

**PUBLIC AND PRIVATE IN SOCIALISM –
A COMPARISON OF GAY IDENTITIES AND MOVEMENTS IN
HUNGARY AND THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis applies the key concepts of LGBT studies used for the analysis of Western LGBT movements to a comparative study of Central European, in particular Hungarian and East German LGBT identities and movements focusing on the period before the transition to democracy. The aim of this analysis, based on interviews and the existing literature, is to identify the key factors in which the relationship of LGBT people with the state in these cases differed from an ideal typical model of Western identity movements. The analysis follows a circular logic: firstly the effects of restricted public discourse on individual and collective identity formation is analyzed, showing that this almost blocked the possibilities of collective identity formation and in the case of Hungary even an LGBT social category could be perceived as non-existent. Secondly, the places and ways of collective identity formation are analyzed, showing that these with a few exceptions also happened in the private realm. Thirdly, the study of the formation of organizations and movements and their relationship with the state shows that the East German movements may have been more successful because of three factors: firstly, they were more related to Western movements, secondly, they chose an integrationist strategy, and thirdly, they had an ally, the church, through which they were also connected to a broader group of movements. Finally, the research of the period after the transition shows how the opening of the public sphere brought these movements closer to the Western type of identity movements.

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years more and more states of Western Europe have legalized same-sex marriage, often also granting adoption rights to LGBT families. At the same time, none of the Central European post-socialist states has legalized same-sex marriage, and the Hungarian Parliament has recently passed a constitutional amendment restricting the legal definition of family to heterosexual married couples.

However, if we look back in time, this difference on the level of rights wasn't always so. Hungary decriminalized same-sex sexual activity among the first states in Central Europe in 1962 along with Czechoslovakia, while the German Democratic Republic has abolished all the discriminatory laws before West Germany, and also before many of the other Western European countries, despite the fact that the socialist states were authoritarian regimes, in which civil rights would not be expected to be given priority. Erős (2000) states that authoritarian regimes are characterized by the erosion of private identities, which along with the overwhelming state control over many spheres of society would rather suggest a direction toward the oppression of sexual minorities.

To be able to analyze what lies behind this contradiction, I will analyze the case of two countries: Hungary and East Germany during the late socialist era, trying to answer the question *“in which factors did the relationship of gay people with the state in these states differ from an ideal typical model of identity movement construction in liberal democracies”*.

The former being one of the ‘softest’ authoritarian regimes, and the latter one of the strictest, the similarities in these countries would at my hope reveal how the authoritarian nature of the socialist states affected the public and the private life and identities of sexual minorities. Because of the relative scarcity of the existing literature noted by several authors (Holy 2001,

Renkin 2007), I will partially rely on a series of semi-structured interviews conducted in Budapest and Berlin with gay men who were already adults during at least the last decade of the socialist era.

The structure of the thesis is as follows: firstly, in the following chapter I give an overview of concepts of the social construction of gender and sexuality, the problematized distinction between the private and the public sphere, and finally, the concepts related to identity and LGBT movements. In the following chapter I will present the methodology of the thesis, discussing the applicability and the limitations of work with interviews, and after presenting the mainly anonymous interviewees I will also briefly describe the circumstances of each of the interviews.

I will analyze the results in a comparative setup. Firstly I will discuss the effects of limited public discourse on the formation of individual and collective identities, while in the second analytical chapter I investigate the relationship between LGBT groups and the state. In this chapter I will firstly highlight the attempts to create organizations which could achieve more publicity for LGBT identities and could affect the state. Secondly, I will analyze the reactions of the state to these attempts and its attitude towards LGBT identities, while in the third subchapter I will discuss the most important changes that occurred after the transition of the former socialist states to democracy.

CHAPTER 1: LGBT POLITICS IN LIBERAL DEMOCRACIES AND AUTHORITARIAN STATES

During the last decades of the 20th century, LGBT identity politics emerged in the Western states. After the second wave of feminism, which questioned traditional sexual norms and traditional concepts of the family, opening the way to new politicized identities, among others, LGBT identities have started to be constructed both at the private and the public level. After the Stonewall riots of 1969, and most importantly with the increasing tensions created by the legal controversies around rights to visit partners suffering from AIDS, these more and more visible identities started to serve as a basis of political movements fighting for their representation as well as for related rights (Lind 2013). LGBT movements gained increasing political importance in the United States and in the Western democracies of Europe, and contributed to wide-spread changes in the legal frameworks, as well as the social perceptions of LGBT people (Nardi 1998; Paternotte, Tremblay, and Johnson 2011; Rimmerman 2007).

LGBT issues have become more visible not only in public debates, but also in academic studies: even though along with gender studies, LGBT studies constitute a relatively new area of social and political science, their results contributed to several topics which were already at the center of interest of other disciplines, including ‘mainstream’ political science. Research on the relationship between LGBT movements and the state confirmed and disconfirmed various social movement theories, revealed important, yet often neglected aspects of power relations and the functioning of social structures, or contributed to the analysis of public opinion dynamics and framing effects, which may be relevant not only for the better understanding of specific LGBT issues, but also for more general social research as well (Mucciaroni 2011).

As the first LGBT movements appeared in the liberal democracies, most of the literature still concentrates on these areas of the world. The characteristics of LGBT movements vary across regions and countries, and hence, most of these studies according to Tremblay, Paternotte, and Johnson (2011) discuss cases of specific states. Among these states we find mainly ‘Western’ liberal democracies, including the United States (Armstrong 2002, Fetner 2008), Rimmerman (2007), France (Duyvendak 1995), Spain (Calvo and Trujillo 2011), Italy (Nardi 1998) or Australia (Willett 2000), and even though recently we could observe a shift in attention toward other regions of the World, we still find noticeably less work on Central and Eastern Europe (Kulpa and Mizielińska 2011).

In this chapter I will briefly present what theoretical concepts may be the most relevant for the analysis of LGBT movements, trying to apply the theories dominantly used in liberal democracies to the authoritarian regimes of the socialist states.

1.1. Gender, Sexuality and Politics

Even though gender theory is not central to the topic of this thesis, a brief introduction is necessary to better understand how sexual orientation may be a political issue. Also, for the analysis of the attitudes of socialist state ideologies toward LGBT issues, the more general attitude of socialist ideologies toward gender and sexuality needs to be discussed.

1.1.1. The political relevance of the socially constructed gender

Subsequent waves of feminist movements and scholars have brought into question the formerly dominant views about the role of gender in political life, revealing hidden power structures that affect institutions, decision making, or even everyday norms: for an overview of the history of feminist movements see the work of (Walters 2005). According to the most fundamental argument, a distinction between biological sex and social gender needs to be made, as the latter is a social construction, a category which was created by society itself. As

Karen Beckwith put it: “Gender as a concept in political science is conventionally understood as sets of socially constructed meanings of masculinities and femininities, derived from context-specific identifications of sex, that is, male and female, men and women” (Beckwith 2010)

Social categories play a crucial role in the organization of labor, politics and many institutions of society, one of the most obvious manifestations of their construction being related to gender. When meeting someone, the first thing we want to decide (even unconsciously) is his or her sex, and we feel confused if we fail to do so. Most of us have already heard someone commenting on a long haired teenage boy publicly “one can’t even decide whether it’s a boy or a girl”.

Judith Lorber (2004) argues that society – in order to divide itself into clearly separable groups, thus facilitating the division of labor – creates a finite number of categories out of the infinite combinations of genitalia, body shapes or sexuality. Thus, through the uniformization of people put into a certain category it creates the ideal-typical "man" and "woman". Gendering, which helps the survival of these socially constructed categories already begins in early childhood, when boys get matchbox cars and girls get Barbies from their parents. Later, the categories are reinforced in most of the social interactions, in relationships, clothing, or even job choices.

While the construction of two genders facilitates our orientation in the world, it also has a compelling force that every individual must meet in order to avoid exclusion from society. Even though gender-related roles and the strictness of boundaries have changed throughout history, individuals in the present experience little of these dynamics; society provides them with an inherited set of rules. Through discursive acts the categories of 'man' and 'woman' are reinforced every time, as we – mostly unconsciously – tailor the intended meaning of our

words to the socially constructed reality, which we ourselves have also learnt through discursive acts, thus contributing to the survival and reinforcement of these categories (Lorber 2004).

Karen Beckwith argues that we can understand gender not only as a social category, but also as a process, meaning “behaviors, conventions, practices, and dynamics engaged in by individuals, organizations, movements, institutions, and nations” (2005: 129). Gender as a process is manifested in the gender-specific effects of various apparently gender-neutral state policies, such as electoral laws, or even in the different effects of transitions to democracy (Waylen 1994).

1.1.2. Sexuality and the heteronorm

In a quite similar understanding, sexuality can also be understood as a social construction. According to feminists, “individuals acquire a sexual nature as they develop a gender identity” (Seidman 2003). Hence, gender and sexuality are closely interrelated through the mechanisms of their construction.

In *The Reproduction of Mothering*, (Chodorow 1978) offers a psychoanalytical feminist view, according to which the sexuality of individuals is largely influenced by the patterns they see in the family: girls tend to establish more intimate relationships with their mothers, which according to Chodorow results in different, more intimate connection with sex than in the case of boys, whose relationships are typically looser with both of the parents. According to Chodorow, even despite these differences in the sexuality of the two genders, most of the people become heterosexual because of the heterosexual norms around which modern society is organized (Chodorow 1978).

Steven Seidman 2003 also refers to the influential essay *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence* of Adrienne Rich, in which she argues that we are all taught and forced by

society to adopt conventional gender identities. According to Rich, society reinforces heterosexual norms by rewarding those who comply with them and punishing those, who do not. Hence, besides the romanticization of heterosexual love and various institutional and social incentives, punishments such as ridicule or violence against homosexuals also contribute to the persistence of the heterosexual norms (Rich 1980). As Rose McDermott and Peter K. Hatemi point out, “individuals do not simply choose their natural gender and sexual orientation, although people have often chosen to not act on their inherent preferences as a result of the cultural and policy punishments associated with deviating from heteronormativity” (2011: 90).

Just as in the case of the construction of gender, sexual categories are also deeply influenced by society, which means that categories come as a given construct, and individuals have only a limited influence on the creation of socially accepted categories. Hence, they have to define themselves in relation to the existing categories, and their possibilities in most of the cases are restricted to attitudes such as conformism, resistance, subversion or negotiation.

Besides the traditional gender categories, public identities related to sexual orientation and self-identification emerged in the second half of the 20th century in most parts of the Western world (Altman 2002). The first two major categories which questioned heterosexuality as the only existing category were gay and lesbian identities. However, according to further waves of feminist literature and most notably queer theory, these categories did not reflect the ambivalences of sexual categorization. The state practices that created and maintained two clearly separate categories, the “pure heterosexual” and the “polluted homosexual”, can also be seen as a means of exclusion through categorization (Seidman 2001).

According Plummer and Stein (1994) some of the queer theorists argue that gays and lesbians in the United States after the 1970’s organized themselves as fitting the ‘ethnicity model’,

along the lines of an ethnic group, following the example of the black civil rights movement. However, unlike gender and race, sexuality defines a political interest constituency, and the membership of the group is fluctuating and largely invisible. Unlike other identities, sexual identity is created by the performative act of coming out (Plummer and Stein 1994). Hence, sexual identities are much more dependent on social norms, as they may be kept in secret, in which case it is possible that in the lack of public discourse no social category is created, which then may result in the impossibility of a conscious self-identification as a member of a sexual minority.

