PROTEST AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Konstantinos Eleftheriadis

Queer Festivals

Challenging Collective Identities in a Transnational Europe

Amsterdam
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Protest and Social Movements

Recent years have seen an explosion of protest movements around the world, and academic theories are racing to catch up with them. This series aims to further our understanding of the origins, dealings, decisions, and outcomes of social movements by fostering dialogue among many traditions of thought, across European nations and across continents. All theoretical perspectives are welcome. Books in the series typically combine theory with empirical research, dealing with various types of mobilization, from neighborhood groups to revolutions. We especially welcome work that synthesizes or compares different approaches to social movements, such as cultural and structural traditions, micro- and macro-social, economic and ideal, or qualitative and quantitative. Books in the series will be published in English. One goal is to encourage non-native speakers to introduce their work to Anglophone audiences. Another is to maximize accessibility: all books will be available in open access within a year after printed publication.

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Konstantinos Eleftheriadis
Paris, September 2017

1 Introduction

Queer Festivals and the Anti-Identity Paradox: Transnational Collective Identities beyond the State

'The LGBT movement is often confined to the sacrosanct trench of gay marriage and adoption. We must try to imagine new ways of progress, new practices, new insights."[1] This is how the festival 'Da Mieli a Queer' in Rome started in a spring day of April 2013.[2] QueerLab, a 'new association born to renovate the LGBTI movement',[3] together with the association Mario Mieli and the squat-theatre Teatro Valle, organized a four-day event in order to 'experiment in the words, in the body experience, in poetics, in the imaginary'. Two months later, in a more northerly part of Europe, another queer festival was starting: the Queeristan festival of Amsterdam:

> The manipulation of gay rights has made it possible to actively support blatantly racist, classist, sexist and xenophobic policies. [...] Let's abandon sexuality as a personal identity that just defines a lifestyle. We are angry, we are pissed off, dissatisfied, *indignados*.[4]

In 2010, the year I started my research, a crucial moment in sexual politics was occurring in Western Europe. LGBT[5] movements had achieved a great breakthrough in institutional politics and public sympathy, at the national and the European scale. Gay civil unions, marriages, adoption, although in different steps, and with different forms, seemed to make their way towards institutionalization (Paternotte 2011) and legitimization in the

1 Da Mieli a Queer, 'Festival Call', http://www.mariomieli.org/damieliaqueer/?page_id=138 (last accessed: 19/09/2017).

2 All extracts from the web are presented the first time with their author, the title, their URL links and their last day of access. For the following uses, I use the author and the title of the source. Theoretical sources and media articles used as such are referenced alphabetically in the bibliography. Therefore, readers can look at the bibliography for the theoretical references, and in the footnotes for the empirical sources.

3 QueerLab Associazione GLBTI, 'A Propos', https://www.facebook.com/pg/QueerLab-248793105177065/about/?ref=page_internal (last accessed: 19/09/2017).

4 Queeristan, 'Call for Participation: "Queeristan 2013"', http://www.univie.ac.at/Geschichte/salon21/?p=12424 (last accessed: 19/09/2017).

5 I refer to the umbrella term LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) as a category used in scholarly literature and the public discourse to describe people with 'deviant' sexual and gender identities (Ayoub 2016: 1).

public sphere, manifested in social and legal recognition. For many gay, lesbian and transgender people, however, this recognition came with a cost. It progressively allowed a dangerous slip towards mainstreamization, seen as recognition of specific gender and sexual identities over others, accompanied by an over-regulation of homosexuality through patriarchal norms, and for some, even an attempt to re-privatize sexuality (Brown and Browne 2016: 63). Moreover, a few scholars and activists argued that this process of assimilation of Western LGBT identities into the normative world of heteronormativity[6] was followed by increasing sentiments of racism and xenophobia inside the LGBT communities, especially regarding Muslim postcolonial populations, either European citizens or migrants. LGBT rights were seen as justifying imperialist wars in the world and racism in the West.

Back in 2010, when I was starting my PhD thesis, two events triggered my interest in the queer critique of the process of LGBT mainstreaming. These events exemplified the need to efficiently articulate the connections between sexual, gender and antiracist politics, beyond traditional identity categories. The first refers to Judith Butler's refusal to accept the award of Berlin Pride Civil Courage on 19 June 2010 (Jaunait et al. 2013: 6; Ayoub 2016: 2-3). In fact, during Berlin's Christopher Pride Parade, the famous queer theorist and activist Judith Butler delivered a speech, in which she stated that: 'I must distance myself from complicity with racism, including anti-Muslim racism. [...] Bi, trans and queer people can be used by those who want to wage war'.[7] As a 'remedy', she proposed to offer the prize to organizations of people of colour. In her refusal, which went viral in social media, Butler pointed at the increasing criminalization of migrants, or Germans from migrant backgrounds, whose supposed 'cultural norms' are portrayed as opposed to women's rights and homosexuality. Since then, this culturalizing discourse has been often reactivated, producing widespread moral panics.[8] Butler's refusal pointed to what she saw as the unacknowl-

6 Heteronormativity describes 'the set of norms that make heterosexuality seem natural or right and that organize homosexuality as its binary opposite' (Valocchi 2005: 756).

7 No Homonationalism, 'Judith Butler Refuses Berlin Pride Civil Courage Prize 2010', http://nohomonationalism.blogspot.fr/2010/06/judith-butler-refuses-berlin-pride.html (last accessed: 19/09/2017).

8 A characteristic case is the 'Cologne aggressions' which took place during the New Year's Eve celebrations on 31 December 2015 in Cologne, Germany. In the aftermath of these New Year Eve's festivities, German media reported that a series of sexual aggressions were notified to the police, pointing to Muslim migrants and refugees as the main assaulters. The news got quickly diffused by other international media, too, reporting foreign politicians' statements that migrants should respect 'women's rights'. The incidents were not presented through the

edged nature of race and migration in contemporary LGBT discourse, a theme that came back, in academic discussions this time, some months later, at the University of Amsterdam's 'Sexual Nationalisms' conference.

The second event pointing to the LGBT identities' mainstreaming and triggering this research refers to the 'Sexual Nationalisms' conference that took place in January 2011. This event organized by the Amsterdam Research Center for Gender and Sexuality (UvA) and the School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences (EHESS), stated that 'homophobia and conservativism, gender segregation and sexual violence have been represented as alien to modern European culture and transposed upon the bodies, cultures and religions of migrants, especially Muslims and their descendants'. The organizers asked 'how can progressive sexual politics avoid the trap of exclusionary instrumentalization without renouncing its emancipatory promise?'[9]

The conference was portrayed by some scholars as revealing the numerous 'problematic trends in academia concerning the politics of speech, silence, and representation' (Stelder 2011). In fact, a series of conflicts emerged during this conference that addressed both 'the premises of the event and the modalities of its implementation' (Jaunait 2011: 5). Scholars of colour in the field of feminist studies and queer theory, such as Jasbir Puar, Fatima El-Tayeb and Jin Haritaworn, addressed critiques against the organization of the conference, on the premise that it was made up of white, gay European men. The conference crystallized, for these scholars, a process of silencing issues of racism, homonormativity and imperialist wars in the name of gender and sexual liberation. They argued, moreover, that twenty-first-century sexual and gender movements in the continent participate, if not contribute to, in the de-politicization of gay and lesbian identities, accompanying it with racism in the LGBT communities (Perreau 2016: 120). The two above events, despite the differences in scope and the location and the publics they addressed, caught my attention in that they pointed at the reorientation of sexual and gender politics in Europe towards *queer* critiques.

frame of 'mass sex assault', which would be an expected response to such a massive harassment. They were rather presented through the frame of 'the lack of respect for women demonstrated by Muslim migrants', hinting at the alleged irreconcilable differences of migrant, and mainly Muslim, men's values with those of the West, which include women's rights.

9 Amsterdam Research Center for Gender and Sexuality and Institut de Recherches Interdisciplinaires sur les Enjeux Sociaux, 'Sexual Nationalisms: Gender, Sexuality, and the Politics of Belonging in the New Europe', http://calenda.org/203157 (last accessed: 19/09/2017).

Queer … What is queer? A research trajectory in collective identities

'Queer' movements and individuals identifying with this label have been marking the activist landscape in many parts of the world. Drawing upon the US experience, Joshua Gamson defined queer as a 'loose but distinguishable set of political movements and mobilizations, and second a somewhat parallel set of academy-bound intellectual endeavors […] [that] defined itself largely against conventional lesbian and gay politics' (1995: 393). For Europe, queer is slightly different. Queer in the continent became known through the circulation of queer theories into academia (Downing and Gillett 2011). In addition, queer activists and groups participated in other left-wing transnational movements, such as the global justice movement or the *No Borders* network (Brown 2007) or local anti-authoritarian movements (for Greece, see, for instance, Eleftheriadis 2013). Progressively, anti-institutional forms of 'queer' political organizing around local-based groups and transnational festivals emerged in the social movements scene.

The organization of queer politics around festivals and their number intrigued me. I wondered, Why a festival? What does this specific repertoire offer to sexual identities politics? I took a look at their programmes: political and cultural workshops, collective cooking, parties, performances, DIY (Do-It-Yourself) structures. Moreover, sexual and gender transgressions were largely emphasized: gender boundary-crossing performances and sex parties. What also surprised me were the commonalities all these festivals presented: all events took place in highly politicized spaces, mostly squats, and shared a strong internationalist character. Their callouts enthusiastically welcomed people from all over Europe and beyond, while many of them were open to new members to staff their organizing committees. Finally, they all called for 'abandoning identities', inviting us to imagine and realize new forms of gender expression and non-normative sexual practices: 'a space where you can feel free to express other forms of sexuality and ways of living than the straight and gay norms we have in today's society'.[10] Finally, their short-term, ephemeral character gave the impression of bringing people, ideas, and practices together in order to work collectively against identities. The festival seemed therefore the most appropriate repertoire of action in order to study the mobilization of queer movements and their beliefs in 'abandoning identities'.

10 Oslo Queer Festival, 'Home', http://osloqueerfestival.blogspot.fr/2011/ (last accessed: 19/09/2017).

As a scholar of social movements, I was aware of the importance of collective identities for mobilization directed to the state and institutions in order to gain resources. But here was a movement that first wanted to abandon identities and second seemed as it did not care whatsoever about claiming anything from the state. I considered theories of protest then as an impasse for studying anti-identitarian movements since most studies have primarily focused on collective identity as a crucial factor in mobilization in order to ask for *rights*, as LGBT and women's movements usually do, or request other resources. For Sabine Lang, for instance, women's rights groups addressing supra-national organizations, such as the EU, or national institutional authorities, employ 'a mix of mobilization strategies that target larger audiences as well as institutional actors' (2013: 167). In that sense, women's movements combine institutional advocacy with public outreach, both embedded in the rights discourse. Phillip Ayoub (2016) claimed in a similar vein that LGBT movements, either those targeting supranational institutions or national polities, are looking for better representation and new rights. This rights discourse was not much present in queer festivals' calls, while the state was only present in order to be criticized for its 'mainstreaming' force. If the desire to ask for further rights from the state is not there, therefore, it seemed that strong identity categories were not useful either. Under which umbrella, then, do queer festivals manage to bring people together?

It appeared to me that within queer festivals, identity is perceived as a constraining rather than an engaging factor in their movement politics. It should then be precisely this normative belief, that we should go beyond identities, that succeeds in putting people together. A paradox thus emerges based upon an assumption and a question. The assumption is that queer indicates a shared anti-identitarian vision and this vision organizes some publics. The question is, How is this vision transformed into a dynamic movement in which actors mobilize some form of anti-identitarianism? To put it differently, How is it possible for a collective identity to be anti-identitarian?

Anti-identitarian movements and collective identities

I argue that the queer movement does not avoid the construction of a collective identity, despite queer's insistence on the contrary. This construction is not only a by-product but an explicit quest in the movement's process of autonomization vis-à-vis increasingly institutionalized LGBT movements

and vis-à-vis a public sphere saturated with the exploitation of LGBT and women's rights for nationalist and racist purposes. For such an autonomization to become possible, a community-building process is necessary. This process is not, however, a romantic path of love and peace, similar to how we imagine older hippie subcultures to have been (which, indeed, they weren't). This community-building is rather full of conflicts, tensions and disagreements that activists face in their way to establish practices and to advance discourses that would most resonate with their ideals on what queer anti-identity *should* be. For this purpose, the book focuses on the discourses and the practices that pull activists and individuals together into spaces of political socialization and brings the process of collective identity construction to light.[11] As per discourses, I focus on the discursive tactics that get deployed in a specific historical moment of a given context, and for queers this includes self-definitions of their identities and 'deconstruction, boundary crossing, label disruption' (Gamson 1989). As per practices, I include these tactics of space-building and organizational processes, but also other, often unacknowledged norm-binding acts, like dressing and eating, that coexist with the above in the queer festivals' process of identity-building. Thus, I adopt a pragmatic approach of mobilization that focuses on the 'modalities of action, in the process of making [...] and the practical skills of social actors' (Mathieu 2016: 8). It is through the analysis of the arrangement of their practices and discourses that we can see how queer festivals contribute to the creation of anti-identitarian identities, that challenge both the dominant representations of fixed gender and sexual identities (and the paradigm that sustains them alive), as well as the LGBT movement's representational logic that the latter strategically uses in order to achieve concrete policy reforms by the state.

I analyse the argument of the book in three parts. The first is the historical part. Social movements might go through a period during which they attempt to regroup forces, to recruit new activists, to widen their frames and to establish their presence in a more constant way in the public space. For queer movements, this is the autonomization period, in which festivals, as a specific repertoire of action, strengthen their presence in the local and the transnational arenas. This process of queer autonomization is a rather

11 I operate this distinction between 'discourse' and 'practice' purely for analytical reasons. According to Norman Fairclough (1995), discourse is just one among many aspects of a social practice, in the sense of an act of intervention in the public space. Therefore, we should be rather talking about 'discursive practices' and 'non-discursive practices'. I, however, decided to keep this distinction in a more pragmatic sociological perspective.

European phenomenon and takes place through community-building after a long decade of links with the global justice movement and its radical components (Brown 2007). After 2009 and the decline of the latter, queer actors did not abandon the struggles and did not fall in abeyance, contrary to women's movements in the 1980s (Taylor 1989). Queer activists chose to pull together and create dynamics in a distinct way, by emphasizing the internal dynamics of community-building. Therefore, European queer movement activity is the result of two larger processes. First, the decline of the global justice movement. Second, the institutionalization of the LGBT movement, and the need for some activists to bring into the public space claims and performances that did not find easy access in the institutional arena and the public sphere. Chapter 2 presents this genealogical approach (Balsiger 2014) through some evidence from the history of queer politics in Europe and its intertwinement with the global justice movements, and sheds light on this period of autonomization. Through historical accounts of secondary sources, I demonstrate how European queer politics were from their very beginning part of transnational left-wing movements. The latter were very active in the flourishing global justice demonstrations of the early millennium.

The second part replies to the main question: Under which umbrella can queer movements pull people together and transform them into active members? In order to approach this question, I identify several levels of analysis, explained in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. On the one hand, queer movements' process of autonomization comes together with their refusal to claims-making in the institutional arena. Queer movements do not address the rights-discourse, since they do not look for concrete policy change, something that primarily defines current LGBT movements. This is a main differentiation parameter for these two social movements, and makes queer an autonomous actor in the gender and sexual identities field. Beyond state-oriented structural approaches of social movement studies, this part of the book explains that social movements which do not address the state mobilize resources, create collective identities and align with other social movements in order to express a voice through distinct vocabularies and performances in and against a normative public sphere. Queer festivals make us understand that movements seeking autonomous internal dynamics are equally important as external policy-oriented ones: creating and sustaining a social movement community without addressing the state, and being against collective identities is, however, a challenge that queer activists are called to take. In these chapters, the main questions are: How do queer festivals carve out a space, distinct from the one

of LGBT movements? and, What consequences does this identity-averse discourse have for identity-building? I address these questions through closer ethnographic insights into queer festivals and activists' discursive and practical tactics.

The final part builds on transnational social movements literature. In fact, what queer festivals inform us is also about their mobilization activities at the transnational level. Moving beyond state-centred approaches on social movements, Chapter 6 shows how queer festivals make openings to the transnational arena, too, without passing through supra-national organizations (EU, Council of Europe). Their aim is rather to build transnational identifications and solidarities with activists and participants from other parts of the continent (and beyond). This is achieved through the arrangement of a set of practices that allow queer festivals to build their queerness through cross-border practices.

How is it possible to mobilize without drawing upon at least some elements of identity? In the Copenhagen Queer Festival, we could read very clearly that 'This is not a gay party. This is a queer party.'[12] So, we are queer, because we are not gay. If collective identity still describes 'a shared sense of "oneness" or "we-ness" anchored in real or imagined shared attributes' (Snow 2001), then queer *seems to be a real and effective* collective identity that defines its 'we-ness' in relation to who we are not rather than to who we are. Such an identity is 'affirmed in terms of a negation rather than an affirmation' (Flesher-Fominaya 2015: 66). The negation against a positively defined identity has its own effects in the way queer actors imagine their 'we-ness', since it allows them to identify the actors against whom they would erect boundaries. These 'key others' for queer festivals are the state and the LGBT identities.

This book makes us understand how the building of an anti-identitarian collective identity can be paradoxically a claim in itself. Queer festivals are the most appropriate object to unfold this social movements paradox, because their politics focuses on the concrete discourses and practices that make social movements activity based upon an anti-labelling discourse possible. In the following section, I provide two main parameters that will locate queer festivals' anti-identitarianism in the literature. First, queer festivals do not address the state as their main challenger. A collective identity is thus possible to be born as a result of a process of autonomization from the state and from movements targeting the state to achieve concrete policy reforms. Movements are not therefore always confined to

12 Poster, personal collection of the author.

a relation with the state. Second, queer festivals' identities expression blurs the boundaries between cultural and instrumental goals, between identity and strategy. This becomes possible through community-building.

Beyond the state: Queer identity-building as a goal in itself

> Queer should not be understood as an identity, it should be understood in an anti-identitarian manner.
> – Commentator on the Queeruption mailing list[13]

The queer 'we-ness' operates through an imagined 'self-sovereignty' against the state and the normative consequences it brings once a movement enters in contact with it through processes of institutionalization. Saying that 'queer is not gay' means that queers do not want to enter in negotiation with the state as other social movements do to achieve concrete policy reforms. But social movement studies have often taken the relations between identities and the state as granted.

For resource mobilization theories, movements are seen as rationally choosing 'political strategies to optimize the likelihood of policy success' (Bernstein 1997: 534). In this respect, social movements interact with the state or political institutions to obtain resources (McAdam et al. 2001). New social movement theories have also addressed social movements' relations with the state and the way the latter interacts with collective identities. These approaches have illustrated the distinction between strategy and identity-oriented movements (Touraine 1981). In fact, for new social movements theories, social movements are divided into 'cultural' or identity movements (Taylor and Whittier 1992) and 'instrumental' or strategic movements (Duyvendak and Giugni 1995: 84-85). Instrumental movements are the ones 'pursuing goals in the outside world for which the action is instrumental for goal realization', whereas identity movements are the ones realizing 'their goals, at least partly, in their activities' (Bernstein 1997). As Mary Bernstein has shown, however, LGBT movements have demonstrated the analytical limits of these two terms, for that identity can become itself an instrument, a political goal per se. So, at first glance, we can say that queer festivals make identity-building an essential goal of their collective action, not so much as to gain acceptance through 'sameness' in

13 Retrieved from the Queeruption mailing list on 4 June 2010. This mailing list does not function anymore.

society, but rather as an attempt to deconstruct already existing identitarian categories, in this case 'gay', 'straight', 'man', 'woman' (Bernstein 1997: 535).

Moreover, Bernstein's model on identity types of mobilization informs us about what she calls 'emergent movements', meaning movements with no establishment in the political arena.[14] For these movements, which lack political access and organizational infrastructure or collective identity, an emphasis on difference will be needed to build solidarity and mobilize a constituency: 'Such movements will tend to focus building community and celebrating difference, as will those sectors of a movement marginalized by exclusive groups encountering nonroutine opposition' (Bernstein 1997: 541). Although some 'emergent' movements might never evolve into more structured organizations, it is important to stress that movements with no access to the polity and with few organizational resources tend to focus on their differences rather on their similarities with other movements. Queer actors in that respect can 'afford' to insist on difference, because they have little to gain from the state. Claiming their difference from the LGBT movement implies building another, new identity, that is as important for their identity as their strategy of mobilization. Queer festivals remind us in that sense of what Francesca Polletta calls *prefiguration* (2002), meaning that festivals organize their actions through the ideals they want to put in place. This concept helps to understand the organizational logics of the festivals that draw upon horizontality. It has, however, its limits when we want to understand why internal conflicts emerge in queer actors' attempts to implement their ideals.

For political opportunity structures theorists, political institutions offer specific opportunities to social movements, allowing for successful collective actions (Della Porta and Diani 2006: 16-19). These approaches have often seen the state as the main challenger for LGBT movements, demonstrating how these movements have been addressing institutions in order to promote rights. Tremblay et al.'s edited collection *The Lesbian and Gay Movement and the State* (2011) introduced insights into the ways gay and lesbian social movements across the globe interplay, according to open or closed opportunity structures, and depending on the context in which they develop. Taylor et al. have addressed the issues of same-sex wedding performances as a political claim vis-à-vis the state of California (2009). In all these approaches, gay and lesbian movements' state-oriented character channels them into choosing the role of the strategic actor. In this respect, the expression of a collective identity can be deployed at the

14 She uses the example of the US homophile movement.

collective level, as a political strategy aimed at rather instrumental goals (Bernstein 1997: 535).

All the above-mentioned approaches are linked to structural theories. Structural theories relate, one way or another, to the way movements configure their identities and their framings to 'convince' the state. These theories presuppose that movements' final goal is legislative change in specific policy sectors. Especially for new social movements, in which gender and sexual identity are usually included, movements have been seen as strategic actors in their fight for equality between homosexuals and heterosexuals. Structural approaches thus explain little on social movements identities created as a relational response to other movements' processes of institutionalization. But, as queer festivals show us, social movements might want to direct their strategies towards other non-state directions. Movements might desire to stay out of institutionalized processes, in order to keep their 'autonomy'. In fact, not directing efforts towards the state allows certain movements to produce 'subversive' or non-representational identities.

Queer festivals urge us, moreover, to look at social movements' transnational mobilization, since their objective is to attract publics from other countries, too. But here again, transnationalism has been often linked with the state or with supranational organizations. Transnationalism (or transnational diffusion) is defined as the 'relatively deliberate and "grounded" construction of cross-border networks between individuals, groups, organizations and countries' (Chabot and Duyvendak 2002: 697). This concept has been quite prominent in the recent debates of social movement studies, but it takes as granted that transnational movements consider the state as at least one key target of contention. How do queer festivals relate to this premise? As I argued earlier, one of the main objectives of queer festivals is not rights-claiming. The state or supranational organizations are therefore not directly targeted. Their main aim is community-building through practice and discourse. Queer festivals do not address uniquely local publics, but they also attempt to attract publics from other cities and from other countries. Their emphasis on that is evidenced through the different practices they put in place in order to attract these foreign publics. We can assume that queer identity is thus imagined not as local-based but rather as cross-border that wants to escape from strict national boundaries. In that respect, queer anti-identitarianism might translate into anti-border politics as well.

At the European level, transnational LGBT and women's rights mobilization has been often associated to Europeanization, defined as a process that relates to elite-driven, top-down processes of EU norm diffusion in member states (Kollman 2009; Montoya 2013). Different movements address state or

supranational power, some of them targeting directly the Council of Europe and EU institutions (for the ILGA-Europe, see Paternotte 2016), and some others using resources from one state in order to target another government, such as the case of Polish activists in Germany targeting Poland (Ayoub 2013). In this last work, Ayoub points out that, beyond top-down interactions, Europeanization can also incorporate 'horizontal interaction', which functions as an 'important pre-condition for (LGBT) mobilization because the EU does not directly offer such public spheres' (2013: 285). To that extent, and away from top-down processes, what sort of public spheres do queers build through their cross-border networks and to what extent do the latter impact on their identities? For Ayoub, the mobilization strategies of LGBT movements, and the resources they possess at a specific moment, target state institutions and/or supranational organizations. On his analysis on Polish activists from Berlin filing cases against Poland, Ayoub claims that

> Europeanization provides different types of mobilizing structures for LGBT mobilization, which come together to mobilize transnational actors to make claims for LGBT recognition in target states (2013: 304).

In this respect, the resources that actors mobilize should align with the available opportunities they possess at that specific moment in order to successfully address the state.

In a similar vein, Kelly Kollman has discussed the importance of political opportunities for LGBT actors' mobilizations in Western democracies (2009). She takes as a case the same-sex union that she sees as a case par excellence of international norm diffusion and socialization, for activists mobilizing both in international and in national arenas. Actors use their resources to target the state. In all these exemplary efforts to address LGBT movements' claims and targets, we realize that states (or supranational institutions) have been playing a primary role in movements' identities for mobilization. The state becomes therefore both an arena (for instance, by getting discrimination cases in the court) but also an actor who participates in movements' identity-building, since movements need to adapt their discourses and practices, in order to achieve stakeholder legitimacy to advance concrete policy reforms. For these approaches, the state largely shapes sexual movements' resources and identities.

Queer festivals inform social movement studies about the limits of structural approaches for movements that look for autonomy from the state, and resort, for that reason, to anti-representational and anti-identitarian identities. In fact, queer 'claims-making' is difficult to imagine as one

addressing the state, because festivals' main aim is the deconstruction of existing binary gender and sexual identity categories. Is the state responsible for producing and keeping these binaries? Certainly yes, but in this case where should queer movements locate their problem? In the law, the administration, the police, the schools? And what about the media? What about society? And capitalism? And the public space? For queer festivals, the target is thus not a single, well-defined entity, but something that is multi-faceted and interconnected.

In this respect, queer identities seem to align more with Armstrong and Bernstein's model of the 'multi-institutional politics approach' (2008). According to this model, actors' perceptions of domination are equally important as domination itself. Breaking away from purely structural theories of state-centeredness, the authors propose to look at the meanings that actors challenge, meanings that are inseparable from the structures in which they exist. Cultural codes are a significant part of the challenge faced by movements because they are not only the product of texts, but they are embedded, enacted and materialized within concrete institutional locations. The institutions producing and maintaining these codes often do it to produce classificatory and hierarchizing systems with symbolic and material consequences for social actors (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008: 83). Such an approach on domination has direct implications on how social movement studies defines politics. A social movement is the one that can target not only the state, but also other institutions, or cultural meanings (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008: 84). Within such an approach, thinking queer festivals as 'identity' or 'instrumental' is limited, since they can at the same time fight against multi-faceted domination while focusing simultaneously on identity-building.

Queer festivals align to this model, because they focus on empowerment through community-building by practice and discourse, emphasizing their difference, rather than their similarities to society (Fraser 1990)[15] in order to challenge dominant codes. Queer festivals might

15 Queer festivals remind us in this respect Nancy Fraser's 'subaltern counterpublics'. Queer claims are subject to the exclusionary practices of the official public sphere, as we know it by Jürgen Habermas (1989). In one of her most important critiques, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', Fraser makes another reading of the 'bourgeois' public sphere. According to Fraser, 'members of subordinated social groups – women, workers, peoples of color, and gays and lesbians – have repeatedly found it advantageous to constitute alternative publics. I propose to call these *subaltern counterpublics* in order to signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs' (1990: 67; emphasis added).

look at the destabilization of classificatory systems in a wide array of institutions (Armstrong and Bernstein 2008: 87) and ask for material and symbolic change at the same time (Fraser 1997). Drawing upon the 'multi-institutional politics' model, we can argue that for queer festivals, politics has the potential of becoming a 'struggle over which imaginary would have greater sway' (Calhoun 2012: 162). As follows, queer festivals and their publics seem to want to 'shape politics itself and not simply rectify social and economic harms, severe as these were' (Calhoun 2012: 180; also Warner 2002: 82).[16] Therefore, queer festivals invite us to question structural political process approaches to gender and the mobilization of sexual identities movements through a multi-institutional approach to power.

We have seen that most LGBT and women's movements have been studied through their relationship with the state. Undoubtedly, the state's impact on LGBT movements' mobilization and identities has been tremendous. LGBT movements largely suppress their differences from the majority society, strategically to achieve concrete policy reforms (Bernstein 1997: 532). But queer festivals on the other hand celebrate their differences. After having discussed the autonomy claimed by queer festivals vis-à-vis the state, I will look now at their identity-building as a means and a goal, replying to the following question: Upon which identity can queer festivals still mobilize?

'This Is Not a Gay Party. This Is a Queer Party': Queer festivals facing LGBT identities through autonomy

The previous question leads us to another important aspect in how the analysis of queer festivals brings new insights into collective identities studies. The literature on collective identities is enormous, and gender and sexual movements have largely contributed to this flourishing. LGBT movements are usually seen as positioned in the 'difference versus sameness' dilemma. This means that 'the lesbian and gay movement seems largely to have abandoned its emphasis on difference from the straight majority

16 Michael Warner's concept of 'poetic world making' is very relevant to our discussion: 'The point here is that this perception of public discourse as conversation obscures the importance of the poetic functions of both language and corporeal expressivity in giving a particular shape to publics. The [rational-critical] public is thought to exist empirically and to require persuasion rather than poesis' (2002: 82).

in favor of a moderate politics that highlights similarities to the straight majority' (Bernstein 1997: 532). In a similar vein, Paternotte has argued that 'gay marriage' is not only the result of mobilizing Western liberal values, but it is also a way to reinforce universality by claiming that homosexuals and heterosexuals' claims are essentially comparable. The following statement of this Belgian MP during the parliamentary discussions on the gay marriage law is illustrative of how gay marriage is framed as moving towards sameness. Els van Weert, of the Flemish Social-Liberal Party, argued that the objective of the law was not to authorize the first 'gay' marriage. Instead, she proposed that the law would allow 'the first marriage whose future spouses would be of the same sex, and this constitutes an important nuance' (cited in Paternotte 2011: 24; translation mine).[17] So, if politicians focus on 'sameness', the LGBT movements are invited to do so too as a necessary step to claim their rights. On the contrary, the queer statement 'the LGBT movement is often confined to the sacrosanct trench of gay marriage and adoption' (Da Mieli a Queer 2013) points to the opposite direction. Queer festivals' discourse seems to align against sameness advanced by their 'competing' LGBT movements, and this makes part of their own collective identity-building.

Movements use identities to direct their claims to the state, to institutions or to international organizations (Tarrow 2011: 7-8; Bernstein 1997). Older paradigms viewed identity as a rational way to proceed to collective action: 'if a group fails in these, it cannot accomplish any collective action' (Klandermans 1992: 81), a widespread model in social movement studies until the late 1990s. Today, collective identity is rather seen as a process in the making: 'social actors recognize themselves – and are recognized by other actors – as part of broader groupings' (Della Porta and Diani 2006: 91). Verta Taylor's and Nancy Whittier's analyses on the lesbian feminist communities played a key role for this constructivist approach. In fact, the authors proposed a 'social movement community' model, seen as 'a network of individuals and groups loosely linked through an institutional base, multiple goals and actions, and a collective identity that affirms members' common interests in opposition to dominant groups' (Taylor and Whittier 1992: 107). 'Social movement community' actors do not share, however, necessarily common structural locations. Further boundaries can be erected paradoxically within the challenging group, 'dividing it on the

17 '[pas] le premier mariage gay mais bien le premier mariage dont les futurs epoux sont de même sexe [...] ce qui constitue une nuance importante'. E. Van Weert, in *Chambre des représentants, Compte rendu integral*, PLEN 318, p. 60.

basis of race, class, age, religion, ethnicity, and other factors' (Taylor and Whittier 1992: 113-114).[18]

In recent years, however, and as a result of transnational movements, sociologically diverse types of actors have met together in collective action. These actors did not share necessarily common identity locations. But, their differences did not prevent them from joining, for instance, the global justice movements. As the latter expanded through World and European Social Forums, the interest in collective identity shifted from identity politics towards a more open and inclusive model, in which collective identity was based on the different experiences that social actors shared. This new model could be described as one in which 'identity shift[s] from single-movement identity to multiple, *tolerant* identities [...] characterized by inclusiveness and positive emphasis upon diversity and cross-fertilization, with limited identification' (Della Porta 2005b: 186). This definition of collective identity changes from its previous conceptualizations, according to which actors are assumed to share more 'stable', exclusive and unique identities. The global justice movement's 'emphasis on diversity' shifted the social movement literature towards the subjective experiences of the activists, and the multiple identifications they develop through their individual life trajectories and unequal structural locations.

Both the social movements community model and the tolerant identities model closely describe the attempt of queer festivals to pull people together. The social movement community model helps us understand the role of the festival, as a space in which identity-building becomes possible. The multiple identities model helps us explain the sociological heterogeneity of activists and participants in the festivals. But, we still lack references that would help us understand what queer actors want and how they express it. If we assume that festivals' main aim is to deconstruct dominant identitarian categories, by showing and embodying the fluidity of classifications, then we can look at how other similar anti-identitarian movements put in practice their anti-labelling strategies. In fact, queer movements are not the only ones to fight against categories.

18 Their example is taken from the analysis of the American lesbian feminist movement of the 1980s: 'African-American feminists criticize the tendency of many white lesbian feminists to dictate a politics based on hegemonic cultural standards' and this is the reason they embrace different cultural styles' (Taylor and Whittier 1992: 121). What can be derived from this observation is that within the same lesbian feminist 'community', the cultural interpretations of the same narratives vary according to power relations developing within the movement ('hegemonic cultural standards') interrelated with identities being constructed through life experiences ('African-American').

Based upon post-structuralist theories, inspired by Michel Foucault (1978), other anti-identitarian movements have challenged 'any and all identities (Jasper et al. 2015: 21). Flesher-Fominaya points out, in her study of the Spanish autonomous movements, that anti-identitarian identity can be broadly described as 'a collective identity that has as a central defining characteristic a refusal to have a common central defining characteristic' (2015: 66). To avoid strong identifications, therefore, which in the past might have been experienced as oppressive, certain social movements nowadays tend to attract actors with no fixed, exclusionary, and positively defined identities. As Jasper and McGarry point out, we can argue that this might be actually part of a 'queer turn':

> Scholars and activists today – *influenced by queer studies* – may feel that they are the first to be uncomfortable with strong collective identities, but that is probably because scholarly portrayals of the past exaggerate the homogeneity of groups and identities (2015: 11; emphasis added).

Following this line of thought, abandoning strict identities is a way for queer festivals to go against traditional LGBT identity politics that has amplified sameness and homogeneity.

Unwillingness to self-identify with a defining label is, however, not only a discursive tactic of queer festivals. Their anti-identitarianism is also part of their insertion into specific activist networks and militant spaces. Queer festivals are embedded into those European left-wing scenes which are unwilling to engage in representation as a condition for political action. Emphasizing their anti-identitarian identities, queer festivals follow on from the long tradition of European autonomous movements that tried to take distances from institutional left actors. This internal battle between anti-institutional and institutional movements has led since the 1960s to countless scissions inside the progressive movements field (Katsiaficas 1997). Autonomous movements have refused the representative logic of politics as practiced by the institutional left, a key 'other' that autonomous movements engage with in their boundary work (Flesher-Fominaya 2015: 66). In their search for anti-institutionalism, however, these movements are difficult to identify from the outside, while their focus on anti-identitarianism often makes them unable to get named by other actors and movements of the same scene. These last processes have an impact on autonomous anti-identitarian movements' dynamics, making them susceptible to fluctuated relations and dependent upon contingent activist recruits.

To sum up, queer festivals' collective identities borrow elements from all three main collective identity models, although they seem to be closer to two models. First, the 'multiple, tolerant identities' model (Della Porta 2005b: 186), where struggle is based on 'recognition of difference rather than on imputed commonalities in experience' (Nicholson and Seidman 1995: 12). Second, the 'anti-identitarian' model, in which refusal of institutional representation and links with autonomy is emphasized. In the table below, I portray the different analytical models of collective identities in social movement studies.

Table 1.1 Collective identities models and examples

Collective identities models	*Theory*	*Examples*
Identity politics	Social movement communities (Taylor and Whittier)	Lesbian feminism
Multiple identities	Multiple, tolerant identities	Global Justice movement
Anti-identitarian	Refusal to be represented (Jasper et al.; queer studies)	Spanish autonomous movements

So, for queer festivals, anti-identitarianism is both an instrument for mobilization in a multi-institutional world of domination, as well as an identity in itself which helps deconstruct from within normative representations and sexual and gender identitarian categories. Their aim is not policy change through concrete reforms, neither claims to representation in the institutional arena. Queer festivals attempt to occupy a space in which inclusivity and anti-labelling of gender and sexuality is at the forefront. In the next section, I show how I approached festivals' anti-identitarian queer work and how the methods I used for the study informed me about the book's theoretical analyses.

Methods of analysis

In order to analyse queer anti-identitarian politics, the most appropriate way is to empirically investigate the repertoire of action which consolidates the most activists' sense of belonging. I suggest thus looking at the *festival*, an extraordinary way for queer actors to gather activists, discuss politics, propose collective actions, but also have fun (and sex), experiment in their gender performances and create friendships and affective ties. Queer festivals are political spaces which address activists and participants

from the local and the international scenes through specific discourses, by circulating callouts, texts and images. Moreover, sustained interactions and networks across borders as well as digital communication practices are put in place. Despite these efforts, however, building a long-lasting identity is at stake due to the ephemeral character of the festivals (four to seven days per year) and their anti-representational rhetoric.

Conducting research in a field of emotional proximity might be a risky endeavour. Sympathies, misunderstandings and conflicts can emerge (and did emerge) during such a study, which might place the researcher in contrast with her own preconceptions about the field. Particularly present in ethnographies of progressive politics, social movement scholars have repeatedly addressed the influences we all have by our 'political ideologies and sympathies as well as nationality and possibly social class' (McCurdy and Uldam 2014: 43). In addition to this, I should add gender and sexuality (social movements scholars often 'forget' to mention these as crucial parameters in their field methods). In other words, it is important to stress *reflexivity* as an important parameter of the ethnographic study. Reflexivity should be seen not only as a way to distance oneself from the field, but also as a means to observe and analyse it in a more 'complete' way, beyond prejudices and sympathies which might alter the ways we understand the scopes and logics of the movement (Bourdieu 1992). In this book, I do not use reflexivity as a means for 'self-promotion', however. I rather use it as a tool to signal the power differentials developing during my fieldwork, between myself and my respondents, by providing an account of their experiences rather my own. Moreover, reflexivity helps to prevent my personal imaginaries of how queer activism should look like from the ways in which queer actors and participants prefigure their own political ideals.

My insertion in the field was facilitated by my own political proximity to queer politics – this had its limits as well. As Balsiger and Lambelet note, when one conducts fieldwork in anarchist or queer groups, revealing the goal of her presence might not be a very strategic move (2014: 156). Activists might become self-conscious about their behaviour and they might alter it each time the person identified as a researcher shows up. On the other hand, failing to disclose one's identity of a researcher feels like betraying the trust of the activists, especially if these individuals hosted you and welcomed you in very open ways, as was the case in most of my field visits. Moreover, is a researcher always obliged to disclose her identity to every single participant or just to the organization committees? These are serious concerns that I had to consider. But I need to say that these dilemmas are not resolved once and for all. My insertion in the field as both queer and as a researcher was the result

of a long process which in some cases was smooth, and in others less so. My relation to the field was therefore non-fixed and unstable, but always overt.

As a subject, therefore, in-between my multiple identities, professional, political and sexual, I acknowledge, moreover, that normative assumptions about queer politics are going through the book. But these normative statements should not be perceived by the reader as an authoritative interference of a social scientist in social movement politics. I urge the reader to see them rather as a general contribution to the current debates of social movement studies about mobilization and collective identities in the process of making. Combining a reflexive framework with a discussion on the theoretical debates is for me the most fruitful way to proceed with sociological research.

Working on community-building and identity construction in queer festivals implies a close engagement with the practices that set them up as well as the discourses that circulate. Ethnographic methods are uniquely suited if we want to understand these processes. I draw upon the observation and the description of discourses, consisting of 'official' written material and activists' narratives, as well as practices, that focus on organizational, networking, and cultural activities. The official texts are examined through the written and visual material produced or circulating in the festivals. More specifically, I see how queer activists promote some discourses over others, what kind of vocabulary they use: overall, their discursive strategies, when they discuss what 'queerness' is. Moreover, I check the practices during the festivals as they are seen through my personal engagement (participant observation) and finally I analyse the narratives through the life histories I conducted with several activists and participants. Each analytical category, however, is not autonomous from the other, and thus both discourses and practices are examined jointly.[19]

Case studies

There is no accurate number of how many queer festivals have taken place since the last Queeruption festival of 2010, and how many keep alive today. We can assume, however, that festivals have been active in maintaining a queer culture. In addition, they have contributed to the reinforcement of social networks between queer activists and other participants across borders for many years (Brown 2007). Of course, 'queer' does not only stand for autonomous

19 For more details on the methodology, and especially the multi-site ethnography, I invite the reader to check the Appendix.

squat-based activism. Many other queer festivals have been taking place, including queer tango festivals or queer film festivals. For example, in 2011, the year I started my fieldwork, there were at least ten queer festivals of such a kind taking place in Europe,[20] and at least 15 in other parts of the world.[21] Although a very important question would be to ask what has provoked this explosion of queer festivals, this book focuses on European queer festivals and looks, in particular, at the ones that advance mobilization rhetoric.

The study of the queer festivals is the result of a multi-sited ethnographic approach which consisted of understanding a variety of perspectives involved with a specific idea ('queer') in multiple settings (Marcus 1995).[22] Despite their variations in terms of size and background, all the festivals studied in this book share common characteristics, such as similar types of organization (horizontal, non-professionalized grassroots). The case studies explored in the book are the following:

Table 1.2 Case studies/sites

City/festival name	*Year (Date)*
Copenhagen/Copenhagen Queer Festival	2011 (25-31 July)
Berlin/QuEAR	2011 (5-7 August)
Oslo/Oslo Queer Festival	2011 (22-25 September)
Amsterdam/Queeristan	2012 (18-20 May)
Rome/Da Mieli a Queer: Culture e pratiche LGBTI in movimento	2013 (4-7 April)
Amsterdam/Queeristan	2013 (30 May-2 June)

20 Queer Lisboa (Portugal); Queer Tango Festival, Copenhagen (Denmark); Vienna Queer Film Festival (Austria).

21 Kashish Mumbai International Queer Film festival and Nigah Queer Fest in New Delhi (India); Tango Queer Festival Buenos Aires (Argentina); Beijing Queer Film Festival (China), Queer Women of Color Film Festival, San Francisco (USA); Vancouver Queer Film Festival (Canada).

22 Epistemologically, multi-sited ethnography can bring important input in social movement studies. We are used to study social movements as monolithic units of analysis, which are created through very distinct macro processes (globalization, Europeanization, etc.). In addition, it is believed that social movement networks are somehow always connected in a conscious and rational way, even if they appear in a cross-national context. Finally, it is very common to examine social movements as part of a 'national' tradition of contention in which they appear (see 'the contentious French', Tarrow 2005: 30). Although it looks reasonable that the starting point of a social movement ethnographic study would be a certain social movement organization, a multi-sited approach makes the researcher evolve her object of study in such a way that the movement is seen as part of the world system. In other words, multi-sited ethnography makes us see social movements not as separate, self-conscious unities with a start and an end, but rather as 'open-ended' processes, 'semi-autonomous social fields' formulated and renegotiated by macro-structures, social actors, and, overall, by the world system to which they belong.

