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Antisemitism and Homophobia in Polish Liberal Discourses: The Cultural Logic of Comparison and a Proposal for Intersectionality

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Abstract

This chapter examines the discursive mechanism of drawing comparisons between antisemitism and homophobia in Polish (Catholic) culture that were popular among the left and liberal opinion makers in the mid/late 2000s. It questions the problematic nature of the analogies made between homophobia and antisemitism as corollaries of national identity. The intention is not to present homophobia in Poland as a form of revitalized, modern-day antisemitism, nor to deny possibilities of thinking about the two in relation to each other; instead, the chapter ponders the implications to be accounted for when using analogies and comparisons. As an alternative, an intersectional approach is suggested as perhaps better-tailored an approach in making sense of the complex entanglements and ever-changing social processes of national (dis)identifications.

Keywords

antisemitism, homophobia, intersectionality, liberalism, nationalism, Poland.

1. Introduction

Sometime in the mid-2000s something curious happened in Poland: for a short period of time—maybe just for a few years—homosexuals became Jews. During almost all LGBT marches and gatherings across Polish cities, ghastly chanting reverberated in the air, all too often with deadly slogans like ‘Dykes to labor camps!’, ‘Gas the Gays!’, or ‘We’ll do with you, what Hitler did with Jews!’. Who do you become, when someone throws at you symbolic—and so all the more deadly—stones of genocide? How do you go about the hate of necropolitical tinctures? Who do you look up to, in the desperate need for signs of humanity that has just been denied to you?

All these questions, as dramatic and grand as they are, crossed my mind and the minds of many of my friends, when we walked through the streets of Warszawa, Kraków, Poznań... Although the Polish LGBT movement has been developing since the late 1980s (Gruszczynska 2009; Szulc 2017), it was not until the early 2000s that homosexuality became a topic of nation-wide discussion and dispute, and the issue of ‘gay rights’ featured in the discourses of different political and social actors. These debates were partially fueled by the annual Equality Parades and strong homophobic counter-protests organized by neo-fascist groups like All Polish Youth. As the xenophobic and ultra-nationalist hate discourse could not be more evident, it is perhaps not surprising that ‘Gays are the new Jews’ and ‘Homophobia is the twenty-first-century antisemitism’ emerged as common refrains among Polish liberal and leftist academics, intellectuals and public figures, civic organizations and activists (feminist and LGBTQ, among others), and ‘liberal’ media such as *Gazeta Wyborcza*, *Polityka*, or *Krytyka Polityczna*.¹ Such interpretations of the hate speech directed against LGBT communities assemble equivalence between Polish homophobia in the present and a historical continuum of antisemitism.

The purpose of this article is to ponder the consequences of the (liberal) discursive ‘politics of comparison and analogy’ between religiously connotated race/ethnicity, gender/sexuality, and nationality/national identity in Poland. It is not the aim of this article to prove or reject the argument—be it from an empirical or a political/normative perspective—that modern-day homophobic discourses in Poland rely on antisemitism. The goal, instead, is to look at those ‘liberal’ discursive instances—which have already established and which have used such an analogy—and to critically examine the consequences of such ‘liberal politics of comparison and analogy’. Hence in this case-study-based article, the textual analysis is used to examine ‘liberal’ discourse texts (rather than the ‘original’ homophobic and antisemitic texts) as primary source material. The methodological approach of the case study analysis is particularly useful as it links micro

¹ All hereby referred to as ‘liberal discourses’ (or ‘liberal’ for short) in inverted commas to denote a specific reference to these actors and instances, as opposite to the general, unmarked adjective of liberal.

and macro aspects of social, political, economic (all in all: discursive) realities; and as a 'cross-level inference' between 'empirical' and 'theoretical' levels of analysis (Gerring 2007). With this formulation, one is capable of understanding 'the big picture' by focusing on its key elements and factors. To exemplify my points, I have selected the texts of Czarnecki (2007), Graff (2008), Ostolski (2005; 2007), Środa (2014) and Warkocki (2004; 2013) as the instances of 'liberal discourses' spanning across media, LGBT and feminist NGOs and informal groups, and other intelligentsia milieus, as the most representative of the dynamics described and analyzed.

On the following pages I will first approach the use of analogy and comparison in historical contexts of feminist and gay liberation movements, and introduce a critical theoretical toolkit of scrutiny. I will then move to analyzing my own examples and offer a critique of such drawn 'liberal' analogies. Finally, I will consider intersectionality as an alternative that might be a better tool to engage with the nuances and complexities of the 'post-communist' transformations of (Polish) nationality, religious (Catholic) underpinnings of culture, and their impact on discursive framings of homophobia and antisemitism.

