

**About the policy of an international organization
to empower sexual minorities
in Albania's capital Tirana**

*An empirically-based but philosophical reflection
on social engineering to create and strengthen social networks*

Short version IUC

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Foreword

After doing a research about the difficulties that Christian-orthodox gay men in The Netherlands face in shaping their identity by trying to combine their homosexuality with their religious beliefs, after participating in a multicultural and multi-religious dialogue about tolerance in Amsterdam, and after carrying out research in Albania in 2008 and 2010, many (gay-)people seemed to wonder why I find LGBT rights so important, and, as I have to admit, interesting.

Well, at least for myself my answer is quite obvious and clear: In a world where diversity is accepted as a positive force, I believe I am better able to develop myself - my identity, my love life, my relationships with others, among many other things - in a free and open way. At the same time, I am horrified by the heterosexist normative discourse in the mass-media and everyday life in the Netherlands. Though I do consider myself a heterosexual,¹ it does not at all mean, for example, that I desire women to have huge breasts or to act in an overtly feminine manner. Neither do I aspire, after graduation, to a petty life of finding a job, marrying, buying a too expensive house, getting a car (bigger than the one of your neighbours), two children (a girl and a boy), a few pets, and an annual holiday to some boring holiday resort with 'the kids,' -- the utmost form of happiness according contemporary commercials! This is to say that, obviously, I feel rather uncomfortable about the contemporary hedonistic and heteronormative discourse in The Netherlands.

As a kind of cultural asylum, I do enjoy going to parties where people of all kind of backgrounds, sexualities, ages, classes and ethnicities can be together. When Ahmed Marcouch, a well-known Dutch-Moroccan politician from Amsterdam, stated that 'the freedom of the gay is the freedom of the Muslim,'² I believe he meant to say that respecting other minorities promotes the respect for you and 'your group' of people. I have to admit I feel more comfortable if others around me do as well experience an extent of freedom to step out of the mass and act and show what they feel like. Although in essence it is a rather egoistic claim, my main premise is that I

¹ While studying humanistics, and not for example gender studies, I never found a final answer to the question 'to what extent sexuality is a construct (nurture) and to what extent it is an innate drive (nature)'.

² In The Netherlands, 'the Islam', whatever that might be, currently faces harsh criticism from the populist and (extreme) right political parties and media. At the same time, quite a few of the Dutch Islamic population in The Netherlands have a rather negative attitude towards LGBT individuals.

Ahmed Marcouch told me that he was debating with some elderly Moroccan migrants who were, because of their religious beliefs, against homosexuality. Marcouch responded that respecting human rights implies the rights of the gays, but as well the rights of ethnic, cultural and religious minorities and grant those ethnic minorities the right to profile themselves as such, for example wearing *djellaba*'s (Moroccan traditional dresses) and have visible mosques in the traditionally Christian Netherlands.

feel more free if others, far and near of me, do not face discrimination or oppression. In short, I believe that LGB or T's, queers, and even foreigners, migrants, weirdoes, performers, artists, funky hipsters, whoever, can just show, while living their lives, that accepting the dominant lifestyle is neither obligatory nor necessary. Moreover, it makes me just sad to experience everyday phobias and discrimination against diverse minorities. I believe those are the reasons why I feel sympathy for LGBT activists, although I have never have reflected thoroughly on those reasons. In truth, while contemplating, I realize it is more a matter of *feeling*. Not just *a* feeling, but a compulsion deep in my spine for humanity, fairness, dignity and equality. In short, my motivation to write this paper is that I see LGBT rights as important human rights; I believe every human would have a better life living in a world where human rights and the diversity that every person brings is respected.

I thank the courageous people of 'Aleanca' for welcoming me in their movement and for their inspiration. I thank LGBTpro for letting me interview them. I do thank the people of Mjaft for letting me stroll along in their organisation. I thank the Albanians who prefer not to be mentioned. I thank Noeke Ruiter and Sweder Voorst tot Voorst of the Royal Dutch embassy in Tirana for their willingness to cooperate in my research. I thank Sergei Malkin of COC International for sharing thoughts. Martha Schaverova for shaping ideas and pointing to ideas. Vilma for assisting while interviewing and Oriol for arranging interviews.

