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Dangerous liaisons: Neoliberal tropes of the 'normal' and 'middle-class respectability' in the post-socialist LG(BT) activism

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Abstract: This chapter explores the emerging, post-1989 logics of neoliberalisation of gender and sexuality activism in Central-Eastern Europe (CEE). By looking at a case study from the early 2000s LG(BT) activism in Poland (the impactful "Niech Nas Zobaczą" / "Let Them See Us" campaign), my argument is that this action illustrates perfidious presence of national(ist) and heteronormative narratives in LG(BT) activism manifesting itself in the quest for the 'ordinary' and 'normal' depiction of the LG(BT) communities. I use Mosse's (1985) articulation of 'respectability' as a critical measure of distinction (and distancing) in the turbulent times of socio-economic re-stratification in post-industrial societies. This helps to argue that LG(BT) activism that embraces neoliberalisation measures of middle-class 'individualism and successfulness,' and enshrines them with 'gender normalcy,' is counterproductive for the inclusivity of LG(BT) communities and broader visons of 'liveable queer living.' **Keywords:** LGBT activism, normal, neoliberalization, Poland and Central Eastern Europe, respectability, liveable living.

Introduction – Framing the context

The "Niech Nas Zobacza" / "Let Them See Us" (2003) campaign was organised by the Campaign Against Homophobia (CAH) and photographed by Karolina Breguła (as of November 25, 2021, four posters were still available on artist's artist webpage at https://karolinabregula.com/portfolio/let_them_see_us/). It was the major intervention into public and national(ist) discourses around same-sex relationships and place and status of lesbian and gay people in Poland. In addition to looking at the photo-documentation, I have also used a range of textual sources from the campaign website, leaflets, and published interviews with activists in popular newspapers and magazines. The chosen case study approach, rooted in social and cultural methodologies, uses the dynamics of micro-level selection not to claim representativeness or generalizability of research findings, but to indulge the intricate complexities of social dynamics at the basic, grounded, level of sociality frameworks (Pickering, 2008; Woodside, 2010). In attaining to these processes through textual and visual analysis (Lehtonen, 2000; Rose, 2001), the chapter is theoretically grounded in discourse studies (Scollo, 2011), which is a particularly well suited methodology for studying social transformations in CEE, as Galasińska and Krzyżanowski (2009) convincingly show in their book. This chapter completes the triad of studies dedicated to sexual politics in Poland and CEE in the early 2000s (Kulpa, 2014a, 2020), offering the analyses of the historical conjunctures as insightful groundings towards the better understanding of socio-cultural institutions and processes of nowadays. Following Jóhannesson (2010: 252–53) and his discussion of 'historical discourse analysis,' I am interested in emerging and forming patterns and principles that lend legitimisation and assemble frames that are (pre)conditioning what is (im)possible (in general, and in the present). On the following pages I will first focus on analysing the notion of 'normal' and then of the heteronormative gender order as constructed in/of the campaign. Following on, I give attention to the notion of 'respectability' as neoliberalizing process. In the final sections I reflect on the possibilities of reading the campaign 'otherwise,' concluding the chapter with the summarising remarques.

The quest for 'normal'

Let me begin with a quotation from the campaign's website:

> Authenticity was important for us - we deliberately wanted true homosexuals, and real couples. (…) All the photographs are in one style: people are shown on the backdrop of winter's urban scenery; couples hold hands and look into the camera's lenses. Colours are toned and quiet. Photographed people are likeable. In the photographer's concept of Karolina Bregula, all photographs are alike, even monotonous - to make the viewer who sees all 30 pictures get bored, and to make them think that they pass hundreds of such people in the street. [Everything is done to make them think that]

> lesbians and gays are not sensational. If lesbian and gay people look so normal and ordinary, they are as normal as the viewer themselves. (http://niechnaszobacza.queers.pl/ accessed July 18, 2011)

Another quotation from one of the organisers:

> "Our campaign presents delicate photos, without kissing and nudity. Just couples holding hands. Nothing outrageous. They [gay and lesbian people] are normal people, not some stereotypical sissy queens." (wyborcza.pl, 2003a)

