

PROMISE: Promoting Youth Involvement and Social Engagement: Opportunities and challenges for conflicted young people across Europe.

WP6: From Conflict to Innovation: Ethnographic Case Studies

<http://www.promise.manchester.ac.uk/en/home-page/>

Zagreb Pride LGBTIQ NGO Croatia

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Executive summary:

This report will introduce the results of ethnographic case study on the PROMISE project about Zagreb Pride LGBTIQ non-government organization. The objectives of PROMISE are to explore young people's role in shaping society (past, present and future) and to investigate their responses to these challenges, as well as transform them to positive social achievement. Organization Zagreb Pride was chosen because of the political and social context of LGBTIQ movement in Croatia, which especially refer to years following the campaign for marriage referendum in 2013 when there was an increase of hate speech against LGBTIQ people in Croatia.

Key findings of the ethnography are the existence of stigmatization as well as experiences of violence and bulling for LGBTIQ community in Croatia. Conflicts young LGBTIQ people encounter in school or college is significant problem noticed in this study, having a result in lack of support in recognition and reporting of bullying. Another common example of conflict is within family because of the traditionally shaped gender expectations, which often collides to respondent's sexual orientation and/or gender identity. However, with all the above, most of the volunteers in this year's organizational committee were young people ranging from 16 to 34 years old. This is one of the example how in 16 years of activities in Croatia, Zagreb Pride March empowered LGBTIQ community by creating positive climate for social and political change.

This report should be read in conjunction with the document "Individual case studies – introduction."



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1. Introduction

1.1. About Zagreb Pride

Zagreb Pride was founded in 2008 following a decision made by the organisational committee of the Zagreb Pride March to establish an organisation. Before then, the Zagreb Pride March was held every year running from 2002 onwards. The first Pride March, called 'Gay Pride', was organised as a reaction to the first Belgrade Pride (in Serbia) that was held a year earlier, with violent anti-pride protests occurring. Even though public support during those early years was not so strong, the March has been held every year since then, celebrating the 16th Zagreb Pride March in June 2017 with the motto 'A free life begins with Pride!', gathering more than 10 000 supporters.

Today, Zagreb Pride is 'queer-feminist and anti-fascist organisation 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'¹. The values of the organisation are queer-feminism, anti-fascism, equality, self-determination, solidarity, secularity and antimilitarism, while the principles of action are: nonviolence, social engagement, promoting vegetarianism and veganism, feminist care ethics, non-hierarchical work, anticlericalism, environmental protection, and resistance to economic inequality and fellowship.

The activities of Zagreb Pride are divided into the three main programmes of the organisation: Advocating Equality for LGBTIQ Persons; Education, Research and Publishing; and Acting towards and within the LGBTIQ Community. Apart from organising the Zagreb Pride March, some of the most important work that has been done over the last few years includes participation in a working group for the legislative proposal of the Same-Sex Life Partnership Act that passed in 2014.² Other than that, Zagreb Pride includes an on-going activity called Pink Megaphone, which is a free legal service helping victims of LGBTIQ hate crimes. This legal service has been active since 2010 and within it, education is being provided for police officers and victims support services so that they can identify hate crimes and provide the best possible help to the victims (Zagreb Pride, 2013). Another Zagreb Pride organised activity is a support group for high school students, Queer Teens, which under social worker supervision gather around 5 to 15 young LGBTIQ people.

Zagreb Pride does not have a permanent base of volunteers, but rather a changing base focused around certain activities which gather between five and 35 volunteers in the Pride March organisational committees. The age range of volunteers is from 15 to 25 years, with the exception of some older volunteers.

The organisation is structured with the Assembly as the main body consisting of nine formal members, a steering committee, council, supervisory board and working team.

¹ For more on the organisation, its vision, mission and fields of work, see the organisation's official web page - <http://www.zagreb-pride.net/en/about-us/> (20 April 2018)

² Life Partnership is a family union of same-sex couples enabled through Same-Sex Life Partnership Act. It is equalized with the marriage of different-sex couples, with the exception in adoption of children. More on the Act: <http://www.zivotnopartnerstvo.com/en/what-is-a-life-partnership/> (20 April 2018)

1.2. The social context of the LGBTIQ movement in Croatia

In a study on anti-LGBTIQ violence, discrimination and hate crime in Croatia, Milković (2013) discussed the ‘brutal reality’ that LGBTIQ people face in Croatia. She stated that, in the last decade, Croatia had done a great deal to set up a good legal framework for the protection of LGBTIQ rights as well as towards protecting individuals from violence and discrimination. At the same time, the violence encountered by supporters of the first Pride March in the city of Split in 2011 and during the campaign for a referendum on marriage by the initiative ‘In the Name of the Family’ in 2013 (which resulted in the amendment of the Constitution of Croatia to include the definition of marriage as a union between a man and woman) are warning signs that progress for the LGBTIQ movement in Croatia is not linear. One of the many results which followed the campaign for the marriage referendum was a record increase in hate speech against LGBTIQ people, as Zagreb Pride (2017) has documented. One example of such hate crime in recent years was the tear gas attack on the Super Super club in February 2017, injuring several people. In a rare display of unanimity, the attack was condemned by all political parties. Nevertheless, and even though the biggest media outlets covered the attack, the perpetrators were not brought to justice.

In 2017 report by one of the biggest LGBTIQ organisation in Europe, ILGA-Europe, Croatia was placed in eleventh of 49 European countries as concerns the achievement of certain legal rights. However, they expressed their concern regarding a reduction in support for both LGBTIQ organisations and independent media outlets as a result of decisions made on the funding of those organisations and media by the Croatian Government (ILGA-Europe, 2017).

Some of the main sites of conflict for young LGBTIQ people include conservative, traditional non-governmental organisations and initiatives, and political parties close to the Catholic Church in Croatia. Some of their activities contribute to the marginalisation and discrimination of LGBTIQ issues in the media space as well as institutional discrimination directed against the rights of LGBTIQ individuals and their families.

1.3. Why Zagreb Pride?

When discussing attitudes of the general population towards the LGBTIQ community and their rights in Croatia, research results show a mixed picture. Bijelić (2011) discussed the high level of homophobia present particularly among men in Croatian society.. As many as 55% of men participating in the research said that they thought ‘homosexuality is not natural and normal’, compared to only 34% of women who agreed with this statement. Similar results in research into the attitudes of high school graduates showed a high level of homophobia among young people. As many as half of the respondents viewed homosexuality as some sort of disorder or illness and thought that discrimination of LGBTIQ people was justified (Bagić, 2011; Hodžić and Bijelić, 2012; Bovan and Širinić, 2016).

The results of a survey of 1200 young people in two contrasting districts of Zagreb, aged between 16 to 25, conducted for the MYPLACE project showed that young people generally had negative attitudes towards homosexuality, even though more positive attitudes were found among youth with higher levels of education and among female respondents without a religious affiliation (Zurabishvili and Pollock, 2013). Interviews later showed that while respondents would most often criticize ‘gay pride’, when talking about sexual minorities in general, they also demonstrated a good level of understanding of the issue (Franc *et al.*, 2013).