1.1.3. Gender, sexuality and the socialist ideology

Socialist ideology brought with itself a partial redefinition of gender roles: even though distinct social categories of men and women were not questioned, their roles in the society and in production were deeply affected by the ideology's focus on gender equality. As Lenin, whose ideas were especially influential in the state ideologies of the socialist states, stated in 1920:

The first proletarian dictatorship is a real pioneer in establishing social equality for women. It is clearing away more prejudices than could volumes of feminist literature. (...) In law there is naturally complete equality of rights for men and women. And everywhere there is evidence of a sincere wish to put this equality into practice. We are bringing women into the socialist economy, into legislation and government. (...) In short, we are seriously carrying out the demand in our programme for the transference of the economic and educational functions of the separate household to society. That will mean freedom for the woman from the old household drudgery and dependence on man. That enables her to exercise to the full her talents and her inclinations. (...) We have the most advanced protective laws for women workers in the world, and the officials of the organised workers carry them out. (Zetkin 1920: 17)

While the quick, ideology-based transformation led to massive participation of women in the labor market and partially through quotas to high levels of political participation in the countries of the Eastern Block, this change had only a limited affect on the cultural understandings of gender. Even though women working in factories were common subjects of

propaganda photos, in the background the traditional social roles prevailed, and women had to cope with multiple tasks: the new one of modern worker and the old one of housewife (Paxton and Hughes 2007).

This superficial redefinition of gender roles had only a limited effect on the understanding of gender as a social category: the two main gender categories remained distinct and ‘natural’, as the socialist ideology did not care about transgressions of traditional categories and different kinds of gender identities.

However, sexuality was far from being a taboo in the socialist ideology: it was seen as an important aspect of society, which may be studied, discussed, but it has the primary goal of sustaining society. Individual sex life may be free, but the goal of it is already a public issue.

This is well illustrated by another quote of Lenin’s same speech from 1920:

In sexual life there is not only simple nature to be considered, but also cultural characteristics, whether they are of a high or low order. In his Origin of the Family Engels showed how significant is the development and refinement of the general sex urge into individual sex love. (...) Drinking water is, of course, an individual affair. But in love two lives are concerned, and a third, a new life, arises, it is that which gives it its social interest, which gives rise to a duty towards the community. (Zetkin 1920: 10)

Lenin in the same speech argued that feminist scholars are putting too much emphasis on sexuality, and the fact that the related works have become the „favorite readings” of many women for example in Germany distracts attention from the social role of sexuality (Zetkin 1920). In the terms of this analysis this adds an additional perspective of investigation: whether the GDR or Hungary has brought into question the traditional sexual norms and whether public discourse about sexuality existed.

1.2. Public and private

One of the main aim of LGBT movements on Western democracies was to enter the public sphere, the realm traditionally seen as the space of politics, and to fight for rights through

visibility (Ackelsberg and Shanley 1996). Hence, publicity was not only a goal, but also a means, which facilitated community formation, reinforced individual and collective identities, and facilitated movement formation. In this section, I will give a brief overview of the literature on the private and public dichotomy in the liberal democracies, and in the second part I will analyze the key differences that distinguished socialist states in this aspect.

1.2.1. Liberal democracies

Central to the concept of sexual citizenship is the dichotomy of public versus private space (Giddens 1992; Lind 2013; Plummer 2001), which may be illustrated by the expression “coming out of the closet”, where the closet is a metaphor for secrecy and hence the private space, while coming out means entering the public realm (Lind 2013).

Subsequent waves of feminist literature also addressed the topic of the distinction between the private and the public sphere from different angles. According to Ackelsberg and Shanley, on the one hand, the liberal state has been criticized for the withdrawal from the private sphere, leaving space for the continuation of traditional power inequalities and oppression of women, while on the other hand, the state was also criticized for not granting personal autonomy to individuals in other matters, such as the choice of same-sex partner in the case of marriage, or the decision over abortion. One central topic of the former critique of the liberal state was domestic violence - as the limitation of state intervention in the private sphere leaves hidden power relations within the family invisible, they also mask acts that would be otherwise subject to criminal charges as private matters, which should be resolved by the members of the family (Ackelsberg and Shanley 1996).

The concept of the public-private distinction was also transformed by others, such as Kenneth Plummer, who introduced the concept of ‘intimate citizenship’, designating a public discourse on personal life, arguing that with formerly private topics discussed in mass media we cannot

strictly distinguish private and public any more (2003). Topics that were previously considered as private matters appear in public discussions, in talk shows and other television programs, making the discourse on private issues public. Plummer's concept differs from the traditional focus of concepts of citizenship, represented among others by the work of T.H. Marshall (1950), which emphasize the state's role in securing the rights of the citizens and the obligations of citizens to participate in common affairs, and which were already transformed by feminist scholars, who brought in the aspect of sexuality, arguing that "all citizens are sexed through the political discourses of the family as heteronormative and gender normative" (Lind 2013: 196).

1.2.2. Socialist states

However, this concept that served as the basis of critique was challenged by multiple groups, including scholars working on studies on the transitional post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe (for the related key differences between liberal democracies and socialist states see Figure 1). Communist ideology wanted to "obliterate private space in terms of capitalism, autonomous civil society organizations and private households" (Marchand and Runyan 2002: 142).

By providing public services, childcare, paid maternity leave and so on, they wanted women to enter the formal workforce. On the other hand, the state was an authoritarian one, which from the point of view of post-communist theorists turned Western concepts upside down: even though it promoted formal equality, the public sphere was controlled by the oppressive regime, while the private sphere was the space of freedom, individual expression and liberty. This was accompanied by the understanding of the private sphere and the household as a larger space of agency, as the public sphere was under surveillance (Marchand and Runyan 2002).

Liberal democracies

- Democratic regimes
- Freedom of speech
- Free media
- Pluralism, no state ideology – also the existence of conservative values
- The state does not intervene in private affairs, construction of public sphere as the territory of politics ↔ feminist critique
- BUT: feminist/LGBT struggle for intimacy in some issues
- Political movements based on identities

Socialist states

- Authoritarian regimes
- Limited freedom of speech
- Media controlled by the state
- Marxism/Leninism as state ideology – aim of a progressive image concerning women's rights and also gay rights to a limited extent
- The state tries to monitor the private spaces, but it still remains the space of autonomy
- No possibility of open political movements or debates

Figure 1: Differences between liberal democracies and the socialist states (Source: Own summary)

This, the role of media in forming the private sphere was severely restricted in the socialist states. (Habermas 1991) coined the term 'regimented' public sphere, which may be applicable to the description of the socialist countries, where even though media and public discourse existed, they were mainly used by the state to support its ideology and to create the sentiment that the majority is on the same opinion as the state-party (Dennis 2005).

These differences provide an important aspect of analysis: how were LGBT identities constructed in the lack of free media and public discourse, how was the role of the private and the public sphere perceived by LGBT citizens, and how this affected the aims of LGBT groups and organizations.

1.3. Identity movements

As LGBT movements constitute a part of the group of identity movements (Paternotte, Tremblay, and Johnson 2011), being based on a shared identity, in this section I will look at some concepts related to individual and collective identity formation and identity movements.

1.3.1. Individual and collective identities

Identity has several levels, which are partly constructed by interactions and by norms of the society. Richard Jenkins argues that “individuals are unique and variable, but selfhood is thoroughly constructed: in the process of primary and subsequent socialization, and in the ongoing interaction during which individuals define and redefine themselves and others throughout their lives” (2004: 18).

Jenkins (2004) differentiates three orders of identity formation: the individual, the interpersonal and the institutional order. He argues that individual identity is a synthesis of internal self-definition and external self-definitions offered by others, having its root in the earliest socialization. Institutional order is the collective level, “a network of identities (positions), and of routinised practices for allocating positions (identities) to individuals” (Jenkins 2004: 24), while the interactional order is the place where identities are formed in dynamics of interpersonal relations. As they are in constant interaction, the political/social sphere and the limited set of identities provided by it may restrict personal choices, while defining a set of distinct categories. These categories may be dominant in different spheres: while the individual may serve as a basis of all of our actions and of our understandings about the world and our personal place in it, the interpersonal may also appear in relation with larger groups of (sometimes impersonalized) individuals in the public sphere. Institutional identities can also serve a role in the political arena, as self-identification with organizations such as civil movements or even parties. Jenkins also makes a difference in the institutional order between group identification and categorization: the former indicating the formation of group identity by its members, while the latter means the identification of the group by others (2004).

Collective identities are central in various types of political actions, and they are at the core of identity movements, such as feminist, religious, or even nationalist movements. Hence, identity has become a political factor. According to Cressida Heyes, “[I]dentity politics” has come to signify a wide range of political activity and theorizing founded in the shared experiences of injustice of members of certain social groups. Rather than organizing solely around belief systems, programmatic manifestos, or party affiliation, identity political formations typically aim to secure the political freedom of a specific constituency marginalized within its larger context” (2004).

However, identity politics according to Ferenc Erős (Erős 2000 In: Takács 2004) is specific to the political system. As the authoritarian states can be characterized by the forced separation of private and public identities, and by the erosion of private identities, identity politics can hardly be interpreted in the context of the socialist state (Takács 2004).

This problematic provides an additional aspect of analysis when we look at gay identities in Hungary and East Germany: the question emerges whether identities can be constructed even at a collective level without using explicit political messages or programs. It is also interesting, whether LGBT identities in the examined cases became political similarly to the movements in liberal democracies despite the authoritarian nature of the states, and if yes, how did they relate to the socialist regime.

1.3.2. LGBT movements

Manuel Castells (2011) classifies LGBT identities as project identities, which aim to change society on the level of values, by transforming certain existing social norms. LGBT movements played an important role also in achieving different LGBT rights in Western societies. The scope of collective identity can however vary: in some cases LGBT movements cooperated with feminist movements in the fight against traditional sexual norms and social

burdens, but in some cases even within the LGBT movement the differences between the purposes of women and men could not be overcome, and hence they could not demonstrate a sufficient level of solidarity to be able to cooperate in one social movement (Altman 2002).

In the analysis I will also rely on the literature of social movements, as the LGBT movements are in this respect closely related to other social movements, such as feminist movements (Paternotte, Tremblay, and Johnson 2011). Despite the common association of social movements with violent acts, we can use its concepts in the case of the analyzed topic in lack of major visible confrontations, as according to Sidney Tarrow (1998), social movements are not defined by violent acts or extremism, but by the sustained interaction with various groups, including the elites, opponents and the state authorities, and by having a common goal and demonstrating solidarity within the movement.

According to Paternotte, Tremblay and Johnson (2011), most of the studies on social movements, including LGBT movements, emphasize the role of the state, and its influence on the movements. The most common approach used in the literature according to them is the political process one, developed among others by Sidney Tarrow (1998) and Charles Tilly (1978), which defines social movements as groups willing to gain access to state resources through interaction with the state and political institutions, and divides actors to insiders who are within the political institutions, and outsiders, being the social movements, who want to gain access to these institutions.

In this concept, the notion of the political opportunity structure is central, emphasizing the structural effects of political institutions on movements: the institutional environment can either encourage or discourage the formation of movements (Paternotte, Tremblay, and Johnson 2011). According to McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1996), transition to democracy signified a shift in opportunity structure, making the formation of new social movements

easier. This provides another important aspect for the analysis of LGBT movements in Central Europe before and after the transition: how did the organizations and LGBT groups react to the transition, and whether it has meant a shift in their activity.