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Frank Nieuwenhuizen,
Baarn, The Netherlands 06-06-2010

*'The problem of writing is that something can only be described accurate exclusively by the use of inaccurate statements.'*³

Gilles Deleuze.

³ Deleuze, G. & F. Guattari (2004). *Rizoom: een inleiding*. Utrecht: Spreeuw libertaire uitgeverij.

Introduction

This article combines philosophy, empirical observations and interviews. The study is an exposé of two investigations which took place in Tirana⁴ in the summer of 2008 and in spring of 2010. It consists of a combination of participative field-research and interviews with significant actors in civil society.⁵ The field research focuses on ‘The Alliance against the discrimination of LGBT’ (Aleanca), a Tirana-based Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) movement, and the Mjaft Movement, a nationwide civic awareness development organisation. Interviews were conducted with members of the LGBT community, social activists, and employees of NGOs and the Dutch embassy.⁶ I will give a *picture*, an impression, of two different sorts of LGBT organisations by comparing two kinds of social activism: activities embedded in hierarchical and official top-down structured NGOs and non hierarchical organised grassroots movements. As part of the stabilisation and association process - I focus specifically on the policy of international organisations that try to de-marginalise the (sexual) minorities of Albania. Drawing from Habermas’s theory of communicative action, which explores ‘the system- and livingdomains,’ and Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the Rhizome I will analyse contemporary problems and challenges to create social communities. The underlying theme of this article is social policy and social engineering in developing countries, in light of how Albanian and international organisations have tried to create a ‘strong civil society’ (Sap, 2000) from, as it seems, scratch.⁷ The study, which considers *inter alia* emancipation and

⁴ Tirana, Albania’s rapidly expanding capital, houses relatively many students and as well the intellectual upper-classes of the country. In general the inhabitants of Tirana have more contact with foreigners due the foreign expats currently living in the capital and the Tiranians are more likely to travel abroad. In short, traditional (family-) values seem less embedded in everyday life in Tirana than in the more rural areas or smaller cities of Albania. Therefore, I believe it is inapplicable to speak about the LGBT in Albania while my research was conducted in Tirana.

⁵ ‘The civil society is composed of the totality of voluntary civic and social organizations and institutions that form the basis of a functioning society as opposed to the force-backed structures of a state (regardless of that state’s political system) and commercial institutions of the market.’ (Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_society, consulted on 13-06-2010.)

⁶ Equality is an important value in the Dutch foreign policy, according to former Dutch ambassador in Albania Voorst tot Voorst. The Netherlands focus especially on LGBT rights. Regarding the cultural context of Albania, the Dutch embassy has put effort to open the discussion about LGBTs, for example by inviting Boris Dittrich of Human Rights Watch to deliver a speech about LGBT rights. Moreover, the Dutch embassy assisted several organisations who work on LGBT empowerment. ‘The Netherlands will oppose the discrimination of homosexuals globally. We will strive to reduce discrimination by governments regarding homosexuality and lobby to erase the criminalisation of homosexuality from the law.’ (Statement regarding LGBT Human rights by former minister of foreign affairs Verhagen, consulted on 31-07-2008. Source: <http://bestel.postbus51.nl/content/pdf/05BR2008G004-200843-81912.pdf>)

⁷ By way of introduction, I will expose the new Albanian anti-discrimination law and developments in the Albanian media and society regarding LGBT from 2009 until the present (June, 2010). After I have shaped a general impression of the tumultuous last year, I will focus in the main text on Habermas’s and Deleuze’s philosophies regarding social communities and international collaboration regarding the LGBTs. After this elaboration I will deliver a concluding chapter where I consider some issues regarding the support of international players like the Amsterdam based LGBT organisation COC for the strengthening and empowerment of the Albanian LGBTs.

The Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) of 2000 is the ‘roadmap’ for Balkan countries to a possible EU membership. Among other things, prospective member states should “develop their institutions and introduce new laws in line

empowerment, social in- and exclusion, community development, sexual diversity, and the organizational dynamics of NGOs, relates to theme one of the IUCcourse, namely 'European integration and social inclusion; *Chances for Overcoming the Social Exclusion of Vulnerable Groups?*'

Aleanca Kundër Diskriminimit të LGBT & LGBTpro

Aleanca⁸ started in April 2009 when a group of LGBT activists opened an account on the Facebook networking site. They turned out to be a *really active* LGBT movement; Aleanca is the first LGBTgroup in Tirana to attract relatively many young lesbians and gays in the movement. An American lesbian couple -- one of them works at the US Embassy in Tirana -- became friends with the group. They supported them with knowledge regarding social activism. Moreover, Aleanca received modest support by the American and Dutch embassies. I believe one of the first achievements of the movement were the weekly LGBT parties hosted by Aleanca. To protect the privacy

with EU norms, improve their police and legal systems' ability to tackle crime, develop an independent media and a robust non-governmental sector, move towards respect for minority rights, and combat racism and xenophobia.⁷ Since Albania is a prospective member of the European Union, the Albanian government seems quite willing to implement progressive laws which guarantee the rights of diverse minorities. One of these minorities is the lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders (LGBT). In the largely politically and sexually conservative Albanian society, the LGBTs seem particularly vulnerable to social exclusion, discrimination and violence.⁷ Probably because of a willingness to flatter the European Union regarding the Stabilisation and Association Process, Albanian Prime-Minister Berisha⁷ stated, to many Albanian's surprise, that he is willing to implement legislation supporting the right for same-sex marriage in Albania. The progressive law - drafted since 2006 by human right activists with the assistance of foreign partners⁷ - was accepted by the Albanian parliament on February 4th, signed by Prime Minister Berisha on February 25th and entered force in the beginning of March 2010.

On February 27th 2010, Klodian Çela, a participant of the popular Albanian reality show Big Brother, declared in the show that he is gay. This was the first unveiled coming outs in the Albanian media. His statement stirred up a lot of attention in the media and in the public opinion (Public petition, Aleanca. 2010). Çela, as well his family in his hometown Lezhë, faced anger from local inhabitants, who protested and claimed that there aren't any gays from Lezhë, that homosexuality is morally wrong and that homosexuality disrespects 'the Albanian values.'⁷ Some protesters even threatened to burn the Big Brother house or kill Çela after he leaves the Big Brother compound.⁷ The American and Dutch ambassadors in Albania appeared as guests in the Big Brother show delivering statements which were in favour on LGBT- and human rights. In the meantime, well-known journalists, such as Fatos Lubonja, wrote in a positive manner about homosexuality in the Albanian newspapers. Open discussions about gay-issues have been a taboo in the Albanian media and society before last winter - that might be one of the causes why many Albanians seem uninformed and insecure about the topic. However, at the end of 2009, the curtains of the LGBT stage finally opened, and on stage – talk shows and print media - the topic is vividly debated.

⁸ 'Aleanca Kundër Diskriminimit të LGBT (Gay-Straight Alliance Against LGBT Discrimination) is an Albanian non-governmental organization that envisions a free, open and equal Albanian society that embraces diversity and is inclusive of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities. To achieve this vision, Aleanca strives to support and empower a visible and inclusive lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender community while increasing public understanding, education, and awareness of issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. Aleanca began in April of 2009 when a group of activists started a Facebook group. In less than a month, the Facebook group had over 500 members, almost all of whom were Albanian. These online group participants are people who are living both inside and outside Albania, are gay and straight, many of whom may never come to a formal meeting of the organization, but all of whom support the idea of an Albania where all people, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, can live freely. (...) Aleanca's programs revolve around a three-pronged approach of building and empowering community, public education, and creating visibility for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues. Activities of Aleanca have included regular lectures on sexual orientation and gender identity in University classrooms and at human rights events; frequent and well-attended social events designed to build community; and periodic discussions where community members can discuss issues related to being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender in Albania. Given the importance of media in shaping public opinion and perception, Aleanca has participated in a variety of print, radio and television interviews and discussions, while also recognizing the need for individual Albanians who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender to decide their personal level of comfort with disclosing their identities. Aleanca also regularly engages in political conversation surrounding issues of sexual orientation and gender identity in Albania through press releases on timely issues. Aleanca has been covered in both the national and international media.' (source: http://gayalbania.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=9&Itemid=29&lang=en, 06-06-2010)