2. Analogies: Parallels and Bridges, Strategies and Problems

In everyday life, we use comparisons, metaphors, metonyms, parallels, and other linguistic and cognitive tools to make sense of the social and political outer-surrounding realities, as well as of the emotional and affective inner-dimensions of life. Indeed, we do this so often that in most cases we do not deliberate or question the very mechanism of comparison, what it actually performs when putting subjects and objects together and vis-à-vis each other. Comparison is also an established and popular method of identifying social meanings and processes, from which certain theoretical and political conclusions can be drawn (cf. Burgess 2000; Zepetnek 2002). Perhaps it was due to this 'naturalness' of comparative thinking that the analogy between homophobia and antisemitism in Poland used in 'liberal discourses' was quickly adopted, and not much questioned. Such analogy making was not, however, only confined to Poland and also observed in e.g. Hungary (Renkin 2009) or Serbia (Jovanović 2018). Of course, the strong political prevalence of a dominant Church (be it Catholic or Orthodox) may seemingly act as a catalyst facilitating such comparisons due to well documented historical antisemitism, and clear aversion to homosexuality within the ranks of Church officials. However, as I will show later in the chapter, Church institutions and religiousness should not be taken for granted in the contexts discussed here.

In the domain of social activism, drawing comparisons between minorities, where one is perceived to be 'more advanced' or 'successful' in their emancipation within the majority society, was and is a popular strategy and legitimization mechanism for social

movements. For example, this was the case of the feminist and the lesbian and gay movements (particularly well documented in the 1970s and 1980s in the USA), which at certain stages of their development drew analogies between themselves and the black liberation movement (Blasius and Phelan 1997; Tong 1989). In these comparisons, 'women' and 'homosexuals' presented themselves as fighting for social emancipation of the same kind that African-Americans had fought for in the Civil Rights and Black Liberation movements. They did not do this by allying with the said movements primarily, but by identifying the same target of, and audience for, their protest—the dominant, white, patriarchal society—and demanding change ('a seat at the table'), a crucial moment in what is now conceptualized as 'identity politics'.

Although arguably successful, such analogies did not remain without a critique.

Numerous activists and intellectuals showed the internal racism and classism of such analogies built between 'women', 'homosexuals' and (as) 'Blacks'. It was shown that such analogies create exclusions, for instance, by implying that 'women' are only 'white' or 'middle class', or that 'Blacks' are only 'heterosexual', among other contradictions (Collins 2000; Collins and Bilge 2016). The uneasy relationship between race, ethnicity, gender and sexuality (and other identity factors) is nowadays one of the core issues for feminist and LGBT politics and activism, spanning from intersectionality to queer theorizing and mobilizations (Haritaworn, Kuntsman, and Posocco 2014).

3. Polish 'Liberal' Framing of the Analogy

Several authors have noticed the tension when comparing sexuality to race and ethnicity, but have also identified the tautness within the very mechanism of comparison. Among these authors, Grillo and Wildman (1997) are particularly inspiring, as they criticize the analogy between racism and sexism. They present three major constraints of the analogy tool, which render it unproductive or, indeed, harmful at times: (1) the downplaying of the importance of the second/compared problem; (2) the illusion that one (particular) problem-mechanism explains how 'all similar' problem-mechanisms work; and (3) the solidification of distinct entities that fix the impermeable 'difference' into the supposed similarity of each compared component (Grillo and Wildman 1997, 44–50). In the following paragraphs I will analyze several examples using Grillo and Wildman's work as an analytical tool to think further and beyond the 'homophobia as antisemitism' analogy in the Polish 'liberal discourses' of the mid-2000s.

3.1 Downplaying

The first mechanism is seen in the works of Warkocki (2004; cf. 2013), Czarnecki (Czarnecki 2007) and Kowalski (2009). Warkocki is an academic and recognized commentator on issues related to gender, sexuality and Polish literary and artistic

culture. When analyzing the reactions to the 'Let Them See Us' campaign in 2003 and the March of Tolerance in 2004, he related the social position occupied by the homosexual people to that of the Jews in the Second Polish Republic (pre-1939). Throughout his article, also Czarnecki—an activist working with Campaign Against Homophobia, one of the largest and best-known Polish LGBT organizations—constantly compares, analogizes, and equalizes how homosexual people in Poland are positioned according to—and in the exact position of—the antisemitic framings of the Jewish people:

In conclusion, we can observe that the anti-Semitism of years past has not yet been eradicated completely from Poland. However, its mechanisms have been used to stigmatize and discriminate against queers as queer visibility becomes more prevalent in Poland. The rise in nationalism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries served to construct the modern identities of both Jews and queers. The process involved an inherent exclusion of both social groups as they embodied the characteristics that were eschewed by those who delineated the boundaries of the nation. (...)