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

2.1. Case selection

In this study I will present and compare the cases of Hungary and the German Democratic Republic. While both of these countries were authoritarian socialist regimes formed after a national socialist dictatorship, they also show significant differences in the levels of oppression. While Hungary in the 1980's was considered as a 'soft' dictatorship, the possibilities of open criticism were still much more limited in East Germany, where the state operated a widespread secret service, controlled the borders strictly, and often reacted with severe punishment to any kind of oppositional activism or expelled those who formulated critiques towards the state politics.

In this sense, the two cases analyzed in the thesis can be seen as the two extremes among the socialist states of Central Europe – Hungary being the softest, while East Germany the hardest of the authoritarian regimes. I would hypothesize that because of the political environment, LGBT movements had better opportunities for self-organization and political activism in Hungary than in East Germany. The analysis of the two cases shed light on the nature of opportunity structures in authoritarian states and about their changes during regime transitions.

While the Hungarian LGBT community in the post socialist era has been analyzed from various perspectives (see among others Renkin 2007, Riszovannij 2001, Takács 2004, Takács 2007, Takács et al. 2012), there is only minimal literature on the period before the transition - even if this era is mentioned, it is not the main subject of analysis. Another problematic aspect related to the research of this period is that the only sources seem to be people who lived in those years. As Renkin summarizes his experiences in his dissertation, “with remarkable uniformity, almost all of the people I questioned during the course of my fieldwork when

asked about lesbians, gays, and their lives before 1989, or during the Socialist period, first responded by declaring, ‘There *were* no gays or lesbians under Socialism’.” (Renkin 2007: 23). Even though there is more literature on East Germany (Dennis 2005; Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung 2008; McLellan 2012; Soukup and Brühl 1990; Thinius 1994; Von Kowalski 1987), as Holy (2001) states, there is still much less than in the case of liberal democracies, or West Germany.

2.2. Oral history and its limitations

Because of the lack of sufficient literature and because the focus of the research is partly the subjective perceptions of the members of the LGBT community about their identity, relationship to the state authorities and social relations, related in some way to their sexual orientation, to map these areas and to find out more about facts in the lack of adequate literature in the case of Hungary, I have conducted semi-structured oral history interviews in both of the countries. In the practical procedure of conducting the interviews I relied heavily on the works of Paul Thompson (2000), and of Barbara W. Sommer and Mary Kay Quinlan (2009).

According to the definition of Sommer and Quinlan, oral history is “primary source material created in an interview setting with a witness to or a participant in an event or a way of life for the purpose of preserving the information and making it available to others” (Sommer and Quinlan 2009: 1). According to this definition, oral history is an adequate tool for the exploration of a way of life which can only be described by the participants, as well as for the analysis of historical facts and their subjective perceptions.

Thompson identifies four ways in which oral history may be analyzed: the single life-story narrative, a collection of stories which may enable us to present more typical life-history material, narrative analysis focusing on the oral text and its language, and finally,

reconstructive cross-analysis, where oral evidence is treated as a “quarry” from which to construct arguments of events in the past (Thompson 2000): 269-271).

In the case of this study, reconstructive cross-analysis is applied, as I am dealing with more than one interviewees and I am only interested in a certain aspect of life stories, related to a limited time period. As in this form the overall shape of the analysis is governed by the inner logic of the argument, cross-analysis requires shorter quotations and the comparison of evidence coming from the different interviews (Thompson 2000: 271).

In order to be able to compare the sources, they need to be evaluated, which has to be done in three ways according to Thompson: as texts, as types of content and as evidence (Thompson 2000: 272). Firstly, the researcher has to evaluate the interviews as a text: one needs to listen to what it says and pick up its repeating comments and images. Secondly, objective contents need to be separated from subjective contents, and thirdly, the interviews need to be evaluated as source materials in terms of reliability.

To check the reliability of the interviews I have listened to the recordings once again and could not identify internal inconsistencies, neither did I feel that the interviewees would have liked to avoid some topics or some aspects of topics. The objective factual information found in the interview texts also seem to be true when compared to other, written sources.

Still, there may be some important points of concern: interviewees may manipulate their subjective narratives because of many reasons (Goffman 1959). These reasons can be of political or ideological nature, but it is also possible that they told me some things differently than they would have told to other people, under different conditions than the one in which the interview took place. The reliability of the texts can also be affected by external conditions that were present at the time period I am examining, but of which the interviewees are unaware in the present. Finally, another issue may be time itself: as more than two

decades have passed since the examined period, memories may be unclear in some details, and they can also be affected by things experienced in the present. Despite these concerns, I find the interviews overall reliable, even though the small number of interviews can make generalization problematic.

On the level of interpretation I use a reconstructive mode of analysis, which in general can be useful in exploring how a certain social context works, helping to understand this context in terms of relationships, values and conflicts, or everyday habits (Thompson 2000: 286). Interviews because of their low number serve mainly as illustrations; they are not a representation of gays living in these states during the examined periods. Still, they contain important information about the period, facts and subjective interpretations.

In the selection of the interviewees I tried to work with as many different categories as I could, looking for respondents coming from different social backgrounds and often from different regions. However, at the time of the interviews, they were all living in Budapest and in Berlin, where I have conducted all of the interviews. Besides this aim of including diverse respondents the selection depended on availability: as it is extremely difficult to find people over 45 who are willing to answer private questions, especially in the case of Hungary, I was looking for interviewees through several channels, mainly informal connections, which did not allow more sophisticated system of interviewee selection.

For the interviews I have used the same topic guide (see Appendix 1) in both of the countries, and I have recorded the interviews. After having conducted and transcribed the interviews, I have done the coding according to the key topics emerging from the literature on Western LGBT movements: I was looking for statements about individual and collective identity-formation, the appearance of LGBT-related topics in public or informal discussions, and in the respondents' framing of being gay in a socialist state. In the lack of sufficient literature I

was also looking for factual information on meeting places, organizations and their history and on the circumstances of their foundation. During the coding procedure I have also tried to understand the experience of living as a gay person under state socialism as a whole picture, which at the end slightly transformed my previously existing categories. Having done the analysis of the interviews I have matched the results with the relevant literature to be able to work with more reliable sources.

2.3. *About the interviews*

2.3.1. Hungary

About Hungary I have conducted six in-depth interviews with gay men, who were already adults before the transition. In the paper I will refer to the interviews by assigning fake names to the interviewees. I firstly present the interviewees in the case of Hungary:

‘Albert’ is in his fifties, and he currently operates a café with a friend. Their café is according to him mostly frequented by actors, musicians and gay people. He was born in a small village and moved to Budapest in the second half of the 1980s, after having served at the military. Most of his friends are gay, and he has worked at several cafés and bars as a waiter, and he was also present at the start of the first gay pub of Budapest, Lokál, in early 1989.

‘Daniel’ was born in Budapest, but he also has experiences related to the topic from the second half of the decade, as he only realized that he was gay in 1987. He also worked in cafés and bars as a waiter, and he was also present at the start of Lokál.

‘Peter’ was also born in Budapest, and now he works as a journalist. It took a long time for him to decide whether he was really gay, but he has started to make social connections already during the 80’s.

‘Zoltan’ is 70; he previously also worked as a journalist, but now he’s already retired. He was part of gay circles in Budapest, and he also had experiences about the start of Homeros, the first gay organization of Hungary. He lives with his partner in a registered partnership.

‘Balint’ is in his seventies, during the socialist era he worked at a hotel, but now he’s running his own business. He has already realized that he was attracted to boys during high school, but had affairs with girls until the university years, when he realized that this was not a question of social expectations. During the socialist era he had many friends in East Germany, with whom they have visited each other frequently. He was and still is part of several strong groups of friends, who help each other, constructed their houses together, organize parties and meet each other regularly.

‘K. M.’, who asked me to mention him this way, is in his seventies, and he has worked in films as actor and director. He has moved to West Berlin in the early 1980’s after long struggles with the authorities. He wanted to move to Western Europe especially because he thought cultural life was freer and richer than in the socialist Hungary, which he felt too masculine and authoritarian.

In the interviews I did not ask previously fixed questions, as I was interested in their perspectives and I wanted to find out where they themselves put the accents. I wanted to be able to map the facts related to the topic and to get an insight to their subjective interpretations and positions towards a range of issues at the same time. For the topics covered in the interviews see Appendix.

The first interview was held on 25 November 2012 in the café operated by the interviewee, and lasted for about 3 hours. The second interview was held on 15 December 2012 in the bar where the interviewee works in the shows, before the opening of the bar and it lasted for about one and a half hours. The third interview was organized on 28 February at the flat of the

interviewee and lasted for about an hour, while the fourth one was held on 6 March also at the flat of the interviewee, and lasted for about three hours. The fifth interview took place in the restaurant of the interviewee on 17 April and lasted for approximately an hour, and finally, the sixth interview was held in Berlin at the flat of the interviewee on 2 May, and lasted for about two and a half hours.

2.3.2. East Germany

About East Germany I have conducted five in-depth interviews with gay men, who lived somewhere in the German Democratic Republic, and were already in adults before the transition. In most of the cases, just as in the case of Hungary, I use fake names to assure the anonymity of the respondents.

‘Alexander’ is in his sixties. He was born in a small town of East Germany and after losing his mother, he grew up in an orphanage. Even though he has already realized during his adolescent years that he was gay, he joined the military and acted as a heterosexual: he married a woman and had a child. After his early retirement, as it became more and more obvious to him that his life was not on the right track, he started to drink. His wife left him, and he move to Munich, where he could, for the first time in his life, live as a gay man. After a couple of years he decided to move to Berlin, and he still lives there.

‘David’ is in his seventies. He grew up in Rostock, where he has already met some gay people before moving to Berlin with the help of a friend. In East Berlin he worked at constructions, and in the evenings he visited regularly the gay pubs of the city. He is now living in a cooperative housing project of an LGBT organization.

‘Felix’ is in his late forties, so he was in his early twenties during the second half of the 1980’s. After high school he started to work as a carpenter, before joining one of the gay organizations of Berlin, where he works ever since.

Peter Rausch is in his sixties. He was born in Berlin, where he worked at a university as a lab assistant. He realized he was gay at an early age, and with his friends he participated at the formation of the first East German gay organization, HIB (Homosexuelle Interessengemeinschaft Berlin) in 1973.

‘Paul’ is in his fifties. He was born in a smaller town near Berlin, and studied at the University of Potsdam. He already realized he was gay before the university years, but after the apparent discrimination of a fellow student because of his homosexuality, he did not come out and did not participate at any kind of organization or gay group until the transition. After having graduated from the University of Potsdam, he started to work at a university, but he is now a parliamentary candidate and mainly works at a party.

CHAPTER 3: CONSTRUCTION OF SEXUALITY AND IDENTITIES

Identities and their construction is one of the most basic questions of analysis in the investigated topic, as they serve as the basis of any kind of community-formation and also of political claims. Constructivist theories claim that dominant norms of society play a crucial role also on the level of private identity formation, and the existing social categories limit the personal possibilities (Jenkins 2004; Lorber 2004; Rich 1980). In the absence of a clearly identifiable set of common characteristics, individuals cannot claim that they form a community, and hence, they also cannot argue that they should be granted certain rights.