and security and to be able to party with people who are positive towards LGBT rights, the location is hidden for people outside the Aleanca community. From the first party on, every Friday a party has been organised, with an increasing number of participants. The LGBTs of Tirana, who can not express their love and sexual identity too openly in regular bars, have found a place where they can be what they feel like. Although partying is a healthy and fun thing to do, especially regarding self-acceptance and creating a community, the scope of activities of Aleanca is definitely not just partying. The opposite in fact is true, because Aleanca is actively participating in public events regarding LGBT rights: *'Aleanca's first collaborative events were the activities surrounding the International Day Against Homophobia in 2009. In cooperation with the Dutch Embassy, the American Embassy, the Albanian Human Rights Group, the Albanian Helsinki Committee, and the Children's Rights Center of Albania, Aleanca helped organize a panel discussion with the American Ambassador at Tirana University, co-sponsored the distribution of 30,000 free postcards in three Albanian cities (Tirana, Vlora, and Shkodra), broadcast and published (anonymous) radio and newspaper interviews, and designed and displayed 150 posters in the central area of Tirana. Aleanca was registered as an Albanian non-governmental organization in November, 2009.'*⁹ (Aleanca, 2010). In addition, Aleanca opened an official website with an email address which made it possible for journalists and sympathisers to interact with them. The activists chat online with other LGB or T's. Aleanca reacted to the media attention by publishing press releases and giving interviews. Lectures about homosexuality have been given at universities.

I believe a particularly interesting and important aspect of the development of the contemporary Albanian LGBT community, in comparison with former initiatives, is the use of modern communication devices, especially the use of Facebook.¹⁰

In the meantime, an organization called LGBTpro has been launched. LGBTpro is a branch of the children's rights institution CRCA and is focusing mainly on two aspects, namely lobbying for the rights of the LGBTs and developing a grassroots movement. LGBTpro got granted by COC. I will expose more about LGBTpro later in the paper.

⁹ (Source: http://gayalbania.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=9&Itemid=29&lang=en, consulted on 06-06-2010)

¹⁰ See www.facebook.com. Facebook is a social networking website. Users can add people as 'friends' and send them messages, and update their personal profiles to notify friends about themselves. Additionally, users can join networks and groups. The Facebook of Aleanca is: <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=67626763334&ref=ts>
In June 2010, 1.038 are signed up as members to the Facebookgroup of Aleanca, the majority of whom are Albanians.

To summarise; last year was tumultuous regarding LGBT rights in Albania. Prime Minister Berisha, although his intentions were not clear, surprised the Albanians delivering a pro-LGBT statement; the anti-discrimination bill has been approved by the parliament; in the media the topic is vehemently discussed, and there is a young and energetic group of young LGBT creating a network, having their parties, delivering their press releases and giving interviews. LGBTpro is lobbying and also being present in the media.

I will give *an impression* on the organisational dynamics of the two LGBT organisations active in Albania. I believe this is important, because some external parties, like the Amsterdam-based LGBT organisation COC are really eager to support the LGBTs of Albania. How can the LGBT cause be supported and strengthened? If you want the LGBT movement and LGBT organisation to join forces, what to keep in mind? First I will discuss ‘top-down’ organisations such as LGBTpro, secondly the more rhizomatic movements, like Aleanca. After this elaboration I will end with some concluding thoughts.

LGBT ‘top-down’ organisations ~ 1995-present

Before elaborating on grassroots social movements, I will shape a picture of the opposite, namely the more systematically structured NGOs by LGBT organisations Gizz and LGBTpro.¹¹¹² I will fit in some practical examples into Habermas system

¹¹ *‘LGBTpro Albania is a new movement that aims to protect and promote the respect for the rights of of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender. Pro LGBT group consists of boys and girls who believe that Albania can’t be considered a democratic country that respects human rights without respecting and guaranteeing the rights of LGBT community in the country. To achieve this aim LGBTpro Albania works to:*

- *Defend the rights of the LGBT community in Albania;*
- *Promote dignity, equality and respect for the rights of LGBT people;*
- *Fight against the discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity;*
- *Awareness of the general public and institutions on LGBT rights;*
- *Improve public policies and laws in support of the rights of LGBT community in Albania;*
- *Support LGBT individuals in emergency situations.’ (LGBTpro, 2010).*

Considering the name of LGBTpro, I have the impression that the organisation claims, considering the ‘pro’ in their name, to be the professionals on LGBT issues in Albania.

