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**Politicizing Sexualities**

Mobilization Practices within the LGBTQ movement  
in contemporary Madrid

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## **Abstract**

This ethnographic study intends to explain the recent mobilization practices within the LGBTQ movement in contemporary Madrid in reference to the strategic use of identity and networking in collective action. It describes the Spanish movement as an ideologically polarized heterogeneous aggregate. The active challenging groups criticize the dominant part of the movement for giving up its original message of sexual liberation and diluting it in consumerism by supporting capitalist tendencies and the power of leading political parties. Via launching protest campaigns and collaborating in internationally supported networks with other ideologically related social movement communities, the challenging groups demand civil rights for all people, regardless of their sexual orientation or identity. They mobilize upon the collective identity of “precariousness” while integrating elements of queer and transgender theory into their radical leftist oriented politics in order to transform the Spanish society. By bringing on new critical ideas and adherents, the success of the leftist oriented challenging groups has an impact on the direction of the politics of the dominant group, which thereby is forced to adopt such ideas into their politics. Despite the disunity and antagonistic character of the movement, the success of the collective action of the newly emerged networks, which collaborate internationally with the help of the internet, influence the maintenance, outcomes and goal orientation of the whole LGBTQ movement, regardless of the borders of Spain.

**Keywords:** *activism; challenging groups; collective identity; LGBTQ; Madrid; mobilization; networking; social movements; social networks; transgender*

## **Abstrakt**

Cílem této etnografické studie je vysvětlit aktuální mobilizační postupy LGBTQ hnutí v současném Madridu s ohledem na strategické užití identity a networkingu v rámci kolektivní akce. Práce vychází z charakteristiky hnutí jakožto ideologicky polarizovaného heterogenního celku, v jehož rámci aktivní frakce kritizují dominantní skupinu hnutí za to, že se vzdala původního cíle sexuálního osvobození a podporováním

moci vládnoucích politických stran a kapitalismu jej rozmělnila v konzumerismus. Prostřednictvím protestních kampaní, založených na spolupráci ideologicky příbuzných komunit v mezinárodně podporovaných sítích, se tyto frakce dožadují občanských práv pro všechny bez ohledu na sexuální orientaci či identitu. Kolektivní identitou, na jejímž základě se frakce mobilizují, je společně sdílená „nejistota“ (precariousness). Jejich snahou je transformovat španělskou společnost skrze radikální levicově orientovanou politiku obohacenou o prvky queer a transgender teorie. Úspěch levicově orientovaných frakcí s množstvím nových stoupenců má výrazný dopad i na aktivismus dominantní skupiny, která si osvojuje kritické myšlenky opozičních frakcí a uplatňuje je v rámci vlastní politiky. I přes nejednotnost a antagonistický charakter hnutí, úspěch kolektivní akce těchto nově vzniklých sítí, spolupracujících na mezinárodní úrovni díky internetové komunikaci, má dopad na životaschopnost, výsledky i cíle celého LGBTQ hnutí nejen ve Španělsku.

***Klíčová slova:*** *aktivismus; frakce; kolektivní identita; LGBTQ; Madrid; mobilizace; networking; sociální hnutí; sociální síť; transgender*

# 1. Introduction

*Disunity makes power.*

**Paco Vidarte**

This essay was supposed to be an ethnographic study of mobilization practices within the contemporary LGBTQ movement in Spain. Nevertheless, the result is rather a probe (the methodology of which was fundamentally ethnographic) into the recent history of networking within the Spanish social movements. After the approvals of gay marriage and adoption law in 2005 and gender identity law in 2007, I started being interested in the socio-political background, which led, at least from my point of view at that time, to such a progressive step in Spanish post-catholic environment. At that time I assumed that recently approved laws must have been the result of a unitary and systematic pressure of LGBTQ activists, who after a long struggle managed to achieve these laws, the approvals of which would have been inconceivable in contemporary Czech conditions. However, after entering the field, I soon found out that the Spanish LGBTQ movement is a complicated unit, which is rather difficult to describe.

Despite the fact that it seems to be unitary at first sight, especially due to the state-aided organization FELGTB (Federación Español de Lesbianas, Gays, Transexuales y Bisexuales) and its centralized uniting politics, the movement is rather a heterogeneous aggregate. After a closer look it seems to be divided into two “divisions”. The first one is represented by the highly visible and “much-hyped” FELGTB<sup>1</sup>, a non-governmental organization, which associates LGBT<sup>2</sup> collectives from all over the Spain within the frame of its hierarchical structure and uniting identity politics. It is also closely connected with the leading political party PSOE<sup>3</sup>. Disagreement with such politics is the force which procreates antagonistic tendencies shaping up within newly emerged challenging groups outside the dominant sector. These groups distance themselves from

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term “The Federation” further in text to provide the reader with easier orientation.

<sup>2</sup> In my essay I distinguish between the dominant group of the Spanish movement, created by The Federation that connects mostly the collectives identifying themselves as LGBT (LGBT as for Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transsexual), in contrast to the challenging groups, which prefer the term LGBTQ (Q as for “queer”). This is the reason why I sometimes use LGBT term only in reference to the dominant part of the movement, the focus of which is narrower and more in accordance with the identity politics of the gay and lesbian movement.

<sup>3</sup> Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party)



the institutionalized part of the LGBT movement and create their own world of networks, which are based on radical leftist-oriented politics and the critique of capitalism, with the collective identity of “the precarious” as the common denominator. The opening quote from the Spanish philosopher, writer, and LGBTQ activist Paco Vidarte (who unfortunately died soon after his book *Ética Marica* (2007), where the quote comes from, was published) points out the way how the Spanish LGBTQ activism is being constantly formed: the dynamics of antagonistic forces which, in permanent disunity, influence each other’s politics, strategies, and goals. According to the words of Paco Vidarte, it is namely the disunity which creates the challenge to protest against unitary, state-aided central identity politics of The Federation (Vidarte 2007: 46-47), which is criticized for its essentialist focus and constructing impenetrable borders within its own “family”.

In general, the LGBTQ movement is usually analyzed in terms of sexual politics and the goals it follows, in reference to the local socio-political conditions. From this perspective, identity is an important analytic concept. Its analysis, however, can be carried out from various points of view. The most frequent analytic tools for analyzing the LGBTQ movement are usually the theoretical frame of identity politics and queer theory, as it is implied in the heart of the movement itself: it is usually mobilized on the basis of a collective identity and common goals, and gaining recognition for such shared collective identity is usually one of them. However, as I argue in my essay, viewing the contemporary Spanish LGBTQ movement only from the perspective of identity politics or queer strategies is not enough to understand its heterogeneous character. In fact, to remain within this analytic frame means to analyze the movement only within two analytic levels of the identity concept, which turns out to be insufficient. The politics of contemporary LGBTQ challenging groups is based on multiple identities with “precariousness” as the common denominator, and the ideological base is created mainly by leftist, literally radical, tendencies and anti-capitalist critique. The elements of the queer theory are integrated within this activism, however, doubts remain about the fact whether such theories applied in practice can deliver change. These challenging groups consider the transgender community to be the most vulnerable and therefore advocate mostly for transgender rights, which in fact might be to some extent similar to the demands of the dominant gay and lesbian movement since trans-people also identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual. However, the identity politics is not the main focus of these groups. They protest against the exclusionary state-aided institutionalized LGBT

movement and advocate for civil rights for all “precarious people”, regardless of their sexual identity.

According to my observations, the combination of the elements of queer and transgender theory integrated in radical leftist oriented politics and applied by newly emerged challenging groups within the heterogeneous Spanish LGBTQ movement advocates alternative ways of organization and sexual politics. The challenging groups criticize the dominant group’s state-aided identity politics and by creating wider international network with other leftist social movement communities they follow different goals than those oriented just on the identity. As a form of collective action, these groups use the identity of “the precarious” not as a goal, but as a “strategy deployment” (Bernstein 1997, 2002). By providing alternative forms of organization and politics, their activism is aimed at the transformation of the mainstream capitalist culture, its categories and values, the fight against transphobia by demanding de-pathologization of transsexuality and anti-normalizing attitude to intersexuality and the transformation of the legislation as well as education of the public, which could be understood and examined at both the individual (micro) and collective (macro) level. Through supporting the diversity instead of proclaiming similarities with the majority, such activities are conducted to bring back the aim of (not only) sexual liberation. Thereby, the goals of the institutional dominant LGBT movement are influenced by the strategies and alternative politics of the challenging groups, which consequently has a positive impact on the whole LGBTQ movement maintenance and its outcomes, despite its heterogeneous character.

The following chapter is intended to be the introduction of the essential terms and theory concepts, which I apply within the frame of my analysis of the mobilization practices in the contemporary LGBTQ movement in Spain. I dedicate its first part to an explanation of the view of mobilization from the *meso-level* perspective, presented via the contemporary social movements theory, e.g. the mobilization of groups within the movement (Staggenborg 2002, Kavada 2003). I consider this view to be a suitable way of illustrating the differences within the contemporary LGBTQ movement in Spain between the mobilization practices of *dominant* and *challenging groups* and the influence of internal *networks* of cooperation created by the challenging groups within the movement or with communities from the same *social movement family*. I explain, with the help of Diani’s and della Porta’s definition, how to understand the social movement structure, which is based on the cooperating networks created by social

actors within the movement communities. I use the term *challenging group* according to the Schwartz's definition, whose analysis of *factionalism* in political movements shows the potential positive impact of the existence of challenging groups on the movement itself. I apply this concept to the case of contemporary Spanish LGBTQ movement and show that, according to my observations, the challenging groups established within the movement often emerge on the basis of an ideological dispute. Despite the ideological antagonism, I demonstrate with the help of the Schwartz's hypothesis that such challenging groups can have a positive influence on the movement maintenance.

The second part offers the explanation of the most common analysis of the concept of identity within the social movement theory. The first level, identity for empowerment, explains identity construction as a necessary precursor or a product of *collective action* including the definitions of the terms *collective identity* and *multiple identities*, while the second, identity as a goal, shows the limits of the mechanical system of movement types (expressing and instrumental). I follow Mary Bernstein, who argues for implementing another, the third level of identity as a strategy, and I apply this analytic tool to the case of LGBT movement. Many queer theorists, feminists and poststructuralists argue, that without relying on fixed or essentialist notions of identity, the recognition cannot be gained, since by advocating for its rights (e.g. women or gay rights) the identity movements usually reinforce the identity on which they are based (Seidman 1993, Bernstein 1997 and 2002). LGBT politics is therefore often explained only within the context of either essentialist ethnic identity model or the critical queer theory perspective and hereby, identity is understood just as an internally oriented goal for the recognition of the stigmatized identity or for deconstruction of this category. Bernstein argues that neither identity politics, queer, nor limited social movement theories alone can fully explain the strategies of mobilization practices within gay and lesbian movement communities (Bernstein 1997, 2002), since it is necessary to take into account a wider perspective with more determining factors when explaining the role of identity considering the movement's activism. I apply this three dimensional analytic tool of identity concept (Bernstein 1997) to the case of the Spanish LGBTQ movement and I point out that by focusing on identity and queer politics only, transgender politics is often omitted and the "T" within LGBTQ is made rather invisible.

In the third chapter, dedicated to the historical background, I explain that diversity (and disunity) of the Spanish LGBTQ movement can be considered characteristic for this movement. I was unsure whether to include the history of the Spanish movement in

this essay, as I am aware of the fact that reading too many names and details can easily bore the reader. However, I do think that at least a brief notion of the history of Spanish LGBT activism is necessary to understand the context of my essay and is especially crucial to see the newly approved laws on gay marriage (2005) and gender identity (2007) as the result of a gradual collaboration of the institutionalized part of the movement (FELGBT) with the leading political parties, and to understand that the critique of the controversial law on gender identity is one of the main characteristics and a constitutive force of the newly emerged challenging groups.

In the fourth chapter, I intend to describe the process of construction of the object of study and the methodology I applied within my research. I offer the description of the whole process of entering the field, finding informants and receiving access as well as my positioning within the group and solving several ethical dilemmas.

The last chapter, which I consider the biggest contribution of my essay, is dedicated to a detailed analysis of the contemporary emergence of the LGBTQ challenging groups and the internal networks they create. My aim is to analyze their role within the Spanish movement from the perspective of meso-analysis in social movement theory. On the case of the foundation of The Alternative Block for Sexual Liberation, an internal network of social movement communities from inside as well as outside the Spanish LGBTQ movement, and The International Network for Trans De-Pathologization, I illustrate how meso mobilization within the movement and the emergence of antagonistic challenging groups influence the maintenance, outcomes and goal orientation of the whole movement on the international level.

## **2. Identity and mobilization in social movements**

### **2.1 Mobilization and organization in meso-level perspective**

Social movement can be understood as “a form of collective organization with no formal boundaries, which allows participants to feel part of broad collective efforts while retaining their distinctive identities as individuals and/or as specific organizations” (Diani 2000a: 8). As Kavada points out, there is an importance of interaction and communication in order to sustain some coherence of the movement and its goals. Since lacking in formal boundaries, social movements have a hard time defining their members (Kavada 2003: 8) “As a result, membership to a movement ultimately depends on the mutual recognition between participants” (ibid.). It is difficult to conceptualize the social movement experience because the “essence of the experience” (Diani 2000a: 8) should capture “being part in a conflict which is at the same time embedded in specific, “local“ orientations, interest, identities, but at the same time exceeds their boundaries, while maintaining the freedom and individuality of specific actors” (Ibid: 8-9).

There are several levels of analysis within social movement theory which many researchers combine. Micro level is focused on individual interaction, whereas macro level involves study of long-term and large-scale social processes (Collins 1981). Sometimes, both macro and micro variables are analyzed to explain mobilization processes (Opp and Gern 1993). Della Porta (1995) sees the importance of each level at different stages of the research. Della Porta believes, that meso level is important when meso-level groups emerge within the movement. It is difficult to understand precisely the emergence of a specific internal network or a campaign within a movement by looking only at political opportunities and large scale (macro) structural and cultural changes alone or by looking only at individual (micro) enthusiasms (Staggenborg, 2002:128).

I have chosen the meso-level perspective in my study as I am convinced that analyzing contemporary Spanish LGBT movement from the internal network perspective offers more accurate capturing of its fluid and evolving nature. The shape of a movement and its communities changes throughout its course. In certain conditions new campaigns and networks emerge within the already existing movement in order to accumulate power for a specific goal or to promote change within the already existing

structure, tactic or goal orientation. In reference to the newly emerged challenging groups within contemporary Spanish LGBT movement, they influence individual participation (meso-micro linkage) as well as political opportunities and large-scale (meso-macro) processes. Thereby, both large-scale macro-level conditions and micro-level motivations and interactions are mediated by meso-level structures (Staggenborg 2002).

Considering the meso and meso-micro linkages of such analysis, movement or community participation and mobilization is a process evolving over period of time. Activities of a social movement or an activist group expand in its own rhythm and dynamics, even though the movement participation could be often seen as spontaneous. (Klandermans, Staggenborg 2002: 11) There are observable fluctuations in participation and it is common to talk about the phases of *mobilization* vs. *demobilization* or *mobilizing* vs. *organizing*. According to Ella Baker, a Civil Rights activist, mobilizing refers to:

[...] the process by which inspirational leaders or other persuaders can get large numbers of people to join a movement or engage in a particular movement action, while organizing refers to a more sustained process whereby people come to deeply understand a movement's goals and empower themselves to continued action on behalf of those goals.<sup>4</sup>

These ways of expansion and contraction could be comparatively analysed regarding the time or cycles of protests, since no single movement is able to keep its constituency continuously mobilized (Klandermans, Staggenborg 2002: 11). As a result, we can basically talk about seasonal cycles: even activists usually celebrate Christmas and go on vacation (ibid.) so there are periods of time throughout the year when seemingly nothing happens in comparison with months of a constant activity. Then a typical period of program planning and activity revision comes to evaluate movement's efficiency and potential after each event organized by the collective as well as at the end or beginning of the year. Since social movements alternate between "visible" and "latent" phases (Melucci 1996), the issue of continuity over time is also important in reference to collective identity maintenance:

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<sup>4</sup> Social movements and culture (<http://www.wsu.edu/~amerstu/smc/glossary.html>)

Contacts between organizations and militant groups are, on the whole, limited to interpersonal, informal relationships, or to interorganizational relationships which do not generally produce the capacity for mass mobilization. In these cases, collective solidarity and the sense of belonging to a cause are not as obvious as they are in periods of intense mobilization. Identity is nurtured by the hidden actions of a limited number of actors. And it is precisely the ability of these small groups to reproduce certain representations and models of solidarity over time which creates the conditions for the revival of collective action (Melucci 1996; Rupp and Taylor 1987; Johnston 1991; Mueller 1994; Whittier 1995). (della Porta and Diani 2006: 96)

In order to understand the emergence of a specific meso-mobilization of groups within a movement, it is considered necessary to “examine the structure of the movement community and how it influences perceptions of large-scale (macro level) trends and individual (micro level) motivations and interactions” (ibid.). Time is therefore a significant factor influencing the movement’s activity as well as success of organized events: the participation of each individual is a key element especially in case of small groups where the efficiency and success of collective action depends significantly on participation and cooperation of the highest possible number of people. In case of the Spanish LGBTQ movement, where the newly emerged challenging groups are created by young people and students, this seems to be a problem. These challenging groups are in fact the part of Spanish movement, which is forced to work in opposition to the institutionalized state-aided dominant group due to its ideologically antagonistic radical leftist politics. Thus, they are forced to strengthen their activism within the meso-level cooperation of internal networks, as it is proved to be more efficient in order to mobilize in bigger numbers. In the following part I explain how I understand the definition of the *network* and *challenging group* concepts, which I frequently use within my analysis.

### **2.1.1. Networks and challenging groups**

According to Diani’s definition, a social movement is defined as a network or networks of “informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or

organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity” (Diani 1992: 13). The production of collective identities also correlates with the emergence of “networks of relationships of trust” within movements, e.g. “among movement actors operating within complex social environments”, which guarantee movements a range of opportunities (della Porta and Diani 2006: 94):

They are the basis for the development of informal communication networks, interaction, and, when necessary, mutual support. They seem to be an essential replacement for the scarcity of organizational resources; furthermore, information circulates rapidly via interpersonal networks, compensating at least part for limited access to the media; trust between those who identify with the same political and cultural endeavour enables those concerned to face with greater efficacy the costs and the risks linked to repression; finally, identifying themselves – and being identified – as part of a movement also means being able to count on help and solidarity from its activists (Gerlach and Hine 1970; Gerlach 1971) (ibid.).

In reference to the meso-level analysis, a network can be defined as a set of actors or nodes that are connected by a specific type of relation (Klandermans, Staggenborg 2002: 175); nodes then in the specific case of social movements may consist of individuals or collective actors / communities (organizations, groups or other entities), or they may also consist of events linked by persons (Diani 2000a: 6-7) with direct (non-mediated interaction) or indirect (based on shared activities), interpersonal and inter-organizational, weak or strong, single or multiple ties that work on basis of cooperation following common goals.