I have divided this chapter to three parts partly on the basis of Richard Jenkins' (2004) categorization of the three orders of society: the individual, the interactional and the institutional order. However, in the application to the cases, I have slightly transformed the categories, creating three levels: public identities along the lines of categorization in the institutional order, referring to identities emerging in public discourse; individual identities; and finally, collective identities partly along the lines of interactional order and self-identification as a group.

In the chapter firstly I will analyze whether homosexuality was part of the socially discussed categories of sexuality, showing that discourse related to homosexuality was minimal on the level of the media and often also on the level of informal groups. Secondly, I will discuss possibilities for personal identity-formation in this environment, illustrated by some of the stories of the interviewees. It is possible that what we can observe here is only the struggle of young people to find their own identities, but I would argue that the lack of publicity and LGBT categories could make a substantial difference, as it deprived young people from the possibility of overcoming their problems as a part of – maybe virtual – community, and the feeling of being alone with their problems could make identity-formation even more

problematic than in other cases. Thirdly, I will analyze how the personal identities could appear on a collective level through the description of meeting places and informal groupings.

3.1. Public and private discourse

According to the constructivist view of gender and sexuality presented in Chapter 2, socially given categories play a crucial role in the possibilities of personal identity-formation (Jenkins 2004). As described by Judith Lorber (2004), gender and gender roles are constantly reinforced through various mechanisms of socialization and education. As sexuality is closely related to gender, its norms according to authors such as Adrienne Rich (1980) are constructed in an almost identical way: conformity to the accepted categories, such as heterosexuality, are rewarded, while norm breaking may be punished by ridicule or violence.

Both Hungary and the German Democratic Republic have decriminalized homosexuality relatively early, even compared to some Western liberal democracies. Hungary made same-sex relationships legal already in 1961, meaning that along with Czechoslovakia, it was among the first states in Central Europe to introduce such a legal change (Risovannij 2001). The German Democratic Republic has also decriminalized same-sex relationships relatively early, in 1968 (Herrn 1999).

However, this legal change did not mean that LGBT issues could become more visible in these states: as the political decisions about the legal changes were not debated publicly, and most of the interviewees have the impression that they have not read anything about the topic, or only a couple of articles before the transition.

Hungary

In Hungary, public discourse about LGBT issues was minimal. There was no public debate around the decriminalization of homosexuality, and the topic was rarely mentioned in the

media: according to the data from the archives of MTI, the Hungarian National News Agency, in 1988 only 18 articles contained the word ‘homosexual’, while this number was 13 in 1989, as represented in Figure 2¹. These numbers are especially low if we compare them with the number of articles about homosexuality after the transition: even though in the years directly following the transition this number remained low, in 1994 it has already doubled and by 2000 it was close to hundred in a yearly average. The peak was in 2004 with 242 related articles, even though in 2007 the gay march was widely covered by the media as it was attacked by protesters for the first time (MTI 2013).

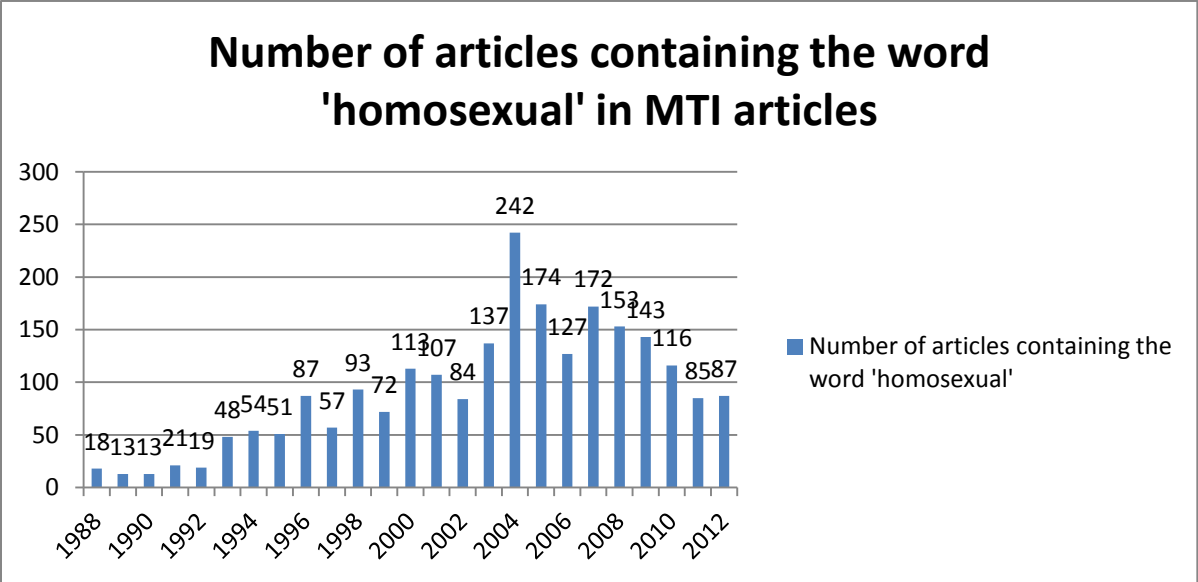


Figure 2: Number of articles containing the word 'homosexual' in MTI articles (Source: (MTI 2013))

The public invisibility is also illustrated by the interviews: all the respondents talked about the lack of media coverage of LGBT topics, as well as the lack of other kinds of material on homosexuality. Instead of these some of them mentioned reading medical books, or going to cinemas to watch Pasolini films.

¹ Unfortunately, the archive does not include articles from the period before 1988, and I couldn't look for the word 'gay', as in Hungarian the word 'warm' (*meleg*) is used for this, which would have included many unrelated articles. However, I believe that the large differences between the periods before and after the transition might be relevant for this analysis. The overall number of articles varied between approx. 80000 and 120000, and its increase cannot explain the increase in the number of articles containing the word 'homosexual'.

Even though this cannot be generalized, but several interviewees mentioned that homosexuality, and sometimes the whole topic of sexuality was a taboo also in the family. As one of the respondents put it: *“I have never heard stories or gossips about gays or anything related to this topic in my village, and it wasn’t mentioned anyhow as an existing phenomenon in the world. (...) [Being gay] was never a topic in the family, sexuality didn’t have newsworthiness”* (Albert).

However, according to Judit Takács (*Forthcoming*), as the regime started to move towards milder control, the complete lack of visibility changed during the 1980s. The 1982 presentation of the film *Egyásra nézve* (Another Way), which for the first time in Eastern Europe portrayed a lesbian relationship, meant a breakthrough in this respect. It was also followed by other publications, such as the 1984 book *Furcsa párok* (Strange Couples) (Eröss 1984), based on interviews with gay men, conveying the message that homosexuality is not an illness, but a behavior; and by the 1987 book *Vadnarancsok II. – Homoszexuálisok vallomásai* (Wild Oranges II. – Homosexuals’ Confessions) (Géczi 1987), in which the author claims that the proportion of same-sex relationships has increased, which perception might be the consequence of greater visibility of homosexuals (Takács *Forthcoming*).

The German Democratic Republic

In the GDR homosexuality was equally invisible in the media until the late 1980s. There were no public debates, and almost no publicly available sources, if homosexuality appeared as a topic, it was a rare occasion. One of the interviewees from the GDR described his impression:

There was almost nothing about the topic. There was a newspaper of the ‘Jungenverband’, which had a section about sexuality every week, and there maybe it could happen that once in every year, homosexuality was mentioned. There was also a monthly magazine for young people, the Neue Leben, and there maybe it was also possible to read something, but also once every year. It was only after 1989 that the ‘Jugendradio’ started to broadcast interviews with gays in East Germany. (Paul)

This lack of public discourse also mentioned by Josie McLellan in her paper about gay and lesbian activism in the GDR: “For many, isolation was the greatest challenge: with the exception of a few areas of Berlin, gay bars were few and far between, and homosexuality was all but a taboo in the press” (McLellan 2012: 109). This means that, quite similarly to the case of Hungary, public discourses could not play an important role in individual identity-formation. However, there was an important difference as well: in East Germany, the broadcast of West German televisions was available, providing occasional opportunity to become familiar with the treatment of homosexuality in the neighboring democratic state.

In many cases, homosexuality was a taboo not only in public discourse, but also, possibly as a consequence, in conversations within the families or even in groups of friends. Most of the interviewees had to hide their sexual orientation from their parents, and in some cases the whole issue of sexuality was excluded from the possible topics. *“I didn’t tell it to my parents, but this didn’t appear to be a problem when I was in my early twenties. We simply didn’t talk about anything related to sex.”* (Felix)

Despite the fact that in Germany, especially in Berlin, an exceptionally free and intense gay life existed during the decades before the NSDAP took the power, the interviews show that this earlier period was not seen as a reference point, and it seemed to be completely forgotten. *“We had the feeling that we have to build something completely new, at least I have felt no living memories of earlier periods.”* (Paul)

However, just as in the case of Hungary, the second half of the 1980s proved to be a turning point in this respect, and the change was more radical than in Hungary. Even though the media was still strictly controlled, and the LGBT groups could not communicate freely, topics related to LGBT issues started to be treated with previously unprecedented openness, and “calls for the tolerance and acceptance of lesbians and gays echoed across many sectors of

GDR state and society” (Dennis 2005: 2). According to Dennis among others, there was an academic working group on homosexuality at the Humboldt University, psychological and medical conferences were organized on homosexuality, and Jürgen Lemke’s series of interviews with homosexuals was published (2005). This change became the most obvious at the 1989 release of the film *‘Coming Out’*, the first East German film treating openly homosexuality, which was perceived as a breakthrough by many of the interviewees as well.

In all, on the public level, homosexuality was seen as a taboo both in Hungary and in the GDR until the early 1980s. However, in the last decade of the socialist regimes, visibility increased significantly in both of the countries: in Hungary as the regime became ‘softer’, several books were published and a film was released, while in East Germany the regime started to treat the topic of homosexuality in a more tolerant way, even without a major political turn in other topics. Thus, while in Hungary the change was not specific to the area of LGBT issues, in the GDR the state has made a shift in this specific area, without a general political turn.

3.2. Personal identity formation

The second level of this analysis is the formation of individual identities, which is heavily affected by the norms of the public sphere. Among others, Rich (1980) and Jenkins (2004) emphasizes the interconnectedness of individual identities with social norms, therefore here I focus on the possible effects of the heteronormative public and private discourses on individual identity formation, illustrated by the memories of some respondents. Even if these experiences cannot be generalized, and may not be specific to socialist regimes, they are still presented, as they serve as the basis of collective identities, and provide an insight to the background of more visible or politicized identities.

Hungary

In Hungary many of the interviewees talked about the inability to define themselves as gays in the early periods of their adult life, as this category simply did not exist as a visible alternative to the dominant heterosexual norms.

I had a gay classmate in high school. Of course we didn't know exactly he was gay, but I would rather say that everybody felt that he was somehow different, as he behaved in a feminine way and sang songs of Szűcs Judit (a Hungarian pop singer) in the class. He wasn't bullied because of this, and we didn't define him anyhow, we simply didn't know the category 'gay'. (Daniel)

Even if being gay as a category existed in the minds of a family, it could clearly be defined as a negative possibility: *“we were fighting with one of my high school classmates on the bed at home when my mother opened the door. She at the moment already knew what the situation was, and there was a huge scandal. I was still far from realizing it, and I think she also contributed to the extension of this period of uncertainty.” (Peter)*

This prolonged period of uncertainty characterized the experiences of all the respondents: they did not define themselves as gay for many years after actually realizing they were attracted to men, and often tried to or actually established relationships with women.