And finally, a fragment from the influential weekly magazine *Polityka*:

> Why did they agree to be photographed? - A sense of duty - says Jacek, Arek's partner. - To be truthful - says Daria, Dominika's partner. - Let them see that a lesbian is not a butch dyke, but a normal girl. (…) They take part in the "Let Them See Us" campaign to show homosexuals as ordinary people. Just couples holding hands. Not sinners, not perverts, nor tyrannized martyrs. Not from gay parades, not in frocks, not bull dykes, as people imagine them. But normal and ordinary, as the neighbour from the next door, a shop assistant from a corner shop. Like everybody. So in photos they appear a bit out of shape, a little shy, without striking poses and stylization. (Pietkiewicz, 2003)

There is no doubt that the crux of the message sent by organisers to the society is that of "normality" and "ordinariness"; it presents gay and lesbian people as being like and the same as everyone else. What is interesting here is how this "normality" is achieved, and what it actually means, "to be the same as everyone else." One straightforward aspect of being the same/like is a kind of invisibility: it is about being indistinguishable for the rest. Paradoxically then, in "Let Them See Us" lesbian and gay people are made visible, in order to become invisible. The visual campaign putting images of gay and lesbian people in the media and advertising places across cities in Poland, is singling them out for the straight gaze; at the same time, it is organised to "hide" them (gays and lesbians). Hiding in this case means to take lesbian and gay people away from the abject position of the Otherness, and bring them into the socially acceptable realm of universality (thus invisibility).

The insistence on 'normalcy' of LG(BT) population in Poland is not unusual or atypical, though. Sikora and Majka show in their insightful chapter (2021: 234) that

> "[a] majority of LGBT people seem to be quite willing to follow normalizing patterns, which include, importantly, the normalization of social inequalities and the neoliberal organization of social and individual lives…"

and summarise that

> "[w]hat seems clear after "30 years of freedom" is that Poland's politics depends heavily on the notion of normality as well as the moral panics that are periodically instigated as a means of policing the borders of that normality. The currency of normality in this country cannot be overestimated." (Sikora and Majka 2021: 232)

Building on this, I suggest that this place of universality, normality, and the ordinary is precluded and coded through concepts and practices of gender, respectability, and nationhood. But since these categories are heavily invested in

the dialectical dynamic of inclusion and exclusion, the performed desire of being the same/the one is already somehow crippled by the organisers' themselves, in the choice of a title. "Let Them See Us" relies on division between *us* lesbian and gay people, and *them*, the straight society. If a little unfortunate, from the campaign's point of view, it is a rather counter-productive label, working against the explicit and implicit goals and purposes of the campaign. Below, I will show that the "normality" (nationality) evoked so blatantly in the campaign, is performed through at least two means. The first is the gender normative prescriptions ("not bulldykes or sissies"), and the second striving for the social "respectability" (Mosse, 1985) of an aspirational *petit bourgeois* positionality ("like a shop assistant from a corner shop").

Heteronormative gender order

In an article in a popular women's magazine "*NAJ*," one of the lesbian couples is introduced as follows:

> Daria is DIFFERENT. She loves a woman not a man. And she speaks about it publicly. (…) From the enormous poster two young women are looking at passers-by. Attractive, smiling, fit. And ordinary. Just like those whom we pass by everyday in the street. Dressed up in jeans and jackets, like their peers. They walk holding hands. As if returning from a walk. (Uszyńska, 2003)

When we look at the posters we see intentionally dull and unexciting portrayal of homosexual couples. Young men are "not cross-dressers from a gay parade" (wyborcza.pl, 2003b), and young women are rather conventionally feminine. Neither are particularly ideal in their engendered/embodied femininities and masculinities: perhaps a little obese, not perfectly 'in shape' (whatever that ideal would be), some women with short hair, some men with long hair, etc. In other words, ordinary rather than representing ideal types of gender. This, as I will show, is exactly what is most desired as the campaign's signal to the general population. Such insistence on the positive image of lesbian and gay people is not surprising, if we account for all the stereotypes and scornful representations of homosexuality produced and in circulation across many cultures; visibility is one of the main areas of interest for LGBT politics (Balogh and Fejes, 2013; Clarke, 2000; Stella, 2012). Usually grounded in the conviction about negative/wrong stereotypes of gay and lesbian people as deviant, dysfunctional, gender disordered and so on, the focus was/is on the creation and dissemination of the reverse, showing gay and lesbian people as "normal" and "ordinary" (Benshoff, 2004; Dyer, 2002).