¹² Summary about Gizz:

‘At that time (2005) there was no movement. It was too early. There was no prime minister saying bullshit things for same-sex marriage without informing anybody. That was a shock. What the hell is he talking about? Same sex marriage in Albania where everybody thinks that homosexuality is an epidemic? Instead of doing that, start to inform your people what is homosexuality. We dont need you (Author: Prime minister Berisha) to show us that you are open minded. So you can profit. You can do the Public Relations of your profile to EU countries...’

‘The project (GIZZ) was about capacity building. If you speak about capacity building, you consider also the communication field. If you dont have a public face, a spokesperson which represents your case, you have nothing. But what if you have a public face, but you don’t have a movement. That is worse. But yes, it was not the right moment to do. Some things come with the right moment. Of course, they will come, because it is the truth. The truth has been hidden for centuries, but you cant hide it forever...’

‘We had no clue how to deal with the media. Why do we need to come out then? First we need to come in ease with ourselves...’

‘It was a small project to test. To encourage us to start a movement. They (Author: COC) were not wrong. Their will was to start this all things we are talking about right now.’

and livingworlds, to address the problems of top-down policy in civil society regarding autonomy of an NGO.

Habermas's system and livingworlds

'First we developed the NGOization without the civil society in Albania. NGOs were created by Westerners, but not from the grassroots, but as a way for some ex-communist elites, to find their children a job somehow. They don't really have a link with grassroots. In my writings I have described it as trees with the roots up, instead of having the roots down and being nourished by people, by needs, by society. NGOs are nourished by westerners who give from the upside...

If the westerners stop, the NGO stops as well.'

Political activist Fatos Lubonja. Excerpt from interview taken in the summer of 2008.

'NGOs are thus economically dependent on grants from donors who set the agendas to which they ostensibly function.'

Shannon Woodcock

While working for Mjaft, an Albanian NGO, in 2008, I got sense of a vague feeling. With the help of Habermas' theory of the living- and systemworlds, I disentangle the cause for that feeling as follows; the problem is that Mjaft, and similar NGOs, are not the activist or social movements which they pretend to be, because they are far-

Since 1994 there have been several attempts to form gaymovements in Albania. My impression is that generally speaking these organisations were not particularly visible nor viable in the civil society so far.

In 1995 the paragraph which prohibited homosexual acts was erased from the constitution. In that year a Jordanese gay immigrant came out in public. After his appearance on television he found asylum in neighbouring country Greece, because the man faced anger and violence. This might have made other homosexuals even more aware what kind of risk and discomfort coming out in Albania implies. Respondents stated that the coming out this person was quite a bad publicity for LGBT's because of the weird appearance and silly answers the man gave in the televisionshow. Quite a few homosexuals emigrated in that time from Albania to live a more free life abroad. From 1996 Albania aimed to become a prospect member of the European Union. In 2005, a group of homosexual man formed in collaboration with the international operating Amsterdam based LGBTlobbygroup COC¹² the LGBT-organisation *Gizz* (Group for integration). COC aimed to institutionalise the movement, something which turned out to be difficult, because the involved people experienced fear, lack of self-acceptance and problems with forming a community (about 50 men were involved in the organisation according COC). *Gizz* was not labelled as an LGBT- but as an organisation for minorities- and humanrights. *GIZZ* lobbied to influence schoolcurricula regarding sexual diversity, tried to create an LGBTcommunity and tried to raise a gathering space. As well *GIZZ* published articles on the internet. *GIZZ* was mainly a capacitybuilding organisation. A respondent told that 'although the project was perfect, it failed.' There was a lack of a (gay-)community, and to paraphrase my respondents words: '*without a community you are destined to fail.*' He said that forming a community can not be reached in an institutional way.

Respondents informed me that the COC wanted to have *Gizz* a public face, to be able to represent the right of the LGBT in public. Because of reasons of privacy and security, the members of *Gizz* did not want to 'come out of the closet' in public. To give an example of the fear the involved man experienced; they never spoke openly about homosexuals, but used in public codewords if they spoke about their organisation, like for example 'communists' if mentioning homosexuals. The man involved were afraid to give up their privacy, because being 'out of the closet' would affect their private and professional life. As well, the respondents experienced lack of protection 'from the back' from COC: The members of *GIZZ* felt left alone when they asked for assistance but did not received it in time. I believe that the obligation to have a public face have caused stress and dispute, and was an important cause for the falling apart of *GIZZ*.