The clearest evidence of the importance of the inclusion of Zagreb Pride as a case study in the PROMISE project, however, are the findings of the 'Brutal Reality' study. Research was conducted with 690 people from within the LGBTIQ community in Croatia of whom 59% were in the age range 19-30. Summarising the results, Milković (2013) stated that 73.6 % of participants had experienced some kind of violence which they attributed to their sexual orientation, sex/gender identity or gender expression. Although this percentage is very high, due to low levels of trust, only a small number of those cases were reported to anyone – either to the authorities or even to a LGBTIQ organisation. Violence would often be experienced in school or in university (21.7%) or in their families (29%). Nevertheless, Milković (2013: 103) concluded that 'LGBTIQ people in Croatia today feel more accepted and are readier to freely live out their identities, which is surely encouraging'.

Because of the Zagreb Pride March consistency over the last 17 years, there are more supporters of Pride Marches every year³ as well as public statements of support. Their existence in public space for over fifteen years encourages young people to get involved more freely and to work on mobilising for broader social change in understanding and demanding human rights for LGBTIQ people.

2. Methods

Before beginning this research, I worked for the Zagreb Pride organisation as a programme assistant, from May 2016 to May 2017. Since my duties included working with volunteers of the organisation, as well as coordinating one of the teams of the Pride March organising committee, doing ethnography on Zagreb Pride as a LGBTIQ non-governmental organisation seemed like a good way forward. My work gave me access to respondents and the possibility of understanding conflicts and problems that the group often faces in Croatian society (whether in relation to political events, intra-family relations, work and school obstacles, personal relations or conflicts and problems within the LGBTIQ community). Before beginning the ethnographic fieldwork, I explained to my colleagues what the project was about and why I was doing the ethnography. I gradually approached my respondents over the time of the fieldwork and explained the project to them. I gained verbal consent from some of them to conduct interviews, while with others I exchanged a few messages over social networks and e-mail to agree on whether they would like to participate in the project or not. During that process, I did not encounter any significant problems or rejections.

The ethnography was conducted using participant observation. As a researcher, I participated in the organisational committee of the Pride March and kept a research diary. Ethnographic fieldwork took place over eleven months (from October 2016 to September 2017). During that period, I participated in over 39 meetings and made 23 research diary entries. A total of 31 semi-structured interviews were conducted producing over 39 hours of recorded material and over 730 standard pages of transcripts. Interviews ranged from 50 to 97 minutes (see table in Appendix 1 for details about respondents' socio-demographic data).

³ In 2013 the Pride March was organised with the motto 'This is a country for all of us!' which was a direct reaction to the campaign initiated a month earlier by the organisation 'In the Name of the Family' in which they started collecting signatures for a marriage referendum. The latest Pride March was the largest so far, gathering around 15 000 supporters. By the end of the year, the referendum had been conducted and, of the 37.9% of the total number of voters in Croatia who participated, 65.87% voted 'For' and 33.51% voted 'Against' adding the clause that 'Marriage is a union of man and woman' to the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia. <http://www.izbori.hr/arhiva-izbora/index.html#/app/referendum-2013> (20 April 2018).

Interviews were conducted with volunteers (the organisational committee of the Pride March, Queer Teens) and members of the organisation, as well as with former members and volunteers from the organisation. Zagreb Pride volunteers are usually young people in their adolescent years or early twenties. The age range in this research was from 16 to 33, with the exception of one respondent aged 40. Most of the respondents were in their early twenties.

At the beginning of each interview, every respondent would receive a 'Participant Information Sheet' with an abstract of the project and contact details of the researchers in the team, as well as the project leader. We would then go through and fill in the socio-demographic form together. All the respondents also signed a consent form before participating in the research.

Most of the respondents had university level education, either having already finished university or currently being at university. Most of the others were currently in vocational secondary education. Of those who are not currently in education, one-half are unemployed, and another half are in full time employment.

The social class background of the respondents was heterogeneous. The majority of the respondents were from working class or middle-class families. Most of their parents did not have university level education, but some were doctors, teachers or lawyers. Some respondents talked about growing up in the city centre, while others lived in social housing and foster homes. Even though some respondents stated that they were privileged growing up, those kinds of privileges were never something they would emphasize, but rather something they would mention in order to talk about those groups in society for which they would say it is harder to gain certain rights and opportunities.

None of the respondents identified themselves as Catholic and only a few mentioned being religious in the past, almost always, due to family tradition. Most of the respondents identify themselves as atheists or agnostics.

This ethnographic case study also employed photo elicitation as part of its methodology. I distributed ten disposable cameras to ten participants who showed an interest in participating in the photo elicitation. Of those ten participants, seven completed the elicitation, producing 77 photographs. The range of successfully developed photographs numbered from two to 21. The age range of the seven participants was 17 to 30 years. They all received disposable cameras for 28 photos, information sheets with additional instructions on this method, and three themes that they should consider when taking photos. Those themes were: (personal) security, inequality, and making a difference. I went through the information sheet and themes with each respondent, explaining the rules they have to look out for when participating in this method, and also explaining that these themes include giving some examples of the possible photographs. Most problems experienced in employing this visual methodology occurred because of a lack of developed photos, in some cases, due to insufficient knowledge as regards the use of disposable cameras.

Interview transcriptions were made using the programme Express Scribe and an analysis of the collected data was made using the NVivo 11 programme for qualitative data analysis. As was explained and communicated to the respondents before they signed the consent form, all of the interviews were anonymised in the process of transcribing and a pseudonym (chosen either by respondents or the researcher) was given to each of the transcripts.

3. Key Findings

3.1. Identity

Throughout the interviews, respondents most often talked about their gender identity and sexual orientation and what it means to them in different contexts and areas of life. Even though some respondents would talk about 'still being confused about everything' (Fox), one of the most important and crucial moments of their lives for the majority of respondents was their coming out to themselves, friends and families. The process of coming out is a process in the true sense of the term because it is something that happens throughout life, in every new situation and with every new person you meet:

It is lifelong. Every day, every new person, every new job, every new place you come to...every single day. It just became easier with time. (Lara)

When I came out for the first time, I thought: 'Oh God, will I have to do this every time I meet someone? Will my life be such hell?' (Smilja)

When coming out, respondents received different reactions from their close family members, some of them questioning whether it was real: 'My mum didn't believe me until recently. She thought it was a phase' (Archi). Others had a hard time believing it themselves: 'I thought: "Well I guess this is just a phase or something". I will let that go, I am too young' (Juno).

For two respondents, the reactions they received from their family members were similar: 'Some reactions motivated me to engage more, at least those from people who said "Why are you dramatizing, you always have to be special"' (Mika). Smilja had a similar experience: 'I came out to my sister last year and it went terribly [...] She said: "That is just a phase, don't talk shit to me!". She literally said that. Like "that is a phase, why do you always have to have some kind of stupid idea in your head." So, we didn't talk about it anymore'.