Dissatisfied participants identifying with a social or political movement may sometimes lose their hope in the existing structure, political and/or goal orientation, strategy etc. of the leading or most visible actor – a dominant group - and may join or create a faction / challenging group within the movement. Challenging groups or factions can be therefore defined as:

[...] groups that reject current leadership, tactics, or interpretations of core beliefs. A frequent characteristic of [...] movements, factionalism results from power struggles, ideological disputes, and efforts by external enemies to promote dissension. (Schwartz 2002: 157)



As the emergence of a challenging group or faction within a movement often uncovers an ideological split within the movement, the influence of factionalism may sometimes be disruptive. However, as the opposing challenging groups bring new actors and provoke new events in the existing movement, they might also be considered a way of expanding its opportunities (Coleman 1990: 390–93; Schwartz 2002: 163).

In reference to my analysis of the contemporary Spanish LGBTQ movement, my aim is to show, how the existence of challenging groups within the movement helps maintain the movement through creating networks and mobilizing for new civil rights campaigns which consequently has impact on individual (micro) interaction as well as (meso) collaborating of groups. This happens despite the fact, that it is often believed to be the main cause of movement decline as it usually is the result of internal war caused by ideological antagonism rejecting current dominant leadership (Schwartz, 2002: 157). Thereby, connections among activists and participants also from different movement communities lead to wider awareness of (macro) political opportunities, resources and the growth of the whole movement. (Staggenborg, 2002: 130-134). The existence of emerging challenging groups within the contemporary Spanish LGBTQ movement protesting against the dominant identity politics has an impact on maintenance and outcome of the whole LGBT movement together with its opposing institutionalized state-aided part as it promotes and enables a transition of the movement by incorporating alternative ways of understanding identity and sexual politics. I therefore offer in the next part a detailed explanation of three levels of analysis concerning the concept of identity within social movements and subsequently apply it on the complicated situation of contemporary LGBTQ movement.

## **2.2. Identity in social movements**

“Identity is people’s source of meaning and experience“ (Castells 1997: 6). As it refers to social actors, we can understand identity as the process of construction of meaning on the basis of a related set of cultural attributes that are given priority over other sources of meaning (ibid.). As Castells points out, it is easy to agree on the fact, that all identities are constructed (from the sociological point of view), nevertheless, the important fact is the difference between how, from which source, by whom and for what reasons they are constructed (1997: 7):

Naturally, identities that start as resistance may induce projects, and may also, along the course of history, become dominant in the institutions of society, thus becoming legitimizing identities to rationalize their domination. Indeed, the dynamics of identities along this sequence shows that, from the point of view of social theory, no identity can be an essence, and no identity has, per se, progressive or regressive value outside its historical context. A different, and very important matter, is the benefits of each identity for the people who belong. (Castells 1997: 8)

According to Diani, “a social movement is a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity” (Diani 1992: 13). In this sense collective identity is a social concept, which could be understood as a way through which participating in social activities, individuals can gain a sense of belonging and in essence an "identity" that transcends the individual. However, in reference to social movements, where collective identity is considered to be the basis, there have been many terms used so far to describe the plurality of dimensions and dynamics of social protest:

[...] the social categories predominating among activists (say “women“ or “animal rights activists“), public representations of social categories (what Johnston et al 1994 refer to as „public identities“), activists’ shared definition of their situation, the expressive character of all action, the affective bonds that motivate participation, the experience of solidarity within movements, and others.” (Polleta, Jasper, 2001: 284-285)

The question therefore is, to what extent are collective identities constructed through protest (and in it) instead of preceding it, whether they are imposed on groups or rather invented by them or for example, what is the difference between collective identity (as a social category) and ideology (ibid.).

Within the social movement literature, two analytic levels of the concept of identity have been developed. First one, which could be characterized as identity for empowerment (Bernstein 1997) sees shared collective identity as a necessary element for mobilization of any social movement (Morris 1992). The second analytic level understands identity as a goal, on which the so-called identity movements such as gay

and lesbian (later LGBT) movement are based. However, as the critical studies show (Polleta 1994; Bernstein 1997, 2002), there are more analytic levels of the identity concept to be taken into account. Bernstein comes with the third level, identity as a strategy, developing the three dimensional analytic model in order to point out, that identity could also play the role of strategy despite the fact that it is often conflated with goal or completely ignored by social movement theorists, as well as by the LGBT studies which usually explain the LGBT movement only from the essentialist or queer theory perspective. According to Bernstein's analytic model, essentialist identity politics or queer theory perspective remains within the frame of first two analytic levels developed in social movement literature, understanding identity mainly as a goal in order to achieve recognition for stigmatized or new identity or to deconstruct those limited categories. However, without a broader understanding of the goals of movement's collective action together with its relationship to the structural location of the social actors, strategy choices made by activists cannot be adequately explained this way (Bernstein 1997: 537). I follow Bernstein and I argue in my essay that despite the queer theory's potential, integrating it in contemporary activism is a problematic thing. Therefore, analyzing the Spanish LGBTQ movement only from its perspective and the perspective of identity politics is not enough. I will explain, in the following part, all of the mentioned levels of analysis related to the concept of identity and demonstrate the potential of implementing the three dimensional model into studies of so-called "identity movement", a description attributed also to the Spanish LGBTQ movement.

### **2.2.1. Collective identity for empowerment**

Identity for empowerment as a precursor to collective action implies some sort of "political consciousness" (Morris 1992) to be able to mobilize the movement. In other words, an existing identity or production of a new collective identity is necessary in order to "translate individual to group interests and individual to collective action" (Bernstein 1997: 536-537; Bernstein 2002). Considering the identity production within social movements, collective action is characterized by the intersection of collective involvement and personal engagement (Melucci 1989, 1995; Rupp and Taylor 1987; della Porta 1992). The sense of collective belonging provides continuity of one's life, "a

linkage between different life stages and different types of experiences [...] united by a common set of values and aspirations.” (della Porta and Diani 2006: 91).

Identity production is an essential component of collective action, through the identification of actors involved in conflict, the facilitation of trusting relationships among them, and the establishment of connections linking events from different periods. (della Porta and Diani 2006: 92)

As for the relationship between collective action and identity, the term identity here does not refer to an autonomous object, it is not a thing one can own; *collective identity* is rather understood as a social process, by which social actors develop to a certain extent fluid emotional ties to broader groupings and recognize themselves (as well as are recognized by other social actors) as part of them (ibid.; Melucci 1989, 1996; Polletta and Jaspers 2001; Goodwin et al. 2001: 8-9).

Collective identities may be based not only on specific social traits such as class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or specific organizations, they can also be defined in reference to shared orientations, values, attitudes, worldviews, lifestyles, as well as experiences of action (ibid.). Moreover, an individual can belong to several different social movements (or communities within the movement), or define himself or herself in reference to more social traits or attitudes at the same time - in this case we talk of *multiple identities*. Social actors who participate in one group can share for example only certain traits and differ in others, which means that identifying with a movement does not necessarily imply sharing a strong “collective we” (Lemert 1994; Billig 1995) or “systematic and coherent vision of the world” (Diani 2000b; della Porta and Diani 2006: 98). Therefore, if one identifies with a movement, it does not mean they cannot be involved in other groups or movements as well. As della Porta and Diani explain:

[...] the motivations and expectations behind individuals participating in social movements are, in fact, much richer and more diversified than the public images of those movements, as produced by their leaders, would suggest (ibid.)

Collective identity therefore cannot be understood as an immutable element that pre-exists collective action, since it can be both, a precondition as well as a product of it:

actions occur when social actors are able to define themselves, their common goals and orientations or other social actors; at the same time, however, certain feelings of belonging to a group or collective are produced, reinforced or redefined through evolution of collective action (Melucci 1995; Bernstein 1997; Goodwin et al. 2001; della Porta and Diani 2006). Nevertheless, despite the immutable character of shared collective identity explained within the analytic level for empowerment, when identity is considered to be the base, on which the movement is built such as the LGBT movement, it is believed by social movement theory that it is the movement's goal to gain recognition for that identity. Such goal can be reached by means of identity politics or politics of recognition by relying on essentialist understanding of identity as fixed, which in the case of LGBT movement is enabled by ethnic identity model. The analytic level that understands identity as a goal, will be explained in the next part.

### **2.2.2. Identity as a goal**

Social movements theory originally distinguishes between strategy-oriented and identity-oriented movements (Touraine 1981), however, some theorists abandon this distinction arguing that the real difference is “the one between movements pursuing goals in the outside world, for which the action is instrumental for goal realization, and identity-oriented movements that realize their goals, at least partly, in their activities” (Duyvendak and Giugni, 1995: 277–78). Hereby, another distinction is made between internally oriented movements (so-called identity movements) and externally oriented (instrumental) ones. Identity movements consider identity as a goal, because they are said to use expressive strategies in order to transform dominant cultural patterns, gain recognition for stigmatized or new social identity (Melucci 1985; Touraine 1981) or aim at deconstructing the categories of identity such as “man / woman”, or “gay / straight” (Gamson 1995). Instrumental movements continue to achieve external concrete goals (Duyvendak and Giugni 1995) instead of challenging dominant cultural patterns or seeking recognition for new identities. Thus, according to this distinction, identity as a goal is understood as the logic of action of internally oriented movements only in contrast to externally oriented ones, whose logic of action is focused on external goals and where collective identity plays only the mobilizing role. In other words, it means, that expression of identity in social movements cannot be externally oriented, since the

role played by identity is assumed a priori for internally oriented type of social movements only, while instrumental strategies cannot be relevant to cultural change (Bernstein 1997, 2002).

The critiques of these distinctions argue that this mechanical system of types of movements, which stems from both – the identity theory as well as from resource mobilization together with political process theory, is unable to explain changes in forms of collective action within contentious politics (Bernstein 1997). Despite the definition of collective identity as fluid and multiple, as shown above in the explanation of collective identity as a necessary element for mobilization of any social movement, the distinction between expressive and instrumental movements seems to limit the interpretation of the role of identity within the movement as essential (Bernstein 1997). As Bernstein further explains, the problem arises from the fact, that goals and strategies are often conflated as it is apparent in resource mobilization, political process, and new social movements theories, whilst they should rather be distinguished as two different analytic levels of the identity concept (Bernstein 1997, 2002).

Secondly, concerning the role played by identity within the identity movement such as LGBT movement, it is assumed, that the goal is to seek recognition and reinforce the identity, on which the movement is based. However, despite the fact, that the identity of a movement appears homogeneous to the public, it is rarely the case. I explain in my essay that it is difficult to regard the LGBT movement as one homogeneous identity movement, since each “letter” in fact represents different sexual politics: should we compare gay and lesbian politics with the transgender ones, there are apparent differences in the subject of their seeking, not to mention the fact, that the demands of bisexual and transgender people are hardly unanimous. Since the identities produced in LGBT rights campaigns result from their negotiations and complex interaction with the state, the opposition, other social movements, as well as activists’ strategy, the important question to ask, is how movements manage differences within political campaigns and how is political action channelled by interactions with the state and the broader political environment. (Bernstein 2002: 86).

### 2.2.3. Identity as a strategy

In her essays on *The Strategic Uses of Identity by Lesbian and Gay Movement* (1997) and *The Contradiction of Gay Ethnicity* (2002), Mary Bernstein asks “to what extent activists naively and narrowly adhere to and rely on fixed or essentialist notions of identity (an ontological move, rather than a strategic claim [Phelan 1993]) in order to gain recognition for that identity” and whether a politics of recognition really requires, “that activists rely on a fixed notion of identity” (Bernstein 2002: 85). As Bernstein points out, broader understanding of the goals of movement’s collective action and its relationship to the structural location of the social actors are necessary to explain all strategy choices made by activists, however, the two dimensional level which analyzes identity mainly as a precursor for collective action or as internally oriented goal is not enough (Bernstein 1997: 537). In order to show that “pursuing a politics of recognition does not necessarily result from, or rely on, essentialism, nor do identity politics necessarily reinforce the identity on which the movement is based,” Bernstein has developed an analytic concept of three dimensions of identity (Bernstein 2002: 86), which is especially useful in analyzing collective action within the LGBT movement. Apart from identity for empowerment and identity as a goal, *identity as a strategy* is brought as the missing piece into the complex three dimensional analytic model to prevent interpretations from conflating goals with strategies as well as from limiting perception, which stems from social movements theory’s essentialist distinction of movement types.

I consider the biggest contribution of the third implemented level of analysis to be the term “identity deployment” (Bernstein 1997), which means that identities may be deployed strategically as a form of collective action. It is defined “to mean expressing identity such that the terrain of conflict becomes the individual person so that the values, categories, and practices of individuals become subject to debate” (Bernstein 1997: 537-538). The goal of identity deployment is not only to contest stigmatized social identities in order to change institutions as Taylor and Raeburn (1995) define; it can also be the transformation of mainstream culture, its categories and values, policies and structures (which according to the social movements theory might be considered the instrumental goal), by providing alternative forms of organizations, as well as the transformation of participants or education of legislators or the public and it could be understood and examined at both the individual (micro) and collective (meso) level

(ibid.). The flexible, strategic role “in social movements is shaped by the interaction of activists and the broader political environment, including the law” (Bernstein 2002: 87), which forms the movements values and preferences of activists (Katzenstein 1998), and state, which forms the orientations of the movements as well as the field of social movements by providing recognition for some identities, while “freezing others out” (Calhoun 1993: 387). The identity then plays not only the role of a goal for gaining recognition, it is also implemented as a strategy when pursuing different political as well as cultural goals, which could be instrumental (externally oriented) in its character.

I find this model to be especially beneficial in reference to the analysis of the case of the Spanish LGBTQ movement, whose character is heterogeneous and where the concept of identity as an internally oriented goal is insufficient as the newly emerged movement networks consist of multiple identities, whose common denominator is mainly the leftist oriented anti-capitalist and transgender politics. Since LGBT movement, earlier known as gay and lesbian movement, is considered to be the quintessential identity movement by the social movements theorists (Melucci 1989; Duyvendak 1995; Duyvendak and Giugni 1995), it is easy to forget that gay and lesbian, bisexual or transgender are “not simply one identity but a tenuous coalition” (Bernstein 2002: 89). Moreover, the contemporary heterogeneous movement covered with an umbrella term LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBT+ or even LGBTQI+, in contrast to the former gay and lesbian movement, represents the intersection of sexuality and gender promoting non-uniform or even antagonistic compound of politics (identity, queer as well as transgender politics), which can vary largely according to specific local conditions. This rather complicated topic will be explained in the next part.

#### **2.2.4. Understanding identity in LGBT movement**

In order to challenge the cultural barriers in reference to binary systems of understanding sexual orientation and gender, the LGBT activism requires a cultural struggle. Nevertheless, the gay and lesbian movement has on the contrary overcome a transition from a movement for cultural transformation through sexual liberation to a movement which seeks achievement of political rights through “ethnic-like” (Seidman 1993) politics (ibid.; Gamson 1995) by suppression of differences and celebration of similarities to the (heterosexual) majority (Bernstein 1997). In other words, the



categories of “gay“, “lesbian“, “bisexual” as well as “transsexual” (or “transgender”) were adopted and limited as fixed identity categories and legitimized as such during the 20th century in the Western society under the authority of *ethnic identity* model enforcement. According to this model, official recognition of such identities, mainly the gay and lesbian ones, in terms of legitimate (sexual) minorities should guarantee all civil rights to “homosexual” individuals within particular society. Therefore the gay / lesbian identity on the individual (micro) level is often constructed upon the essentialist understanding of innate homosexuality, something that cannot be chosen but is discovered as natural, predisposed and inborn, unlike the possibility or choice open to all people (Jagose 1996:59).

This transition of the former “queer” anti-assimilationist movement to the gay and lesbian and later LGBT movement advocating for the essentialist identity politics has been criticized mainly by the queer and transgender theorists for relying on essentialist and therefore fixed notions of sexual identities making them exclusionary:

Essentialism homogenizes groups of people who often have little in common either politically or otherwise when differences of race, class, gender, and sexual style are taken into account. For example, the category “woman” typically ignores differences of race, class, and sexual orientation. (Bernstein 2002: 87).

Queer theory, implemented in the so-called queer politics, is aimed at deconstructing rather than seeking recognition for the identities on which the movement is based. It was welcomed at the beginning by mainly transgender activists as an anti-essentialist, post-identitarian “potential for attacking the anti-transsexual moralism so unthinkingly embedded in most progressive analyses of gender and sexuality without resorting to a reactionary, homophobic, and misogynistic counteroffensive,” which brought theoretically and politically interesting concept of strategically fluid “queerness.” (Stryker 2004: 213). In Spanish LGBTQ environment, queer theory is a welcomed element. There is a strong interest in queer theory among the activists within challenging groups, however, doubts about the fact how its principles could be applied in contemporary activism or in another words - how queer theory becomes politics – occur:

*[Fieldnotes, 9.4.2008]*

*Lola was speaking about their group from Barcelona, which was supposed to be queer. However, she said, they found it difficult to use queer theory in practice. The first problem they encountered was how to name themselves.*

This concern can sound rather odd, nevertheless, it stresses the intention of queer politics to eliminate categorizing. Categories such as “gay”, “lesbian”, “woman” or “man” are understood as too narrow and limited:

*[Fieldnotes, 26.1.2008]*

*Carol: It is difficult for me to understand how the queer movement is politicized... from where?*

*Sol started nodding, explaining that it is all rather difficult to understand. In her opinion, the problem is in the categories. According to her, the question should be this: why are certain categories constructed and others aren't? Then she adds:*

*Sol: I don't want to say that the women groups are not important. They are very important, that's clear. But the category of woman doesn't say everything. It says a lot, but not everything.*

According to my collected data, queer theory is mainly appreciated by the activists of the challenging groups for its transformative character. However, it is necessary to point out that there is no single theory within this theoretical concept. On the contrary, there are many. Since there is no concrete model to be followed when applying such understanding in practice, queer politics is a term which is hard to specify. By definition, it strongly resists any limitation or categorization. In the case of Spanish LGBTQ environment, elements of queer theory are being quickly integrated within the activism of the challenging groups, which collaborate in wider networks whose common denominator is not identity, but instead, leftist oriented politics. However, for the reason of remaining within mainly academic realm, queer theory is criticized by the academic and activists themselves. Paco Vidarte complains that a few elitists took over the queer theory and sell it for a high price as “a recipe for freedom” (Vidarte, 2007: 13). Despite his faith in its efficiency to some extent, he criticizes the queer theory mainly for confusing people and for not being able to make them agree with each other. According to his words, it does not satisfy him politically anymore, for the queer theory has converted itself into nothing more than a springboard for making money, a way for

academics to make a living out of it. In his opinion, it has got too far from the real people and is rather boring (ibid.).