When I was 15, (...) I was already thinking of a boy, but it lasted 8 years to accept this. (...) For 8 years I was struggling with myself and I read. I was 23, I have already graduated from the university, when I had my first physical relationship with someone. (Peter)

The length of these periods of uncertainty becomes even clearer when the respondents talk about what they would do differently today: most of them would decide much faster, and look at these periods as a kind of ‘wasted time’. *“If I remember right to these years, it's like thinking of the middle age from the period of enlightenment, it was totally unclear.” (Peter)*

Of course we could argue that these experiences may be common even in societies where public LGBT identities exist, and young people always have difficulties finding their identities. However, in the case of the socialist Hungary, the interviews indicate that the lack

of discourse and of categories left the young people alone trying to find their identities, which complicated the issue much more than a case where existing identity models are already available. *“We had no idea what this was. It was not like now that you google it, and you find six million results. One couldn’t imagine what it is, men with each other.”* (Daniel)

Peter also talked about this feeling of being alone with his problems which he could not discuss with anyone, neither with his parents, nor with any friends.

What I remember is that there were nights when I couldn’t sleep, I just sweated on the pillow and wanted to shout: oh my god, where does this lead, where will I get? At the beginning I was really afraid of myself and of the situation” (...) *“At the time I had no idea about what came with a gay life, I had no relationships, so it was an unclear thing, it only became clearer really slowly.* (Peter)

The German Democratic Republic

Despite the lack of discourse on LGBT issues, some of the interviewees in East Germany seemed to have identified their sexual orientation earlier or with less difficulty than in the case of Hungary, even if they could not imagine their lives as gays, such as Alexander.

I have already discovered my feelings for boys at the age of 13 or 14. I also looked for contact with them, but not so often. It’s known that boys around that age are making experiments, but I also had a girlfriend. When we played football, I always had erotic thoughts, but I didn’t want to be gay. (Alexander)

However, for some of them discovering their sexual orientation still took longer, and the geographic location may have also been an important factor:

I have lived in a city, not in a village like now, this of course wasn’t irrelevant in the life of a gay, a village was completely different than a city. I have started to discover my gay life in 1983; but I have always felt that I was somehow different than the others, it didn’t really go with girls, but I haven’t defined myself as gay, I thought it had to do something with music and my artist friends. (Paul)

Of course, ways of self-identification and the interpretation of the process varies on a personal level. Besides public discourse and the general handling of LGBT issues as a taboo, the immediate environment of individuals mattered a lot, and for some, this was the most important factor. *“It wasn’t specific for the West or the East, but it was my personal thing. My*

colleagues were really tolerant and in fact, I think they realized even before me that I was gay.” (Felix)

In the lack of a supportive environment, however, the influence of the general negative feelings of society about homosexuality could force people to act as heterosexuals and conform to the norms, especially in the case of professions, such as the military, where these norms were more visible and enforced.

I haven't found the right one, but I told myself when I was young: you have to be married by the time you will be 25, the society expects you to do so, and the army also expects you to do so. One day I travelled to another city, where I started to talk to the first woman. A not too nice, but a really talkative woman. After three weeks I married her, so the problem for me was solved, no one could say I was gay. (Alexander)

According to Alexander, this kind of marriage was not rare: *“I was always thinking about boys when I was with my wife. She has also realized this, but she also knew that I was a good party, a good friend, and I liked her very much. But you know today also, there are many fake gay marriages.”* (Alexander) However, it was not a long run solution for him, as finally they divorced, Alexander started to drink and then decided to continue his life without having a cover relationship with women.

Although there is obviously no data on the actual quantity of this kind of cover marriages or relationships, their existence reveals how the implicit, or sometimes even explicit social norms and the lack of a visible alternative could affect the personal choices and life strategies of individuals, even if the legal environment would not punish them formally for coming out.

The difficulty of self-identification depended on the environment, in rural areas it was much harder to cope with differences from the mainstream heterosexual norms, and some occupations, such as the military, made self-identification as gay also more difficult. In the lack of media appearances and public debates, the primary sphere of gay identities, just as in the case of Hungary, remained the private sphere.

3.3. Collective identities

In this chapter I move from individual to collective identities, will analyzing how LGBT people organized their communities, showing that even before the transition a living community existed in both of the countries, partly using public spaces, but still mostly invisible to the greater public.

Hungary

In the lack of public discourse and maybe also because of the homophobic attitudes of the society, even though gays used partly public spaces for meeting, the community remained largely invisible to the greater public. One of the well-known meeting points was a café called “Egyetem presszó”, which operated as a normal café until 9 p.m., when it turned into a secret gay club every night.

Even though “Egyetem presszó” was according to the interviewees well-known in the LGBT community, most of the everyday guests of it or the wider public did not know about this specificity. This secrecy characterized most of the other meeting places as well: LGBT people met each other in house parties, private gatherings in private places and the so-called “Pentecost balls” organized by some members of the community every year.

The secrecy has led to a sort of double identity: elements of the gay identity only appeared in these closed events, while on the streets, no apparent signs of difference in sexual orientation were demonstrated. *“Feminine behavior was really fashionable when we met each other. We talked and gesticulated in a totally different way than in the public. But once we were out of the party, we changed back to normal.”* (Albert)

Even though the meeting points where gays could act differently than in the public were invisible, this was coupled by the more extensive usage of public spaces for occasional “hook-ups”: according to memories cruising at certain points of the city center, such as the

Dunakorzó, Ferenciek tere or Múzeum körút was much more widespread, as well as meeting at the parks. *“You didn’t have to be afraid of any negative reactions, you just walked and made eye-contact. It has changed a lot since”* (Albert). Other important public spots were the spas, such as Gellért, Király and Rudas.

However, the choice of meeting places also reveal differences in collective identities: some places were seen by many as ‘too gay’, as Balint put it: *“The fact that I am gay didn’t disturb me, but the Diófa restaurant was disturbing, I didn’t like it. The pianist announced that this song goes from Pista to Jóska, or the waiter came with a shot telling you that it was sent by that blond man or by that bearded”*.

The German Democratic Republic

Despite the lack of publicity, gays in Berlin could find the way to meet each other already decades before the 1980’s. In the earlier decades, most of the bars frequented by gays were in the center of East Berlin, in the Mitte district, but when the government made a decision that gay pubs were not any more tolerated in the historical center, and started to close these places, the LGBT community needed to look for new meeting points. It was at this time that the most famous places of the last decades of the socialist era emerged.

One of the new places was Café Ecke Schönhauser, previously called Café Peking, which was an ideal place for an afternoon tea, and served as a meeting place for groups of friends. Two other important places were Burgfrieden, a pub which was open from 6 p.m., and Schoppenstube, a bar which was open until early morning and was so popular that long queues could be seen every night in front of its entrance. These three places were also known as the ‘Bermuda Triangle’ of the gay social life (Sonntags-Club 2009). Other places according to the interviewees and (Sonntags-Club 2009) included the Café Prenzlau, where dance events were organized every Wednesday, City Klaus, Café Senefelder, Café Flair, Café Mosaik or

Café Nord. But besides the cafés, some restaurants also were mainly frequented by gays, most importantly Offenbachstuben and Altberliner Bierstuben. The only LGBT disco of the Eastern part of the city was Die Busche, which was in Weißensee, while most of the gay pubs and bars concentrated in the district of Prenzlauer Berg.

Even though the existence of these places was well-known in LGBT circles, they were not officially gay pubs and bars. *“Before the transition there was no real gay place in East Berlin. Officially all of them were normal cafés or pubs, but the majority of the guests were gay.”* (David) But not only pubs and bars, but also other public spaces, such as parks and the streets of Friedrichshain, or public toilets served as meeting points according to the memories of the interviewees.

Gay meeting places in the form of pubs or well-known parks existed in many of the bigger cities of the GDR, but in smaller towns it was more difficult to meet with others.

In Berlin there was no problem in this respect, but it's a big city. Already in Potsdam it was only a coincidence if I met someone: once I accidentally met some gay guys at a lake, and I could talk to them, but there were otherwise no gay places in the town. (Paul)

In all, even though there were semi-public meeting places in both of the countries, these didn't contribute to the formation of a general or more conscious collective identity. Identities remained within the walls of the specific places, often differing from each other from place to place, and were established only on the level of the collective identity of the regular public of a bar or the one of a group of friends, and hence, they also remained depoliticized, at least until the formation of the first organizations in the case of East Germany, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: THE STATE AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The second important element of analysis is the way the personal identities are used for community formation and serve as a basis of collective and political action. In order to be able to have an impact on legislation and the values of society, members and identities of a group need to be visible, just as in the case of LGBT movements in liberal democracies, entering the public sphere is a crucial element (Lind 2013). As the role of the state and political institutions is central in this process even in the case of liberal democracies (Paternotte, Tremblay, and Johnson 2011), it is even more crucial in the case of authoritarian regimes, where the control of the state is much more expanded to every territory of life and social institutions.

In the first part of this chapter I will analyze how, and with what kind of goals the LGBT organizations of Hungary and East Germany were formed, in the second chapter I will look into the responses and general attitude of the state, while in the final part I will briefly discuss the changes after the transition.

4.1. *The birth of a movement?*

Hungary

In Hungary the first institutions already appeared before the transition: the idea of the first organization, Homeros, already emerged at the beginning of the 1980s, while the first gay newspaper was founded during the months of transition, in December 1989. Homeros was officially registered in 1988, with a primary goal of promoting AIDS-prevention. This goal played an important role: according to Hadley Z. Renkin (2007), one of the main reasons of the official registration of Homeros was the fact that its members could persuade the state that its only existing goal was AIDS prevention. Another reason of this relative political tolerance could be the fact that although according to Riszovannij (2001) the first steps of the gay and

lesbian movement were watched by the security forces, they were not considered as oppositional activity. Neither did the members of Homeros formulate claims against the regime, nor was their activity intended as an alternative way of life within the socialist rules - in contrast with the case of East Germany, described among others by Thinius (1994 In: Riszovannij 2001).

According to Zoltan, who had a view on the process of the foundation of Homeros, the idea of starting an LGBT organization emerged at a series of informal gatherings at the beginning of the 1980s. According to him, there was a central figure in the earliest period, who had a view on the LGBT movements in Western Europe, and realized how big the difference was between the life of gays in those countries and in Hungary. The group started to be formed slowly, new people joined and some left, and in 1986 after some years of waiting it was officially registered as the first genuine civil organization, not formed by the state. According to Zoltan, even though the official goal of the organization was AIDS-prevention, at the beginning issues such as civil partnership and the equality of age of consent were also discussed.

Besides the limits imposed by the state, another factor might have also contributed to the depoliticized nature of the organization: because of the authoritarian nature of the state, political action was not a viable means of representing interests and achieving goals, while the relatively good standard of living compared to other socialist countries created a depoliticized atmosphere for a long time, until the last years of the 1980s. As K.M. put it: *“I didn’t think about politics, because no one thought this [the socialism] could ever end”*.

The limitation of gay meeting places to merely semi-public spaces also ended around the time of the transition: in early 1989 the first openly gay bar, Lokál was opened, and it was followed by a long list of other gay places in Budapest. This makes an important difference, as having

own places for entertainment clearly indicates that a group of people shares something common upon which they can define themselves as a group or community.