However, what if the insistence on normality becomes almost obsessive and constantly, time and again, invoked as the mantra of a "hopeful performative" (Ahmed, 2010) that is meant to make it happen? Description becomes prescription. The open call to society provides at the same time a goal for the gay and lesbian community. Photographs and a constant pledge seem to sub-code the following

message for the community: if we fight disdainful stereotyping, we should back it up with our own exemplars; if we claim to be the same, we have to prove to them that we are the same; we need to be those feminine lesbians and masculine gays; if we claim normality, we need to be normal. The campaign, then, seems to have two faces: one of the pledge and the other of the instruction. In all this, organizers do not seem to recognize the instability of the very category of normality, its inner incongruities, and instead take it for granted, unscrutinised. Furthermore, Anna Gruszczyńska (2009: 203) in her excellent analysis of Polish LG(BT) parades, has also noticed strong normalising ideals behind activists' discourse of what the gay parade should be. She writes:

> At the same time, the efforts of the research participants to produce "normal," desexualised citizens through the public encounters discussed in this thesis, relied to a large extent on an unproblematic understanding of heterosexuality and heteronormative assumptions of what is defined as (not) "normal" in the public sphere. After all, as discussed previously, the ideal of a "normal" Polish citizen was rather restrictive, where perhaps the most striking example was the "Normality Parade" organised by the All-Polish Youth a week after the banned Warsaw Pride in 2005.

According to Gruszczyńska, unreflective re-deployment of "normality" by LG(BT) activists necessarily repeats (although unintentionally) the homophobic framework of the heteronormative social organization. Also, in terms of gender politics this discourse is dubious, as bargaining gender conformity for sexual acceptance must be short-lived (Engel, 2006). I suggest that this gender normative claims are the manifestations of heteronormativity (rather than homonormativity), for they reinstate patriarchal social order (Duggan, 2002; Ludwin, 2011; Roseneil et al., 2013). Following Hennessy (2000) who notices how the politics of visibility seem to go hand in glove with capitalist insistence on consumption, let me now move from discussing normality and open the discussion to thinking about respectability as form of neoliberalisation, and their analytical potential.

Respectability and neoliberalisation discourse

Another inspiration for the interpretation of the "Let Them See Us" campaign comes from the work of George Mosse (1985) about middle class, nationalism and homosexuality as significant aspects of the European 'Modernity.' Here I would like to develop a thread around his concept of respectability, characteristic of the emerging new, middle social class. In the Polish case, the post-1989 transformations solicited the neoliberalisation of social and political imaginaries, underpinned by the qualities of self-determination, independence, resourcefulness, commitment, and, last but not least, normality.

Also early 2000s saw a strong current in queer studies undertaking the critiques of neoliberalism and sexual normativity in the long established capitalist countries of the "West" (Binnie, 2008; Chasin, 2000; Duggan, 2004; Evans, 1993; Hennessy,

2000; Puar, 2002; Richardson, 2005). As it would be impossible to capture the diversity of these debates in few words available here, I point the reader to the works of e.g. Binnie (2014), Majka (2019), and Sikora and Majka (2021) who have already offered excellent reflections and mapping of scholarship on class and neoliberal underpinnings of sexual politics and how it speaks to late 2000s Poland. For conceptual clarity, let me signal here that when using 'neoliberal' and 'neoliberalisation,' a well-researched topic in itself (Cahill et al., 2018; Gibson-Graham, 2006; Harvey, 2011; Robinson, 2000; Springer, 2016), I follow Springer (2017) to stipulate that 'neoliberalisation' captures values and effects of political, economic, social and cultural system of arrangements constructing particular type of 'subjects' approximating market-like 'exchange value' to all spheres of life. As permanent hybridization and transformation are imperative, so is constant overvaluing of individual agency and 'opportunity,' while underestimating structural arrangements that are pre-configuring possibilities of agency and undermining redistributive ideas of social justice (Springer, 2017).