Their own sense of guilt and inner conflicts were often mentioned when talking about sexual identity and coming out because of the religious and traditional environment that people were raised in:

When I started going through puberty, I realised that I like boys. At that time, I was religious and those religious, how to say, laws... religious dogmas were in conflict with my sexuality and with whom I was attracted to. So that was my inner conflict I had for most of high school. [...] Then I joined a dating site where I met other people and talked with them. Entering that community and meeting and talking to other LGBT people helped me a lot. At that time, when I accepted myself, those inner conflicts stopped, and that was at the age of 17, 18. But they [the inner conflicts] were not completely gone until the end of high school and when I was separated from my peers [...]. When I separated from them, that is when it all came into place. (Jo)

One respondent who was raised in a smaller community on a Dalmatian island has gone a long way from having a negative attitude towards the LGBTIQ community, to accepting his sexuality and joining the Organisational Committee of Zagreb Pride March:

Before, I would say I had a negative attitude, but that has changed. It was related to the way I was raised. Not necessarily traditional in a religious sense, but traditional.

Man and woman and that's it! We wouldn't talk about anything else and those questions were not discussable. I had a similar attitude. [...] I started to think differently when I went from denying to accepting myself. That is when I started to look at the LGBT community differently, but not completely, because I still had some kind of resistance to it all. But that was just a consequence of internal homophobia that retained that negative attitude and resistance to everything. (Mark)

He also pointed out a feeling of disappointment he is often scared of:

I know they won't kick me out of the house or do something drastic, but I have been really afraid of that feeling of disappointment for them. I don't know why they would be disappointed, but that is a feeling I am scared of the most. This feeling of rejection, being turned down, it is a scary feeling that every gay person is struggling with. Even those who have liberal parents, one part of you is always afraid. So that was also my fear. (Mark)

Another respondent talked about 'always feeling guilty' because what she experienced is disapproval from parents who are religious and who think that her sexual orientation is her choice. While she talked with her parents a few times, they stuck to their strict beliefs: '[...] [My mum] thinks that it is a sin because she is Catholic. Like... 'What is wrong with me?' She said that we will never be equal with straight people' (Smilja). Even though Smilja has a challenging situation at home, she has a strong sense of understanding and a will to help other people in a similar situation:

I always feel guilty because of that. I think that is something that we all feel, but it felt really strange that no one ever talked about that. And I think that is a way to help young people, especially elementary school students, because I know how that was for me. I didn't have anyone to talk to, no one talked about it, I only thought "What is wrong with me?". That is when I understood that I need that one person to talk to about that. I would like to do something to help elementary school students so they know they are not alone. (Smilja)

Like Smilja, a few other respondents mentioned the fact that having topics which are not being talked about enough results from the strong heteronormativity in society: 'Those sexual discriminations and that heteronormativity are so strong that you need years to really accept yourself, but also the community' (Mark). What emerges from this is a negative attitude towards one's own sexual orientation at a young age: 'Lots of LGBT people have difficulties accepting that at a young age because of the normative sexuality that society imposes' (Jo).

When talking about the ways in which they were raised and their relationship with parents, only a minority of respondents said that they had come out to their fathers. For most of them, talking with their fathers about their sexual orientation and gender identity was not something they felt free to do because 'God forbid that his child come out as a gay. That is something I will never say to him' (Smilja). Some of them said that 'My dad still cannot... cannot perceive that as something. He just can't. We never talk about it' (Mika), but in the future the 'relationship with my dad could be better, we could talk more... maybe it will come with time' (Haz).

An important topic for the majority of respondents was the marriage referendum that took place in Croatia at the end of 2013 when the definition of marriage as a community of man and woman

was added to the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia. During the campaign for the referendum, there was a broad political and media discussion which often led to homophobic statements by politicians, activists and celebrities. That time was especially hard for some of the respondents because at that time they were in elementary or high school and were only beginning to question their identities. The presence of these political issues in everyday life ended up triggering fury and defiance, as well as encouragement because, even though there were a lot of negative comments made towards the LGBTIQ community, there were also reactions that empowered some of the LGBT people to come out:

Let's start with the marriage referendum, because it really triggered a lot of things for me. One was awareness about my own sexuality, and the other was fury, angry, sadness, a little bit of depression...it wasn't pleasant. You always have the feeling that you are a target and you don't know why. You are only a high school student and you go to school and suddenly every day the newspapers are writing about homosexuals. And that triggered me to get politically conscious. [...] That day, that social situation that started, it encouraged me, but also in one moment I understood that there is someone else that is... I mean, it is stupid, you know that all that time, but it is just that in those 16 years, in your whole life, the system, education, everywhere it is hidden under the rug. No one talks about it. (Nikka)

I actually had two stages of coming out. Once when I was 11, that was when they told me that it is a phase, and then I said "Okay, that is a phase, that is over." I buried myself. But then, like, man, you can't hide with moths in the closet. That is boring. So yes, Markić⁴ was quite a decisive factor because she woke up that defiance, that was really important to me. (Saša)

Some of the respondents talked about finding a surprising amount of support in the moment of their coming out, through experiencing a mutual coming out alongside siblings or friends:

I didn't have a close relationship with my sister until that moment. I told her: "I have to tell you something. I have a girlfriend." And she said "Great!" and continued to get ready to go out and it started to be a really uncomfortable situation. And then I asked her: "Hey, isn't that weird?" and she just said "No." And I asked "How come?" And then she said "Well what do you think? I am also lesbian!" And stormed out. [...] after that we talked about it and she really helped me in that process of starting to accept myself. From that moment, she stopped being a sister I fight with and started being the only person I trust in my life, and that still hasn't changed. She became my best friend from that moment. We connected through that mutual coming out and it meant a lot to me to know I am not the only one. Because what would I know about it? That there is some other lesbian? (Leia)

My best friend is gay and he came out to me before I did and it was like some trigger in my head said "Okay, that is okay!". Because he accepted that before I did, and we became closer because of that. (Tay)

⁴ Željka Markić is president of the organization 'In the Name of the Family'. In 2013 she was one of the initiators and key organizer of marriage referendum in Croatia. See more in Chapter 3.4.5. 'In the Name of the Family'.