The historical continuum of nationalism's tendency to exclude that which is not desired has used Jews in the past as its primary recipients for discrimination. Presently queers are serving as tangible targets for similar purposes in Poland. (Czarnecki 2007, 341–42)

Both authors call homophobia in Poland the 'twenty-first century antisemitism' and suggest that it is a xenophobic blueprint on which Polish nationhood is founded. It should be noted, however, that they seem to be aware of possible troubles of such framings. As Warkocki writes,

I do want to stress that it is not about bidding 'who's got it worst' [homosexual or Jewish people] but about the functioning of the public discourse in Poland, and clearly emerging 'Jewish' status of homosexual [people]. It is worth noticing that the public reactions to the existence of homosexuals in the Third Polish Republic begin to resemble those [reactions] from the 1930s to Jews. (Warkocki 2004, 169)²

However, unwillingly but inevitably these authors are prone to the discursive mechanism that orders the hierarchy of importance. This is because discourse has a life of its own: it, so to say, creates meanings in all the spectrum of symbolic (human) communication; beyond the dry words, it overflows the intentions of the speaker and creates meanings 'in excess' of itself (Smith 1994; Kulpa 2019). Since antisemitism is only used in these texts as

² Polish to English translations here and elsewhere are my own.

a keyword, which everyone supposedly understands and which does not need further consideration, it is overlooked; its possible importance for understanding the xenophobic mechanisms of nation-building is disregarded, for antisemitism becomes 'obvious' in such treatment. It is so, because the analogy remains with the binary paradigm, which discursively frames the first part as more important than the second. Homophobia in Poland thus becomes a more pressing and somewhat more urgent issue than antisemitism. A quote below further evidences this.

The second difference between homophobia and antisemitism (...) is that homophobia is more real, antisemitism on the other hand, more symbolic. The former has a bearing on the existing people, the latter impacts the symbolic creation in the form of millions of nonexistent traitor "Jews". When confronted face to face by a Jew, a true anti-Semite often loses ground and becomes surprisingly polite. (Kowalski 2009, 28)

In this commentary, published in the "Report on the Homophobic Hate Speech in Poland" by the Campaign Against Homophobia, Kowalski reasserts homophobia as real and material, and antisemitism as 'merely' symbolic and thus inconsequential. Therefore, he delegates it as less pressing and of lesser standing or emergency, as if symbolic violence did not have 'material and real' harmful effects. (Needless to say, this is not true.) Although this is not an explicit intent, the negative discursive framing is inevitably lurking and creating a hierarchical order in which homophobia is more important than antisemitism.

3.2 'False friends'

The second problematic issue of making analogies identified by Grillo & Wildman (1997) can be traced through two publications by Ostolski (2005, 2007), who is an academic, an activist, former co-leader of the Green Party, and a public commentator at *Krytyka Polityczna*. Here the problem with the analogy and comparison (between homophobia and antisemitism) is to suggest that the experience of one type of oppression (antisemitism) gives an account and insight into the other form of oppression (homophobia). Ostolski analyses present-day ultra-right magazines and newspapers for their 'anti-gay discourse' and similar outlets from the interbellum period for their 'antisemitic discourse'. He concludes,

I believe that the analogy between the antisemitic and anti-gay discourse in contemporary Poland is especially sound. Antisemitism is not only a blueprint for the anti-gay discourse, but also its matrix. The structures of antisemitism and homophobia are not [merely] alike—it is one and the same structure. (Ostolski 2007, 160)

His use of the analogy creates a problematic temporal twist in his analysis. The analysis compares homophobic discourse from the 2000s with antisemitic discourse from the 1930s (both in niche, ultra-right publications). It seems important to ask why antisemitic discourse from the 1930s instead of the 2000s is useful: does it somehow tell the 'truth' about homophobia (rather than about antisemitism) in Poland in the 2000s? His answer to that question is not entirely satisfying. He argues that, although the content of antisemitic discourse remains the same, its structure has changed between the 1930s and the 2000s. The line of argument seems to imply that 1930s antisemitism evolved into 2000s homophobia. To use Ostolski's own words, "The structure of the national habitus demands enemies. Enemies are found. Homophobia is antisemitism: continued under new circumstances with the same methods." (Ostolski 2005, online) But if so, where does 2000s' antisemitism come from? Also the question regarding 1930s' homophobic discourses remains unanswered: did they not exist at all, since they are not mentioned or discussed? Was Poland, as a young nation-state in which authoritarian and fascist sympathies were not alien to the political elites and general public (Auer 2004), free from homophobia back in the 1930s, while it has been well documented that many other European countries were clearly not (Mosse 1985)?