This fieldwork is in no case exhaustive of queer festivals that took place during the years under scrutiny (2011-2013), but it is indicative of two parameters: first, the geographies that make queer festivals easier to develop in specific settings over others; second, my own methodological bias. The former parameter relates to social and institutional factors in the production of queer festivals; the latter relates to research constraints. First, in terms of social attitudes, European publics demonstrate varied – often opposed – views on LGBT tolerance, so a great diversity can be identified inside the continent. All the countries under study, apart from Italy, showed high rates of approval of homosexuality, according to the 2010 European Social Survey, in the Netherlands 92% of people approve it, in Denmark 89%, in Norway 83% and in Germany 81% (European Social Survey 2010).[23] In these public spheres, LGBT issues have been discussed in heightened public debates. As indicated by the same survey, these results are contrasted by the lower rates of approval in Eastern Europe. We can explain this contrast in the different articulations of sexual identities movements, that did not follow the linear Western form: homophile, LGBT, queer. Mizielinska and Kulpa have very insightfully argued that after the collapse of the Soviet bloc, Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries

> quite unanimously adopted a Western style of political and social engagement, without much questioning of its historical particularism and suitability for their context. When lesbian and gay activism began to emerge in CEE, the West was already at the 'queer' stage, with a long history and plurality of models, forms of engagement, goals and structures. (2011: 14)

For the authors, distinct forms of queer engagement are much more hardly discernible in this region right now, since homophile, LGBT and queer movements have been going through an 'Eastern time of coincidence', according to which, elements from the above three distinct Western movements are collapsed into new, hybrid, forms of movements. In that respect, queer identities that take clear distance from LGBT ones are more discernible in Western European settings. Therefore, festivals in these contexts are the most appropriate if we want to understand the distinct path of autonomization of queer politics.

Selecting Western European festivals over others was a necessary step in order to understand queer community-building in capitals located in countries with similar views on homosexuality but also with similar

23 Italy is not part of the survey.

institutional frameworks on LGBT rights. Europe, as the primary focus of this study, is selected as the region whose countries are subject to common sexual minorities' protection norms, through the EU and the Council of Europe systems of binding legal protection (Ayoub 2013: 281). In 2013 – the final year of the fieldwork – ILGA-Europe, the main European LGBT rights organization, published a map classifying countries according to their national legal and policy rights situation of LGBT and intersex people.[24] In this list, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands and Germany hit high in the scores (respectively 66%, 57%, 60%, 54%).[25] Only Italy scored very low with 19%. These results align to the European Social Survey's attitudes results, presented above, and indicate a trend of correlation between LGBT policymaking and positive views on homosexuality. Queer festivals were thus more present in countries with similar levels of LGBT social and legal recognition.

Although Italy might seem a bit away from this pattern, the Mario Mieli festival informs us on another parameter which might impact on queer mobilization. In fact, queer festivals tend to take place in advanced industrialized democracies with similar levels of economic development.[26] In this sort of economic models, workers' and new social movements have been actively engaging in contentious politics. The capitals of these countries have hosted for several decades significant intense mobilization activity (Melucci 1996). These movements have been present both in terms of redistribution as well as recognition justice (Fraser 1997). Progressive activists share therefore long histories and profit from resources that newer generations can enjoy in these Western European urban centres. Activists act within political environments with existing infrastructures (dense networks of squats, established left-wing scenes, etc.), and human resources. Many of these cities are in fact, inhabited by mobile young people with high cultural and militant capital that lie behind the organization of such events.

In addition, and in line with reflexivity as a main method of field research, I need to acknowledge, as second crucial parameter of the case selection, my personal bias. In fact, multi-sited ethnographic research entails many risks and is subject to limits of representability, since the number of site

24 ILGA-Europe, the biggest transnational LGBT organization in Europe, has published this map every year since 2009.

25 ILGA-Europe, 'ILGA-Europe Rainbow Map, May 2013', http://www.ilga-europe.org/sites/default/files/Attachments/side_a_rainbow_europe_map-_2013may.pdf (last accessed: 19/09/2017).

26 For a similar argument about the impact of industrialized urban centres on the development of the first homosexual cultures and the homophile movement, see, respectively, Chauncey (1995) and D'Emilio (1998).

locations can be endless. Reducing the field to six festivals that took place in five capitals of the same legal, political and 'cultural' zone is a conscious and deliberate decision from my side. Getting to explore sites from contexts with more diverse cultural representations and institutional arrangements might have entailed serious contradictions in the research question of the project and might have impacted on its directional clarity. Moreover, in my fieldwork, I was 'guided' to a certain degree by my informants through snowball sampling. My personal networks as a committed scholar in social justice movements have also contributed in the selection process. Instead of dismissing these limits as scientifically irrelevant, I prefer to incorporate them in the study, trying to analyse the reasons behind scientific and personal travel among these cities. Visiting the Queeristan festival, for instance, in Amsterdam twice was not only a choice dictated by the research (I could have avoided the second time), but it was a way to reconfirm some findings. My trip to Oslo, on the other hand, was largely due to personal and activist networks that facilitated the integration in that specific site.[27]

Levels of analysis

Through ethnographic observations, I examine first the discursive tactics of queer festivals, namely how actors frame and organize 'deconstruction of identities, boundary crossing, and label disruption' (Gamson 1989). I identify discursive processes in the texts that circulate in the festivals and in the activists' interpretations through their narratives. Second, I look at practices, going through the internal organizational, communication and cultural activities that take place in and during the festivals. The following table summarizes the above dimensions:

Table 1.3 Dimensions of analysis and commonalities across festivals

Dimensions of analysis (deliberative processes and other modes of address)	*Commonalities in the six queer festivals across Europe*
Discourses	Circulation of texts, content of texts, performative politics, workshops,
Practices	At the level of organization, transnationalism, networking

27 I would like to thank at this point my friend Helge Hiram Jense for his incommensurable help.

Despite differences that emerge due to local specificities, this book attempts to identify the common mechanisms that festivals put in place in order to build autonomy from state power and institutionalized oppression, which is not a local characteristic, but rather transversal and transnational. Queer festivals, as will become more evident in Chapter 6, in their attempt to create communities through distinct collective identities have transnational visions, that their common practices allow them to do so. This process, however, is often disrupted and local specificities are sometimes exploited by actors in order to stress their own differences. Whenever relevant, these differences are highlighted.

Drawing upon ethnographic evidence on queer festivals, this book contributes to the debate on social movements' collective identities, by analysing the tensions between anti-identitarianism and collective identity. I ask whether and to what extent queer festivals act as arenas which are capable of generating alternative interpretations of sexual and gender identities, and, if so, how.

This specific methodology allows me, therefore, to state the main arguments that I have been mentioning throughout the introduction. First, queer festivals cannot escape from collective identity construction. As loose as this identity might be, festivals go through this process. Second, rather than formulating a clear rational response to what queer anti-identity means, queer festivals engage with specific practices and set the agency which allows them to poetically prefigure the worlds their actors want to live in through community-building. Third, queer festivals' 'contentious' arena is the multiplicity of institutions involved in the sexual and gender binary constructions (state, education, administration, medicine, etc.), the public space, as well as the heteronormative norms they all convey. Finally, in this process of community-building, queer festivals seek for autonomy, taking distances from the state and the LGBT movements. Institutional claims-making and the rights discourse is not part of their agenda. But what is crucial for them is the construction of publics that could have some continuity in time, a target difficult for queer festivals to achieve.

Plan of the book

The book is structured as follows. Chapter 2 discusses the first paths of autonomization of queer politics in Europe. I present traces from secondary literature on the participation of queer actors and groups in the global justice movements of the 2000s. These interactions have been important for

the years that followed because they consolidated a sense of belonging in a community which had been taking distances from policy-oriented LGBT movements. These actors were rather part of other left-wing movements of that moment, with strong transnational networks. Moreover, a first attempt to build queer autonomous politics became possible through the organization of Queeruption festivals in several cities around the world. I argue that those were the factors that progressively led to the creation of autonomous political spaces in the form of queer festivals.

Chapter 3 discusses the first aspect of the practical implication of queer festivals to the construction of their anti-identitarian identity. This relates to their organizational tactics and strategies which allow queer activists to organize the spaces so as to host new members and participants in their 'queer world'. The management of the space and the practices which organize the daily routine of the festivals are not just supplementary in queer publics' identity-building, but they are endowed in it, through their symbolic economy (squat and horizontality being linked to other left-wing autonomous scenes and movements). Space and its organizational practices which accompany it reconfirms, moreover, the embeddedness of queer movements into a tradition of autonomous left-wing politics which dates to the global justice movements and the squatting scenes of European capitals.

Chapter 4 turns to the discourses that attempt to create a community upon the same values. Those are conveyed through the callouts, official documents that determine and fix the contours of what queer signifies. I argue that callouts set boundaries for the festivals' identity, and this happens before they begin. From the callouts, we understand, moreover, that queer seeks not so much to abandon identity categories, but rather to incorporate more, and thus to become more inclusive. Other attempts to build the queer anti-identitarian identity are emphasized, such as inclusivity and autonomy.

Chapter 5 analyses 'cultural practices' that hold high symbolic value among the participants. Dressing, eating, speaking and performing hold their own importance in producing narratives on what is queer. In this chapter, issues of who is really 'queer' and who is less so, are debated. Stories of internal disputes demonstrate the tensions – necessary components of identity-building – and illustrate queer festivals as spaces in which internal symbolic homogeneity is far from being achieved.

Chapter 6 finally situates the findings within a larger picture of transnational social movements, by analysing queer festivals as arenas taking place in *transnational* public spheres. It demonstrates the continuity of the global justice movement (and of other transnational left-wing movements) as well as of LGBT transnational movements on European queer movements, which

have used similar diffusion strategies to create cross-border coalitions. Through the analysis of the languages used inside the festivals, the networking activities among actors across borders, digital communication, and cross-border socialization, the chapter demonstrates how queer festivals build their identities not only at the local, but also at the transnational level. This chapter questions also the temporality of these networks, by focusing on the volatility of queer political projects, very much dependent on contingent participation and activists' mobility.

The final chapter summarizes my argument that an anti-identitarian identity is another form of collective identity, built upon discourses but also practices. This identity is not directly targeting the state. Queer festivals are actually one of the most representative examples of such a case. This book challenges our thinking on identity categories as rational constructions that target only policy change. It offers a practice-oriented view into social movements' collective identities – and other spaces of socialization, in general. Yet, I bring to the discussion the contribution that queer festivals can have an impact on other movements, too, those concerning gender and sexual identities as well as other progressive movements, not only in Europe, but also in the USA and in other parts of the world.

2 The Origins of Queer Festivals in Europe

> I believe in art and theory and direct action. All these combined, in my mind, create praxis. I can't stop thinking about praxis, about how to engage in it on an everyday basis. Writing and thinking and talking and creating and doing. [...] Read! Go to lectures! Rent documentaries! Go out there and raise your consciousness! Write! Make art! Talk! Get active get active get active![1]

Does 'praxis', as proclaimed in the Copenhagen Queer Festival, signify a completely new form of political action? In order to reply to this question, we need to contextualize queer festivals into a historical narrative. This chapter functions as a precursor of the debate following. I argue that queer festivals have origins that trace back to the global justice movement, the Queeruption festivals, and US-based queer theory. By drawing upon secondary sources, I sketch an overview of the origins of current queer festivals in Europe. I link, later, this legacy to sociological trends of activists and participants in current queer festivals.

In the first part, I contextualize queer festivals by means of a historic narrative. I link queer festivals to the emergence and development of queer politics in the USA and Europe after the late 1980s. In this part, the global justice legacy of the queer movement in Europe is explored, since it relates directly to the structure and organizational tactics of queer festivals. Furthermore, questions on the definition and translation of queer/queerness/queering is addressed by exploring the ideological legacy of queer, tracing its roots to the development of the academic discipline of queer theory. In the second part, I expose the social basis of the festivals' participants. Based upon an online survey I conducted at the Oslo Queer Festival, I proceed to conclusions regarding the sociological constituency of the participants at that festival. I suggest, however, that these findings could be generalized to the wider field. According to the survey, the main social basis of the events is constituted by young, educated, middle-class people. Moreover, the survey indicates that the festivals present a dynamic degree of participants' mobility capacities.

1 *Academy VS. Activism. Theory VS. Practice* (fanzine), Copenhagen Festival, 2011. Personal collection.

Historical genealogies

Emergence and development of queer politics in the USA

Queer activism as a movement distinct from gay and lesbian politics has its roots in the USA in the late 1980s (Gamson 1995). It was mainly the AIDS crisis that radicalized political trends originating from the gay and lesbian movements of the 1980s. ACT UP New York is considered the pioneer organization of this political trend. ACT UP, apart from its direct-action, confrontational repertoire, used a radicalized discourse attacking not only state institutions for their indifference towards people suffering from HIV/AIDS, but also the conservative values of patriarchy, normality and sexism, present in both the heterosexual and the homosexual community (Gamson 1989; Shepard 2010; Warner 1993). Queer Nation followed the same rhetoric and tactics of ACT UP, by proclaiming 'resistance to regimes of the normal as an alternative to identity-based politics of representation' (Brown 2015). SexPanic!, another group in New York City, 'pushe[d] the limits of identitarian politics and allowe[d] for a broader pro-sex agenda by seeking alliances based not on "gayness", but on stigmatized sexual practices […] [which] may be most threatened by the moral claims of gay conservatives' (Pendleton and Goldschmidt 1998).

These groups were born in a very specific historical and geographical context. New York City provided the symbolic and material space for new forms of politics to emerge. The flourishing gay movement of that period, associated with a vibrant homosexual culture, was based on essentialist conceptualizations of gay identity, which viewed sexuality in the same way as race, and therefore tried to mobilize in the same ways as previous race-based identity politics movements had done (Murray 1979; Corber and Valocchi 2003: 2; Epstein, 1994).[2] The outbreak of the HIV crisis and its conservative instrumentalization by public authorities, however,

2 The biological determinisms of sexuality still hold a powerful authority in the USA. This essentialist discourse is built upon a clear binary distinction of homosexuality and heterosexuality. It is promoted in the official public sphere, and disseminated through the mass-culture products of American cultural industries. For a critique, see Brandon Ambrosino, who claims that the biological narrative might have helped the LGBT movement at one time, but it is not necessary anymore: 'Arguing that gayness is as genetically fixed as race might have bolstered our rhetoric a few years ago, but is it necessary to argue that way now? I understand that the genetic argument for homosexuality is a direct response to the tired "You weren't born that way" rhetoric of religious people. But in my opinion, we could strip that religious argument of much of its power if we responded like this: "Maybe I wasn't born this way. Now tell me why you think that matters"' (Ambrosino 2014).

created the opportunity for activists to move away from identity-based movements.[3] This process took place through abandoning strict sexual identifications and moving towards an oppositional identity; oppositional against the way HIV was instrumentalized by the state and the media in order to increase homophobia. But also in terms of membership: ACT UP New York included heterosexual and homosexual women, HIV-positive and HIV-negative men, and transgender people. At the same time, a new political and epistemological critique started emerging in American universities: queer theory.

Queer theory: The emergence of a discourse on anti-identitarian sexual politics

New York queer politics emerged in parallel with the development of queer theory within American academia and the legitimization of poststructuralist theories on sexuality. As Gavin Brown explains:

> From the very beginning, the development of Queer Theory was entangled with the new breed of queer activism. There were direct overlaps in personnel between the graduate students and early career academics developing queer theoretical approaches and those strategizing and participating in queer direct action on the streets. Queer Theory was rooted in this broader radical project of contesting heteronormative social relations. In the intervening two decades, the relationship between Queer Theory and radical street-based activism has become more tenuous and more strained, but has never been entirely broken. (2015: 73)

Insights from queer theory can reveal important aspects of the queer movement. In fact, queer theory suggested an epistemological rupture with the identity politics model which reigned in sociology and the humanities until the 1990s, according to which 'gays and lesbians constitute an oppressed minority similar to other oppressed minorities such as Jews and African Americans, and they have their distinct history and culture that can be traced to the ancient Greeks' (Corber and Valocchi 2003: 2). Scholars coming mainly from the humanities, such as Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Michael Warner, appropriated critically the poststructuralist

3 The HIV crisis was used as a pretext by the conservative mayor of New York City Rudolph Giugliani to close all private bars in which sexual acts were taking place, such as sex clubs, bath houses, porn stores, etc. (Warner 2000: 153-157).

approaches of identity put forward by French philosophers such as Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser, Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan.

The key book of this flourishing school of thought was Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, published in 1990.[4] Butler engaged with feminist theory and constructionist approaches on gender by claiming that identity is not only socially constructed, but also performative. By analysing drag performances, Butler argued that it is specific acts, gestures and enactments that are performative, in the sense that 'the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means (1999: 173; emphasis in the original). Performativity thus is a 'reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names' (Butler 1993: 2). Based on speech/act theory according to which performative is a form of speech that *does* something, instead of just describing it, Butler moved sexual and gender politics one step forward by considering gender as a '*corporeal style*, an "act", which is both intentional and performative, where "performative" suggests a dramatic and *contingent* construction of meaning' (1999: 177; emphasis in the original). As such, gender became 'an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through *a stylized repetition of acts*' (Butler 1999: 179; emphasis in the original). Although the constructed character and performative aspect of gender is accepted now in the humanities and social sciences, Butler shook the foundations of feminism by claiming that it is not only gender which is socially constructed, but also *sex*, the biological/anatomical organ, the 'raw material' as it has been described (Rubin 1975: 165).[5] Butler claimed that:

> If the immutable character of 'sex' is contested, perhaps this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gendered, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all. (1999: 10-11)

Therefore, the traditional conception of gender as a social construction and of sex as a biological essence, 'raw material', collapsed with the contributions of Butler and the emergence of queer theory.

4 I use the second edition of *Gender Trouble* (1999).

5 Contrary to difference feminism (Braidotti 1994) and French psychoanalytic feminism (Irigaray 1993), which both stress emphatically the ontological division between men and women.

Several social scientists largely engaged with queer theory in a rather constructive and critical approach. Steven Epstein, sociologist back then at the University of California-San Diego, in his article "A Queer Encounter: Sociology and the Study of Sexuality" (1994) argued that the "term queer has recently come into wide use to designate distinctive emphases in the politics and the intellectual study of sexuality" (188). In a rather critical note, he reminds us that the majority of the work we actually call "queer theory" has already to a certain extent been explored by sociology, including social constructivist approaches on sexuality. Epstein recognizes that queer theory would have much to learn from sociology, particularly through its anchoring to the real, contrary to its "textual idealism" (1994: 198). On the other hand, he speaks to sociologists and offers them specific lines of research, paths that queer theory has opened and which sociology should benefit from by engaging with. For example, sociologists could start working on the construction and hierarchizing of sexual meanings and social categorizations (what are the central institutions for the reproduction or challenge of sexual codes and beliefs?), social institutions (how does the state intervene in sexual politics, and how do these constitute these institutions?), and finally social movements (the role of the queer movement in exploring the dynamics of collective action in "new social movements").

Joshua Gamson seems to respond to Epstein's call for further attention of social movement studies to the queer movement. Through empirical work, he observes the emergence of *queerness* as a distinct identity inside the LGBT community of that time. In his article 'Must Identity Movements Self-Destruct? A Queer Dilemma' (1995), Gamson discussed how the decision to call the 1993 San Francisco Freedom Parade the 'Year of the Queer' sparked an outcry to many gay- and lesbian-identified people that saw an attempt to destroy what older lesbian and gay identity politics had achieved so far.

In later texts, Gamson and Moon acknowledge the influence of queer theory for sociology so that we can understand now that 'sexual identities, desires and categories are fluid and dynamic and that sexuality is inevitably intertwined with [...] power relations' (2004: 49). Corber and Valocchi noted that sociologically the term 'queer' refers to 'identities and practices that foreground the instability inherent in the supposedly stable relationship between anatomical sex, gender and sexual desire' (2003: 1). While queer politics and queer theories marked the activist and the academic scenes in the USA, queer developed in Europe through a distinct process.

Diffusion of queer politics in Europe

Queer travel to Europe is a typical case of transnational diffusion, seen as 'processes by which people work to effect social and political change [...] [by] building alliances, exerting pressure, and spreading and adapting knowledge across national borders' (Ayoub 2016: 7). Diffusion, however, does not imply a linear transposition to the new context, but rather a series of discontinuities, retransformations, adaptations and challenges, as happened in Europe. The diffusion of queer in the continent took place rather quickly, but only at the activist level. For academics, queer theory gradually and slowly integrated European academia in different countries (Downing and Gillett 2011), while in some of them it encountered extreme resistance (for France for instance, see Bourcier 2002). Queer theory found its way into European academia, starting mainly in the UK, and in differentiated terms it expanded to Scandinavia, Italy, Germany, etc., adapting in each case to the local context in which it was transposed. In their edited volume *Queer in Europe*, Downing and Gillett argue that '"queer in Europe" does not mean a return to the French theorists who provided the underpinnings to queer's anti-identitarian force' (2011: 4).[6] The authors suggest that we see queer in Europe as a tool to describe 'the ways in which strategies that we might call "queer" [...] are currently being implemented, discussed, taught or otherwise disseminated in a range of European countries' (Downing and Gillett 2011: 4). Part of various academic programmes, queer theory is nowadays present across Europe, usually in gender studies departments, or in specific courses in the humanities and social sciences.

Concerning queer politics, diffusion started with the creation of ACT UP branches in several European capitals, such as London, Paris and Berlin (Brown 2015). London saw the birth of queer groups, mobilizing against conservative Thatcherite discourses (Bell and Binnie 2000: 44). The prominent one was OutRage!, which drew upon the legacy of ACT UP London and was influenced by the use of direct action protests in response to the government's implementation of Section 28 of the Local Government Act (1988), which prohibited the use of public funds to 'intentionally promote' homosexuality (Brown 2015: 77).

6 Or, as the series editor of the volume argued, we should not see queer as 'a McDonaldizing American exportation' but rather as something which bears 'exciting possibilities, [...] not only for the development of conceptualizations of sexuality, but for broader philosophical questions too' (Downing and Gillett 2011: xv).

In the French context, ACT UP Paris was an illustrative example of transnational diffusion, 'despite obvious discrepancies between the pluralist political culture in the United States and their own political culture of republican universalism' (Chabot and Duyvendak 2002: 721). As Christophe Broqua explains in his analysis of ACT UP Paris, it was the articles of the journalist Didier Lestrade, in the gay magazine *GaiPied* and the daily *Libération*, that made the French public aware of ACT UP New York and its actions (2005: 66). Lestrade founded ACT UP Paris with two of his colleagues, and imported new repertoires of action onto the Parisian streets, such as die-ins (Broqua 2005: 71). Their connections with the USA were so clear that in their first appearance in the Parisian Gay Pride of 1989, ACT UP members had ordered their 'SILENCE = DEATH' T-shirts from New York.[7] Trips to New York, as well as various press articles on ACT UP New York and ACT UP London, created the space for the introduction of street-based sexual activism in Paris.[8] Although none of the above-mentioned groups utilized 'queer' as a mobilizing identity, ACT UP created the space for a new style of politics to emerge: angry in its discourse and confrontational in its tactics against the state and other institutions. This activist style later got expanded to movements explicitly identifying as queer.

'Queeruptions' and the global justice influences of queer politics

> The funny thing is that there had been a Queeruption in Berlin. [...] And I was still together with R. and he was a little a bit involved. So funny, because on that weekend that I was going on this training during Queeruption, that was a training on queer education and, for example, someone gave us an introduction into queer politics. So, I preferred the intellectual approach, hearing about queer activism, instead of actually being part of it. (Vabbi, Berlin, 2011)[9]

Listening to the stories of queer activists feels as if the whole story of queer politics is unfolding. Vabbi was born in 1980 in Eastern Germany. He participated in the Queeruption festival of 2003 in Berlin and in the Queeruption

7 'SILENCE = DEATH' was an exemplary slogan of ACT UP New York.

8 For a detailed analysis of the diffusion process of ACT UP New York to Paris, see Broqua (2005), pp. 66-73.

9 The list of the names, the status, the gender identifications, and the ages of the participants can be found in the Appendix. Names are modified.

festival of 2005 in Sydney, many years before the QuEar festival where I met him took place. At the Queeruption in Berlin, he was not strongly involved, but had a contact through his ex-partner, who was in the organizing committee. It was mostly in Sydney, where he spent one year on a university exchange programme, that he got actively involved in Queeruption:

> But I'm not sure if I knew before Sydney that Queeruption was in London and people squatted a house to party. So, the idea of linking queer activism and Queeruption with squatting, I think that was new to me in Sydney' (Vabbi, Berlin, 2011).

Vabbi's personal story on squatting and queer politics in Berlin and in Sydney is part of a broader history of queer festivals and queer collective action that has been taking place since the late 1990s, and coincided fruitfully with the rise of the global justice movement. By the end of the 1990s, many European and American sexual-identity groups aligned with anarchist and anti-capitalist strands of the global justice movement, emerging at that moment (Brown 2015; Portwood-Staser 2010: 487). In 1998, activists from the anarchist scene of London organized the first Queeruption festival, which would establish an annual transnational gathering of 'queer' people that would last until 2010. This is how Queeruption presented itself in 2010, just before shutting down:

> We hope this site will convey the diversity of queer life, identity, and politics; provide visibility for a definition of queer that confounds and contradicts the limited representation of the 'normal'/consumerist model; and be an active tool for building community that recognises the differences in queerness globally.

In the 2000s, Queeruption festivals took place in different cities (New York, San Francisco, London, Berlin, Amsterdam, Sydney, Barcelona, Tel Aviv, Vancouver), establishing a transnational network, with an electronic platform and a mailing list. Within this list, apart from the organizational strategies and the actions, identity issues were debated, while topics such as islamophobia and racism were at the frontline of the discussions.

Europe played a main role for Queeruption festivals because many of them took place in European cities. These events had clear links with the global justice movement, which was developing during that period, too. Gavin Brown acknowledges that Queeruption festivals were spaces which 'have been inspired by the anti-capitalist networks of the global justice

movement' (2007: 2685). Equally, Saskia Poldervaart saw queer politics as intersecting with feminism, through global justice transnational networks such as NextGenderation, as well as the global justice-inspired feminist collective Karakola in Madrid, which worked on the intersections of gender, queerness, and precarity. Both collectives participated in the European social forums of London and Paris (Poldervaart 2006: 14). Moreover, queer politics in Europe took the form of pink blocs in global justice demonstrations (Juris 2008b: 74), while queer groups participated in the European social forums (Doerr 2007: 82). Membretti and Mudu acknowledge, for instance, that at the demonstration against the 27th G8 Summit in Genoa in 2001, 'the presence of various blocks oriented towards different uses of space for demonstrating', one of those being the 'queer/spectacular', was evident (2013: 88).

Although the links between Queeruption festivals and the global justice movement were more explicit, precisely because they were developing during the same period and inside the same social movement scenes, current queer festivals have more fragmented links to that history. This can be explained by the new generation of activists who compose these festivals and did not take part in the global justice movement. In this context Membretti and Mudu's frame helps us understand the ongoing legacy of the global justice movement and of Queeruption on queer festivals. They analysed the way in which Italian *centri sociali* [community centres] were used as a resource infrastructure for the global justice movement (Membretti and Mudu 2013: 89). The resources used by the Italian community centres for the global justice movement coincide with the same types of resources that are used nowadays by queer festivals. These resources are divided in five categories:

1 public places (including squatted places);
2 social networks (including cyberspace);
3 decisional processes (self-management/non-hierarchical relationships);
4 repertoires of action (symbolic representation, collective use of space);
5 codes of communication (performative power, underground culture).

Queer festivals have used all these resources created and circulated over the last fifteen years, which suggests that, to a certain extent, the legacy of the global justice movement is still with us. More specifically, I look at the global justice resources and attempt to link them with queer festivals as follows:

Public places: The organization of the festivals in squats belonging to the broader anti-authoritarian domain of their cities keeps up the tradition of autonomous and horizontal political events. The spaces are open to a 'wider public of "users", offering the platform for other movements' organizations and actors to coordinate (Membretti and Mudu 2013: 89).

The organization committees pay particular attention to the creation of 'safe spaces', in other words, there is the normative assumption that the festivals should function as places where participants would be able to express themselves without fear, threat or violence based on their gender, sexuality or other characteristics. Organizers usually achieve this without resorting to specialized professionals, opting rather for the DIY (Do-It-Yourself) mode. Furthermore, it is also possible for participants in the festivals to reorganize the spaces on their own initiative. Based on the DIY ethos, the organizers tend to call on participants to contribute according to their skills.

Social networks: Queer activists organizing the festivals draw upon a specific network capacity, both at the local and at the international level, in order to attract their publics. Their local connections are mostly with some local LGBT actors, as well as with the local anti-authoritarian/anarchist/squatting scenes of their cities. At the international level, networks develop between other queer platforms, social media and other queer festivals, through activist and affect/friendship relationships.

Decisional processes: At the organizational level, queer festivals have been inspired by the horizontal structures and consensual decision-making 'inherited' by the global justice movement. Queer activists themselves call this organizing mode 'flat structure'.

Repertoires of action: The queer festival forms part of the repertoire of action of the local and transnational queer communities. It also functions as a platform where other actions are discussed, decided on and performed, such as demonstrations, kiss-ins, etc. In addition, a process of mutual learning can take place, especially within technical workshops. Examples are: bike repairing, handmade sex toys, collective cooking, dragging and other similar activities, which require technical rather than theoretical skills. The transmission and sharing of practical skills constituted a big part of the autonomous mode of organization in the global justice movement (Pickerill and Chatterton 2006: 738).

Codes of communication: The global justice movement promoted 'values related to communication in an open space, networking, respect for diversity, equal participation and inclusiveness' (Della Porta 2013a: 337). This discourse on 'inclusion' is largely diffused and developed within the festivals. Its application, however, can escalate into a dispute. Regarding language and other cultural practices (food, clothes, etc.), these conform to the 'performative' character and the 'underground culture' from which certain global justice codes of communication also derive (Membretti and Mudu 2013: 89).

The above resources, although not directly transmitted to current queer festivals, have been also part of the spread of innovative tactics and transmissions of new ideas (Ayoub 2016: 7). To that extent, the global justice movement seems to have fertilized the ground for future queer actions. To sum up, queer festivals draw upon histories that connect to various sources, such as US-based queer activism, academic queer theory, but also global justice and Queeruption movements histories. In queer festivals' contextualization, however, another crucial parameter needs to be addressed: their sociological composition.

Subordinate discourses rather than positions: Sociological indications of queer festivals

I shift now the focus to sociological trends of queer festivals' activists and participants, in order to complete the picture of their contextualization before moving to the discussion on the construction of queer anti-identitarian identities. In the start of my fieldwork, I wondered whether queer festivals were arenas in which 'some ostensible members of a subordinated group may have attained positions of privilege in relation to their cohorts' (Asen 2000: 439). In other words, I set two sociological hypotheses. First, I assumed that the large majority participating in the festivals assert identification with non-heterosexual identities, and this makes them susceptible to subordinate positions because of their sexuality. Second, I assumed that education or class might have balanced to some extent the previous subordination.

According to the results of the online survey I conducted at the Oslo Queer Festival,[10] my initial hypotheses were confirmed. A large majority of the respondents had acquired privilege through other social processes, such as education or social status, although actors with lower social status appear in the responses, too. The most illustrative indication of the survey relates to the self-identification of respondents relating to their social background. Thus, 74% replied that they came from families which would be defined as 'middle-class', 14% replied that they came from upper-middle-class families, while only 12% claimed to come from lower-middle-class backgrounds.[11] Concerning the financial situation of the activists and the participants in

10 See the Appendix for further information on the survey.

11 The question was posed in this form: 'How would you describe your family's monthly income when you were 17 years old?' In the attempt to objectify the replies and not rely on subjective identifications, I provided respondents with possible replies corresponding to seven income categories, based on the average income per capita scheme as provided by OCDE 'Better Life Index', http://www.oecdbetterlifeindex.org/countries/norway/ (last accessed: 08/11/2016).

the festival, 52% asserted they worked part-time, 32% worked full-time (40 hours and more per week), and only 12% were not employed and not looking for job. The remaining 4% declared themselves unable to work due to issues regarding physical disability. We observe a continuation between financial stability and social background, characteristics of middle-class belonging. Concerning the quality of jobs, the question was open. Thus, respondents identified themselves, giving their own titles to their jobs. According to the results, I regrouped them into eight categories:

Table 2.1 Jobs of people participating in the 2011 Oslo Queer Festival and rates

Jobs categories of the participants and of the organizers	*Rate among those who responded to the questionnaire*
High-skilled profession (manager, advisor, consultant, IT architect)	21.7%
Student	17.4%
PhD researcher/researcher	17.4%
Low-skilled profession (bartender, janitor, bike mechanic)	13%
Care/social worker	8.6%
Artist	8.6%
Teacher	4.3%
Volunteer	4.3%

High-skilled tertiary jobs account for more than 80% of the total respondents. On the contrary, lower skilled jobs, and people who failed to reply account for approximately 20%.

The educational position of the respondents is equally illuminating. To the question 'What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?', 60% of the respondents affirmed that they held a university degree at the time of the survey. Among these, 36% held a bachelor's degree and 24% a post-graduate degree. The high level of education serves to verify the observation of the high cultural capital that many of the participants in the festivals enjoy. Predominantly young (96% were between 21 and 39), more than half of queer participants at the Oslo Queer Festival were finally between 21 and 29 years old (56%).

Since the sample is taken from Oslo, the results concerning professional stability cannot be automatically generalized to the other queer festivals, especially in those cities where a high degree of youth unemployment is structurally constraining, such as in Rome or in Berlin. For instance, in the

survey, no respondent claimed to be looking for a job, certainly thanks to the high employment rates that Norway enjoys. We could, however, be more confident in generalizing the results with reference to family background and cultural capital acquired through education, confronted with qualitative observations in the fieldwork.

The above-mentioned interpretations do not contradict the findings on the global justice movement's constituency, and give us once more the confirmation of the global justice movement's sociological continuity in current queer festivals. Thus, according to Gobille and Uysal's analysis of the European Social Forum (ESF) in Paris, its participants were in the majority young (less than 35 years old), holding a high degree of cultural capital, and profiting from a relatively stable professional position (2005: 107). Finally, the demographics of festivals' sociological constituency is not far from the one of new social movements activists who initiated identity politics in Europe (Offe 1985).

Conclusion

This chapter contextualized the origins of queer festivals in their historical and sociological settings. The legacies of European queer festivals were discussed by tracing them back to US-based queer activism and queer theory, as well as the global justice movement and its resources. Moreover, the importance of the Queeruption festivals as the precursor of what would establish queer festivals in Europe was acknowledged. Finally, I attempted a sociological contextualization through the online survey I conducted on the Oslo Queer Festival's participants. The young and educated profile of queer festivals was confirmed, and this finding links back to the global justice and new social movements' legacy, in which similar socio-demographics were identified, too. What is the impact of these legacies and of these profiles in the arrangements of the practices and discourses of queer festivals' identity-building will be explored in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. The next chapter unfolds the discussion, by discussing a crucial parameter of queer identity-building: space and organizational activities.

3 Organizing the Queer Space

Squats, Horizontality and Do-It-Yourself

Deliberate decision making or rule following 'is never but a makeshift aimed at covering up the misfirings of habitus' (Bourdieu).
– Wacquant (1992: 24)

Introduction

August 4, 2011. Berlin
Four days before the QuEar festival begins

I go to the Schwarzer Kanal squat to help people set up. The Schwarzer Kanal lies on the old border of the two Berlins, on the east side. There are trees all around the squat. It is the first time in my life I have seen such a thing. The Schwarzer Kanal is the place where the QuEAR festival will take place. It is a squatted area inside a forest occupied by queer-identified persons who live inside train coaches. Squatters follow the 'Wagenplatz political tradition', a guy tells me. 'What does it mean?', I ask him. He says that some queer people from the Berlin left scene moved train coaches into this area and transformed them into living spaces. Each coach hosts one person usually. There are also a couple of coaches used as common rooms or exhibition spaces. These moving coaches are now scattered across the squatted forest area. The squat is identified as:

> A queer community project, and Wagenplatz, currently based in a patch of woods in eastern Berlin, Germany. As such, it is a networking, coming-together point for queers and friends and part of a wider network of autonomous spaces of squats, Wagenplatz in Berlin, Europe and beyond.[1]

The first QuEar DIY festival will take place here. I ask one girl to tell me the idea behind having such a festival here. According to her, the idea started with three friends who wanted to organize a sound festival with queer perspectives. Since they already had close connections with the queer squatters of the Schwarzer Kanal, these three friends decided to organize

1 Kanal, 'The Project', https://kanal.squat.net/?page_id=58 (last accessed: 19/09/2017).

> their festival here. The squatters of the Schwarzer Kanal offered a part of the squat to the festival. The agreement was to provide the festival with seven of their coaches, together with the main entrance. People are not allowed to stay overnight, however. Therefore, the coaches offered were only used as spaces in which the sound installations would be set up.[2]

Part of the broader left-wing scenes in their cities, queer festivals are organized within squats. By putting in motion a set of organizational practices which are linked with the squatting ethos, such as horizontality and DIY, we can assume that queer festivals function as prefigurative spaces in which their oppositional identity can emerge. Squatting being one part, a series of other organizational mechanisms are promoted and implemented. DIY is one of those mechanisms I observed in five out of six festivals I attended.[3] As the Copenhagen Queer Festival's slogan 'Do-It-Yourself. Do-It-Together' (2011) reveals, queer activists promote and put into practice a way of organization which raises sometimes multiple problems in its implementation and its reception by the publics that attend the events.

In this chapter, I argue that organizational mechanisms are inextricably part of queer festivals' identity-building process. Queer festivals are linked to physical space because it is the latter which allows people to come and stay together for as long as the festivals last. The choice of the space where festivals would take place is not arbitrary. On the contrary, it makes part of how queer actors imagine their belonging to specific localities. First, organizing a queer festival in a squat has its own logics that conforms to the way queers envision their anti-identitarianism. Functioning, moreover, according to DIY principles is a way to mark queers' difference vis-à-vis hierarchical movements, but it is also a way for queers to take their politics in hand and prefigure the ways they would like to live their lives. All these practices are crucial for the understanding of how festivals' anti-identitarian identity becomes possible, because they carry symbolic and normative value, too, reinforcing their differentiation from institutionalized movements. For the analysis of the role of the space and its organizational practices into the queer anti-identitarian building, I consider all those processes which construct festivals' prefigurative character, such as assemblies; their oppositional character, such as the DIY practice; their anti-institutionalism, such as squatting. All these practices contribute significantly to the development of festivals' queer anti-identitarian collective identity.

2 Field Notes, Berlin, August 2011. Retrieved from Eleftheriadis (2015a), pp. 651-652.

3 Despite the fact that the Rome festival was the only one not to apply a DIY mode of organization, its organization still shared characteristics of horizontal organization.

Queer festivals are situated in deliberative forms of organization, combined with a promoted emphasis on affective communication. In their effort to construct a community out of the norms where deviance is celebrated, queer festivals act out their ideals. In other words, queer festivals function as prefigurative spaces, to the extent that the ends they want to achieve 'are fundamentally shaped by the means' they employ, and so queer actors 'choose means that embody or "prefigure" the kind of society they want to bring about' (Leach 2013: 1004). The deployment of the festivals within a period from three to seven days allows for temporary experimentations attempting the creation of 'an alternative organization of life based on care and solidarity' (Della Porta 2015: 103). We should not see 'prefigurative', however, as synonymous with utopian. Queer festivals are not radically isolated from social life, neither do they overtly perform marginalization from the rest of society, as we see in countercultures. Festivals are well embedded within the squatting scenes of the cities in which they take place, but also in other activist networks. Many organizers and participants share affiliations with the broader social struggles of the urban and transnational context in which they live.

I have divided this chapter into three parts. First, I make an overview of the theoretical debates in social movement studies relating to the organizational dilemmas on horizontality, and their links to deliberation and prefiguration, and check how queer festivals fit in with this debate. In the second part, I analyse the role of the squat as the space in which most queer festivals take place as well as of the organizational practices of horizontality and of the DIY ethos in the building of the festivals' anti-identitarian identity. I show how these practices are part of the broader queer prefigurative project and how they relate closely to the movement's self-imagination as oppositional, including a promotion of an anti-authoritarian, feminist and egalitarian ethos. The third part addresses the internal controversies that these particular organizational practices cause. Through personal accounts and public expressions of the activists, I show how the building of a prefigurative space is the result of tensions regarding the level of commitment in the process of queer collective identity-building.

Organizational strategies in social movements

One of the main organizational dilemmas within social movements is that of choosing between hierarchical or horizontal structures (Della Porta and Diani 2006: 142). The term 'horizontality' refers to 'an increasingly

widespread mode of political organizing characterized by non-hierarchical relations, decentralized coordination, direct democracy, and the striving for consensus' (Juris 2013: 40). Questions of internal democracy are gaining increasing interest within the social movements literature, especially after the relevant transformations they have undergone, such as the innovative forms of networking, the sociological diversity of participating actors, and the experimentation on 'possible utopias' (Della Porta 2013b: 337). These transformations are even more visible within the global justice movement of the early 2000s, where actual queer networks found their origins. For instance, in 'solidarity groups and new social movement' groups, the modes of organization 'stress the prefigurative role of participation as a "school of democracy"' (Della Porta 2013a: 333). Informal social movement organizations with a radical agenda of claims and multiplicity of actors, experiences and identities tend to organize horizontally, defending more 'participatory and consensual visions of democracy' (Della Porta 2013b: 338).

Horizontal political experiments have been seen by scholars through two lenses: first, the Habermasian model of deliberative democracy; second, the Gramscian emphasis on counter-hegemonic struggle (Juris 2013: 42). While the former sees the events as ideal places where rational-critical debates can be held and decisions can be taken (Fraser 1992: 30), the latter stresses a more agonistic form of political struggle, in which extra-verbal actions can expand the democratic scope (Mouffe 1999; Warner 2002; Young; 1996). These actions include, among others, body politics, emotional pluralism and affective communication. This two-fold approach led to studying horizontal political experiments often through the light of 'prefiguration' versus strategy, seen 'as two separate or contradictory movement practices' (Maeckelbergh 2011: 2). In that vision, prefiguration is more about identity than strategy, since it does not include the traditional idea of 'organization', as defined by the social movements of the left of the 1970s and 1980s: 'to be "strategic" was to privilege organization over personhood and political reform over radical change' (Polletta 2002: 6). Strategy is conceived more as an essential part of a hierarchical organization. Prefiguration, in contrast, is often seen as without goals and merely cultural. Many cases reveal, however, that, especially after the global justice movement, prefiguration should be understood as a reflection of its goals, and therefore strategic as well. Democracy obtains a 'normative' aspect in which 'participatory democratic decision-making is at once a means and an ends' (Polletta 2002: 199). In that respect, movements with oppositional discourses and repertoires of style are not only seeking to build distinct counter-identities. They are also challenging representative democracy, in part by developing

their own 'directly democratic forms of organizing and decision making' (Juris 2008a: 295).

Queer festivals are an illustrative case of conflating the dichotomous binary of 'prefiguration versus strategy', or identity versus instrumental goals (Bernstein 1997), by asking 'how the commitment to aligning means and ends affects political practices' (Leach 2013: 1004). In other words, the prefigurative ideal of queer festivals and the practices they put in place is not only a way to internally build their identities. It is also a way to challenge representation logics of the LGBT movement and its institutional repertoires of action that do not question the binary categorizations of gender and sexuality. All these practices which reinforce this differentiation process and build queer festivals as distinct identity places will be analysed in this chapter, starting from the importance of the space in the emergence of a queer anti-identitarian identity.