In the same way the foundation of organizations and media products is also a sign of the transformation of personal identities to community-building. Hence, the registration of the Homeros organization in 1988 and the foundation of the first gay newspaper '*Mások*' in 1989 mark an important step toward the publicity of LGBT issues and also in their way of becoming public issues instead of being locked in private spheres.

The German Democratic Republic

In East Germany, the legal changes of 1968 have opened the way before those, who wanted to break out of solidarity and wanted to act against the taboo nature of LGBT issues. Already in the early 1970's, the idea of a gay organization was formed by two young men, Michael Eggert and Peter Rausch, who lived in East Berlin. They, according to Josie McLellan, have been planning to form some kind of gay organization for years, when they met gay people from West Berlin, who told them that Rosa von Praunheim's film, "*Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation in der er lebt*" ("It is not the homosexual who is pervers, but the society in which he lives") would be on ARD, a West German television next day. Under the influence of the film, the two men finally decided to form Eastern Europe's first gay liberation front, Homosexuelle Interessengemeinschaft Berlin (HIB) (McLellan 2012).



Figure 3: Michael Eggert, Charlotte von Mahlsdorf and Peter Rausch (Source: Private archive of Peter Rausch)

The HIB was largely influenced by Western models: *“We knew about what was happening in West from people who came to East Berlin, and we wanted things to change here as well.”*

(Peter Rausch) The main goal according to Peter Rausch was to be able to live a full life as gays, to meet each other and to form a community. They organized meetings in the private museum of Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, a transvestite who offered them her rooms, they celebrated Christmas together, and organized parties in Die Busche.

However, the HIB also had political goals: they wanted to become more visible. The same year in which the organization was formed, the Tenth World Festival Games of Youth and Students in East Berlin were organized, for which huge crowds gathered in the city both from the GDR and from abroad. An Australian member of the British delegation, Peter Tatchell, also member of the British Gay Liberation Front, wrote a manifesto and managed to smuggle

thousands of it to the place of the games. They got to know each other with the members of HIB, and at the closing ceremony the first small LGBT demonstration of the GDR occurred. Tatchell carried a placard with the words “Homosexual liberation. Revolutionary homosexuals support socialism”, but then was attacked by his team members, who found the message too provocative. At the end of the fight, the placard was torn, and Tatchell continued to carry only the upper line, “Homosexual liberation”, while members of the HIB were distributing pamphlets to the crowd (McLellan 2012).

The HIB did not exist for a long time: when in 1978 a member organized a lesbian conference and meeting at Charlotte von Mahlsdorf’s house, where they invited many women from across the country, the state intervened and was banned from holding meetings at her museum. This according to Peter Rausch practically meant the end of the organization, as in the lack of regular meeting place, they could not continue the operation as earlier.

The organization sent several letters to the *Volkskammer* (People’s Chamber), the legislature of the GDR, requesting some space for their programs. These letters also highlight the framing of their claims within the boundaries of the socialist state (See Appendix 2). As they argue, “(...) *it is also about the equally rightful participation in social life in socialism, not only in work, but also in the free time. This is the logical consequence of the abolition of (...) Paragraph 175, which was made with the humanistic purpose of eliminating a hundred-years-old criminalization of a naturally justified variant of sexual life. This also follows from the tradition of the communist movement (...)*” (Appendix 2: 1).

However, they did not get anything, and Peter Rausch also recalls what at the end they were invited to the *Ministerrat* (Council of Ministers), where an official told them that “homosexuality in the GDR (was) not promoted”.



Figure 4: Members of HIB at a May 1st March (Source: Private archive of Peter Rausch)

During the next decade, in the 1980s, two main groups emerged: one was the Sonntags Club, where Peter Rausch also participated. The organization was started as a regular meeting in a Youth Club, and it became the meeting place of a new generation: *“We were talking about what we can do, what we are allowed to do, but they have said: if we cannot live as we want, then we go away from the GDR. And they have done it, by the mid-1980s most of them was gone”* (Peter Rausch). Sonntags Club operated in the Prenzlauer Berg district, where most of the pubs and bars frequented by gays could be found, and it was open to the whole LGBT community. Even though the state did not support the organization, by 1989 they were able to appear at a state-organized event: *“In 1989 there was the Nationales Jugendfestival (National Youth Festival), and that was the first time the Sonntags Club could participate at the program with an information desk.”* (Paul)

The other groups were related to the church: in several towns of the GDR, and also in Berlin, LGBT discussion groups were formed, using rooms provided by the evangelic church (Holy 2001). Most of these circles was more politicized than the Sonntags Club, and had a close relationship with the civil rights movement also related to the church (Soukup and Brühl 1990). According to Dennis the movements of the 1980s, in some respects similarly to the HIB, have used a rhetoric which could be integrated to the socialist ideology, putting an emphasis on the collective struggle against fascism (2005).

According to Holy, one of the key differences between the East and West German LGBT movements can be found here: while in West Germany besides the integrationist movements more radical emancipatory movements also existed, in East Germany no such division could exist, the only viable route was the goal of integration instead of the aim of changing social norms more profoundly (2001).

In all, both in Hungary and the GDR the first gay organizations were already formed before the transition, in East Germany as early as the early 1970's, shortly after the legal changes decriminalizing same-sex relationships, and the first small LGBT protest also took place in the same year, in 1973. In the formation of this movement and in shaping the goals of its members, the influence of the Western movements of the 1960's seems to be more significant than in the case of Hungary: East Germans could watch West German television and they could also meet West Germans in the gay places of East Berlin, which led to a mixture of Western thoughts about changes in norms and the support – or at least no opposition - of the socialist regime at the same time. Entering the public sphere was an important goal of the HIB in the 1970's, but they have imagined the changes within the socialist society, similarly to most of the later church circles, which have put an emphasis on antifascism, and contrary to the Western states, where integrationist and emancipatory movements coexisted, in the GDR integration remained the only main goal.

4.2. Reactions and attitude of the state

The third important aspect of analysis, emphasized also by feminist theories and LGBT rights movements is the protection of privacy of LGBT people (Ackelsberg and Shanley 1996) and the reactions to the movement formation. This may also implicate public issues like rights through the privacy in selection of marriage partner, but mostly refers to the question to which limit the state can interfere with individuals personal lives.

As feminist movements criticized the liberal states for the withdrawal from the private spheres, the situation in the socialist states was fundamentally different: the state wanted to control citizens as much as possible, and hence it has intruded to their private lives in many ways.

Hungary

In Hungary, all of the respondents stated that they were sure about being registered by the police in some form before the transition, and Renkin (2007) also mentions the existence of the so-called 'Pink list'. Zoltan also talked about the experiences of his friend coming from a Western European state: when he wanted to register that he came to live at the address of Zoltan: at the immigration office they have actually warned him not to move to that address, because a gay man lives there.

In the lack of data on discrimination by the police, in this question I can only rely on anecdotes by the interviewees, which may of course not be representative. However, in everyday life LGBT people according to the respondents gay people in general did not have much trouble with the police. This may be related to the invisibility of LGBT people and also to the non-militant and politically neutral behavior of the one existing LGBT organization.

Somehow I didn't feel myself badly in the 80's, I didn't feel myself oppressed, nor excluded, nor observed. It's possible that I also had a file at the secret service, but I am not interested in it, I didn't even look for it. (Peter)

I have one concrete experience with the police: we were going home from Lokál after a party, when two policemen stopped us on Nagykörút (Grand Boulevard). They asked us to show them the content of our bags, which were full of women's clothes. When they saw them they only asked whether we came from this bar and laughed. They didn't really care about the whole issue and they let us go. It was a funny situation. (Daniel)

According to Daniel, the newly opened Lokál, where he worked that time, was not discriminated by the police either: even though there were police controls at some occasions, these were not more frequent than in the case of other pubs or bars, nor did they show any other kind of difference compared to usual police controls.

Another field of personal contact with the state apparatus was the military service, which was compulsory for every man in that period. The military service was a form of socialization, where men had to conform to the norms set by the apparatus and they were controlled in many ways. These were also fields of establishing contacts with a large range of different people from the same age, coming from different social backgrounds and different geographic regions. One of the interviewees related his only negative personal experience with the state to the years of the military service:

My only negative experience is related to the military. A letter of mine was discovered from which it became obvious that I was gay. My commander invited me to his room, and asked: 'Are you gay?' But that was it, I didn't have to really answer and it didn't have any formal consequences, nor did it cause any problems with my superiors or with my fellows. (Albert)

The German Democratic Republic

The German Democratic Republic, along with West Germany, inherited the infamous anti-gay Paragraph 175 of the Penal Code, which was used against LGBT people during the Nazi era. Even though the communist gay activist Rudolf Klimmer fought for the cancellation of paragraph, this did not lead to immediate results: the East German state firstly returned to the paragraph's earlier version in 1950, and only later ceased to enforce it in 1957. In 1968 the paragraph was restricted to minors, which practically meant the decriminalization of

homosexuality. The paragraph was completely abolished only in 1988 in East Germany (Herrn 1999).

With these changes the socialist state acted faster than West Germany: the latter according to (Herrn 1999) only limited to 'qualified cases' the applicability of Paragraph 175 in 1989, one year after the GDR limited its applicability to minors, and only abolished it completely in 1994. This actually meant that at the time of the reunification of Germany, East German citizens found themselves once again in a state, where Paragraph 175 was still in the penal code.

However, these changes were not the results of some kind of pro-LGBT policy. As Peter Rausch put it: *"The East German state wanted to be seen as progressive as possible in the international arena, that was the main reason of the modifications, otherwise nothing changed in the life of LGBT people."* Others also had the impression that the government did not want to change its attitude towards homosexuality: *"There were no debates about that, it wasn't a topic in the news, it was just a kind of race with West Germany."* (Paul)

This double level of politics included the implicit message that even though the state acts against legal differences, homosexuality is not an important question, nor is it strongly present in the country. As seen earlier at the analysis of the (lack of) public discourse, the state did not intervene in individual affairs, but it limited associations that could possibly formulate political messages or could in any sense create the impression that something was not going well in the country, even on the level of social norms.

Even though the party ideology supported the equality of women and the discourse about sexuality was relatively free, homosexuality was excluded from the topics with a strong heteronormative assumption.

I participated at an event of the Party, organized to mobilize people against 'counter-revolutionary sentiments' in the late 1980's, and there the officer of the party also talked about a gay meeting organized that time, but he said, we comrades naturally don't go there. That was the first time I heard anyone to officially talk about gays. (Paul)

Despite the formal equality of gays and the lack of legal discrimination, at some institutions discrimination was still possible to experience. *"I had a friend at the university, who also wanted to be a teacher, and when they heard somewhere that he was meeting gays in some cafés of Berlin, he couldn't pass any exams anymore. Of course no one could prove that this happened because he was gay, but it was sure."* (Paul)

Of course this kind of discrimination could depend on the institution, but it surely existed at the military according to Alexander, for whom this was one of the main reasons to marry a woman even though he already realized earlier that he was gay. Homosexuality was not a topic, but one according to him could know that it is out of the accepted categories on both formal and informal levels: it was clear that he would have been discharged if he had revealed that he was gay, and his friends also asked frequently questions about his relationships, which was a strong pressure to marry a woman as quickly as possible. Also for Paul, the discrimination at his university was an important factor that prevented him from coming out:

I don't know if this kind of discrimination existed at other universities as well, but I have experienced it in Potsdam. I was scared because of it and as a result I didn't come out during the university years. I have only talked openly about my homosexuality after the transition, after 1989. Otherwise, people in the GDR could live a normal life, but as a gay, it was more difficult (Paul)

Also despite the laws granting equality, according to the interviewees mentioned police raids against gays: *"I personally didn't see anything like that, but I heard from many friends that in Freidrichshain there were police raids against gays"* (David) However, there was no mention of regular raids in bars, or of visibly more police control than in other bars. The only major state action related to the places frequented by gays happened around the late 1950's, when the gay pubs of the central Mitte district of East Berlin were closed one after the other, but the

result of this wave was merely that another district, Prenzlauer Berg became the center of gay life.