I have the impression that, regarding media-attention *GIZZ*, was a rather passive and hidden movement. However, *Gizz* seems to be a seed, a small sparkle, for the contemporary LGBTmovement. A small network of gaymen was formed then and the LGBTissue was put on the agenda of some Albanian human right NGO's and embassies.

reached entwined with the bureaucratic check- and report systems of the donors, which Habermas would label as the *inference of the systemworld*.¹³

Donor darlings

I tend to believe that many NGOs can not express themselves as social movements because of the influence of the systemdomain. That NGOs present themselves as activist movements seems rather simple to explain: because that is what is expected from the donors. With regard to their image it is a strong and active signal and, moreover, according my observations, the popular but rather unquestioned mantra in the civil field of last decade is 'grassroots.' What grassroots exactly are and imply in the civil field, I will discuss later in this paper.¹⁴

¹³ Opposite of the systemworld Habermas positions the livingworld; the sphere of communicative action, the domain of personal- and group relations, like for example the contact between partners, families, friendships, and as well societies, the public opinion and the civil society. (Kunneman, 2009). In the livingworld people strive for consensus with the help of reason respect for plurality. It is the domain of non-violent communication, which implies a request for non violent agreement. (Schreurs, 2008). A central characteristic of the livingworld is that people expect to be treated in a communicative way. Strategic acting is experienced as a disruption in the livingworld. The livingworld contains the request for sense, culture, solidarity and institutions (Kunneman, 2009).

The systemworld, with its sub-domains, the economy and the state, is materialized in bureaucracy, power and money while colonising the livingworld by the use of concepts like democratic values, human rights and solidarity. Which leads to the phenomenon that instrumental and strategic acting becomes dominant in the sphere where communicative acting is necessary. This tendency is exemplified in the unbridled bureaucratisation and sharp monetization of everyday life. (Habermas, 2008, P.11). Because of this tendency, the space for communicative action and freedom of action decreases, and is replaced by contracted and determined acts. This is a form of violence which undermines solidarity and care, and seems to overload civil servants in systematic and bureaucratic (paper-) work. (Scheurs, 2008). The systemworld is the domain of the material reproduction, and tends to expel the culture, the institutions and the senses or passions for social causes. Habermas points out that in the modernity the systemworld becomes more and more independent from the livingworld. For example, nowadays many people find it normal to act rather egoistically in 'the economic system.' Moral questions regarding solidarity seem to be out of question - the systematic act is not communication with others - it is 'the capitalistic law.' Habermas states that it is important that the livingworld emancipates itself from the penetrating influence of the systemworld in the domain of the language and everyday communication.

¹⁴ I do invite you for a small thought-experiment: Ask yourself to what extent you can, in accordance with your feelings, relate the word activism to well paid professionals whom work in luxurious offices and who have their own drivers. Although in activism strategic planning might be involved, personally I find that activism implies a rather radical, maybe even blind, devotion and as well urge and necessity for a cause, for which one does not need a fund from a donor before acting, or needs to discuss with colleagues about political strategies. I believe an activist group can have a small agenda and can even be erased after the group accomplished their goal. To my impression, professionals act based on calculations, which implies a way less radical approach and are overly focused on future developments (as well as the future development of their own career).

However, after all I believe it is unfair to blame the professionals who work for NGOs regarding their integrity. The donors expect a profile which is impossible for their partners to fulfill. The employees need to be young and activist - this seems to be the link to the concept of the grassroots movement - and professional, experienced and trustworthy. This is a paradoxical profile: To be experienced and professional, you need at least a few years of working experience. Altin Hazizaj, director of CRCA literally told me that his organisation got a fund for LGBT emancipation, because the other LGBTmovements lack the experience and skills to deal with the fund. Although Hazizaj might be right, it leaves a sour taste. The organisation with the right connections and necessary experience 'wins' the fund to develop a grassroots movements from below, although the already existing activist (grassroots) movement itself did not received such a fund.