Space, horizontal DIY festivals and the construction of queer anti-identitarianism

The squat as an identitarian marker

The QuEar festival took place during the first few days of August 2011. Its name, QuEAR, is intended as a play on the words *Queer* and *Ear*. The festival was composed of sound installations scattered over different parts of the Schwarzer Kanal squat. These installations were displayed inside the coaches made available for the festival by the squat's residents. As expressed in its name, they were all centred on sound, and its political implications for queers. By sound, the organizers did not limit their ideas to music, but tried to include every sound mechanism relating to hearing, such as radio programmes, audio documentaries, artistic sound installations, interactive sound games and live sound performances. The organization of the QuEar festival within Schwarzer Kanal is an illuminating example of the inextricable links between queer festivals and the squatting scenes of their cities. Squats provide a strong cultural identifier since they, although a distinct urban movement (Lopez 2012: 867), have always held connections with other anarchist, anti-authoritarian, punk, and DIY movements. The squats function therefore as crucial markers for queer festivals that attempt to promote anti-institutional styles of politics.

Queer festivals are organized in different types of squatted spaces. Some of them have a longer history in the local political scene, while some others

are newer. Some of them take place in the city centres, others a bit further out. The QuEar festival was organized at Schwarzer Kanal, in a location a bit further from the city's alternative centre, Kreuzberg. The Oslo Queer Festival was organized in Hausmania, a squat in central Oslo, whose building belongs to the City Hall. At the same time, many festivals tend to scatter their activities around the city in a number of different squats. In this case, they usually have a central squat, which functions as the 'headquarters' in which the daily plenaries take place. The two Queeristan festivals in Amsterdam were held at the Op de Valreep squat in the east side of the city, mostly migrant-inhabited areas. Many of the festivals' activities have been gradually removed since 2013 to two other squats in the centre of the city: Vrankrijk and Slang. Finally, the Rome queer festival took place mainly at the Teatro Valle, which was an occupied public theatre in the heart of the city. Many of its activities were also decentralized. The parties, for instance, took place at the squat Angelo Mai, and the closing plenary took place at the Acrobax squat. The only exception was the Copenhagen festival. This festival was organized in a building belonging to the City Hall, which the activists rented for a lower price than usual. The building was located next to the central railway station, a working-class area with a high number of homeless and drug-addicted people. All spaces are included within an urban setting[4] and located in already highly politicized spaces. Table 3.1 explains the public places in which the queer festivals took place.

Table 3.1 Pubic places where queer festivals took place

Cities in which the festivals took place	*Public places used to host the festivals*
Copenhagen	Rented municipal building
Berlin	DIY queer squat
Oslo	Urban squat
Amsterdam (2012)	Urban squat
Rome	Urban squat
Amsterdam (2013)	Urban squat

4 The importance of the city as a welcoming space for queer activism was visible, although not openly discussed in the festivals. For instance, of all the queer festivals organized in Europe in 2011, only one was organized in the countryside – the Queertopiafestivalen in Norberg, Sweden. The urban character of DIY festivals is not always compatible with what we know from DIY politics in the 1990s. Earth First! was founded around the rural and grand narrative of Western individual freedom, while British DIY groups in the 1990s sought to reclaim the countryside (McKay 1998: 29-31).

Pre-existing personal and activist networks between the organizers of the events and the squats play a crucial role for the realization of the festivals inside them. These networks vary in their intensity, but they allow the arrangement to take place in a much easier way. As Casimiro from the Rome queer festival explains, his organization, Queer Lab had already some links with Teatro Valle, the squat in which the festival took place:

> Concerning the relations with us [QueerLab], our relation is really depending on one person at Teatro Valle [He tells me the name]. [...] She was totally supporting the festival. [...] In Bologna, she was in a feminist collective. The relation with Teatro Valle is a very good relation, even if it depends on some people, but it's something not so strange in general in Roman politics, it's something very common. You wait to have a relation with a place through one person. If that person is not there, it's a big problem. So, personal relations, yes, but not because we're friends, [but more] as a contact. (Rome, July 2013)

Lee, one of the organizers of the QuEar festival in Berlin, explains in a similar manner:

> I know people from there [the Schwarzer Kanal squat], living there or used to live there, friends, or people I know from scene, or we performed there, too, or I helped them in a shift in another festival, but [...] none of us lived there or lives there. (Berlin, August 2011)

Queer activists rely therefore on pre-existing activist infrastructure to set up their festivals.

Organizing festivals in squats can be a challenging endeavour, however, for the organizers, since squats are spaces in which heteronormativity and sexist discourses and practices are not unusual (Di Feliciantonio 2017: 432). The promotion of a 'safe space' becomes therefore a necessity for the festivals. Organizers set as main goal to protect the participants from undesirable intrusions and harassment based on their assumed gender identities or their sexual preferences. The 'safe space' policy is thus another important parameter in the organization of the festival. Despite all the measures taken, however, the squat is not accompanied from the utopian imagination in a future ideal society. It rather allows for 'a participatory way of practicing effective politics' (Routledge 2003: 345), fertilized with an 'experimentation with another form of democracy' (Della Porta 2015: 119). Squats' anti-institutional character helps in shaping a collective sense of

belonging to an anti-institutional setting, and sets in motion together with other horizontal organizational practices the construction of participants' anti-identitarian identity.

Organization committees: The role of socialization

All queer festivals are organized around a committee, composed by activists who reside permanently in the city where the festival takes place. Its members meet regularly several months before the festival begins. Apart from their physical meetings, part of the communication takes place through mailing lists or Facebook pages, but also through friendship networks, since many among of the activists have already established various types of affective relationships. The role of the organization committees is not to form a 'revolutionary vanguard', which would seek to 'seize existing power structures and implement revolutionary change' (Leach 2013: 1004), but to facilitate the complexity of dealing with technical and logistical issues. For instance, the Copenhagen festival took place in July 2011 after a year of regular meetings by its organizing members, which began straight after the end of the 2010 festival. Organization committees are crucial for the communication campaign of the festivals, too. As already noted, festivals are not only for 'internal consumption'. New members are necessary in order to validate the prefigurative project queer actors have in mind. Therefore, addressing new members is essential not only for the participation but also for the organization. All queer festivals (apart from that in Rome) invited new people to become members of the organization committees through their callouts, months before they start.

Participating in the organization process of the festival requires a lot of energy and time. Having no direct institutional support, and lacking large amounts of resources, queer actors need to dedicate a lot of their personal time for the realization of the event. Despite these difficulties, people who participate in the committees draw their motivation through strong emotional ties with other members. These ties function as affinities, which can help sustain festivals across time, but they can also produce internal contention, especially after months of exhausting work.

Socialization with people sharing the same political ideals, but also the same lifestyles, is a major motivation for someone to participate in the organization committee of a festival. But at the same time, the organization committees can become a place *for* socialization. People with no previous connections with the festivals stress the importance of participating in the committee as a way to socialize with people sharing similar political visions,

but also as an opportunity to feel active in their new place of living if they just moved there. Tobin describes his own experience when he became part of the Queeristan's committee in Amsterdam:

> I immediately liked all the people. Because they're all, rather they're gender queers, my first understanding of what non-normative genders, what they look like. I felt directly at ease with them. [...] I was struggling very hard to find a way how I could be productive part of the group. But, I had a great time. (Amsterdam, May 2012)

Other activists participated in the organization committees in order to support their friends. Vabbi's story from Berlin is an illustrative case:

> Last year, I heard about this [the QuEar festival] for the first time, because I know Christian. Christian, actually, was on the same bus on the way to the queer festival in Copenhagen, and we met him there, and we got to talk, and Jane met him there and [...] Lee was also in Copenhagen. So, you know, five years ago we already, we hung out together. And, Christian works at this radio station and he produces radio features. He's into this kind of stuff. He said he wants to do this audio festival and I thought, oh, that is a good idea, and Lee then started to organize it with him, and in the early spring, they said we need more people to help us and to do all the work. And I said I don't want to do any conceptual work, I don't want to do organizing or think, but I want to help you as the festival comes closer. And this is what I did. When it came closer, they said we need someone to organize the building of this big Ear, the entrance, I said, OK, I can do that. So, I got into the group of the [Qu]Ear. (Berlin, August 2011)

Socialization functions equally for foreigners who moved to the cities to study, or for professional reasons. These mostly European (and American to a lesser extent) mobile citizens see the organization committees of the queer festivals as socialization arenas in their new lives. Zoe attended the organization preparations of the Copenhagen festival with one of her friends, who had also moved from Poland:

> [I met the committee] In February [2011]. Maybe one or two weeks after I moved [to Copenhagen]. And we just went to Ana's [a member of the organization committee] apartment, without knowing anyone, and we just said: 'Hey, can you speak English? We are from Poland; we'd like to do the queer festival with you.' And they started to speak English. I mean, at

> first they switched to Danish very often, but then we were like coughing. (Copenhagen, July 2011)

Giacomo from Italy also saw the organization committee of the queer festival as a way to make friends sharing similar activist ideals in his new life in Oslo:

> I wanted to be more active, so I wanted sort of come out more, to be more present, and of course this is connected to the fact that *I'm new in the city, so I also wanted to sort of to get to know people*, and settle down, that was also part of it. And then when I got in touch with them [the organization committee], they mentioned that there was a regular meeting, taking place and I had seen that also on Facebook. (Oslo, September 2011)

Socialization is usually combined with positive feelings. Activists tend to describe their emotions by attributing a sense of happiness:

> I can't even express *how happy I am* that I was preparing this festival. Maybe the preparing the festival wasn't like the most important thing, but I liked our seminars, when we had these political discussions, about separate space, and racism and stuff. And it learnt me so fucking much. I've never been, I've never felt I'm learning so much in such a short period. (Zoe, Copenhagen, July 2011)

Zoe relates her happiness, among other things, to the idea of 'mutual learning'. She felt very inspired by the fact that she had the opportunity to listen and to discuss issues such as racism, for instance.

Although becoming part of the festivals' committees was usually accompanied by positive feelings, they were not sufficient to avoid conflicts and controversies, or feelings of exhaustion, which appeared during the events. In reality, these feelings reveal broader processes of involvement in social movement politics beyond rational choice logics. Although physical exhaustion could become a reason to abandon the organization of a festival, activists describe their participation as a balance between happiness and tiredness:

> So I went, I think, to three of the meetings, which is weekly meetings, and then through the meetings I got more involved in working as a volunteer, and *that I felt very happy* that I've done that, because it's precisely what I needed. I*t's physically tiring* but [...] it sort of satisfied the need I had

> [...] of do[ing] something, be active and not just, yeah, complain, there's nothing happening. (Giacomo, Oslo, September 2011)

Similarly, Vabbi from Berlin acknowledges the time someone needs to dedicate as a member of the organization committee:

> I got into the group of the [Qu]Ear. And generally the festival took much more time than I thought. Then because I had to do my PhD, but then again it was so nice to be outside on the Schwarzer Kanal building this (Qu)ear. (Berlin, August 2011).

Socialization becomes therefore a crucial motivating factor for participating in the organization committee of a festival, and thus developing a sense of belonging to a political community. This motivation applies to both the 'natives' who are already embedded within the local queer scenes, and the 'migrants', people who moved to a new city and want to socialize with others sharing the same political beliefs. But after becoming member of an organization committee, things are not over. Putting all the other practices in place might require extra involvement once the festivals begin.

Assemblies, workshops, performances

A basic feature which structures queer festivals once they kick off is the daily assemblies, during which the organizers present the issues and the schedule of the day, and the participants comment on, make suggestions and criticize the events of the previous day. The assemblies take place either in the morning or in the afternoon. Subcommittees are organized around a specific function of the festival: cooking, cleaning, night shifts. They are a unique opportunity for organizers to encourage participants to become more active by getting more involved in the organization of the festival. Cleaning issues are particularly stressed, due to the numbers of people, the constraints of the space, and also because people do not usually do it very enthusiastically. The last assemblies take the form of 'evaluation meetings'. During these meetings, organizers and participants discuss the development of the festival, stressing both the positive elements and the pitfalls. There have been cases when intense conversations took place, usually when participants dwelt more on their negative experiences.

Another main organizational feature is workshops. They take place throughout the whole day, whereas, due to their big number, they might overlap, too. Workshops vary from theoretical and ideological ('Queer

Anarchism', 'Masculinities and the Bear Culture', 'Metrosexuality', 'Queer and Class', 'From Precarity to the Commons') to practice-oriented ones ('DIY Dildos', 'Diva Workshop', 'Eyes Wild Drag', 'Bike Repairing', 'BDSM'). A recurrent theme of the theoretical workshops is the relationships between class, race and queer politics. On the other hand, practical workshops focus mostly on issues of sexual practices and gender performativity. The workshops are organized either by one person or by a group, and these organizers are usually appointed weeks before the festival begins. People or groups willing to organize a workshop contact the organizing committee, after the latter has diffused the callout through social networks. The organization committees always have the last word on the workshop proposals.

Performances constitute another essential aspect of the festivals, taking place in the evenings. Performers are usually invited by the organizers, or they apply directly to the festivals, similar to workshops. They vary from those relatively famous in the transnational queer scene (it is not unusual to see the same performers in different festivals) to those more amateur. The Brazilian performer group Solange, tô aberta! (STA!), for instance, based in Berlin, performed in Copenhagen and Oslo.[5] Sex parties, although not part of every festival, are also part of the organization package. Sex parties sustain the alternative character of the events, by prefiguring a new mode of expressing sexuality. Two out of six queer festivals organized a sex party. Finally, collective cooking and eating constitute another main regular practice of the events.

The assemblies and the final evaluation meetings provide the festivals with a certain organizational regularity and allow them to function as traditional 'deliberative spaces', as inherited by the global justice movement and performed through World and European Social Forums. The regularity of organizational practices gives a performative character to the festivals, reifying their oppositional identity against more hierarchical and institutionalized forms of political organization. Festivals' organizational practices become ritualized through their repetition, and function as a 'reenactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established', becoming the 'mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation' (Butler 1988: 526). In other words, the daily committees, the night performances and the workshops legitimize the importance of the queer festival, affording the participants a specific sense of 'queerness', a feeling of belonging to an alternative community. All these practices reflect the horizontal logics within the organizational architecture of the festivals (Juris 2013: 42), whereas at the same time they represent the 'place par excellence

5 For more information on the group and their queer political perspective, see Hutta (2013).

of an open and (in principle) egalitarian space' (Della Porta 2005a: 337). In that sense, one could say that festivals conform to the Habermasian model of a 'discursive public sphere' (Calhoun 1992: 1). This is partly true, although the ideas tend to be formulated in a more personal experience-oriented narrative, reaching a communicative model of deliberation, not unusual in feminist movements. Emotional communication constitutes a very illustrative example of consolidation of the collective identity of the groups, which operates through the expression of tensions, and through common projections for future actions. I demonstrate below that this identitarian experience becomes even more intense with the promotion and implementation of a set of DIY discourses and practices.

The DIY experience

The specificity of the queer festivals is limited not only to their horizontal organization, but also to their DIY character and ethos. DIY is a label given by activists to those political events which promote a non-hierarchical form of organization and decision-making, and which attempt to deconstruct the binary between organizers and consumers as two distinct entities. It has its roots in the punk subcultures which rejected, at the beginning of the 1980s, the idea of collaborating with major music labels; they expressed themselves through non-commercial networks and self-organization (Poldervaart 2001: 151; Nicholas 2007: 1). In that sense, it is the DIY practices which largely contribute to the construction of queer festivals as a 'counter' way of doing politics, far away from institutionalized repertoires of action.

Historically, the DIY principle has been associated with an 'autonomous anarchist ethos', which considers that people participating in them should do as much as possible themselves (Nicholas 2007: 1). Several countercultural scenes in Europe which have been influenced by anarchism and the squatting culture are linked to the DIY practice.[6] For queer festivals, 'Do It Yourself' stands for each individual's designing her own life and taking initiatives, without expecting the political or social institutions to do so (Poldervaart 2006: 8). In that way, they draw upon older queer politics, close to the squatting/anarchist scenes, that had also built their identities

6 For example, Poldervaart (2001) describes the DIY scene of the Netherlands at the beginning of the 2000s by providing four representative examples: the squatter movement, the broader global justice movement, punk subculture and animal rights groups. All of these four movements present similarities to the extent that they develop their actions and sustain their collectivities through a DIY idea and practice.

through a DIY practice and ethos. Queer activism in the UK, for instance, was 'infused with a creative, DIY (Do-It-Yourself) ethos that preferred thrift shop drag over the latest designer labels' (Brown 2007: 2685). For current queer festivals, DIY is extensively promoted through their official discourses. The QuEar festival at the Schwarzer Kanal in Berlin promoted its DIY character through its programme, by dedicating one full page to the Schwarzer Kanal squat. Taking the squatting project as departure point, the writers gave their own definition of DIY:

> Schwarzer Kanal operates according to the DIY principle: Do It Yourself! The idea is that there are no bosses, no masters and no one comes just to consume. Everyone who uses the space helps to keep it running. Whether that be by doing the washing up after a meal, doing a bar shift during a concert, helping to tidy up after a party, doing press work, or realizing your own ideas for an event. [...] There are lots of possibilities![7]

The Copenhagen festival, similarly, placed the DIY character at the centre of its political discourse. The main poster publicizing the festival on the walls of the city of Copenhagen, took the following minimalistic form: a black background with white letters saying: 'Do it yourself, Do it together'. Below the slogan, it displayed the place and the dates of the venue. These street posters constituted the main source of information about the event for the inhabitants of the city.[8] Moreover, going into the building where the festival was taking place, one could find a pack of one-page brochures with the title in English 'Do it yourself; Do it together', the logo of the 2011 festival. We read in the brochure:

> DIY doesn't just mean that you can make anything you want out of the festival, it also means that everyone must run the festival. This means actual work for everyone. [...] And someone else cleaning up after you is just another boring, oppressive division of labor.[9]

The Copenhagen Queer Festival has a long history in DIY politics. By checking the posters of its previous queer festivals, the DIY character becomes inextricably linked, even synonymous with its queer part, by using the discursive

7 QuEar festival, 'quEAR, das Trans*tonale Ohrenfest', http://quear.blogsport.eu/files/2013/04/quEARprogrammheft.pdf (last accessed: 19/09/2017).

8 As in the case of Berlin, 'to find out what is "really" going on, one does not read the newspapers, one reads the streets' (Leach and Haunss 2009: 263).

9 Copenhagen Queer Festival, 'Get Involved', http://www.queerfestival.org/getinvolved.html# (last accessed: 19/09/2017).

pattern of X = Y: The Copenhagen Queer Festival *is* a DIY festival. The 2008 festival poster, more colourful than that of 2011, portrayed the DIY letters at the top of the image of the poster, while in the 2007 poster, DIY was simply one aspect of the festival, along with the workshops, music and performances.

The main programme of the Oslo Queer Festival in 2011 followed the same pattern, too. In the graphics on the first page of the programme, the hand holding the 'OSLO QUEER' banner mentions DIY, together with 'workshops' and 'films, live music'. It is tempting to give a short visual analysis of this: the hand holding the 'OSLO QUEER' banner ban could be seen as a visual metaphor for the festival itself. Since DIY is one of the three hands of the picture, it would not be unreasonable to imagine that DIY is an essential constituent of the festival. As explained on the Oslo Queer Festival's Myspace webpage:

> The DIY/DIT (Do It Yourselves/Do It Together) means that by sharing and volunteering we all make the festival together. It makes performers, audience and organizers equals. Everyone participates and everyone is included. We make the festival by ourselves and for ourselves because we want to.[10]

Therefore, the repetition of such celebratory discourses on the DIY character explicitly points out the political ethos of these events. By stressing their DIY character, festivals reinforce their opposition to the commercial, mainstream culture. At the same time, they attempt to link discursively to other similar movements, located in the anarchist and squatting scenes. Finally, the DIY narrative encourages participants to get an 'active uptake' in the event; this active engagement of the participants, as 'somnolent' as it might be, is indispensable for the construction of an oppositional public, addressed through, among others means, its distinct political practices (Warner 2002: 61).

Looking closely at the queer festivals, an emphasis on the idea of 'togetherness' emerges. The practice of DIY aims at 'equalizing' the organizers with the participants through horizontality. By minimizing the differences between the two sides (organizers and participants), the discourses of the festivals align with the idea, extensively circulating within the anti-institutional left/squatting scenes, of an 'egalitarian way of life' (Leach 2013: 1005), which can be achieved differently than through a representative

10 Oslo Queer Festival, 'Oslo Queer Festival', http://www.myspace.com/osloqueerfestival (last accessed: 19/09/2017).

mode of organizing. Hence, the repetition of slogans such as 'Do it yourself; Do it together' stresses, and thus reaffirms, the links of the festivals to these political traditions, especially those connected to anarchist scenes. Having explained the organizational logics of queer festivals, showing that it connects with an anti-institutional ethos, I shift now to the way organizers and participants experience their implementation.

What is queer with the organization? Negotiating the differences in the identity-building

Examining how activists and participants experience the organizational logics of queer festivals allows us to analyse the meanings they give to the festivals' queerness, as a distinct way of belonging to a community with anti-identitarian visions. In this part, I examine how festivals' specific organizational structures reach their own public, and how they are subsequently conceived through that public's personal experiences. I pay particular attention to the controversies the implementation of these practices creates. Similar to other prefigurative attempts, queer festivals function within 'a penumbra of differences, conflicts and compromises' (Routledge 2003: 346). These controversies are evidenced through activists' narratives, which reveal the difficulties at the events in deconstructing the dichotomies between organizers and participants, promoted through festivals' official discourses. Other stories relating to the communication of emotions are also illuminating. In the end, however, I show that it is precisely these controversies which consolidate the identity of the festivals, by strengthening its emotional energy and the sense of belonging (Della Porta and Giugni 2013: 126-127). The following story narrated by a person with physical disabilities at the Copenhagen festival is illustrative of the limits of the organization committees. But at the same time, it is precisely because of the festivals' structure as spaces with strong emotional commitment that the expression of such complaints becomes possible.

> Back in 2011:
> Copenhagen, 30 July 2011
> Last day of the festival. Evaluation Meeting
>
> Jenny raises her hand. 'I really like the festival. It is a very precious moment when we can create a community and create a new world' – her positive words were really moving. 'But when you create this new world,

> please do not forget people with disabilities.' Everybody then realized the point of Jenny's intervention: her short but substantial complaint was made on behalf of people like herself with physical disabilities.[11]

Jenny was particularly active in the rolling out of the festival. Although not officially part of the organization committee, she participated in the cooking, cleaning, and night shift work. She was trying to engage actively with the practical arrangements of the festival, despite her visible physical disability in her leg. Copenhagen's queer festival took place in a public building, offered by the municipality at a low price. The building had two floors, and there was no elevator. Moreover, in the callout of the festival, there was no warning for people with disabilities that they would not be able to move to the upper floor. Jenny's intervention revealed the limitations of the organization of an event, which cannot control every possible problematic issue that can emerge. Jenny's claim found, however, a very specific channel to express her disappointment. One of the main features of the festivals' daily routine are the daily assemblies (or plenaries), in which people commit to a communicative debate, traversed by the feminist idea of sharing experiences and emotions. Jenny's complaint about the lack of disability politics inside the festival was made during one of those assemblies, making the whole festival realize the extent of non-awareness regarding disability issues. Jenny's account contradicts inclusive narratives that queer festivals portray in their discourses. But at the same time, it makes visible the utility of the emotional communication festivals put in place through their assemblies in order for such complaints to be able to get expressed.

The organizational mechanisms that festivals put in place allows (some) actors to express personal experiences. For instance, the open assemblies invite all participants to take the mic and speak about how they feel in the spaces. They are encouraged as well to say what they think is going wrong and how we could all fix it. Through the assemblies, people are encouraged to suggest new ideas, making possible processes of transformation of collective identities, and the rise of political consciousness. This kind of mechanism is a necessary step for emotional expression to take place but it does not mean that all participants feel comfortable to express themselves in front of so many people. Issues of language, timidity, lack of activist capital, etc., can be discouraging factors for people to express themselves. But overall, these organizational practices contribute to the articulation of the festival as a different, alternative space in which people can speak

11 Field Notes, Copenhagen, July 2011.

and be listened to (Doerr 2009). Part of their feminist legacy, assemblies allow for expression of opinions and emotions, often accompanied by the intersection of individual and collective storytelling, as was Jenny's case.

The function of the festivals on horizontal DIY mode is far from ideal. Organizers try very intensely to encourage participants to contribute to the organizational work, part of the pattern of Do-It-Yourself = Do-It-Together. This attempt becomes even more important in the light of the *autonomous* political economy upon which festivals are sustained. For the organizers, autonomy signifies independence from commercial, capitalist ways of production and consumption, as the Copenhagen festival's callout stated: 'We wish to create a space, which is not based on money, as we find this is the case in society today.' For the success story of such a prefigurative project, heavy workloads need to be taken on, and many participants need to be ready and willing to intervene when needed. In reality, there are several participants who engage in the setting up of the infrastructure and installations, take care of the facilities, and contribute to the cleaning process. What is more, these same participants respond to the appeals for night shifts, which are organized for security reasons; they man the info desks, which are usually located at the entrance of the squats; and they then become barwomen/men every night. Meals are provided through dumpster diving in big supermarket chains,[12] or by offers from local commercial shops, which need to be picked up by participants. This whole autonomous political economy of the festivals can become particularly exhausting for the members of the organization committees. But how are all these practices experienced by the organizers and the participants?

Zoe, a member of the organization committee of the Copenhagen festival, compares the queer event to the punk festival of Dortmund, in which she had participated as an organizer, too:

> I also [had] the experience of making the DIY festival in Dortmund, which is also a DIY festival, but is organized in a different way. But everything is like prepared beforehand, all the concerts, and workshops. *I was also in this orga*[*nization*] *group* and we had like [an] overview on what is happening and we're making up the decisions. And there were people who were volunteers, [who] sign up for shifts and shift checkers, so it was a DIY [festival], but in another way. (Copenhagen, July 2011)

12 'Dumpster diving' is a term 'used for obtaining items, in this case food for consumption, from dumpsters' (Eickenberry and Smith 2005: 188).

Zoe's account on DIY derives from her position inside the organizational structure of the festival. This level of engagement has been consolidated in a 'dispositional adjustment of actors in the expectations of the institution' (Yon 2005: 141), as well as in the feelings of connection that she has towards the event.

The promotion of the DIY ethos, as expressed through the discourses of the festival, and contributing to 'togetherness', is challenged by the relative failure of the festival to erase the boundaries between the organizers and the participants, or 'consumers'. This 'consuming' attitude is confirmed by Vabbi, too, in the QuEAR festival in Berlin. To the questions, What critique can you make of queer activism in Berlin? What would you like to see happening in the next few years?, he replied:

> What I would like to see [...] [is] more people doing organizational voluntary work – *there's too many people who just consume*. It's always the same people, so last night, I was really glad to see there were new people. (Berlin, August 2011)

Although Vabbi initially claims that there is no critique to make, after a few seconds, the lack of people helping in the work of the festival comes immediately to his mind. The same reflection comes from Zoe in Copenhagen:

> And I am a bit pissed that people are not taking the shifts, and you have to force people, and you have to explain why it is DIY, why you should clean up after yourself, after others, and maybe I would like this to be more steep, [for there] to be shift checkers. [...] And [what] I like about this festival [is that it is] so fluid, and so flexible, and so open that you don't know what might happen here, because [it] is the people that create this festival, and I like this idea way better, but *I still think that people could or* [*should*] *help a bit more, to be smarter on what it means to do something DIY*. You know, just care more. (Copenhagen, July 2011)

The way Vabbi and Zoe narrated their experiences reflects a general complaint from the organizing members, who very often feel overloaded and exhausted, since they bear the heaviest load of responsibility. According to them, a large majority of participants are unwilling to take on night shifts, or any tiring and boring duty, even if they know that the queer festival works on a DIY basis. Furthermore, the lack of volunteers from the side of the 'consumers' is believed to lead to a decrease at the level of security, as gaps in security checks and night shifts are not fully secured.

Both Vabbi and Zoe have been part of autonomous politics (queer, antifascist, punk) for many years now. The similarities in their stories of lack of involvement on the part of the participants is due to their, more or less, similar position inside the hierarchical structures of the festivals, and the social ties they had already developed there, which made them part of their organizational structures. The common feelings they share are part of their exhaustion as members of the organizing committee, because of the workload that such positions entail.

Exhausting as it might be for the members of the organization committees, the functioning of the festivals feels much more enjoyable for the participants. Participants in the festivals usually express more positive feelings, compared to those shared by the organizers. Robin was interviewed in Copenhagen, where he was invited to speak about queer politics in Palestine. Robin belongs to the organizational core of the Queeristan festival in Amsterdam. His account sounds spectacularly different from Zoe's and Vabbi's:

> *It's wonderful* [the festival]. It's good for me to come and see it here in Copenhagen, not being part of the organizers because having Queeristan in Amsterdam, being part of the organizers*, being always* [*tense*] *about what's happening and* [*about the fact that*] *we need everything to work out well, I did not sit there and enjoy it*. [...] It was my first queer festival, even to organize, not only attend, but also organize. So, I [...] had a different idea that everything needed to be very controlled and now I come to Copenhagen and I see that things are more relaxed, and *the Do-It-Yourself concept is, I think, working well*. (Copenhagen, 2011)

The difference in the experiences that people have as organizers and as participants is evident in Robin's account. The work overload is a given in every festival, and every account I gathered from the organizing members reconfirms this.

This contradiction in the way people experience the horizontal and DIY structures of the festivals might have an impact on the way they build their sense of belonging to a queer identity. This contradiction might be situated in the different positions they occupy inside the hierarchy of the festivals and the tasks that each of them is de facto fulfilling, due to a lack of commitment on the participants' side. Hence, Zoe and Vabbi, who participated in the organizational structure of the festivals and executed most of the most difficult tasks, view DIY as a 'consuming practice' for some activists. So, this might become an obstacle in the process of creation

of a common collective identity. Robin, on the other hand, who belonged to the participants' side in Copenhagen, is much more open to collective identifications.

We realize therefore that the differences in the experiences between the organizers (frustration, exhaustion) and the participants (enjoyment) reveal the limits of such political endeavours to completely erase the barriers between the two sides, in spite of the celebratory discourses of the festivals on DIY, and the continuous attempts of the organizers to make participants more active within the function of the festivals. This discontinuity between the promoted horizontal, DIY-oriented ethos and the material difficulties in implementing it, creates conflicts which can generate tensions within the festivals. But these tensions reveal also how the queer anti-identitarian collective identity is produced in action through the conflicts and the problems raised by the organizers and the participants, even if these relate to their inclusive character and the lacunae in the uptake and the unequal division of labour in the organization of the events.

Conclusion

Queer festivals act for organizers as prefigurative spaces, in which their anti-identitarian aspect needs to be significantly reflected, both in the discourses and the organizational practices. Horizontality is presented as a basic constituent of the events. It usually takes the form of a DIY practice and is promoted as a basic identity marker of the events' decisional and organizational processes. In reality, horizontality connects queer festivals with past and present social movements based on squatting and self-organization. The strategy to organize the festivals in public places, mostly squats, functions as another identity marker. By selecting squats as the places in which the festivals take place, organizers set the bases for a horizontal ethos to emerge and to be processed into an anti-institutional identity. Although squats tend to limit the number and the kind of people who visit them, they help, however, to solidify a distinct identity.

DIY is not only an organizational mode, opposed to hierarchical forms of organization of institutionalized social movements. It rather contains a specific ethos in the sense that it marks out its difference and its 'radicalism' in relation to mainstream society and social movements (Brown 2007: 2685). In order for this ethos to transform into an oppositional identity, it needs to be promoted intensely through discourses, but also to be practised through repetitive acts. Thus, DIY is portrayed in the discourses of queer festivals

as very solid, coherent and radically inclusive, whereas a closer observation proved that it is experienced in a variety of ways, depending mainly on the hierarchical positions of its members. Members of the organization committees tend to express frustration and feelings of exhaustion, compared to the participants (or 'consumers') who tend to find it more enjoyable. I attributed this difference in perceptions of the DIY practice mainly to the relative failure of the events to deconstruct the binary between organizer and participants.

I showed, however, that despite the logistical constraints of such a project, and the lack of financial resources, DIY horizontal queer events offer the possibility to their participants to express their feelings and emotions. Regular assemblies and plenaries give possibilities to both organizers and participants to communicate. Organizers usually complain about the lack of involvement of the participants, while participants tend to express more personal frustrations and disappointments, making visible existing inequalities, connecting with the idea of 'communicative democracy'. As such, this experience-oriented form of deliberation takes place in spaces where 'the principle of inclusive listening, understood as the collection and exchange of narratives' is promoted (Doerr 2007: 85).

It is all the above organizational practices that enable queer festivals' anti-identitarian identities to emerge. Any organizational structure other than these ones would imply a neglect of horizontal structures. On the contrary, the organizational practices they promote and put in place are seen as a resistance to commercialization and the hierarchical structuration of political events and activities which has taken place during the last few years in the field of institutionalized movements, especially the LGBT movement. Even if this is not mentioned explicitly, queer festivals are trying to closely associate with horizontality in order to dissociate themselves from conventional, 'apolitical gay politics' (Brown 2007: 2686), and hence to build their distinct collective identity.

Discourse, however, is not sufficient in itself to sustain and consolidate a collective identity. A set of specific repeatable practices is a necessary condition for activists to experience 'togetherness'. Performativity, apart from its discursive side, holds the idea of repetition of acts, which give meaning to the queer counter-identity. It is mainly the ritualized daily practices and their stylized character, such as the communicative assemblies, the workshops, the evaluation meetings and the performances, which account for the construction of a political queer identity. The regularity of these practices within the festivals shapes the solidification of belonging, while it allows the participants to debate upon various issues and experience

collective emotions, not always without controversy. At the same time, an active uptake is necessary for participants to enter the 'threshold of belonging' (Warner 2002: 61). By becoming active members of these prefigurative spaces, activists and participants develop their links to what it means to be queer and give meaning to the events and their collective identities. Having explored the importance of space and horizontal organizing within queer festivals, the next chapter discusses what makes the spaces in which these festivals operate 'queer' by focusing on the discourses and the practices that circulate within the spaces as well as the boundary-making they create insofar as the membership of the publics is concerned. What is to be queer according to the festivals?

4 What Is 'Queer' about Queer Festivals?

Negotiating Identity and Autonomy

Introduction

> Last day of the Oslo Queer Festival
> Oslo, Hausmania Squat
> 17:00
>
> [In the courtyard] We are about seven people smoking. 'This is the difference between queer theory and activism. Theory tries to deconstruct identities, whereas here we are building an identity: We are all queer!' Luca, a Norwegian trans man, very active in the organization of the festival, attracts my attention. Queer theory and queer activism? Interesting. I wonder. 'I have done gender studies', says Nikolaj, a Danish performer visiting the festival. All the others shook their heads. It seems that it is only me and Nikolaj, who have studied gender at university.
> [...]
> [Inside the building] Some people are preparing handcraft and drawings on a table. Some others are painting on white T-shirts. One participant makes a drawing on a T-shirt. She is sketching a multiple-choice quiz with the following options to tick: 1. Man, 2. Woman, 3. Fuck Gender, with the third option ticked.
> [...]
> I start talking with Kaja, one of the 'leaders' of the festival's organization. She says: 'If we start talking about real politics inside the festival, half of the participants will go away. Some others, however, ask me why we never discuss politics. Last year, I prepared a workshop called 'Queer Feminism'. I had no idea what it would be about. So, I show up, and say: I have no idea what queer feminism is. Let's discuss it. But in the very end no one takes Oslo Queer seriously. Neither the left, nor the gay community, nor the radicals.[1]

The above-mentioned discussions are illustrative of the way identity issues are debated and practiced within the queer festivals. Their 'identity crisis' ('no one takes Oslo Queer seriously'), and the struggle of the actors to position themselves within the political sphere through identity-work

1 Field notes, Oslo, September 2011.

guides the analysis of this chapter in which I unfold the identity-building process of queer festivals. To understand the anti-identitarian identity of queer festivals, it is important to look at activists' sayings over the content and the political usefulness of identity. Debates and interviews will help us delve into individual and collective meanings of what it means to be queer. These meanings can change and might depend on whether they originate from the festivals as a collective endeavour, and by the organizers and the participants at the individual level.

This process of queer festivals' identity-work is investigated by analysing a set of discursive practices. The discursive practices help us understand how actors organize speech, speech sequence, how they relate to each other, and the conventions and narrative genres that are applied. A systematizing of these practices reveals the identity processes that take place among festivals' members. Overall, queer is presented in the following terms: (a) an anti-identity narrative, built through its differentiation from what festivals perceive as the mainstream LGBT movement; (b) inclusivity, and (c) more rarely as anti-capitalist rhetoric.

I begin with an overview of the relevant theoretical debates. I continue by analysing how queer festivals envision their collective identity through self-presentation strategies. I use for this purpose the *callout*, a short piece of text intended to draw attention in social media. Callouts are crucial to understand how festivals, in the pursuit of becoming public and attracting participants, discursively build the contours of their collective identity through antinormative narratives. Queer anti-identity narrative is imagined as inclusive. This inclusivity is, however, subject to limitations. In the third section, I discuss the way queer actors attempt an introduction of anti-capitalist discourse in the festivals. Queer anti-capitalist discourse is not systematically present in all festivals. Anti-capitalist critique is contingent, depending on the presence of activists with a relevant political socialization who want to integrate it in the festival through workshops. Although occasional, its inclusion in this chapter is essential, because it points at one of the main components of the distinctive character of European queer identity-building: autonomy. Autonomy builds upon post-Marxist theories on the commons and relates to the inclusion of queer festivals in left-wing squatting scenes. A relevant workshop, which took place at the Queeristan festival in 2012, is used as evidence of this trend. The chapter closes by showing how these identity-building discursive characteristics rearticulate an oppositional public, which seeks to engage with issues of collective identity in terms of alternative political practices and prefigurative imaginations, rather than with concrete policy-oriented concepts.

Queer, identity and autonomy: Theoretical insights

Input of queer theories into queer identities

Joshua Gamson's publication on the 'queer dilemma' had a great echo in collective identity studies. It posited for the first time the question: What happens when movements want to escape from identities?

> Queerness in its most distinctive forms shakes the ground on which gay and lesbian politics has been built, taking apart the ideas of a 'sexual minority' and a 'gay com-munity,' indeed of 'gay' and 'lesbian' and even 'man' and 'woman.' It builds on central difficulties of identity-based organizing: the instability of identities both individual and collective, their made-up yet necessary character. It exaggerates and explodes these troubles, haphazardly attempting to build a politics from the rubble of deconstructed collective categories. This debate, and other related debates in lesbian and gay politics, is not only over the content of collective identity (whose definition of 'gay' counts?), but over the everyday viability and political usefulness of sexual identities (is there and should there be such a thing as 'gay,' 'lesbian,' 'man,' 'woman'?). (Gamson 1995: 390)

More than 20 years later, queer politics has not yet managed to escape from these identity debates. Categories and classifications are still very present, they structure to a large extent society's visions on gender and sexuality. Moreover, binaries are enacted by multiple social institutions: law, education, media. Queer politics today goes through all these processes facing multi-faceted identity dilemmas: transnationalism, neoliberalism, financial crisis, increasing precarity, coalitions with other social movements, recognition of gay rights in the West, regression in other parts of the world. Newer factors have been challenging queer politics.

Beyond social movement studies, humanities scholars have been debating the 'nature' of queer, and its utility for politics of gender and sexuality. Queer theorists were the first to introduce the term *queer* into the academic sphere. These scholars responded to the institutionalization of lesbian and gay studies in US academia, which saw the sexual subject as a historical product and culturally dependent on the material relations in which it develops (Chauncey 1995; D'Emilio 1998). The social constructionist approach, as it got named, was quickly challenged by literature and humanities scholars who 'advanced an expressly critical approach to the subject of Lesbian and Gay Studies and those institutional forces that conspired to produce

the modern homosexual' (Green 2007: 28). Queer theory thus emerged as a response to lesbian and gay studies. Although the former believed they had liberated the homosexual subject one and for all, queer theorists saw this liberation as reiterating social control through its insistence on sexuality as the primary characteristic of the subject. For queer theorists, *queer* is not a more inclusive evolution of the gay and lesbian movement. It functions rather as a parallel sphere. Its identity is shaped as a response to this distinction from the frame of gay and lesbian identity politics, by setting as aspiration to challenge dominant identitarian discourses and propose new modes of performing politics:

> Queer politics [...] has not just replaced older modes of lesbian and gay politics; it has come to exist alongside those older modes, opening up new possibilities and problems whose relation to more familiar problems is not always clear (Warner 2005: 213).

Queer theorists accompanied the emergence of their new field with an exploration of Foucault's theses on the regulatory mechanisms of the sexological and psychiatric discourse of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (1978). It became urgent then to 'decenter' sexuality in order to undo, or *deconstruct*, the regulatory powers which create the (sexual) subject:

> The current term queer, too, while still carrying something of its historical connotations of sexual abnormality, quickly covers them up by presenting itself as gender-inclusive, democratic, queer texts, habits, and the issue of a future multicultural, and multispecies, and *thus effectively shifts the ground away from the nitty-gritty of sexuality* – the polymorphous-perverse that Mario Mieli theorized in the visionary, radical 1970s. (De Lauretis 2011: 248-249; emphasis added)

Decentring sexuality as the primary characteristic (that we find in queer festivals' discourses, too), does not mean forgetting sexuality. For early queer theorists, the focus should move on to sites of resistance against heteronormativity. These sites can be spaces, sexual practices or bodies (Butler 1993). So, in queer theorists' attempt to build queerness as a distinct academic and political term, they often discussed it as a *category* that did not necessarily include all homosexuals: 'There are a lot of people – visibly, actively, impressively, lesbian and gay – who do not find a home in queerness' (Warner 2005: 316). In a similar vein, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argued that:

> Everyone knows that there are some lesbians and gay men who could never count as queer, and other people who vibrate to the chord of queer without having much same-sex eroticism, or without routing their same-sex eroticism through the identity labels lesbian or gay. (1993: 13)

We can locate this emphatic attempt of queerness to be distinct from lesbian and gay identities in the effort the first queer theorists made to build their theoretical approach as autonomous from lesbian and gay (but also women's) studies in order to create a separate discipline in the academic field that would align this stream of thought with new forms of activism emerging at that moment in the USA. Synergies were also at place, since many queer theorists participated in these movements as well. These political movements, such as ACT UP, Sex Panic! or Queer Nation, would borrow vocabularies from the emerging queer theory to build their parallel counter-movements vis-à-vis an increasingly institutionalized LGBT movement.

Queer anti-capitalist critique: A European perspective

How does this history of queer theory, as radically distinct from lesbian and gay, get interpreted in the European experience? As we will see in this chapter, queer festivals borrow several elements of older and recent queer theories, mainly those emphasizing the destabilization and the fictitious character of gender and sexual identities. But in addition to this, European queer festivals have been influenced by their embeddedness in left-wing political spaces and traditions. We can trace back their genealogies to Marxist feminist and gay liberation movements of the 1970s and the 1980s that flourished in several Western European countries. These movements were the product of battles that feminist and gay liberation activists fought inside the left-wing scenes in which they participated, in order to ensure that their identities and their claims were no longer considered as secondary. These movements kept Marxism's materialist traditions, claiming that capitalism was heavily influencing gender and sexual oppression. Beyond the gay liberation and the materialist feminist movements of the 1970s, the group Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners in Thatcherite Britain of the 1980s is a typical example of synergies between identity politics and Marxist critiques. This group, although constituted by 'lesbians and gays', built its collective identity through a framing on an anti-neoliberal critique, expanding the scope of sexual politics in solidarity with the workers movement (Colpani 2017).

After the 1980s, the relations between gay and lesbian movements and other Marxist or post-Marxist movements persisted (although not always in a peaceful way). These relations spanned the 1990s and the new millennium with the global justice movements, coinciding with the emergence of European queer movements within the anti-capitalist left (Brown 2007) or the anti-authoritarian scenes (Eleftheriadis 2015b). The global justice movements provided a fertile ground for the first European transnational queer (ex. Queer No Borders), and queer feminist groups (ex. NextGenderation) to mobilize in the same activist spaces and challenge from the inside the celebration of masculinity and gendered division of activist labour in these spaces. The socialization of these activists within a left-wing environment laid a foundation in which they linked capitalism, gender and sexuality (Klapeer and Schonpflug 2015). European queer identities have therefore been influenced by the spaces in which they were born and mobilized.