I will argue in passages below that the 'normality' and 'sameness' of the interrogated early LG(BT) activism in Poland is constructed not only through the performative fulfilment of the socially prescribed gender norms and roles, but also in performing well, the new ideals of a "good life" in the new, capitalist and democratic Poland. Kość (2003) recalls words of Andrzej Osęka, a well-known journalist of *Gazeta Wyborcza* and commentator in Poland:

> [homosexuals] "are not followers of some caprice or fashion; they are living people next to us. They work, study, love, and are loved. We usually know nothing about them. But this time, quite a number of these people came out toward passers-by in Polish cities. No provocative poses here."

Further in his article, Kość quotes one of the participants saying: "We agreed to take part in this project in order to show that we are a part of society. We don't want to be a bad part of it. We're normal." The two accounts are fairly uncharacteristic one could say, it is as if they were not descriptions at all. But this is exactly what they are meant to be, I argue: suggesting the indistinguishable quality of the subjects portrayed. As a visibility campaign meant to hide lesbian and gay people into the invisibility of normality, so did the recurring uncharacteristic descriptions mean to render them into the usual of invisible normality. In another article we read:

> Photographs are positive, gentle. Young, smiling and happy people. Is this a true depiction of Polish homosexuals? - We've chosen simplicity for a purpose. We want to gently introduce ourselves to passers-by - says Robert Biedroń from the Campaign Against Homophobia, which organised the action. - We show normal people in ordinary situations, as if they've just popped in to the corner shop to buy bread. (wyborcza.pl, 2003b)

The portraits used in "Let Them See Us" campaign were shot in metropolitan centres, with young, professional-looking people, confident, assertive but not pushy, determined, committed and motivated (to take courage and do what they

did). In the two following fragments taken from interviews given by organisers and campaign participants, we learn more about these qualities.

> I don't feel guilty or worse than others because of my sexual difference - Daria says assertively. - Perhaps I'm even better in a sense, because I'm doing quite well in life. Daria is 24 years old, and is studying psychology. She wants to work as a negotiator in the future, as she likes challenges and high risk. - And then perhaps even more qualifications. Maybe a doctorate? - she considers. Her partner is finishing the same programme. At the moment she is at home, in Przemyśl. - But we're in touch everyday - confesses Daria. - We text each other and send e-mails. We talk over the phone every few days as well. Daria is studying and working as a waitress. For the past four years she has had no financial support from anyone. - I'm getting by - she shrugs off. - I even have some pocket money left for small expenditures. (Uszyńska, 2003)

Daria emerges in this article as a young independent woman, getting by in life, which is not easy, but she does not complain. Lesbian and gay people can be, and are in this discourse, "professionals." "An assistant at the post office can be a lesbian (…) - a mate from work, or a neighbour can be gay. It is at least one million Poles!" (se.pl, 2003). Daria's "professional" attitude is also tightly connected to her commitment to a monogamous, stable relationship, seen in the practice of staying in touch with her girlfriend: committed exchange of text messages, emails and less frequent but regular phone calls should be understood as a sign of effort, commitment and investment put into the (monogamous) relationship. What emerges, are the neoliberal entanglements of 'private' and 'professional' lives that produce self-contended subjectivity, or in Daria's own words: '[p]erhaps I'm even better in a sense, because I'm doing quite well in life" (Uszyńska, 2003).