The problem of the term “queer” is that in practice it often reinforces an identity, since it is mainly applied by activists as another, wider, umbrella category, which in fact still refers to another kind of identity politics, where the term queer substitutes the term gay or the whole LGBT as a shared collective identity. Thereby, it also again paradoxically excludes those, who are not white, middle class (Bernstein 2002) or out of the scope of the sexual orientation category, such as transgender people. The critique of the unexploited transformative potential of queer theory and its politics in practice therefore arises mainly among the transgender theory frame:

Queer theory has become an entrenched, though generally progressive, presence in higher education, but it has not realized the (admittedly utopian) potential I (perhaps naively) sensed there for a radical restructuring of our understanding of gender, particularly of minoritized and marginalized manifestations of gender, such as transsexuality. While queer studies remains the most hospitable place to undertake transgender work, all too often *queer* remains a code word for “gay” or “lesbian,” and all too often transgender phenomena are misapprehended through a lens that privileges sexual orientation and sexual identity as the primary means of differing from heteronormativity. (Stryker 2004: 213-214)

According to Stryker, despite its transformative character (Seidman 1995), queer politics in practice often manipulate with the term “transgender” as with the site of all gender trouble, which thereby helps secure the binary opposition of homosexuality and heterosexuality as stable and normative categories of personhood producing damaging, isolating political consequences (Stryker 2004: 214). As Stryker further explains, the same developmental logic transformed an anti-assimilationist “queer” politics into a more palatable LGBT civil rights movement, where T was reduced to “another (easily detached) genre of sexual identity rather than perceived, like race or class, as something that cuts across existing sexualities, revealing in often unexpected ways the means through which all identities achieve their specificities” (ibid.).

The critiques of queer theory within the LGBT studies claim, that the problem of its political potential is that “queer is always an identity under construction, a site of

permanent becoming: ‘utopic in its negativity, queer theory curves endlessly toward a realization that its realization remains impossible’ (Lee 1995)<sup>5</sup>. The other extreme is to see it absolutely free of definition, as a tool to deconstruct the rigid categories that do not serve well for marginalized groups of people at the edge of the institutionalized LGBT world. The fact that the term “deconstruction” is often understood rather in the meaning of “destruction” (Seidman 1995: 116) consequently seems to cause anxiety in those, who clearly identify themselves as one of the available LGBT identity categories or advocate for identity politics of such sexual identities as necessary. It is also believed, that promoting the deconstruction of identity categories undermines the goal of such activism, since it is not possible in reference to the politics of recognition to do without categories:

*[Fieldnotes, 22.2.2008]*

*When I mentioned the queer theory, Javi commented critically (with a gesture showing no interest) that it is rather anti-identity oriented.*

This is also a critical argument against radical transgender theorists and activists, who advocate for using gender as an instrumental concept only in order to analyze power relations and systems of inequality (Hausman 2001). They follow Judith Butler’s (1990) analysis of gender identity, explaining gender as a mere juridical construction and “the effect of reiterated performances of one’s sex that make up the illusion of an identity inside that produces such expression” (Hausman 2001: 476). As further explained:

All gender presentations are conventional and, although not voluntary, do not necessarily inhere in the subject as formative of her or his central self. [...] Using gender instrumentally means reorienting it from an ontology (our culture’s primary view, that gender underlies the being of all people) to an epistemology (a way of knowing or understanding the operation of culture) (ibid.).

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<sup>5</sup> Eldeman, Lee (1995) cited in Jagose, Annemarie (1996), ‘Queer Theory’ Australian Humanities Review, extracted from Queer Theory, University of Melbourne Press, 1996, <http://www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-Dec-1996/jagose.html>

In reference to transgender theory (known also as transgender studies), which was born similarly to queer theory in the 1990s, the theorists, social scientists as well as activists often end up advocating for “trans” people and their lives in order to make their situation easier, however, different approaches to gender and related politics cause the emergence of antagonistic wings within the LGBT movement, which is not surprising, should we consider the fact, that there is no unity within transgender community whatsoever as Kate Bornstein demonstrates in her intimate confession *Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us*:

**Post-operative transsexuals** (those transsexuals who've had genital surgery and live fully in the role of another gender) look down on: **Pre-operative transsexuals** (those who are living full or part time in another gender, but who've not yet had their genital surgery) who in turn look down on: **Transgenderers** (people living in another gender identity, but who have little or no intention of having genital surgery) who can't abide: **She-Males** (a she-male friend of mine described herself as "tits, big hair, lots of make-up, and a dick.") who snub the: **Drag Queens** (gay men who on occasion dress in varying parodies of women) who laugh about the: **Out Transvestites** (usually heterosexual men who dress as they think women dress, and who are out in the open about doing that) who pity the: **Closet Cases** (transvestites who hide their cross-dressing) who mock the post-operative transsexuals. (Bornstein 1994: 67-68)

Regardless of the contentious character of queer politics and heterogeneity of transgender theory, I consider both of them to be suitable analytic tools especially in reference to meso analysis within the heterogeneous LGBTQ movement of Spain, where challenging groups emerge in order to protest against the institutionalized state-aided movement, focusing mainly on the identity politics. These groups often take advantage of queer theory knowledge and implement it in their politics, which advocate especially for transgender rights demanding deconstruction of the very category of gender by, for example, removal of the mention of individual's sex from the identity documents. According to queer and transgender theory's contemporary logic, which is in accordance with social movements theory and its understanding of collective identity, sexual and gender identities are perceived as arbitrary fluid social constructs and the claims about existence of essential “authentic” and uniformed sexual identity are

denied. Thereby, the binary opposition of “homosexual vs. heterosexual” as well as “man vs. woman” is undermined. Hereby for example, bisexual identity in this perspective seems to be only a way out of the dead-end of unsustainable taxonomy. Bisexuality is nowadays perceived by queer theorists as a [non]identity which undermines the very base of identity politics (Jagose 1996:69) or as a form of anti-policy, which (whether consciously or not) refuses the pressure to limit one’s desires to one and only object or way of love behaviour (Clausen 1990:19).

Nevertheless, sexual identity in general is still often perceived as a source of coherence and uniformity (Holt, Griffin 2003; Farquhar 2000) based on experience of discovering it within one’s self and overcoming the inner struggle. The construction of one’s sexual identity around his or her recognized and accepted sexual orientation or gender, which still remains understood in accordance with biological sex, is supported by the fact that this experience is collectively shared and serves as a base for community building and a liberating sense of belonging. The gay and lesbian movement needed to form itself on a shared collective identity and goals which, however, varied in time in reference to the opportunities offered by the law and state, which required some adjustments, particularly in reference to suppression or celebration of differences from majority (Bernstein 1997). It appeared therefore at first as a revolutionary movement promoting sexual liberation and diversity. However, especially due to HIV pandemic in the 1980s, the gay and lesbian politics changed its strategy and on the contrary highlighted its normalizing similarities to the wider society. The transition of the gay and lesbian (later LGBT) movement is well documented (Altman 1982; Paul 1982; Escoffier 1985; Epstein 1987; Seidman 1993; Gamson 1995; Vaid 1995), but still needs to be further explained (Bernstein 1997). I argue in my essay in reference to contemporary LGBTQ movement in Spain that the combination of queer and transgender politics, applied by newly emerged challenging groups within the heterogeneous Spanish LGBT movement, advocates alternative ways of sexual politics. These challenging groups have become bitter critics of the state supported identity politics represented by the institutionalized dominant group and they follow different goals than those focused just on the identity. These groups, connected within wide networks with other leftist oriented social movements, use identity of “precariousness” not as a goal, but as a “strategy deployment” (Bernstein 1997, 2002). These activities are conducted to bring back the aim of (not only) sexual liberation through supporting the diversity instead of proclaiming similarities with the majority. Thereby, the goals of

the institutional dominant LGBT movement are influenced by the leftist politics of the challenging groups, which consequently has an impact on the whole LGBTQ movement maintenance and its outcomes.

### 3. The historical background: The LGBT movement in Spain

Over the last thirty years, the Spanish state experienced a profound and remarkable transition from dictatorship to a modern democratic society, which brought changes in women rights and development of gender equality policies. These changes later helped the promotion of gay and lesbian rights as a political demand. This period marked by a struggle to obtain anti-discrimination law, was followed by a fight for recognition of partnership legislation, which in the end, due to particular socio-political conditions, resulted in the approval of same-sex marriage and adoption rights in June 2005 and the gender identity law in March 2007 (Platero, 2007a: 207).

As the Spanish sociologist and activist Raquel Platero argues in her study of the representation of lesbian and gay rights in Spain, LGBT rights became a political problem especially in the 1995-2005 period after entering the political agenda once it was “framed as coherent with the general understanding of political problems and socio-cultural values” and became “a matter of kinship rights, built on the relevant concepts of marriage and family”, as family is the most valued institution among the Spanish citizens upon the results of the CIS survey of 2004 (Platero, 2007a: 208-209). The political success in achieving same-sex rights supported by majority of citizens as a part of the development of Spanish democracy reveals the sign of increasing notion and acceptance of equality discourse within the society, with the inclusion of the view of the Catholic Church and most conservative parties, which implicated partnership rights in their electoral program in March 2004 in spite of protesting against the approval of same-sex marriage (ibid.). Although both of the approved laws had a symbolic effect on the society and were intended to satisfy the demands of LGBT movement organizations in order to stop the inequality, according to some activists they did not succeed in transforming the society in depth and moreover contributed to a reproduction of further inequalities (Platero 2008).

According to Elena Vergara Díez, the organizer of an exposition held in June 2007 in Madrid held to celebrate 30 years of the fight for the LGBT rights in Spain, this thirty years long history has been a collective fight of many groups, when the small local collectives were of the same importance as the bigger organizations from larger cities: all of them shared the same interest in winning the right to be different “as the *diversity* is a fundamental value which enriches the society and the LGBT people have never



wanted to lose this sign that is so characteristic for them” (Vergara Díez, 2007: 8)<sup>6</sup>. Since the Spanish LGBT movement as a whole has always operated in many networks and organizations with more or less common goals all over the country, in this chapter dedicated to its recent history and development I would like to illustrate that the diversity with almost permanent existence of dominant and challenging groups can be understood as its characteristic sign.

### **3.1 The formation and development of LGBT movement in Spain**

In reference to the intention to fight for the citizen’s sexual rights, the first people started to group together in the 1970’s at the time of severe political and cultural repression when “homosexual acts” were forbidden and prosecuted by LPRS Law (Ley de Peligrosidad y Rehabilitación Social) from 1970<sup>7</sup>. The dictatorship made the heterosexual/homosexual and the man/woman dichotomy the central point of its ideological program (Pérez Sánchez, 2004) and the vast majority of Spanish society, whose cohesion during the dictatorship was re-established on grounds of traditional values such as family, Catholicism and patriotism, more or less shared the institutional attitude (Platero, 2007a). Due to the hostile homophobic environment, the gay and lesbian movement started to build itself up on its opposition to those traditional Spanish values mentioned above: “the institutionalized family, the Catholic church, and the unity of the native land” (Llamas & Vila, 1999: 216).

Despite the end of the dictatorship after Franco’s death in 1975 and the following process of transition when Spain underwent large structural changes on its way to the new constitution (1978) and parliamentary democracy after the fashion of European standard, the homophobia in Spanish society still continued as a result of past forty years lived under the authoritarian regime. Nevertheless, this significant period of transition at the end of the seventies, however hostile to homosexual behaviour, gave to newly awoken gay and lesbian movement an opportunity to protest and revolt against the deprivation of their liberty, especially after the amnesty in 1976. This amnesty was supposed to be the symbol of new emerging freedoms such as freedom of the press and freedom of association but did not include the amnesty of those imprisoned for “social

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<sup>6</sup> Italics mine.

<sup>7</sup> The Social Menace and Rehabilitation Act (LPRS, 16/1970)

menace” according to the LPRS law from 1970. As Llamas and Vila explain, that was the time when the gay and lesbian movement, which articulated its goals alongside other underground organizations and marginalized groups, appeared on the public scene as a part of numerous “anti-Franco” social and liberation movements characteristic for this period of public life renaissance (in the Basque and the Valencian countries, Catalonia and the Balears these organizations were linked mostly with the idea of national liberation and independence) (Llamas & Vila, 1999: 217-221).

Madrid’s first Orgullo (which means Pride) parade, organized by FLHOC (Frente de Liberación Homosexual de Castilla<sup>8</sup>), was held in 28 June in 1978. According to Llamas and Vila (1999), there were already seven thousand participants and according to another sources (Vázquez 2001, Fundación Triángulo archive) there were even three thousand participants more<sup>9</sup>. The main objective of both first Orgullo parades in Barcelona (1977) and Madrid (1978) was of course the appeal of the LPRS law, whose majority of clauses were finally successfully eliminated in January 1979 by the legal reform proposed by PSOE political party (Partido Socialista Obrero Español<sup>10</sup>), which won the following election in 1982.

At the beginning of the eighties, the homosexual associations as well as leftist political parties and organizations were legalized and the new equality legislation included also the divorce right (1981), sex-change right (1983), which allowed to undergo surgery at private clinics only, and abortion right (1985) which, however, until today remains legal only in certain exceptions such as rape, fetal defects, maternal life, general health and/or mental health risk.

During the eighties first AIDS cases in Spain were announced but the community did not pay much attention to it, since, due to the continuing repression and hostile environment, it was rather negatively perceived as “antihomosexual propaganda” (Llamas & Vila, 1999: 230). As a consequence the rate of HIV infection in Spain was higher than in other countries and especially in Madrid the disease reached nearly epidemic proportions, which provoked delayed feverish reaction in promoting prevention and safe sex campaigns at the end of the eighties and early nineties (Mann, 2005) after many gay organizations associated within the countrywide COFLHEE base included these as one of their main struggles. In 1994, new lesbian feminist activist

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<sup>8</sup> Homosexual Liberation Front of Castile

<sup>9</sup> Source: [http://fundaciontriangulo.es/educacion/dossier1998/e\\_historia.htm](http://fundaciontriangulo.es/educacion/dossier1998/e_historia.htm)

<sup>10</sup> Spanish Socialist Worker’s Party

group LSD<sup>11</sup> organized a national meeting of feminist organizations held in Madrid, where the debate on the possibility of HIV transmission through lesbian sexual practices were opened, which led to active participation of LSD and other collectives in prevention campaigns as well as demonstrations organized by La Radical Gai (formed in Madrid in 1991) in front of the Ministry of Health (Llamas & Vila, 1999: 233). Fifteen years later, the official statistics as well as medical doctors themselves still ignore the possibility of woman-to-woman HIV transmission. A good illustration of this attitude is a record from my personal visit at one of the Madrid's medical centres of free anonymous HIV testing in March 2009 where, before the testing, I had to undergo a compulsory entering interview with one of the responsible staff members:

*[Fieldnotes, 20.2.2009]*

*After a cold greeting I was asked to sit down and answer some questions. Dr. María Ángeles was sitting in front of me with three sheets of a questionnaire in her hand and started giving me questions on drug use, prostitution, sexual contact with prostitutes, forms of sex with men, etc. After my negative reply to all of them, she looked at me impatiently and asked: "What are you doing here?" I, surprised, did not know what to say first. It was the last question I was expecting as I was convinced that all of those, who already come here do it for the same reason. Instead of replying to her I asked curiously whether it were so strange that a careful citizen decided to undergo the test. She gave me a somewhat unpleasant feeling that I was wasting her time, then looked at me and uttered in a preaching manner: "I have been working here for 15 years and I have never heard of any woman infected by another."*

As for lesbians, at the very beginning there were not many of them organized, but those who were, actively looked for a way to make themselves visible. The problem was that their participation in political formations was many times refused by gay men. The truth is that codified repression was most often applied to men only and concerning women, "the laws that punished homosexuality did not specifically name them" (Llamas & Vila, 1999: 216). Nevertheless, women "were paradigms of the "silent and nonexistent beings" that the dictatorship had eradicated from public space" (ibid.) and were reprimanded mainly in the family environment by the institutionalized Catholic Church and psychiatric system powers (Platero 2009: 110).

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<sup>11</sup> LSD as for Lesbianas Sin Dinero, Lesbianas Sobretudo Diferentes, Lesbianas Se Difunden

Madrid's FLHOC was the first organization that admitted men as well as women, therefore in 1978 the first mixed group was born (Mann 2005). Three years later, a new independent group of feminist lesbians was formed, CFLM (Colectivo de Feministas Lesbianas de Madrid), due to continuous disputes between men's and women's FLHOC's wings. Throughout the eighties, the voice of Spanish lesbians joint the feminist struggle for divorce, contraception and free abortion rights and their own issues were made less important. According to Spanish sociologist and activist Gracia Trujillo Barbadillo, the participation of lesbians within the feminist movement led to the formation of the lesbian feminism discourse resulting in activism, which proved to be beneficial for feminist, lesbian as well as the sexual protest in general (Trujillo Barbadillo, 2007: 31). However, different attitudes as well as dilution of the same-sex and the lesbian visibility issues among the feminist movement's demands in the eighties led to inevitable splits among the lesbians as well as the whole feminist movement itself, which caused the formation of newly diversified forces among both wings throughout the nineties. According to some lesbian activists, the feminist movement has a historical debt on the lesbian visibility account and "should recognize them publicly now with no more delays" (ibid.).

Despite the difficulty in talking about a united feminist and lesbian movement nowadays, all parties concerned are trying to find a common ground mainly in reference to topics of their common interest or support. It is e.g. the demand of free abortion right as it still remains legal only in certain exceptions and therefore belongs to one of the main political demands of the activists, as it was possible to see and hear in the centre of Madrid during the illegal celebration of International Women's Day held on March 8<sup>th</sup> 2008.

In 1979 the transgender<sup>12</sup> collectives started to organize themselves. They developed their struggle alongside gay and lesbian organizations especially in big cities even though the communication between them was not always easy. These newly mobilized organizations formed a significant part of the first events focused on the repeal of the LPRS law. As the law did not distinguish between homosexuals, travesties or transsexuals, they all were perceived as "social menace" and/or delinquents.

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<sup>12</sup> When I refer to the term "transgender" I do not distinguish between transsexual, transgender or travesty people, since in Spain it is more common to use the term "trans" as an umbrella term for all. However, in essays it is typical to use the term "transsexual" as a reference to both, transgender and transsexual people, groups or movement. As in English the term "transgender" is more common than the term "transsexual", I prefer to use this term, too, but not in the meaning of pre-op state transgender people but as a synonym for the Spanish umbrella term "trans".

According to Vázquez and his study about the beginnings of transgender movement in Spain, their first efforts and demands of sexual liberty wanted to show that sexuality and gender were mainly a political option, which implied the participation of various non-gay organizations such as all leftist political parties (PSOE as an extreme left at that time) as well as various social and union groups (ibid.). In 1983 the legalization of sex-change surgery was accomplished, which also helped promote the visibility of numerous transgender organizations appearing at that time. In 1987 the AET-Transexualia (Asociación Española de Transexuales<sup>13</sup>) was founded. Among their main goals was the right to an access to social security with all its benefits. They also demanded that the prostitution was considered a legal work so that the “sexual workers”<sup>14</sup> could pay taxes and acquire the social security number.