Today, in queer festivals one of the most fertile imbrications between anti-capitalism, gender and sexual oppression has been the engagement of queer actors with post-Marxist feminist critiques and the theories of the 'commons'. Silvia Federici, an autonomous Italian Marxist feminist, whose works often circulate in the festivals, contends that:

> The first lesson we can gain from these struggles is that the 'commoning' of the material means of reproduction is the primary mechanism by which a collective interest and mutual bonds are created. It is also the first line of resistance to a life of enslavement and the condition for the construction of autonomous spaces undermining from within the hold that capitalism has on our lives. (2011: 6)

The achievement of 'commoning', of creating communal forms of economy, which move beyond the frames of contemporary capitalist modes of production, is essential for the construction of autonomy. Autonomy, within such a feminist framework, includes sexual and gender autonomy: an overcoming of gender and sexual binaries, which are continually reproduced through capitalism. Autonomy can thus become a mode of producing new kinds of affinities and sociabilities, which move beyond the normalized categories of friendship/love/family. Individually, autonomy is presented as a free-choice in decision-making for every person, to perform their preferred gender and practice their selected sexuality. Collectively, autonomy relates to what Katsiaficas describes as: (a) independence from political parties and trade unions, (b) 'politics of the first person', (c) direct-democratic forms of decision-making (1997: 6-8). Following this line of thought, all

three collective characteristics of autonomy apply to queer festivals. They explicitly proclaim the independence of political parties; they conform to the 'politics of the first person' model through their feminist engagement, and, finally, they organize according to horizontal consensus-based organizational forms, as we saw in the previous chapter. Queering the commons is not a project present in all festivals. But by creating spaces where 'knowledge and resources are shared freely' (Brown 2012: 1070), queer festivals are part of the wider discussion of *commoning* politics, by making their prefigurative visions a political practice materialized in physical spaces.

In the next section, I demonstrate through an analysis of festivals' callouts how queer and other anti-capitalist theories have been integrated and adapted in a 'real' activist context, and how festivals imagine their collective identities. Here festivals' anti-identitarian framework is explicitly evidenced. There is in fact an input from queer theory, present in the narrative of destabilization of the binary systems of gender and sexuality. But, queer festivals advance framings of *inclusivity* as well, a term that relates more to sociological incorporation of multiple identities. Activists' interpretations of their relation to queerness is also presented in this section, evidenced through interviews. Second, I use a case study from a workshop organized in the Queeristan festival in 2012 to demonstrate the importance of the introduction of anti-capitalist discourses in queer festivals.

Addressing identity issues in an activist context: Beyond LGBT mainstreaming

Callouts as indicators of identity-work

Callouts are the texts queer festivals use to get public on social media. They function as self-presentation texts in which queer actors deploy their discursive strategies in order to attract as many participants as possible. Callouts can often take the form of 'manifestos'. They aim at producing a distinct image of festivals' uniqueness in the social movements' field. Using specific vocabularies and sets of beliefs, or otherwise frames (Benford and Snow 2000: 614[2]), callouts contribute to the construction of the normative

2 According to Benford and Snow, collective action frames denote 'an active, processual phenomenon that implies agency and contention at the level of reality construction. It is active in the sense that something is being done, and processual in the sense of a dynamic, evolving process. It entails agency in the sense that what is evolving is the work of social movement

and affective framework to which the potential participants will be exposed, while at the same time, they give meaning to their own actions. The callouts' analysis indicates that queer festivals reinforce the differentiation gap between the 'queer' and the 'gay public' (Calhoun 2004: 166), by explicitly distancing themselves from a supposedly 'mainstream gay identity'. Queer festivals choose to focus on the promotion of an inclusive – in terms of class, race, ability and gender – ethos. Their rhetoric is rather confrontational and angry, while often it is also accompanied by humour and parody.

Callouts have a major communicative importance for queer festivals. Through their circulation on social media, and on their websites, they attract participants by making the events known to people across the net. Festivals' organizers inform but also ask for new recruits, as well as for proposals for workshops and performances. In addressing an a priori unknown audience, callouts try to establish therefore a public (Warner 2002: 55). This autotelic communication has in mind some imaginary, yet not unreal, addressees.

Callouts set the boundaries for the identity-work which will take place during the event. They allow actors to position themselves in the movements' field, by presenting their actions and ideological orientations, setting hence the boundaries on who is welcome to come. Although their future participants are a priori unknown, festivals' organizers have some ideas of how they would look like, what sort of gender and sexual identifications these will have. These identifications are set in order to distinguish queer festivals from other political events, and therefore build their distinct collective identity.

Their analysis informs us on two things. First, that there is an ongoing legacy of the anti-identitarian narrative of queer theory in festivals' identities. Second, this abstract theorization of anti-identitarianism is accompanied by a more concrete discourse on inclusivity. This is framed as an openness towards individuals and groups with intersecting discriminations, in terms of disability, race, or economic exclusion.[3]

The Anti-identitarian frame: Beyond gay and lesbian

In the first place, queer is presented as different from gay and lesbian. According to the QuEar festival in Berlin, 'queer is not merely a synonym of

organizations or movement activists. And it is contentious in the sense that it involves the generation of interpretive frames that not only differ from existing ones but that may also challenge them' (Benford and Snow 2000: 614).

3 In the Appendix, I have included a table with extracts of the festivals' callouts.

gay and lesbian'.[4] In a similar vein, Queeristan in 2012 argued that 'although Queeristan strives to bring together all sorts of sexual outlaws, we do not want it to be another gay pride'.[5] The Da Mieli a Queer festival argued that 'the LGBTI movement is often relegating itself in the foxhole of same-sex marriage and LGBT parenting; that for equality is a dutiful battle but we (queers) should try to imagine new ways of raising and struggling, new practices, new intuitions.'[6]

A common frame across all festivals is the attempt to differentiate queer from LGBT or gay, either by making explicit this difference, or by criticizing the latter's institutionalization processes and its obsession with gay marriage and rights' equality. An essential component of queer identity-work is thus its demarcation vis-à-vis what it sees as its competitor. It is important to stress that this differentiation is not operating through the exclusion of specific individuals who have been 'co-opted' by LGBT identities. What is rather pointed out is the LGBT movement as such which has shown mainstreaming signs of institutionalization. In that sense, all 'sexual outlaws' are encouraged to participate in the festivals, no matter if they identify as gay, lesbians, or queer.

More specifically, the boundaries queer festivals attempt to build as a distinction from the gay and lesbian movement, and its supposed identity politics tendency, can be seen in two streams: deviance and explicit opposition to the LGBT movement. To begin with, queer festivals are not imagined as one more identity on the 'shopping list' of identities (Flesher-Fominaya 2015: 73). They are rather seen as a 'deviation' from normality, that needs to be celebrated. The QuEAR festival's callout is illustrative:

> Queer is a deviation from the norm, challenging and questioning boundaries that are upheld within mainstream society. Queer is also a utopia, not in the bourgeois sense of otherworldliness, but as a space that needs to be constantly (re)created and projected into new spaces, which is the aim of this event. (QuEar 2011)

4 QuEar Festival, 'About', http://quear.blogsport.eu/en/about/ (last accessed: 19/09/2017). All citations from the QuEar festival in this section come from this source. All the following citations in English are in their original form.

5 Queeristan, 'Calls for Contributions to Queeristan 2012', http://trikster.net/blog/?p=574 (last accessed: 31/08/2017). All citations from the Queeristan festival of 2012 in this section come from this source.

6 Da Mieli a queer, 'From Mieli to Queer: LGBTI Cultures Experiences in Movement, 4-7th April, 2013', https://www.facebook.com/notes/da-mieli-a-queer-culture-e-pratiche-lgbti-in-movimento/from-mieli-to-queer-lgbti-cultures-and-experiences-in-movement-rome-4-7th-april-/628441453848387/ (last accessed: 31/08/2017). All citations from the Da Mieli festival in this section come from this source.

'Deviation' from the norm becomes not a matter of shame, but on the contrary a matter of celebration and, as Kosofsky Sedgwick described, a stigma that activists reverse into a political identity (1993: 4). This reminds us, certainly, of the Pride parades politics which also celebrate, and in certain contexts resist strong homophobia (see, for instance, Pride politics of the Warsaw marches, Ayoub 2016: 53-86). For queer festivals in the Western capitals, LGBT, however, is not seen as deviant, but as already integrated in social normativity. The phrases and terms in festivals' callous stress this normalization process of the LGBT movement and resort to a multiple set of idioms to describe it: 'straight and gay norms'[7]; 'deviation from the norm' (QuEar); 'break free from structures and norms imposed on us'[8]; 'counter the normative workings of gender and identity' (Queeristan 2012).

For some festivals, the LGBT movement is even explicitly accused of getting co-opted by the heteronormative society. A clear illustration of this process is the introduction of the term 'homonormativity' in Queeristan's promotion material in 2013. Not only 'homonormativity' became part of the distinct vocabulary of Queeristan but it also obtained a central role in its identity-work. This term was coined in queer theory in order to define a 'politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions – such as marriage, and its call for monogamy and reproduction – but upholds and sustains them while promoting the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency ad a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption (Duggan 2002: 179). Queeristan used this queer theory term to create a promotion video called: 'HomoNormativity Ad'.[9] In this parodic video, the festival's organizers explain what this term means:

> Are you tired of being a bad queer? Do you want to be a good gay? Well, look no further. [The] FDA [Food and Drug Administration] has recently approved a new drug called *homonormativity*. This drug has been proven to help bad queers like yourself, to assimilate to the heteronormative society, by behaving the same as straight dudes.[10]

7 Oslo Queer Festival, 'Practical Info', http://osloqueerfestival.blogspot.it/p/practical-info_24.html (last accessed: 19/09/2017). All citations from the Oslo festival in this section come from this source.

8 Copenhagen Queer Festival, 'Copenhagen Queer Festival 2009', http://trikster.net/blog/?p=321 (last accessed: 19/09/2017). All citations from the Copenhagen festival in this section come from this source.

9 Queeristan, 'Queeristan 2013 Video Promo', https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3T7GMFiJt_M (last accessed: 19/09/2017).

10 Transcription from the promotion video. Original in English.

The video plays with this binary opposition between the kind and normalized gay on the one hand, and the bad and deviant queer on the other. This does not happen only in verbal terms, but the distinction takes place through images as well. In the video, gays are portrayed as white cis boys and cis girls, with neat clothes, discussing about their wedding plans. Queers are, on the contrary, depicted as an a-gendered mass dancing in gloomy places, sexually aroused and kissing each other, and smacking each other's behinds, while their racial backgrounds are much more diverse. It is obvious therefore that this promotion video does not only describes a *division* between gays and queers, but more importantly, it performatively establishes it (Butler 1988), and turning it into Queeristan's main raison d'être. The critique of identity therefore is accompanied by the provision of a space for all those who do not feel part of the mainstream LGBT community.

Second, the commitment of queer to identifying as *different* from gay and lesbian identities is another main constituent of queer festivals' identity-work. This is clearly stated in the manifesto of the Da Mieli a Queer festival: '[T]he LGBTI movement is often relegating itself in the foxhole of same-sex marriage and LGBT parenting.'[11] Queer festivals tend to read the LGBT as a movement with a rather limited scope. By setting itself to the defence of a specific, normative sexual identity (gay, lesbian), the LGBT movement is accused of missing other parts of oppression, and thus setting itself apart from other struggles, which do not relate directly to sexuality, but include economic exploitation, race and gender relations.

Despite their critique of identity, festivals' dissociation from the LGBT movement is paradoxically part of another identity-work, as evidenced also in the posters that decorate them. For instance, a banner welcoming the participants at the Copenhagen Queer Festival was displaying: 'This is not a gay party. This is a queer party.'[12] This slogan and all the above examples point to the argument that there is an agency of building queerness as a distinct identity, against a 'gay' one. In a performative manner, festivals set the boundaries between these two identities.[13] Going beyond the LGBT or gay identities is a queer claim, but it is not the only one. As we see below, callouts and other texts are very vocal in including people from different social backgrounds, be it social, economic or racial.

11 Da Mieli a Queer, 'From Mieli to Queer: LGBTI Cultures Experiences in Movement, 4-7th April, 2013'.

12 Poster in English, Copenhagen Queer Festival, 2011. Personal collection.

13 I also read this demarcation as a reaction against the masculine domination of gay males within the LGBT movement, contrary to queer politics, which is imagined as promoter of a more feminist agenda.

Inclusion in multiple terms

Inclusion is a major frame of festivals' callouts. This frame encourages people to join the festivals, independently from their gender or sexuality, but other facets of discrimination and their intersections are stressed as well. Inclusion for queer festivals encompasses race, class, disability and citizenship status, too. A significant concern for festivals is economic background. Callouts inform potential participants from other cities and countries about the possibilities of accommodation. Many festivals state having means to provide performers, workshop organizers and participants, with financial support for their trips. The Oslo Queer Festival's callout is illustrative in that sense: 'We are happy to help those who need it with some accommodation for your travel expenses, with all the money left after the festival.'[14] In a similar vein, the Copenhagen festival's callout states: 'We wish to create a space, which is not based on money, as we find this is the case in society today. The festival is open to all, whether or not they have money.'[15] With their discursive opening to people with few economic resources, queer festivals are trying to effectively address exclusion, not only in terms of gender expression and sexual identity, but also in terms of economic status.

Callouts address issues of language, age, and disability inclusions, too. Language in particular is another main concern since callouts are primarily written in English and the festival's local language. In 2013, for instance, the queer festivals in Amsterdam and in Berlin displayed their callouts in other languages, too, such as Turkish and Arabic. Translation in these migrant languages aims at a rather non-English speaking audience, which lives, however, in the cities in which the festivals take place.

Age becomes another crucial factor for the inclusive identity-work of queer festivals. As we saw in the online survey, most participants are included in the age group 20-30 years old. The inclusion of participants with older ages becomes then an issue for the organizers, expressed in festivals' callouts. Finally, disability forms part of the inclusive narrative of the callouts, too. Oslo's callout is particularly exemplary to the degree that it links several discriminatory conditions:

> It is important for us that everyone can take part in the festival, independent of economy or age. [...] We are happy to change locations for the

14 Oslo Queer Festival, 'Practical Info'.

15 Copenhagen Queer Festival, 'Copenhagen Queer Festival 2009'.

> workshops, build ramps and make Blitz [the squat in which the festival took place] as accessible as we can.[16]

The above frames share some common points. They attempt to move the boundaries of inclusion a bit further. They are not completely oppositional to the existence of the identities per se. But they are rather critical of the way these are used to erect barriers in political participation and claims-making, both by the mainstream LGBT movement and the government.

An aspect that is not much present, however, in festivals' callouts is the affirmative invitation of racialized people, or people of colour as differently portrayed. Although festivals explicitly talk about 'anti-racist queer critique' (Queeristan 2012), 'dealing with any form of racism' (Oslo), 'address racist structures' (QuEar), 'break free from norms imposed by racist society' (Copenhagen), the inclusion of race as a crucial parameter of queer politics is relatively absent from their discourses. This lack of race-affirmative politics coincides with the relative absence of racialized people within the queer festivals, with the notable exception of the Queeristan festivals. Festivals' whiteness is not, however, uncritically ignored. Workshops are organized on these issues, and debates on the 'white character' of some practices, such as veganism, promoted in the festivals turn into heated debates, as we will see in the next chapter.

Moreover, although economic exclusion is a significant parameter for festivals' inclusive identity-work, people from lower social classes are relatively absent, as shown also in the online survey. This absence, or even the narrative of 'independent of economy' or 'open to all, whether or not they have money', seems to legitimize the participation of middle-class actors, by providing the alibi of supporting all people wanting to attend the festivals. 'Independent of economy' indicates therefore a sort of self-consciousness of the middle-class sociological and cultural dominance in the festivals.

Overall, festivals' anti-identitarian critique, as framed mainly in their callouts, consists of acknowledging the importance of going beyond gender and sexual identities. *Homonormativity* is also present in some festivals, indicating the dialogue between festivals and queer theory. But festivals are also very prone to inclusivity. This discourse is made up of idioms welcoming people from different social and economic backgrounds. Finally, queer is presented as anti-racist, making part of their identity-work. But how do activists perceive festivals' discourses on queerness?

16 Oslo Queer Festival, 'Practical Info'.

Does education matter? Activists' narratives on 'queerness'

Activists and participants incorporate as well as challenge the narratives of identity-work as promoted by queer festivals. In this section, we will see how the education of each participant might alter the way they describe 'queerness'. The destabilization discourse of queer theory is much more integrated in activists with PhD training in gender studies. Whereas members with lower credentials emphasize the practical and alternative aspects of queerness.

Vabbi, from the QuEar festival, at the time of the interview was a PhD candidate in gender studies. He described queer as a deviance from the norm:

> I think ultimately queer to me means two things: one is [...] *opposition towards the regulation of lives, by gender and sexuality.* Through my theoretical work, I have often had to think about you know what is it that I'm thinking through, what's the problem? [...] And then, there's this amazing text by Gayle Rubin, 'Notes on thinking sex',[17] where she [...] [presents] the circle model, where she writes about what forms of sexuality are allowed and which ones are not. And it's this multidimensional model, which she does not say that one dimension is more important so she doesn't put homosexuality in there. But she also has money/no money, BDSM or vanilla, intergenerational versus intra-generational, like old and young, and so on. And I thought, I like that. (Berlin, August 2011)

Vabbi's understanding of 'queer' is mediated through his own academic training in gender studies, and conforms, in a more sophisticated way, to how the Berlin's festival callout was describing queer as 'deviation from the norm'.

In the callouts, queer is imagined as opposed to what the LGBT movement 'traditionally' represents. This imagined opposition is activated and more articulately expressed, once there is a clash between two political organizations working on the same field of sexual politics. The story of Casimiro from the organization committee of the Roman festival and PhD student at that moment, is illustrative. In the following extract, he attempts to describe QueerLab, his organization, as opposed to the LGBT section of the communist-oriented student movement Link:

> [The Link movement has] a very *traditional* way of facing the questions. So, it's *more LGBT oriented*: recognition of diversity, recognition of rights.

17 He refers to one of the fundamental texts of lesbian and gay studies: Rubin's 'Thinking Sex: Notes for Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality' (1984).

> So it's a way in which it is *different* from queer politics as we know: they do not really question the binaries, and this kind of stuff. It's acceptance of diversity: promotion, all this kind of stuff. (Casimiro, Rome, 2013)

According to Casimiro, a movement working in the old school, traditional way of recognition of rights and diversity is '*more LGBT oriented*'. On the contrary, queer is imagined as different from just a recognition of rights: queer is supposed to challenge the binaries, by moving beyond 'recognition', which is the major political claim of the LGBT movement. By focusing only on issues of 'rights', the LGBT movement's discourse does not attempt to destabilize social and political norms, thus maintaining the difference between homosexuality and heterosexuality, man and woman, the traditional gender and sexual binaries.

Describing queer as 'something different' is reproduced by activists with lower educational capital, too, although they tend to emphasize more the practical implications of what it means to be queer in everyday life. So, in less theoretical wording, activits and participants with no academic training imagine queerness as an identity against the 'mainstream', as it operates within society and politics. In these activists' narratives, 'mainstream' holds a negative connotation. By opposing the 'mainstream', queer connects with an image of 'alternative lifestyle'. To the similar question of 'How do you perceive queer?' Vladimir, from the Copenhagen festival, explains queer through anti-mainstream words:

> At the beginning, I was [perceiving] something with alternative, alternative, *non-mainstream, non-mainstream gay or lesbian*, and then yes, [it was] implicit that we had some basic feminism, being left and, and yes, more or less, and then I'm realizing more or less that in fact it is a culture and yeah like every culture you have to learn it. (Copenhagen, July 2011; emphasis added)

Vladimir's response is beyond academic explanations on queer. His educational background and his professional status explains the fact that he translates queer in a more practice-oriented, everyday experience. In fact, Vladimir was a call-centre worker in Berlin at the time of the interview. According to his interpretations, queer functions as an alternative culture to be learnt.[18]

18 Vladimir's argument is addressed again in Chapter 5, where I discuss the cultural aspects of queer identity.

The alternative lifestyle of queerness is also part of Gem's descriptions, which connect 'queer' with everyday life. Gem, similar to Vladimir, does not have academic training. In order to define her conception of 'queer' she narrates a personal story:

> There was a SlutWalk on Saturday. [...] In the morning of the SlutWalk, when we were dressing up, I had a shirt on that was half [see-through]. [...] Automatically my girlfriend told me, 'Wear a bra'[...] And it was amazing, because both of us are very conscious people. She is part of the orga[nization] team of this thing, very very – I don't want to say "liberal" but for me, *questioning the hierarchy we're brought into the society*. [She gave me a] [...] sort of [...] automatic response: 'Are you putting a bra [on]?' It could be [...] [that she was actually saying], 'Maybe people will see your tits.' (Berlin, August 2011).

Queer is seen as 'a constant questioning of bases, roots, behaviours, ways of thinking, the culture we live in.'. Gem's understanding of queer connects to practical, everyday aspects of life. Gem's girlfriend's request for her to 'put a bra on' during the Berlin SlutWalk questioned their queer commitment to challenging gender norms. Gem was surprised to hear her girlfriend being sexually conformist instead of being sexually challenging. Gem shares the same cultural capital as Vladimir, stating in her own interview that she 'has never read Judith Butler'. So, for both sets of activists, with or without academic training, queer is thought of in a distinct manner. For the former, queer is linked with queer theory and thus imagined as an anti-identitarian fantasy. For the latter, queer has direct connections with alternative spaces of socialization and everyday life implications.

Festivals point at certain directions when they present themselves to the public. The critique against gay and lesbian identities is largely stressed. The influence of queer theory is evidenced in their callouts and texts, through their focus on 'deviance', on 'anti-normativity' or 'homonormativity', on 'straight and gay norms'. But more importantly, festivals stress inclusive frames, too. It is this sort of encompassing larger segments of the public that makes 'queer' distinct from 'gay and lesbian'. Rather than completely spurning the concept of identity, festivals attempt to broaden it, by encompassing different aspects of potential discrimination, such as language, age and disability. We could argue, therefore, that queer anti-identitarian identity-building, part of the historical legacy of queer theory, is accompanied by an openness towards 'multiple, tolerant identities' (Della Porta 2005b). This characteristic of global justice movements is defined by 'inclusiveness and

positive emphasis upon diversity and cross-fertilization' (Della Porta 2005b: 186). Festivals express an interest in actors from diverse gender, sexual and social backgrounds. Finally, they imagine queer as a concrete and practical way to live one's everyday life.

In this section, one of the points I raised was the festivals' interest in people from lower social backgrounds. It is interesting to see now if this openness is just part of a broader inclusivity strategy of the festivals, or if it is accompanied by a systematic analysis of the class system and the economic relations which sustain it. Do contemporary queer festivals continue the legacy of European queer activists' anti-capitalist and materialist politics of the previous decades? Let us see in the next section which festivals advance such a critique and how they present it.

Looking for queerness in anti-capitalism: Structural or contingent?

Queeristan festival. Third day. Amsterdam 2012
Workshop on the Commons

There are about 20 people gathered for the workshop. Four organizers, all of them students living in Amsterdam: three are doing their master's and one her PhD; two come from Turkey, one from the Netherlands and the other from Poland; two men and two women. The setting of the workshop resembles an academic conference. There is a PowerPoint presentation to be displayed. The organizers distribute the outline of the presentations on paper, accompanied by a corpus of five texts: Isabell Lorey: 'Governmental Precarization'; Maurizio Lazzarato: 'Immaterial Labour'; Paolo Virno: 'The Ambivalence of Disenchantment'; Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri: 'The Production of the Common'; Nick Dyer-Withefor: 'The Circulation of the Common'. The organizers start by presenting themselves and the theme of the workshop, and announce that a discussion with the audience is foreseen at the end.
[...]
The audience seems to have diverse backgrounds. Many of them are PhD and master's students. There are two women, however, who self-identify as a 'lower-class farmer' and an 'illegal precarious mother'.
[...]
The discussion centres around the idea of the 'commons', as a specific social need, such as alimentation, and the Common, as a non-material shared good, without owners, such as language. Organizers claim that

> the Queeristan festival in Amsterdam belongs to the category of a 'space where the Common is produced'. In this sense, they link it to similar contemporary social movements, which tend to 'transcend the nation-state' such as Occupy, and where 'thousands of social interactions take place'. Thus, the links of the Queeristan festival with other social movements are presented with slides. Apart from the Occupy movement, the organizers engage theoretically with the Blockupy event, which is taking place at the same time in Frankfurt.[19]
>
> [...]
>
> The discussion then turns to the links of queer politics with more institutional gay-rights politics, represented, according to the organizers, by the LGBT movement. They claim that since 'the production of the Common should stay relatively open', queer, as an anti-identitarian political stance, fits with the political idea of the 'commons', because it is an open category. In contrast, they claim, traditional LGBT politics, which tend to focus on gay rights, have a very limited scope manifested in their identitarian logics, and therefore LGBT cannot be included within the category of 'commons'.[20]

At the Queeristan festival of 2012, one of the most enthusiastically followed workshops was entitled 'From Precarity to the Common: Proceeding from Anti-Capitalist Struggles'. The workshop had as objective to 'explore recent discussions on the notion of the common in relation to anti-capitalist struggle'.[21] The rationale of the workshop was expressed in three points. First, queer politics needs sustained reflection on urgent points of resistance, and notions of community and *autonomy*. The workshop claimed that, central as they are in queer politics, these issues need to be debated through a 'new communist perspective'. Moreover, the organizers wanted to raise two other points: first, on reflections on the emergence of the 'precariat'; second, on the critical production of discourses on communism as a strategy to use against dominant neoliberal narratives.

19 The Blockupy movement is a European-wide network organized to 'break the rule of austerity and build democracy and solidarity from below'. It became very active during the Eurozone economic crisis. Blockupy violent demonstrations took place in Frankfort, the German city where the European Central Bank is based, during my fieldwork in the Queeristan festival in 2012. For more information, view its website: https://blockupy.org/ (last accessed: 16/06/2017).

20 Field Notes, Amsterdam, May 2012.

21 Queeristan, 'From Precarity to the Commons', http://queeristan.org/2012/04/27/from-precarity-to-the-common-proceeding-from-anti-capitalist- struggles (last accessed: 06/01/2017).

We saw in the previous section that an anti-capitalist critique is not part of festivals' callouts. There are voices, however, among the actors who address these critiques and attempt to bring new 'communist' perspectives in queer festivals. Activists and participants in the festivals often hold several political identities and memberships in different social movement groups across Europe and beyond. Many have been part of far-left groups (anarchist, anti-authoritarian, anti-fascist, etc.). Their participation in these groups reflects the way queer publics identify in political terms. In the online survey of the Oslo Queer Festival, more than three quarters of the respondents affirmed that they position themselves in the most radical parts of the left (80%).[22] Moreover, apart from their political identifications in terms of left-right, many activists feel connected to subcultures, such as punk, gay leather, and drag queen scenes, as is revealed through the interviews. These identifications with other left-wing movements and their participation in subcultures often makes actors wonder why the capitalist system is not criticized so much, and how different aspects of intersectionality can be linked not only with gender and sexuality but also with capitalism and economic exploitation.

The anti-capitalist critique and connections with queer politics were mostly addressed in the Queeristan festivals. The introduction of the anti-capitalist critique, through the theories of the 'commons' was largely influenced by the presence of specific actors who attempted to integrate it in the festival. This attempt relates to these actors' academic training and political involvement in other social movements. We can argue therefore that queer festivals are spaces in which this sort of debate and critique is possible, but remains upon the discretion of specific actors. The Queeristan festival is an illustrative example of how actors who engage in left-wing theories, through their educational socialization and their diversified political involvement in other left-wing movements, can stimulate the festivals' identity-work with political theories of the left. In this respect, anti-capitalist critique does not seem to be a constitutive part of current European queer festivals, as was the case with Queeruption (Brown 2007). Its integration appears more as the result of contingent factors, such as the presence of specific actors with relevant concerns.

The scarce anti-capitalist discourses do not signify, however, a complete absence of their practical effects in the festivals. Queer festivals organize in fact their identity-work through the politics of the commons, more at the

22 In the question 'From 0 (radical left) to 10 (radical right), how do you define your political positioning?', 28% replied with 0, 24% with 1 and 28% with 2.

level of practice than at the level of discourse. For instance, 'the sharing and gifting of skills, knowledge, and affection' that Brown (2009: 1505) describes for the previous decade's Queeruption gatherings, applies to the current queer festivals, too. Festivals open the path for skill sharing and affective relations. We could mention the bike-repairing spaces, the collective cooking and eating, the provision of accommodation. Moreover, the whole political economy of the festivals is based on a certain idea of commons. Communal kitchens, for instance, are based on food products offered by local neighbouring commerce, or through the process of dumpster-diving in big supermarket chains. In addition, the specific organization patterns of the queer festivals inform us about their links with the politics of the commons. As we saw in the previous chapter, DIY blurs the boundaries between organizers and 'consumers', albeit without avoiding the configuration of new power relations. Moreover, the squatted spaces which host the festivals offer the possibilities for queer events to create community resources and to link with other social movements of the squatting scenes, without paying for the organization of the events. Finally, the transnational character of the festivals allows activists who acquire or share skills to take them back to their 'home' communities.

The politics of the commons is also linked to queer anti-identitarianism. The organizers of the 'From Precarity to the Commons' workshop discussed queer as being different from 'traditional' LGBT politics, by using the argument of the 'commons'. This is a characteristic illustration of the rapprochement queer festivals make with anti-capitalist critiques. So, although scarce, the anti-capitalist critique can be, and sometimes is, integrated into queer festivals. But this happens mostly through actors' contingent interest in it.

Conclusion

I explored in this chapter the process of identity-work of queer festivals, from the viewpoint of discursive conventions. Through the discussion on two dimensions of festivals' identity-work, I demonstrated that queer festivals respond to their anti-identitarian identity, through the promotion of frames of autonomization from the LGBT movement and through the promotion of inclusivity. Moreover, I showed how discourse and practices of autonomy and the commons can be part of festivals' anti-identitarian building. Hence, through their collective actions, queer festivals reproduce this distinction against LGBT 'mainstream' publics (Bernstein 1997).

In order to distinguish analytically the dimensions which are present in the identity-work of queer festivals, I regrouped them broadly as follows: a) The anti-identitarian aspect and b) Autonomy and the politics of commons. First, the discourse of moving beyond sexual and gender identities is that dimension of queer festivals' identity-work which links them to the historical legacy of queer politics, as it developed after the 1980s, and to their ideological legacy of queer theory, as it developed in the American universities during the same period. By using a discourse which opposes rigid and fixed identities in order to promote fluidity in the forms that gender and sexuality can take, queer festivals conform to the model of queer theory as it was built within universities after the late 1980s. This discursive legacy is portrayed in the callouts of the festivals when they address an unknown public, thus setting the first demarcation points for the construction of the boundaries of collective identity. I also demonstrated that the anti-identitarian discourse is enriched by a narrative of inclusivity and anti-normativity, which includes the fight against both heteronormativity but also homonormativity. Concerning activists' interpretations on the matter, they tend to reproduce this anti-identitarian idea. Depending on their educational capital, they either emphasize the 'destabilization' character of queerness (university students), or they attribute a more practical sense of an 'alternative' lifestyle, a counter-culture which is 'different' from the mainstream gay one (no university education).

Moreover, actors participating in the festivals have been trying to integrate anti-capitalist critiques and make it part of the queer anti-identitarian identity by advancing theories on the commons. Although this discursive engagement is scarce and contingent upon those actors, the politics of the commons is much more present in festivals' practices. The horizontal and DIY organization, which blurs the boundaries between organizers and 'consumers', as we saw in Chapter 3, is one of such set of practices that festivals engage with.

By organizing themselves through different sets of discourses, festivals do not deny as irrelevant their collective identity. But this identity does not derive from a supposedly subaltern status of participants (Fraser 1990). Festivals rather attempt to build more coherent identities through the mobilization of political theories, as they are formulated and circulate within academic institutions and social movement scenes. Although queer theory still constitutes one of the legitimate ideological holders of the events' identity, new political ideas are gradually introduced. These ideas originate from theories on autonomy and the commons. Therefore, can we say that a certain degree of de-*queerization* is currently underway, in the sense

that queer theory does not hold the ideological monopoly of these events anymore? This is hard to assert for the moment, and new insights from the development of these theories in queer festivals need to be brought in.

Having identified the ways queer festivals publicly present themselves, and the way their members think about 'queerness', and having presented the significance of discourses for the construction of queer festivals' collective identity, the following chapter discusses the importance of cultural practices for the building of queer festivals' anti-identitarian identity.

5 'Not Yet Queer Enough'

Constructing Identity through Culture[1]

Introduction

As shown in the previous chapter, a consideration of the discursive part of queer festivals shows only one side of the picture of their identity-work. Texts and discourses circulating are not sufficient sources from which to understand the whole process of the construction of festivals' collective identity. Festivals promote specific oppositional lifestyles through cultural codes and practices too. Cultural codes need to be promoted for the consolidation of festivals' counter-character, against the 'mainstream'. Therefore, examining queer identity-work shifts our attention to how specific practices contribute to the promotion of an ethos which opposes established cultural codes and goes hand in hand with queer anti-normative statements.

I demonstrate in this chapter that collective identity is not only built at the rational-critical, but also at the practical and the cultural level. This indicates the importance that queer festivals show vis-à-vis the style and the aesthetics both placed in the forefront of their identity-work. For queer publics, embodied sociability is very important. Affect, play, and communication of styles have a defining role in their constitution. Queer politics often depends more on 'performance spaces than on print' (Warner 2002: 89). This means that the conflicts queer festivals address are not limited to those of ideas, as we saw in the previous chapter, and certainly not to questions of policy. The festivals, and the actors participating in them, attempt to challenge the styles of living, talking, and expressing gender and sexuality as well. They go against established speech genres whose constitutive discourse, outside of queer arenas, would be regarded 'with hostility or with a sense of indecorousness' (Warner 2002: 86). The promotion of cultural practices is therefore significant for queer festivals' identity-work.

Cultural practices are, however, charged with strong normative assumptions (Samuel 2013). In their attempt to build their collective identity, festivals are mediated through boundaries, which construct not only the 'who belongs' (external), but also, 'to which extent one belongs' (internal).

1 The title is inspired by Stephen Valocchi's article 'Not Yet Queer Enough: The Lessons of Queer Theory for the Sociology of Gender and Sexuality' (2005).

These boundaries are negotiated continuously and operate through all the ritualized components of the festivals: debates, workshops, assemblies, performances, and informal conversations.

I start with an overview of the debates over important concepts of cultural sociology (habitus, cultural capital) and cultural studies (disidentification, subcultures) that will be useful for the study of the role of cultural practices in festivals' identity-work. I then proceed to an analysis of cultural codes, and to a cartography of which festivals promote these cultural styles, and the way they do this. I address in this chapter the following questions: To what extent do actors follow the cultural practices promoted by the festivals, and under which circumstances? How is the promotion of specific cultural modes channelled by the festivals? How do these practices relate to the queer identity-work? In order to answer these questions, I focus on styles of performances, language, food, and clothing, as evidence of practices with charged political significations and meanings. I demonstrate that these practices become visible within the queer festivals and form the main cultural component of their anti-identitarian building, moulding their collective identity.

Theoretical overview

This chapter debates ideas of Bourdieu's concepts of *cultural capital* and *habitus*, and engages with queer theorist Munoz's concept of *disidentification*. Habitus, according to Bourdieu, is 'a system of durable and transposable dispositions (schemes of perception, appreciation and action), produced by particular social environments, which function as the principle of the generation and structuring of practices and representation' (Bourdieu 1990: 53). It functions in ways which can sometimes be contradictory, depending on the opposing formations that produced it, while it allows a person 'to develop embodied ease in navigating cultural and practical action in structured ways' (Schilt and Windsor 2014: 734). This ease in navigating specific fields is the result of the activist history of each participant, the embodiment of their 'militant habitus', defined as the 'system of durable and transposable dispositions' (Yon 2005: 141-142; translation mine).[2] Militant habitus defines one actor's position within the arrangement of the festival and the practices which take place inside. Different actors with different habitus thus operate

2 'C'est l'incorporation d'un *habitus* militant spécifique, "système de dispositions durables et transposables."'

within a 'field of cultural production' (Bourdieu 1983), in which relations can be often antagonistic and thus lead to conflict. Habitus and the ease to navigate in the festivals are moreover linked with the cultural capital of their holders. Borrowing Frith's words on popular culture consumption:

> A similar use of accumulated knowledge and discriminatory skill is apparent in low cultural forms, and has the same hierarchical effect. Low culture, that is to say, generates its own capital [...] which [is] organized around exclusiveness, but [is] equally significant for the fans. (1998: 9)

In contrast to the subculture logic of homogenous oppositional entities against dominant cultures, Bourdieu's *cultural capital* allows for the examination of cultural hierarchy as a 'useful conceptual lens with which to understand the dynamics of symbolic appropriation of popular culture' (Lizardo and Skiles 2008: 497). This view allows us to deconstruct the idea of queer festivals as 'egalitarian safe havens from hierarchy and power' and rather acknowledge them as scenes 'structured around multidimensional axes of differentiation and distinction' (497). Habitus and cultural capital are therefore useful to examine the hierarchies developing *inside* the queer festivals.

But activists and participants in the festivals develop strategies to resist the hierarchical effects of gender and sexual normativity which structure the *external* society. José Esteban Muñoz theorizes one of those strategies. He talks about *disidentification* as a tool to describe:

> The survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship. (Muñoz 1999: 4)

Disidentification allows for a theorization of activists as subjects who find political agency through events, like queer festivals, by negotiating their identifications, according to their own habitus.[3] The degree of identification with the cultural codes promoted within the spaces varies. This negotiation is certainly not assimilationist, to the extent that subjects do not look for integration to the normative public sphere. On the other hand, neither do

3 See also Kaminski and Taylor who argue that 'disidentification is a strategy of transforming culture from within by taking dominant cultural symbols and working against them to critique hegemonic rules and identities and create new identities' (2008: 63).

the majority of activists adopt radical counter-identifications, or subcultural codes, totally marginalized from the public sphere. The main reason for this is that most of them enjoy high social and educational positions out of the festivals.

Performances, in particular, are an illustrative example of how disidentification works. Muñoz claimed that performances 'rehearse identities that have been rendered toxic within the dominant public sphere but are [...] restructured (yet not cleansed) so they present newly imagined notions of the self and the social' (1997: 83). Borrowing from his approach, social movement scholars showed that 'disidentification' works also in actors' performances in order to build hybrid models of gender and sexual identities:

> [T]he performers (drag queens) appropriate dominant gender and sexual categories and practices, neither rejecting them nor embracing them but using the fact that femininity and heterosexuality are being performed by gay men to construct a hybrid and more fluid model of gender and sexuality. (Taylor et al. 2004: 117)

Performances is not a new repertoire of action, and they are certainly not limited to queer politics. Theatre and performances have always been part of the repertoire of the broader gay and lesbian movement (Shepard 2010; Taylor et al. 2004). During the 1970s, gay liberation groups used gender parodying and street performances as tactics to enact the revolutionary character of their political claims and imaginaries. Members of the group Gazolines in France, for instance, performed gender transgression through clothing and body style. Moreover, they exploited gender parody by performing tea servants in the general assemblies of FHAR, the Homosexual Front of Revolutionary Action, to exaggerate the stereotype of female obedience (Sibalis 2010). After the 1990s, and with the establishment of Gay Prides across the West, performances constituted a major constituent of this repertoire of action (Browne 2007).

Other social movements have used performances and parody as part of their repertoire of action, too. The global justice demonstrations of the last two decades exploited theatricality and included it one among within their forms of collective action. As Hardt and Negri admit:

> It is easy to recognize the *performative, carnavelsque nature* of the various protest movements that have arisen around questions of globalization. [...] The demonstrations are *highly theatrical*, with giant puppets, costumes, dances, humorous songs, chants, and so forth. The protests [...]

> are also street festivals in which the anger of the protesters coexists with their joy in the carnival. (2004: 211; emphasis added)

If performances have existed in other movements, too, how are they specific to queer festivals? In queer festivals, activists and participants seek 'to abolish (or at least destabilize and problematize) "the homosexual" as identity, as well as 'woman, man, and other gender identities' (Hardt and Negri 2009: 335). Performances allow queer actors to engage with parody, with hybrid forms of artistic expression but also with politicization of forms of queer individuals' reality that are not part of performances that we find in other social movements. For instance, performances on HIV/AIDS commemoration, police arrests, incarceration of racialized queers, psychiatric consultations remind violence that non-normative and non-binary people experience in their everyday lives. At the same time, parodies of fashion shows, of online sex dates, of mainstream LGBT people often compose the performative repertoire of queer festivals. It seems that queer performances are therefore in-between reminder of violence and parody leading to catharsis.

To sum up, habitus, cultural capital and disidentification are tools that can describe the ways queer actors interact and build festivals' collective identity, by introducing and promoting specific cultural practices. I see these practices as suggesting new ways of living, new ways of developing sociability. Actors' relations to these practices generate narratives on what queer identity should be, and what its anti-identitarian embodiment should look like. Through an analysis of this process of degrees of belonging, I demonstrate, however, that, in the dynamics involved in building a collective identity, queer festivals come to face challenges concerning class and racial diversity.

The performances, that I analyse in the next section, contribute to the awakening of a queer collective identity, engendered by participation in performative collective actions and theatrical shows which, as we will see, can take unexpected directions and can create internal conflicts. Two sets of performances in particular are used as illustrative examples, both from the Da Mieli a Queer festival in Rome: the SlutWalk and an internal show from a performance group.

Performances in the queer festivals

Performing, and participating in the performances as public, is one of the main aspects of all queer festivals. In their majority, performing actors

attempt to challenge dominant sexual and gender codes. Although performances are not texts in the strict sense of the term, they can be analysed as such, since they have a discursive function (Fairclough 1995).[4] I consider performances therefore as a discourse that mediates political messages, and contributing, through their performative character,[5] to festivals' identity-work. The production, circulation and internal (inside the festival) and external (in the street) reception of these performances shape actors' sense of belonging, and configures their feeling of participating in an alternative public. The external character of performances has its own importance in these processes. As we will see below, with the Roman SlutWalk, getting the performances out of the festival's space recognizes how privacy is publicly constructed, and challenges 'our understanding of how private life can be made publicly relevant' (Warner 2005: 62).

Performances in queer festivals have another function, too. They are used as a repertoire of action, through which playfulness and performativity, in the sense of excessive theatricality and parody, are promoted. As Benjamin Shepard claims, 'ludic expressions are found throughout the history of queer social protest' (2010: 9). By performative and playful practices, queer festivals include 'the extravagant performance of a range of queer identities and styles, but [...] also [...] theatrical enactments – either dramatic or parodic – of other social identities' (Ziv 2010: 545). As we will see below with the spontaneous sadomasochistic (S/M) show, performances are not limited to orchestrated stage-oriented and directed shows, but as Shepard argues, 'many of the most relevant forms of queer political performance stretch well beyond the traditional contours of the theatre' (2010: 12). Different kinds of performances take place: drag queen and drag king shows, theatre, dance, parodies, mimes, body installations, performative-playful contention, but also smaller, spontaneous performances. All these performances set as their aim to 'destabilize gender and sexual categories by making visible the social basis of femininity and masculinity, heterosexuality and homosexuality,

4 I use an extended definition of discursive text: 'discourse [...] is not always and exclusively verbal: Issues and attitudes are expressed and contested in dance, music, gesture, food, ritual, artifact, symbolic action, as well as words. [...] [I]nvestigated historically within their political contexts, [cultural performances] [...] are profoundly deliberative occasions' (Conquergood 1991: 189; cited in Pezzullo 2003: 350). This definition aligns with Fairclough's study on critical discourse analysis, according to which discourse includes visual images, too (1995).