It seems to me that comparing early-twenty-first-century homophobia with early-twentieth-century antisemitism instead of with early-twentieth-century homophobia is creating more problems and troubling questions than that it offers insights and answers. These questions are important, when one decides on the comparative approach in explaining contemporary phenomena through the historical lenses of another issue. Not attuning to each issue separately, within a corresponding historical frame, potentially creates a problematic mismatch of content. The experiences of antisemitism cannot explain homophobia; and so the analogy used in the analyzed 'liberal discourses' helps to maintain a 'false consciousness' and a wrong sense of understanding of the social problem, while glossing over the necessary disparities between the different experiences and forms of oppression. By foreclosing the recognition of difference and using antisemitism as a keyword to unlock the understanding of all forms of xenophobia and hatred, the gesture also erases the particularity of homophobic abuse and/or the sexual identification. It becomes a 'reincarnation' of another type of phobia (like homophobia becomes a reincarnation of antisemitism in the discourse discussed by Ostolski). Satirical cartoonist, Marek Raczkowski, aptly tapped into this 'liberal discourse' in his drawings for Poland's main liberal newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*. In one of his cartoons, which shows a group of anonymous people protesting with a banner that reads "Homosexualizm nas bzydzi" (Homosexuality disgusts us), he plays on the homophony of the words 'brzydzi' (disgusts) and 'Żydzi' (Jews) (Raczkowski n.d.).

In another cartoon, this time using homonyms, another nameless crowd is marching under the slogan “Gej (=) maca (z) dzieci”. Without the equation mark and the ‘z’ it means “Gays grope children”, but with the equation mark and the letter z, the slogan means “Gays are the azyme made of children” (Raczkowski n.d.). This is a clear reference to the traditional Passover bread that in some antisemitic folk imaginations was said to be made from the blood of Christian children.

But of course, this is closely intertwined with the first problem discussed above, that of erasing the identity of the second compared component. Both homophobia and antisemitism then are in danger of becoming keys to the doors of the Polish society that open nothing but a barren, self-referencing discourse.

3.3 Fixation

The third possible negative consequence of the analogy is disconnecting rather than adjoining the two forms of xenophobia and oppression. This supports fixing their identities as stable and distinctive, separate units, while clouding the view of the common roots. Although this may seem to go against the argument above, such is not the case if a new framework of understanding homophobia, antisemitism, and (religious-ethnic) nationhood is in place—I return to this below. To the contrary of what Graff (2008) has argued, I will show that common origins for both social problems are rooted in the transformations of Polish national identity and, consequently, the re-definitions of its ‘others’ after 1989 (the end of state socialism) and 2004 (the ‘Eastern enlargement’ of the EU).

Graff is a well-known feminist academic, activist, and popular media commentator on gender issues in Poland. While deploying the analogy, she is more cautious than the writers discussed so far. She acknowledges that the analogy may be too general to be an effective political strategy, and she sees some tensions arising from comparing two minority identities (Graff 2008, 136). Yet, it still seems important for her that such a comparison was mobilized by the ‘liberal discourses’ in Poland. She concludes her argument as follows:

I appreciate the [LGBT] alliance with the liberal wing of the old democratic opposition. But there is something I am anxious about in this situation: our marches and protests are more about Polish nationalism than about sexual minority rights. Gaining in popularity, the [LGBT] movement got entrapped in arguments over Polish democracy and history. It is a very important issue, for Polish democracy needs healing. But gays and lesbians have other things to do (Graff 2008, 122).

As I have argued in the section 3.1 and 3.2, it is worth to be cautious about analogies; for when focusing on similarities, too easily the difference (and thus the 'identity' of the issue) may be erased and forgotten. However, the contradictory danger is possible too, and some underlying wider roots of the two problems may be overlooked and ignored, as seem to be the case in the Graff's conclusions. I disagree with the type of 'liberal discourse' represented by Graff that seems to suggest that LGBT activism's 'rank and file' subset of priorities be different from those of the political left in focusing on Polish nationality and history; that it should be developing in parallel, but focused on a different context. As I have argued elsewhere (Kulpa 2019), it is possible and necessary to see the backlash against sexual minorities in Poland as a consequence of the Polish past, its present, and possibly carried into an imagined future. It used to be a story of a struggle for state sovereignty and cultural liberty, leading to the 1989 epiphany of 'freedom' and the 2004 'return to Europe'. But the question of what constitutes Polish national (and political) identity still remains unanswered. For now, many writers point to it as a ground zero of many social problems, most certainly of the conflict over values ('old' and communitarian vs. 'new' and liberal) that directly influence the shape of Polish democracy (Krzyżanowski 2009) and thus the situation of sexual and other minorities. Homophobia and antisemitism in Poland are problems on their own, but they are also symptoms of another, perhaps more clandestine and steadfast process of national identity in-making. Not a metaphor, not a symbol, but a libel of nationalism.