As mentioned above, the struggle of transgender movement in Spain developed alongside the gay and lesbian organizations with an effort to find the common ground in order to follow common goals but it was not until the late nineties when the allied associations of gays, lesbians, transgender and bisexual people (who still remained somehow overlooked as they basically never created any significant organization with political goals) united in mixed LGBT movement and followed the path to legal sexual equality together (Platero 2009: 111). The problem of AIDS pandemic, which entered the Spanish scene in the eighties, evoked the stigmatization of all the non-heterosexual forms of sexuality and the main goal of especially gay movement was to purify the reputation of gay men’s lives and to distance themselves from the HIV fever in a protest against the stereotyped view of homosexuality. The gay organizations were therefore not willing to cooperate with transgender organizations, since the transsexual women, who very often had to work as sexual workers<sup>15</sup>, were aggressively persecuted by the police (Ramos, 2003). However, the transgender movement shows a history of constructive relationship with the feminist movement (Platero, 2009: 112). In 1993, when Asociación de Identidad de Género de Andalucía was founded (which five years later played the main role in the inclusion of comprehensive treatment of transsexuality in Andalusian public health system), there was a countrywide feminist workshop (Jornadas Feministas Estatales) held in Madrid where the transgender issue received huge support from the majority of the presented organizations (ibid.), which led to

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<sup>13</sup> Spanish Association of Transgender People

<sup>14</sup> Trabajadoras de sexo.

<sup>15</sup> Transexuales trabajadoras del sexo

acceptance of transsexual women in the celebrations of The Women's Day on March 8<sup>th</sup> (Platero, 2009; Ramos, 2003).

### **3.2 What preceded the approval of 2005 and 2007 laws in Spain**

In the late eighties and early nineties, the gay, lesbian and transgender movement were already fully rooted in Spanish democratic society. New groups were formed even in localities where LGBT people had never mobilized before and as a new element to its strategy, the movement started to constructively cooperate with political parties. This in the end did bear its fruit in 1988 when the "Public Scandal" article (1979), used to prosecute LGBT people, was eliminated after the proposal of IU (Izquierda Unida<sup>16</sup>) communist party (Llamas & Vila 1999). The decade between the years 1985 and 1995 was marked by the struggle for the anti-discrimination law manifesting its potential in many marches and demonstrations all over the country. In 1986 in Madrid, as a result of COFLHEE's meeting, a non-profit organization COGAM (Colectivo Gai de Madrid<sup>17</sup>) was born. COGAM played an important role during the antidiscrimination law fight, which was in the end won in 1995 with the new Civil Code after the anti-discrimination measures were enacted (Platero 2008). Before, in 1991 COGAM left the COFLHEE association for its different, more radical attitude, splitting later into two independent groups - COGAM and La Radical Gai. La Radical Gai was established mainly to fight against the Catholic Church whereas COGAM, in 1992, initiated the formation of The National Federation of Gays and Lesbians (FEG<sup>18</sup>) with the same-sex partnership legislation and later the same-sex marriage right as its main goal (Mann, 2005).

As Platero explains in detail in her article on gay marriage in Spain (Love and the state, 2007), first attempts to demand same-sex marriage and partnership rights took place already at the beginning of the 1990's coming e.g. from the lesbian feminists from the whole Spain, who published a common set of demands in relation to same-sex marriage. They claim that although they are not in support of institutionalizing (affection) relationships, they do not accept either the discrimination suffered by those

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<sup>16</sup> United Left

<sup>17</sup> Later Colectivo de Gays y Lesbianas de Madrid and now Colectivo de Lesbianas, Gays, Transexuales y Bisexuales de Madrid.

<sup>18</sup> FEGL later changed its name to FEGLT in order to show supportive attitude to transgender organizations. The name of the federation has lately added the letter B (FELGTB) as a sign of the inclusion of bisexual issues.

who would like to get married but cannot (Platero, 2007b: 333-334). In 1992 some LGBT organizations began to negotiate with political parties, e.g. the CRECUL (Comité Reivindicativo y Cultural de Lesbianas)<sup>19</sup> played an important role, since it presented the first partnership proposal, and especially left-wing parties began to perceive gay rights and related same-sex marriage demand as its political opportunity (ibid.). Concerning the participation of political parties, the one which introduced the most progressive proposals supporting, as the consequence, the emergence of LGBT issues within the Spanish politics was the left-wing party IU (Izquierda Unida). However, the main role in the end played the PSOE Socialist Party, which after two electoral periods in opposition again won the 2004 election and introduced equality as a prior goal in relation to the demands of feminist, disability and the LGBT organizations (Platero, 2007b: 332).

As for the LGBT movement itself, there was no real consensus about the same-sex marriage: Catalanian FAGC from the very beginning in their Manifest 1977 advocated the suppression of the concepts of marriage, the couple and the family and most of the countrywide COFLHEE association did not support the demand either (Llamas & Vila, 1999: 239). Nevertheless, the partnership legislation demand in the end managed to find support despite the fact that there were different attitudes to partnership rights in comparison to same-sex marriage demand led mainly by the National Federation of LGBT organizations FELGT (former FEGL), which gradually increased its political influence leading to a same-sex marriage proposal that was twice debated in Parliament at the beginning of 2005 (Platero, 2007b: 334) and in the end achieved its approval in June 2005.

Law 13/2005, reforming the Civil Code and allowing same-sex marriage under the same conditions as different sex couples as well as adoption of children, has been presented as a step to formal equality of LGBT people, however, other requests for allowing partnership legislation promoted by some leftist parties (IU e.g.) and LGBT organizations outside FELGTB have not been answered (Platero, 2008: 45). Although the symbolic impact of the 13/2005 Law approval is undoubtedly evident, according to National Statistics Institute (INE) the 2006 yearly percentage rate of same-sex weddings was only 1-2% out of all weddings carried out in Spain (ibid.).

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<sup>19</sup> Revolutionary and Cultural Committee for Lesbians

In 1989 it was the first time in Europe to officially recognize the existence of discrimination against the transgender people (transphobia) as the resolution of the European Parliament, which implied the forthcoming gradual demand of sanitary assistance in the sex-change surgery and treatment process for transgender people in the EU member countries (Platero 2009: 112). In Spain, however, this demand was denied in 1991 by the Ministry of Health (Ministerio de Sanidad), which provoked further mobilization of transgender activists. Next year, in 1992, they formed a collective in Catalonia (Colectivo de Transexuales de Cataluña) with a new revolutionary point of view from which they demanded the right to the change of name, the elimination of sex identification data in ID document DNI (Documento Nacional de Identidad), an access to the sex-change treatment fully covered by the social security and also the possibility of sex change without the necessity to undergo a surgery (Ramos, 2003) all of which were at that time found by majority as rather radical (Platero, 2009: 112).

Nowadays, even after many changes and the approval of the gender identity law in 2007, which in the eyes of some LGBTQ activists is a controversial act, some of the demands still remain topical and are being discussed. The critics of the law, who collaborate in wider network (International Network for Trans' Identities' Despathologization) independently from the state-aided FELGTB organization which promoted the approvals of the new laws, criticize the fact that anyone who wishes to change their name in their official documents, or who wishes to modify their body with hormonal treatment or with some operations, has to go through a psychiatric monitoring. They criticize the pathologization of transsexuality under the "Gender Identity Disorder" as an extreme exercise of control and normalization and demand the retirement of transsexuality from the mental disorders' manuals (DSM-IV-R and ICD-10). They also demand to bring the treatments on intersex babies to an end. According to their words, "when medicine and State define us as disordered, they are proving that our identities, our lives, deeply disturb their system. That's why we say that the illness is not in us but within gender binarism." (Stop Trans 2012 Manifest)



## **4. Methodology: The construction of the object of study**

### **4.1 Entering the field**

This part deals with the methodology of my study. It aims to explain and reflect on the applied research methods and decision making with relation to the process of the construction of the object of study and the whole process of anchoring the research in an unknown environment.

My investigation began with the idea of implementing my interest in queer theory and LGBT studies in an ethnographic research. I planned to carry it out during a 10 month long Erasmus exchange in Madrid. I chose this city as my future destination on purpose due to recently approved Laws of Gay Marriage and Adoption (2005) and Gender Identity (2007). I expected to encounter an abundant LGBTQ community there, despite the fact that I had never been to Madrid before my first arrival in autumn 2007. My knowledge of Spanish LGBTQ community life, social movements and politics was based only on information which I was able to obtain a few months earlier in Prague on the Internet, mostly via virtual chat conversations on community servers.<sup>20</sup> The first phase of my research was therefore conducted “online” before arriving in the “offline” field.

Considering the ethnographic methodology, most ethnographers still avoid conducting studies situated in the “online” social world, because such research requires making adjustments in defining the setting, conducting participant observation and interviews and obtaining access, as well as dealing with ethical dilemmas that such studies bring (Garcia et al. 2009). However, the distinction between the online and offline worlds is becoming less precise and useful as these two worlds are currently blending and the use of Internet and text-based computer-mediated communication (CMC) is becoming a part of everyday life (ibid.). Therefore, my first step was to create a community server profile in order to get into contact with local transgender and lesbian community in Madrid and, if possible, to find some informants ahead of my arrival. Being sincere about my intentions as an ethnographer helped me to obtain access to online community life and establish direct contact with several members whom I later met personally in autumn 2007 after I arrived in the city. Ever since, I started receiving regular invitations to various private parties and public bars and clubs

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<sup>20</sup> <http://gaydargirls.com>

in Chueca, a district which is widely known as a sort of gay district. Through many informal conversations made both online and offline during the first months of my stay, I managed to collect the initial data about the formation of LGBTQ community and related topic of collective identity (de-)construction, which was supposed to be my first object of study.

After enrolling in winter semester at the Faculty of Political Science and Sociology at Complutense University, my fieldwork tutor introduced me to two students of ethnography and gender, who consequently introduced me to LGBTQ activists in RQTR collective – a group at the university, working to unite students and academics interested in LGBT and queer politics. I was also given a contact to LGBT NGO called COGAM (Colectivo de Lesbianas, Gays, Transexuales y Bisexuales de Madrid) and, as a UCM student, I easily received access to a lesbian group, which regularly met in the centre of Madrid. In winter 2007 I became a regular observant at those meetings. I mostly took notes and took advantage of coffee breaks in order to participate in informal conversations with the members. This way, I found out about the existence of FELGTB<sup>21</sup>, the state-aided federation of LGBT collectives with political bonds to leading Socialist Party (PSOE). COGAM in Madrid has a position of major significance there as the official organizer of “Orgullo“ (Pride) event that seems to be, as I later realized, the most state-aided commercial public event with a significant social and political influence.

Before entering the COGAM group in November 2007, I was mostly unaware of the existence of various “radical” LGBTQ collectives cooperating within wider social movement networks, which are not as easily accessed in comparison with the state-aided organizations such as the FELGTB member groups (COGAM in particular). When one is looking for some information or an access to LGBTQ community in Madrid without any knowledge of the environment, COGAM seems to be the most visible and accessible point. In fact, all of the UCM anthropology students who had carried out their research within the LGBTQ context in previous years (and whom I got in contact with) were also doing their participant observations in COGAM.<sup>22</sup> Later, in

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<sup>21</sup> FELGTB – Federación Estatal de Lesbianas, Gays, Transexuales y Bisexuales

<sup>22</sup> As I have already found out about my informants from distinct LGBTQ collectives, the majority of them also claimed to be entering one of the COGAM groups at the time when they either “came out” and wanted to make friends within the LGBTQ community, or when they were looking for a LGBTQ organization because they were interested in active participation. This actually supports my observation that COGAM, thanks to its special position as a well-known and easily accessible organization, serves as

January 2008, I was already more informed about the activism of the radical groups cooperating within social movement networks and I came to the conclusion that it might be useful if I refocused my research. Therefore, I decided to find another accessible unit of analysis – one that would be more suitable for my regular participant observation regarding the objectives I followed.

The most active among networks operating outside the state-aided FELGTB, *Bloque Alternativo por la Liberación Sexual* (The Alternative Block for Sexual Liberation, further in text as The Alternative Block), was particularly known for criticizing FELGTB for promoting the goals of the leading Socialist Party (PSOE) and using the Orgullo parade as a part of their electoral campaign.<sup>23</sup> The Alternative Block in fact consists of mostly LGBTQ groups which emphasize financial (and political) independence and intensify their activity in large social networks with the support of other social movement groups apart from the strictly LGBT oriented ones (e.g. feminist, ecologist and/or anti-capitalist). Thanks to one of my informants, a member of the Ladyfest feminist group (which at that time cooperated with several social movement collectives in a social centre located in an abandoned house, “ocupa<sup>24</sup>”, in a central part of Madrid), I was invited to participate in an event called *Foro Social Mundial 08*, which was held the last weekend of January 2008. While there, I visited a workshop called *Politizando Sexualidades*, organized by an unknown leftist LGBTQ activist group which turned out to be the constituent part of the (in)famous Alternative Block network.

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an important primary filter or a goal. There is a constant flow of newcomers: some of them stay, some of them leave, but in the end, everybody knows them.

<sup>23</sup> The leading Zapatero’s PSOE, which put through the law 13/2005, modifying the Civil Code on the matter of same-sex marriage as a matter of full citizenship (Platero 2007: 218), has a wide base of voters among gay and lesbian activists. Some influential PSOE political representatives are members of the FELGTB association as well, such as Pedro Zerolo, who was elected as the president of FELGTB in 2000 and again in 2002, while he was still a federal executive. Other LGBTQ collectives have been participating in various political parties, too – for example, Izquierda Unida (United Left) has a strong support among young members of COGAM or LiberAcción. A brand new political party called Izquierda Anticapitalista (Anticapitalist Left) emerged in November 2008, being built on the platform of former Espacio Alternativo. It is a leftist-oriented collective from Madrid, which set itself the goal to stand in European elections in June 2009 as a part of the European left block, alongside the New Anticapitalist Party in France. An important part of their electoral program was dedicated to LGBTQ rights and the novelization of the gender identity law. See more in: Manifiesto “Por una candidatura anticapitalista en las elecciones europeas de 2009”, <http://www.anticapitalistas.org/node/3311>

<sup>24</sup> Ocupa is basically a squat, which is used by various social movement groups as a self-organized and self-aided social centre and a meeting point.

The workshop introduced the topic of sexual identities in present Spanish political context with a special focus on transsexuality from the queer theory perspective<sup>25</sup>, together with the critique of the new controversial Gender Identity Law released in March 2007<sup>26</sup>, which allows transgender people to change their name and sex in the Civil Register without the necessity to undergo a surgery. However, as I learnt at the workshop, the individuals have to be previously diagnosed as Gender Identity Disordered and therefore undergo a two-year long period of a hormonal therapy under the supervision of a psychiatrist. As I was further informed, this collective belonged to the constituent members of The Alternative Block, whose activism (as partly mentioned above) was mainly focused on the critique of market-oriented LGBT values, especially concerning the so-called Madrid's Orgullo "Pride" parade organized by COGAM (FELGTB). At the time, one of the main efforts of the activism of The Alternative Block was to support a shift towards de-pathologization of transsexuality and de-psychiatrization of transsexual individuals.

I intended to get in a closer contact with the group after the workshop, showing my interest in the topic as an ethnographer. Due to the fact that at that time they did not meet regularly, I had to wait for another month before I was invited by their members to take part in their first official meeting at the end of February 2008.

#### **4.2 Positioning in the group of informants**

After receiving access to the group of the constituent members of The Alternative Block network, I was informed about their political orientation of a leftist radical group. As a Czech citizen, who was eleven at the time of the 1989 revolution and still clearly remembers the greyness of everyday life in former socialistic Czechoslovakia, I must

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<sup>25</sup> In Spanish, the word "transsexual" and "transgender" are sometimes replaceable, depending on who says it in what context and how they understand it. What I have understood from my observations, the word "transgénero" is a rather new term and might be sometimes taken as a synonym for queer. According to some of my informants from Barcelona, "queer" is a new term in Spanish and is not usually used as an umbrella term for LGBT, nor is it a synonym for a gay/lesbian person. In Spanish, there are terms for each category that are more common in everyday language than the English ones: "maricón" for a gay, "bollera" for a lesbian. Queer as a new term is usually understood as a reference to queer theory and therefore is more known in the academic field. To solve the problem when dealing with the transsexual and transgender topics such as the gender identity law 3/2007, many people tend to unite both meanings in the word "trans", which is then understood as an umbrella term for both: e.g. "la gente trans" (trans people).

<sup>26</sup> La ley de Identidad de Género, 3/2007

admit I have been somewhat suspicious of openly radical leftist politics ever since. After realizing the fact that in contemporary Spain the leftist politics is differently understood and accepted due to its distinct history background, I had to give up my prejudice about the adherents of the Communist Party. Likewise, I was regarded by my new informants as a “rare phenomenon”: someone who is theoretically interested in leftist politics without necessarily voting for it. A deeper study of Spanish history was necessary in order to realize that the Spanish right-wing politics has been connected with dogmatic attitudes of the Catholic Church and former dictatorship of Franco’s era – the time when the Communist Party was illegalized and became a part of the underground subculture together with all the social movement’s activities. It also explains the long history and recent high activity of social movements in Spanish environment.

Therefore, for the first few weeks my informants considered me to be a student of anthropology with a strange accent and unusual political orientation. At that time the group only began to meet regularly and was interested in welcoming new members. Some new people came to their meetings to see what was going on and then never appeared again. At first, I was accepted as one of those curious people. I realized that there was an unwritten rule of dividing people in two categories: the real members (who were few) and the sympathizers, who received only emails addressed to wider public. This way the group tried to manage to keep the important internal things among the constituent and “real” members only.

After regularly attending several meetings I have confirmed my serious interest in participating and was accepted as a real member. Afterwards, I was offered a complete access to the group’s dossier, which helped me understand the group’s focus and conduct participant observation. My email address was added to the group’s mailing list, so I could be informed of every activity, meeting, and all the organizational steps of the group.

I have later realized that the “online” part of my research (particularly the computer-mediated communication through the mailing list and blogs) was an essential part of keeping in touch with the group agenda: since the members had various activities, they could hardly ever meet all at the same time. The internet communication through the mailing list therefore provides a good way of informing everyone involved of every new plan, move, or decision. It also opens up a possibility for everyone to discuss and argue specific points. From that time on, my research consisted of both

offline as well as online participant observation, which was necessary to fully implement the text-based CMC into my analysis of collected data.