A few of the respondents said that they had not come out to their parents nor did they intend to. This was often accompanied by their explanation that first they want to move out and become financially independent:

My mum doesn't know I am gay. I mean, I told her once, but it didn't end well. She couldn't accept that and I had to take it back. So now, she doesn't know. [...] When will I tell her that I am gay? Not now. I will have to work on that and test her points of view on the LGBT population. But coming out to her is not my priority anymore. I have to come out to her and I will, but this isn't my life goal. It is important for me to concentrate on myself and secure myself a good future. I will deal with my mother later. (Jo)

When talking about how being a young person that is part of the LGBTIQ community is harder than being a heteronormative person in Croatian society, one respondent said that she sees a lot of differences around herself:

Growing up is so much harder for me, as well as misunderstanding and intolerance. And when you see all that violence, how people talk negatively about it, parents won't accept you, that is terrible. For example, when I asked my mum what she would do if [names sister] and I were gay, she said... like they see it as my sister can come home with any boyfriend, she won't say anything to her, but I can't come home with a girlfriend. Like, that girl can be the best girl in the entire world, but she will never accept her because she is girl, which is sad. (Smilja)

Another respondent talked about how being a transgender person is even harder because there is a medical procedure you have to go through, as well as the necessity of coming out, even in situations where you are not willing. Also, you are not necessarily forced to come out if you are lesbian, bisexual or gay:

[...] [As transgender people] we have the whole medical procedure that needs to be done, the whole legal procedure, plus the whole medical procedure, when you go through hormonal changes, is physically and emotionally exhausting [...] Also, as a lesbian or gay, you don't have to come out if you don't want to. You don't have to say anything to colleagues in college, or at work about who are you dating. I mean, you will probably want to, at least I say to anyone that I am lesbian, even those who don't know I am trans [...] but theoretically you don't have to come out if you are LG if you don't want to. But if you are a trans person, the moment you start transitioning, you will have to come out because everyone around you will see... you can't avoid that. (Issa)

3.2. Activism

3.2.1 Political activism

Talking about their own activism and how they see it in terms of it being political, only a few of the respondents said that they 'don't know what political activism is' (Juno) or that they 'don't see it as politics' (Medo). For the majority of respondents, the political in their own activism was something they would emphasize, even to the extent of understanding that 'coming out is not necessarily only personal, but also a political thing' (Borka), and concluding that 'coming out is a political issue' (Mika). In a conversation on why he sees his engagement as political, one

respondent went on to explain that if there is a threat to someone's sense of security in acting and living freely, then activism is pointing out that that problem is political:

This is political activism. LGBT rights in Croatia and in the whole of East Europe are a political issue and that is what we talked about at the Pride March this year... I think it is important not to fall into the trap that it is a little bit better, so we relax a bit, start being less political and lighter, partly because that would be really dangerous because there is so much to improve. If you see it superficially the situation is okay, that doesn't mean it really is okay because people still can't hold hands in the centre of Zagreb, you can't kiss someone without risking being hit in the head. So, there is a lot of work that still needs to be done. (Haz)

Another respondent also mentioned that part of the LGBTIQ community often resents the organisers of the Pride March. His comment referred to understanding the Pride March as something that should be a little less about politics and a little more about fun and entertainment, saying that 'in Croatia Pride is a political issue, it is not a party' (Mark) but also concluding that in general, today in Croatia '[...] every engagement is more or less political!' (Mark). Nevertheless, Gabi said that she thinks younger generations are 'starting to be more progressive' even though others often comment that the 'political part of the March disappeared' (Gabi). She added that 'those comments are irrelevant because the person that wrote that didn't read the manifesto. Because in our manifesto we explained why we are there and what is happening, why are we marching. And I think the manifesto is everything but not non-political' (Gabi).

Just like the majority of respondents, Lars sees his activism as political activism, but adds that he did not choose to be an activist, it was rather something that society made him do. He is a person that experienced bullying that forced him to change school, and he had several experiences of being attacked:

What I always say is that I didn't start with activism by my own choice. Homophobia forced me into activism. No matter how much I love doing what I do, I didn't wake up one morning and say 'Let's change the world!' It was more like 'we will kill you, you have to fight against that. (Lars)

The debate over the Pride March being a political event or being a 'festival' or 'party' is an ongoing discussion even among Zagreb Pride volunteers. But for most of them, Lotrius' opinions are something they would agree on: 'Somewhere Pride is a festival. And I think it is a bad thing that people see it as a festival in countries and in places where it is still a protest, where it is still a political message' (Lotrius). He then went on to talk about the experience he had on the last Pride March when he shouted political messages through a megaphone, and no one wanted to shout those messages back 'not realising that we are still fighting for those things I shouted. So I stopped shouting because no one shouted with me and I felt stupid' (Lotrius). Reactions to the issue of politics as interfering in the Pride March included the following statement by Bela: '[...] if someone from the organisational committee of the Pride March were to say that Pride is a political gathering, the community would be disgusted, like 'What politics? Don't mix politics with this!'" (Bela).

However, another respondent felt that political and economic discussions should not have a place in the LGBT movement because they create divisions between people:

It bothers me that political-economic attitudes started to mix with LGBT activism and... generally I don't like it when that happens because you start to isolate LGBT people that don't agree with you. Because you stop being there for all LGBT people, and only for your small circle of like-minded [people]. (Issa)

She went on to say that those divisions isolate people that do not share the same values and political positions, in the LGBTIQ community:

[...] I think that in Croatia, the LGBT community is not a group of LGBT people anymore, but a group of vegan, Marxist, anti-capitalist, anarcho-communist, queer-theory LGBT people that are not only led by feminism, but by a certain type of feminism and a whole bunch of other things. And then, if you, as a person, don't share all those ideas, then they kick you out of the community, e.g. by not wanting to include you in a certain project or by attacking you on Facebook. (Issa)

Issa also talked about a libertarian group that has come to the Pride March in the last few years, and whose arrival was discussed and criticized on social networks and independent media:

The Pride March should be a place that accepts differences, but what happened in the last few years is that they were attacked because they came. They were yelled at during the March and attacked on social networks because they came, like 'Go away capitalists!' This is really terrible to me because these are LGBT people but with different values and attitudes. (Issa)

My personal impression was that even though most of the respondents talked about what the political aspect of their engagement means to them, the difference between the political stance of last year's organisational committee which was more politically vocal in the media during the organising period before the Pride March was that:

This year's generation of people in the organisational committee is really young and, for most of them, this year's Pride March is their first march ever in their life, let alone their first political experience as a young person. In one conversation in the office, it was stated that previous years of Pride Marches organizational committees wrote better manifestos and mottos because of the participation of activists who were politically more active and engaged. (Fieldwork diary, 8 June 2017)⁵

3.2.2 Activities and volunteering

Most of the respondents had volunteered in the organisational committee of the Pride March this year or in previous years. One of them described that experience as 'one of the smartest things I did' (Archi) and went on to say that '[I] learnt to do many things I didn't know' (Archi). Similar sentiments were repeated by others.

Just before the invitation to participate in the organisational committee was published, there was a tear gas attack in the club in which an LGBT party was taking place that night. That event was a

⁵ A few days after the 16th Pride March, one of the founders of Zagreb Pride, Gordan Duhaček, wrote an article stating 'How Pride became one big party, in the limits of decency' emphasising the depoliticisation of the Pride March, stating that the political message was not recognized, thus making it the 'most impotent March so far' and criticizing the Pride March for having become a *feel-good* event. <https://www.crol.hr/index.php/politika-aktivizam/8675-kako-je-prajd-postao-jedan-veliki-party-u-granicama-pristojnosti> (20 April 2018)

turning point and 'additional motivation' (Mark) for some of the respondents to apply to volunteer at the Pride March:

[...] the turning point for me was the attack in Super Super. That enraged me and my stomach turned - how could someone do that kind of an insidious and disgusting attack. And then I thought okay, this happened, it is important now for the LGBT community to stand up, not to have its tail between its legs, but to do something, and I applied. (Jo)

To some of the respondents, participation in the organisational committee gave them lots of practical knowledge, but also a self-awareness about LGBTIQ rights in Croatia:

[...] that is when I started to understand how discriminated we are and how shattered our rights are. For me, that was never... What could I know about laws and marriage laws? I didn't know anything. And besides, I wasn't someone who was regularly in school, I didn't have a basic knowledge of practically anything and Zagreb Pride was really a base where I learnt everything I didn't learn in school. (Lotrius)

One respondent went on to talk about how volunteering in the organisational committee was an important moment in his life 'because I realised that I am an auto-homophobe' (Oliver).