The state has also acted in a more invisible way: the state security (*Ministerium für Staatssicherheit* or *Stasi*) had its observers in the organizations starting with HIB, and according to the interviewees it was apparent that many of the members of the church circles were also Stasi agents (Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung 2008).

In all, even though the German Democratic Republic decriminalized homosexuality even before West Germany, this did not mean any kind of change in the political or social environment. There were no debates about the changes, and the motivations of the legal modifications could be more related to the aim of creating a progressive international image than to pro-LGBT policies. In institutions discrimination could be experienced and state officials also represented heteronormative views. Even though the police was not visibly discriminating LGBT individuals, police raids in the streets of Freidrichshain, a gay cruising area, did occur, which along with the earlier discussed negative attitude toward LGBT organizations until the second half of the 1980s, may be a sign of the state's heteronormative attitude, as well as the fear from losing control of a subculture.

4.3. Transition to democracy

Transition to democracy has created a completely new environment on the level of the state in the two analyzed countries, however, as the main focus of this thesis is the period before the transition, I will only briefly discuss some major differences between the two periods..

Hungary

In Hungary, after the transition besides the previously invisible semi-public spaces several new places were opened, which can be found and identified by everyone as LGBT places. Several new organizations besides Homeros were also found, which have partly started to fight for more rights for LGBT people. One of the major issues of the 1990s was the demand of equal age of consent in same-sex relationships as in heterosexual relationships. After this, the focus moved to the demand of some kind of civil partnership or marriage and finally civil partnership was legalized in 2008. In the fight for these rights not only gay groups but also other civic organizations for the protection of rights participated.

However, the society is still considered as homophobic in European comparison (Takács et al. 2012). According to Hadley Z. Renkin, the ambiguity created by this continued to exist even after the transition, through a changing political climate: even though the LGBT community has successfully fought for several legal changes, including registered partnership and equal age of consent for sexual acts, LGBT people continue to be stigmatized, which results in low numbers of people actually living with their right to register their partnership (Renkin 2007: 23).

It is hard to tell whether legal changes were the effects of the work of these organizations and movements, or simply of the influence of international examples. In this context, the issue became more and more politicized, but this is only in a small degree a result of the activity of

LGBT organizations. Apart from the yearly organization of a Pride march in Budapest and legal lobbying their activity was not visible to the greater public.

Hence, the LGBT issues became politicized in two ways: from one direction, in 2007, when extreme rightists protested almost permanently in the streets of Budapest, the Pride march was seen by them as related to the leftist government's ideology. The march, which was never attacked before, was targeted that year by protesters, which had great media publicity, situating once again LGBT people in opposition to the rightist protesters. From the other direction, the fact that a leftist government took actions to legalize same-sex partnerships also associated LGBT people more closely with the left, bringing in an explicit political dimension.

On the level of identities, the respondents emphasized the contrast with the young people today, describing them as much more self-confident and able to identify themselves as gays much earlier than the respondents themselves. Identities have hence changed a lot since the transition according to one of the respondents:

Today it's much more relaxed, younger generations take their identity much more naturally. They walk in the streets without any kind of fear in all kinds of extreme clothes, extreme hair styles. Today young people care much less about what others think about this. (Daniel)

However, in this respect we have to take into account the fact that it is older people talking about their perceptions of identities of younger people, which may be misleading. Daniel, who works in a bar may only meet young people who are already willing to frequent an openly gay bar. What makes his claim despite this fact credible is that he is talking about different generations of young people - he compares his experiences from previous years when he worked in the same bar with his experiences from these days.

The German Democratic Republic

The end of the socialist era brought with itself a completely different change in East Germany than in Hungary: the state after a short period ceased to exist in its previous form, and its territory became a part of the Federal Republic of Germany. This has also meant the adaptation of the West German legal system, and thus, on the level of political institutions and legal environment, East Germany has become a liberal democracy. However, in some aspects this was a step backwards for the LGBT community: as previously mentioned, the paragraph 175 still existed in the federal republic, and was only erased a couple of years later (Herrn 1999).

On the level of organizations, an organization formed in the GDR, *Lesben- und Schwulenverband in Deutschland* (Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany, LSVD) started to operate on the national level (Holy 2001), while local organizations, such as the Sonntags Club, continued to work on a local basis. Almost all of the national parties have LGBT organizations, but also workers' unions or research centers focusing on LGBT studies make a considerable difference compared to the previous decades of the German Democratic Republic. The amount of public work and literature has also expanded considerably, making LGBT issues much more visible.

However, despite the existence of new nation-wide organizations in the life of East German territories, major differences in collective identities remained after the transition: while the primary goal of Eastern groups was cooperation, community building and the organization of 'free time activities', most of the Western organizations fought visibly against the heteronormative nature of the social establishment, hence bringing new aspects besides the aim of integration as equal members of the existing social structure (Holy 2001).

With the collapse of the Berlin wall, the city was once again reunited, and free move between the two parts became possible. This has also meant that the gay scenes of the two parts were no more divided, and East Berliners could access the more numerous bars and pubs of the Western part. Also, the opening of 'officially' gay pubs in the Eastern part became possible. However, many of the old places still exist, creating a feeling of continuity, even if in the opening of new bars the former East-West division does not play a visible role any more.

CONCLUSIONS

In this thesis I analyzed the factors in which the relationship of gay people with the state in socialist Hungary and the German Democratic Republic differed from an ideal typical model of identity movement construction in liberal democracies. After having presented the related concepts of the social construction of gender and sexuality, the problematized distinction between the private and the public sphere, and finally, the concepts related to identity and LGBT movements in the first chapter, I presented the methodology of the thesis. Because of the absence of sufficient literature on the period before the transition, I built this research partly on semi-structure interviews conducted in the two countries, using the same topic guide. Besides the thematic analysis of the interviews based on the key background concepts, I also used the existing literature to be able to apply the concepts of analysis in a more generalizable way.

I divided the analysis to two main parts to be able to analyze all the elements of an ideal typical Western type of identity movement. Firstly, I analyzed how the public discourse affects individual and collective identities, showing that in socialist states public discourse about LGBT issues was minimal because of the strict state control over the media, which resulted in the lack of visible LGBT identity categories, making individual and collective identity-formation more difficult. Secondly, I analyzed movement formation and its relationship with the state.

The individual and collective identities seemed to be sufficiently strong to serve as a basis for the foundation of organizations in both of the observed countries. However, on this level significant differences emerge between the two cases: while in Hungary the first LGBT organization started to be planned only during the 1980s before it was officially registered in 1988, in the GDR the first LGBT organization was already formed in 1973, shortly after the

decriminalization of homosexuality in 1968. Also, the West German state became more tolerant toward LGBT identities and movements by the second half of the 1980s, when these issues gained much greater visibility than in previous periods.

Three factors could contribute to the differences between the two cases: firstly, East Germany was more exposed to international influences, through West German television channels and personal contacts especially in Berlin, and the aim of creating a more progressive image of the state could also contribute to the results. Secondly, the movements followed an integrationist, partly depoliticize strategy, having the goal of gaining more visibility within the socialist system. Thirdly, the movement had an ally in the 1980s, the church, through which it became related to the civil rights movement, which might have increase its impact.

After the transition, we could observe a relatively fast shift towards the Western model in both of the countries: the media coverage of LGBT issues grew significantly, LGBT media appeared, new organizations and meeting places – now in the form of visibly gay bars and pubs - were created. LGBT issues also became politicized – in this sense we can observe a general trend toward the earlier model of liberal democracies, even though this is in many aspects overwritten by social homophobia, especially in the case of Hungary.

There are of course limitations of these results: the analysis of merely two cases cannot provide a systematic model of differences between liberal democracies and authoritarian states, therefore the results are limited to the two countries analyzed. Also, the lack of sources in the case of Hungary and the low number of interviews which could be conducted during the research period make generalizations about identity-formation and interpretations difficult and often problematic.

However, I believe that the analysis of LGBT movements in authoritarian states can lead to a better understanding of power structures related to sexuality and heteronormativity, as well as

about their manipulation by authoritarian regimes. A more thorough understanding of which factors contribute to the success of a social movement under an oppressive regime could provide strategies to influence these outcomes, which is a crucial question also from the perspective of political science and of transition theories.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Topic Guide

1. Starting questions

What are your general memories about the 1980's?

2. Everyday life

How did you realize you were gay/lesbian? How did it feel? What kind of effects did it have on your everyday life? How did it change former habits? Where did you go, what did you do, and who did you meet because of being gay/lesbian?

3. Social relations

Whom did you tell about being gay/lesbian? How did they react? Why didn't you tell it to others? What could have been the possible reactions?

4. Identity

What did you feel about the relationship between social norms/expectations and being gay/lesbian? Did you identify yourself as a part of a minority? If yes, was this against something, or for something? Did you discuss LGBT issues with your gay/lesbian friends, or did you hear about such issues anywhere?

5. Political identity

Did you ever (plan to) act visibly? Have you talked about being gay/lesbian in front of a larger, not LGBT crowd? Did you feel that sexual orientation might be a political or a social issue? Have you ever heard about gays in the media during the 1980s? Did you have any confrontation with the police? What do you feel, how did being gay/lesbian go with socialism? What was your opinion about the socialist system? Do you think the LGBT movement could be considered a sort of opposition, and if yes, did it have any ties with other oppositional movements?

6. Finishing question

What do you think, what are the most important changes since the transition?

Appendix 2: Letter of the HIB to the Volkskammer

Source: Private Archive of Peter Rausch

E i n s c h r e i b e n !

Peter Rausch
102 B e r l i n
Rathausstraße 13

Berlin, den 9.6.1979

Volkskammer
der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik
Abt. Ausschüsse-Eingaben
Sekretariat
102 B e r l i n
Marx-Engels-Platz

Ihr Zeichen: Le/OL

Sozialistische Freizeitgestaltung einer Minderheit

Sehr geehrte Abgeordnete !

In Folge unseres Schreibens vom 23.2.1979 erhielten wir eine Einladung zu einer Aussprache beim Ministerium für Gesundheitswesen, NA Medizinische Betreuung, zum Gen. MR Dr. Barleben für den 23.3.79. In diesem Gespräch, das in einer offenen Atmosphäre stattfand, wurde Einigung dahingehend erzielt, daß das MfG die Angelegenheit, soweit sie in ihre Kompetenz fällt, prüfen wird und der zuständigen bearbeitenden Institution die Stellungnahme des MfG zukommen läßt.

Bisher ist weder vom MfG noch vom Ministerium des Innern eine befriedigende Antwort noch ein Zwischenbescheid erfolgt, wie es sich aus dem Eingabengesetz vom 19.6.1975 nach § 7, Absatz 2 und 3 ergeben müßte.