Soon, I was presented with the first ethical problem. In April 2008, the group decided to participate in the national LGBT conference (Encuentros Estatales<sup>27</sup>) in Gandía, Valencia. This conference is organized regularly by the institutional state-aided LGBT federation (FELGTB) in order to meet with its member groups and vote for proposals that can be presented by any participating collective. There is a special system of votes, which are assigned according to sexual orientation (every group can have a representative of each of the L,G,B and T categories) and as the only biological woman which arrived in Gandía as the member of our collective, I was a potential voter. When I was offered the chance to vote, I felt honoured. On one hand, this made me feel like an insider of the group. On the other hand, I was concerned for losing my neutrality of an ethnographer, which I was trying to keep, because I didn't want to unnecessarily influence the results of the group's action. I was also worried about not getting a permission to video-record the conference – my first intention was to introduce myself as a student, not as a member of a radical group. Furthermore, the group was not a member of the wider FELGTB federation and was known for its antagonistic attitude to the politics of the federation. The last but not least, I knew I would meet the COGAM members of the group where I had started my participant observation and where I was known as an anthropology student, not as a radical activist. I expressed my concerns to Manu, who offered me the chance to vote, stating that if I was going to present myself as a voting member of their group, nobody would believe in my pure academic intentions:

*[Fieldnotes, 2.4.2008] Manu agrees, thinking my reaction through, then he nods, but wants me to try anyway. He suggests I try and if I am not allowed to record, I won't lose anything by voting. I see this as a compromise and reluctantly agree, but later I feel as if we were negotiating at that moment, making a political deal.*

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<sup>27</sup> XX. Encuentros Estatales 2008 were held in Gandia, Valencia. There were about 40 collectives presented. Most of them were members of FELGTB association, only 3 of them were not. This regular meeting of LGBT collectives is hosted by a different collective every year. The host for the forthcoming season is elected during the previous event.

In the end, I was allowed to video-record the conference without any problems. In fact, there were more people from different groups recording and taking photos. I discussed my position with my informants and decided to act as would any other representative of the group probably act: I voted only for proposals which I personally thought were worth voting for. When there was one of the group's internal proposals presented, I followed my informants and voted for it, as I knew I was in fact representing the group's attitude.

I found myself in a number of similar situations later: when I was offered to take part in a press conference regarding the preparation of the alternative Orgullo parade, for example. I was supposed to be in charge of answering questions from the media on behalf of the group. Fortunately (or unfortunately), in the end the press conference never took place, because the group was unable to organize it in time. However, such situations made me consider the appropriate behaviour of an ethnographer in the field and think hard about the consequences.

### **4.3 Refocusing the research**

At the end of February 2008, I was still determined to participate in both of the abovementioned groups<sup>28</sup>, however, after the key period of time - the first week in April 2008, when I happened to participate in a regular LGBT state conference *XX. Encuentros estatales LGTB* organized by the state-aided federation FELGTB, I have decided to leave the COGAM group. The infamous reputation of The Alternative Block among COGAM members<sup>29</sup> made me feel that it would be more beneficial if I fully devoted my time to a single group only. I have decided to focus on carrying out the research outside of the official FELGTB association where COGAM was one of the most influential members and where I was already known as a member of a non-allied

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<sup>28</sup> COGAM, the member of the state-aided FFELGTB, and the radical group, which was the constituent part of the opposing Alternative Block network.

<sup>29</sup> This is especially due to the protest action of The Alternative Block during the Orgullo parade on 28. 6. 2007, which was understood by COGAM and FELGTB (the official organizers of Orgullo) as a personal attack (according to their own words during the debate). Consequently, COGAM, in reference to this "counter-demonstration", refused to cooperate with the group of The Alternative Block network's constituent members during the XX. Encuentros Estatales in Gandia in 2008 when challenged by the organizers of the event to discuss the possibility of joining two different proposals of Orgullo manifest, one proposed by COGAM and the other by an independent group.

group. I have realized that if I was known as the one who “serves two masters”, the situation could become more difficult for me.

After making this decision, I have realized that it was necessary to refocus my research on wider Madrid’s LGBTQ heterogeneous movement of networks. Becoming a member of an active group (in comparison to the opportunity of a passive visitor with a restricted access to information) provided me with the access to other collectives both inside and outside of the FELGTB association. I was convinced that I would be able to uncover more, if I was no longer focused on studying particular identity groups. Such objectives put restrictions upon my progress in discovering the complicated heterogeneous field in Madrid. Therefore, I have decided to concentrate on the whole LGBTQ movement as a heterogeneous network of collectives with the centre point of politicizing sexuality.

Thus, between February 2008 a February 2009 (as I have decided to prolong my stay in Madrid so I could collect more data) I continuously participated in most of the regular meetings and various activities organized by the independent LGBTQ groups, such as several film projections and following discussions and workshops (*Jornadas sobre Tortura y LGBT-fobia, Foro Social Mundial 2008 and 2009, Cumbre Trans 2009*) or *San Isidra Queer* event. I also took part in the regular meetings of The Alternative Block network, the preparations of various demonstrations, and especially the Orgullo<sup>30</sup> parade. This event is organized by challenging groups regularly on 28<sup>th</sup> June in the time period of the European Pride parades as an alternative to the official Orgullo Día event organized by COGAM (FELGTB) and it is considered to be an important protest against the state-aided politics of the dominant group.

#### **4.4 Summary**

Throughout my stay in Madrid, which I now consider to have been extremely difficult and stressful, I've come to realize the importance of sufficient language knowledge in fieldwork: all of the collected data are the result of the researcher’s oriented observation and conversation skills. If those conversations weren't conducted in local language, the data could have been easily misinterpreted. As my knowledge of Spanish and the field

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<sup>30</sup> An alternative “Pride parade” organized by The Alternative Block.



was gradually getting better and more precise with time, I've kept coming back to the data I've collected so far via conversations on similar topics throughout the year, sometimes even with the same informants, in order to critically review the objectives I had chosen.

Tracing the way from the first single encounters with both the online and the offline LGBTQ community in Madrid (autumn 2007) through my COGAM more-or-less passive observations in the group of lesbians (winter 2007) to my participating role in one of the independent LGBTQ collectives (spring 2008 – spring 2009), I have continuously constructed my object of study through various phases. At first, my progress depended on my gradually improving communication skills. From the methodological perspective, this seems to have a significant role within the process as it also influenced my chances to uncover the field, which was initially absolutely unknown to me. Based on a gradual change of the conditions throughout my fieldwork and the fact that I became a regular participant in one of the active LGTBQ collective, I have refocused my objectives and reconstructed the object of study from the process of the [de-]construction of sexual identity to the way how sexualities are politicized in the context of mobilization practices and networking within the wider Madrid's LGBTQ heterogeneous movement, which is based on social movement principles.

## **5. Mobilization practices within the LGBTQ movement in Spain**

### **5.1 Identity and mobilization**

Concerning the different understanding of identity within the Spanish LGBTQ movement, much is said by the fact how the organizations and collectives are organized and mobilized. During my investigation I had many chances to capture the way how adherents of the observed groups expressed their ways of understanding sexual identities in the way how they mobilize themselves, in another words, how sexualities are politicized on the collective level. According to my data, it is possible to say that the LGBTQ movement in today's Madrid (and Spain in general because they cooperate on the state level) is divided into two wider networks of cooperation. The major division is made by the fact whether the organizations are supported by the state, which results in dividing the movement into its institutionalized (official or dominant) and independent (challenging) wings. These divisions include of course the political or ideological orientation, specific goals, way of mobilization upon the understanding and the use of sexual and gender identities, which as a consequence bring together the demands and objectives that each wing represents.

According to the view of Diagonal magazine, which published a few short interviews with the representatives of several LGBTQ challenging groups before the Orgullo Parade in June 2008 in order to comment on the contemporary situation within the LGBTQ movement in Spain, the institutionalized area of cooperation is created by three main associations of LGBT organizations: COLEGAS, Fundación Triángulo and FELGTB (National Federation of LGBT groups), which is the biggest umbrella association in Spain with almost 50 members (further in the text as The Federation). The Federation is represented in Madrid by its founder COGAM and among the most active groups belong also AET-Transexualia and the academic group RQTR from Madrid's Complutense University (UCM).<sup>31</sup> As for COGAM, the biggest and most important institutionalized (only) LGBT organization in Madrid and the official founder of The Federation, the dominating essentialist discourse is divided into areas that represent each category in its title: lesbian, gay, transsexual and bisexual. It is interesting to point out that the letter "B" as for the category of "bisexual" has been added recently on will of some of its members in order to mobilize bisexually

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<sup>31</sup> Cited from Diagonal - <http://www.diagonalperiodico.net/Diagnostico-y-valoraciones-de-la>

identified people in more numerous groups on the state level. For the first time, their own demand of visibility and anti-bi-phobia talk was presented at the National Conference of LGBT organizations in Gandía 2008 organized by The Federation.

The second network of cooperation within the movement is represented by groups that do not belong to any of the institutionalized associations, since they emphasize the fact that they are financially independent from the state. According to the Diagonal magazine, these groups are considered non-official part of the movement and sometimes they are even called “queer” in order to emphasize that their way of politics differs from the institutionalized one. However, some of the members disagree with the definition of their politics as “queer”. According to their own words, they prefer to constitute the collaboration on the shared collective identity of “precariousness”, which is based on leftist oriented politics and strong anti-capitalist tendencies:

*[Fieldnotes, 29.2.2008, The Group]*

*Iko said they do not want to call themselves queer nor use any other expression because they do not want to bring about any academic theory to say who they are or who they are not. Their aim is to change the society and the system in order to eliminate injustice among all minority groups, regardless of who they are: gays, trans, women...*

Their platform is more or less based on the protest against the present political bonds of the institutionalized movement (represented by The Federation) with the leading political Socialist Party (PSOE) and its economic interest. As the biggest difference between these two wider networks is ideology, I use the term challenging groups to emphasize the fact that they differ from the politics of the dominant group, represented by the institutionalized part of the movement. According to the Diagonal magazine, the non-official network is represented by La Red de Descontrol de Género (originally The Alternative Block for Sexual Liberation<sup>32</sup>) with connections in Latin America, formed by eleven independent collectives from Spain and Portugal (Madrid, Barcelona, Zaragoza, Galicia, the Basque Country, Lisbon and Porto).<sup>33</sup> There are also several groups of mostly feminist activists, which do not belong to any of these networks.

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<sup>32</sup> Bloque Alternativo por la Liberación Sexual

<sup>33</sup> Cited from Diagonal - <http://www.diagonalperiodico.net/Diagnostico-y-valoraciones-de-la>

They either stay independent or cooperate on the bases of shared interest in particular campaigns. In Madrid they are Las Lilas (a feminist group which originally formed The Alternative Block network), Las Feas, Ciclobollos, El Grito de las Brujas, Las Tejedoras and Girlz Brunch from Eskalera Karakola. In Barcelona it is the Front d'Alliberament Gai de Catalunya, Feministas Lesbianas de Catalunya, Manada Degenerada and Asamblea Queer de BCN (Stonewall- Queeruption).<sup>34</sup>

It is necessary to point out that the explanation of the fact how individual members of certain LGBTQ groups within the Spanish movement understand their own sexual identities would require a more profound or wholly independent research. The way how individuals understand their sexual identities could highly differ from the group's collective understanding. I therefore apply the data I collected in reference to personal perception mainly in order to illustrate the different ways of understanding sexual politics of the two mentioned widest wings. This analysis is aimed at showing how the institutionalized dominant group, which mobilizes its adherents around the separate LGBT categories regardless of their political views, differs from the radical leftist oriented politics of the challenging groups, which mobilize upon the understanding of multiple identities with reference to the collectively constructed and shared identity of "precariousness".

### **5.1.1 The dominant group and the experience of "authentic-self"**

The biggest institutionalized association, FELGTB (The Federation), which emerged in 1992 at the time of the beginning of the struggle for the partnership rights (later same-sex marriage), built itself upon the understanding of gay and lesbian sexual identity, which is understood as something innate, fixed, stable, and different (in the meaning of being opposite) from the heterosexual one. The demand of same-sex marriage in fact expresses the idea brought by the ethnic-like model, which says that gay, lesbians, and bisexually identified citizens should have the same right to get married (and have children) as the heterosexual majority. Understanding one's own sexual orientation as fixed and stable supports validating and legalizing the "authentic" sexual identity, which consequently remains perceived as a source of coherence and uniformity (Holt,

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<sup>34</sup> Cited from Diagonal - <http://www.diagonalperiodico.net/Diagnostico-y-valoraciones-de-la>

Griffin 2003; Farquhar 2000) based on the experience of discovering it within one's self as innate and overcoming inner struggle. This kind of understanding of the sexual identity is especially supported in COGAM, the official organizer of Orgullo Parade in Madrid and the founder of The Federation, which was established with the intention to focus on the demand of the same-sex marriage and nowadays has the major impact within the contemporary socialist politics (PSOE).

I had the opportunity to attend several meetings of the COGAM gay and lesbian groups during the winter season 2007-2008 where the need of experience of an authentic identity, as an essential step to discovering one's true nature and place in the society, was widely discussed:

*[Fieldnotes, 1.2.2008, COGAM]*

*Within a few minutes I catch up to find out the story is a well-known fairy-tale about an ugly duck who is looking for its family and feels denied by the whole world until it finds out where it belongs. Helena explains she feels that the ugly duck could be compared to a lesbian woman, since the whole world denies her as ugly for being different, and that she herself strongly identifies with the self-quest as a personal experience. Cristina comments that she also had that sensation when she was younger and was fighting with herself, discovering that she was a lesbian, how different she felt and how she was looking for a place in the society as the duck in the story. Cristina comments further on how different she felt for wanting to play football as a kid while her mother intended to change her, which she didn't like at all. How exiled she felt, exactly as the small duck in the story. She explains that to her it seems to be an inner fight as well, not only external search for a group where to belong. The young lady next to me comments: "Creo que habla de identidad, no?" (I think it is about identity, isn't it?). Manuela comments that she also had time in her life, 30 years ago, when she felt different. She knew that her family felt strange for being her family, and that she didn't want her mother to be ashamed of her, but she knew she couldn't help it and felt weird herself as well. She then points out that these feelings last until one actually continues feeling that way, unless she is able to accept who she is, to accept herself as she is and in this sense it is an inner struggle.*

The construction of one's gay or lesbian sexual identity around his or her recognized and accepted sexual orientation is supported by the fact that this experience is

collectively shared and serves as a base for community building and a liberating sense of belonging. However, people who are perceived as (hidden) gays or lesbians (e.g. bisexuals) due to their same-sex behaviour or relationships but resist to “come out” are often criticized by the community as those who lack courage or are still confused, which from the perspective of understanding sexual identity as something innate supports the binary opposition “homo” versus “hetero” as if the world was divided into two groups:

*[Fieldnotes, 21.12.2007, COGAM]*

*Elena complains about the fact that there are many gay people, who never come out of the closet, and who, for this fear of being rejected, stay closeted and feel unacceptable and bad, which she finds erroneous. She thinks that they will never experience what it means to be, who they really are. Pili nods and agrees with her saying: “It is very sad.”*

One of my interviews with a COGAM lesbian group member can illustrate this attitude of lesbians to bisexually identified women:

*[Fieldnotes, 11.1.2008, COGAM]*

*When Marta asked me whether I was a lesbian, I was trying to explain that I’d rather not define myself as such since I do not feel comfortable in any narrow category. She responded with a smile and a gesture as if she understood. However, then she tried to explain to me that I probably have not found out yet or have not accepted the fact that I might be a lesbian too.*

The common understanding (read in essentialist way) of homosexuality as a part of binary opposition to heterosexuality is still very often accepted as logical or automatic. Sexual identities are particularly defined on the basis of an object of sexual interest. As for the term “lesbian“, the commonly used definition was narrowed to a biological woman who doesn’t have intimate sexual relationships with biological men and who accepted the “lesbian“ label (Stein, 1991:44). For the same reason, bisexuality is very often understood pejoratively as an attitude trying to hold on to the “heterosexual privilege”. On one hand, people who behave bisexually are often perceived as (hidden) homosexuals. On the other hand, they often share experience of being denied by gay or lesbian community as sexually hesitant, uncommitted, non-

aligned and untrustworthy (Däumler, 1999: 92). This is perceived as a form of bi-phobia presented among gay and lesbian members of LGBT movement itself. As for COGAM, Arantxa, the representative of the area of bisexual people points out:

*We, bisexual people, meet daily with not only the internalized bi-phobia (which is the incapacity to accept our sexual orientation, a phobia which is lived by gays and lesbians too) but also the bi-phobia caused by ignorance, which comes from the following myth that we would like to dismantle today: that we are confused in reference to our sexuality: the leading heteronormativity divides the world in heterosexual and homosexual people. The social pressure on bisexual people, so that they fit into one or the other category, is so brutal that it forces them to castrate a part of their identity if they want to be socially recognized<sup>35</sup>. (COGAM, Gandía, 5.4.2008)*

Even though the groups within the dominant LGBT movement, represented by The Federation (FELGTB), intend to work politically on collective level, and most of the participants agree that they all follow the same goals, each group (in this case each represented identity within the LGBT umbrella term) follows its own aims (such as visibility) and seeks recognition based on articulated experience, which is shared as collective and unique at the same time:

*[Fieldnotes, 1.2.2008, COGAM]*

*Elena is saying that within the LGBT group there are many smaller groups that differ from each other because they share something in common only with their own members. Marta next to her joins the debate saying that she was looking for a group of lesbians only, because she felt that she could identify only with them.*

At this discussion of the COGAM lesbian group, the opinion that only women can share the feelings that a woman can experience was widely supported. The presented ladies strictly distinguished women from men on the basis of their intuition and

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<sup>35</sup> „Las personas bisexuales nos enfrentamos todos los días, no sólo a la bifobia interiorizada (que es la incapacidad para aceptar nuestra orientación sexual, fobia que también viven gays y lesbianas), sino también a la bifobia por desconocimiento, y que se asienta en los siguientes mitos que hoy queremos demontar: Que estamos confundidos/as con respecto a nuestra sexualidad: la heteronormatividad imperante divide el mundo entre personas heterosexuales y personas homosexuales, y no entiende de más posibilidades. La presión social, por tanto, sobre las personas bisexuales para que encajen en una u otra categoría es tan brutal que les fuerza a castrar una parte de su identidad si quieren verse reconocidos socialmente.”

similar energy, which according to their words helps women understand each other as nobody else could. Then the only gay man, who was presented at the debate, joined the discussion with his opinion:

*José adds that in his opinion those who suffer the most within the society are neither women nor lesbians but transsexuals. Marta agrees that it is clear, but she still thinks that her experience as a lesbian woman is totally different from the experience of a transsexual woman, and for this reason she can't speak for them, nor identify with them.*

This example shows that the LGBT categories within the institutionalized part of the LGBT movement are understood as separated groups with strict borders, which in terms of categorizing tend to keep one's gender in accordance with their biological sex. The organization of The Federation also corresponds with this structure: it is divided into four areas of politics; each area represents one of the four given categories. There is an area of lesbian politics, which organizes events and group meetings for lesbian women only, despite the fact that the meetings are usually public and people who are interested in joining them are welcomed. Nevertheless, as the example above shows, the fact that a transsexual woman can be a lesbian too and therefore can share the same feelings is not very supported by the group members. Rather there are tendencies to create a separate group for transsexual women only.