What rises to our attention here is the role of partnership/relationship (Polish *związek* denotes both English words) itself in the image of a socially respectable person, in heteronormative imagination that is – monogamous, serious, and dedicated. Normal, one almost wants to say. "[Aśka and Julia] have monogamous hearts, as do Jacek and Arek. They hate jumping from one arm to another. They want to be together. They are responsible. They get photographed to show others that here are two regular, normal, happy young women, even if life is not easy for them" (Pietkiewicz, 2003). Surely, "monogamous hearts" is yet another example of what is conceived here as normality.

The heteronormative scaffolding of Daria's (and that of her interviewer) thinking about herself is further exemplified across the text by the use of the term partner not girlfriend; a name that cautiously (although to a limited degree, since nouns in Polish are not gender-neutral, as in English) downplays a more obvious same-sex referent of girlfriend. In Polish language, as perhaps also in English, partner denotes greater stability and respectability that goes beyond youthful emotional instability and short-lived erotic fascination that may be characteristic for what 'dating' (rather than living with) and 'girlfriend' (rather than partner) denote. It also hints towards same-sex partnerships, which similarly to marriage, would be in this analysed universe the ultimate sign of commitment, respect, and maturity. And as in marriage, partnership is also meant to signify the longevity of the relationship, as

much as it downplays the sexual dimension of it. This is again explicit in the following passage:

> "We love each other normally." So our homos are ordinary, in love, monogamous, live together in flats they own, have cats, write poems for each other. (…) [Arek and Jacek] were in many different relationships, which didn't last. Now, they believe, they will succeed. Arek is monogamous in the depth of his heart. He always wanted a stable and long-lasting relationship/partnership. So did Jacek. They are not interested in sex without feelings. (Pietkiewicz 2003)

On the note of homosexuality and neoliberalisation processes, Volker Woltersdorff (2007) draws an interesting observation regarding nationalism, sexuality and the EU. He claims that while "religious fundamentalists, nationalists and racists unanimously reject both homosexuality and neoliberalism, official neoliberal discourse in the European Union includes tolerance of homosexuality within its list of allegedly European values" (Woltersdorff, 2007: 1). He later argues that "very often queer people prefer neoliberal working conditions to more traditional ones because they enable them to live untraditional lives even if they don't earn more money they therefore" (2007: 3). Although I would be a little more cautious here then Woltersdorff regarding the scale of described processes, certainly there is a point in place that resonates well with my observations. Further example of the neoliberalisation discourse and "respectable homosexual subject" came from late Izabela Jaruga-Nowacka, at the time a Plenipotentiary for Equal Rights in the government. She said:

> If we are dealing with people of the same sex who have spent a huge part of their lives together, own a house together, then why should we refuse them, e.g. the right to information about a partner in hospital, or inheritance after death. There are no objections to a homosexual person working as a surgeon, teacher, or pedagogue. (…) In labour and unemployment law it is forbidden to discriminate against anyone because of their "sexual orientation." That's some progress. (se.pl, 2003)

For Jaruga-Nowacka, lesbians and gays are valued for their dutiful performance of bourgeois ideals of "good life" and "respectability." For that, they have been recognised under labour code regulations and offered protection against discrimination… in the workplace. This initiative from the EU directive (2000/78/EC) (Council of Europe, 2000) forcing protection for homosexual people but only in the work place, is a rather bold example of how homosexual subjects are being increasingly recognised under neoliberal capitalism as perhaps worthy, that is productive, contributors to the economy ("pink money" and "human capital") (Drucker, 2015; Duggan, 2004). Overall, the intrinsic connection between citizenship claims, implanted capitalist social divisions and the rise of a "new middle class" in Poland, and LG(BT) organisations deployment of "respectability" as a major strategy, is quite striking (Binnie, 2014; Warkocki, 2006).