The image of a young activist NGO is impossible to connect to the desired skills. When you really try to combine being the young and energetic activist and the experienced professional, you will end up in a so called 'catch-22' paradox, 'a situation in which one needs to fulfil two actions which are reciprocally dependent on the other action, where one action needs to be fulfilled to accomplish the other mission. Instead of analysing this paradox, the donors, the NGOs and the media do fool each other on such a professional scale, that it is hardly inconspicuous.

Joris Luyendijk, a critical Dutch journalist wrote in 'Het zijn net mensen' how that happens: *'A [humanrightactivist] turned out to be something else then we are used to in [Western Europe]. They have a good salary, because it is paid by Western governments, 'donors' in the jargon. Local humanrightactivist are often quoted by journalists, because, 'they are the ones who provide answers to your questions. But, the more of these humanrightsactivist I met, the less comfortable I began to feel. The routine in which they produced 'one-liners', how they gave after a 'pleased to meet you' their businesscard (so I would spell their name and that of their organisation correct in my article). Their statements often contained quotes like 'it is a long way, but we can not turn back anymore' or 'giving up is not an option.' I believe these activists red their interviews on the internet and think "hey, that statement about 'never giving up' always appears in the article, that one I will use the next time again." (...)*

In general, I notice two problems regarding the relation between donors and NGOs. Firstly, the agenda of the donors are not set by the NGO themselves, but implicitly by the donors, i.e., Western countries. The NGOs are, in their struggle for survival, depending on new funds, and will, because of that need, come up with new project proposals, which, quite often, connect integrally with the political agenda of the donors. Local autonomy is lost as a result. This structure, despite the funder's probably humanist and democratic intentions, leads in essence to cultural and political imperialism from the Western countries. Borradori defines '[a]utonomy (...) as a function of functional symmetry, or equality, between parties, a symmetry which is embedded in the democratic participation.' (Borradori, 2003. P.65).

Secondly, Luyendijk points out that NGOs, their donors, and the media, are entangled in a *tango*. Adri Smaling warns us of 'the problem which emerges here, namely that the avoidance of subjects where differences of insights, opinions and meanings exists, and which are tremendous obstacles for the development of a fruitful and open sphere. That might lead to conformism, docility, lip service, lack of criticism, hypocrite dependency and improper consensus.' (Smaling, 2008. P.13). Habermas indicates that 'mutual understanding (...) can only occur if the necessary conditions that allow for a mutual change of perspectives do occur, to be able to 'see' the other's vision. (Habermas, 2003. P.57). In the case of donor darlinism, the donor is in a dominant position, where it is not obligatory to have an open and listening attitude to see the other party's viewpoint. Because of the minor position of the donor darling, the local NGO is obliged to adapt to the donor's agenda; a case of the improper

That seems to be the problem with humanrightactivists (...) [they] just exist because of Western funds. Their chance for funds increases if they a better reputation, and Western journalist do spread their reputation. The result is a dubious tango of journalists in need of beautil quotes and humanrightsactivists in need of publicity. I found it significant that, while doing my research, non of the students I met knew or supported any humanrightsactivists. How would I like an activist in The Netherlands whom receives a fund from Iran or Saoudi Arabia? (...) My objections increased after I heard how Western diplomats called the local humanrightsactivists, donor darlings. Embassies need to get rid of their funds of 'support for human rights,' but can only distribute it to the organisations with a Western agenda and an decent accountancy and other regulations against [corruption]. Donor darlings do fullfil these requirements; 'one hand is washing the other.' Often a Western member of parliament brought a quick visit to a county. The MP's are sended to a few donor darlings by their embassy, who will provide them a optimistic picture in fluent English with all the necessary ingrediënts: development, gender, empowerment, civil society, good governance. Back in The Netherlands, the MP will talk full of optimism and energy about his visit'. (Luyendijk, J. 2007. P.53, 54).

In addition, I wonder to what extent donor darlings are able to bond (have ties, a sense of) with the target groups of projects. Usually, employees of NGOs have been studying abroad, and spend most of their time, together with international expats, in the upper class neighbourhoods of the capitals. How far are they authorised to speak for marginalised groups in society?