Concerning the above mentioned goal of visibility, the present situation of the institutionalized movement in today's Spain is criticized by lesbian representatives as unsatisfactory. Carmen G. Hernández, the member of Área de Políticas Lésbicas from The Federation argues that the lesbian visibility should be one of the main priorities of the contemporary Spanish LGBT movement. At the national conference<sup>36</sup> of LGBT collectives in Gandía 2008 she called for more space and respect towards lesbian activists from their gay co-fighters within the LGBT movement. In her emotive speech, dedicated to this topic, she was putting her hopes and optimism in the influence of promoting the motto of Orgullo 2008 event, which read: "And now the lesbians!"<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> XX. Encuentros Estatales

<sup>37</sup> "Y ahora, las lesbianas!" Propuesta de Compromiso del movimiento LGTB español en le Año de la Visibilidad Lésbica, Trobada Estatal LGTB, XX Encuentros de Organizaciones de Lesbianas, Gays, Transexuales y Bisexuales del Espado Español, CLGS, 2008: p.28-29



Nevertheless, next year after the Orgullo 2009 event she complained in her blog<sup>38</sup> that every year, with the exception of 2008, she feels disappointed by the course of events relating to Orgullo parade, which is more than often called Orgullo Gay only by mass media as well as many LGBT movement members, which results in making the rest of lesbian, bisexual as well as transgender identified people invisible again. According to her words:

*When people look for excuses in order to argue that gay is a synonym for lesbian, trans, bi, jack, queen as well as king, it makes me sick. In Spain, gay means gay, a guy who desires/loves another guy, full stop. Nobody thinks of two women, a transsexual woman or a bisexual man when you say gay. No matter how much we try to say that it is all inclusive, it is not, especially not for mass media.*

In her blog dedicated to LGBT diversity and related social and political topics she challenges all the lesbian women who have not come out of the closet yet to do so in order to mobilize and emancipate from the invisibility within the gay movement. In addition, she challenges all the transgender, bisexual and even heterosexual women in order to unite their powers and help promote the woman (lesbian) visibility issue.

### **5.1.2 Challenging groups and the collective identity of “precariousness”**

According to Appiah, the major collective identities understood as socially constructed categories that demand recognition are: religion, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. In case of gender and sexuality – “both are grounded in the sexual body” and “both are differently experienced at different time and place” (Appiah, 1992: 150). The connection between individual and collective identity is like the difference between collective and personal dimension within each individual and the distinction is rather sociological than logical (Appiah, 1992: 151). Therefore the personal dimension, which some might experience as a constitutive basis for their identities in the essentialist sense whereas others might see it as pure experiencing of sexual or gender expression or desire, can differ from the understanding of collective identity which is

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<sup>38</sup> <http://carmenghernandez.wordpress.com/>

shared among those who gather around LGBTQ as an umbrella term according to their own views, experience, as well as political goals and motivation. This way sexuality and gender are politicized through socially constructed categories in order to gain recognition, although the ways of understanding these categories may differ among the individuals who share the collective identity.

In reference to the history of the Spanish LGBTQ movement, most of the collectives were closely allied with socialist parties or at least shared some of the goals of the traditional leftist ideologies. Since Spain has overcome many years in right oriented conservative Franco's dictatorship, where all left-wing political parties had to work in illegality, the mobilization of social movements has always been connected with the leftist ideology and the idea of communism. Without having the experience of living under the communist regime, the contemporary non-official LGBTQ collectives outside The Federation intentionally collaborate in wider independent networks. These networks represent more radical demands concerning sexual politics, such as de-pathologization of transsexuality and free choice of gender identity, and the left-oriented values together with the anti-capitalist criticism are also presented.

Madrid's most active challenging group, The Group<sup>39</sup>, is an LGBTQ collective created by the founders of The Alternative Block residing in Madrid, who after the Europride 2007 event left their original collectives for personal reasons, mostly in disagreement with the direction their groups followed as the members of The Federation. The Group constituted itself as an independent LGBTQ group which unites radical anti-capitalist leftist politics with the experience of individual transformation. Although it forms a part of left-wing oriented LGBTQ movement, it particularly understands itself to be a member of a family of self-supported social movement communities of independent and dissident character, whose objective is to create a new LGBTQ meeting point with a different proposal than the one offered by the institutionalized LGBT movement. According to their words, the LGBTQ problematic should not be exclusive to certain groups only as well as it should not be the only goal of their activism. Topics such as social rights for the rest of oppressed areas of society should be also included.

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<sup>39</sup> For the purpose of this study I have chosen the terms "The Group" for the representative of the challenging groups, and "The Federation" for the dominant group, in order to provide the reader with better orientation in the text.

As ideology is closely connected with the movement's definition (Schwartz 2002: 161), in this way radical leftist orientation supports the formation of a so-called movement community of "precarious": those, who are oppressed for being members of sexual minorities, as well as the working class together with all those excluded from the "capitalist well-being"<sup>40</sup> such as immigrants, illegal aliens ("sin papeles"<sup>41</sup>), students, homeless, etc. By putting emphasis on self-supportive, independent, anti-capitalist leftist character and collective decision making in its definition, The Group wants to differentiate itself from the central institutionalized LGBT organization (The Federation, FELGTB), which is hierarchical in its structure, politically linked with the leading social democratic party (PSOE), and receives state grant-in-aids. The leading challenging group operating in Madrid defines itself as:

*[...] a collective, which is founded with the objective to fight for the rights of LGBTQ people, integrated in a new auto-financed space of political struggle formed in Patio Maravillas centre. Our intention is to unite radical leftist political work with the experience of our own transformation as individuals in our own way of understanding the society. We want to create a new LGBTQ meeting point with a new proposal that converges transversally with the rest of social movements with independent and dissident character. (The Group's dossier)<sup>42</sup>*

Their understanding of sexual and gender identities is therefore not the only element upon which the collective identity is constructed and when referring to the umbrella term LGBT they prefer using the multiple LGBTQI, LGBTQ or LGBT+ terms in order to demonstrate that they want to support the rights of all related groups including immigrants, transgender people, as well as heterosexual women, regardless of their sexual or gender identity:

*[Fieldnotes, 29.2.2008]*

*Iko suggests we decide what program will be on the next Patio Maribollos, on 30th of March. He explains to me that it is meant to be a new meeting point ("espacio de encuentro") for the LGBT people. Lidia corrects him that he should*

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<sup>40</sup> From Spanish: "bienestar capitalista".

<sup>41</sup> Literally "without papers", a term which describes people without legal permission to stay.

<sup>42</sup> „Pretendemos aunar un trabajo político radical de izquierdas, con una experiencia de transformación propia como individuos y en nuestra forma de entender la sociedad. Queremos crear un nuevo punto de encuentro LTGBQ, con una propuesta diferente que converja de modo transversal con el resto de movimientos sociales con carácter independiente y disidente.“

*have added “I” for Intersexual and a plus sign (+) for the rest in order not to discriminate anybody, especially if the topic of that session is intersexuality.*

In one of our first meetings I asked Iko, one of The Group’s members, if he could introduce their collective and their goals within the LGBTQ movement. He emphasized that it is not only the LGBT thing that matters but all the things that are related to injustice. He said that their activists should support the women rights as well as transgender rights. Then he informed me about a planned march for free legal abortion right for all the women and explained why supporting such events is important to them:

*I: “It is important to support women so that they have their own choice about whether to have an abortion or not. It is necessary to have the right to decide about ourselves. What can you expect from a society that does not allow you to decide about your own life“?*

These newly emerged LGBTQ challenging groups differ from the institutionalized dominant group also in the way of understanding sexual identity. They in fact use the LGBT umbrella term as a necessary element for the movement enforcement, however, in contrast to the dominant group, their politics is not centred on the LGBT categories as a goal. Understanding the categories of the LGBT umbrella term in their limited sense is often denied and the institutionalized politics of the dominant group is criticized for constructing impenetrable borders within the movement, which makes the minorities (transsexual, bisexual as well as lesbian) within the gay minority even more invisible.

The next example shows the contrast between the ways of understanding sexual identities, upon which the movement is mobilized, of the dominant group (represented by The Federation) and the challenging groups (represented by The Group, the constituent member of The Alternative Block network). Before the regular national LGBT conference, which is organized annually by The Federation as a state-aided event, every LGBT collective can enrol in participating in the event by sending an application form with the names and details about their delegates. Each enrolled group can obtain the right to vote, however, the votes are assigned according to the model below:

1. Gay, lesbian, FTM transsexual or MTF transsexual group only – 1 vote
2. Gay/lesbian/FTM or MTF mixed group - 2 votes
3. Gay, lesbian and FTM mixed group - 3 votes
4. Gay, lesbian and MTF mixed group - 3 votes
5. Gay, lesbian, FTM and MTF mixed group - 4 votes
6. One more delegate corresponds with the entities that are disposed of bisexual representatives

The organization of the event corresponds with the hierarchical structure to The Federation, whose politics is divided into four areas, according to the essentialist understanding and separable character of each category (L, G, B, T). In contrast to The Federation, The Group is a mixed collective, mobilized upon multiple understanding of identities. Their activism is based on leftist anti-capitalist politics, which creates the main platform for sharing a collective identity, enabling collaboration with wider social movement networks. After receiving the email from the organizer of the national LGBT conference, the members of The Group enjoyed themselves when discussing the voting system of the event. The clause referred to the bisexual representatives was found the funniest:

*[Fieldnotes, 3.3.2009, The Group]*

*Xavier: Great! We have one more delegate because of me! How can we call this clause? Positive discrimination?*

*Victor: Well...as far as I'm concerned, there are days when I go to bed rather bisexual and I wake up rather gay, does it depend on the day, or on the way I wake up?*

*Xavier: And what if we are disposed of someone queer? Is there also another vote for us?*

Despite the fact that these challenging groups advocate, too, for LGBT rights (with a special focus on transgender rights), the identity politics or the recognition of the very category is not their main focus. The transgender people are perceived by the activists as those among the LGBTQ community, who are most excluded. However, their protest against the exclusionary politics of the dominant institutionalized group, which still promotes the identity politics that supports the homo- versus hetero- binary

system and therefore excludes those who simply do not fit in, involves also advocating for civil rights for all people regardless of their sexual identity. The challenging groups based on leftist oriented politics tend to collaborate within internal networks in order to deploy identity strategically in order to promote wider social changes. The next part is aimed to describe and analyze the contemporary emergence of these networks within the Spanish movement from the perspective of meso-analysis in social movement theory. On the case of the foundation of The Alternative Block for Sexual Liberation, an internal network of social movement communities from inside as well as outside of the Spanish LGBT movement, I aim to illustrate how internal networks, created by challenging groups, influence the mobilization and goal orientation of the whole movement.

## **5.2 The Alternative Block for Sexual Liberation: Meso-mobilization within the Spanish LGBTQ movement**

According to the theory of social movements, social movement communities include social movement organizations (SMOs), but also include networks of cooperating factions, as well as networks of individual movement adherents who do not necessarily belong to SMOs or the institutionalized movement. There are also other supporters, as well as alternative institutions and cultural or ideologically related groups. The impetus for meso-mobilization within a movement in order to cover a political or social action is often provided by critical events (Staggenborg 1993). Concerning new campaigns in response to these critical events, as illustrated by the emergence of The Alternative Block, the movement communities such as challenging groups, organizations or supporting collectives often overlap with communities of other movements in the same social movement family (della Porta and Rucht 1995) in order to mobilize for the campaign by creating networks of trust and adherence to common goals (della Porta and Diani 2006: 94).

During the national conference of Spanish LGBT movement in 2007 in Rioja, The Alternative Block for Sexual Liberation organized a meeting for its collaborators in order to prepare a special form of protest action against the dominant part of the LGBT movement. The Alternative Block network was created in 2006 in order to unite LGBTQ groups and collectives, both inside and outside The Federation (FELGTB), in a

wider network aiming to focus on specific goals that did not receive support from the institutionalized LGBT movement represented by The Federation. The initiative stemmed from two of the presented collectives from Madrid – RQTR, an association of gays, lesbians, bisexual and transgender people organized within the academic environment of Universidad Complutense, and Liberación LGBT, an LGBT collective, both of which were the members of FELGTB. Other constituent members were not directly from the LGBT circle, nevertheless, they came from the same “social movement family” (della Porta and Rucht 1995) – L.I.L.A.S., a feminist group, and two groups (El Eje de Género<sup>43</sup> and Antipatriarcado) united in a wider Madrid’s platform of social movements called Rompamos el Silencio<sup>44</sup>. Later, several LGBTQ collectives from the rest of Spain and Portugal were addressed by the constituent members of The Alternative Block and joined the network in order to support the common goals.

As the manifest of The Alternative Block informed in detail, the intention was to create a network of LGBTQ groups as well as other social movement collectives and communities that shared the same vision: a depoliticized alternative to the present society which is “based on capitalist consumerism and inequality”. This critical statement implied not only the commercialization of places for gays, lesbians, bisexual and transgender people, such as Chueca district in Madrid, but also included a critique of the contemporary political bonds and activities of the institutionalized LGBT movement represented by COGAM (The Federation), the main organizer of Madrid’s famous Pride Event (Orgullo Día). The Alternative Block’s manifest offered:

An alternative to the mercantilization of a movement which has been losing its character of demands as fast as it accumulates the “pink money”. We demand our space in order to independently participate in political and economical bonds and privileges. An alternative to depolitization and political isolation of LGTB which seems to be telling us that our political principles start and end in the bi-lesbian-gay-transsexual fact. [...] Our cause must also involve the others. Our effort is to cooperate with other organizations in order to propose new forms of understanding the relationships of LGBT movement with the capitalists.<sup>45</sup> (The manifest of The Alternative Block)

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<sup>43</sup> The Edge of Gender (translated from Spanish)

<sup>44</sup> We break the silence (translated from Spanish)

<sup>45</sup> „Reclamaremos nuestro espacio a participar de modo independiente a atadura política, económica o de privilegios. .... Alternativa a la despolitización, al aislamiento político LGTB, que parece querernos decir que nuestros principios políticos comienzan y acaban en el hecho bi-lésbico-gay- transexual. ... Nuestra

The voice of The Alternative Block was raised mainly in connection with the announced Europride 2007 in Madrid. The Europride committee chose Madrid to be the next central destination. Cities all around Europe are elected in this way to organize a week of LGBT Pride related events and to welcome people from all over the world. The 10 days starting on 22 June, 2007 were meant to celebrate the enormous advances in LGBT rights in Spain. The main slogan “Equality is possible” (La igualdad es posible) referred to the approvals of gay marriage (2005) and gender identity law (2007) (see picture No.1).



[picture No.1: the Europride 2007 flyer]

According to the information published on the organizers’ official website<sup>46</sup>, the event was about to receive a huge financial support from local, regional and national government as well as from private sector. The main sponsors Schweppes and Pink Fish guaranteed the successful course of the event with over 2 000 000 anticipated participants. The celebration was hosted by the Orgullo Día Parade organizers from

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causa también debe ser la de otras y otros. Pretendemos contribuir con otras organizaciones proponiendo nuevas formas de entender las relaciones del movimiento LTGB con el empresariado capitalista.”

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.europride.com/spip.php?rubrique13>



Madrid, COGAM and The Federation. The parade was planned on the last Saturday of June and should have taken its typical course in the central streets of Madrid between Puerta de Alcalá and Plaza de España. One hundred groups together with forty floats were expected to join the crowd.

Every spring during the national conference of Spanish LGBT collectives (Encuentros Estatales), the proposal of the manifest of the Orgullo Parade is read and confirmed by the votes of majority of the present representatives of LGBT groups. In 2007 a critical voice of some activists, who were the founders of The Alternative Block but at that time still cooperated with the collectives within The Federation, was raised against the massive commercialization of the event and the loss of its protest character. The majority, however, was in agreement with the official organizers COGAM (The Federation) and did not pay much attention to it. The founders of The Alternative Block criticized mainly the emphasis “on capitalist and patriarchal values”, which as a consequence support the persistence of inequality between the majority and sexual and other minorities. According to their words, the event, which originally refers to the Stonewall riots<sup>47</sup> in 1969, should not therefore lose its protest and demanding character:

In a context in which the whole society tilts without scruples into consumption, exploitation, social and affective control, the historically marginalized sexual minorities integrate themselves in a category of the executors of the chain of power.<sup>48</sup> (The manifest of The Alternative Block)

On 23 June, 2007 the representatives of The Alternative Block met in Traficantes de Sueños in Madrid, Lavapiés, a bookshop specializing on sale, distribution and publishing of social movements related literature, which serves as a meeting point that offers place for discussion, presentations, lectures and other related events, in order to organize a press conference. This call for publicity was meant to both help promote the existence of the network in wider awareness and to present the proposals for the

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<sup>47</sup> The Stonewall riots were a series of spontaneous violent protests of homosexual community against a police raid that took place on 28 June, 1969 at the Stonewall Inn in the Greenwich Village, NYC. Ever since, it has become the defining event of the gay rights movement in the USA and later in the whole world. Pride Parades are organized annually to celebrate and revitalize the advances of the LGBT movement and its fight for equal rights.

<sup>48</sup> “En un contexto en el que la sociedad entera se vuelca sin escrúpulos en el consumismo, la explotación, el control social y afectivo, las minorías sexuales históricamente marginadas pasan a sumarse a la categoría de ejecutores de la cadena del poder.”

organization of “The Alternative Week of Orgullo LGBTQ 2007”<sup>49</sup> in Madrid with the intention to protest against the practices of the institutionalized LGBT movement represented by Europride 2007 organizers.

The Alternative Week consisted of three days, starting on 28 June and finishing on 30 June, the day when the massive Europride 2007 event took place in the centre of Madrid. On 28 June, The Alternative Block organized a march in order to remember the Stonewall riots of 1969. At the end of the parade, the organizers read a manifest, in which they explained their motivations and interests. Then they invited people to a party and the rest of events organized for this purpose. This campaign can be read as a separate Pride Parade independent from the official one, which was scheduled to begin in two days.<sup>50</sup> The next day LGBTQ sport events “against sexism and homophobia” were organized in cooperation with the Club Deportivo in Lavapiés. The activities planned on 30 June started at noon with the discussion workshop called “New perspectives of the LGBTQ fight<sup>51</sup>”, which took place again at the bookshop of Traficante de Sueños. In the afternoon The Block prepared a collective lunch where special “Great pink anti-capitalist paella”<sup>52</sup> was served for an affordable price in order to cover the expenses associated with the organization of the events.