This reverberates in yet another example of the 'liberal analogy' deployed by Magdalena Środa, another prominent feminist intellectual, activist and academic, and at some point, a member of the Cabinet. In an article for the popular weekly *Wprost*, Środa refers to anti-'gender ideology' discourses (which are largely defined by homophobia) spawning the Catholic and populist political right and some Church officials across Poland as well as across Europe and in other parts of the world (Graff and Korolczuk 2017; Kuhar and Paternotte 2017). She writes,

When Smoleńsk³ burnt off (...) the 'gender ideology' emerged. Now not so much politicians as the hierarchs and priests went in the offensive mode to 'divide and rule' the society. Some institution (Opus Dei?), some headquarters, some mastermind alike that of Goebbel's have invented 'gender ideology'—which, just like the 'Jewish conspiracy' in fascist Germany is said to be destroying the nation. Because it [gender ideology] arguably is widespread, disgusting and insidious, and wants to annihilate white Polish race—to 'degender' it. In the footsteps of the self-

³ 'Smoleńsk' refers to the Polish government's airplane catastrophe over the city of Smoleńsk (RUS), in which late president Kaczyński and numerous other officials died. I have analyzed the 'queer mourning' among LGBT communities in the aftermath of this event in another article (Kulpa 2014).

righteous hierarchs [of the Catholic Church] some politicians flocked; for they have understood that they can piggyback political capital on that self-righteous fire. (Środa 2014)

Środa points out that 'gender ideology' (in the populist biopolitics of the conservative government) is a political-national matter. By introducing references to the Nazi German leadership, all the familiar tropes of Polish martyrology are in place. While homophobia and antisemitism surly are elements of a warfare deployed by populist xenophobes, the 'homophobia as modern antisemitism' analogy is a weapon of the belligerent 'liberal' offensive. 'Conservatives' suffer from 'gender ideology' and wage a war against it; this is read by the 'liberals' as homophobic illiberalism based on religious fascism. This 'liberal suffering' is then minted into discourse comparing homophobia to antisemitism (as much as Polish elites to Nazi ones). Each side creates parallels for their own purposes of trying to win over the meaning of what is—or should be—the identity of a 'modern Poland'. Located in either 'traditional' communitarianism (of Christian values and ethno-religious phantasmagoric purity) or in 'modern' individualist neoliberalism, Jews and homosexuals, antisemitism and homophobia, are at the heart of contemporary Polish *imaginarium bestiarum*.

4. Movements and Intersections

From the discussion so far, there is no doubt that the history and historicity of antisemitic discourses in Poland—from the pre-1939 rise of fascism through the Holocaust and the 1968 communist purges up to the present day—cannot be ignored in thinking about Polish national identity and Catholic rooting. However, the use and deployment of the antisemitism analogy in the context of homophobia seems to treat antisemitism as a fixed concept that travels through time while remaining unaffected by time. This may be due to the unnamed and perhaps taken-for-granted idea of what Polish national identity is; that antisemitism is understood to be an unchangeable core, structural element. The analogy between homophobia and antisemitism solidifies them both: they become fixed and innate, 'timeless' components of Polish nationhood. Both are treated as 'problematic qualities' rather than as 'everyday practices' that reconstitute Polish cultural identity. Antisemitism emerges as somehow fixed in Polish history as an orientation point of what 'being a Pole' meant and means.⁴

⁴ Much has been written about antisemitism in Poland—its psychological, cultural, religious, and other facets. While I recognize it would be beneficial to shed more historical light on these facets here, the issues are too complex to only pay lip-service in a couple of paragraphs. The excellent entry point for informed and insightful overviews are works of, among others, Glowacka and Zylinska (2007), Michlic (2006), and Zubrzycki (2016).

But this undercuts the possibility of responding better to the dangers of homophobia and antisemitism, as their changing facets are concealed. If we start thinking about nationality not in terms of identity but in terms of on-going, contextual practices of identifying and *disidentifying*, we may find more answers to the valance of xenophobia (Skey 2011). For example, such a shift away from 'identity' to '*disidentifications*' has enabled me to better understand the related issue of why some lesbian and gay people, on days of national commemoration of the Smoleńsk catastrophe, *identify* with the national/ist discourse that seems pervaded with homophobia (Kulpa 2014). Also drawing on the work of Laclau and Mouffe and their conceptualization that stresses processes (and 'subject positions') over fixed 'identity', Dorota Hall (2015a, 2015b, 2017) offers excellent analyses of the media discursive framings of religion and homosexuality in Poland that escape essentializing narratives that tend to oversimplify the assorted complexities addressed here. This approach then seems better tailored a response to the dynamic and flexible (yet no less problematic) relationship between contemporary discourses of religiously and politically informed homophobia, antisemitism, and nation/alism. This may help with not offering easy solutions like the liberal 'blame-it-all-on-Church', while recognizing the inescapable confluence of the Catholic Church's institutional politics with/on the political institutions in Poland.