Even though most of the volunteers were older than 18, an age limit in Croatia above which you do not need parental permission to participate in activities, some of the respondents were younger than 18 and one even brought parental approval to be able to participate. Another shared her experience of not being able to be part of the organisational committee because her parent would not sign a consent form permitting her participation:

I volunteered for a short time but it wasn't signed for, because I was a minor and when you are a minor, you need parental approval, which I didn't want to ask for, so I volunteered here and there, wherever I could. I was in Medika later on, working on banners and that was it. It was so nice to be part of something and to work on progress. (Lara)

One of the activities in the organisation is a support group for high school students called Queer Teens. Even though a few years back there was a support group established by volunteers and people who worked in the organisation at the time, this group started working a few months before the 16th Zagreb Pride March, under the guidance of a social worker who is also an LGBTIQ activist. Some of the respondents went to the support group and said that:

[...] it is really good because you grow stronger as a person and it gave me a sense of activism, like I want to do something with this... you start to accept yourself, it really includes people, and you connect with people there. There is no hate and that is what I like best. Everyone tells you everything and you can see that we are all honest and no one is spoiled. (Smilja)

Another respondent talked about the support she got from the group after she went through a rough time with her parents: 'Everyone contacted me through Facebook and asked if I was okay, if I needed something...they were really helping me' (Juno). Lara talked about how much it meant to her to talk openly about her experiences and problems: 'You can come hang out and learn new

things about the LGBT community, and different historical things as well as generally talking about our experiences. We can share our problems and be open' (Lara).

When discussing the progress seen within the group, one respondent said: 'Those kids... I can't even imagine that at that age I would have come out to someone, let alone go to lectures, workshops, and they are already conscious about that' (Oliver).

3.2.3 What does Zagreb Pride mean to you?

When asked about what the organisation and the Pride March means to them, respondents would often answer by talking about the broader significance and what it means for Croatian society. They said that 'Pride is exceptionally necessary' (Mark) or that 'it is definitely the most important organisation, which is organising the most important LGBT event' (Mike).

Some of the respondents, when asked about the meaning of Pride to them, went on to talk about the political significance they see in the Pride March:

The Pride March is a political act where, in that one day, compared to the other 364 or 365 days in the year, the problems of the LGBTIQ community are brought to the fore with the media writing about it, and when there is a strong political and cultural force and the people power that could push things to happen' (Gabi).

Explaining what Pride means to her, Issa talked about entering into a fight which went viral with someone who said that maybe there should also be a Straight Pride March. She went on to explain that:

[...] as I see it, it is not gay pride, we don't celebrate that someone is born as gay, because you don't celebrate being born with green eyes. You don't need to celebrate it as it is, but it is rather about the social context. Pride March celebrates the human pride of gay people, their pride, our pride not to allow ourselves to be bullied and to be treated as second class citizens, or to have our basic human rights violated. Therefore it is a march for the human pride of gay people, not gay pride of gay people. (Issa)

Lotrius explained the meaning behind the Pride March for him personally:

The meaning of my Pride, that feeling at Pride is that unity, that acceptance, that possibility for me to be me. Like, it was not good or bad, you are a cool person, yes bitch! I never wanted to be something special because I am gay, I never wanted to be something less because I am gay and Pride was the moment I wasn't anything else, I wasn't gay, I wasn't anything, I was a person that has these characteristics, but not my orientation. I really felt fully accepted. (Lotrius)

Even though the vast majority of respondents talked fondly about what the organisation and the Pride March means to them, there were a few who were more critical, contrasting how they saw it at the beginning when they were more active, and what they see now:

[...]that is my critique of Pride, in general. Zagreb Pride was founded because organisations like Iskorak and Kontra monopolized the Pride March as a brand, as an event, as a project, and that is when everything started to go downhill. Then, Pride as a grassroots [initiative] took it over and gave it back to the community, and that was the

power of Pride in that moment, in empowering the community. [...] What is happening now is that Pride is institutionalizing again, starting to be a brand or project of one organisation, and not something that a community can identify with. I see that as a big problem for the March itself. (May)

3.3. *Context of support*

When speaking about support in their lives in relation to coming out, most of the respondents talked about the support they received from their families, the LGBTIQ community, and friends. Of those who talked about support from their families, in most cases they talked about supportive mothers as well as brothers and sisters. They spoke somewhat less about supportive fathers or extended families. In most cases, respondents noticed that support from their immediate family was often followed by concern for their safety: 'My mum is a different story, she supports me but she was afraid that someone would do something to me' (Bela). As one way of demonstrating support from their families, respondents mentioned mothers coming to the Pride March or even participating in some of the activities that were organised in Pride Month, such as Mums in Mama (Mame u Mami) in which the parents of LGBTIQ children gather and share their experiences and stories.

Even though respondents more frequently talked about the support they encountered inside their immediate family, they would more commonly seek out support among their friends. Most often, that support was given to them and a few respondents even concluded that they thought that their coming out positively influenced their friends' perception of LGBTIQ people:

In high school, in the summer when I was in second grade, I went through my coming out, and I decided to come out to my friends. To this day, I haven't lost any of my friends I came out to because I'm gay. Some thought it was weird, for others it was really weird, but I think that in a way I positively influenced some of them because of the things I said (Nikka)

There was one friend, she is very active in the Church... I was really scared about her reaction, but she was like: 'Okay, I think that all gays are disgusting, that they all go to hell, except for you!' But yes, she really became okay with everything. She was okay with me, it all became great to her and she changed her opinion, so all in all everyone reacted well (Zele)

Despite support among friends, some respondents talked about wanting to connect to people who they perceived as someone who 'shares the same or similar experiences':

Mostly in my life, I have been surrounded by open and free-minded people [...] and the majority of them were heterosexual... and sometimes, I just needed someone who shares the same or similar... well it can't be the same experience... You just come to the point where you say 'I want to meet some LGBT people to have fun' [...] You always want someone to reflect on things with, to talk to, to share things with, even to say 'Hey, are you gay? I am gay. Cool.' [...] Of course that orientation is not so important, but at some point you miss that and you want to hear something else, something different... (Borka)

Other than with families and friends, support is something that respondents often encountered in the LGBTIQ community itself. Some respondents even said that getting to know other people from the LGBTIQ community was a turning point for them:

I didn't have that feeling anymore that I was part of a community that was bullied and that only some of the members of the community are exposed and fighting, and that I am sitting at home and waiting for someone else to fight for my rights. I felt better because I joined and met lots of great people in the OCZP who became my friends. So that kind of socialization and support meant a lot to me. (Bela)

Besides talking about how meeting other young people from the LGBTIQ community changed many things for him, Lotrius also talked about the meaning that activities organised by the local social network had for his own acceptance:

I went on hangout⁶ and that was a moment that changed everything for me, really everything. Those people were really interested in things I wanted to say, about what I am, who I am and they have never forced me to behave in a certain way, they never put me in boxes, they would always ask, and support me in how I wanted to express myself... they would accept how I wanted to express myself, and what I didn't experience ever before. (Lotrius)

For some of the respondents, support was something they could find at school, among their teachers and peers. One of the respondents even said that the only person she felt free to share the information with, that she was attacked on the street and ended up going to the Accident and Emergency department, was her high school teacher: 'I didn't want to share that with my parents. I told my psychology teacher because I could talk to her about everything. I couldn't talk to my parents and somehow, I kept that to myself' (Lara). When talking about supportive school staff, it was noticeable that in most cases support was found among psychology teachers and psychologists.