In the evening, the members of The Alternative Block in green T-shirts with signs “Pride is a protest!” (Orgullo es protesta!, see picture No.2) with a group of tam-tam batucada drummers gathered together with other participants in the Alfonso XII street in order to join the marching crowd of approximately 2 000 000 activists, sympathizers, LGBT tourists and other passers-by, organized by COGAM (The Federation). In a few hours, when the march arrived at the Plaza de España to listen to the manifest written by COGAM members, the group of The Alternative Block, all

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<sup>49</sup> Semana Alternativa del Orgullo – Madrid 2007:

<http://www.rompamoselsilencio.net/2007/?Semana-Alternativa-del-Orgullo>

<sup>50</sup> This march was also a demonstration of the disagreement with the change of the date of the Orgullo event which used to be celebrated annually on 28 June in order to remember the Stonewall Riots and the rise of gay rights and later LGBT movement. According to The Alternative Block, the postponing of the date of the official Orgullo Parade is a result of the commercial purpose of the event organized by COGAM-FELGBT, whose intention is to provide a whole-weekend celebration with many additional activities and parties and hence achieve the highest commercial benefit from the event. This, of course, would be much more difficult, if it was planned just for a weekday. However, COGAM-FELGTB argued that Saturday is the best day for the central event in Madrid, since more people can arrive in the city and fully enjoy the event after celebrating smaller local marches on 28 June in their home cities. Their strongest argument was that the weekend date was supposed to mobilize more people, which is the main goal of the event.

<sup>51</sup> “Nuevas perspectivas de las luchas LGBTQ”.

<sup>52</sup> “Gran paella rosa anti-capitalista”.

dressed in the same green T-shirts, managed to get in front of one of the main bus with the famous music band Fangoria (see picture No.3).



[picture No.2: Orgullo Alternativo protest campaign flyer, an event organized by The Alternative Block]



[picture No.3: "Our rights are not negotiation"]

This way they forced the marching crowd to stop at the busiest corner of two main streets, Alcalá and Gran Vía, holding open pink umbrellas in front of the Fangorias' windshield to prevent the bus from driving through their gathering, in order to start their protest action: they unwrapped a large green sheet and a slogan banner which read "Our rights are not negotiation"<sup>53</sup>. They sat down around the bus in order to demonstrate their disagreement with the commercial character of the Europride event. One of their members pulled out a megaphone and inaugurated the Week of Social Fight (La semana de la lucha social), organized by Rompamos el Silencio, the Madrid's social movements network which joined their power with The Alternative Block in order to help them mobilize people for the protest<sup>54</sup>.

Factionalism, or the existence of conflicting groups within a movement, is often believed to be the principal cause of movement's decline or death, as this is the usual result of power struggles and ideological disputes concerning current leadership, tactics or interpretations of core beliefs. (Schwartz, 2002: 157). Nevertheless, conflicting groups may also help the movement survive thanks to the impact they have on solving movement problems through the creation of networks and the mobilization for new campaigns, which in turn influence the mobilization on micro and meso levels (ibid.). As for The Alternative Block, the network was created by the challenging LGBTQ groups within the movement in order to publicly protest against the practices of the dominant LGBT group. The main expressed expectations on the side of the activists from the newly emerged network were neither to show that there are internal wars within the LGBT movement (although this kind of reactions from media was to be expected), nor to undermine the work of the dominant group – in this case the official organizers of the Europride 2007 – the ongoing conflict might have been anticipated earlier as a logical consequence. The activists of the challenging groups waited for an opportunity, for "a critical event" (Staggenborg 1993), which helped them mobilize a few hundreds of people for a specific campaign providing them high visibility and an easy way to present their message to the wider public.

After the Europride 2007 protest action, The Alternative Block received ambiguous reactions from within the movement: there were critical as well as affirmative responses, which then led to gradual and conscious consolidating of the two-winged LGBTQ movement in Spain. Since the members of The Alternative Block

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<sup>53</sup> "Nuestros derechos no son negocio".

<sup>54</sup> [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oc4jLa\\_sK78](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oc4jLa_sK78)

were very well aware of the fact that the cooperation with The Federation is difficult (or even impossible after the Orgullo 2007 event), they also knew they could no longer receive their approval for their action. Nevertheless, they were also aware of the fact that they do not need anyone's approval for their activism as they have always maintained it with the main goal of independence:

*[Fieldnotes, 19.4.2008, AB]*

*Sol: "Why do we really need the legitimacy of LGTB [The Federation<sup>55</sup>]? "The Block can be much more massive than FELGTB as we have different channels with other collectives and if we unite our powers, it can work. There would be then two different kinds of activism but who cares?"*

Next year, during the national conference of Spanish LGBT collectives in Gandía 2008, some representatives of COGAM and The Federation (FELGTB) refused to cooperate with the members of one of the groups present (further in the text as "The Group"), recognizing them as the members of The Alternative Block and accusing them of organizing a counter-demonstration in order to undermine their work. After the national conference of LGBT groups in Gandía 2008, the meeting of The Alternative Block was called in Madrid in order to discuss the future of the network, since in comparison with the last year the network was lacking support of its constituent member groups. It was partly the consequence of the infamous reputation of The Alternative Block as the result of the Orgullo 2007 event, and partly the problem of managing the activism of the network. The Alternative Block originally consisted of several groups with various views of the form of activism they should follow. Before the Orgullo 2007 event, there was a mutual consent that some critical action was necessary. However, in 2008 the situation was different. According to the social movements theory, it is typical that after the cycle of protest subsides, the shape of the movement community again changes. Its future form then depends on the particular environment of the individual movement and, of course, on the constituency of the movement (Staggenborg, 2002). The main point of the meeting of The Alternative Block was to discuss what happened during the international conference in Gandía, since The Group was in fact the only representative of The Alternative Block there. One of their representatives explained to their allies at the meeting, that they, as The

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<sup>55</sup> Author's note.

Alternative Block, were accused by The Federation of organizing a counter-demonstration saying:

*[Fieldnotes, 19.4. 2008, AB]*

*Xavier: "We were attacked verbally by FELGTB and COGAM for blocking the parade". All of the members are trying to recall what really happened last year and to reconstruct the event from what they remember. In the end they all agree that the accusation of The Federation is erroneous and that they did not block the parade.*

This short discussion shows that the challenging groups understood the relationship between them and The Federation as hostile. The fact that a representative of The Federation was taking pictures during the conference in Gandía of people voting was also mentioned by two members of The Group who both knew his real name. The reaction of the representative of the other collective was short but expressive:

*Hector: "Holy shit!" (Qué fuerte!)*

Another member of The Group, Victor, who was presented in Gandía, comments further on the fact that The Group was criticized for writing infantile proposals. He complains that The Federation is unable to discuss any controversial issue because they take everything as a personal attack on the institutional LGBT movement. Sol, who was not in Gandía but was in Rioja a year before, further comments on what happened there: she (at that time a member of a group which belonged to the constituent members of The Alternative Block but at the same time was a member of The Federation) was criticized for the same thing. During the national conference in Gandía there was another group from Catalonia, which basically came up with a very similar topic: the transgender issue. Their speech received a big applause whereas The Group's proposal was criticized. After the conference, one of The Group's members asked a representative of The Federation during a coffee break why the proposal of the Catalanian group was accepted despite the fact that it was almost the same as their own, which was denied. He received this answer:

*[Fieldnotes, 4.4. 2008, Gandía]:*

*FELGTB member: “You have to learn how to speak without being aggressive. They knew how to present their proposal without criticizing our work, but you don’t explain things, you attack us. It is not the best way how to make people listen to you”.*

Considering the contemporary circumstances set up by the critical events in 2007, it is hard to tell whether the reaction of The Federation could have been any better. All of the network members were aware of the fact that the relationship between the two wings of the LGBTQ movement was not easy. There is also a problem of loyalty, which makes the situation even more complicated: each member group maintains an individual relationship both with the individual members of The Federation and with the collective as a whole. This makes some of the members unwilling to appear in public, because they do not want to be recognized by the media or the members of their “home” group, to which they still belong and which is usually a part of the institutionalized federation. This situation is fairly common, since all of the constituent members of The Alternative Block came from collectives which are members of The Federation. However, some of them have not given up the cooperation with their “home” collectives, e.g because they consider their participation necessary in the part of Spain where they originally come from (Galicia, the Basque Country, Aragon). Therefore, they keep their participation with radical collectives more or less secret. In fact, being recognized as one of the radical activists after the Orgullo 2007 event resulted in identification of The Group with The Alternative Block by the president of The Federation, even though the members of The Group did not present themselves as such. Due to the Orgullo 2007 event, The Alternative Block received critique from the official organizers of the Europride 2007 (COGAM, The Federation) and especially the members who were personally seen at the place of the demonstration were stigmatized this way. This was also the reason why The Federation was not willing to accept The Group’s proposals at the Gandía conference. They saw in its members the activists from The Alternative Block, as they simply could not differentiate them from each other. Therefore, there was no will whatsoever on the side of The Federation to discuss the text of the manifest for the forthcoming 2008 event with The Group. The president of The Federation said that he had no interest in cooperation with the rebels. Hence, the negative reaction from The Federation during the conference was partially anticipated, regardless of the way and

tone of The Group's presented proposals. The members of The Group, who were presented at the national conference of LGBT in Gandía, all felt that their presence is not very welcomed:

*[Fieldnotes, 3.4. 2008, Gandia]:*

*In the morning before the conference started, the whole group gathered in the cafeteria for breakfast. There were people chatting all around the room, but their table seemed to be a bit isolated from the rest. Manu told me that this is the true picture: each table is now talking about us and we are talking about them and that's how it is. He also told me that all the people in the room were our enemies: M: "The whole world that is here hates us." (Todo el mundo que está aquí nos odia)*

Before the participation in Gandía conference 2008 I was informed by Xavier (a member of The Group) that the other allies of The Alternative Block do not want to participate in the conference because it is organized by The Federation as a state-aid event. Since the allies came from the whole Spain, mostly from Galicia, Catalonia, Aragon and the Basque Country, there were also some nationalistic tendencies resulting in not supporting the state event. I asked him why they, as The Group, want to participate in the event this year if they do not agree with the official politics of the dominant group. He said:

*[Fieldnotes: 3.4.2008, The Group]*

*Xavier: If we don't come either, there will be no one to show that there are voices against the official LGBT politics. We know we can't succeed in promoting all our proposals, but we are doing it to show them our disagreement. Can you imagine what it would be like if all our allies participated? That would be a totally different thing.*

Then Manu joined the discussion to explain that the success of their proposals was not meant to be their main goal, since they, as The Group, were already aware of the fact that they could not succeed in receiving the recognition:



*Manu: "It is just a show, look at this, there will be at least 15 groups present, but only 5 of them will propose something. We are one of them and we will present all the proposals that are allowed!"*<sup>56</sup>

In another words, the real intention of The Group was not to change something directly by discussing their radical proposals with the representatives of the dominant group. In their eyes the national conference rather plays the role of visibility. It is a good opportunity to present critical ideas to the public in hope that there might be a chance of meeting some potential allies. During the conference in Rioja in 2006, they met Lidia, their present member and an important mediator, since she did not give up her participation in her domestic collective from the Basque Country.

This way certain contacts are formed and the visibility of challenging group is increased within the institutionalized LGBT movement. It means that despite the fact that such protest actions may create schisms inside the movement (especially from the point of view of the dominant group, which accused the challenging groups of organizing a counter-demonstration), mobilization of groups within meso-structures of particular movement may have a positive influence on binding both the new and the older participants to the movement through newly emerged networks and their critical campaigns (Staggenborg 2002). Firstly, as the challenging groups usually take up opposing attitudes to a particular problem, it can open new topics for discussion. In this case the new topics are the image and political orientation of the dominant group, which does not sit well with the ideology of leftist oriented (but politically independent) factions, as well as the critique of the Gender Identity Law, approved in 2007. Secondly, the effect of emotions generated within and through the movement networks and their critical campaigns has an important impact on micro as well as meso mobilization processes (Taylor and Rupp 1993, Jasper 1998). As Staggenborg explains:

“Movements form and people join them because they are excited about the cause and hopeful that they can bring about change through collective action. However, the emotional energy needed for the emergence of movements must be generated within movement communities.” (Staggenborg, 2002: 129)

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<sup>56</sup> Each group can present maximum of 3-4 proposals, according to the rules of The Federation, the official organizer of the Spanish national LGBT conference.

In this way, meso mobilization also affects micro interactions, since it brings about changes in individual perceptions: by participating in actions that are successful, the participants are motivated to carry out new actions and discuss new ideas. By collaboration through joining networks they develop commitments and realize the potential and efficacy of collective actions, which in consequence influences meso organization: connections among activists and participants from different movement communities lead to a wider awareness of political opportunities, resources and the growth of the whole movement. (Staggenborg, 2002: 130-134).

### **5.2.1 Collaboration: The strength and the weakness of networking**

This part of my analysis is important for two reasons. Firstly, it shows the process of decision making within the network, which is a complicated task, since the network consists of several member groups, whose opinions can – and very often do – differ. Secondly, this example illustrates that the network really depends on individual participation of each member group and if it lacks the necessary support, it cannot take any action or is forced to transform itself to another type of social movement entity.

At the very beginning of its activism, the network consisted of more member groups. Therefore, the decision had to be made through mutual consent. However, because the representatives of the constituent member groups from various regions of the country were often unable to come to the meetings of The Alternative Block in Madrid, the decision making was often done through e-mail discussions.

At the meetings, the main points were usually discussed in order to come to some conclusion, while the whole meeting was carefully recorded in the form of an official report by one of the present members. It was then sent to all constituent member groups via e-mail and during a few days time they all had the opportunity to comment on presented data, before an official statement of the network was issued to the public. This was usually done via launching a new webpage aimed at a specific goal, a blog announcement, or a press conference – especially in case of announcing a demonstration or another public event.

The meetings of The Alternative Block were neither regular nor frequent and after the first Orgullo event in 2007, the network suffered from the lack of support, both from the general public and their own constituent member groups. When the date of the

Orgullo parade was near (28 June), the members of The Group decided to call a meeting of The Alternative Block in order to talk about a possible preparation of another parade in Madrid, an alternative to the official Gay Pride organized by the state-aided Federation (see picture No.4).



[picture No.4: Orgullo Alternativo Anticapitalista, the last protest campaign organized on behalf of The Alternative Block]

Only two representatives of another collective located in Madrid appeared. It was necessary to discuss the possibility of organizing another demonstration, but the other collective had a different opinion. Therefore, The Group met in advance to decide about the official statement to be presented to the other member group. The final result was to take no action on behalf of The Alternative Block network.

*[Fieldnotes, 6.6.2008]*

*Sol: So I know they [their allies – basically the only group still interested in collaboration <sup>57</sup>] are going to prepare something for 28 June, some bus or something.*

*Iko: I've heard something about a bus for 28 June... But what is our plan for 5 July<sup>58</sup> then? Nothing?*

*Julio: Nothing.*

*Sol: Nothing.*

*Julio: And if they are going to say that they want to do something?*

*Lidia: As The Block?*

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<sup>57</sup> Author's note.

<sup>58</sup> The date of the official commercial Orgullo Parade organized by COGAM (The Federation).

*Iko: Let them then. We can argue that last year it was more important because it was 28 June but 5 July is a different case, so there is no reason to draw attention to us. Our plan is to do something on 28 June, as usual.*

This conversation uncovers two different voices within The Alternative Block and the fact that the members of The Group are aware of them. Iko points out that in his opinion the diversity is important. Sol thinks that the diversity is one thing, but the other thing is that none of the other members ever appears at a meeting. She basically expresses her disappointment with the fact that the whole network is managed by The Group only and therefore it makes no sense to organize things on behalf of the whole network. In fact, she is saying that the network doesn't exist anymore, for The Group has already presented itself independently of it and can continue this way without organizing events under the name of The Alternative Block. Then she explains by asking a rhetorical question what in her opinion can be a better rival for The Federation: is it an anonymous network or three concrete and well-known radical groups? This is basically a crucial point of the discussion since it shows how fragile the existence of the network is: it is based on the mutual cooperation of the member groups, which means that if there is no cooperation, there is no network. They, therefore, had to discuss a potential disbandment of The Alternative Block:

*Angelo: I guess that if we are not able to find any point in common, we should step out of The Block and do our own business as The Group.*

*Sol: It is impossible to work if we are not united. If we find out that there is nothing we have in common with them [their allies<sup>59</sup>] anymore, then we don't and it's OK.*

*Iko: I think it's a very good idea...*

*Xavier: But what happens next if we really have nothing in common?*

*Sol: We should propose a disbandment of The Block with a condition that no one will ever do any action on behalf of it.*

This is an example of how the decision making in The Group works. Through discussing things together among those who are present, a sort of brainstorming is done in order to come to a conclusion that all would agree on. In this case, at the end of the discussed topic, Iko asked again about the officially planned Orgullo Parade on 5 July,

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<sup>59</sup> Author's note.

2008, whether it was clear that there would be no action on behalf of the network. All the members who were personally present agreed on this. The official statement regarding the discussed topic is usually issued later as the official position of The Group, either to the rest of the member groups or to the public.

Sol further complained about the lack of responsivity of their allies. She criticized the fact that when they were asked to be responsive, they had nothing to say but they did not come up with any other idea. By pointing out the missing support of the allies I aim to stress the participation of each individual as a key element: the success of any collective action, as well as the fate of the emerged networks or challenging groups within the movement, depends significantly on the collaboration of the highest possible number of people. The problem is that “allies important to the movement network or a challenging group may prove unstable and become bitter critics when they are dissatisfied“ (Schwarz: 167) or they simply grow disinterested in the network’s or group’s goal orientation. However, the meso-mobilization and the formation of networks within movements is still compatible with movements’ continuity, since newly emerged challenging groups “add excitement and resources with new, more committed actors, leaders, and allies“ (ibid.).

### **5.3 Stop Trans 2012: International Network for the Trans De-pathologization**

Even though, as mentioned above, the challenging groups and internal networks can have noticeably disruptive impact on the public image of the movement, they can encourage the dominant group to change, instead of destroying it. Challenging groups, which create opposition, may at the same time represent the ways through which a movement can adapt to the resulting problems and the new environment, although it does not have to necessarily lead to solving the differences between the dominant and the challenging groups (Scott 1998: 10; Schwarz 2002: 163). The last part of my analysis intends to analyze the way how the dominant part of the movement (The Federation) adopts the goals and strategies of the challenging groups and by accepting new objectives changes the direction of its politics, which has a positive effect on the movement maintenance and outcomes in the long run, despite the fact that the antagonistic tendencies between the movement’s parts remain.

One of the critical points announced in the manifest of The Alternative Block was the protest against pathologization of transsexuality. Nowadays, transsexuality is considered to be a “Gender Identity Disorder” mental pathology (further as GID) classified in the ICD-10 (International Classification of Diseases by the World Health Organization) and the DSM-IV-R (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders by the American Psychiatrist Association). These classifications are the ones that serve as a guide to psychiatrists all around the world when establishing diagnosis. As for transgender politics, it has been a critical point of disagreement within the LGBTQ movement in contemporary Spain. Different ways of understanding the problem caused the development of opposing attitudes to related topics within the constituted movement. Consequently, challenging groups and networks emerge within the movement, where new ways of politics is born and practiced.