Homophobia and antisemitism rely on concepts of identity—racial, ethnic, religious, gendered, sexual, or otherwise. Identity serves as a proxy to the experience of how one *is* in the world. 'Identities' are molded, arguably, of bodies and their experiences, cast as 'subjectivities'. These could be thought of as encapsulated locations and situations in which bodies are and engage with one another (Segal 2008). In the discussed case, it was suggested that '1989' and '2004' are symbolic (but not less real) moments of the renewal and negation of the (old formation of) Polish national identity, which entrusted itself in the fight and struggle for independence (Auer 2004). Therefore, the post-1989 'epiphany of freedom' and the post-2004 'return to Europe' symbolize not only the fulfillment of the century-old 'Polish dream', but also need to be seen as critical points requesting a re-definition of Polish nationhood, asking for new foundations fit for the new geo-political and cultural situation. Liberty and Europeanization unbolted ambiguous and manifold socio-political, cultural and economic processes, often referred to as 'post-communist transformation'. I argue that it is in this context of transformations that we need to think about both antisemitism and homophobia as 'master tools' of counter-ideologies, be they populist (using xenophobia and minority scapegoating) or liberal (using analogy to warn against the perceived and/or real totalitarianism of the populists).

Part of this transformation is finding a new reference point, which at least for now is partially invested in the homosexual community, and an imagined abject homosexual other (Kulpa 2019). Historically, it was often (although not exclusively) the Jewish

communities in Poland which suffered from these processes. In this sense, talking about homophobia in the context of antisemitism in Poland is justified, as both social groups are framed as 'others' in relation to which the national self—futilely—tries to realize itself. Hence it is important to think of them in relation to each other, although not comparable.

4.1 Intersectionality

In thinking of that movement of 'twinning' (Jakobsen 2003) rather than comparing, re-joining and counter-positioning, in considering how the nationhood is constantly re-done in its *dis/engagements* with its others, it may be useful to consider the concept of intersectionality (e.g. Collins and Bilge 2016; Stella 2010; Taylor, Hines, and Casey 2011). This concept is a productive tool to conceptualize the spawning of homophobic discourse in Poland in the mid-2000s. Intersectionality seeks to address the multiplicity of inequalities that one person may experience in a more fluid and interwoven manner. It focuses on complexity rather than predominance, and it is not simply an additive exercise of piling up subject positions.

When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other. Intersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves. (Collins and Bilge 2016, 13)

As any methodological tool, it should not be used uncritically, and indeed, much strength of intersectional approaches derives from its constant self-questioning and negotiation (Taylor, Hines, and Casey 2011). In Polish academic and activist contexts, intersectionality is somewhat a novel conceptualization—although not necessarily a 'novel practice'. Yet it is gaining more traction in recent years. Especially feminist scholars-activists start appreciating the productive capacities of this approach, as exemplified by the works of e.g. Ewa Majewska, Ewa Charkiewicz, or Ewa Korolczuk. They start questioning the uniform category of 'womanhood' dominating feminist and popular discourses, by considering the experiences and needs of female migrant workers from Ukraine, or by looking at divergent needs of women of different ages, with diverse senses of 'belonging', or on different geographical locations. These and other scholars also do an important job by introducing 'new perspectives' (e.g. post-colonial theories) to help in rebooting somewhat stalled debates about the 'post-communist condition'. However, thinking about sexuality together with other subject positions in that intersectional ethos is yet to have its moment—to which this article hopes to contribute to.

Since intersectional thinking considers multiple forms of inequality as interlocked catalysts for one another, it may be a more suitable way of thinking about compound

problems, rather than employing analogies. Intersectional perspectives demonstrate subject positions to be temporal practices of relating and dis-engaging and thus enable a more nuanced and multifarious understanding of homophobia *and* antisemitism *and* nationhood, rather than one *or* the other (the either/or-distinction that binary comparisons inadvertently set in place). Intersectionality enables us to better understand the relations between the existing homophobic and antisemitic nationalist discourses, but also why liberals are keen on creating the analogy between the two.

4.2 Thinking through inter-sections of sexuality and racism in Poland

Rather than asking if one is like the other, attention could be given to questions of how, when, who and where, to a constellation of actions and opinions that are duly performed time and time again. Understood performatively, these practices *re/create* and uphold the impression of an inherent 'Polish national identity' which is framed as incommensurate with homosexuality and Jewishness, and, therefore, they retroactively *re/produce* homophobia and antisemitism as 'natural' and 'innate' 'Polish' xenophobic responses.