Another context of support which respondents often mentioned when talking about why it is good to be a young person in Croatia today, was the internet as a source of information and networking among young people. One respondent went to a vocational high school where he was bullied. This led him to change high school, saying that the support he got from virtual communities was crucial:

[...] When you have the internet, you find... the whole world is connected through the internet and you can get support from someone in America where it is better than here, and from people who are empowered, and someone will help. If you speak English you can find all sorts of information on the internet and it can be helpful for surviving in Croatia at least on some kind of psychological level. (Lars)

One respondent who is in her early thirties and remembers her early teenage years living without access to the internet or social networks, questions how much this was down the merit of LGBTIQ organisations, compared to the empowerment young LGBTIQ people got from virtual communities:

⁶ LGBT Hangout is activity organised by local social network gay.hr, where people gather and hang out together. Sometimes activities are organised in community centre LGBT centre Zagreb.

Well, that is the Tumblr generation, as I like to call it. The internet really did a lot in terms of empowerment because it is a great tool for those kids who strive for knowledge. They are always online and it gives them hope that it didn't all go to hell. They have Tumblr, they have Instagram, and they are able to connect, to empower each other. I don't think it has anything to do with any NGO, but only with their individual initiative. (Leia)

3.4. Context of conflict

3.4.1 Violence and safety

When asked about physical safety in everyday life, respondents would most often start talking about having experienced street attacks, either verbal or physical attacks. All the respondents talked about experiencing some kind of attacks based on their gender identity or sexual orientation during their life. During fieldwork, one quarter of the respondents experienced attacks, of which two were physical attacks. One of the activities undertaken by the organisation Zagreb Pride is to provide legal help and information through its programme called 'Advocating equity for LGBTIQ persons'.

Through interviews with respondents and also through fieldwork, my impression was that hate speech (with hate crimes also being a frequent occurrence) was even more frequent than could be seen statistically. People would often talk about being physically attacked, but not reporting it because of a lack of trust in the police and a reluctance to come out to the police. Also, problems occur because of the lack of recognition of hate crimes as a legal classification and of the possibility of legal action against it: 'I was attacked more than once and didn't report it to the police [...] I didn't think it would change anything' (Leia).

One respondent even told a story he had not shared with anyone since then. He and his friends were hanging out near a club in which there was a party called 'Participacija', arranged by the organising committee of Zagreb Pride, and usually after the Pride March as a closing event of Pride Month or Pride Week. After a short discussion, they were attacked by a group of young men but decided they did not want to report the incident because, 'we didn't want to ruin our night' (Tay). Such opinions are found more frequently than it may seem, even though all of the respondents talking about their experiences were well aware of the importance of reporting hate crimes.

What I did notice in conversations with respondents was that they would talk about feeling safe and unthreatened in certain everyday activities and situations, but would later on in conversations say that there are certain rules they follow in order to feel safe. Zele mentioned depriving himself of certain things in order to feel safe: 'I would say I feel safe, but not in the way I should feel. I feel safe because I am deliberately depriving myself of some beautiful things' (Zele). He also mentioned that he '[...] experiences an expected level of street violence' (Zele) when compared to other LGBTIQ friends. Another respondent talked about 'knowing how to act': 'I feel relatively safe. Yes, sometimes I think about what if something would happen to me, to my close ones, to my boyfriend, but as long as you know how to act, you can live normally' (Jo), while Lara chose to 'pretend to be part of a normal community': 'I carry pepper spray with me and try to avoid challenging people. I would rather wear less rainbow marks and pretend I am part of the normal community' (Lara).

In February 2017 there was a tear gas attack on the Super Super club that organised an LGBT party. The next day, Zagreb Pride organised a protest called 'Love Is and Remains Stronger Than

Hate' at which more than a thousand people gathered to show support to those injured in the stampede that occurred just after the attack. Two respondents talked about being at that party and how it affected them:

One minute it looked like a great party, and the next a horror movie in which people started to run randomly. At that point no one knew why everyone was running, you only knew something was happening. And then you are choking, tears... your eyes are burning. You are trying to breath and that wouldn't be a problem if you were outside, but when you are in that place where there is only one way out and you can only get to via the stairs... then it is pretty chaotic. (Mark)

Another respondent who happened to be there said that after everything was over, he noticed that he did not feel so shocked or surprised because he, in a way, expected something like that to happen: '[...] you realise that you live in a society where you expect that could happen. I wasn't so shocked' (Haz).

One respondent was attacked several times and experienced a lot of street violence and bullying. The latest example of that kind was during one event of Pride Month after having gone to a public toilet with two of his friends in order to change their clothes. After leaving the toilet, they came across a few young men who physically attacked them. They talked about what happened after calling the police:

[...] The police came, they went on with the procedure [...] the police outed that boy to his parents even though he has a violent father [...] I warned him that he could end up on the street, that he will be beaten. The reaction of the police officer was that if there were any violence, he could contact the police. [...] [Names friend] came after us, he had to turn down medical help because he was afraid his parents would find out. He was dizzy, he couldn't stand up, he had blacked out, he was still bleeding, and came by tram to the hospital... he couldn't stand... but he had to turn down medical help [...] it is disgusting, you have to choose between risking your life or telling your parents who you are. (Lara)

Lara was one of three who were beaten and she talked about how she did not feel free to tell her parents about what had happened because she would have to explain to them why they were attacked: 'I didn't want to share that with my parents. I shared that with my class teacher, she is a psychologist. I could talk with her about everything. I didn't share it with my parents, I kept that to myself' (Lara).

Some of the areas of discrimination respondents mentioned were religion and politics, and often they are overlapping:

In our dear, secular country everything is happening under the white hand that comes from the Kaptol.⁷ [...] I think that the lack of secularity is a big problem because it affects every aspect of life – education, sport, politics, culture, the political participation of young people, the public administration, the homophobic, transphobic and biphobic legal system... (Gabi)

⁷ Kaptol is part of Gornji Grad-Medveščak district in the centre of Zagreb. It is historical part of Zagreb and residence of Archdiocese of Zagreb and Zagreb Cathedral.