After the disbandment of The Alternative Block for Sexual Liberation, the agenda of de-pathologization of transsexuality has been adopted by the activists from two challenging groups from Madrid and Barcelona<sup>60</sup>, who afterwards initiated the worldwide International Network for the Trans De-pathologization. Their goal was to launch an international campaign in as many cities and countries as possible. The first phase of the campaign would result in massive demonstrations all over the world in October 2009 (see picture No.5, 6 and 7).



[picture No.5: Stop Trans 2012 protest campaign, an internet banner]

The campaign's main goal was to achieve united mobilization at an international demonstration against Gender Identity Dysphoria (GID), and to demand its removal from the next DSM-V and CIE-11 (manuals that are going to appear in the years 2012 and 2014, respectively).

<sup>60</sup> Both of them belonged to the constituent members of The Alternative Block for Sexual Liberation network.

# LA TRANSEXUALIDAD NO ES UNA ENFERMEDAD

Fuera ya de los manuales de enfermedades

viernes 16 de oct // 19.30 h

Pl. de Chueca - Pl. Museo Reina Sofia



diseño:marthamarimarina

Manifestaciones en Ankara /  
Barcelona / Berlín / Bilbao /  
Bogotá / Bruselas / Buenos  
Aires / Campinas / Caracas /  
Ciudad de México / Corunha /  
Donosti / Gasteiz / Granada /  
Las Palmas de Gran Canaria /  
Lille / Lima / Lisboa / Londres /  
Madrid / Montreal / París /  
Quito / San Francisco / Santia-  
go de Cali / Santiago de Chile  
/ Santiago de Compostela /  
Valencia / Zaragoza / z

más info:  
[manitransmadrid.wordpress.com](http://manitransmadrid.wordpress.com)  
[stp2012.wordpress.com](http://stp2012.wordpress.com)

Convoca: Red Internacional  
por la Despatologización Trans

Organiza: La Acera del Frente

[picture No.6: “Transsexuality is not an illness”; a flyer inviting to take part in the protest campaign in Madrid]

Despite the fact that the campaign was launched in Spain, the organizers aim to reach an international level because the demands of the campaign refer to international organizations (the American Psychiatric Association –APA – and the World Health Organization – WHO). In the words of the organizers from Barcelona:

*[Fieldnotes, 24.9.2009, INTD]*

*Martin: “The purpose of this calling is to really achieve a coordination that allows us to have as big an international fighting day as possible, so we can achieve enough pressure to force the American Psychiatric Association Assembly to raise the possibility of removing the GID from its next manual. We are aware that it is a tough task to coordinate so many cities at the same time, therefore, as we have done in past years, we suggest that we decide the same slogan and 5 basic points to be included in an international manifest. Each city can then spread the call and hold the demonstration as they want.”*

As mentioned above, the campaign follows five principle objectives, all of which refer to the critique of the new Gender Identity law, which was approved in Spain in March 2007:

1. The removal of GID from the international diagnosis manuals (and its next versions. DSM-V and ICD-11)
2. The removal of reference to sex in the official documents
3. The abolition of the binary normalization treatments of intersex people
4. Free access to hormonal treatments and surgery (without the psychiatric monitoring)
5. The fight against transphobia: working for education, social and labour insertion for trans people

The campaign's manifest explains what exactly is meant by the terms “pathologization” and “psychiatrization”:

With “psychiatrization” we name the practice of defining and treating transsexuality under the label of a mental disorder. We are also talking about the mistaking of non normative bodies and identities (those out of the cultural dominant order) for pathological bodies and identities. Psychiatrization gives the medical-psychiatric institutions the control over gender identities. The official practice of these institutions, motivated through state, religious, economical and political interests, reflects and reproduces the male/female binomial on people’s bodies. They're trying to convince us that this position, exclusively, is a “true” and a natural one. This binomial assumes the sole existence of two kinds of bodies (male and female), and associates a determined behaviour to each of them (male or female). At the same time it



has traditionally taken into consideration heterosexuality as the only possible relationship between these bodies. Today, as we denounce this paradigm, which has justified the current social order with arguments about nature and biology, we evidence its social effects so as to put an end to its political pretensions. Transsexuality's pathologization under the "Gender Identity Disorder" is an extreme exercise of control and normalization. This disorder's treatment is carried away in different centres around the world. In some cases, like the Spanish State, it is compulsory to go through a psychiatric monitoring in the Gender Identity Centres. In some cases it is linked to a weekly control of our gender identity through group therapies, family, and all sorts of derogative procedures which infringe our rights. While referring to the Spanish State's case, it is important to highlight that anyone who wishes to change their name in their official documents or who wishes to modify their body with hormonal treatment or operations has to go through a psychiatric monitoring. (Stop Trans manifest<sup>61</sup>)

Apart from demanding the removal of transsexuality from the mental disorder manuals (DSM-IV-R and ICD-10), the activists criticized the newly approved Gender Identity law and demanded the right to change their name and sex in the official documents without having to go through any medical or psychological monitoring. They follow the feminist movement in their fight for the right to abortion, and the right to one's own body, and demand the right to freely decide about a modification of their bodies and "to carry on with no bureaucratic, political or economical impediments, nor any other type of medical coercion" (Stop Trans Manifest).

The fifth objective, which refers to the fight against transphobia, is the point where the majority of LGBTQ activists in Spain agree on. Both The Federation and the challenging groups are aware of the extreme vulnerability and difficulties of the trans community, especially when it comes to the labour market. Similar demands of granted access to the labour market and specific politics engaged to end the marginalization and the discrimination of the trans community were included in COGAM's (The Federation) propositions presented during the national LGBT conference in Gandía in 2008. They also agreed on the demand of health and security conditions for sex workers and the end of the police harassment of these individuals, as well as sexual traffic.

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<sup>61</sup> The English version of the Stop Trans 2012 manifest online: <http://www.stp2012.info/en/manifesto>

However, the demand the psychiatric monitoring an unnecessary step and the psychotherapeutic monitoring voluntary rather than mandatory was the point of disagreement between the institutionalized LGBT movement and the LGBTQ challenging groups which launched the campaign. It was, therefore, especially surprising when The Federation joined the campaign after it had been launched mainly via the internet. Any organization or collective could join the campaign this way and express their support by joining the list of adherents. The campaign received support in five continents, and organizations such as ILGA, TGEU and many other collectives joined the list. It was necessary then to initiate communication about the preparation of the demonstration in Madrid, where high participation of LGBTQ activists was expected:

*[Fieldnotes, 25.8.2009]*

*Lidia: "We are the organizers of October 17 in Madrid, but since these groups have adhered, it is necessary to initiate a dialogue so that they give us their support in the preparation of the demonstration and the related matters (campaign, actions, press...)"*.<sup>62</sup>

Once The Federation joined the list of adherents, the organizers of the campaign also expressed their concern for losing the publicity of such a big event. The strategy was discussed via email when the organizers of the event sent an email to all participants, giving them instructions:

*Lidia: "It is necessary to establish some type of relationship with the other groups such as the FELGTB to sum up the work of the event in Madrid. That does not mean we will give them a voice in the decision making! Be aware that we are the organizers, and that we are not going to allow the message to get diluted by giving the power to decide to other people!!!!"*<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> "Nosotros somos los organizadores del 17 Octubre en Madrid, pero ya que estos grupos se han adherido, hay que iniciar un dialogo para que nos den su apoyo en la preparación de la mani y lo relacionado con ella (campaña, acciones, prensa...)"

<sup>63</sup> "Hay que establecer algun tipo de relación con otros grupos como la FELGTB para tantear trabajo de la mani en Madrid, no significa darles sitio en las tomas de decisiones! Tened claro que somos nosotrxs lxs organizadorxs, y que no vamos a permitir que el mensaje se diluya dando poder de decisión a otra gente!!!!"

Such worries were well-founded, as a few days before the planned demonstration in Madrid, *Público*, one of the main Spanish newspapers published an article which brought detailed information about the campaign. In this article, The Federation was denoted as the organizer of the whole event and also the creator of the International Network for Trans De-pathologization. As the first paragraph says:

*[Fieldnotes, 16.10.2009, Público archive]*

*Various associations convoked by the Federación Estatal de Lesbianas, Gays, Transexuales y Bisexuales (FELGTB) have initiated today several demonstrations in Madrid. These demonstrations will continue tomorrow morning in various Spanish cities in order to demand that transsexuality is no longer considered a disease.<sup>64</sup>*

After reading this article on the internet, the enraged original founders of the International Network for the Trans De-pathologization and the organizers of the campaign contacted the newspaper and explained what happened. They received a reply from the media, which, according to the words of the organizers, was this:

*[Fieldnotes, 16.10.2009]*

*Xavier: "In any case, EFE [Spanish language news agency<sup>65</sup>] has not written the news, but somebody from FELGTB knowing that it is a lie from the first sentence. The press release from FELGTB from 2 days ago was deliberately ambiguous, this one is big bold faced lie.<sup>66</sup>*

A few hours later, the webpage, where this article was published, was already full of critical comments, as the news had been spread with the speed of light among the campaign's participants and supporters:

*"As always, the official FELGT has promoted a work of someone else. These declarations coordinated in several countries of the world have been coordinated*

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<sup>64</sup> Diversas asociaciones convocadas por la Federación Estatal de Lesbianas, Gays, Transexuales y Bisexuales (FELGTB) han iniciado hoy en Madrid unas manifestaciones que continuarán mañana en diversas ciudades españolas para reivindicar que la transexualidad no sea considerada como una enfermedad. (<http://files.publico.es>)

<sup>65</sup> Author's note.

<sup>66</sup> "En todo caso esta noticia no la ha redactado EFE, sino alguien de FELGTB a sabiendas que es una trola desde la primera frase. la nota de prensa de FELGTB de hace 2 días era deliberadamente ambigua, esta directamente es una mentira como un piano."

*for a year by the Network Stop Pathologization, with the epicentre in Barcelona, and during all this time it has been impelled by LGBT revolutionary affiliations (of those that neither receive subsidies nor correspond with the majority parties)".<sup>67</sup>*

*"Advice: correct the initial paragraph (the FELGT has not convoked anybody, actually it has been the one that has come to the call of other groups) and do not believe in any other future bulletin of the above mentioned Federation".<sup>68</sup>*

As this example shows, the official organizations (the dominant group) of the movement do not always play a central role in sustaining the movement. The movement maintenance typically involves "a complicated array of meso actors" (Staggenborg 2002: 134). It is interesting to see how different strategies and goals are literally adopted by the dominant part of the movement, despite its previous disagreement, once they reach a certain level of publicity and international support.

This part of my analysis was aimed to show how such steps can have a positive influence on maintaining the movement, despite its heterogeneous and competitive character. In the end, the campaign was massive: 29 cities from 5 continents joined and during the weekend of October 16 and 17, 2009 related demonstrations were organized in all of them. This example clearly shows how the sum of the movement's disunity, despite the dynamics of antagonistic forces, can result in a progressive environment where new campaigns, if launched with massive support, attract new as well as old adherents and can change the direction of the dominant group's politics. Such climate can be beneficial in opening channels which have heretofore remained closed. Also, by adopting the strategies and goals of the challenging groups, the dominant group changes its politics in accordance with their critics.

The challenging groups highlight contradictions and push the dominant group "towards accommodations that value decentralization and loose coupling." (Schwartz 2002:169) If the dominant group becomes overinvolved in maintaining itself without taking into account the demands of the challenging groups, these groups alert the

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<sup>67</sup> "Como siempre, la oficialista FELGT ha rentabilizado el trabajo ajeno. Estas manifestaciones coordinadas en varios países del mundo lleva un año siendo coordinada por la Red Stop Pathologization, con epicentro en Barcelona, y durante todo este tiempo ha sido impulsada por asociaciones LGTB revolucionarias (de esas que no reciben subvenciones ni les hacen el juego a los partidos mayoritarios)".

<sup>68</sup> "Consejo: corregid el parrafo inicial (la FELGT no ha convocado a nadie, en realidad ha sido ella la que ha acudido a la convocatoria de otros grupos) y no os creáis en el futuro ningun otro comunicado de dicha Federación".

dominant group to new topics, issues and constituencies ready for mobilization (ibid.). The important element, which runs through the relations between the dominant and challenging groups, is ideology: critical ideas can act as the impetus for actions and the substance of continuity, for the participants of challenging groups seek to perpetuate ideas (Schwartz 2002:170).



[picture No.7: Stop Trans 2012 protest campaign in the Basque Country]

This way, therefore, challenging groups can make important contributions to movement endurance: “when the movement survives the turmoil, it emerges stronger and more focused” (ibid). Meso actions also bring about changes in the individual perceptions, as participants, who observe and take part in successful actions, find opportunities for new actions, learn new ideas, develop commitments, and come to believe in the efficacy of collective actions. (Staggenborg 2002: 134) In a nutshell, the existence of internal networks created by challenging groups may help continuity of the whole movement, for their goal is not to destroy the movement, but to improve it: “they value the movement itself, encourage opponents to voice their positions, and, above all, persuade members not to exit” (Schwartz 2002: 163).

## 6. Conclusion

The aim of my essay was to explain the recent mobilization practices within the Spanish LGBTQ movement in contemporary Madrid (Spain) in reference to strategic use of identity and networking in collective action. I intended to illustrate that the tangible results of the LGBTQ activism in Spanish conditions are not the result of some unanimously applied identity politics: on the contrary, the Spanish movement is an ideologically polarized heterogeneous aggregate.

The dominant group, represented by the state-aided federation of LGBT collectives, closely collaborates with leading political parties, which explains its potential to enforce approvals of new laws on gay marriage and adoption as well as the gender identity law. However, the texts of these laws are not in a total accordance with the voice of the whole movement. A very significant part of the movement, created by challenging groups collaborating with other social movement communities in wider networks, is showing its disapproval of such laws and institutionalized politics by launching protest campaigns, which have recently succeeded in receiving both local and international support.

The active challenging groups, collaborating in wider movements with other feminist, ecologist and other ideologically related social movement communities, criticize the dominant part of the movement for giving up its original message of sexual liberation and diluting it in consumerism by supporting capitalist tendencies and the power of leading political parties. Via launching protest campaigns and collaborating in internationally supported networks, the challenging groups demand civil rights for all people, regardless of their sexual orientation or identity. They mobilize upon the collective identity of “precariousness” while integrating elements of queer and transgender theory in their radical leftist oriented politics in order to transform the Spanish society. One of their main goals is to focus on the process of de-pathologization of transsexuality via eliminating the mention of sex identification in personal documents and negotiating the constraints of gender binarism.

By bringing on new critical ideas and adherents, the success of leftist oriented challenging groups has an impact on the direction of the politics of the dominant group, which thereby is forced to adopt such ideas into their politics. Despite the disunity and antagonistic character of the movement, the success of the collective action of the newly

emerged networks, which collaborate internationally with the help of the internet, influence the maintenance and outcomes of the whole LGBTQ movement, regardless of the borders of Spain.

Due to the fact that the goal orientation of the whole movement is also influenced by the recent success of these networks and international campaigns such as Stop Trans 2012, it is possible to see the form of the contemporary Spanish movement (with its virtual centre in Madrid) as if it was undergoing a transition opposite to the direction from original anti-assimilationist queer to identity politics movement. This transition within the Spanish movement is possible due to the suitability of the local political conditions: the history of leftist oriented collective action, the approvals of the new laws (Gay Marriage Law in 2005 and Gender Identity Law in 2007) and relatively good communication with the state, where the institutionalized LGBT part has a strong political influence. Since the contemporary transition of the movement is based on ideological disputes that leads to the emergence of challenging groups and their internal networks promoting alternative ways of politics within the heterogeneous movement, I believe that the level of analysis which sees identity as a strategy together with the meso-level perspective of movement mobilization practices, both of which I applied in my essay, has provided better understanding of the contemporary movements' more fluid nature.

As I have mentioned in the introduction, I have decided to incorporate the part on history into the essay mainly in order to show that the newly approved laws on gay marriage (2005) and gender identity (2007) are the result of a gradual collaboration of the institutionalized part of the LGBT movement with the leading political parties. My aim was to point out the fact (which might be interesting especially for a Czech reader) that the contemporarily high activism of social movements in Spain, based on radical leftist oriented politics, has a long history with the roots in the time when such activity was considered illegal: in Franco's regime, which is well-known for a close connection to the Catholic Church and the disapproval of leftist oriented tendencies. Nowadays, the activity of Spanish social movements is still closely linked to radical leftist ideologies and the critique of capitalism. According to my data, it is probably because the right-wing politics, represented mainly by the conservative party PP<sup>69</sup>, is still connected with the strong support of the Church which is especially antagonistic to the demands of the

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<sup>69</sup> Partido Popular.

LGBTQ movement and potential social change. Nevertheless, the position of the Church within the Spanish state is the object of contemporary political (especially electoral) critical debates and I was very surprised when I found out soon after my arrival in Madrid in 2007 that the attitude of the Spanish young people regarding the religion and tradition is very similar to the emphasized Czech atheism. Most of my informants told me that for them, the Catholic Church is reminiscent of the Franco's dictatorship. This information helped me discover another parallel between the Czech and the Spanish political orientation: the Czech people, hypothetically speaking, tend not to vote for the Communist party, for having the history of forty years under the Soviet regime, whereas the Spanish people tend not to vote for the conservative right-wing parties (which in the Spanish conditions implies the Church), for living under the dogmatic Franco's dictatorship. In another words, mentioning among the Spanish LGBTQ activists the fact that voting for the Communists or any leftist oriented party in the Czech Republic is nowadays considered the lack of education, evoked unfeigned astonishment. However, regarding the fact that the relation of the Spanish people to the Catholic Church and the religious tradition was not the focus of my research, to be able to tell more about the present political situation would necessarily require a separate profound study.

I am aware of the fact that the topic I chose for my essay is very complicated. My aim was to focus on a detail explanation of several issues, which I consider most important in providing the reader with sufficient knowledge about the Spanish LGBTQ movement and the socio-political conditions of its contemporary activism. Nevertheless, I am also aware that more could be said in reference to, for example, the topic of internal organization of the challenging groups; the role of immigrants in Spanish social movements (LGBTQ activism particularly); the difficulties in receiving international and local support (this especially is a complicated process with much hard work behind it); or the negotiation with the state and political parties.

All of the mentioned topics are worth becoming the research problems for possible future investigations. I also believe that the study of social movements is becoming important again, especially in reference to the rising force of new media and the strategic use of internet networking in international politics, as we could see for example in the case of so called "Twitter revolution" in Iran's post-election protests in June 2009, which clearly showed the power of new media to organise opposition in "cyberspace". My aim was mainly to contribute to the discussion on contemporary



LGBTQ activism in Europe. I hope that despite the limits of my work I managed to describe the complicated background of recent networking within the Spanish social movement communities where such activism is born.

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