Respectability

The set of discussed problems brings to mind once again the work of George Mosse (1985). For the author, respectability and nationalism are intertwined through normative gender ideals (predominantly manliness), as visible especially in the set of rules accepted and performed by 'insiders,' with their abnormal Double projected on those outside of the national community. Mosse notices that although standards of behaviour are common, one particular convention - respectability - even if present in earlier periods, became the sign particular to the European 'modernity' taking shape from the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries. For him, it is an effect of shifting economic modes of production, resulting in rapid industrialisation of (mostly Western) societies, and in consequence, shifting social stratification. Particularly the rise of the middle class as the new formation is important for Mosse, as 'respectability,' aside from economic characteristic, became the most significant element distinguishing the newly emerged social class from the working class and aristocracy. Moreover, 'respectability' was a middle-class response to the very conditions that gave birth to it; amid rapid changes, general insecurity of the unknown, and unpredictable conditions of social and economic organisation, it was 'respectability' that was meant to provide a sense of stability and rootedness (Mosse 1985: 4-9).

We find similar traits in the "Let Them See Us," which deploys an intense and rather narrow understanding of the gender norm, through redeployment of which it tries to re-inscribe homosexual subjects, taking them out from the domain of the outsider/abject into the familiar and acceptable subject position of insiders. The social and cultural unrest in Poland after 1989 brought feelings of volatility and unfamiliarity (Galasiński, 2009). In this sense, extending and inscribing LG(BT) strategies into the discourse of respectability was/is a means of tapping into the socially recognised and cherished national characteristics, to secure themselves a place at the table of the nascent new Poland. As Mosse argues for nationalism, being the force embracing middle class ideals of gender and respectability, eventually helping to spread them across the range of other social classes, so I am arguing that we should read "Let Them See Us" as a campaign that at a very deep level performs, uses, and subsumes itself into the national discourse of Polishness.

Mosse (1985: 10) extends his argument further to indicate how sexuality was downplayed and tamed in this process, "stripped of sensuousness," in place of which "passionless" marriage and family life as practice of virtue were established. Accordingly, we need to understand the stress on monogamous and stable relationship created in the discourse of the campaign as an implicit way of self-normalisation into national(istic) biopolitics of nationhood, through the particular performative of the 'normal' (homosexual). Why? Because normality does not only exist as an independent category, but is fixed as the "quality of the national" (Mosse, 1985: 13).

So, as Mosse claims the industrialisation of Western European societies brought about the rise of the middle class, characterised by a "respectability" that became inextricably linked to nationalism, here I have presented a reverse process. National discourse establishes norms of "respectability," which are espoused by LG(BT) campaigners, in order to integrate homosexual subjects into the "Polish national family." This ambitious goal is sought through performing respectability and establishing homosexual abjects as middle-class subjects in times of rapid transformations in Poland post-1989. And the circle is closed.

Reading "Let Them See Us" otherwise

It is important, however, to not overestimate neoliberalism and capitalism. Both Wilson (2009) and Binnie (2014) agree that capitalism may regulate homosexuality in various ways, but as a single force, the market cannot fully determine it. In the "Let Them See Us" case, I would suggest that however the range of choices may be predetermined by various social, cultural and economic conditions - gay and lesbian people are not solely docile bodies, puppets in the neoliberal theatre. Rather, they show pro-active willfulness to harness the mechanisms of a new regime (for better or worse).

Looking back at the two decades that have passed since 2002 I wonder if the "Let Them See Us" brought about changes that perhaps were not/could not be foreseen at the moment of its conception. Indeed, I believe that in consequence there was a ripple effect of some important vagaries to the discourse of homosexuality in Poland. My first observation is that it cracked the culturally sanctioned discourse of silence surrounding sexuality in Poland (Ritz, 2002). The campaign, although initially intended for outdoor billboards, has actually never happened in this form, and became a media campaign through its extensive coverage across a range of outlets. What is more important, it was not just a scornful acknowledgement as e.g. gay prides had been thus far, but a discourse consisting of full articles and interviews, giving voice and opportunity to the spokespersons of the campaign to get their message across.