Lota told her story about how she had noticed that the social climate had changed after the HDZ⁸ won the election and how that was the first time that someone attacked her on the street: '[...] We have really reached the bottom with this government... In thirty years no one ever said anything bad to me or kicked me on the street, but this happened when the HDZ won the election...' (Lota). Beside the above mentioned, respondents talked about certain specific areas in which they encountered conflicts or in which they noticed conflict being something new, that in some way triggered their engagement.

3.4.2 Conflicts inside families

For the majority of respondents, conflicts inside families are still one of the most common issues they encounter. Consequently, a minority of respondents stated that they were out to all of their close family members and almost every one of them said they had some sort of problem with close family members. The vast majority of respondents are still not out to their closest family members.

One respondent told his story of how he came out to his mother but because of her reaction, he had to 'take it back' (Jo). Another told a story about coming out to her parents that 'didn't go well at home. My parents started to treat me really badly, they would mistreat me, they wouldn't leave me alone, they watched over me all the time... I had the feeling that they don't give me my space for anything anymore' (Grey).

Another respondent received an even harsher reaction from her parents. When she came out to her parents, 'mum wanted to check my transgender identity, to get a second opinion. When all those experts' opinions came back positive, she threatened me not to do anything as regards that issue, that they will stop financing me, which they did. [...]' (Issa). Now, a few years later, she lives in Zagreb, while her parents live in a smaller town on the coast. Her relationship with her mother is almost completely non-existent: 'I talk to my dad sometimes, like once every two weeks and then he asks me how I am, what is going on, what is new with college, but he ignores the transgender component of it all. My mum and I almost never talk...' (Issa).

This kind of relationship is not unusual among young LGBTIQ people, and it only broadens the sphere of discrimination they already face in society:

How can we live freely when we are afraid of discrimination at every turn? Personally, I am afraid of discrimination in my own family. All the time. So it is not easy for young people because you don't have any tangible protection instruments. Not only is society going backwards, it is running backwards! (Leia)

Ruby is a young person who, when we first met, told me how every year during the Pride March, her parents would take her to their holiday house in a coastal part of Croatia, so that she would not be in Zagreb and would be prevented from going on the March. However, being persistent and strong as she is, she joined this year's organisational committee and helped a lot. Thus, even though she was not able to participate again this year, she had helped with the organisation:

[...] This year they didn't take me there [to the coastal part of the Croatia], but I couldn't be on the March [...] So they let me stay in Zagreb this time, but they said a

⁸ The Croatian Democratic Union (in Croatian: Hrvatska demokratska zajednica) is the main conservative and centre-right political party in Croatia, which won the election in September 2016.

few times 'You better not go! If I find out you went, it won't be good!' (Ruby)

Even though some respondents talk about having support from their close family, there would be some kind of issue with the wider family, as in Madison's case. He lives with his mother and sisters and has a great relationship with them. They knew he was a part of this year's organising committee and even came to the Pride March to support him. But for him, problems exist with communication and with a lack of understanding or acceptance among his wider family:

My two aunts and uncle are really... they go to church more than once a week and they are really conservative. I mean, it is really hard for me to talk to them... Besides, they often start conversations about the LGBT community and not in a good way. (Madison)

3.4.3 Double discrimination inside the organisation

During the fieldwork, there were several issues that would often emerge as problems that Zagreb Pride deals with as an organisation. Some of those issues are those discussed in this section of the report (3.5. Context of Conflict) as they relate to conflicts that young people inside the LGBTIQ community often encounter in Croatian society.

However, an additional problem mentioned by respondents was a kind of double discrimination encountered by volunteers; discrimination not only from the outside (Croatian society), but also from the inside (the LGBTIQ organisation). When talking with young LGBTIQ people about their experiences of discrimination and different areas of conflict in Croatian society, some of them would talk about experiencing a similar type of discrimination inside the organisation. It should be noted that some of the respondents were people that had been active in former organisational committees of Zagreb Pride March and had had, as often happens given the dynamics of smaller groups, differences of opinion with the leadership of the organisation.

One of the respondent said that during her active years in the organisation 'we didn't have the right to say anything' (Bela). This kind of relationship between volunteers and the organisation's leadership came up several times: 'We don't have a chance, we as volunteers. I can't say what I want, the people that run Zagreb Pride will give me the formal answer that they give to everyone, as if I were some company and not a person' (Lotrius).

Some people who are members of the organisation used their power on a few occasions because they were hierarchically above the volunteers and they said in those moments 'Okay, we will not discuss those things, I am putting a veto on this, it will be like this!' (Madison)

Because of those problems, one third of the respondents are not active in Zagreb Pride anymore, either due to their own decision or as a result of a decision taken by the organisation leadership: 'I don't know if you noticed the vibrations inside the organisation, but lots of good people left. I mean, they were expelled' (Mika).

A couple of us had the idea that we wanted to remain permanent Zagreb Pride volunteers, that we want to be an activist group just like Green Action, that we don't necessarily need to be part of the organisation [as members]. We don't need to be in the team or employed. No one wanted to have a position in the organisation, but we wanted to be a group of activists that could react immediately [...] And then they said no and it remained at that. (Mika)

What came out as another consequence of this mode of coordinating the organisation was that 'heritage and activist continuity is not retained' (Mika), with the consequence that 'Pride has a reputation of being an amateur organisation, like really chaotic...' (Zele). Mika and Leia talked about how much that kind of loss of knowledge slowed down the movement:

I mean, we did lots of things, I see now that the people before us did, like there is no preserved corpus of knowledge, but rather everything is being reinvented again and again. I think that this is not helping the wider struggle for a more just society because we are falling apart. (Mika)

Instability is caused by change. Pride functions by constantly changing people as volunteers and in the working team, and because of that nothing can be done properly because everything always goes back to the beginning. (Leia)

A few respondents did not want their specific criticisms to be recorded or used in this report, one of whom said that there is a fear that 'there will be an 'open hunt' and one by one, we will all be thrown out of the organisation' (Fieldwork diary, 18 October 2017). This kind of caution only raised the question of why there is a hesitation to talk about these kinds of problems among young activists that are engaging in a movement that is encouraging them to speak out against discrimination. When talking about this issue, one respondent that was vocal about the need to talk about it gave her opinion on the problem saying:

[...] That was also my dilemma, that exposure to internal instabilities. On the other hand, that is a strong and weak point of our movement. The right-wing will never fight on the outside and will always have a clear hierarchy, like structured obedience and so on. But the left-wing, now I call it the left-wing conditionally, all these other movements don't have it because everything is based on the fact that there is no absolute trust, that critical thinking is welcome and so on. So we don't have that sense of loyalty to protect the movement, even though the cost is that it is rotten inside [...] that is a big strength, but also a big weakness because this is seen on the outside and that is shit! I don't know myself how to solve it, but I think that being quiet about it is not a solution. (May)

As one of the main problems surrounding this kind of issue, May pointed out that 'Pride is an extremely hierarchical organisation. And only worse than hierarchy is implicit hierarchy, not explicit [...] I think that it is a non-feminist organisation and that it is based on everything but solidarity' (May). Leia concluded that the reason for this kind of problem occurring is 'one group in the organisation - even though everyone is supposed to be equal - has imposed itself as the main one [...]' (Leia).