5 Performative in the sense of ritualization and enactment. Ritualization, since performances constantly repeat the same topics and deploy similar aesthetics. Enactment, in Butler's term, of holding the power of doing while saying (1990: 177).

and presenting hybrid and minority genders and sexualities' (Rupp et al. 2010: 277).

Two examples from the Da Mieli a Queer festival can illustrate more clearly the role of performance for the queer identity-work. The first is the SlutWalk, a demonstration organized on the third day of the festival, which presented a deliberatively performative character. The second is the description of the Bibliotheque Erotique show, an orchestrated performance by a queer group which took place on the last night of the festival, and which led to another spontaneous sexual show.

Each performance presents different characteristics. The SlutWalk has both external and internal functions, to the degree that the action addresses an unknown public, a mainstream audience, a priori not familiar with queer politics, and at the same time is produced as the result of a collective decision-making, creating bonds among its participants, and finally constituting a source of tension. Its external function in particular is crucial for the articulation of the collective identity 'between members of the different groups who gather to participate in the event on the one hand, and the larger community, on the other' (Taylor et al. 2004: 112). The second performance has a uniquely internal function, to the extent that it occurred inside the festival, and had as main addressees the public of the festival, the participants and the organizers. In brief, both performances participate actively in the identity-building process of the festivals, and contribute to the construction of their anti-identitarian character, by attempting to challenge dominant representations of gender and sexual identities. By revealing their celebratory and emotional character, but also their internal controversies and complex meanings, I show (a) the role of these external and internal performances for the identity-building of the festivals, and (b) their degree of importance in the construction of festivals' anti-identitarian identity.

Putting the queer body in the public space: The SlutWalk of Rome

> Rome. Day 3
> [Inside Teatro Valle]
>
> We are all informed by the organizers that the demonstration is unauthorized. One specific person from the organization will negotiate with the police if the need arises.
> [...]
> [At the beginning of the demonstration]

We are at least 200 people: participants of the queer festival, the organizers, members of affiliated collectives, such as the feminist collective Ribellule, members from the Teatro Valle. I ask Cassimiro about the direction of the demo. He says that the objective of the trajectory is to traverse the historical centre of the city until we are in front of the Parliament, and then return to Teatro Valle, making one stop at the hyper-touristic square Campo de Fiori.

[...]

The crowd starts walking. Some people dance. There is loud music, since people are carrying mobile sound systems. I hear the song 'Voulez-vous coucher avec moi?' and Madonna's 'Material Girl'. The dressing styles vary. I notice sexually provocative dressing from men and women. Boys in particular look very sexually explicit, with shorts. One is licking a banana provocatively. Girls walk wearing only their bras. Others have drawn moustaches on their faces.

[...]

There is a microphone, which is passed between three to four people from the festival. The first person, Foti, a Rasta-haired boy dressed in black shorts and an open gilet, is shouting in Italian: 'The SlutWalk is ready to start!!'

[...]

After leaving the narrow road where Teatro Valle I situated, we become exposed to larger streets with more people looking at us. There are many tourists, too. We shout slogans, both in Italian and English: 'Siamo puttane' (We are whores/prostitutes), and 'Tell men not to rape'. After a while, a girl grabs the microphone from Foti and starts shouting: 'La prima SlutWalk in Italia, La Marcia delle puttane sta traversando le strade del centro da Roma' (The first SlutWalk in Italy, the SlutWalk is walking the streets of the centre of Rome).

[...]

[At 17:30] We arrive in front of the Italian parliament. The building is blocked with barricades, and policemen are guarding the space. We stay for approximately ten minutes. Some of us whistle in defiance of the police, others continue dancing and singing. Music still goes on. We leave the Parliament and head back to the Teatro Valle. We shout slogans. Some of us hand out leaflets to the passersby. A couple of women are observing us from the outside: they are reading the leaflets and raise their hands, shouting 'Bravo', and clapping their hands. Many people ignore us, however, on our way back. We suddenly stop in front of a church, which is on our way. Two or three boys are running quickly in order to

> enter the church. Suddenly, the door of the church closes in our face. We start gathering on the steps of this church. The organizers invite us for a photo. We take poses. Some of us pull their trousers down, baring their bottoms to the church.[6]
> [...]
> We head towards Teatro Valle. A final stop is made in front of another church at Campo de Fiori Square. We are invited to take part in a kiss-in. I didn't know this action had been planned. People become enthusiastic. People start kissing on the mouth, two by two, three by three, four by four. I kiss with one friend from Amsterdam. And five seconds later, a man from the Teatro Valle joins us. I didn't even know his name. I can see some straight kisses, too.[7]

On the third day of the Da Mieli a Queer festival, a SlutWalk was organized. The idea was introduced by the radical feminist collective Ribellule, which has been acting in the feminist scene of Rome since 2005.[8] According to Ribellule activists whom I interviewed a couple of hours after the end of the SlutWalk:

> It was a moment to try to express ourselves in the streets. Not only something that you do by yourself but something we wanted to do all together. The SlutWalk has a history. So, it's not something that *we* invented. Because of course it started in Canada, because during a [self]-defence training, a policeman said that it was preferable for women that wanted not to be raped to not dress as a slut. So, this is why [we need] a SlutWalk. Because we are all sluts. (Anna, Rome, April 2013)

Ribellule connected the Rome SlutWalk with the broader global movement of SlutWalks that started in Toronto, Canada, in 2011, thus attempting to locate their own struggles in transnational imaginaries and become part of the global SlutWalks movement. Ribellule's account thus conforms to the official historical narrative of Toronto being their starting point.[9]

6 The main photo coverage of the SlutWalk from the newspaper *La Repubblica* is from that moment. See: La Repubblica, 'La SlutWalk per le strade di Roma', http://roma.repubblica.it/cronaca/2013/04/06/foto/manifestazione-56090029/1/ (last accessed: 20/09/2017).

7 Field Notes, Rome, April 2013.

8 Grassroots Feminism, 'Le Ribellule (blog), http://www.grassrootsfeminism.net/cms/node/1236 (last accessed: 20/09/2017).

9 'The Toronto SlutWalk, organized in response to a police officer's offensive remarks about women who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing sexual assault, triggered off similar

According to their organizers, the demonstration aimed at inversing the stigma of the insulting denomination ('slut') and at re-appropriating it into a visible political identity. 'Slut' follows, according to them, the same discursive strategy as 'queer'. If shame is capable of generating a powerful emotion in its addressees, the insult can then be appropriated for the construction of an active identity. The organizers' account reminds us of the fundamental principles of queer theory. 'I am the product of insult. A son of shame,' writes Didier Eribon, describing his own path towards the building of his homosexual identity (Eribon 2009: 204; translation mine).[10] And, similarly, Kosofsky Sedgwick writes about shame:

> It generates and legitimates the place of identity – the question of identity – at the origin of the impulse to the performative but does so without giving that identity-space the standing of an essence (1993: 14).

Moreover, the shame within *slut* is reported to create a rather 'anti-essentialist', always 'to-be-constituted', yet very powerful identity, precisely because it is based upon such a strong emotion. Therefore, 'queer' and 'slut' share some tenacious identifications, since their departure point is the shameful, which becomes the performative, thus creating an identity.

Similar to the interview's account, the posters carried within the demonstration also captured this idea of shame. Through their transcription into visual discourse, posters were transforming the insult of 'slut' into a political identity with specific targets: 'Clothes are not my consent', 'The miniskirt does not rape,'[11] 'Don't tell me what to wear. Tell men not to rape.'

The Rome SlutWalk had some specificities, however, that were connected to its local context. The demonstration was unauthorized and it crossed the most touristic spot in the capital, the Campo di Fiori. Two important moments of the SlutWalk are worth mentioning: first, the kiss-in in front of a church, and, second, the photo we took in front of a second church, in which activists bared their behinds. By encompassing actions with multiple meanings, the SlutWalk tried to celebrate the 'slut' identity, by connecting

protests across the world. Through these protests, feminists and non-feminists highlighted concerns related to power relations, sexual harassment and violence, and at the same time asserted their sexuality through the clothes they wore and the messages they displayed' (Borah and Nandi 2012: 415). SlutWalk was rapidly diffused to many other geographical contexts (Edgerton and Sotirova 2011: 35), not always uncontroversial within the local feminist movements.

10 'Je suis un produit de l'injure. Un fils de la honte.'

11 'La minigonna non stupra' in Italian in the posters.

it with an anti-Catholic ethos, manifested in the provocative actions in front of the churches.

The SlutWalk was the festival's only contentious action, this being defined as a collective action exposing its actors to an a priori hostile public space. The SlutWalk, beyond its internal collective-identity-building, held a significant *external* dimension, too. It made up a part of the repertoire of queer festivals, articulating a collective identity between the participants and the larger community (Taylor et al. 2004: 112). The unauthorized, and thus antagonistic character of the demonstration, moreover, was behind the idea of making SlutWalk into a direct action, that would be different from traditional marches and rallies, such as a Gay Pride march, for instance (Juris 2008a: 125). At the same time, the organizers envisioned this march into a cultural antagonistic framework. As mentioned above, the march involved two kiss-ins in front of Catholic churches, as a way to provoke religious sentiment and challenge therefore the presence of the Vatican in the city. During the second kiss-in, a priest quickly closed the door of this church when he saw the marchers running towards him. The transgressive dressing styles, together with the provocative slogans complete the picture of the alternative aspect of the march. By crossing a highly touristic urban area, the SlutWalk attempted to give a different image of the city to the tourists who were present.

The decision of the festival to go out in the streets by organizing this march was overall praised by the activists and the participants, for its internal (consolidation of collective identity between straight and gay activists), as well as its external (visibility) effects. To begin with, Tasso, a cis, gay man, at the final plenary of the festival, narrated his experience in the SlutWalk in a very positive way. He tried, however, unsuccessfully to grab some of the people looking at the SlutWalk protestors and kiss them:

> [It is important] mainly to speak with people [...] kiss a bit, go towards people. I tried to kiss someone, in general, maybe even kiss a bit in a way not at all Catholic! Because we were also in front of a church. But a bit this thing of transmitting a bit the effects of the body, bodies that touch one another in a way that is not granted. [...] So, relations with the city [are important].[12]

12 The final assembly received a simultaneous interpretation in English. The extracts come from this interpretation.

Concerning the internal dimension of the demonstration, it was acknowledged that it fortified solidarity between gay and straight participants, since many straight activists from Teatro Valle took part in the demonstration. During the final plenary, other activists stressed the idea that having straight men and women from Teatro Valle inside the SlutWalk was one of the biggest achievements of the festival: 'One of the big success[es] was to have my comrades from the Teatro take part in it, and queering the bodies, their identities. So, it means that maybe we achieved the goal.'

Controversies, however, were also on the agenda. During the same final plenary, Sylvia regretted the dominance of some cis men at the forefront of the demonstration, which contributed, according to her, to the invisibility of female participants:

> There was male participation: not masculine bodies, but male modalities of being, I found. The issue is rape. And so, the rape of female bodies. And the fact that there were male-assigned men reinforces also experimentation, because I believe in the contamination [...] so I was enthusiastic that we were mixed [males and females]. But there was a very strong male visibility. [...] The impression I had was that the male presence was more visible politically than the female one.[13]

Sylvia's argument was rooted in the view that the SlutWalk became an example, yet another one, of male domination. Her critique came from the fact that it was a cis boy who led the demonstration at the beginning. She did not regret the presence of males inside the Walk, ('We are all queer in the end', she said). Yet she questioned the hyper-visibility of the male body as once again the *leader* of the demonstration.

Beyond controversies regarding maleness and its presence inside feminist marches, what Sylvia and Tasso brought into the discussion was a crucial aspect of the performative logics of queer festivals: the politics of the body. Queers are supposed to see the body as a site of resistance, capable of putting at stake the normalized codes of gender and sexuality as they are established within society but also within social movement politics. Watching male bodies wearing miniskirts, and having excessive amounts of makeup, observing girls writing on their face 'I am a whore' challenges radically the idea of gender categorizations and norms of 'good' femininity and masculinity. In addition, it brings to the surface issues considered non-political or private in the public space and in the

13 Final Assembly, *ibid.*

movements' world. The body also holds the ability to provoke tension, thus leading the path to conflicts inside festivals' deliberation mechanisms. These mechanisms are capable of putting in motion the collective identity of the group. Why was a man leading again the march? How feminist can a queer festival should be?

The Bibliotheque Erotique performance and its unexpected end: Sexualizing performative logics

> Rome, the last night of the festival. Angelo Mai Altrove squat. 22:00
>
> The last night's party is called Queer Shake. The party is open to everybody, regardless of prior participation in the festival. The Angelo squat being one squat out of many in Rome, the organizers are expecting various people from the broader squatting scene of the city. I wonder if many of them will have any idea about what queer politics means. The squat is divided into two buildings: one open space in which DJs and performers will act. The other, smaller one, functions as the squat's bar, in which smaller performances, such as Bibliotheque Erotique, will take place.
> [...]
> The group Bibliotheque Erotique is one of the invited performance groups. They are based in Amsterdam. Half of its members, however, are Italians and hold some affiliation with the Roman queer scene. I had a short l chat with one of the members, Gianni. He explained briefly their performance ideas. Their performances consist mainly of cabaret-oriented shows. They attempt to create an erotic atmosphere, reminiscent of the cabaret aesthetics of the 1930s. They read extracts from erotic literature to the audience. They individually address some of the audience members by whispering in their ears, and touching them in a highly eroticized manner. The members who travelled in Rome for the performance were two girls and two boys.
> [...]
> 23:00. The performance starts. Bar of the squat.
> The space is extremely crowded. People order drinks from the bar. Not of all them sit to watch the performance. There is a continuous noise coming from the bar, from people ordering drinks. The space is very bright. I believe this clashes with the supposed cabaret-atmosphere of the performance, as Gianni had described before. The performers are on stage. The girls are dressed in hyper-sexualized clothes; they wear thick, but not excessive makeup. One of the girls, Shiley, wears a black mini

> skirt and black tights. She also has two red bands, one around her head and the other around her middle. Gianni wears a light blue dress. The other man of the group is dressed as a cabaret 'master of ceremonies', and he holds a whip. The noise does not die down. The performers decide to start a bit later. The two female performers sit on the sofa. The 'master of ceremonies' stands up holding his whip; he has a threatening look. Gianni starts reading an erotic poem in Italian. He speaks loudly trying to keep a sensuous tone. He walks around the stage very slowly. I am in the front seats together with some other queer activists from Amsterdam. Some people look very interested in watching the performance. The noise from the bar stays loud however. Impossible to concentrate. Suddenly, Shiley stands up, approaches a girl in the audience and starts whispering sensually in her ear. It is an extract she was reading from a book. The performers seem to be trying to concentrate on getting through the act as quickly as possible. Suddenly, in the middle of the performance, the bartenders start ringing bells. It is the last call for drinks before the bar and the small building of the squat close. The performers rush to end the show.

Although disappointed by the organization and arrangement of the space, things suddenly took a different turn, with people from the audience engaging in a spontaneous sexual performance.

> Suddenly I see Saha standing up [a female member from the Queeristan festival, a visitor from Amsterdam]. She was sitting in the front seats watching the Bibliotheque Erotique performance, which was fading away. She grabs the whip from the 'master of ceremonies' and stars whipping her own butt. A friend of hers from the audience, Bebe, stands up, bends her over, takes the whip and starts whipping her gently. The atmosphere becomes gradually more eroticized. A guy from the audience, Luca, steps next to Saha. He kneels down as if he was expecting whips from Bebe. He wears tight jeans, a T-shirt, and he also has two feminine silver earrings. Bebe starts alternating the whipping, first Saha and then Luca. I see some other people from the audience getting curious about this improvised performance, which is completing the incomplete performance of Bibliotheque Erotique.
> [...]
> Suddenly Bebe invites me to whip Saha and Luca's bottoms. While I do, they both start kissing on the mouth. Another girl from the audience joins me and Bebe. Now, the three of us use the whip to spank the bottoms of this temporary-created couple.

> [...]
> This spontaneous performance ends after ten minutes, since the space has to close and the activists running the bar order everyone out.[14]

The performance of Bibliotheque Erotique was the result of a sophisticated artistic idea to blur sexual and gender boundaries by suggesting an eroticized, cabaret-like, atmosphere. As they were engaging with their audience, they were also challenging the traditional forms of performance, which wants performers to be isolated from their public. As the performance was fading away, a more spontaneous form of action took place. This 'organic' show was initiated and developed by parts of the public. Taking advantage of the feeble nature of the previous performance and profiting from the general confusion and noise that covered the space, Saha grabbed the whip from one of the performers, and started using it provocatively. The erotic atmosphere attempted by the previous 'official' performance created the terrain for another unprepared performance to emerge. Other people from the audience stood up and started participating in this S/M sexual game. Whatever the intentions of the people who initiated this spontaneous show, it allowed a boy and a girl, who identify as homosexuals in their everyday lives, to kiss passionately. The image of sexual fluidity was largely achieved, by reminding to the public what queer means. But contrary to the previous SlutWalk, this performance was more about how queerness can be translated in practice. Feeling queer is also about diffusing sexual desire in bodies that are not perceived as male or female.

By not embracing totally the fixed categories of man-woman/gay-straight, queer actors engaged in a game of *disidentification* with the dominant understandings of gender and sexuality. They performatively created hybrid identities by blurring the categories and sexualizing the performative logics. When we all shout 'We are sluts!', when explicitly identified male bodies ask 'men not to rape our female bodies', actors neither reject the identity of male (since they still dress as men), nor embrace it (since they act and speak in a non-masculine way). At the same time, when Luca and Saha perform the potentialities of sexual fluidity, even if their intention was just to provoke, as a respondent told me later, they nevertheless contribute to the building of an image in which destabilization of clear-cut sexual identities becomes temporarily effective.

Although this 'queer performativity' enacted by participants in the festival indicates ways of subverting sexual and gender identities (Hardt

14 Field Notes, Rome, April 2013.

and Negri 2004: 200),[15] I wonder to what extent they are able to create long-lasting subjectivities whose gender and sexual fluidity would become a more organic part of their lives. In fact, 'the subversion of identity' that Hardt and Negri account for queer performativity (2004: 200) might be an overly simplistic account of the radical potentialities of such actions, to the extent that performances do not materially act against the structural logics of creation of two sexes and two sexual identities, but they rather question the binaries and destabilize them in a performative way. As Kosofsky Sedgwick argues, all performances, no matter how radical or mainstream they look, are 'kinda subversive, kinda hegemonic' (1993: 15). In that sense, although the ephemeral character of these performances can create temporary bonds between the actors and empower to a certain extent their members into subversive logics, such performances have a rather *indoors* resonance. It is not surprising, therefore, that they have difficulties in shaping long-lasting political projects and subjectivities that would incorporate the logics of sexual fluidity *out of the festivals*, by creating antagonism in the hegemonic norms of the public sphere. Contrary to the SlutWalk, which took place in the public space, indoor performances tend to over-estheticize the queer project, without participating in a conflictual dimension of norms and ethics of heteronormativity and cis genderism in the streets.

We saw how performances are essential cultural components for the building of feelings of belonging in queer festivals. This is one part of it. Speaking a specific idiom in queer festivals has its own importance for activists and participants. To what extent therefore, 'speaking queer' can unite and at the same time divide the people in the festivals?

Speaking 'queer'

Queeristan festival, 2013. Amsterdam. Third day

I am going to follow a very interesting workshop. Susan Stryker is invited. I Googled her that morning on the internet. Stryker is the director of the Institute for LGBT Studies at the University of Arizona. Her workshop

15 '[Q]ueer performativity is not limited to reproducing or reforming the modern social bodies. [...] Queer politics is an excellent example of such a performative collective project of rebellion and creation. It is not really an affirmation of homosexual identities but the subversion of identity in general' (Hardt and Negri 2004: 200). Hardt and Negri's theories of the commons inspire some European queer activists, as we saw in Chapter 4.

> is called 'Interrelations of Archival Research, Filmmaking, Theorizing, and Activism'. I am talking with a guy who knew her. He explains to me that Stryker is a famous historian and transgender theorist in queer academic circles. According to him, Stryker['s workshop] is the landmark of the festival. There are two other workshops taking place at the same time. I decided to move from one to the other. Stryker's workshop was a success in terms of the number of attendees. Around 30 people went to listen to her.
> [...]
> She speaks passionately about her documentary film Screening Queens: The Riot at Compton's Cafeteria (2005). I look around to see the faces of the participants. All of them look very concentrated on her analyses. She talks about archives, documentaries and activism. 'What makes Stryker's presence at the queer festival so important?', and 'What does this invitation from the organization team signify for the links between queer activism and academia?', I wonder.[16]

Susan Stryker is a landmark figure of queer theory and trans studies. As shown in Chapter 2, queer theory, as a distinct academic 'discipline', developed within the English literature departments of prestigious American universities. Drawing from French poststructuralist philosophies (Perreau 2016), queer theory came to unmask the binary systems upon which our language is built. Binary discursive couples, such as man/woman and gay/straight, play a powerful role in shaping the construction of language. Social approaches on queer theory came to extend this argument, by demonstrating how these binaries also shape social organization, through systems of heteronormativity and heterosexism (Seidman 1996).

The terms, concepts and arguments of queer theory, what we can call the *queer vocabulary* (*or idiom*), are widely spread within festivals. Introduced by people with masters or doctoral degrees in gender and cultural studies, queer vocabulary is displayed and promoted through the official discourses of the festivals, but also during the everyday interactions among activists and participants. If we see the use of queer vocabulary as an autonomous way to address political issues, then it becomes obvious that queer vocabulary constitutes a distinct speech that has its own significance in the building of a queer collective identity. We will see in this section where queer vocabulary receives its authority from, and to what sort of critical resistances it has confronted.

16 Field notes, Amsterdam 2013.

Queer vocabulary holds its authority in festivals not only because it draws upon academic theories. The fact that it is introduced in the spaces by actors with relevant cultural capital plays a major role in reconfiguring the linguistic dispositions of the festivals. In fact, many actors have already or were conducting at the moment of the fieldwork university studies, with specializations in gender, queer or cultural studies. These actors were familiar with it therefore not only through their political involvement in the festivals but also, and foremost, through their academic trajectories. Very often, they used to reproduce the jargon of queer theory, with words such as 'heteronormativity' or 'binary construction'. The authority of queer theory and its extensive use in the festivals had a double impact. On the one hand, it encouraged activists with other university degrees to start exploring queer theory's literature. These actors expressed a desire to explore and broaden their theoretical horizons, since it seems that queer theory can function as a liberating discourse against gender and sexual oppression. On the other hand, for actors with no academic training, it created feelings of embarrassment, as we see in the following story.

Actors with no university education

> Copenhagen
> Five days before the beginning, after the preparatory meeting
>
> We drink beers with Liza and Sarah, both on the organization committee. Sarah comes up with a question: 'During the preparatory meeting, one member from the organization committee said something like "essentiality". Do you know what it means?' Liza corrects her: 'Essentialism. It is a word used extensively in academia.' Sarah smiled and said: 'Yes, I realized that it had to do with that'. Her voice was full of irony.[17]

Here is an illustrative scene of two actors who represent two different political and intellectual trajectories. On the one hand, Liza was doing a master's degree in gender studies at the University of Copenhagen. On the other hand, Sarah was a bar tender. Sarah points to the use of queer vocabulary in the organizational meetings of the festivals in which she participates as well. Trying to find out what 'essentiality' means comes one day after the meeting, making us believe that at the moment this word was spoken, the actors who did not understand its meaning did not feel comfortable to ask

17 Field Notes, Copenhagen, July 2011.

it. In a similar vein, the following story confirms the normative aspect of queer vocabulary and the way it is used in queer festivals.

During the second day of the same festival, there was a call for those willing to organize the sex party and arrange its space. The sex party would take place the following night. The group of people interested in organizing the sex party gathered in order to discuss and set it up. During the plenary of the following day, we learnt that the committee had faced an important challenge: the separation of the sex party into gender-restricted zones. How is it possible to be queer, therefore anti-identitarian; and at the same time create separate zones based upon traditional gender definitions (cis and trans). The sex party committee ended up by dividing the space into four distinct zones, according to the experienced gender of each participant: cis females, cis males, trans, and mixed. Despite the various oppositions to such a divisive sex party, it was decided to keep it this way. The compromise achieved drew from placing a hierarchy between two queer ideals: identity fluidity or safe space; the former coming from queer theory, the latter from activist urgency. Providing the participants with safe space was finally agreed.

Vladimir had been visiting the Copenhagen Queer Festival for the last four years. He participated in the sex party committee. In the last part of the interview, when we had already started discussing his relation to queer activism, he started narrating the story of the 'sex space' on his own:

> Yesterday [on the second day of the festival], for example, I realized I was the only person in the [...] maybe one of the only persons in the room, who didn't know a term which was very important [He is not revealing the word. I am asking him] [...] 'cis'.[18] Do you know it? [I explain] Ok, these fucking idiots (laughter). Like that, I would have understood it. [...] Maybe it's a question of language, and then I didn't; I understood it by context, but I didn't. (Copenhagen, July 2011)

Vladimir acknowledges his lack of knowledge of the term *cis*. This lack is not connected to the fact that English is not his mother tongue. It is rather related to his lack of familiarity with this linguistic field. Moreover, he expresses big frustration by insulting the people who went on with the

18 The word *cis* or *cisgender*, a neologism used widely in queer activist and theoretical contexts, is used instead of the more popular *gender normative* 'to refer to people who do not identify with a gender diverse experience, without enforcing existence of a "normative" gender expression' (Green 2006: 247). In other words, *cis* (*-gender*) describes the situation in which an individual's experience of their own gender matches the sex they were assigned at birth. It is usually used as the opposite of 'trans-gender'.

use of these words. When I asked him if he had expressed at the time his unfamiliarity with the word 'cis', he said:

> No, no, no, I didn't ask. I was even [...] [ashamed?], because it was very intense, it was the discussion about the sex place and people were arguing, in a very polite way, but it was really '*identity-challenge by the subversion of spaces*' and '*shall we reproduce society within our festival*?' [Irony on the use of these phrases] And what the hell is happening here! And if I would have come with a question: 'What is 'cis' by the way?' [Laughter.] (Copenhagen, July 2011)

Although *cis* was widely used during the discussions on the sex space, Vladimir did not dare ask what it meant. In order to describe his awkward position inside the sex space organization group, he uses self-deprecating irony. It is true, as he said, that everybody else was deep in serious discussion, using complex and sophisticated catchphrases and expressions, such as 'identity-challenge by the subversion of spaces'. By questioning what the word 'cis' meant, he feared being confronted to ironic reactions from the rest of the group, and been put in an uncomfortable position. Feelings of submission to dominant judgements can easily prevent people from asking such questions (Bourdieu 1997; see also Samuel 2013: 401).

Vladimir narrates this story at a point where I am asking him how he perceives queer in general. The fact that he produces a story that he experienced recently shows that from an abstract level of identity theorization ('What is queer?'), the discussion moves towards the concrete level of experience. Somehow the theoretical concept of queer is not only a celebratory, optimistic political tool, but it brings with it also power relations, obstacles, and raises internal boundaries, connected to language.

A similar experience was shared by Gem during the QuEar festival in Berlin:

> The queer part came after, like learning more about gender. Maybe I'm the only one you interviewed that didn't study gender studies (laugh). No? [Asking me.] [Expression of relief],' (Berlin, August 2011).

Gem admitted that she still hadn't read Butler's *Gender Trouble*,[19] the landmark of queer theory, because, she argued, of its complex vocabulary

19 Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) and Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) constitute the two books that are seen as introducing queer theory within academia.

and dense meanings.[20] For Gem, embodiment was more important for her queerness: semi-shaved hair and feminist tattoos.

Vladimir's story connects to those of Sarah and Gem. They all point to two things. First, there is an extensive use of a vocabulary that not all participants feel familiar with. This use is so authoritative that some members with no knowledge do not dare ask for explanations. For these members, with no university education, the strategy of adapting is rather humour or silence, or in the best case, asking for an explanation from a friend. Is this experience shared by people with university training?

Actors with university degrees, but no training in gender studies

During the Oslo festival, Giacomo, new member of the organization committee, with a high-status job and university degree in management, shared a similar experience:

> I feel I miss elements of the language that I would like to understand more. [...] As I mentioned, I think there is this gap between, that needs to be filled in, in terms of making things more approachable also for the everyday. I think, actually, I believe that probably our schools, and our basic education should include more [...] [about] gender studies, and, you know, [it] also would make people [more aware], even people that might not feel directly connected to these issues, I think it would be very helpful for society. (Oslo, September 2011)

Contrary to the experiences of actors without university degree, Giacomo is not attacking the language used inside the festivals per se, neither does he get frustrated or ironic about its use. He rather attributes the lack of such knowledge to educational structures, which do not provide people with the opportunity to explore questions of gender and sexuality at schools through relevant courses.

When I asked Robin, someone with a high-status job and university training, a participant in the Copenhagen festival in 2011 and an organizing member of the Queeristan festival, my question, 'Why do you consider queer politics important to your life?', he turns the discussion towards his desire to learn more about it at the theoretical level.

20 Butler's texts circulate also in zines. See the next section on veganism.

> I want to continue my studies in gender relations and specifically masculinities and femininities. And how masculinities shift and also looking at oppression, and how masculinity shifts under oppression, in different kinds of oppression, whether it's violent like in [a] social context or [a] political context, like under occupation or whether it's not as violent but still oppressed by the mainstream community. So, I don't find myself in mainstream LGBT frames. And that's why [in] joining this queer collective [Queeristan in Amsterdam], I found that there are no limits and we [all] [...] got [...] more education, [...] more information. (Copenhagen, July 2011)

Kate, another English teacher member of the Oslo Queer Festival, with no gender-oriented university training, shared a similar desire to read more about gender studies: 'I admit that I haven't read *Gender Trouble*, but I wish to do so soon' (Oslo, September 2011).

All these actors considered their experiences with queer festivals as a motivation to continue their studies, by focusing this time on gender and sexuality. Therefore, the lack of familiarization with queer vocabulary can function more as an incentive for further intellectual and academic exploration, rather as a source of frustration and isolation from the other members.

Actors with university training in gender studies

Finally, many actors have university training specifically in gender studies. We have already seen in Chapter 4 how Vabbi from the QuEar festival, who at that moment was finishing his PhD in gender studies, saw his own identification with queer as an intellectual process, drawing upon figures of queer theory (in his case Gayle Rubin). Furthermore, the organizers of the 'Queering the Commons' workshop in the Queeristan festival used queer vocabulary to deploy their commitment with both left-libertarian and queer political projects. These are similar cases to that of Chris, a member of the Oslo Queer Festival, and an American university teacher living in Norway. Chris obtained his PhD in English literature in the late 1980s, the moment queer theory arose in academia, and in a discipline which was in the avant-garde of introducing queer thinking in the American universities.

> [In the late 1980s] queer came on the scene and to be honest I didn't really understand it until I began my doctoral degree where I had to have queer theory. So, that's when I sat down and read Judith Butler, and I would just, it was very difficult *even for a native speaker*. It's very difficult. So,

> I just kept reading and would go back and re-read it until I understood it. Now it's a lot easier, because there's a lot of secondary literature on Butler, that at that time I didn't have access [to] – *I was just reading Butler*. This became a sort of passion, while I was doing my doctorate. (Oslo, September 2011)

The legitimacy of gender studies in the queer festivals is commonly shared by all groups of activists: those without or with a university degree, and among the latter between those who haven't done gender studies and those who have. This legacy is accepted as a fact that structures the cultural dispositions of queer festivals, and it has a unique impact on the way actors incorporate or challenge the use of the queer vocabulary by other actors. In fact, although actors lacking a university education do not all passively allow the authoritative circulation of the queer vocabulary through these spaces – indeed, some can and do challenge it with irony and humour – for others this is a more difficult process, inclining them to remain silent. Interestingly, even those actors who challenge the use through irony or humour never proceed to such public declarations, by asking, for example, for explanations in the plenaries, but they prefer doing it in small interactive contexts, between friends, or during the interview process. We can conclude by arguing that members of festivals with different educational backgrounds agree that there is an ideological legacy of queer politics and that queer vocabulary is present in the spaces, but its widespread use is not publicly recognized as a problem affecting members with no university education.

The legacy of queer theory

We explored the dimension of language for queer identity-work. The queer vocabulary is widely used inside the festivals, but the way members feel at ease with it varies according to their different educational dispositions and the way these dispositions are activated in the everyday life of the events. These micro-level interactions and the narratives we acquire from activists in different festivals link to common processes. They shed light on the way the organization of an event and its identity-building is inextricably linked to language (Tarrow 2013). In the stories of the members of queer festivals, the way they perceive queer is largely shaped by the use of a specific vocabulary. This vocabulary connects clearly with academic discourses. Its legacy creates political and cultural imaginaries on what a queer activist should know and should read. In other words, these codes create the normative assumption that participants in the festivals *should*

know at least the main principles from queer theory. The boundaries are not, however, stable, and do not affect everybody the same way. The degree of ease in navigating the field of queer vocabulary differs according to activists' incorporation of these specific linguistic codes though university training. This does not signify that people have in reality necessarily read or explored the concepts of queer studies. Being part of a festival, however, makes one aware of the linguistic authority of queer vocabulary. Queer theory is seen as the ideological inspiration of queer festivals.

This ideological legacy derives from two factors. First, queer theory still holds the authority of being the *ideological source* of the whole queer movement. Second, this authority is promoted through actors who are trained in it and disseminate it inside the festivals. In the first case, people feel, at least at the imaginary level, as connected to the discursive legacy of queer theory, its exemplary figure being Butler. As I showed in the previous chapter, however, this ideological legacy is slightly complemented by the introduction of other left-wing theories, like the one of the commons. In the second case, those familiar with these theories usually come from gender studies departments and hold high-level academic degrees (master's or PhDs). Their academic capital is high.

As a result, activists and participants who have not incorporated academic linguistic dispositions tend to cede the authority to queer theory, as a strategy of fighting against festivals' majoritarian cultural codes, which remind them where the ideological legacy of the movement lies. This does not imply, however, that these actors will ever become familiar with these readings. By negotiating their position towards these linguistic codes, according to their own habitus, actors express a sort of disidentification. To that extent, they do not comply completely with the queer vocabulary's codes, since in reality they often just carry on *not* reading the authoritative texts. Moreover, they continue to attribute the authority of queer festivals to queer academic discourses, without rejecting them completely, and even suggest further training. In both cases, queer theory is somehow present, either in the vocabulary circulating within the festivals, or in the discussions taking place in the workshops. In this sense, part of queer identity is constructed upon the legacy of queer theory. *Queer vocabulary* becomes one particular style of communication, upon which identity-work takes place, with the norms it imposes and the respective responses of participants and members according to their habitus.

Having explored performances and language and their role in queer festivals identity-work, it is time to shift our attention to another cultural

aspect, often neglected in social movement studies: food. What is the power of food choices that festivals make? To what extent veganism is connected with queerness? And how do actors challenge it?

'Mmmm... Vegan is so tasty': Food practices and queer collective identity

> [The] next time someone [...] impose[s] [...] vegan food [on me], I will bring a huge piece of pork and eat it in front of everyone.
> – Pietro, 'Queer Activism and Class' workshop, Queeristan, Amsterdam, 2012

> Whatever comes from the middle class is not necessarily bad.
> – Lena, 'Queer and Class' workshop, Copenhagen Queer Festival, 2011

Collective cooking and eating is not a new phenomenon for movements deployed inside squats. Queeruption festivals used to provide their participants with meals (Brown 2007: 2693-2696). As part of the squatting culture, therefore, queer festivals are also familiar with collective cooking. Through the tensions and the differences in the interpretations concerning collective cooking, and especially veganism, I expose in this section the degree to which food becomes a component for the identity-work in queer festivals. I start by presenting the collective meals as a main ritual of queer festivals, which attributes regularity and shapes the collective ethos through the practice of cooking and eating in large ensembles. I focus then on the vegan character of these meals, as an attempt to build an oppositional cultural style, which attributes meaning to the construction of festivals' anti-identitarian identity.

The majority of queer festivals practise collective meals.[21] The biggest festivals tend to organize three meals per day: breakfast, lunch, and dinner, while the smallest ones usually provide only dinners. Collective cooking is part of a broader political economy of the festivals. For organizers, it is an efficient strategy to obtain financial resources, since the meals are extended not only to the internal but also to external participants, and they are much cheaper, and thus more attractive, than a usual meal in a commercial restaurant. Moreover, some products used in the cooking process are collected from dumpster-diving practices.[22] Activists approach

21 Apart from festivals which are more art-oriented, such as the QuEar festival in Berlin.

22 Dumpster diving is 'one among many tactics used to create an independent "subsistence economy" outside of capitalism' (Barnard 2011: 423). It consists of sifting through commercial or residential trash to find items that have been discarded by their owners.

supermarket chains and take the vegetables to be thrown away. At other times, agreements with grocery stores or bakeries are set up so that festival workers collect the food the shops are planning to throw away. For instance, the Copenhagen Queer Festival's organizers made a deal with a bakery to collect all their food remained unsold every night at 19:00. Jane, a participant from Berlin (and a friend since then) and I took over the responsibility to bring the food from the bakery to the festival with a bike provided by the festival. After the end of every meal, 'collective washing' is practised; every person is supposed to wash her dirty dishes in a sort of a DIY washing place. All practices around the meals hold high symbolic importance stressed in the narratives of the organizers and contributes to a certain extent to the construction of queer's anti-identitarian identity.

Collective cooking is often channelled through vegan norms. Festivals in Northern Europe provide only vegan food, while the organizers oppose any possibility of including meat or meat products in the daily meals. The promotion of veganism takes place through festivals' official discourses:

> 1. All the food served on the festival is vegan. If you have allergies let us know and we will make sure there is also food for you. There is vegan food three times a day.[23]
>
> 2. All the food at the festival are priced with a suggested donation. You will get vegan lunch and dinner everyday for donations, and free breakfast. So no one needs to spend lots of money on expensive food while they are in Norway! As a participant at Oslo Queer Festival – we promise you free private accommodation and very cheap nice vegan food.[24]
>
> 3. Please be aware that Queeristan is a vegan space and respects the Palestinian call for boycott of Israeli products.[25]

Callouts and other written texts circulating inside the festivals or on the net remind participants of the vegan character of queer, and often feminist politics, tracing and performatively establishing connections to other political identities, such as that of anarchism. The zine *Straight Edge, Veganism and*

23 Copenhagen Queer Festival, 'Food', http://www.queerfestival.org/practicalinfo.html (last accessed: 20/09/2017).

24 Oslo Queer Festival, 'Practical Info', http://osloqueerfestival.blogspot.fr/p/practical-info_24.html (last accessed: 20/09/2017).

25 Queeristan, 'Call Out 2017', https://queeristan.org/ (last accessed: 20/09/2017).

Identity Politics at the Copenhagen Queer Festival contained for instance texts linking veganism with race and class issues.[26]

If veganism is usually presented 'from above' as an essential part of queer festivals, everyday stories 'from below' reveal the controversies that veganism can create among queer activists. In the preparatory discussions of the Copenhagen Queer Festival in July 2011, veganism became a matter up for discussion, and its implementation in the end was confirmed.

> Copenhagen. Preparatory assembly
>
> Two days before the festival begins food issues are raised in the discussion. The organization committee confirms the vegan character of the festival. I am surprised at this unquestioned confirmation, until Morgan, a member of the organizing committee, raises her hand:
> 'Sometimes, I have the impression that we see things in a monolithic way. We should never forget that there are people who do not eat meat, but they are still vegetarians, not vegans. Concerning meat, do you know any Chinese person knowing the concept of vegan?'[27]

Although Morgan's concern did not lead to a reconsideration of the festival's vegan character, her intervention questioned the 'biopolitics of food', or the process through which 'ethical concerns over food come to displace troubling questions of white privilege and a complex politics of class and social mobility' (Brown 2015: 79). In other words, Morgan put in question the 'unquestionable' character of veganism in queer festivals, attempting to create a debate over the links between white, middle-class privilege and vegan ethics. In the same festival, a workshop called 'Queer and Class' took place. During the workshop, one participant raised the middle-class character of vegan food. An activist reacted: 'Whatever comes from the middle class is not necessarily bad.' Another one jumped in, however, admitting that vegan food might be a 'discouraging characteristic' for people who are not familiar with this alimentary practice. This debate in Copenhagen demonstrates that despite the top-down character of veganism, its connections with race and class discrimination, are not silenced but often expressed in internal discussions.

Despite these discussions, however, the Copenhagen Queer Festival kept a very strict policy on veganism. The following story is illuminating.

26 The zine contains other texts, too. Some examples are the texts 'Our Bodies Are Battlefields', 'Rights or Liberation' and an interview with Judith Butler.

27 Field Notes, Copenhagen, July 2011.

During the first day of the festival, Jane and I brought the food from the bakery. The organizing committee realized then that among the various bakery products, there were a dozen meat sandwiches. It was decided ad hoc that the meat sandwiches should be immediately thrown away. After the intervention of a couple of activists, however, it was decided that they should be put in the fridge, strictly separated from the vegan food, and certainly not displayed with the other vegan food, during dinner.

The Queeristan festival had a strict vegan policy as well. During the 'Queer Activism and Class' workshop, I organized in 2012, some activists reacted to the exclusively vegan character of the festival, seen as a top-down 'imposition' from the organizers. The following dialogue from the above workshop is relevant:

> Although I am not a vegan, I support the festival to be vegan. We need to create a collective ethos, which can be also based upon this alimentary practice. (Daniel)
> Yes, but what about the imposition of the festival as vegan? (Martha)
> [The] next time someone [...] impose[s] [...] vegan food [on me], I will bring a huge piece of pork and eat it in front of everyone. (Pietro, angry)[28]

When I later asked Pietro why such a reaction, he explained that he had been frustrated about the BIY [bring-it-yourself] brunch organized that morning. In fact, organizers had not provided participants with collective meal, as usual. Participants were supposed to bring any food they wanted and share it with the others. The only condition was that food had to be vegan. Pietro explained that he could not understand why he could not bring meat, since the brunch was BIY. During the same workshop, Giulia, another participant, criticized veganism, this time drawing upon concepts from materialist analysis. According to her, some of the vegan food is produced very far from Europe. Therefore, she suggested that we should always take into account both the modes of production, as well as the moral ideology of veganism. As a final compromise, participants of the workshop concluded that the festival's choice on being vegan should be at least explained more clearly on the website of the festival and not be taken for granted by the organizational committees.[29]

Veganism does not coincide necessarily with members' ordinary lifestyles. In fact, many queer activists are not vegans in their everyday lives,

28 Field Notes, Amsterdam, May 2012.
29 Field Notes, Amsterdam, May 2012.

as pointed out above in Daniel's statement, who, although not vegan in his 'real' life, sees the point in entering temporarily – at least for the duration of the festival – the vegan world. It is upon this ephemeral character of the festival, that some work can be done in connecting all participants through common ethics, one of those being animals' rights, and thus veganism.

Zoe, from the organizing committee of the Copenhagen festival, was in the same situation. She is not a vegan in her everyday life, but a vegetarian. She agrees, however, on the festival being vegan, despite herself not being one:

> I am a vegetarian. I don't call myself vegan because sometimes it happens that I eat eggs [...] or cheese but I almost don't buy food at all. Only dumpster dive food. So, when I find cheese or eggs of course I will eat it. (Copenhagen, July 2011).

