riessman, Catherine Kohler. "Narrative Analysis." In *Narrative, Memory & Everyday Life*, 1–7. Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield, 2005.

Rosenthal, Gabriele. "The Narrated Life Story: On the Interrelation Between Experience, Memory and Narration." In *Narrative, Memory & Knowledge: Representations, Aesthetics, Contexts*, edited by Kate Milnes, 1–16. Huddersfield: University of Huddersfield, 2006.

"Safra Project Statement on East End Gay Pride." Accessed May 20, 2015. http://nohomonationalism.blogspot.hu/.

Skultans, Vieda. *The Testimony of Lives: Narrative and Memory in Post-Soviet Latvia*. 1 edition. London ; New York: Routledge, 1997.

Smith, Anthony. "The Varieties of Nationalism." In *Theories of Nationalism*, 211–29. New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1983.

Spade, Dean, and Craig Willse. "Sex, Gender, and War in an Age of Multicultural Imperialism." *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking*, 2014, 5–29.

"Speech of Marja van Bijsterveldt." Accessed October 4, 2015. http://www.ilga-europe.org/home/about_us/annual_conference/the_hague_2010/day_by_day/opening_reception/marja_van_bijsterveldt.

Szetey Gábor Bejelenti, Hogy Meleg. Accessed May 20, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGspUU6fx9A.

Takács, Judit, and Ivett Szalma. "Homofóbia És Az Azonos Nemű Partnerkapcsolatok Intézményesítettsége Európában." *SZOCIOLÓGIAI SZEMLE* 22, no. 1 (2012): 61–88.

"Te Mesélsz Buzivicceket, de Arról Hallgatsz, Hogy Az Asszony Nem Tette Szét Nyolc Éve." Accessed November 5, 2014. http://www.hir24.hu/elet-stilus/2014/07/01/te-meselsz-buzivicceket-de-arrol-hallgatsz-hogy-az-asszony-nem-tette-szet-nyolc-eve/.

"The New Fundamental Law of Hungary." Accessed April 25, 2014. http://www.kormany.hu/download/a/1c/11000/The%20New%20Fundamental%20Law%20of%20Hungary.pdf.

Vidra, Zsuzsanna, Anikó Horváth, and Jon Fox. "Tolerance and Cultural Diversity Discourses in Hungary." In *Addressing Tolerance and Diversity Discourse in Europe Comparative Overview of 16 European Countries*, edited by Ricard Zapata-Barrero and Anna Triandafyllidou, 317–43. Barcelona: Barcelona Centre for International Affairs, 2012.

Wodak, Ruth. "Does Sociolinguistics Need Social Theory? New Perspectives in Critical Discourse Analysis." Key note speech presented at the SS 2000, Bristol, April 27, 2000. https://www.univie.ac.at/linguistics/forschung/wittgenstein/unemploy/bristol5.htm.

Wolff, Larry. *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*. 1 edition. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994.

Zanghellini, A. "Are Gay Rights Islamophobic? A Critique of Some Uses of the Concept of Homonationalism in Activism and Academia." *Social & Legal Studies* 21, no. 3 (September 1, 2012): 357–74.