An alternative analytical axis could be introduced if we consider gender as another 'identity' vector along sexuality and ethnicity/religion in nationalist discourses. To avoid the earlier showcased shortcomings of binary juxtapositions, liberal advocates of the analogy between homophobia and antisemitism could broaden up their understandings of contemporary Polish, national/ist discourses with the analysis of patriarchal gender stereotypes. Considering gender as another factor (rather than 'third', for intersectionality is not about quantifiable multiplications) is equally important for the reification of national/ist discourses. One can observe not dual but polistructural matrix of references, sustaining national/ist discourses of otherness and exclusion.

For example, nationalist attention to active/passive signification of sex roles, leading to a rejection of homosexual bodies as 'failed men' or 'failed women' is a striking reminder of the nationalist denouncement of 'Jewish masculinity' as soft, 'feminine', and 'unmanly' (Boyarin 1997). But we ought not to contend here on finding the analogy. Feminist and gender studies literature of intersectionality clearly shows that such contentedness erases the experiences of women, who are being culturally objectified, arbitrarily assigned social values which are then traded in socio-political games 'between men'. Here femininity is constantly re-inscribed as a lesser form, reinforcing 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005), and it is vital to also consider how such debates about homophobia and antisemitism to not only affect 'homosexuals' and 'Jews', but also 'women'. (And at the same time considering that none of these three groups can ever be distinctly separated). Intersectional thinking clearly exposes the misogyny that is at play in comparative thinking of homophobia and antisemitism, and strengthens the ability to

provide a 'thick(er) description' of the analyzed problems, by exposing another matrix of exclusion (based on gender in this case).

Another example of more productive, intersectional thinking comes over the nationalistic discourses of 'proper bodies' and their reproductive capacities that mutate to at least three different, yet intrinsic forms. The first is a renouncement of homosexual bodies for their supposedly 'reproductive incapacity' and rejection of e.g. same-sex adoption rights; the second is fearful condemnation of 'racial pollution/racial death' and e.g. prohibition of 'interracial marriages'; the third is denying women's rights to decide upon their bodies and e.g. enforcing draconian anti-abortion laws. In order to get a 'thicker description' of the biopolitics of nationalism, one needs to look beyond possible analogies of two aspects (homophobia as antisemitism) of national/ist or religious discourses (in Poland, or elsewhere); one needs to look at intersections of manifold factors (gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, religion, education, among possible others), and at the mechanisms in which each enables and channels the others. Then one is able to acknowledge and account for temporal and performative dimensions of national/ist discourses; and acknowledge changing and not fixed structural-discursive alignments that deploy various strategies ('homophobia', 'antisemitism', 'misogyny', etc.) in different contexts. Rather than suggesting the scaling importance of compared problems as happens when the analogy is deployed (alleviated attention to the first, while the second is subsumed as 'auxiliary', passively awaiting its mobilization), intersectional perspectives register and account for the temporarily shifting, flexible and mutating reverberations of 'more than two' factors exemplifying contemporary national/ist politics in Poland.

The third example of how intersectionality is helpful to understand and engage with livelihoods, forced positions, and sometimes tearing-apart allegiances can be found in considering religious homosexual people struggles in their everyday navigation of religious and sexual subject positions. Dorota Hall's work on Christian LGBTs in Poland (2015a, 2015b, 2017), and other authors on diverse other national-religious contexts (among others: Sremac and Ganzevoort 2015) have shown multiple exclusions non-heterosexual religious people face. Comparative strategies and analogy-making only reinforces and reinscribes the supposed inconceivability of being only 'either', but not 'and': homosexual, religious, Polish, Jewish, Christian, secular. The intersectional approach, however, generates more meaning than binary comparison-making. It also helps to avoid multiple exclusions and hierarchies of 'identity importance' to which analogy-comparisons are prone. Instead, it helps to account for complex nuances of personal *dis*identifications that go beyond the constraining topology of fixed identities.

With a more intersectional approach one can also learn more about the possible motivations behind the 'liberal' exploitation of the analogy *per se*, in connection to such subject positions as class, status, and geographical location. If we ask for the basic