Making queer festivals vegan is seen by several organizers in Amsterdam, Oslo and Copenhagen as a strategy of radical inclusion. Their rationale is that vegan food functions as the minimum denominator of all participants' food choices, and therefore it has an inclusive, rather an exclusive, function. Vegans, vegetarians and meat-eaters can all eat vegan food, whereas vegans or vegetarians cannot eat meat. This pragmatic approach is, however, often complemented with a more political explanation, which links veganism with anarcha-feminism and punk subculture. Zoe saw the point of organizing the queer festival as vegan through a feminist perspective:

> At first, when I heard that you can actually join animal rights with female rights, I was like 'what??' But then, there is this idea of speciesism[30] [...] that you can connect to feminism or racism. [...] You just don't treat live beings equally. And, someone asked me that. 'Yes, but how can you just draw this connection?' I mean animals are not humans [...], but I said, like, yeah, in the whole feminist theory women are treated as others. Not as humans. And the same was with black people, and all the others, they were called like Jews, they were not good humans, they were called other humans or others or whatever. [...] This is the same with animals. I don't argue that animals are humans but I think like they have feelings and emotions and they should be treated [in] the fairest [way], equally. And the pain is equal, and discrimination is equal. I would really like to [raise] this consciousness about animals and gay rights and female rights

30 'Speciesism was first conceptualized by Richard Ryder as a form of prejudice against non-human animals, analogous to sexism and racism' (Cole and Morgan 2011: 135).

> to be more popular within the queer scene, for example. I think it would be really nice to discuss it. (Copenhagen, July 2011)

According to Zoe, veganism, as part of the broader animals' rights movement, is not (yet) incorporated deeply, in queer activism. Therefore, more discussion and further consciousness-raising concerning this issue should be developed within queer circles. Certainly Zoe's account is influenced by her personal involvement in the punk scene and the consequent development of a punk habitus, which is clearly connected to veganism (Cherry 2006: 157).[31] Her embodiment (way of dressing, piercings and tattoos) reveals, moreover, a clear identification with the punk subculture. Her narratives do not deny this connection:

> I travel a lot around Europe [...] around punk festivals, and there I think about my identity, I think it's more important to me be a punk, than to be a queer. [...] This festival, I like it very much, but I don't really feel that it's like my place to be. I feel more at home when I'm at a punk show, really. Even with straights. It's a matter of ideas. (Zoe, Copenhagen, July 2011)

For Zoe, queerness seems to function as a 'disidentificatory' process, as a 'survival strategy' against mainstream heteronormativity, which is also present in some parts of the punk scene. Radical vegans are presented as being inextricably associated with punk subcultures, and so Zoe's opinion that the queer festival in Copenhagen *was not so vegan* is not surprising.

Although Zoe feels that there is not enough discussion on veganism and animal rights in Copenhagen, an insight into other festivals reveals ongoing discussions about the connections between animal's rights, veganism, punk and queerness. During the Queeristan festival in 2013, two punk queer activists from Brazil, living in Amsterdam, organized a workshop called 'What's Queer about Animal Liberation?' The organizers of the workshop advertised their event on the programme of the festival with the following words:

> The idea of this workshop is to have a discussion about unlearning speciesism and exploring the intersections between anarchism, queer and animal liberation. We hope to create a space for challenging oppressive dynamics

31 According to Cherry (2006), punks tend to identify with the strictest definition of veganism, compared to non-punks.

> and biological justifications of supremacy, exploring veganism and vegan space, and its connection to radical egalitarian politics and praxis.[32]

The vocabulary used by the above members and Zoe share commonalities: *speciesism*, *anarchism*, *animal liberation*. Vegan discourses promoted in all the festivals of Northern Europe systematize and put into circulation words that clearly attempt to set up the connections between queerness and veganism. The number of discussions, the debates on the food practices of the festivals, and the controversies on these issues are a common theme in every festival, except from the one in Rome.

The Roman exception

One festival, however, escaped the vegan paradigm. The festival in Rome followed a different food policy. The food was prepared by an autonomous women's squat, which collected the money for its own political project, and distributed some of the benefits to QueerLab, the main organizer of the festival. The meals consisted of a meat and a vegetarian option. No vegan policy was followed whatsoever, and meat was displayed freely. Moreover, no collective cooking was followed as practice, since the food arrived already cooked in the women's squat and was carried to the festival at Teatro Valle. Organizers opted for solidarity with the women's squat, who were collecting the profit. And thus, they did not consider as crucial the construction of a collective-cooking ethos, which would also be logistically difficult to implement in this particular squat of Teatro Valle.

When I asked Casimiro, one of the organizers, about the absence of a vegan policy in the festival, he said:

> I have to say that among us [the organizing committee] it was not a big [...] issue. Actually, there was nobody who even proposed it. [...] And in any case I don't know any squat in Rome providing just vegan food. [...] Our 'national' culture is meat-based! (Casimiro, Rome, March 2013)

Casimiro ascribed this absence to the 'national' culture of the Italian squatting scene, which is considered meat-based. This narrative can easily be contested, however, because one of the main objectives of the festival in Rome was to attract a transnational constituency, with invitees and participants from all over Europe. There was no complaint, however, about

32 Queeristan, programme. Personal collection.

the absence of vegan food, despite the participation of Northern European queer crews in the event. As Casimiro explains:

> The only complaint was that people thought it was a kind of professional profit-oriented catering. [...] It was not very clear it was a women squat doing it as a way to fund themselves (Casimiro, Rome, March 2013).

This discrepancy between the importance of veganism in queer festivals indicates that veganism does not become the priority in the queer identity-building in all festivals. Collective meals, however, in all forms, vegan or not, voluntary or dumpster-diving, is a crucial component of the organization of queer festivals. Minor debates on the 'biopolitics of food' (Brown 2015: 79) that some members bring into discussion demonstrate that food has its own part in the queer festivals. In addition to that, the production and the organization of its distribution, either by the festivals themselves or by other squats (as in the case of Rome), promotes a specific anti-individualizing and anti-fast food ethos, which has its own importance in the building of queer identity.

Veganism in particular has its own importance in the queer identity-work and actors' refusal to go under an identity. Veganism opposes mainstream ways of food production and consumption. By putting vegan food at the forefront of the political struggle, queer festivals in Northern Europe broaden the agenda of what queer should mean and what it would imply. Thus, veganism speaks with its own voice to the construction of the queer anti-identitarianism and has its own importance in the consolidation of festivals' identity-work.

Veganism, however, presents several limits in terms of reaching the broader public. The lack of diversity in terms of class and race is a problem which queer organizers are constantly facing. But, despite this evidence, the festivals' prioritization of animal concerns over class or race issues indicates that white, middle-class youth with strong subcultural identities might create environments that people of colour find unwelcome (Juris 2013: 57). Is veganism, therefore, as inclusive as the queer identity proclaims to be? I will end this section with an extract from the text 'Our Bodies Are Battlefields', included in the zine *Straight Edge: Veganism and Identity Politics*. The author of this piece states that:

> People who argue that eating meat is natural utilize these primitivist fantasies of brown folks [...] as meat-eating savages. [...] [On the other hand], the pro-veganism arguments often invoke Asia [...] as a site where

> veganism has always been the norm, homogenizing an entire continent. [In both cases] Vegan histories are often suspiciously white. People of colour get relegated to a sort of vegan anthropology. [...] Folks of colour, when used in these arguments, are Othered, and reduced from peoplehood to human bodies.[33]

The text, at the disposal of Copenhagen festival's members, opposes both the naturalizing discourse of veganism and its antithetical class/race exclusionary discourse, as essentializing the non-Western Other, attributing arguments of homogenization and dehumanization.

As important as food is for queer identity-work, another cultural practice is also important to understand how queer festivals build identities despite their refusal to go under identity labels. This is clothes and dressing styles, which both contribute to the production of cultural norms and have their own significance to festivals' anti-identitarian identity.

'I am trash, because I like it': Embodiment and its role to queer identity-work

> Clothes have more important offices than merely to keep us warm; they change our view of the world and the world's view of us.
> – Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*

1. At around 16:30 of the third day of the festival

> The preparations for the SlutWalk demonstration started. Activists and participants started making themselves up, trying different varieties of clothes, and making sexual jokes with one another. These preparations were taking place within the Teatro Valle Occupato. Participants explored the wardrobe of the theatre and experimented with various ways of dressing, using the most incredible and incompatible materials. The principle was, however, quite specific: gender transgression and/or hypersexualization for both boys and girls. Of course, there was no obligation, and in fact, some people did not really participate in the dressing and makeup preparations. The majority, however, improvised with all the material available there. Many boys and men in particular stressed a very feminine, eccentric style,

33 Royce Drake, 'Our Bodies Are Battlefields'. In the zine *Straight Edge, Veganism and Identity Politics.* Personal collection.

which seemed to be parodying the normalized codes of dressing according to a binary system of male/female gender. Other men adapted to gay male subcultures. Casimiro, for example, dressed in gym clothes, although he also wore a necklace and put glitter on his face. Women diversified their appearances as well. Many of them adapted to a cabaret culture, with elegant, sexy clothes, whereas others adopted a more pulp fiction aesthetic, with blue and pink wigs, miniskirts, etc. While preparing, at some point someone screamed: 'We are freaks!' And, indeed, once we moved out of the theatre and onto the street, this was what we were, a freak show with diversified aesthetics, with incoherent dressing styles, transgressive gender roles, and provocatively sexualized. The SlutWalk was ready to start.[34]

2. Oslo. Final day of the festival, 25 September 2011

I am walking out of the squat with Noris. We head towards a gay bar. Its name is 'London'. We enter and get some drinks. 'I'm twice married,' he says. 'I married him to give him [...] nationality. He's American and he wanted to stay in Europe.' 'Does marriage kill love? I ask him. 'Love kills marriage,' he responds. I am observing him. He is wearing three rings. 'Each one has its history,' he says. He has many tattoos on his arms and on his back. I am particularly impressed by one tattoo which shows a skeleton which instead of a skull has a television.[35]

The first extract from the field notes describes the preparatory atmosphere just before the beginning of the SlutWalk in Rome. In previous sections, we examined the public outreach of the march in Rome's touristic streets, and its performative logic for identity-building. But a SlutWalk is also about dressing, expressing subjectivity through styles, communicating messages through symbols on the body. Do dressing styles function as a tool to connect people into sense of belonging to a common identity project, despite anti-identitarian rhetoric? Freakish dress codes, which transgress traditional gender alignments, and promote an imprecise gender picture, are at the forefront in queer festivals. In the SlutWalk, one could observe individuals with beards wearing heavy makeup and skirts, or others with gym clothes and elegant female necklaces. Furthermore, femme lesbians[36] with dresses

34 Field notes, Rome, April 2013.

35 Field notes, Oslo, September 2011

36 *Femme* is a lesbian category, which links sex and gender, but challenges the connection between gender and sexual orientation, since femmes are 'being attracted to women, although

and S/M leather persons were showing off their style in the demonstration. By operating outside of 'traditional rationalistic verbal discourse' (Penney 2013: 291), dressing styles contribute to the construction of identifiable publics with shared understandings of what constitutes transgression. Style and clothes constitute modes of addressing the political through concrete significations. They both have external and internal effects. Externally, they become eminently visible in the public space. Internally, they forge feelings of belonging, by stressing a culture of excessive heterogeneity in terms of styles, and thus function as a significant component for the shaping of collective identities.

By attempting to challenge dominant cultural codes, dress becomes one of the several processes in the construction of the queer anti-identitarian identity. Dress styles function as strategies for the transgression of dominant cultural categories. They construct gender as a set of stylistic expressions, reflected in the bodies and the clothes that gendered bodies wear. As bell hooks claims, style holds a transgressive and transformative potential, making it 'one example of counter-hegemonic cultural practice' (1990: 22). These stylistic transgressions attempt to demonstrate the constructed character of gender and sexual identities. As in the case of drag performers, queer activists attempt to show that identities do not 'begin and end with the physical body' (Taylor et al. 2004: 127).

Stylistic transgressions promoted and enacted in queer festivals become strategies by which actors attempt to contest dominant codes of gender binaries. These externally oriented strategies do not escape, however, from already established subcultural aesthetics, existing out of the queer festivals. In fact, for members in the queer festivals, their dress codes and aesthetic styles function as an appropriation of both dominant and subcultural codes, which create in their turn new forms of identity: wearing miniskirts on the one hand, but keeping one's beard on the other hand. This process aligns with disidentification. Actors do not completely refuse dominant categories but at the same time they want to subvert them through hybridizing, and complexifying traditional gender stylistic expressions. In that respect, queer festivals do not invent new styles, they rather appropriate different ones and create style bricolages.

Dressing styles have their own importance for queer identity-work. They become markers of the solidification process of a sense of belonging, and attribute meaning to what it means to be queer and to participate in a queer

where this is or is understood to be for masculinity it can also be recuperated by the heterosexual imaginary' (Eves 2004: 487).

festival (even if one does not perform queerness in 'real' life). This play with dressing codes and styles comes to reinforce gender performativity, according to which gender is a set of practices and performances, constructed across time, and varying according to space and social interactions. Queer dress comes as a confirmation to the political statement that gender identity is never fixed or biologically given, but rather acquired through various power relations and discursive formations to which all people are subjected. In these power relations, dress might function as a disruptive political strategy when it is manipulated, or ridiculed, by the ones who use it as such, against actors who just use style as an individualistic aestheticized way of existing.

Dressing codes are not explicitly discussed inside the festivals; neither do they become the focus of discussions in the workshops, as is the case with the previous cultural practices (food, performances, vocabularies). To a certain extent, dressing styles speak for themselves; they have an autotelic *raison d'être*. They compete silently through participants' dress choices. Activists who have been in the scene for many years function as the reference point for queer style. Having accumulated a militant and subcultural capital, built over time, through their participation in the squatting and/or queer scenes, their styles set the norms of what it is to look queer. I cite below part of my observations from the Copenhagen festival and the Queeristan festival of 2012. Back then, I had distinguished three broad categories of dressing styles: (a) punk, (b) trash, and (c) ordinary.[37] All styles are equally represented in the festivals, punk constituting the minority in terms of number of adherents. I do not take into account performance styles or drag, which are usually displayed during the night performances, but limit the descriptions to the styles as performed in the everyday interactions within the festivals.

a. *Punk:* It is very common for activists, especially those affiliated with the squatting, anarchist/black bloc and vegan culture, to perform a punk dressing style with strong embodiment. This could be described

37 I need to acknowledge that this is an over-simplified categorization which was made for analytic purposes. My idea remains that dressing styles and embodiments in queer festivals are not 'naïve' and 'spontaneous' performances, but they incorporate a reflexive and relational way of actors who position themselves within the festivals according to specific cultural and militant logics. Dressing styles are part of symbolic hierarchies, together with all other cultural practices, and as such they should not be neglected in the analysis of social movement communities. Dressing styles have therefore their own role to play in people's identification with the queer identity, which goes beyond rationalistic-verbal explanations.

> as involving lots of piercings, jewellery, tattoos. The trend is to dress in black and red. Piercing of the nose, in particular, is a trademark of identification. In this group, one can identify S/M styles, too. The latter wear black leather clothes and jewellery in their everyday interactions inside the festival. Members in this category often reproduce the idea that the body is a site of contestation of norms.
> b. *Trash aesthetics/Hippies:* These are mostly styles that stem from alternative clothes, relating to working-class culture. Performed mostly by male participants (cis or trans), they often adopt exacerbated gay male cultural styles, such as gym sport clothing.
> c. *Ordinary:* Most participants present an accumulation of ordinary dress styles. These are mostly people with no long experience in the scene, and usually outside of the organization committees, or actors with an established professional status. Visitors or random participants belong also to this majority. These styles are mostly eclipsed by the extravaganza of the two previous categories.[38]

In my observations, *punk* and *trash* styles function as the promoter of what it means to dress queer. They work as styles which performatively contribute to the queer anti-identitarian identity. The trash style in particular carries many class signifiers, whereas the punk one has already been associated with white working-class subcultures (Hebdige 1991). Although the punk style constitutes a minority in terms of the number of those embodying it, its links with veganism and the squatting culture make it particularly legitimate inside queer festivals. Punk's expressivity on the body conveys strong political and cultural messages. As Zoe, from the Copenhagen festival, stated about her nose piercing:

> For me it is really a punk thing to wear. [...] I was always very interested in experimenting with my appearance, to cross the boundaries of what is pretty and what is ugly. I am also very interested in treating my body as a kind of a collage, that you can use a very nice makeup, and still have a piercing that some people might perceive as something really ugly. In Poland, this thing is really ugly; they really think that I look like a pig, or a bull. [...] I like to wear things that in their eyes make me ugly. (Copenhagen, July 2011)

38 Synthetic field notes, 2012. In this categorization, there is no intention to silence the dressing styles of actors who invent and perform other types of styles.

Zoe, who comes originally from Poland but lives now in Copenhagen, expressed her reflections about what she considers pretty or ugly. Her narrative traces back to Poland where she claims that such piercing is considered savage. She acknowledges that the dressing style itself carries political signifiers; it challenges dominant ideas of beauty. At the same time, she portrays her body as a site of political contestation.

Gem, from Berlin, holds similar ideas on how the body can become a site of 'transformation'. She supports the idea that her own tattoos (at that time she had four) transform her. In her narrative, she linked them to cultural references that inspire her. Among many, the most important was her admiration for PJ Harvey, a punk-blues singing icon: 'This tattoo is the lyrics of PJ Harvey's 'Snake'. I don't like PJ Harvey, I worship. PJ Harvey is god' (Berlin, August 2011). PJ Harvey functions as a symbol of feminist punk ethos, and the lyrics of the song that Gem has traced on her body are relevant: 'No need for god, no need for him. Just take my hand. You'll be my bride'. Similar tattoos are presented on queer performers. The accumulation of tattoos with death symbolism, as is the case for Noris, is another feature of the embodiment of queer punk style.

Trash aesthetics is more broadly diffused within the festivals, since it does not require such a strong embodiment (no piercings or tattoos) as the punk. It fits the middle-class backgrounds of the majority of the activists and participants. Trash aesthetics borrows from working-class style, but transforms it to a certain extent. It assembles a set of practices and cultural products, which represent low value and broad mediatization. The clothes linked with this style consist of used and torn jeans, tile shirts, braces, boots, used baskets and other similar. In that sense, we could trace a historical continuity between the appropriation of lower-class products from the white queer middle classes and the trash aesthetics of the artistic subcultures of the 1960s and the 1970s.[39] This trend of trash aesthetics is part of a broader process of bringing this style of clothes to

39 'The white trash aesthetic championed during the 1960s and 1970s by such artists as Andy Warhol and John Waters, who also included "over-the-top" camp. [...] Regarding both concept and place, Waters made central the figure of the tragic trash queen through Divine and spent a fair amount of time in Provincetown. From 1966 to 1980, Waters spent what are now legendary summer seasons at Land's End working at the Provincetown Bookstore, taking drugs, having sex, and writing the screenplays for *Eat Your Makeup* (1968), *Mondo Trasho* (1969), *Multiple Maniacs* (1970), *Pink Flamingos* (1972), *Female Trouble* (1974), and *Desperate Living* (1977). Although Waters's full-time residence is and has always been in Baltimore, like countless other queers he has treated Provincetown as a second home and has enjoyed there a sizable cult following for decades' (Krahulic 2009: 12).

youth subcultures. It is facilitated by commerce, in the form of vintage shops, from where many activists get these clothes. This process starts in the 1960s, when post-hippies, punks, students and others drawn to the subculture obtained a cheaper but more expansive wardrobe. These clothes survive nowadays in vintage/second-hand shops precisely because of their relatively good quality. They are used now in such a way that could look 'trashy', or that can be combined with various other styles of dressing. This vintage style depends on the 'surplus of goods whose use value is not expended when their first owners no longer want them' (McRobbie 1997: 193).

Although working-class clothing is practical and comfortable[40] (Bourdieu 1984: 200), for participants in queer festivals, it carries different social significations. For middle-class queer activists who follow this dressing style, they mark their sympathy for the popular classes, by rejecting the heavy load of their middle-class origins. It is what Sarah Thornton used to call 'guilty of being trapped in their class' when she was referring to the British working-class subcultures of the 1990s (1997: 206). The practicality and the functionality that Bourdieu used to talk about do not seem to apply completely in queer festivals, since many participants reinvent working-class clothing by incorporating heavy loads of clothes, jewellery, accessories, and makeup, which is anything but comfortable.

Trash aesthetics and other alternative clothing are legitimate cultural trends in queer festivals. Although dressing as a 'real' queer is part of the collective identification process, just like all the other cultural practices, it does not lead to visible conflicts or other misunderstandings. It is more connected to the creation of 'symbolic boundaries', to generating feelings of similarity, against the mainstream (Lamont and Molnar 2002: 168).[41] This stylization of clothing gives meaning to what it means to be and to look queer. The different clothing styles, together with the other cultural practices that are deployed in the festivals, and relate to language, performances, and food, complete the picture of how culture has its own significance in creating bonds and conflicts between actors in relation to belonging in a queer identity, which declares not to be one.

40 Bourdieu used to say that 'the working classes make a realistic or, one might say, functionalist use of clothing' (1984: 200).

41 'Symbolic boundaries' are defined as 'objectified forms of social differences manifested in unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources (material and nonmaterial) and social opportunities' (Lamont and Molnar 2002: 168).

Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to explore to what degree and how cultural practices inside queer festivals function as markers for the construction of their anti-identitarian collective identity. I used performances, language, eating and dressing as main dimensions of analysis. In their attempt to challenge dominant representations, these practices have a double role. Externally, they have a communicative function. By promoting specific styles of addressing the political – performances, queer vocabulary, vegan collective eating, alternative dressing codes – queer festivals make 'identities and views known to the external society as a strategy of public rhetoric' (Penney 2013: 290). Internally, these specific practices have as their objective to make queer identities known to fellow community members, as a means of enhancing solidarity, and thus forging collective identity.

The practices I analysed were the ones carrying strong political and cultural significations and they often become the field upon which conflicts take place. I demonstrated how these conflicts develop because these practices attribute meaning about how queer identity *should* be and carry therefore a normative dimension in the identity construction as well.

First, performative politics functions as a tactical mode in queer festivals' repertoires of action. Queer festivals engage with performances and theatrical modes of contention, in order to challenge dominant cultural sexual and gender codes. By analysing the SlutWalk in Rome, and other performances which took place during the same festival, I demonstrated how politics on the basis of performance, putting the body at the forefront, reinvigorates the idea of social movements, which are usually seen as formations based on rational argumentation. Performances assist in expanding discursive space, not only at the level of content, but also at the level of style. They help festivals in recognizing, and at the same time overcoming the exclusions they face from the official public sphere, because of their use of specific speaking styles which do not conform to the idea of rational-critical argumentation (Asen 2000: 438), and thus to the broader political discussions.

Second, language is another crucial dimension for queer festivals' identity-work, especially the use of the queer vocabulary. This vocabulary connects with academic discourses. The degree of ease in navigating the field of queer vocabulary differs according to activists' incorporation of these specific linguistic codes, based on their individual educational trajectory. Being part of the festival makes someone aware of the linguistic authority of queer academic jargon. Regarding activists or participants who have not incorporated academic linguistic dispositions, they usually accept

queer theory's legacy. Queer vocabulary becomes one particular style of communication, upon which identity-work takes place.

Third, food practices are another point from which to analyse the process of festivals' identity-work. I focused on collective cooking as a ritualized practice and veganism as a relative norm operating inside the festivals. The logics of vegan choice lies in inclusiveness, as part of the broader queerness inclusive narrative. Moreover, it is closely connected to anarcha-feminism and punk cultures, which constitute one of the constituents of queer identity-work. I also exposed the limits of veganism as part of identity-building. People from within the spaces expressed their own resistance to the imposition of veganism, pointing out the limits in their individual choices of what they can eat, or the lack of participation from lower classes and people with minority ethnic backgrounds in the festivals, that might feel not at ease with cultural practice links with white privilege.

Finally, dressing practices were used as another set of cultural modes for the analysis of queer festivals' identity-work. Contrary to the other cultural practices, dressing does not lead to discernible conflicts or other misunderstandings. It is connected to a silent creation of 'symbolic boundaries', of generating feelings of similarity, against the mainstream (Lamont and Molnar 2002: 168).

By presenting cultural practices with specific codes unequally distributed among the festivals' members, I conclude that every participant incorporates and contributes to queer festivals according to her placement within the field of cultural dispositions. The discursive and practical battles occurring within the festival spaces contribute to the construction of 'queer codes'. This observation would seem to confirm the idea promoted by new social movement theorists that, far from posing a direct political confrontation against state structures, activists can mobilize through social movement communities, contesting assigned, existing identities, and producing new ones (Bereni and Revillard 2012: 29). This production, of course, does not come without internal struggles over cultural codes, and their degrees of incorporation. These internal struggles, which continually reconfigure the boundaries of a prefigurative space, confirm the idea that the building process of a movement's collective identity is not isolated from the internal processes taking place inside the organization, and from the course of the movement's events. In that sense, it is problematic to conceive queer festivals as homogenous spaces, in which a specific collective identity incorporates a completely oppositional style, against exogenous normative understandings of gender and sexuality. This is actually why queer festivals are not a subculture, but a dynamic social movement, crossed through

internal disputes and conflicts over its collective identity. In contrast to the Birmingham School idea of subcultures as structurally oppositional homogenous blocs against dominant ones, queer festivals are rather open 'fields of cultural production' (Bourdieu 1983), and as such they are subject to 'impose hierarchies of value and taste, to attempt the construction of exclusionary canons, to establish systems of cultural currency [...] and to legislate definitions of group belongingness' (Lizardo and Skiles 2008: 496).

This chapter sought to enrich the concept of collective identity, by seeing it as an expanding term. Collective identities are not stable traits. They are not simply the result of the frames of a social movement, as is usually argued (Evans 1997: 554). Collective identities are rather open, fluid and subject to the interpretations of activists and their contextual influences. They are negotiated not only at the rational deliberative level, but they are also addressed through 'indecorous modes of intervention' (McCann 2011: 253). Especially movements with strong oppositional codes present a membership that is not only a matter of sharing common goals, but also of aspiring to the construction of new cultural codes, or the challenge to dominant ones. Queer collective identity is embodied through norms and practices: queer signifies what to read, what to wear, what to eat. Through its normative practical reconfiguration, queer becomes another identity, which, by challenging dominant styles, creates its own specific style.

The limits, however, of the fluidity and the inclusive character of the festivals' anti-identitarianism should also be acknowledged. Although festivals address an undefined public, in reality they 'select' their participants by criteria of practices which correspond to specific habitus. These practices and their arrangement within the festivals tend to attract mainly radical white middle-class youth. Although participants' shared militant habitus could be seen as an easy factor for the solidification of festivals' collective identity, this process can be obstructed, as long as festivals do not seek to address a wider public. The risk of self-referencing and 'keeping it for ourselves' (in other words, self-marginalizing) is present. For instance, Tobin, one of the Queeristan organizers, positions himself in favour of this self-marginalization:

> [We need] more critique, more self-organization or spaces, specifically. There is a lack of queer spaces in Amsterdam. So, for me, what is most important is to make possible, as much as possible, queer spaces. They can be invisible – they *don't have to be visible. I oppose this sort of narrative of visibility*. But, underground parties more, and to *draw more people in that* [*way*]. (Amsterdam, May 2012)

Tobin's statement illustrates both the advantages and the pitfalls of regarding the queer festival as an inclusive space. Although queer can be seen as an open identity, with fluctuating membership, the need (if any) to draw more people inside risks the 'mainstreamization' of the movement. He proclaims therefore that queer spaces do not need visibility and therefore discourse should circulate only among people who are already familiar with it. In contrast, the argument that festivals should 'draw more people in' signifies the ideal of members radicalizing the rest of society, rather than conceding in order to attract the more mainstream public. In that respect, queer festivals explicitly attempt to be built in opposition to LGBT movements which look for further recognition both by the public and by institutions (Ayoub 2016).

Cultural practices that help solidify queer festivals' work are not only located at the local level. Even if queer festivals are inextricably linked to their local scenes, and especially the squatting and anarchist ones, their politics and their aspirations go beyond borders. In the next chapter, I reply to the question of whether queer festivals succeed in building transnational identities and try to identify the mechanisms they put in place in order to achieve this.

6 Queering Transnationalism

Introduction

1 Da Mieli a Queer festival. Teatro Valle, Rome, 6 April 2013, 11:30

It is time for the 'Bridging the Gap in a Queer Europe/Oltre la dicotomia teoria/pratica' workshop. The Queeristan crew from Amsterdam comes on stage to present the group and share their experiences. The crew is composed of five people, all living in Amsterdam: Tobin (Dutch), Korin (Swedish), Gianni, Stefi (Italians), and Danna (Puerto Rican). Tobin and Korin start presenting Queeristan in English, showing slides from their actions in Amsterdam. Gianni and Stefi translate into Italian.
[...]
Now Andrea Gilbert comes from the organization team of Athens Pride. Her first words are: 'Athens Pride is not a queer organization' (Why does she say this? I wonder.) She gives some contextual information on gay politics in Greece. She claims that gay rights are almost non-existent in the country. She stresses the recent uprising of Golden Dawn,[1] as an obstacle to gay rights implementation. I notice her almost native level of English.
[...]
It's the turn of Paulo and Ines. They will present the queer group Panteras Rosas from Lisbon.[2]

2 On Sunday the 2nd of June Queeristan 2013 will take the streets! Under the banner 'Not in our name ... Breaking down borders ... No one is illegal', we will march against the violent and exclusionary politics of borders and specifically protest the ongoing criminalization of people without papers in the Netherlands.
[...]
As queers, we resist and want to break down social and cultural binaries (male/female, straight/gay, black/white, migrant-non-migrant, etc.) as

1 Golden Dawn (GD) is one of the most extremist far-right political parties in Europe with Neo-Nazi inclinations. It secured '6.92 per cent, 425,990 votes and 18 seats in the June 2012 Greek elections. Despite the association of GD with violence, subsequent polls have shown the party reaching 11-12 per cent' (Ellinas 2013: 544).
2 Field Notes, Rome, April 2013.

> we know from our own experiences that these binaries serve as a basis for discrimination, exclusion and marginalization. In the same way that we resist these social and cultural 'borders', we protest the violence exercised at the borders of the nation-state and the repressive policies and mechanisms that keep these borders in place. Additionally, we protest the way in which currently the LGBT rights discourse is instrumentalized by right-wing group in their anti-migrant policies. These groups want us to believe that 'the progressive Dutch society' is under threat of homophobic migrants and that is why we need more strict migration policies. We resist this false duality: the Netherlands is not a queer paradise and homophobia is not a phenomenon that arrives with migration.[3]

In previous chapters, I explained how queer festivals are becoming spaces where their actors manifest their ability to offer interpretations of their identities and needs, as opposed to 'a comprehensive public sphere imbued with dominant interests and ideologies' (McLaughlin 2004: 160; Fraser 1997: 81), as well as opposed to public policy, state-oriented claims. Festivals' identity-work takes place within local scenes of social movement activity, mainly in squats. This identity-work, however, is imagined at the intersections between the local and the global, taking distances from national identities, to which they stand critical. Queer festivals organize identity around the sense of belonging to a community where, first, the nation-state is challenged in its effort to define normative sexualities and genders, and, second, the nation-state is seen not as an ally, but rather as an enemy against queer efforts to break down binaries. In addition to these logics, queer festivals explicitly address international publics. Can we assume therefore that queer festivals have visions of participating in a transnational, rather than a national, public sphere? And if so, how does this impact on their identity-work?

Queer festivals are embedded in cross-border coalitions. Activist groups and individuals travel from different countries to participate in the gatherings. Contrary to LGBT movements whose transnational links and identifications with the nation-state and the European Union or the Council of Europe have been part of their agenda and their claims-making (Ayoub 2016), queer festivals present a specificity regarding their own transnational dimension. Since their politics is not so much concerned with policy and changing the law, they engage little with the state or with international organizations, if not to criticize them for perpetuating the binaries, and thus the hierarchies, of gender and sexual identities. Queer

3 Queeristan, 'Queers against Borders', https://vimeo.com/67603029 (last accessed: 20/09/2017).

festivals' transnationalism lies therefore in their desire to create queer as a 'post-national' identity that exceeds national borders. Their effort relates to, but is not included in, what Fatima El-Tayeb (2011) defines as trans-local forms of resistance spanning national borders. El-Tayeb's definition relates more to queer of colour organizations and their diasporic networks,[4] which is not necessarily the case of queer festivals. But what is important in her definition is how Europe has become a post-national space in which activists can co-create collective identities that go beyond their national arenas. For festivals, queer is imagined as a sense of belonging to a community that extends *borders*. But for them, borders do not only define the physical lines dividing the globe into countries (Spurlin 2013: 71).[5] Queer festivals perceive them in a broader sense according to which borders are linked to gender and sexual boundaries as well, maintained through fixed identitarian categories. This interest of queer festivals in imagining their identities as moving beyond all borders aligns, moreover, with previous Chicana theorists who have theorized 'borders' through a broad inclusion of geographical, political, but also gender, sexual and race boundaries (Anzaldúa 1999). According to these theories, borders do not only divide territories and people for the sake of it, but these divisions are constituted with the objective of placing territories and people into hierarchies through processes of creating the deviant other. Queer festivals set as their aim to challenge these processes of deviance and othering through their transnationalism.

In this chapter, I explore how queer actors produce their festivals as arenas that provide them with the possibility for transnational identities to emerge through the activation of specific practices. The departure hypothesis is that transnationalism does not only constitute a discursive strategy for a political event, and as such it should not be limited to its narrative-building. I rather argue that transnationalism functions as a vision which directly relates to festivals' identity-work. This is achieved

4 *Post-national* for El-Tayeb relates primarily to the queer of colours organizations who draw upon diasporic resources (2011). Queer transnationalism in my respect is more about transnational networks of queer activists, who are primarily defined not by their colour, but by their queerness, although both can be incorporated and claimed by some activists. This is especially visible in the Queeristan festivals, where race issues have been significantly taken into account.

5 There is a growing literature on the intersections between queer theory and nationalist studies, which demonstrates how nations are built upon certain ideas of manhood and masculinity, and tend to exclude 'others' on the grounds of their sexuality from the national body. The special issue 'Queering Nations and Nationalism' (2013) in the journal *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* is one relevant example of this recent trend.

through specific mechanisms and practices. The transnational character of the queer festivals is thus always *under construction* (Juris 2008a: 210). It is therefore the setting in motion of these practices that allows festivals to enrich their identity-building through the transnational aspect.

I start with a brief theoretical overview of transnational movements. In social movement studies, transnationalism has been largely inked with movements addressing another state or an international organization. Queer festivals fill this gap by providing insights into how transnationalism becomes part of a movement's collective identity construction. I reply thus to the following question: Which are the practices that queer festivals use in order to build themselves as arenas in which their identity-work of queer can be seen as going beyond national borders? To begin with, I present the results of the survey I conducted at the Oslo queer festival in 2011, which demonstrates the sociological tendency of foreign participation in the festivals. I then proceed to the analysis of the four sets of practices, used as analytical categories to examine the formation of the festivals' transnational identities: multilingualism, networks, political trajectories and digital communication. These four categories capture the extra-institutional nature of the processes constructing the festivals. Multilingualism addresses a transnational audience and has the possibility to create 'inclusive deliberation' (Doerr 2009). Networks and trajectories point at the experiences of activists coming from other countries, bringing in new practices, points of view, and politics in queer festivals. Finally, digital communication and social media consolidate festivals' collective identities through self-identification strategies, while they also contribute to the archiving of memory. I conclude by arguing that, for queer festivals, transnationalism expands rather than limits their anti-identitarian idea. The blurring of national borders is part of the narrative construction of festivals' attempts to deconstruct any kind of borders, gender and sexual ones included. Thus, the transnational character of the festivals aligns with the queer identity-work and its normative assumptions. In this effort, however, queer festivals run the risk of a selective transnationalism, placing more emphasis on the transnational than the local.

Moving transnationalism one step forward: A theoretical overview

Sidney Tarrow was one of the first scholars to introduce transnationalism into social movement studies (2001, 2005). He conceptualized 'transnational contention' as 'conflicts that link transnational activists to one another,

to states, and to international institutions' (2005: 25).[6] Della Porta and Tarrow used a similar definition in their study 'Transnational Processes and Social Activism' by defining transnational collective actions as 'coordinated international campaigns on the part of networks of activists against international actors, other states, or international institutions' (2005: 2-3). Concerning Europe, these transnational processes are part of the political changes occurring in the continent after the late 1980s and intensifying after the early 2000s (Della Porta and Tarrow 2005: 7). These processes have taken the name of 'Europeanization', and the mobilization of social movement actors affected by Europeanization as 'Europeanization from below' (Della Porta and Caiani 2007).

Concerning specifically sexual identity movements, the growing literature on how they operate transnationally in Europe focuses more on policy-oriented LGBT movements. Phillip Ayoub has described that Europeanization has influenced the legislative achievements of LGBT movements in Eastern European countries, as these new-adopter states are influenced by norm-diffusion from older member-states (2015). Europeanization has, moreover, the capacity of changing the tactics of LGBT movements, when the latter use Europe as a justification of legitimacy to obtain breakthroughs in their own national institutions (Ayoub 2015: 310) and encourage the change of norms in their societies (Ayoub 2013). Europeanization and transnational advocacy networks have, therefore, shaped national LGBT activism, especially in Eastern Europe (Binnie and Klesse 2012; O'Dwyer and Schwartz 2010), by reorganizing their tactics and strategies towards 'international symbolism' and by assisting them into yielding valuable resources (Ayoub 2015: 309-311).

LGBT organizations in Europe have found it advantageous to politicize their causes at the transnational level, by building advocacy networks which are closer to European decision-making centres (Ayoub 2015: 297). ILGA-Europe (International Lesbian and Gay Association) (Paternotte 2012; Ayoub and Paternotte 2012) and IGLYO (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer & Intersex Youth and Student Organisation) (Vella et al. 2009) are illustrative cases of transnational organization of sexual identity movements that seek for influence and policy change primarily at the European level. All the above movements have something in common. They

6 Or, as he explains in 2001, transnational social movements are 'socially mobilized groups with constituents in at least two states, engaged in sustained contentious interactions with power-holders in at least one state other than their own, or against an international institution, or a multinational economic actor' (Tarrow 2001: 11; Della Porta 2005b: 177).

address either the nation-state or supranational organizations to achieve policy change. In addition to this, they organize at the transnational level in order to succeed in their claims-making and to coordinate more efficiently the various national and local LGBT movements.

Working so closely with institutions configures to a large extent the way LGBT movements represent the social groups they are supposed to fight for, by emphasizing strong identitarian categories. Using these categories might help to achieve policy change, very important for the material conditions and the symbolic recognition of LGBT people across the continent. But they run the risk of keeping unchallenged identity boundaries, between gay and straight but also between men and women, a political goal in itself for queer movements, as we have seen previously. There is thus a gap in covering this political claim at the transnational level. Do queer festivals fill this gap and how? In order to reply to this question, we need to find out if it is possible to speak about transnational social movements, without having as a target the state or an international organization.

Scholars working on oppositional (in the sense of counter-hegemonic) and horizontally networked forms of contention agree that movements might be called transnational, despite the lack of a distinct target in the form of the state, or other international bureaucratic institution (Alvarez 1997; Escobar 2001; Juris 2008b; Olesen 2005). As Jeffrey Juris claims in his study on anti-corporate globalization networks, decentralized oppositional formations are movements which do not have any 'coordinated actions against fixed targets' (2008a: 201).[7] Transnational identity-building can thus be a claim in itself for social movements. But how?

In order to understand how queer festivals attempt to synthesize their anti-identitarianism with visions on post-national identities, we should take into serious consideration the way their actors seize the opportunities available in the 'post-Westphalian' (Fraser 2007) space,[8] and how they put in place mechanisms that establish them in this transnational public sphere. To approach therefore how actors organize their own transnationalism,

7 Based on the Habermasian definition of the public sphere, Guidry, Kennedy and Zald refer to 'transnational social movements' as 'transnational public spheres' (2000). In their definition, the 'transnational public sphere' is the 'space in which both residents of distinct places (states or localities) and members of transnational entities (organizations or firms) elaborate discourses and practices whose consumption moves beyond national boundaries' (Guidry, Kennedy and Zald 2000: 6-7).

8 For Fraser, the post-Westphalian space describes processes of disaggregated sovereignty. Political power is diffused today among states, international organizations, intergovernmental networks and NGOs (2007).

Pascal Dufour suggests analysing actors' 'practices' put in place in concrete settings. For her, movements do not deterministically follow pre-existing transnational political opportunity structures, but they deliberately work to transnationalize their actions and identities through different mechanisms they put in place.

Dufour's approach of transnationalism through the study of practices relates to the whole book's discussion of practices as important tools to understand social movements' identity-work. In the case of transnationalism, looking at practices allows us to understand how queer festivals are constituted as arenas that go beyond their local and national geographies, aspiring and looking at beyond the borders. We can call these mechanisms that festivals put in place to achieve this goal 'cross-border practices' since they relate to practices that connect actors from at least two different states. These cross-border practices can be either physical or digital. They share a common characteristic, however, to the extent that they shape physical, *embodied* counterpublics, and not digital ones. Therefore, cross-border practices build queer festivals as physical arenas where organizers and participants meet and build their identities together.

Cross-border practices are equally important for the construction of the anti-identity narrative of queer festivals, together with the other discursive, organizational, and cultural practices which shape their identity-work. Festivals' identity project aligns with ambitions which go beyond the nation-state. By creating these transnational arenas, queer activists enrich their anti-identitarianism with the idea of moving beyond national borders, as the Queeristan's demonstration slogan 'Breaking Borders' illustrated very emphatically. Thus, the general problematization of the politics of borders (be it national, gender or sexual) fits well, both with the queer anti-identitarian ethos, but also with the broader anti-border social movements which have been active in Europe since the global justice movement,[9] and with which several queer activists share common activist spaces and political socialization overlaps.

Let me begin the discussion with the sociological constituency of the festivals. The results from the Oslo festival indicate a strong transnational component among participants. This is an important finding to understand that queer festivals resonate not only with local but also with international publics. In the second place, I discuss the different practices festivals put in place to transnationalize their events and conform their identity-work to their post-national visions.

9 See for instance, the transnational European network Queers without Borders.

A strong presence of foreign members, even in isolated contexts

In the online survey I conducted at the Oslo Queer Festival in 2011, I collected data on the geographical origins of the participants and on their actual country of residence. The results indicate a specific trend in queer festivals: many people across Europe travel to the cities where festivals take place in order to participate. Taking into account that Oslo is the most geographically isolated city of all the case studies, I could confidently generalize the results for cities which are located in more central positions in Europe.

To begin with, I asked two questions concerning geography.[10] The first was: 'In what city and country were you born?' and the second: 'In what city and country do you live now?' The objective was double: to identify the geographical constituency of the festivals and confirm my observation about people who travel in order to attend the events. In both questions, I expected a largely transnational constituency. Both results confirmed my expectations. In the first question, 'In what city and country were you born?', fewer than half of the respondents replied that they were born in Norway (46.2%); 46% were born in another European country, and 7.7% in Asia. The composition of the representation of European countries reflects the geographical location of Oslo. Thus, the majority from European countries were born in Sweden, Iceland and the UK, while participants from Italy, Germany, France and Greece were also present.

Although these results reveal a transnational trend, those regarding actors' place of residence confirm transnationalism to a lesser degree. In fact, 59.3% of the respondents lived currently in Norway (Oslo and the rest of the country), and the rest in different European countries: 22.2% in Sweden, 7.4% in the UK, and 11.1% in Iceland, Austria and Italy. It becomes obvious that many foreigners living in Norway participate in the festivals. Comparing this with the other results on participants' professional occupations, we could confidently assert that the majority of participants are highly skilled, with high cultural capital, and form part of intra-European mobility. Two critical observations relating to transnationalism can be identified at this point. First, people attending the festival come, in their big majority, from Northern and Western Europe, that is the richest regions in the continent (and in the world). Second, no Eastern European traveller or resident in Norway was identified in the poll, which confirms the Western trend of queer activism in Europe, as highlighted by Kulpa and Mizielinska in their previous studies (2011).

