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# Conflicts and stigmatization young LGBTIQ people face in Croatia: ethnographic case study on Zagreb Pride LGBTIQ NGO

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# About Zagreb Pride

- Queer-feminist and anti-fascist organization which is committed to the achievement of an active society of solidarity and equality free from gender sexual norms and categories, and any other kind of oppression
- Organizing Pride Marches from 2002
- Formal organization from 2008



# About Zagreb Pride

- Three main programs: **Advocating** Equity for LGBTIQ Persons; **Education**, research and publishing; Acting towards & within the **LGBTIQ Community**
- Life Partnership Act in 2014
- Zagreb Pride Marches



# Methodology

- **31 interviews conducted** – volunteers (Team for Pride, Queer Teens, Organisational Committee of Zagreb Pride), member of the organization, ex members, ex volunteers
- Happy to participate – activist attitude
- Age range – from **16 to 33**
- Gender – Female (15), Male (9), Transgender (1), Non-binary (6)
- Interviews were conducted from June to September 2017
- Participant observation during eleven months (October 2016 – August 2017)
- 23 field diaries – over 39 meetings
- Photo elicitation (10 interviews; 15-30) – **(personal) security, inequality, making a difference**

# Background/Context

- 2002 – First Pride March – Tear Gas attack; about 30 attacks – 300 participants
- 2009 – First Anti-gay Pride
- 2011 – First Pride March in Split – 10 000 protesters – violence
- May, 2013 – In the Name of the Family – protecting heteronormative family
- Citizens Vote Against
- Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, Article 62.

*'Marriage is a living union between a woman and man.'*



# Background/Context

- 2014 – Biggest Pride March ‘This is country for all of us!’; 15 000 supporters
- July, 2014 - Croatian Parliament voting on Same-Sex Life Partnership Act
- February, 2017 – Tear Gas attack in Zagreb





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# Key findings



# In the Name of the Family

- Narrative of the organization
  - Feeling guilt and stigma
  - Initiating coming out and activism
- *'She (An. Željka Markić, referendum organizer) used a narrative whereby if you didn't know what it was about... I mean, who would be against family, for God's sake? You know, she took basic values to destroy other people's lives, which is really a horror'* (Mika)
- *'The marriage referendum triggered a lot of things for me. One was an awareness about my sexuality, the other was anger, rage, sadness, a little bit of depression... It empowered me to become politically aware.'* (Nikka)





# In the Name of the Family

- Civil distrust in political institutions, recession, corruption affairs – new forms of political activism
- Three distinct opportunities available to the movement: change in the referendum legislation; distrust in mainstream politics; ‘non-confessional initiative’ but concerned citizens (Petričušić, Čehulić and Čepo, 2017)
- Record increase of hate speech against LGBTIQ people after the marriage referendum (Zagreb Pride, 2017)

Petričušić, A., Čehulić, M. and Čepo, D. (2017) Gaining Political Power by Utilizing Opportunity Structures: An Analysis of the Conservative Religious-Political Movement in Croatia, *Politička misao: časopis za politologiju*, 54(4), 61-84.

Zagreb Pride (2017) *Još Hrvatska ni' propala: 2016. Godišnji izvještaj o radu*, Zagreb: Zagreb Pride.

# Violence and safety

- Street violence, violence inside families, school and educational system
- Rules to follow to feel safe
- *'I am experiencing an expected level of street violence.'* (Zeke)
- *'We were in an ethics class when the topic was homosexuality and they started to express their opinions. And they were saying things like 'That is sick, they should be sent to concentration camps! They should be sterilized! Kill them, Hitler... he should finish the job he started...'* (Lars)

# School and education system

- School bullying
- Lack of understanding and recognition of bullying displayed by teachers
- *'Is faggot really an offensive term?' (Lars)*
- *'The school librarian outed me to everyone! [...] She decided to out me to my teachers and then they outed me to my mum [...] she slapped me in front of everyone and no one reacted in my school.'* (May)
- Education of educators – failing to recognize participation in the same kind of verbally abusive behavior

# Conclusion

- ‘Brutal reality’ LGBTIQ people face in Croatia – 73.6% experienced some kind of violence (Milković, 2013)
- High level of homophobia present in Croatian society – disorder or illness; discrimination is justified (Bagić, 2011; Hodžić and Bijelić, 2012; Bovan and Širić, 2016; Zurabishvili and Pollock, 2013)

Milković, M. (2013) *Brutal Reality: A Research Study Investigating Anti-KGBTIQ Violence, Discrimination, and Hate Crime in Croatia*, Zagreb: Zagreb Pride.


Bagić, D. (2011) ‘Politički stavovi maturanata i njihove determinante: odgaja li škola dobre građane?’ in: Bagić, D. (ed.) *Odgaja li škola dobre građane? Studija o političkoj socijalizaciji hrvatskih srednjoškolaca*, Zagreb: Gong i Fakultet političkih znanosti, pp.46-72.

Hodžić, A. and Bijelić, N. (2012) *Izveštaj istraživanja o mišljenjima i stavovima prema homoseksualnosti u srednjim školama u Zagrebu*, Queer Zagreb: Zagreb.

Bovan, K. and Širinić, D. (2016) ‘(Ne)demokratski stavovi maturanata u Hrvatskoj: Prisutnosti i odrednice’, in: Kovačić, M. and Horvat, M. (eds) *Od podanika do građana: razvoj građanske kompetencije mladih*, Zagreb: Institutu za društvena istraživanja u Zagrebu, GONG.

Zurabishvili, T. and Pollock, G. (2013) *Deliverable 4.5: A series of country specific analyses which highlight local historical and cultural factors and which contrast the two regions sampled*. Available at: <http://www.fp7-myplace.eu/documents/WP4D4-5overviewreportv1.pdf> (20 April 2018)



A large crowd of people is gathered in front of a grand, multi-story building with many windows. The crowd is holding a large rainbow flag, and there are colorful balloons and signs visible. The scene is festive and celebratory.

Thank you for your attention!

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