demographic description of the 'liberal' milieu using the analogy, and those implicitly charged in this analogy with perpetrating the homophobic (and antisemitic) discourses, interesting class-related observations emerge. It is not surprising that the former are described (and perceive themselves) as higher educated, middle- and upper-class, secular, metropolitan, modern, pro-European, and the latter as lower educated, working-class and farmers, religious (Catholic), rural, traditional, nationalistic (Domański 2002). Keeping the above 'class' description in mind along, one could ask what cultural, economic, and aspirational interests may lay behind the 'liberal' comparison of homophobia to antisemitism? How may liberal-metropolitan self-perception of secular respectability—and, I would add, modern-day economy of 'rights culture'—be entangled with socio-economic processes of 'emerging self-consciousness' and 'self-creation' of the 'middle class' in Poland (Domański 2009)? Inspired by the intersectional approach, it is possible to notice how economic positionality (class) is projected onto spatial imaginary (metropolitan vs. rural), and how these in turn are further translated into temporal markers (modern vs. traditional), feeding back onto religious/ethnic categories (secular vs. religious). In summary, by intersecting various axes of social and individual positionalities, we could tangibly observe that the deployment of 'homophobia is the twenty-first century antisemitism' analogy in the Polish 'liberal discourses' analyzed in this chapter may also, among other possibilities, bear marks of wider socio-cultural and economic 'post-communist transformations'. It may exemplify a neoliberal formation of 'class' and especially of the 'middle class' (on which neoliberalism relies as a socio-economic and cultural ideology) in its struggle to auto-define in the new, post-1989 and post-2004, Poland. And perhaps, if we take the lesson and warning from the homonationalism debates, the use of the analogy may also be symptomatic of that post-2004, pan-European drive to inhabit 'gay rights' discourses and policies to self-narrate as progressive and advanced (but at the cost of increased racism and Islamophobia in particular) (El-Tayeb 2011). Of course that rights-based drive of the EU politics is an effect of (neo)liberal capitalism and its dominant mentality of the middle-class as the 'golden' center-point of reference. The intersectional articulation seems more useful than analogy in understanding the strategies of equivalence and difference (Laclau and Mouffe 2001) that sustain a chain of (supposed) semblance, which nonetheless works against equality of each element separately. Such considerations show in my opinion that the 'liberal' investment into analogy is a manifestation of the ongoing remodeling of the Polish national identity under neoliberal capitalism.

In summary, the intersectional approach helps to grasp the dynamic of inner-outer group relations (in their local, regional, national, international, global spectrum), by attuning to the multi-factorial aspects of objectification and inclusion/exclusion within religiously-underpinned nationhood. These relations are weaved from (among other) attitudes that

allow and deploy homophobia and antisemitism as strategic liberal discourses in the 'culture wars' over the shape and the content of 'Polishness' after 1989 and 2004. Should we attain to the social prejudices and discourses of homophobia and antisemitism, and how they affect the concrete bodies of 'others' marked by e.g. gender, class, religion, geographical location, or education, an intersectional analysis rather than analogy enables a willful playing out the tensions, contradictions, and fulfilling elements in order to gain ever more 'thick description' of the case in hand, rather than relying on the problematic analytical or political strategy of comparison. Intersectionality and those who approach social reality from this standpoint, whether activists, academics, or anyone else, also cross the disciplines and domains of activity. Consequently, I hope to add to this slowly growing momentum by suggesting new angles and layers of considerations.

5. Conclusion

In the closing paragraphs I would like to stress again that the aim of this chapter was not to dispute the findings of the analyzed texts (which, in their own given frame, seem logical and interesting) and judge on the accuracy of the comparison of homophobia to antisemitism in the Polish liberal discourse. Applying a case study approach to the 'liberal discourses' already using the comparative strategy, my focus was on the *mechanism of analogy*, and on the possible shortcomings of such 'politics of comparison' of homophobia and antisemitism with a reference to the (Polish) nation/hood and its Catholic cultural underpinnings.

There is a danger of downgrading the second problem to a 'keyword' that becomes empty of meaning, thus the very problems it denotes (antisemitism) becomes somehow devalued in comparison with the 'prime' one (homophobia). There is a danger of erasing the uniqueness and distinctiveness of each of them. But on the other hand, fixing the two as discrete, encapsulating them as distinct may cloud the sight of a common cause from which they grow. I have pointed to the need of looking at everyday practices that sustain impressions of (national, sexual, racial) subjectivity, as a site where it may be profitable to begin the explorations of the post-1989 and post-2004 reimagining of Polish nationality, historical *in situ* where homophobia and antisemitism find a fertile ground for constant re-establishing and re-defining of themselves. As the presented analysis entrusts more into the movement, practice, performance, and doing (*disidentifications*), rather than in place and position (identity), further alternatives to the comparative thinking about homophobia and antisemitism may come from within the feminist-inspired intersectional approaches to the sexual and ethnic-religious oppression that minorities face.

The line of argument that I followed throughout this chapter was that the liberal discourses in Poland that retrieve the analogy too easily settle down on the contempt that

'homophobia is the twenty-first-century's antisemitism' and do not attune in-depth to the complexity of the problems. I tentatively suggested that in order to understand the intensification of political homophobia in Poland in the early and mid-2000s, it is important to see it not only as a hindrance of its own (which it certainly is), but also as a symptom of a more fundamental problem with national identity—that is, a setback with the two founding tropes of Polish nationhood: 'epiphany of liberty' after the collapse of state socialism in 1989, and a problem with this newly 'regained' freedom after the 'return to Europe' and 2004 enlargement of the European Union.

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