10 For the rest of the results, see Chapter 2 and the Appendix.

Festivals' transnational sociological constituency might be an indicator of the efforts organizers put in place in order to construct their publics beyond local scenes. But how do they achieve it in practice? And why? In the next section, I show how cross-border practices allow queer festivals to build their anti-identitarian identity in conformity with their post-national visions on what queer should be.

Anti-identitarianism going beyond borders: Building transnational identities through practices

Queer festivals, as locations where new collective identities are generated and 'transnational solidarities' created (Dufour 2010: 103), are shaped through the realization of specific cross-border practices. These practices are performed through physical and digital action. These four sets of practices are illustrative cases of blurring the boundaries between strategic and contingent, in order to avoid binary dilemmas, between 'acting' and 'feeling' transnational, and between strategy and practice (Favell et al. 2011: 19). I divided these practices into four analytical categories: multilingualism, composition of the organization committees and participants, links with other left-wing movements and cultures, and digital communication.

Multilingualism

1 Queeristan festival, 20 May 2012
Op De Valreep Squat, Amsterdam

The 'Queer Activism and Class' workshop is ready to start. I have been preparing it since last night. There are around fifteen people. I invite them to sit on the floor in a circle. As people take their seats, I am told by a festival organizer that three members from Spain wanted to participate in the workshop, having, however, a very poor understanding of English. Sara, a Greek girl, also from the festival's organization, is standing next to us, and takes the initiative to make a direct translation into Spanish for these members. Apparently, she speaks both English and Spanish fluently. The Spanish people and Sara move to the back in the room. She translates to them in Spanish quietly, while I start speaking.[11]

11 Field Notes, Amsterdam, May 2012.

2 Oslo Queer Festival, 23 September 2011
Hausmania Squat, Oslo

> I am going to take part in a workshop on safe sex practices. I am already late; the workshop has already started. I enter the room. The presenter carries on speaking in Norwegian. I raise my hand. I say I do not speak Norwegian. I ask him if the conversation could instead take place in English. He immediately changes his presentation to English, without expressing any negative comment whatsoever.[12]

One of the strategic aims of queer festivals is to address an international public. What's more important than communicating in a language that all people would understand? Language helps to enhance 'inclusive deliberation' (Doerr 2009), and permits transnational political events to be more inclusive than nationally based ones, in which a single linguistic format is usually applied. As Nicole Doerr describes in the case of European social forums:

> Inclusive deliberation in the European meetings could be an outcome of the multilingual working practices in these European meetings compared to single language formats in national social forum meetings (2009: 93).

For queer festivals, the aim for inclusive deliberation is achieved primarily through the use of languages beyond the local one. This is a strategy that allows them to enlarge their potential publics both at the local and at the international level. This is the reason, many callouts are produced in different European languages (French, German, or Spanish) or non-European languages to attract migrant publics. Producing callouts in languages such as Turkish and Arabic becomes part of festivals' broader strategy of inclusion, which allows them to attract members from migrant communities. Since 2013, for instance, the queer festivals of Amsterdam and Berlin[13] have displayed their callouts in multiple languages, non-European migrants' languages included:

> The call set out is available in other languages including: Nederlands, Deutsch, Español, Português, Italiano, عربي, & Türkçe. Please specify if

12 Field Notes, Oslo, September 2011.

13 QuEar festival, 'Call 2015 finished!', http://quear.blogsport.eu/en/call/ (last accessed: 20/09/2017).

> you will be conducting your workshop in a language other than English so we could connect you with community translators.[14]

Despite using multilingualism as strategy for broader inclusivity, English becomes the de facto lingua franca for festivals' internal and external communication. All the main activities of the events take place in English: daily plenaries and workshops are indicative examples. Equally, the texts circulating within the spaces are also in English: fanzines, flyers, programmes, advertising posters, rules, and prices of drinks are displayed in English, together with local languages. Personal interactions adapt to the common languages of the people involved, although English is considered the common language par excellence. Examples from everyday interactions in the festivals confirm this. The queer festival in Rome was the only exception. In this festival, Italian was the predominant language of the event. Translation into English, however, was assured by the organizing committee, in order to create an inclusive space for non-Italian speakers.

Dealing with language issues is a basic component for queer festivals inclusive identity. Organizers try therefore to create mechanisms of translation at the level of organizational practice as well. These mechanisms are certainly less organized than in other political transnational events, such as the European social forums, but still very useful for the broader proclaimed inclusive character of the events.

Organizers claim that festivals should be multilingual environments so that more and more members feel included. According to this logic, linguistic inclusivity enhances communication but also comprehension of the political context for a larger majority of activists, without imposing a single unified linguistic code. Although it has been noted that language barriers can constitute a disadvantage for the construction of a European public sphere (Offe 2003), queer activists, like their predecessors of the global justice movement and the European social forums, develop strategies to remove, to the greatest possible extent, these barriers. The logistical arrangements, however, of queer festivals and of European social forums are different. In contrast to the latter's extensive use of technical infrastructure and skilled personnel, with assured continuous translation through technological systems such as Babel (Doerr 2009), queer festivals, because of scarcity of material resources but also due to their smaller size, negotiate multilingualism in terms of human capital than technological equipment.

14 Queeristan, 'Queeristan 2013 Call Out', http://queeristan.org/2013/02/24/queeristan-2013-call-out/#dutch (last accessed: 07/11/2016).

This does not mean that linguistic arrangements do not generate tensions. Many concerns from the activists regarding the widespread use of English were observed. During the 'Queer Activism and Academia' workshop, organized at the Oslo Queer Festival, Kate, an Australian participant, argued: 'As an English speaker, I see that some are uncomfortable with that.'[15] As she further explained, according to her, people coming from countries where English is not widely taught and spoken (e.g., Spain and Ukraine) might have some difficulty in following the everyday interactions or the workshops and performances.

Other participants have stressed the use of the queer vocabulary, as we saw in previous chapters, and its use in English. Terms such as, 'heteronormativity', 'cis' or 'essentialist' circulate within the everyday discussions during the festivals, constituting a fundamental part of the theoretical toolkit used in the workshops. The fact that these are English words add to the difficulties of some participants to follow. As Tobin, a member of the organization committee of the Queeristan festival in Amsterdam, and a PhD candidate in cultural analysis, says:

> The majority of queer theory is presented and published in English. So, it's also like we organize things here only in English. So, that also already appeals that, sort of interpellates[16] international, transnational audience' (Amsterdam, May 2012).

Using English, therefore, as a lingua franca is not a panacea for solving all problems of intercultural communication. It allows foreign participants who already speak English, however, to feel included in the processes of the festival, empowering them to contribute actively in the collective identity-work.

Composition of the organization committees and members

Transnationalism is practiced and encouraged, moreover, in the composition of both the organizing committees and the participants in the festivals. The international composition of the organization committees and of festivals' publics reveal how queer festivals seize the opportunities

15 Field Notes, Oslo, September 2011.

16 The interviewee makes reference to the French verb *interpeller*, which means 'address'. It is widely used in contemporary social theory influenced by Louis Althusser, who theorized it in the 1970s.

of Europeanization to enlarge their recruit activity. In the urban centres in which most festivals take place, many non-nationals participating in the organizing committees live, work and study. Regarding participants, they come from the local areas but also from neighbouring (or further) countries, as the poll previously indicated.

Let us begin with festivals' organization committees. Their members are connected through cross-border networks. Although some of their membership is stable, open calls for new members to join take place a few months before the festivals, as illustrated by the callout of the Oslo Queer Festival 2013: 'Do you want to participate in making this year festival? We have to decide where we want the festival to take place this year! Come and help us decide.'[17] Similarly, on 12 January 2013, the Queeristan festival in Amsterdam published a call: 'We're starting to organise again for 2013! Meetings every Sunday at the Latin American Center at 17h. If you're interested in organising with us come to our meeting tomorrow.'[18] Encouraging, therefore, a transnational public to become part of the organizing committees constitutes a basic aspect of the anti-identitarian identity-work, to the extent that it sets the basis for the creation of cross-border collective identities. The groups organizing the festivals are very keen to create a core with members from diverse backgrounds: national, gender, and sexual backgrounds. Therefore, the diversity of participants' national backgrounds is equally part of the festivals' anti-identitarian identity-work.

The reasons for people from other countries participating in the organization committees vary, from a feeling of belonging to an imaginary transnational queer community, to more concrete affective reasons, such as intimate relationships or friendships. A combination of motivations is also very common. As Tobin, member of the Queeristan festival, emphasized:

> Many of them [the old organizational members] are still in the circles; they're still in the network. But like I said, the group is mostly international, so many people do not have Dutch citizenship, most of them students, so they're here for a semester or for two semesters. Or many people leave again. But there is such a commitment that people are still part of the network. [...] This year one of the participants of last year's organization flew over from the USA to give workshops. (Amsterdam, May 2012)

17 Oslo Queer Festival, 'Oslo Queer Festival 2013 Meeting', http://www.facebook.com/events/600682553278989/ (last accessed: 20/09/2017).

18 Queeristan, 'Queeristan', http://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?id=156441577807398&story_fbid=315900648528156 (last accessed: 20/09/2017).

But, the cross-border character of festivals' organization committees is also context-dependent and subject to variations. The Amsterdam organizing committee, for instance, has many international members, whereas in Oslo, three-quarters are Norwegians and in Rome, all the members are Italian.

Diversity in national origins is equally visible among the participants. In fact, many people cross borders in order to attend queer festivals. The pattern is influenced by geographical proximity. As we saw with the poll, residents from neighbouring countries are more numerous than those living further away, making proximity a 'critical factor' (this observation confirms Ayoub's work on Polish sexual minorities mobilizing in Berlin (2013: 291)). For instance, several people from Berlin attended the Copenhagen Queer Festival,[19] while many Scandinavians and British are regular visitors of the Oslo festival.

In sum, queer transnationalism is achieved both at the level of the composition of the organization committees but also at the level of participation in the festivals. Diversity and inclusivity is very important for queer festivals since it contributes to the definition of their anti-identitarian identity as transnational, one that goes beyond borders. But, the issue of geographical proximity plays its own role for festivals' transnationalism, since it might reproduce patterns of mobility reflecting already existing paths of Europeanization, and not challenging them. Therefore, queer transnationalism towards Eastern Europe or even beyond European borders, would be a new jump into queer cross-border solidarities and activists' coalitions that might have a further influence in their anti-identiarian work.

Activist networks and political subjectivities: Skill-sharing and cross-border ties

> Queeristan Festival, Amsterdam, 31 May 2013
> Workshop: House of Brag
> Time: Saturday, 1 June, 17:00-19:00
> Location: Op De Valreep
> See Full Programme Schedule
> House of Brag is a collective of radical queers and allies from London, UK
>
> Our main project is the London Queer Social Centre. We take over empty buildings around South London to create safe, fun, creative,

19 The distance between Berlin and Copenhagen is only 356 km.

> non-commercial social spaces for queers and activists and friends. We've run two temporary social centres so far and the third will be happening this June & July. Our workshop will take the form of a discussion and skill-share, where we share our experiences of running squatted queer social centres and ask our audience for their experiences, suggestions, and advice.[20]

Links between the festivals allow queer activists to shape a sort of activist map, in which circulation of ideas and skill-sharing becomes possible. This kind of mapping is not new for progressive social movements, or for the European left in general. Social movements as well as institutional actors, such as political parties, have always connected through networks which allowed the creation of transnational channels of communication.[21] Personal links are a crucial factor in the maintenance and strengthening of queer cross-border networks. In a similar way to what Ayoub refers to as 'tactics of European socialization' (2012: 25), queers exploit the available networking resources across Europe in order to transnationalize their festivals as much as possible. By capitalizing on these networks, organizing committees are able to invite and give space to crews from other festivals. A good example of this is the participation by the Amsterdam-based Queeristan group in Rome in April 2013. The personal links between one of the organizers of the Rome festival with the Queeristan group, made when he was studying in Amsterdam, created these ties, which brought the two groups together. The Queeristan crew, composed of eight activists from Amsterdam, gave a speech during one of the workshops entitled 'Bridging the Gap: Beyond the Dichotomy Theory/Practice'. For this workshop, the organizers had also invited the Pink Panthers, a Portuguese queer organization; Athens Pride from Greece; and Rachele Borghi, an Italian academic and performer, who was living in Rennes, France, at the time. The organizers' objective was to share experiences from queer politics, especially those in Southern Europe,

20 Queeristan, 'Workshop House of Brag', http://queeristan.org/2013/05/21/workshop-house-of-brag/ (last accessed: 07/11/2016).

21 In Western Europe, actors on the left coordinated and exchanged information and resources and built common identities after WWII, and the division of the continent into two blocks. Despite local differences, European identities of the left circulated very actively in this space, building similar political categories. One clear example of how this division of political identities operated across borders can be seen, for instance, in the split of the communist parties into Stalinist/pro-USSR and euro-communist/anti-Stalinist groups, and this split has left its mark on Europe. The contemporary identity of antifa (antifascist) (Doidge 2013: 258) and the digital network Europeans against the Political System are further manifestations of the European trend to make cross-border political identifications attainable through networks.

but also, as Andrea Gilbert, from Athens Pride, pointed out: 'to create a political network for the future'.[22]

Similarly, during the Queeristan festival in 2013, members from the 'House of Brag', a newly founded queer squat in London, organized a workshop. Their objective was to 'skill-share where we share our experiences of running squatted queer social centres and ask our audience for their experiences, suggestions, and advice'.[23] The workshop was lively, and participants shared their experiences on squatting and the challenges they face when they try to squat. This networking between House of Brag and Queeristan led to collaboration. As Vinci, from the Queeristan organizing committee, confirmed:

> We now had two workshops at least on different ways of organizing with the House of Brag from London. So, we want to do something and talk about how to organize different ways of living, sort of living on the edge, and still making the world better, or at least the movement, the scene better. (Amsterdam, June 2013)

Working together and sharing experiences and skills on squatting is crucial for queer festivals, not only because this process consolidates cross-border networks, but also because it allows the circulation of know-how and expertise, what Ayoub has defined as 'cooperative transnationalism', which can take the form of horizontal interactions, similar to LGBT movements across different countries (2015: 285). The difference between LGBT and queer transnationalism lies, however, in the use of the European frame. In fact, as Ayoub highlights, 'horizontal interaction' for LGBT movements signifies 'pressures and actors mobilized across member states, using European frames' (2015: 285). This means that LGBT movements often use Europe as a way to indicate progress and convince their national audiences on the necessity to become 'modern'. Europe in this use becomes a discursive strategy. For queer festivals, 'horizontal interaction' is rather about skill-sharing and the building of post-national collective identities. This does not mean that Europe is never acknowledged, but when this happens is rather in order to criticize 'fortress Europe' and its strict border policies.

22 Field Notes, Rome, April 2013.

23 Queeristan, 'Queeristan 2013', http://queeristan.org/category/queeristan-2013/page/3/ (last accessed: 07/11/2016).

Queer skill-sharing is particular and difficult to understand unless one confronts the problems it raises in practice. As we saw in Chapter 3, this skills-sharing relates to squatting experiences: how to squat, how to sustain the squat, how to engage with electric, internet, plumber issues, what to do when police arrives, what are the residents' rights, how to deal with issues of good neighbouring, what to do with drugs, alcohol, how to organize safe spaces for minorities. This is a big list of questions that activists engaging with squats are confronted to, and cross-border skills-sharing helps a lot in this respect.

Furthermore, interviews with members in the festivals attest that the latter function as spaces in which activists build cross-border political subjectivities. Activists emphasize the need for going beyond borders, be it gender, sexual or national, aspiring to what we called above *post-national identities*. As we saw previously, many of these actors construct their political awareness through participation in various movements of different countries. Their life histories reveal the building of transnational political trajectories, mainly within political groups of the left, and within anarchist scenes around Europe. The interviews demonstrate that actors participating in the festivals establish political relationships in one place, and keep them alive when travelling or moving to another country. Since many of these activists have lived in places other than where the festival takes place, they tend to keep affiliations with political groups from countries they originally come from or where they have lived in. Robin's movement engagement is illustrative of the cross-border construction of his political subjectivity.

Robin was a member of the Queeristan festival in Amsterdam. But he was also an active member of the Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, the main objective of which is to fight against 'Israeli apartheid', as he calls it:

> In the Netherlands, I gave different workshops in different venues, anarchist venues, or just specific events for Palestinian issues. I give talks, mainly about the Palestinian situation, under Israeli occupation. So, I am very active on that. I am always invited to give talks. [...] But now with the queer issue, this is very new, and this is where I find myself more and this is where I want to take it more and that's why I want to support it with more education so that I can take it further. (Copenhagen, July 2011)

For Robin, his queer struggle in Amsterdam cannot be separated from his links with his home nation, Palestine; he is both queer and Palestinian. He describes his intersectional identity very illustratively in his interview:

> The queer is part of my personality. But it is very well connected, very much connected to the occupation. So that's how it's different [from the other Dutch queer activists]. In the Netherlands, the queer [...] and being an international movement, not specifically about the Netherlands, but having more international activists brings it to more global perspective. Palestinian queer is a very specific, about Palestinian background. So you talk about specific things, in that group. You mainly have the campaign for BDS to stop the occupation. So you have a political agenda. And you are also bringing the queers out in Palestine, bringing them to be part of the society to be there and to be respected. Because the queers are there, calling for a cause that is important to every Palestinian. And it's good that the members of the queer group are very well educated and, as the majority of the Palestinians, and they're working hard, and that's really achieving good results so far. (Copenhagen, July 2011)

In a similar vein, Sergio, a Turkish PhD student in Amsterdam, switches between cross-border activist identities. At the time of the interview, he held political affiliations with transnational radical environmentalist and climate change movements. He had also been politically socialized in students' movements in France, where he did his BA studies. But it was the climate summit in Copenhagen in 2009, which became the landmark of his political awareness, and changed his mind on social movement politics:

> I meet these wonderful people, climate justice action, basically autonomists from all over Europe, who were attracted to this call to Copenhagen. And this was my real contact with *Autonomia*,[24] without really knowing what it is, again you know, being five years in France, and you just don't realize what's happening out. (Amsterdam, May 2012)

Another case is Zoe's links between her queer political identity and other punk subcultures in squatting scenes in Europe. At the time of the interview, she was both an organizing member of the 2011 Copenhagen Queer Festival, and a singer in a Polish anarcho-punk group:

24 'Autonomia' or Autonomism is a branch of a far-left extra-parliamentary movement based on theories of Italian workerism (*operaismo*) of the 1970s. Hardt and Negri have developed a great theoretical framework, which has recently developed in the theory of the 'commons' (2004, 2009). See Chapter 4 for how Sergio attempted to introduce autonomy theories in the Queeristan festival.

> I go back and forth for the band, and we have some rehearsals and tours. I don't know how it's going to work now, because now I decided that I wanted to stay in Copenhagen. At least for two more years. I will see how it'll work. I don't know, we didn't want to split, but maybe we'll have a pause or something like this. (Copenhagen, July 2011)

Zoe moved to Copenhagen in February 2011, attracted by: 'The anarchist movement [...] and the punk scene. That's why I was very excited about living in Copenhagen' (Zoe, Copenhagen, July 2011). The historical scenes of the left in specific Western European cities function as sites of attraction for activists who claim to be unable to feel at home at their own places of origin. As Zoe explains, there are differences between Warsaw and Copenhagen's activist scenes:

> The DIY thing is like priority for me, always. But I can see that it's working a lot better here [in Copenhagen, so] that I really feel a part of a collective, as a group. And not a leader with all the responsibilities on my head anymore. [...] I really like this kind of very deep reflexivity about politics [...] that we are so sensitive, and so self-[critical], and so open to all these kinds of discussion. I've never been to a surrounding that is so open to discuss, and reflect, on things. [...] I was very surprised that we've discussed such issues, and in such a matter.[25] (Copenhagen, July 2011)

Similar to Zoe, the image of a Western European city as one that offers the space and the people with whom radical activism can be practised, lay behind Sergio's decision to move to Amsterdam: 'And it was also going to squats here in Amsterdam for the first time. That kind of stuff. And again, they were meeting in Amsterdam, because there were squats that they could organize this, because there was a good contingency of people here [laughter]. (Amsterdam, July 2012).

But queer festivals' transnationalism can also be the result of cross-border socialization, manifested in affective relationships. Sergio, living now in Amsterdam, includes the socialization factor in his description of the relationships he had with some friends, who made them also when moving to the city:

> My best shot would be to be in the belly of the beast. [...] I came to Amsterdam to look for schools. At the same time CJA [Climate Justice

25 She refers to the political discussions which took place within the Copenhagen festival (July 2011).

> Action] had its first post-Copenhagen summit here. *Basically because my best friend was studying here.* So, I squatted his place for one month. But also, yes, the country of liberties, etc. It was attractive. And more important, I wanted to do my research in English. That's why I left France at the first place. I didn't want to do it in French. England, anyway, was out of [the] question; expensive, *politically not inspiring*, etc., and [the] Netherlands was also attractive about design and culture. So, about for a year after Strasbourg [I was] spending a little time in Turkey, Copenhagen, Amsterdam, going back and forth to many places. Going to Strasbourg again for a NATO summit. Again, it was *fast tracking of radicalization*, which brought me here. (Amsterdam, May 2012)

For Zoe, friendship was an important factor in deciding to move to Copenhagen. Based on a scholarship she received to study abroad, she joined her friend with whom she used to be active together in a queer feminist group in Warsaw. They decided to engage with the Copenhagen Queer Festival together:

> One or two weeks after I moved [to Copenhagen]. And we just went to Ana's [a member of the organization committee] apartment, without knowing anyone, and we just said: "Hey, can you speak English? We are from Poland; we'd like to do the queer festival with you." And they started to speak English' (Copenhagen, July 2011).

Queer actors hold usually multiple political identities, one of the results of their prior participation in other social movements and subcultures in Europe and beyond. Their personal trajectories show that these multiple belongings across various national settings have shaped their political subjectivities, and they become coherent with their involvement in queer festivals. Transnational multiple belongings are very important for queer festivals. Activists bring in their own political stories and experiences, influencing each other through these interactions, and contribute therefore to the creation of queer as an anti-identitarian identity that moves beyond borders. Cross-border communication is, finally, another crucial factor for transnationalizing queer festivals.

Digital communicative and cross-border practices

We have looked so far at the physical cross-border movements that are put in place in order to build queer festivals as transnational arenas. But in this

effort, technology and communication transcending the borders play their own role in maintaining networks and contributing to identity-building. Actors tend to resort to decentralized networking supported by digital means of communication, such as mailing lists and social networks. As Tobin explains about Queeristan:

> [It] has a very big international network. I know people here and there, someone else knows people here and there. So, we gather that. And we disseminate the announcement and then we have very standard [public relations] propaganda committee (Amsterdam, May 2012).

Apart from mobilizing human, material and symbolic resources, queer arenas produce self-organized cross-border communication. As J. Juris says, the 'exchange regarding tactics, strategies, protests, and campaigns' (2008a: 203) is part of transnational movements' communication, which – in the case of queer festivals – shapes the emergence of their transnational anti-identitarian visions. Email lists, websites, and social media pages provide space for discussions on the organization and the politics of the festivals. One example of these can be found in the email list *queerandnow*, which served as a means to spread information among queer activists at the time of the fieldwork. Older mailing lists, such as that of Queeruption, contributed to the publicity for the majority of queer events before 2010. Digital platforms help the organization and communication of queer activists across the continent and beyond.

The digital tools used by the festival of Copenhagen and the Queeristan festival illustrate how transnational digital communication becomes crucial for queer identity-building and for their memory archiving. The main website for Copenhagen's festival (http://www.queerfestival.org) provides a photographic archive. At the same time, it gives to its readers useful information about present and future events, as well as information about how new members could engage in the organization of the event. Finally, it has also an informative function, since it is the main platform which displays the festivals' 'manifesto' as well as other policies (and politics) of the organization, for example, on drugs, safe spaces, etc. Multilingualism is also present in the digital communication. The information is displayed in four languages: English, Danish, German and Spanish. An additional website was set up on the music platform MySpace, in which one could find out the festival's program.[26] MySpace used to consolidate the counter-character of

26 Copenhagen Queer Festival, 'Copenhagen Queer Festival', http://www.myspace.com/copenhagenqueerfestival (last accessed: 07/11/2016)

the festival, by hosting 'DIY songs', that visitors could listen for free. The songs' titles were sexually explicit ('How Clean Is Your Penis?'), or linked to celebrations of the non-normative body ('Big Size Girl') and the trash aesthetics[27] promoted within the festivals ('Tina Trasch'). A Facebook page also used to support the digital infrastructure of the event.

The Queeristan festival had a similar active digital toolkit, manifested through its webpage (queeristan.org) and its Facebook page.[28] Queeristan keeps a digital archive of older events, displaying in systematic order manifestos, photos and workshop calls. It is also used as a platform to disseminate information for forthcoming events. Its Facebook page constitutes a crucial means to disseminate information and to diffuse calls for volunteering, participation, and forthcoming benefit dinners, parties and other similar activities. Issues of collective identity are debated on both webpages. For instance, the name of the festival and its supposedly orientalist character (*-istan*) have provoked intense debate on its Facebook page. Beyond its use in spreading information, digital communication fosters the growth of transnational affective ties generated during the festivals. As Queeristan's organizer, Tobin, said: 'Over the email correspondence we have still people from previous years, giving their thoughts' (Amsterdam 2012).

Digital communication is a cross-border practice par excellence. Queer festivals use several means and tools offered by technology to help them disseminate information beyond their local scenes and attract new but also maintain older members. Furthermore, festivals' webpages and Facebook pages help in creating and maintaining links between different interconnected actors and political communities in different countries. This supposed openness, enhanced by the impersonal character of digital communication tools, gives the possibility for actors in different countries to get in touch with each festival's network, and organize their presence in the forthcoming event, either as an individual participant or as a collective one. But digital communication has another function as well. It allows festivals to be displayed in the public sphere as anti-identity arenas, and give a meaning therefore to their events. By emphasizing on and displaying specific vocabularies, images and aesthetics, digital communicative practices participate in their turn in the construction of *queerness* as an anti-identity in which borders of any kinds should not be valid anymore.

27 See Chapter 5.

28 Queeristan, 'Queeristan', https://www.facebook.com/pages/Queeristan/156441577807398?fref=ts (last accessed: 20/09/2017).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that queer festivals function as arenas constituted by a series of cross-border practices. These arenas are built beyond institutional fields, since they do not directly address the state or other supranational organizations. The transnational character of queer festivals can become the departure point from which to re-examine definitions of transnational social movements.

For queer festivals, identity-building is extremely crucial for their differentiation in the field of social movements. A set of practices is activated in order to achieve this goal. Multilingualism, international composition of the organization committees and of participants, cross-border networks and political subjectivities, and finally digital communication all make up a set of these cross-border practical dispositions at the physical and digital levels. Actors seize the available opportunities to construct their identity through transnational visions. Being queer becomes an attempt to move identities beyond fixed national categories. Transnationalism is produced by queer activists through practices, which span national borders. In this sense, the arenas they create are not used as a strategic frame to enhance institutional visibility and obtain additional resources. The arenas are rather performatively created through cross-border movements, and have as objective to build their own spaces in which they attempt to diffuse their queer critiques. Therefore, queer festivals do not explicitly address issues of transnationalism at the discursive level. The transnational character of the arenas they aspire to is, rather, the result of a series of cross-border practices they activate and promote.

Queer festivals' transnationalism relates to their anti-identitarian identity-building. Transnationalism is produced by queer actors, as far as it produces them as well. This does not imply that in their effort to break borders, new borders are not put in place. We have already seen that queer festivals are far from utopias, but rather spaces in which oppositional habitus and controversies emerge. The use of English as a lingua franca and the exclusions it produces for people who do not speak it at all or do not feel comfortable with speaking it in public is an illustrative example of the limits of the proclaimed inclusive character of festivals' anti-identitarian identity. Festivals seem therefore often to appear only as addressing educated nomads whose skills conform to a cosmopolitan ethos.

But beyond the limits, queer festivals' transnational practices connect with a significant political frame: going beyond borders. The move beyond borders, either sexual/gender or any other type, constitutes a basic

component of what it means to be queer. Therefore, its implementation in practical terms, the setting-up of mechanisms which would allow festivals to become transnational arenas, aligns with the normative idea for the movement, which sets as aim to move beyond fixed identities.

This chapter ends the analysis of the practices that queer actors put in place in order to build festivals' anti-identitarian collective identity. I move now to the conclusion of the book. What are the benefits of such an anti-identitarian identity for queer festivals? And what are the challenges that such a choice entails?

7 Anti-identity, Politics and the State

Queer Challenges and Future Directions

A journey into the queer world

> Pink Life QueerFest [...] is the first queer festival in Turkey. [...] First edition of the festival was held in 2011 in Ankara. [...] The 6th edition will be organized between 12-19 January 2017 in Ankara and 26-28 January 2017 in Istanbul. The festival aims to create new and fresh areas of (self-) expression, of LGBTQI individuals and artists and to raise awareness on LGBT struggle through the use of art; and it creates an opportunity for detailed discussions about queer theory.[1]

The moment I started my fieldwork, the 'first queer festival' in Turkey was about to start. Some years later, the International Queer Festival DOTYK in Minsk, the Belarusian capital, would begin. Both looked extremely interesting in terms of workshops, films, and even psychological support for victims of homophobia.[2] Queer festivals seem to expand beyond Western settings. But how do they make it? What does lie behind a queer festival in a non-Western European context?

In this book, I focused on queer festivals taking place in Western European capitals. I argued that it is crucial to investigate the mechanisms of their production and the ways their actors seize the local and transnational opportunities in order to build their anti-identitarian identities, in a context of transnational LGBT activism that stands hegemonic as far as gender and sexual identities are concerned. Queer has historically and politically been built as an opposition, as a counter-hegemonic discourse and practice, against more institutional-oriented LGBT movements, but also against a public space regulated by hetero/homonormativity, commercialization and racism. This study showed that this is what Western queer festivals are for: create alternative zones, experiment on vocabularies and aesthetics, create links of belonging to an imagined queer community and sustain activist networks.

1 KUIR fest, 'Pink Life QueerFest', https://filmfreeway.com/festival/PinkLifeQueerFest (last accessed: 20/09/2017).

2 DOTYK, 'Dotyk 2017', http://en.dotyk.by/dotyk-2017-3/ (last accessed: 20/09/2017).

Queer festivals are empowering experiences, but they are difficult to organize. I showed in the book how a series of practices need to be implemented in order for these ephemeral events to take place safely and enjoyably for their participants. These practices are found everywhere: from the editing of the callout, its dissemination via social media, the contacts with the squats, the organization of the space, the organization of the collective kitchen, the collection of food, the workshops' programmes, the performances, the organization of demonstrations, the organization of sex parties and safe spaces, the transnational networking, the digital communication. 'To create a queer space that is free for all, it is important that *we all try* radically to confront some, if not all, of the structures existing in society today. We *need to help each other* to break free from structures and norms imposed on us by the capitalist, heteronormative, racist society.'[3] Why such an emphasis on togetherness? Without mutual aid, a common concern and collaborative work, no queer festival can ever take place.

The focus on Western European capitals has its own logic, inasmuch as queer festivals in these sites respond to common analytic questions and that their differences do not succumb their commonalities. Moving away from strict comparative frames, I opted for a multi-sited observation that looked at the emergence of a dynamics of pulling together transnational publics, against institutions as well as against the traditional LGBT movements. Having the queer paradox of the anti-identitarian mobilization as the departure object of the research, I wanted to check how it gets solved bt suggesting a look at concrete situations. This epistemological move led me automatically to an inductive and rather pragmatic approach. The inductive parameter of the study is significant as far as it allowed me to investigate the object of study by adjusting it in the course of the research. In this respect, Rome followed Amsterdam, which followed Oslo, which followed Berlin, which followed Copenhagen. Nothing was precise from the very beginning. The festivals appeared in a logic of snowball sampling, similar to the one we follow when we look for interviewees. When it comes to the pragmatic parameter, this is embedded in studying the situation in which the object of the study occurs. My role of researcher was to put in discussion several points of view, by readjusting them during the empirical investigation (Werner and Zimmermann 2006: 47).

Another epistemological choice was to avoid overgeneralizations on how queer festivals could work in other parts of the world. I rather tried to

3 Copenhagen Queer Festival, 'Politics', http://www.queerfestival.org/politics.html (last accessed: 20/09/2017).

generalize partially, to the extent that I attempted to make clear the combination of the various situations of queer festivals, focusing on the dynamics of the movement sustained and organized by practices that reappeared in every setting. I tried to make this sort of generalization as much as possible. This was not applicable, however, in all sites of investigation, and whenever needed, I was making it clear (for instance, the no-vegan policy in Rome). Finally, I avoided strictly comparative methods thanks to reflexivity. In fact, a strictly comparative perspective would imply an external point of view that would oblige me to build comparable objects and similar analytical questions that would equally apply to all festivals. This was not desired but also not possible. Not desired because of the proximity I had with my field. Not possible, because some practices were more stressed in some festivals than in others. Trying to identify the same exact mechanisms in order to compare them in the end would make me lose some specificities or some exemplarities identified in certain sites and not in others (for example, the 'commons' discourse in Queeristan). I will now present an overview of the book's findings, and I will end by indicating some directions for future research that this study did not consider thoroughly.

Overview of the findings and theoretical contributions

My departure point was located in a paradox: that of building a sustainable repertoire of action based on an identity which pretends not to be one: an identity that sets as its aim to deconstruct any possible identities. Following the trend of previous research on 'emerging transnational "micro-publics"', such as the European Social Forums (Doerr 2009: 235), the book continues the study of the transnational coalitions that have been built at the European level over recent decades, particularly after the establishment of the global justice movement. Part of the broader Europeanization process, which affects not only institutions but also mobilization, everyday lives, and the formation of identities (Ayoub 2016), even marginal forms of contention, such as queer festivals, are participating as well in the building of new transnational identities.

The analytical part of the book focused on the discourses and the practices which build queer festivals as political arenas at the transnational level. I demonstrated how participation in these arenas first brings confrontation with new rational vocabularies, which challenge the dominant understandings of gender and sexuality. Second, participation becomes a means by which actors invent new ways of performing and addressing the

political. Queer festivals' identity is not just the result of actors' calculations and rational decisions. It is rather the (contested) product of the practical mechanisms and processes which are activated and put in motion once the events start. Festivals' 'anti-identitarian' identity is mainly promoted through discursive practices (callouts, texts, zines, etc.). It is translated, however, into a 'real' collective identity by its members.

Queer festivals' 'anti-identitarian' identity has discursive as well as practical dimensions, and their memberships are sociologically, if not determined, situated in specific social and educational structures. This does not mean that working-class, racialized or undocumented migrants can never enter such a place. All people are welcome, and through affective relationships or political engagement, individuals belonging to subaltern groups can be occasionally part of festivals.

The anti-identitarian identity: Social movements beyond the state

I started this study based upon an empirical observation: the gradual establishment of queer festivals across Europe. I knew that queer was synthesized in the postmodern phrase: 'beyond identities'. Although moving beyond identities has been adequately scrutinized in queer theory, the lack of empirical understanding of queer as a political identity has constituted for several decades a fundamental barrier to sociological explorations in queer studies (Seidman 1996). I thus developed a curiosity to analyse the ideological frames of queer festivals from a sociological perspective, to see their degrees of distinction from queer theory, and to answer the question of why queer festivals succeed in mobilizing actors, many of whom make cross-border journeys in order to attend them. Scholars have stressed movements' fear of 'strong collective identities' (Jasper and McGarry 2015; Flesher-Fominaya 2015). These are based on the 'identity politics' model, challenged both in the academic and the political arena. This challenge has occurred because of the emergence of a rival paradigm of 'multiple, tolerant identities', supported massively by the global justice movement of the early 2000s (Della Porta 2005b). This paradigm came to be complemented by the anti-identitarian model.

Sociology of practice and social movements

The main approach of this research consisted in the systematization and analysis of collective practices, as crucial parameters for the building of queer festivals and of their identities. Based upon Dufour's and Bourdieu's

theories, I explored how activists put in motion a set of specific practices in order to build their identities. It became obvious, however, that the conceptualization and implementation of these practices is far from consensual. Oppositions within the spaces reveal the degree of clashes between actors. Following Bourdieu's line of thought, however, I did not see these oppositions as part of a rational-choice debate among actors. The educational and political socialization of each participant accounts largely for her position in the festival. Thus, social practice does not start from zero, but is rather built through interactions of individuals, with delimited, yet dynamic, horizons of possibilities.

Anti-identity, discursive and non-discursive practices

The continuity of the legacy of the queer movement, as it emerged in the 1990s, in contemporary queer festivals is obvious. It is sustained through the links between queer festivals and queer theory, links which are mostly enacted by activists who have studied gender and queer studies. At the practical level, this anti-identitarian critique translates into an open call for people to identify with any form of gender and sexual orientation, attempting to create a space of radical inclusivity. The discursive strategy builds on the idea of including people subject to various forms of discrimination, economic, linguistic and regarding disability, while queer festivals demonstrate a discursive sensitivity for migration and race issues. Moreover, the queer legacy is continued through a celebration of abnormality: queer identity is imagined as a deviation from the mainstream, and this imaginary links queerness to an alternative lifestyle. Radical inclusivity does not imply, however, a quantitative enlargement of festivals' publics. Radical inclusivity itself is bound to various forms of boundary demarcation. Through the promotion of specific cultural codes, the number of potential attendees in the events becomes automatically restricted. People from racialized backgrounds, for instance, are not very visible in the festivals.[4]

Performance and theatricality constitute other basic components of the attempt to build a queer collective identity. Based on the legacy of older queer and gay politics, but also on the performative character of the global justice movement, queer festivals utilize a performative repertoire of action when they engage in public demonstrations. In addition, organized or spontaneous performances are an essential part of the agenda of a queer festival. Finally, queer festivals make attempts to cross-fertilize their own

4 With the exception of the Queeristan festivals in Amsterdam.

discourses with those of other alternative social movements. The gradual introduction of the anti-capitalist politics of the commons is an illustrative example of how queers imagine their identities into the field of left-wing scenes in Europe. The links between sexuality, gender and capitalism are not yet thoroughly acknowledged and elaborated, and they have not become a fundamental point of reference for participants.

Organization and anti-identitarian ethos

At the organizational level, I demonstrated how the siting of the festivals within squats provides their ideological and material frame. The proclaimed horizontality of the events, embodied through daily assemblies, plenaries, workshops, safe spaces and other similar organizational rituals, are largely linked to the squatting, anti-authoritarian scenes of European capitals. Moreover, the specific way of organization brings us back to the global justice movement and the European social forums of the early 2000s. The organizational level is the one on which this global justice legacy is the most visible.

The empirical findings on queer festivals' organizational practices reconfirmed the establishment of new forms of 'listening-oriented' consensus that occur when actors meet at the transnational level, as other scholars have identified in their studies on transnational movements in Europe (Doerr 2009: 243). Actors learn how to be more careful listeners, and at the same time the festivals' mode of organization encourages further deliberative forms of decision-making. Traversed by feminist ideas on communicative democracy, queer festivals continue the legacy of the attentive perspective. Moreover, festivals present another specificity to the extent that they opt for a DIY mode of organizing, which promotes an even more radical form of engagement and participation, albeit a mode which does not always function as successfully as imagined. I suggested that festivals' organizational logic follows a more complex pattern of communication than just a simple rational exchange of arguments. Safe spaces and guidelines on how to respect them, attentive listening and other similar practices reveal the importance of emotional understanding and of affective deliberation in queer spaces.

Performing cultural conflicts

I showed also that cultural practices have their own place within queer festivals, largely contributing to the construction of the anti-identitarian

queer identity. Starting with the observation on the extended use of *queer vocabulary*, borrowed by queer and gender studies, I showed how people with academic education hold a certain degree of authority in the events. This advantage in cultural capital is mainly reflected in the terminology used in the workshops, during discussions and plenaries but also in the everyday discussions among participants. The establishment of collective cooking and eating, combined with the promotion of veganism, constitutes another main component of the construction of the alternative identity of these queer events. This tradition, mostly observed in the queer festivals of Northern Europe, is the product of historical and contextual custom, reinforced through the embeddedness in the squatting scenes in which the festivals take place. Finally, a specific stylization reflected in dressing codes constitutes another non-discursive aspect of the queer identity-work, although dressing is certainly not homogenized and several styles are observed. These practices have their own significance in the building of queer identity, and often produce oppositions within the spaces, among actors who fully embrace them but others do less.

Queer transnationalism: Self-identifications beyond the state

Finally, I demonstrated how actors use specific practices in order to build queer festivals as transnational arenas. Beyond state-oriented approaches, according to which transnational social movements target at least one institutional polity, a country or an international organization, I showed that for queer festivals, what is important in their transnationalism is the building of identities that extend national (but also other) borders, a sort of post-national identity. For queer festivals, borders are therefore to be found everywhere, in nation-states, in race, in gender and in sexuality: all people are defined and determined by the cross-cutting of these borders, produced beyond single nation-state regimes, and diffused through transnational norms. Challenging borders becomes possible for queer festivals through a series of practices, physical and digital cross-border ones, which not only construct festivals as transnational spaces of collective identity, but also help sustain them over time, through the networks and the social bonds they establish. Queer transnationalism does not deny, however, local specificities. Queer festivals take into account their local contexts when they address their politics. But they rather see the local existing in interaction with the transnational into a dynamic relationship which produces its own effects. This can be visible in the framings of their politics, but also in the networks they establish among local, foreign and ephemeral participants. Queer transnationalism does not,

however, escape criticism. The location of the spaces in Western European 'creative capitals' (Peck 2005: 740) translates into limited outreach to Eastern European publics, or people with migrant backgrounds.

Queer festivals and anti-identity in the world

The book suggests that studying the formation of movements that put in the core of their identity-building the critique of traditional identitarian categories through discourse and practice is important for scholars working on transnational mobilization. European queer festivals allow us to reconsider contention as not already contained within the state, but as looking for autonomy from it, trying to build distinct spaces and create counter-hegemonic cultures. It allows also social movement studies to pay more attention to the variety of contentious forms of social movements at the local, the national and the transnational scale. Moreover, queer festivals recognize the importance of agency in gender and sexual destabilization as long as this makes part of collective action. Can we escape from gender and sexual models that we are assigned to? Impossible as it seems at the first place, queer festivals embody this desire for expressivity and for autonomy on the gender performance, as a collective endeavour.

Furthermore, queer festivals shed light on issues of membership and social movement participation. Do people participating in political events incorporate and agree on all the codes that circulate inside? Why some of them return and some other not? This 'membership identity', defined as actors' participation and attachment with queer dispositions, takes several forms and is located in a continuum of looser to tighter bonds. 'Membership identity' is a concept which can make us rethink the identity relationships of occasional participants in the social movement sphere, be it a physical activist space or/and a digital one. In this respect, queer is not only a matter of quality, 'Am I queer or not?', but also a matter of quantity: 'How much queer am I?' In fact, in their attempt to politicize their identities, queer activists build festivals as arenas that do not aim only at 'internal consumption', but they are oriented towards unknown publics, attempting to spread queerness onto new individuals, too. These new individuals participate in the spaces, not always through a 'complete involvement', but to multiple degrees and with extreme variations, depending on different perceptions and affects that these actors develop once they become members of these arenas. 'Membership identity' can reveal these tensions that different degrees of involvement and thus attachment in ephemeral political events raise.

Do queer festivals in Western Europe share any commonalities with queer festivals in other parts of the world? Although many could consider queer as a purely Western, if not a US-based project, queer has been expanding and appropriated in different national and local settings all over the globe. This diffusion relates both to queer as an artistic, rather than political, project and also on its travelling and its translation around the world.