The bureaucratic check system which investigates the results and accountancy of a project is not impermeable. A research intern of an Albanian NGO 'told me the reports were usually good, while the results were not.' *'Bigger NGOs have some freedom (...) to write exactly what donors want to hear but act within their own framework, i.e. make it sound as if they're following the wishes of the sponsors. E.g. if I really want to start a project on agricultural produce I can still fit it under governance framework pretty much bullshitting that the farmers will increase their participation; [this is a] common practice among bigger NGOs.'* (Schaferova, 2010). Yes, to apply particular 'tricks', like 'selling' 'good' results, one needs some experience. Inexperienced activists might lack these kind of abilities.

consensus Smaling (2008) points out. This might for example bring the question to what extent local people feel a need or necessity for a project.

LGBTmovement bottom-up and rhizomatic 2009 - present

An rhizomatic network

I find the organisationstructure symbolised as a Rhizome particularly interesting, especially because it is an alternative regarding the mentioned problems regarding a top-down policy.

Facebook

Facebook, and other *new media* like Twitter and Youtube, are particularly useful for marginalised groups to form a network and exhibit their voice. Regarding the anonymity of the political or social activists - who probably do face oppression by the political elite or the population in a country – one can decide in general themselves what and how much of their identity is shared with others. For example, people can use alter ego's. As well, although verbal violence can be really oppressive and intimidating, there is at least a physical safe space between protagonists and antagonists of some case. Another interesting aspect is that, regarding LGBTrights, one might inform herself from 'a safe distance.' Information can easily be spread. In short, new media do have an enormous emancipatory potential.

Facebook in itself is a good example of a Rhizome. Grassroots-movements¹⁵ are 'horizontal' (non-hierarchical). The network is an always changing network. It is about the connections, the fluidity, the decentralized movements. The organisation does not have a central body, central point, of authority or leadership, it is all about the network of the community and the ability to form this network. You can enter, think about Facebook again, from uncountable angles, instead of the few entrances of a hierarchical organisation. The more connections one can make, the 'stronger' the network will be. Grassrootsmovements are particularly interesting in the LGBT-field. For example, due this method of working, the young people can protect their

¹⁵ Some examples of grassrootmovements are ants, insects, rats, the nature as whole. As well, wikipedia, facebook, linux and the internet as whole. As well, the squatmovement and the other-globalisingmovement, drugtraffickingorganisations and terrorist organisations are formed as grassrootsmovements. I find it interesting that the forces who are fighting, for example, terrorist-organisations, seem to think in a hierarchical manner. Taking away a leader of a movement does not erase the organisation at all.

autonomy and decide themselves how much they want to show of themselves in the public life. As well, grassrootsmovements do not need any funds to exist. In short, I believe Aleanca is mainly working on a grassrootsmovement and they make, as many youngsters do nowadays, viable use of Facebook for their networking.

Conclusion

With the use of Habermas's theory of communicative action, which explores the system- and livingspheres, I have analyse how the system-world, with its bureaucracy, technical rationality and focus on power and money, interferes *too* deeply in the livingsphere, the domain of the civil society, dialogue, friendship, opinions, which needs to be based on the respect for plurality and a will for consensus. This interference of the system-world leads to a phenomenon which Joris Luyendijk calls 'donor-darlinism', which refers to a situation where the funded NGO does exactly what the donor's agenda dictates, while the results of every single project afterwards will be a succes - at least, in the official reports. One respondent of mine stated literally 'the reports were good, while the results were not.' I argued this is a form of imperialism which limits to a minimum the autonomy of the organisation. In such kind of organisation privacy can not be guaranteed, which is necessary for an LGBT-movement. □

However past initiatives to initiate a movement for the emancipation for LGBT were not viable. Nowadays the mishmash of top-down and bottom-up activity - the EU laws being implemented, the lobbying by western-european NGO's (regarding LGBT activism, especially by the Dutch and American Ministries for Foreign affairs, Human Rights watch and the Amsterdam based LGBT-organisation COC) and activity in the field by young Albanians - seem a fertile ground, though there is a lot of work to do while the future perspective is unclear.

How about the future? Now we have the stage ready, it is really interesting, the group starts to work. The public faces are in favour of gays. We have to use it for the good of the case. We have to profit for the better. The challenge is to combine both of the described worlds. I think an openness for complexity is needed here.

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