I would also suggest that being the first campaign of such seize, it accelerated the process of cultural reworking of social attitudes towards *homo*sexuality in Poland. For example, in 2002/2003 "*Gazeta Wyborcza*" the biggest and main daily newspaper (self-proclaimed central-left) was still publishing outspokenly homophobic and derogatory articles alongside those calling for tolerance and e.g. same-sex partnerships, all in the twisted name of 'objectivity' and 'balanced' discussion (although it would never publish anti-Semitic or racist texts) (Sypniewski and Warkocki, 2004). Towards the end of the decade, not only was homophobia sidelined along with anti-Semitism and racism as an absolute "no go" discourse; but the newspaper actually embraced pro-active stances, actively campaigning for LGBT equality (e.g. coming out campaigns co-organised with

Campaign Against Homophobia and Lambda) (Pacewicz, 2008). Similarly, when in 2005 late president Lech Kaczynski (then Mayor of Warsaw) banned for the second time Pride Parade, the protesters with many prominent politicians from left and centre sides of the political scene marched against the mayoral ruling, committing acts of civil disobedience in the name of freedom and democracy, and against the ideological and religiously motivated decisions. These would not have happened if the public debate about the place of homosexual people in society was not already well under way. Of course, to assign such social change just to one campaign would be erroneous, and surely those changes are the outcome of the steady, everyday labour of LG(BT) organisations and gay and lesbian people themselves, in forging new frontiers of their presence in the public space. However, as I have said, I believe the "Let Them See Us" campaign has significantly contributed to this process, hence it deserves its positive recognition and not only critical assessment (and stressing that one does not cancel out the other and that both assessments are of equal value).

Conclusions – Belonging and 'sexual citizenship'

In summary, I would like to offer the reader the following thought. If we agree with Michel Billig (1995) that nation and nationalism are performative, discursive practices constantly bringing nation to life in the smallest and least significant practices – would it be right to suggest that "Let Them See Us" is an example of such "everyday nationalism" in its insistence on culturally sanctioned 'normality' (acted through the embodiment of normative ideals of gender and respectability)? Producing 'normality' as the (counter-)discourse and the reiterative politics of claims also echoes Sara Ahmed's concept of the "hopeful performative" (2010: 200) that is, the performative power of repetition that renders the desired idea into a "state of reality" (which of course was so powerfully elaborated in the case of gender by Judith Butler). In another article I have shown how in the 'extraordinary times' (the catastrophic death of the President) this was used by the LG(BT) community to re-inscribe themselves into the discourse of Polishness (Kulpa, 2014a). In this piece, I have stressed the banality of 'normal' and 'respected.' It seems that the need to belong to the imagined community of the nation not as outcasts, but as 'good (normal) citizens' may be one of the underpinning psychosocial driving forces within the gay and lesbian community and behind LG(BT) activism in Poland. This of course ties in with the scholarship on homonationalism, but as I have argued across my writings, this may not be the most suitable conceptual approach (Kulpa 2014b).

The "Let Them See Us" campaign incites to self-governance to fit the bill of a 'good citizen' as redefined according to the new neoliberal agenda taking roots in post-1989 Poland, abiding rules of biopolitical governmentality, so sharply theorised by Michel Foucault (2000). What I find problematic is the lack of

acknowledgement from the LG(BT) organisations that inequality of lesbian and gay people in society is an effect of not only prejudices against homosexuality, but is a manifold social problem encompassing many other factors of social positioning (age, place of living, education, employment status, etc.). The taken-for-grantedness of neoliberal logics is symptomatic here, for it goes hand-in-glove with the dominant discourse of 'democratic rights and freedoms' and 'politics of citizenship,' what Scott (2009) aptly termed as 'sexularism.' Noticing the lack of a challenge to heteronormativity, Bell and Binnie characterise 'good sexual citizenship' as, "privatized, de-radicalized, de-eroticized and confined in all senses of the word: kept in place, policed, limited" (Bell and Binnie, 2000: 3; see also Richardson, 2004; Seidman, 2002; Warner, 1999). This self-restricting (in certain respects, of course) discourse of respectability (well rooted in the nationhood) opens a dangerous place in the LG(BT) discourse, a rupture where other divisions within the gay and lesbian communities may occur, leading to multiplications of inequalities and exclusions. What is need then, is a renewed activist and academic attention to intersectional thinking, acting, and analysing sexual politics in Poland and CEE.

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