First, and as indicated in the introduction, many queer festivals that take place in Europe, in the USA and elsewhere are in fact film festivals. These festivals usually display a rich international filmography of LGBTQ short and long feature films, and they often take place in art cinemas, fine art schools or independent spaces. Naming them queer does not necessarily imply that they are different from LGBT. The term 'queer' has been appropriated by some film festivals for several reasons. First, it is a way to depoliticize the cause, since 'queer' does not sound aggressive in the ears of a non-English mainstream audience. Second, it can estheticize sexual politics, by insisting only on the destabilization of gender and sexuality, and ignoring the social dimensions of heteronormativity and gender binarism. Third, it can be also used as a strategy of existence in strongly homophobic environments. For instance, some cities use the term 'queer' to describe their festivals in order not to display the more visible term 'LGBT'. In this respect, 'queer' is used more as an umbrella term than a distinct identity. This is the case of the Beijing and the Mumbai International Queer Film Festivals. On Mumbai's platform, we can read that the festival accepts films relating 'to LGBT stories (Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender)',[5] but 'queer' is not used apart from in the title. Regarding the Beijing Queer Film Festival in China, this has been a significant actor of diffusion of LGBT sexualities in the Chinese public sphere (Bao 2017). So, even if 'queer' is used as an umbrella term in these settings, people are getting acknowledged in the queer perspectives of gender and sexuality. We see, therefore, that for non-European contexts, 'queer' is often making its move through art, and mostly through cinema. Film festivals are significant producers of non-normative and probably non-identitarian forms of gender and sexuality. Furthermore, I strongly believe, although a sociological study misses in this point, that queer film festivals serve also as spaces where their publics communicate, exchange and elaborate on the local and global specificities of queer collective identities.

5 Mumbai Queer Fest, '8th Kashish Mumbai International Film Festival', http://mumbaiqueerfest.com/ (last accessed: 20/09/2017).

The transnational dimension of queer film festivals has been evidenced by other scholars who have showed how circulation of movies are accompanied by media constructions in our supposed 'post-gay' era (Loist 2015). Media remove queer film festivals' gay character, claiming that these festivals go beyond sexuality, that they are 'post-gay'. This 'post-gay' identity has been seen as defining 'oneself by more than sexuality, to disentangle gayness with militancy and struggle, and to enjoy sexually mixed company' (Ghaziani 2011: 102; also Warner 2000). But is queer really 'post-gay'? Although we see some common points in Ghaziani's definition between queer and post-gay, for instance, the need to escape from sexuality as a primary characteristic of identity, the major difference between post-gay and queer lies in the latter's insistence and persistence on *militancy* and activism.

Central and Eastern European experience, in particular, is important in this point because it reveals the limits of 'post-gay' identity, and the ongoing conflicting character of gay and lesbian identities in the public space. In some contexts of the Balkan region, claiming collective identities of gay, lesbian, or transgender, might be a dangerous task. In Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) or Belgrade (Serbia), LGBT prides and queer festivals are seen as antagonistic with local understandings of heteronormativity and masculinity, and they often lead to violent clashes among the participants (Kajinic 2010), but also between the queer organizers and external, usually far-right nationalists or hooligans (Bilic and Dioli 2016). Activists, however, identifying either as LGBT or queer or both, keep organizing activities in the public space in an actively militant way, challenging constraining factors due to public heteronormativity. Therefore, a focus on European queer festivals make us understand the role of activism for queer identities.

For activists in European queer festivals, queer is not just a word to hide their non-normative sexualities or gender expressions behind catchphrases. Queer is linked with local and transnational activist scenes and movements. For these festivals, the embeddedness in other left-wing cultures is as important as their non-normative sexualities and genders. Left-wing ideas on queering the commons, for instance, illustrate how queer festivals see their activism through a broader global justice perspective. Moreover, their identifications with radical left positions, as shown in the survey, adds to this argument. The links between left-wing and queer in Europe is a very important point that I stress in the book because it builds the specificity of European compared to other appropriations of queer in Asia or the USA. For the USA, in particular, queer has long been associated with radical militancy, but it seems that this is not the case, anymore. Queer has lost part of its activist legacy, and it is common now to use 'queer' as

a synonym for 'gay', in popular culture.[6] I believe that the decline of the USA radical queer legacy lies in the lack of left-wing movement scenes and infrastructure, compared to European cities that still provide opportunities for anti-institutional activism. Infrastructure and networks with other social movements in this sense are extremely important for queer activists in Europe, because it is often upon their spatial and human networks that queer movements become part of a dynamic left-wing culture. Although anti-institutional movements of the left have lost a large part of their power compared to the 1960s and the 1970s, they still play an important role in queers' political socialization. As we saw in the book, it is very often the case that European queer activists have been part of other left-wing social movements or they have participated in one or more movements or subcultures of the left-wing scenes of the cities they live in or in the cities they originally come from. Transnationalism in this extent is a differing parameter, since in Europe it is part of queer identity-building, much more than in the USA. In this respect, queer movements profit from freedom of movement within the borders of the EU, like other transnational LGBT movements (Ayoub 2016). Queer festivals demonstrate the capacity, despite difficulties, for alternative public spheres (and the public sphere itself) to be no longer linked inextricably to the nation-state. They finally prove that grassroots democracy does not require culturally and linguistically homogenous settings, but rather political visions, and the motivation to put them in practice.

European queer festivals can be also located in a global cycle of contention, which coincides with the Arab Spring, the anti-austerity protests, the Occupy movements and the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul. Despite their differences, all these movements share some characteristics, especially in the actors participating in them. Workers, youth, students, women, LGBTQ, racial, ethnic and religious minorities, environmentalists, they all found space within this global contentious wave that shook the world since 2009. Within these global 'multiple identity' movements queers found their space too, such as inside the Occupy movements (Jaleel 2012), or within the Gezi Park protests (Zengin 2013). Queer collectives found the opportunity and the space to become part of these movements through intersecting their queerness with larger political goals, aiming at social change, not only in terms of recognition of minoritarian identities, but also in terms of redistribution and socio-economic equality. These broader movements revitalized

6 E.g., *Queer as Folk*, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, etc.

queer identities, linking them back to their roots in radical activism and anti-institutional logics, diffused in queer festivals' mobilizations.

What challenges are queer festivals facing right now? The lack of spaces and the decline of left-wing movement activity, due to harsh effects of real estate speculation and increased policing, seem the most important. After the end of this study, many of the squats where queer festivals had taken place were shut down by local authorities as a result of aggressive neoliberal policies around urban planning. 'Creative cities' try to accommodate squats as a form of speculating in the housing market. This was the case, for instance, with the Teatro Valle in Rome and the De Slang squat in Amsterdam. The squatting tradition that has significantly influenced the flourishing of European queer festivals is now threatening their political independence, and even risks the possibility of the privatisation of queer activity, identities and sexualities, by dragging them into more mainstream spaces, with all the consequences that this might have for festivals' radical orientations. Moreover, the decline of transnational inclusive movements, such as Blockupy, the global justice or the Indignados movements that have given significant room to queer activity, might also influence queer activists' identity-building and collective actions. Finally, another crucial aspect is festivals' ephemeral character. Without minimizing any of the importance of queer festivals for the activists' and the participants' lives and identities, queer festivals face the problem of temporality. Members' fluctuating participation and organizers' mobility are contingent variables upon which festivals depend to survive. This was the case of the Da Mieli a Queer; despite holding a successful festival in 2013, it did not take place again.

In a more positive note, some queer claims, especially on gender destabilization, seem to have gained ground within LGBT movements. The case of the Queer Committee of the Danish Party Red-Green Alliance is illustrative. One of the successes of this group was the introduction of transgender rights in the legislative arena. This group did not, however, manage to move beyond the policy implementation paradigm, and challenge the institutional norms, which create the basis for the rights-claiming process.[7]

7 In Denmark, queer groups had already attempted to mix with institutional politics through elections. The Queer Committee of the Red-Green Alliance, Denmark's left-wing party, is an illustrative example of such an engagement. As Liv Mertz, one of its members, described: '[The Queer Committee] immediately attracted a relatively large number of non-party members. Some of them were academics like myself or academics-to-be who had been identifying as socialists all along, but who had no experience working within the framework of a political party. Others were LGBT activists, while others yet were affiliated with radical left-wing

And although it seems positive that LGBT movements have started taking into account queer claims, what happens in countries which provide few rights to their non-normative sexual citizens? How does the lack of a common LGBT rights policy across the continent affect queer discourses in different countries? I attempted to make a short introduction to this question by addressing the case of the Rome queer festival. The Romans were very sceptical about their Northern European counterparts, who see the 'gay rights' issue as an 'old-fashioned' claim. I believe that queer activists in Western European festivals have a lot to learn by looking at Eastern and Southern European experiences (and beyond, of course). As Kulpa and Mizielinska remind us, the temporal disjunction of LGBT and queer politics (2011) might minimize the hostility some queer movements display against institutional representation. In contexts where strong homophobia is still very present in the institutional arena, and this influences 'ordinary' people's lives, how can queer become a dynamic social movement and a strong oppositional pole against heteronormativity and gender binarism?

Queer Festivals: Challenging Collective Identities in a Transnational Europe is a step towards the analysis of all these questions by linking social movements and the state, sexuality, gender and politics, activist practices and transnationalism. This book demonstrates the sociological need to examine festivals' mobilizations at the transnational scale, and to shed light into cultural and social dynamics developing within. Beyond postmodernist ideas on queer 'moving beyond identities', the book showed that collective identities are not dead, and this is not for bad. It is rather the identity models which change across time. Actors keep conducting identity-work both at the discursive and the practical level. European queer festivals have brought a revolution in the way actors think about gender and sexuality, and the identities that accompany them.

initiatives like Ungdomshuset or feminist grassroots groupings [...] or all of the above. In short, the Queer Committee is the closest I have ever come to witnessing and participating in "the mutual interdependencies of social movements and academic theories" – to the point where the definitional boundaries between the two dissolve. Thanks to ØQ [the Queer Committee], I have often left the Red-Green Alliance's gigantic first floor apartment contemplating academic theories that had been *refined* rather than simplified in the course of my evening there. And characteristically, my sporadic academic output is very often prompted by discussions and experiences shared by my ØQ comrades' (2008: 23). The Queer Committee did not function without barriers and without discursive misunderstandings. It managed, however, according to Mertz, to introduce legislation on transgender rights in 2007, while its popularity was attested through reportages published on the party's bimonthly bulletin.

Appendix 1: Methodology of the study

Ethnography and social movements

Marc Edelman, in his work on changing paradigms in social movements, argues that:

> Political process and NSM [new social movements] theorists could benefit from a greater sensitivity to the historical and cultural processes through which some of their main analytical categories (frames, submerged networks, movement culture) are constructed, as well as a more genuine appreciation of the lived experience of movement participants and nonparticipants. Something that is accessible primarily through ethnography, oral narratives, or documentary history. (2001: 309)

Edelman believes that ethnography in social movement studies is not fairly represented, and uses Whittier's ethnographic analysis on radical feminism (1995) as an exemplar of how an ethnographic approach in social movements can provide a window onto submerged networks, activities, ideological differences, repression and fear. The idea that social movement studies need to shift their attention to 'lived experiences' is common both in Whittier's and Edelman's accounts and it reveals the convergence of post-structuralism and feminism, concerning the idea that the personal experience can become a source of knowledge.

Ethnography allows for reflection on the relation of the researcher herself with the movement. Feminist scholars, in particular, have considered ethnography as the most appropriate way to access the lived experiences of activists, because of their critical identification with, or sympathy for, the movement they study. Therefore, the subfield of sexual and gender movements, whose scholars tend to be related to feminism, has enriched social movement studies with more reflective forms of ethnography. Whittier, by following such an approach, has explained how lesbian communities managed to keep radicalism alive during the 1980s (1995). More recently, Benjamin Shepard studied the dynamics of the queer movement in the USA through a historical ethnography, while describing his position inside the movement, by reflecting upon his own role as researcher and activist (2010). Moreover, Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor have worked on the drag performers of a small city in a Southern state of the USA (2003). By using a traditional ethnographic approach (single-site, thick description), the authors managed

to bring to the surface activists' feelings, emotions and subtle gestures in a way that enriches social movement studies with new ways of viewing activism, beyond the conventional approaches of contentious politics.

When it comes to the site of study, anthropologists have questioned the dichotomy of the local and the global (Marcus 1995: 95; Kearney 1995). In his article 'Ethnography in/of the World System' (1995), George Marcus explains why conventional single-site studies cannot account for meanings and identities, which are part of the broader global system. Although he admits that single-site studies have produced refined examinations of resistance and accommodation, he concludes that, in our globalized era, nothing seems any longer to be isolated and unconnected to other relations, structures or ideas (Marcus 1995: 96).

To make things clear, a conventional single-site ethnographic study would entail analysing an event as a product of very specific structures, the most important being those connected to the state in which it takes place.[1] Although such an approach can reveal social and political processes which interplay within the contemporary world system, or can emphasize the role of the state as providing a political opportunity for the development of the movement, it does not take into account the following:

- the way actors give meanings to macro-changes, and to the power relations developing between themselves;
- the complexity of the interplay of state and non-state institutions in the construction of a movement whose target is not directly the state;
- the historicity of the movement, as well as the importance of the space in which its development takes place;
- its interactions with other movements.

1 See the classical definition of Martin Hammersley and Paul Atkinson, who define ethnography as: 'a particular method or set of methods which in its most characteristic form [...] involves the ethnographer participating overtly or covertly in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of research' (1995: 1). Although this classical definition sets the basis for a schematic representation of ethnography, it describes it as a stable and fixed method, which is shaped in a very concrete way. In fact, the ethnographer is described as a person who stays outside the observation process: her main objective is just to listen, take notes and collect the data in order to produce the knowledge which she is going to transform into a scientific discourse. Furthermore, the time limit that they pose ('extended period of time') reminds one of the old school of 'native' anthropology, when researchers stayed in the research field for years, some of them turning 'native'. Multi-sited ethnography, however, takes a distance from this narrative of the long stay in the field, for practical and theoretical reasons. Practically, because the objective of a multi-sited ethnography is usually constructed upon the study of several sites which implies that long periods of time are not always available (Falzon 2009: 6). Theoretically, because people, ideas and materials are viewed as connected and 'open-ended' rather as single, unitary, and complete.

In addition, multi-sited ethnography is considered necessary in the case that the researcher wants to position herself in relation to the object of study. Conducting fieldwork in settings in which the researcher feels politically and emotionally attached allows a breaking of the binary between public and private, by questioning the notions of 'objectivity' and 'impartiality', through a reflexive process. Reflexivity allows for a keen awareness of 'being within the landscape, and as the landscape changes across sites, the identity of the ethnographer requires renegotiation' (Marcus 1995: 112). Reflexive ethnography can bridge the binary between activism and academia, and to produce several sources of data which otherwise would not have been accessible (Shepard 2010: 280). It allows also for an acknowledgement of the challenges of politically and emotionally charged fieldwork.

Case studies: Six queer festivals in five European capitals

How does an anti-identity discourse, attacking every possible link with strong gender and sexual identities, succeed in mobilizing across Europe? In order to answer this question, I had to identify sites which provide a home for activists to gather and put into practice their political ideals. Queer festivals fitted this description perfectly, given that they could be seen as 'semi-autonomous social fields', defined as the 'most suitable way of defining areas for social anthropological study in complex societies', being 'vulnerable to rules and decisions and other forces emanating from the larger world by which (they are) surrounded' (Moore 1978: 55). Having limited myself to queer festivals as the site of analysis, I opted for a medium-size sample. I thus narrowed the focus to festivals which took place during a specific time frame: July 2011-June 2013, and only in Europe. The geographical area covered is related to my own knowledge of the field, and to the greatest access I had to the sites, in terms of resources. During the fieldwork, however, more theoretical questions emerged, concerning the links between European and queer identity (Eleftheriadis 2014).

The first social field I identified was the Copenhagen Queer Festival, a large-scale seven-day event, with a brief but remarkable history in European queer circles.[2] Probably the longest and biggest queer festival in Europe, the Copenhagen Queer Festival had already created its own circle of members,

2 As I realized afterwards, many people from other parts of the field had visited one of the Copenhagen Queer Festivals. As Vabbi told me, 'I went to Copenhagen for my first queer festival, where I had my first sex with a woman. 2006' (Vabbi, Berlin, 2011).

who used to follow it on a regular basis. The Copenhagen queer festival seemed the perfect 'semi-autonomous social field' Sally Falk Moore was thinking of, in the sense of being a definable setting, embedded in the larger fields of European queer and alternative circles (1978: 55). Easy as it was at the beginning of the fieldwork, because of its size and importance, the choice of the following events posed a series of methodological questions. Starting by elaborating on a multi-sited ethnographic approach, I decided to visit the Copenhagen festival and allow myself to be directed by activists to the following settings. I was led to Berlin some days later, and to Oslo a couple of months afterwards. After the end of the Oslo festival, and building on the common characteristics of the existing field, I decided to impose some criteria for the following events I would attend.

The first criterion for the selection of festivals was their self-identification as 'queer'. But this was not enough. Queer should not just be an umbrella for LGBT, as is sometimes the case for film festivals. Therefore, I avoided every example of 'queer film festivals' that are currently spreading all over Europe. Finally, I excluded from my research Gay Pride marches, even if they were given the name 'queer', since I was focusing on multi-day arenas, rather than on daily marches: all queer festivals I attended lasted between four and seven days.

Methods

Participant observation

I observed various meetings, assemblies, workshops and performances which took place in the six festivals of my field from July 2011 to May 2013. The main challenge of this study was, however, to be present and available 24 hours per day in the space, since festivals tend to begin very early in the morning, and finish very late in the evening, usually with a party or performances. Thus, physical exhaustion did not allow me to be fully available during the whole duration of the festivals. Another challenge lay in the fact that during the day, many workshops used to take place at the same time. I thus opted for the ones which were more useful for the research. Finally, my own subjective position as a sympathizer of the movement might provoke some criticism. I have to acknowledge, however, that the largest part of the writing process of the PhD dissertation, from which this book emanates, took place after the end of my fieldwork. I was given thus the necessary emotional and time distance to the field of my research. After I closed my

fieldwork, I also chose not to attend any other queer festival until the end of the writing process, in order to avoid new input that would affect it.

I followed traditional methods of observation: keeping notes on everything that I considered useful. I did not face particular obstacles in this part of the study. I kept notes before going to sleep. The only occasion on which I took notes in front of the actors was during the plenary meetings and the assemblies. This was especially the case with the daily general assemblies and the evaluation meetings on the last day of the festivals.

Analysis of documents

One important dimension of this study was the collection of written material circulating in the festivals. I managed to collect around 50 written documents. These documents include: schedules, manifestos, posters, zines, stickers, campaigns and posters from other political events. Moreover, internet sources were used, too. These included both festivals' websites and their pages on social media (Facebook, Myspace, YouTube, etc.)

Interviews

The other essential part of my project was the interviews with activists and participants present in the events. For this purpose, I elaborated an interview grid:

- Birth, childhood, adolescence, first sexual consciousness, political awareness of the family and social background, explicit questions on the social background, political participation in adolescence, early adulthood. The social background, in particular, was addressed in the following terms: age, national background, professional occupations of parents, education, training.
- Adulthood, political consciousness raising, political activities, sexual experiences and negotiation of gender and sexual identities, connections to other political groups and/or subcultures. Contemporary social background: personal class context,[3] living and working conditions,

3 I agree with Jane Ward when she argues that theorizing class is a complex process because 'class identity itself is multifaceted. Class is a marker of wealth and income, but it also influences, and is influenced by, an individual's skills, resources, choices, food, manners, language, intelligence, education, and geography' (2003: 67). Beyond an orthodox Marxist reading of class, I promote the ideas of P. Bourdieu (1984), who sees class not only as an examination of disparities in wealth, education, and professional status, but also in the tastes, skills, and connections associated with these social locations. What role is played by inequalities in connections,

relations to the welfare states of the countries they live in, profiting from freedom of movement in the European context.
– Queer activism: explicit questions on their own perception of queer activism, degree of engagement in the festival at which I met them.

My research did not focus on the reliability of the interviewees' narrations, but rather sheds light on the way they present their stories and is particularly attentive to the things they choose to say. It is argued that narratives play an important role in activism, constructing and maintaining individual and community identities (Fine 1995). F. Polletta argues that narrative is an object of sociological analysis, which gives 'relevance to understanding neglected dynamics of collective action' (1998: 420-424). As B. Shepard reminds us, the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee in a long interview is 'as a jazz-like improvisation', in the sense that the researcher uses different aspects of his own experiences in order to listen carefully, asks the appropriate questions when s/he thinks intervention is needed, and finally constructs a story from the narrative of the interviewee (2010: 281).

Interviews were conducted with people who participated in at least one of the queer festivals of my field. I attempted to diversify my sample as much as possible by following a theoretical sampling strategy (Doerr 2009: 49), rather than the snowball technique. Thus, my focus on gender diversity was very much taken into account: cis women, cis men, defined as 'individuals who have a match between the gender they were assigned at birth, their bodies, and their personal identity' (Schilt and Westbrook 2009: 461), and trans women and men (MtF, FtM).[4] At the same time, many individuals would aspire to gender destabilization, through everyday dragging. I also tried to take into account matters of age and educational background. I tried to keep a balance between organizers who reside permanently in the place where the festival took place, and people who travelled in order to attend the festival. Finally, the national backgrounds of the interviewees are diverse: Poland, Palestine, France, Germany, Israel, Belgium, Italy, USA, Norway and others. All of the interviews were conducted in English, apart from Sylvia's in Rome, which was conducted in French. They were tape-recorded and transcribed. In table A, one can find the list of the

professional skills, and aesthetic tastes – or what he refers to as social capital, cultural capital, and habitus – is the approach I adopt in my reading of class.

4 Male to Female, Female to Male.

interviewees with their age, status and way they chose to express their gender identity.[5]

Interviewees' stories reveal significant aspects regarding identity issues. Although association with the gay and lesbian identity tends to be rejected at the collective level, the same does not happen at the individual level. This means that many interviewees keep identifying with traditional identity categories in their everyday lives (gay, lesbian, bi, trans). At the same time, their identification with the *queer ideal* is also a matter of how, and to what extent, actors incorporate the codes promoted within the events. Thus, the narratives reveal neither mechanisms of radical separatism from institutional processes, nor an aspiration to build distinct utopian communities.[6] Furthermore, interviews reveal an idea of 'affective mobility' connected especially to actors who travel to another country in order to join the festivals; in other words, many queers are subject to various 'types of social, personal, professional and intimate relationships' (Passerini et al. 2007: 3). In this type of narration, affective and political socialization plays a crucial role for participating in a queer festival. What is interesting in this case is also that this kind of socialization takes place through the transnational arena. Therefore, travelling to meet friends who live in another country, or to meet new people, can be a strong motivation.

Online survey

I conducted an online survey after the end of the first half of the fieldwork. The survey ran for two months, from October to December 2012, and it gathered 26 responses from a population of 125 members in the Facebook page of the Oslo Queer Festival group. I posted the link on the festival's Facebook page, which directed the respondents to the electronic platform.[7] I selected the Oslo festival because of its small population size, and its high response rates.[8] The response percentage corresponded to almost one out of seven participants in the festival, the maximum peak of the festival had reached 200 people.

5 See the list of interviewees and the place these were held in the end of the bibliography.

6 See the opposite case of identity politics lesbian feminism of the 1980s (Taylor and Whittier 1992).

7 I used the SurveyMonkey survey platform.

8 Other surveys were initiated in festivals with a social network page but their response rate was not as satisfactory as the Oslo's one.

Some institutionalist notes on LGBT movements and queer festivals

Liberal gay rights, as well as the *dichotomizing binary of the two sexes* (man/woman), are heavily promoted within transnational and local polities. To begin with, binary divisions are officially part of European Union policies, in which all the countries of the field participate.[9] Nordic countries in particular share a common history of state feminism, defined as the introduction of feminism through 'state politics as part of projects which aimed at the modernization of traditional societies' (Laliotou 2007: 56). State feminism has in reality gained significant rights for women through powerful gender equality policies. The mode of this implementation, however, has functioned as a 'tool of political transition that marked the consolidation of modern nation-states' (56), and thus became the standard measure for the modern character of a state. In addition, state feminism did not push for a radical deconstruction of the sexes binary, but rather solidified the idea of an inherent sexual difference (two distinct gender identities), based on heteronormative ideology, which sees the world as divided into two, and only two, categories of people: two opposed gender categories, two opposed sexual identities (Schneider 2013: 555).

Moreover, regarding LGBT politics, there has been developing lately an institutional tendency to include gay rights as part of the construction of the national imaginary. This process has taken the name of 'homonationalism' as a frame:

> For understanding the complexities of how "acceptance" and "tolerance" for gay and lesbian subjects have become a barometer by which the right to and capacity for national sovereignty is evaluated (Puar 2013: 336).

Although the concept has been heavily criticized, especially by analyses on countries where gay rights have still a long way to go (for Poland, see Kulpa and Mizielinska 2011), the normalization of the gay subject and gay lifestyle has been largely integrated into the national narratives of some countries of Northern Europe, especially the Netherlands and Denmark, and with some variations in Norway and Germany. This integration/assimilation process becomes very clear in cases where the institutional far right includes LGBT rights in its agenda, trying to build an image of openness towards

9 Despite Norway not being part of the EU, the country participates in several EU agencies, and conforms to many legal and political regulations, among others gender equality and discrimination against sexual orientation (Ellina 2003: 43).

homosexuality. For example, the Dutch far-right party of Geert Wilders, Party for Freedom (Partij voor de Vrijheid), 'took up the cause of gays and lesbians' (Hekma 2011: 134). The result is that left-wing parties became 'uncomfortable with the Islamophobic tone in the defense of gays and lesbians' (Hekma and Duyvendak 2011: 626), since the argument was: We support [ethnically Dutch] gays against homophobic Muslims. At the same time, in Northern European countries, homosexuality is often used as a tool of instrumentalization against ethnic minorities and Muslim populations, by both the official public authorities and far-right parties and movements. Take the Netherlands as an example, again: the integration office uses images of gay men kissing in order to check the reactions of immigrants asking for naturalization (Butler 2008: 3). The Netherlands might sound like a unique case of the way LGBT rights are developing in Western Europe. Yet, it illustrates a paradigm shift regarding the institutional normalization of sexuality and gender. Although varying according to the contexts in which they develop, these processes make part of a *transnational diffusion of gender and sexual norms*, promoted by both national institutions and by supranational organizations, such as the European Union and the Council of Europe.

In the case of the queer festival in Rome, things are a bit different. It is obvious that Italy participates in the same supranational polity of the EU and of the Council of Europe, and therefore it is exposed to the same *transnational diffusion of gender and sexual norms*. Two court decisions, Corte di cassazione civile, sentenza 4184/12 del 15/03/2012, and Tribunale di Reggio Emilia, sezione I civile, ord. 1401/2011, 13 February 2012, refer to a clash between Italian law and EU law, and question the recognition of gay marriage, which was accepted in other European countries, but not in Italy.[10] Italy is an illustrative example of the idea that even if countries participate in the same norm-diffusion polity, institutional resistances can create real obstacles for the attribution of rights to minorities (Garbagnoli 2013). This political reality does not, however, prevent queers in Rome from mobilizing on the basis of an anti-identitarian collective identity, and promoting at the same time a more radical agenda, which goes beyond gay rights and gender equality. Their discourses are, however, more nuanced and less polarized when it comes to LGBT recognition than those of their counterparts in Northern queer festivals, precisely, because of the lack of institutional support concerning fundamental rights.

10 For more information, check http://www.verfassungsblog.de/en/all-you-need-is-law-same-sex-marriage-in-italian-courts-2/#.UpNzUGTwL6m (last accessed: 08/11/2016)

Table A Extracts of festivals' callouts

Callout extracts	*City, Year*
We wish to create a space, which is not based on money, as we find this is the case in society today. The festival is open to all, whether or not they have money.	Copenhagen, 2012[a]
For us queer is not merely a synonym for 'gay/lesbian', but rather an open call for action, which includes a lot more than the sexual orientation or gender identity of the individual. Queer is a deviation from the norm, challenging and questioning boundaries that are upheld within mainstream society.	Berlin, 2011[b]
It is important for us that everyone can take part in the festival, independent of economy or age. […] We are happy to help those who need it with some accommodation for your travel expenses, with all the money left after the festival. We are happy to change locations for the workshops, build ramps and make Blitz as accessible as we can.	Oslo, 2011[c]
The callout is available in several other languages, including: Nederlands, Deutsch, Español, Português, Italiano & Türkçe. […] Queeristan is an autonomous, DIY festival, based on voluntary work. […] However, if financial support is needed […] we will take it into consideration.	Amsterdam, 2013[d]
On the battleground of civil and social rights, the LGBTI movement is often relegating itself in the foxhole of same-sex marriage and LGBT parenting; that for equality is a dutiful battle but we should try to imagine new ways of raising and struggling, new practices, new intuitions. […] We invite all the interested (inter)national groups to join us in Rome […] to meet, discuss our perspectives and practices and to share (new) visions, imageries, goals and desires.	Rome, 2013[e]
Although Queeristan strives to bring together all sorts of sexual outlaws, we do not want it to be another gay pride: we are not interested in using the beat of our music to celebrate the 'integration' of just some queer lives whose skin color, citizenship, cultural and financial means are played as 'assets' within a liberal democracy that trades rights as if it were a stock exchange. Instead, Queeristan wants to be a festival where dissent unpredictably materializes and becomes shareable in a performance, in a workshop, but also in a work of art, or in partying all night long. There is no fixed formula for Queeristan. There is a togetherness based on affinity with political projects that focus on the body as the site where social aggregation and exclusion can be concretely addressed. Queeristan discerns the battlefield where a geopolitics of consumerism, migration, human rights is enforced. Queeristan resists.	Amsterdam, 2012[f]

[a] Copenhagen Queer Festival, 'We Think of Queer As', http://www.queerfestival.org/ (last accessed: 20/09/2017).
[b] QuEar, 'About', http://quear.blogsport.eu/en/about/ (last accessed: 20/09/2017).
[c] Oslo Queer Festival, 'Practical Info', http://osloqueerfestival.blogspot.it/p/practical-info_24.html (last accessed: 20/09/2017).
[d] Queeristan, 'Queeristan 2013 Call Out', http://queeristan.org/2013/02/24/queeristan-2013-call-out/#dutch (last accessed: 06/01/2017).
[e] Da Mieli a Queer, 'Call', http://www.damieliaqueer.com/wp/appello-en/(last accessed: 06/01/2017).
[f] Queeristan, 'Call for Contributions to Queeristan 2012', http://trikster.net/blog/?p=574 (last accessed: 20/09/2017).

Appendix 2: Documentation of Queer Festivals

Queeristan 2012 Document

Below is a Call for Contributions for the important political festival and gathering Queeristan 2012 that takes place in Amsterdam between May 18 and 20 this year. Queeristan is said to be one of the central meeting places for anti-racist queer critique in the area. This year they have a 'freaky' framework for the festival:

> All the freaky people
> make the beauty of the world
> (Michael Franti)

With this message Queeristan is calling out whoever is interested in using freaking beauty to achieve a different queer politics. Together, let's join forces in a festival that will take place in Amsterdam from May 18-20.

What is Queeristan? Certainly not a(nother) country. Behind it there is a nomadic collective of activists based in Amsterdam whose interests do not exactly rhyme with law&order, nor with setting up new borders. Nonetheless Queeristan is all about providing a space. Not only an autonomous space that dodges logics of profit and commercialization, but also a platform to both explore and counter the normative workings of gender and identity. A safe environment for queers and a factory of resistance. Our critique departs from the simple fact that buying 'normalcy' in the guise of being either male or female, a Dutch or a foreigner, gay or straight, either one or the other, simply means to be disciplined by a choice made elsewhere, to be docile towards it, to keep your mouth and your eyes shut.

Although Queeristan strives to bring together all sorts of sexual outlaws, we do not want it to be another gay pride: we are not interested in using the beat of our music to celebrate the 'integration' of just some queer lives whose skin color, citizenship, cultural and financial means are played as 'assets' within a liberal democracy that trades rights as if it were a stock exchange. Instead, Queeristan wants to be a festival where dissent unpredictably materializes and becomes shareable in a performance, in a workshop, but also in a work of art, or in partying all night long. There is no fixed formula for Queeristan. There is a togetherness based on affinity with political

projects that focus on the body as the site where social aggregation and exclusion can be concretely addressed. Queeristan discerns the battlefield where a geopolitics of consumerism, migration, human rights is enforced. Queeristan resists.

Amsterdam becomes Queeristan the moment we recompose the space we inhabit to uncover the possibility of troubling our private, individual consumer identity. To start using our bodies and intersect the multiple layers of stories and practices that shape them as they tie them to one another. Therefore Queeristan is calling activists, artists, performers, queers to come up with proposals that aim at re-inventing the modes of encounter, feeling, and understanding our bodies and with interventions that seek to spatially short circuit and re-map Amsterdam beyond its neoliberal rhetoric of gay-friendliness and connect it to other places and struggles.

If Queeristan's politics resonates with yours, come onboard and share the platform by joining the collective in our weekly meetings in preparation to the festival. Or, if you have exciting ideas for a workshop, a performance, an art exhibition, or other, original formats cooked up by your queer creativity: we are looking forward to receiving your proposals – being aware of the nasty logistic limits of time, space and money – to construct the festival that will form Queeristan this spring.[1]

Oslo Queer Festival 2011 Document

Oslo Queer Festival is a non-profit festival. We make the festival together and offer vegan and vegetarian food for donations, live music, workshops, discussions, queer art, movies, dancing, Djs and lots of fun!

WHY?
Oslo Queer Festival wants to create a space where you can feel free to express other forms of sexuality, gender and ways of living than the straight and gay norms we have in today's society. In this space you should feel free to express yourself without having to deal with any forms of racism, sexism, transphobia, homophobia, ageism, ableism or other repression.

WHO?
Everyone is accepted, independently from their gender identity or sexuality. Explore, experiment, feel open and free to just be yourself. You don't have to

1 Source: http://trikster.net/blog/?p=574 (last accessed: 25/9/2017).

be gay or straight to fit in. You can be bisexual, heterocurious, homocurious, cis gendered, trans,* nothing of the above or all of them. Just come as you are!

DIY
The DIY/DIT (Do It Yourselves/Do It Together) means that by sharing and volunteering we will all make the festival together. It makes performers, audience and organizers equals. Everyone participates and everyone is included. We make the festival by ourselves and for ourselves because we want to.[2]

Da Mieli a Queer, Rome, 2013, Document

How many of Mario Mieli's original ideas and visionary imaginaries can be found in the Queer Theory? How fruitful and fervid was his personal imagination? How much was he able to influence the 'crazy' and 'fabulous' LGBT movement?

March 12th, 2013 will be the 30th anniversary of Mario's death. We want to celebrate this recurrency reasoning about his legacy and trying to answer those open questions.

First of all it will be an occasion to review the history of the LGBT liberation movement through a collective analysis. Instead of learning from someone's version, we want to define our own interpretation of the experience of our movement. It will be, of course, an educational experience on Mario Mieli, his thoughts, his life, his imagery.

The secondary perspective will be certainly the theatre: inspired by Mieli's scriptures and, above all, by his biography we would like to elaborate a collective research. It will be an experimentation lab where various artistic groups can meet and get involved. We imagine it as a theatrical experience where to practice on words, inside our body, our poetics, our imagery.

The political analysis will be the third pillar. It isn't enough to outline the history of the last 30 years; it is indeed important to build our own history in order to define our political perspective and practices. On the battleground of civil and social rights, the LGBTI movement is often relegating itself in the foxhole of same-sex marriage and LGBT parenting; that for equality is a dutiful battle but we should try to imagine new ways of raise and struggling, new practices and new intuitions.

2 Source: http://osloqueerfestival.blogspot.fr/2011/08/oslo-queer-festival.html (last accessed: 25/9/2017).

We want to fertilize again the movement, out of the contingency of 'managing' the ordinary issues. We want to have an imprudent gaze to look at new scenarios.

We invite all the interested (inter)national groups to join us in Rome from April 4th to 7th, 2013 at the Teatro Valle Occupato, one of the most important squat theatres of Italy, to meet, discuss our perspectives and practices and to share (new) visions, imageries, goals and desires.

Circolo di Cultura Omosessuale Mario Mieli
QueerLab
Teatro Valle Occupato[3]

Queeristan 2013 Document 1

March 2013: Breaking Borders

On Sunday the 2nd of June Queeristan 2013 will take the streets! Under the banner 'Not in our name … Breaking down borders … No one is illegal' we will march against the violent and exclusionary politics of borders and specifically protest the ongoing criminalization of people without papers in the Netherlands. Read the full flyer text below and come and join us: meet-up at 16.30 at Vrankrijk, Spuistraat 216, Amsterdam! You can also join the preps for the march by doing some Queer Crafting for the Revolution during the Friday workshop at our festival space De Valreep (Polderweg 620) from 14:00-16:00: http://queeristan.org/2013/05/29/direct-action-preparations-breaking-borders-march/

See you at the festival space AND in the streets!

Queeristan 2013 Document 2

Queeristan March 2013: Breaking Borders

Behind a public discourse of tolerance, the Dutch government hides its criminal face regarding the treatment of undocumented migrants. The Netherlands has one of the most restrictive and inhumane migrant policies in Europe.

3 Source: http://www.mariomieli.org/damieliaqueer/?page_id=138 (last accessed: 25/9/2017)

The most obvious expressions are the migrant detention centers: jails which the Dutch government started building since 2003 to imprison undocumented people. The Netherlands has the highest percentage of people in detention centers in Europe. In 2011 alone 6104 migrants were jailed here, among them hundreds of minors and people who have been tortured and trafficked in their country of origin. The punitive rules in the deportation jails are more strict than for those convicted under criminal law, with more restrictive visitation rules and the impossibility of work and education. Human rights and activist groups have pointed to the severe psychological consequences for the migrants, several of them have already attempted and actually committed suicide inside the prisons.

Whereas migrants are now imprisoned as a form of administrative detention ('to await the results of their asylum procedure or their deportation'), the Dutch government is currently debating the actual criminalization of 'illegality'. A law proposal which has been part of the governmental agreement between the two ruling parties VVD (right-wing liberals) and PVDA (the labour party). This law would be an obvious violation of international treaties that try to safeguard the universal right to access to education and healthcare and would increase the vulnerability of people without papers to various forms of exploitation and abuse. This law would also criminalize the hundreds of migrants who are currently living on the streets as their request for residence in the Netherlands has been declined, but their country of origin doesn't accept their return.

Many activist and human right groups resist this ongoing criminalization of migration. From groups trying to struggle against forced deportation to human rights groups visiting the prisons to people squatting alternative housing for migrants in the streets. Also the migrants themselves are protesting, even from within the jails. Since last April this year, dozens of imprisoned migrants entered a hunger and thirst strike to protest their inhumane treatment. Their protest was met with repression: the spokesperson was put in isolation, strikers were physically abused and some deported after weeks of strike; in a court case the judge ruled the strikers can be forced to eat and force-fed. Still, some are on strike supported by activists at the gates of the jails.

Queeristan 2013 marches in solidarity with these struggles. As queers we resist and want to break down social and cultural binaries (male/female; straight/gay; black/white; migrant/non-migrant, etc.) as we know from our own experiences that these binaries serve as a basis for discrimination, exclusion and marginalization. In a same way that we resist these social and cultural 'borders', we protest the violence exercised at the borders of the

nation-state and the repressive policies and mechanisms that keep these borders in place. Additionally we protest the way in which currently the LGBT right[s] discourse is instrumentalized by right-wing group[s] in their anti-migrant policies. These groups want us to believe that the 'progressive Dutch society' is under threat of homophobic migrants and that is why we need more strict migration policies. We resists this false duality: the Netherlands [is] not a queer paradise and homophobia is not a phenomenon that arrives with migration.[4]

quEAR Festival Document

quEAR! – is a group of queer people. We organized audio festivals based in Berlin 2011 at 'Kanal' and 2013 at 'Zukunft am Ostkreuz', presenting audio plays, sound installations, audio performances and workshops, with a focus on trans*, inter and queer interventions. quEAR! facilitates a sensory based experience, an exploration of the auditory canal if you will, through noise, voice, sounds and storytelling.

quEAR!, a combination of the words queer and ear/hear, offers a unique creative event that is also rooted in intentional politics. For us queer is not merely a synonym for 'gay/lesbian', but rather an open call for action, which includes a lot more than the sexual orientation or gender identity of the individual. Queer is a deviation from the norm, challenging and questioning boundaries that are upheld within mainstream society. Queer is also a utopia, not in the bourgeois sense of otherworldliness, but as a space that needs to be constantly (re)created and projected into new spaces, which is the aim of this event.

We aim to create a platform for an artistic and political exchange based within the context and use of audio. quEAR! encourages people to use audio as a creative and empowering tool with which to address oppression, such as heterosexist, transphobic, racist, ableist and capitalist structures.

Isolating and exploring the various ways in which audio can be used, is the central theme of our work and activities, because trans*, inter and queer lives, practices and policies are under-represented in the audio-landscape. The possibilities that this artistic and political tool provides are vast. Which is why we want to present the importance and possibilities of the medium audio in supporting social change. Through the act of listening to varied

4 Source: https://www.facebook.com/events/162899750555063/?active_tab=about (last accessed: 25/9/2017).

soundscapes, noises and/or stories, participants are able to allow for images, imagination, ideas and inspiration to arise.

We also want to create a space for experimenting and hands-on engagement through workshops, supporting the goal of quEAR! to provide a place of political and artistic debate, exchange and empowerment. We will on [the] one hand focus on the unique power and beauty of audio, while on the other will support diverse queer perspectives within audio landscapes.

Additionally to our activities we have since 2011 been active within the Berlin network Diskriminierungsfreie Szenen für alle that seeks to address different forms of discrimination within the Berlin queer/LGBT community.[5]

5 Source: http://quear.blogsport.eu/en/about/ (last accessed: 25/9/2017).

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Interviews

Table B List of interviewees, status and forms of gender expression. All names have been changed.

A.	*Copenhagen, 21-31 July 2011*
	C1. Robin, 28 years old, workshop organizer, Travelling from Amsterdam (Palestinian) (he)
	C2. Vladimir, 35 years old, travelling from Berlin (French) (he)
	C3. Zoe, 25 years old, member of the organization committee (Polish) (she)
B.	*Berlin, 1-21 August 2011*
	B1. Lee, 27 years old, member of the organization committee (German) (he)
	B2. Vabbi, 28 years old, member of the organization committee (German) (he)
	B3. Stella, 30 years old, participant living in Berlin (Belgian) (she)
	B4. Gem, 33 years old, participant living in Berlin (Israeli) (she)
C.	*Oslo, 21-28 September 2011*
	O1. Giacomo, 35 years old, member of the organization committee (Italian) (he)
	O2. Chris, 45 years old, participant living in Oslo (American) (he)
	O3. Borek, 35 years old, participant living in Oslo (Norwegian) (she)
D.	*Amsterdam 1, 23-30 May 2012*
	A1. Sergio, 26 years old, workshop organizer, living in Amsterdam (Turkish) (he)
	A2. Tubio, 27 years old, member of the organization committee (Dutch) (he)
E.	*Rome, 4-7 April 2013*
	R1. Antonio, 30 years old, member of the organization committee (Italian) (he)
	R2. Sylvia, 34 years old, performer, living in Paris (Italian) (she)
	R3. Casimiro, 28 years old, member of the organization committee (Italian) (he)
	R4. Anna, member of the Ribellule collective, co-organizer of the festival (Italian) (she)
	R5. Morgan, member of the Ribellule collective, co-organizer of the festival (Italian) (she)
	R6. Jenny, member of the Ribellule collective, co-organizer of the festival (Italian) (she)
	R7. Paola, member of the Ribellule collective, co-organizer of the festival (Italian) (she)
	R8. Nicola, member of the Ribellule collective, co-organizer of the festival (Italian) (she)
	R9. Open Assembly
	R10. Final Assembly
F.	*Amsterdam 2, 30 May-6 June 2013*
	A3. Vinci, 50 years old, member of the organization committee (Dutch) (qui[a])

[a] Self-identification title

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