Wir sind mit dieser Situation sehr unzufrieden und möchten nochmals den Grund unserer Eingabe konkretisieren.

Wie in unserem Schreiben vom 23.2.79 schon dargelegt, geht es uns um die gleichberechtigte Teilnahme am gesellschaftlichen Leben im Sozialismus nicht nur in der Arbeit, sondern auch im Freizeitbereich. Dies ist die logische Folge der Aufhebung der Strafbestimmung für homosexuelle Handlungen Erwachsener (§ 175 des alten StGB), die vom Gesetzgeber in der humanistischen Absicht der Abschaffung einer Jahrhunderte alten Kriminalisierung einer natürlich begründeten Variante des Sexuallebens bestimmt

wurde. Dies resultiert auch aus der Tradition der kommunistischen Bewegung, die schon unter den Bedingungen des bürgerlichen Klassensystems in Petitionen an den Verfassungsausschuß der Weimarer Republik gemeinsam mit progressiven Vertretern der SPD und Links-Liberalen für die Beseitigung der Diskriminierung dieser Minderheit eintrat. Wir sind der Meinung, daß die Zeit gekommen ist, auch mit den Resten eines unbegründeten Vorurteils in weiten Kreisen der Bevölkerung gegenüber dieser Minderheit durch Aufklärung und öffentliche Gleichstellung entgegenzuwirken.

Das erfordert unter anderem die Schaffung von Möglichkeiten, die es gleichgeschlechtlich empfindenden Bürgern erlauben, sich auf saubere Art und Weise kennenzulernen, Geselligkeit zu pflegen und kulturvoll ihre Freizeit nach den Normen der sozialistischen Moral und Ethik zu gestalten. Die derzeitigen Kontaktorte eindeutigen Charakters - wie Toiletten und zweifelhafte Abbeipen - begründen bei einem Teil der Bevölkerung Unverständnis und Abscheu sowie ungerechtfertigte Ausschreitungen gegenüber homosexuellen Bürgern.

Diese Situation hat viele gleichgeschlechtlich Empfindende, die im Arbeitsleben in hervorragenden Positionen als sozialistische Werktätige ihr Bestes geben und damit zur Stärkung des Sozialismus beitragen, verunsichert und sich negativ auf ihr Selbstwertgefühl ausgewirkt.

Wir möchten uns nicht wegen fehlender anderer Kontaktmöglichkeiten und des gesellschaftlichen Tabus auf diese Orte abdrängen lassen, sondern unser natürliches Menschenrecht auf **L i e b e** und **P a r t n e r s c h a f t** auf würdige Art und Weise realisieren. Deshalb sei noch einmal betont, daß wir uns weder als potentielle Kriminelle, noch als sozial Gefährdete, noch als Betreuungsfälle des Gesundheitswesens fühlen (obwohl es einige inat. Bile Persönlichkeiten auf Grund von unzumutbaren Bedrängnissen wurden), sondern als gesunde Bürger dieses Staates mit gleichen Pflichten und Rechten und mit der gleichen Liebes- und Pflegefähigkeit wie alle anderen Menschen, nur mit dem Unterschied, daß der Partner unseres Liebeslebens ein Mensch gleichen Geschlechts ist. (Siehe auch Ausführungen von Dr. Schnabl in Zeitschriften und Rundfunk-sendungen !)

Daher ist unser Anliegen ein soziales bzw. kulturelles Problem und kein medizinisches oder juristisches. Es wäre daher vor der endgültigen Beantwortung unserer Eingabe zu prüfen, wie es auch § 2, Abs. 3 des Eingabengesetzes vorsieht,

- welche gesellschaftlichen Organisationen (z.B., Nationale Front, Kulturbund der DDR) und welche staatlichen Stellen, angefangen

beim Ministerium für Kultur, Abt. Klubs und Kulturhäuser,
Ministerium für Handel und Versorgung, Amt für Jugendfragen beim
Ministerrat der DDR bis zu den örtlichen Räten bei einer Grundsatz-
entscheidung über die Nutzung von Kultureinrichtungen und Freizeit-
zentren für Veranstaltungen für homosexuelle Bürger mitwirken
sollten

- welche gesellschaftlichen Träger diese Einrichtungen finden könnten,
ähnlich den "Klubs der Unverheirateten", den Klubs der Mittzwanziger,
dener Jugendklubs sowie den ehrenamtlichen Klubs bzw. wie vorhandene
Einrichtungen teilweise diesen Bürgern zugänglich gemacht werden
könnten, um ihr spezifisches Anliegen, eine kulturvolle Freizeit-
gestaltung mit Gleichartigen, zu erreichen.

Dies würde eine Vervollständigung der bisher gültigen gesetzlichen
Bestimmungen wie die AG des MFK, Nr.2, über die Aufgaben und Arbeits-
weise der Kreiskulturhäuser vom 2.4.71, die AG des MFK über die
Planung und Finanzierung staatlicher Kulturhäuser vom 1.7.72 sowie
die AG des MFK über die rechtliche Stellung und die Finanzierung
ehrenamtlich geleiteter Jugendklubs vom 1.7.75 erfordern.

Es wäre auch zu prüfen

- welche gastronomischen Einrichtungen durch spezielle Tage bzw.
Vermietungen diesen Bürgern die Möglichkeit zu Tanz und Geselligkeit
geben könnten unter Berücksichtigung der Veranstaltungsmeldungen
bei der VV
- wie die DEWAG-Werbung in den Zeitungen: Magazin, Wochenpost u.a.
durch eindeutiger Kontaktanzeigen die Herstellung echter Partner-
beziehungen erleichtern könnte
- wie durch publikumswirksame Aufklärung in den Massenmedien, wie es
in Anfängen schon geschieht, das landläufige Vorurteil gegenüber
gleichgeschlechtlich empfindenden Bürgern systematisch abgebaut
werden könnte

Zur Klärung der hier aufgeführten Punkte wäre es vielleicht ratsam,
eine Arbeitstabelle auf zentraler Ebene einzuberufen, auf der Vertreter
oben genannter staatlicher Dienststellen, gesellschaftlicher Organi-
sationen, Wissenschaftler und Betroffene, das heißt gleichgeschlecht-
lich empfindende Bürger, über die zu treffenden Maßnahmen beraten
würden.

Bei der Realisierung der hier gemachten Vorschläge würden wir nach
Kräften selbst mitwirken wollen, z. B. bei der Schaffung und Verwaltung
ehrenamtlicher Klubs, Mitarbeit in Klubs, gesellschaftlichen
Organisationen und Mitarbeit bei Volksvertretungen und staatlichen
Organen.

Dies waren einige Gedanken und Anregungen, die unsere Eingabe nochmals erläutern und Ihnen unsere Situation verständlich machen sollen, damit wir auf eine baldige konstruktive Beantwortung unserer Eingabe hoffen können.

Mit sozialistischem Gruß!

gez.
Peter Rausch

gez.
Siegfried Spremberg

gez.
Thomas Kaminski

gez.
P. Sonnenburg

gez.
Michael Eggert

Appendix 3: Founders' Agreement of the HIB

Source: Private Archive of Peter Rausch

Entwurf

//////////

Vertrag

der Gemeinschaft von Bürgern Homosexuelle Interessengemeinschaft Berlin (HIB)

Dieser Vertrag wird abgeschlossen zwischen folgenden Bürgern: siehe Anlage

§1

Aufgaben und Ziele

Die Gemeinschaft hat das Ziel, die Lebensbedingungen ihrer Mitglieder durch die Schaffung gemeinschaftlicher Freizeiteinrichtungen zu verbessern und darüberhinaus das Ansehen der homosexuellen Bürger zu heben.

§2

Inhalt des Vertrages

Die Gemeinschaft beschließt zur Erreichung dieses Zieles mit ihrer Bildung durch gemeinschaftliche Aufwendungen und Arbeitsleistungen die Schaffung von Einrichtungen zur gemeinschaftlichen Nutzung.

§3

Pflichten der Mitglieder

(1) Die Mitglieder verpflichten sich, die notwendigen Leistungen zur Erreichung des Vertragszwecks zu erbringen, vertrauensvoll zusammenzuarbeiten und die gemeinschaftlichen Interessen zu wahren.

(2) Die Geldleistungen werden von den Mitgliedern zu gleichen Teilen getragen.

Die Geldleistungen bestehen aus einmaligen Aufwendungen für die Schaffung bzw. die Einrichtung des Objektes und aus ständigen Aufwendungen für die Unterhaltung in Form eines Mitgliedsbeitrags.

Die Höhe der Anteile für jedes Mitglied wird durch die Vollversammlung festgelegt.

(3) Arbeitsleistungen dienen insbesondere der baulichen und malermäßigen Instandsetzung und Instandhaltung des Objektes und werden von allen Mitgliedern gemeinsam erbracht.

(4) In Ausnahmefällen können Arbeitsleistungen für Geldleistungen erbracht werden und umgekehrt.

(5) Für Mitglieder mit geringem Einkommen, zum Beispiel für Studenten, können niedrigere Anteile festgelegt werden.

§4

Rechte der Mitglieder

Jedes Mitglied ist berechtigt, die geschaffenen Einrichtungen einzeln und in Gemeinschaft zu nutzen.

§5

Eigentumsverhältnisse

(1) Die von den Vertragspartnern eingezahlten Beträge werden gemeinschaftliche Eigentum. Die durch gemeinschaftliche Arbeit geschaffenen Sachen werden gemeinschaftliches Eigentum.

(2) Das gemeinschaftliche Eigentum ist Gesamteigentum. Die Mitglieder können darüber nur gemeinschaftlich verfügen.

§6

Erfüllung von Verpflichtungen

(1) Die Mitglieder erfüllen die Verpflichtungen, die sich aus der gemeinschaftlichen Tätigkeit ergeben, als Gesamtschuldner. Forderungen und andere Rechte stehen ihnen als Gesamtgläubiger zu.

(2) Reicht das gemeinschaftliche Eigentum zur Erfüllung bestehender Verpflichtungen nicht aus, verpflichten sich die Mitglieder, zu gleichen Teilen den Fehlbetrag zu erstatten.

§7

Vertretung der Gemeinschaft

Die Vertretung der Gemeinschaft erfolgt durch Beauftragte. Die Wahl der Beauftragten erfolgt durch die Vollversammlung.

§8

Ausscheiden von Mitgliedern

(1) Das Ausscheiden aus der Gemeinschaft erfolgt durch Kündigung mit einer Frist von.....

(2) Der ausgeschiedene Vertragspartner hat Anspruch auf Auszahlung seines Anteils am gemeinschaftlichen Eigentum.

§9

Beendigung der Gemeinschaft

(1) Die Gemeinschaft endet durch Aufhebung des Vertrages.

(2) Im Falle der Aufhebung des Vertrages wird das gemeinschaftliche Eigentum wertmäßig zu gleichen Teilen an die Mitglieder verteilt.

§10

Schlußbestimmung

Dieser Vertrag wird auf der Grundlage der §§ 266 bis 273 des Zivilgesetzbuches der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik vom 19. Juli 1975 abgeschlossen.

Dieser Vertrag wird dem zuständigen staatlichen Organ zur Registrierung vorgelegt.

Der Vertrag tritt mit seiner Registrierung in Kraft.

Berlin, den 15. Januar 1976

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