Those issues mentioned above could also be viewed as intergenerational issues, along with problems with the type of leadership present in the organisation. One respondent explained that 'if that person established an organisation and is there for more than 15 years and no one has the courage to confront him or replace him... I don't know, how do you replace someone who was there first? Before anyone else?' (Bela). Another respondent said that she had tried to talk to the leader of the organisation and explain what younger volunteers think about certain activities, but:

I said that we respect them as older activists but somehow it was always as if I was talking to a wall and then I gave up. I never got the feeling that they respect what people do for Pride. My perception is that there is a big ego problem and they are like 'Pride is ours, we are Pride and you all are kids that are replaceable and we will replace you!' And so they did. (Mika)

However, respondents did see a way in which those kinds of problems could be resolved:

I am glad that Pride cannot lose its power completely, because it has an influence that was intensively built during seven or eight years, and Pride has confidence in some people, in the infrastructure it built and in people who are loyal. I see it as a good thing, because if Pride decided to come back to some kind of grassroots, activist discourse, it has a large potential to do it. [...] I see that Pride has lost a lot of power over the last three years and that it is a two way street now [...] (May)

Everything is left to the self-will of a few who think they know what community is [...] we have to bring Pride back to be sexy to the community, not to the donors, because Pride is here because of the community. The basic problem is its absolute inertness, the comfortable salaries, positions of certain people in the organisation. (Leia)

3.4.4 School and the education system

One of main issues raised in this ethnography was that of bullying experienced by respondents during some part of their education - elementary school, high school or in college. For most of the respondents, the bullying and abuse was verbal, but for one group of them it was physical. The common conclusion drawn by all of the respondents was that the 'biggest problem is the school system' (Archi).

Respondents would often talk about their experiences of verbal abuse:

They would surround me and call me names, make fun of me, like vilify me. A classic example of not accepting other people's sexuality, stereotyping, like being feminized, being a feminized boy, being born as a hermaphrodite and so on... (Jo)

Two respondents talked about having to change their high school because of their bullies' persistence. One of them talked about trying to deal with the abuse for some time, before his mother decided to move him to a different school:

They started to write messages in school, but in places where you couldn't see it. Where you would only see 'We will kill you! Death to faggots! Kill the faggots!' That was really imaginative teasing and jokes, and I kept quiet and tolerated it, but then I snapped. (Lars)

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)

First, I went to an elementary school that was five minutes from my home, but because of the bullying and physical abuse, not only from students, but from teachers as well, I had to change school after fifth grade. (Jo)

However, a lack of understanding and recognition of bullying displayed by teachers seems to be the crucial problem. In one example a respondent recounted how he was asked by a school guidance counsellor 'Is faggot really an offensive term?' (Lars). Other respondents mentioned that they had teachers who would openly express their opinions saying: 'I had a teacher who would talk openly about how someone should be killed. There were all sorts of people' (Bela) and 'I was in elementary school when the first Pride March was organised and there was a discussion during religious education and our teacher was horrible, saying things like 'Kill the faggot! Kill the Serbs!' (Fox).

Certain other experiences were even more physically threatening:

There was bullying in elementary school. We had a horrible teacher from first to fourth grade and she would slap us... she would line us up in the hall and slap us. She would also throw us in the corner and so on. She was suspended because of that and was fired later on, I think. (Grey)

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)

The problem of peer bullying is something that is often mentioned in media discourses because of UNICEF and later, a Ministry of Science and Education campaign called 'Stop violence among children'. But what remains less represented when talking about these problems is the lack of education for educators in terms of LGBTIQ topics as well as 'teachers ignoring LGBT topics' (Smilja). Respondents also often discussed experiences that demonstrated that one of the main contexts of conflicts in school comes from teachers not being able to recognize bullying happening among students and pupils, not only when talking about LGBTIQ bullying, but also failing to recognize participation in the same kind of verbally abusive behaviours:

I think that the context of conflict I never had the courage to address was that I was in the closet during the whole of high school and I couldn't deal with it. I can't even begin to imagine on how many levels that can create problems. When your teachers are homophobes and you are a child but have that authority in the classroom that is talking against you. And everyone knows he is talking against you. (Haz)

The reaction of older teachers was 'really bad. I would even say, non-existent. For example, my maths teacher made fun of me and because of that I don't like maths... (Jo)

In high school [...] I didn't know anyone that was gay and that was hard. In the last year I had a bad experience because one teacher said, not to me directly, but in the classroom, that in his time there were no paedophiles and gays and that is when I got really mad and went to my class teacher [...] I felt a responsibility towards the future generations (Madison)

Zele, who talked about being beaten daily by his peers in school, persuaded himself that it was something with a positive outcome: 'After first grade, they would beat me every day. [...] But I don't even see that as a really bad thing because that was a major influence on my character today... I don't know who I would be if that hadn't happened. I think I would be more average, less interested in the world [...]' (Zele). Later on he concluded that 'in elementary school it was a catastrophe, therefore I am an activist today' (Zele).

3.4.5 'In the Name of the Family'

In 2013 the organisation 'In the Name of the Family' organised the collection of signatures in order to conduct a referendum advocating for a definition of marriage as a union of man and woman in the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia. This campaign resulted in a referendum being conducted and in the inclusion of the proposed definition. In addition, during that period and because of the broad political and media coverage of the campaign as well as support the organisation got from conservative political parties and the Catholic Church, an opposition campaign called 'Citizens Vote Against' was initiated. In this campaign, numerous civil society organisations, politicians and public figures participated in order to raise awareness about the possible outcomes of these kinds of constitutional changes. Even though some of the respondents participated in this campaign, at that time most of them were in elementary or high school and perceived the campaign of the organisation 'In the Name of the Family' as if 'it was an attack' (Elza). Remembering that time, some of the respondents said that not only in the media, but also in their schools, 'everyone who was different would be attacked, and that wasn't pleasant' (Grey), and consequently 'that referendum raised awareness about the society in which we live' (Issa). Most of the respondents talked about experiences they had in their schools because of the referendum: '[...] there was a lot of homophobic comments. They weren't addressed to me directly, but rather indirectly. Because in every class you have at least one LGBT person and people would know that and then we would have those awfully big discussions...' (Grey).

One of the leading persons most recognizable in the media for advocating on behalf of 'In the Name of the Family's ideas and goals, was the activist Željka Markić, about whom Jo said that - because of a lack of a faster reaction and understanding about what was happening - 'we are all in a way responsible for her appearance' (Jo). Another respondent talked about the narrative that the 'In the Name of the Family' organisation and activists spun, which emphasised the idea of 'protecting the family':

She 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. Terrifying, but again wow! So, yes, I remember being really angry and disappointed and I thought about the collective, but also on a personal level this is shit...this is really a bad time to be queer. (Mika)

In one of the first workshops arranged for the organising committee of the 2017 Pride March, one participant talked about being in school and not out to his family and friends at the time the referendum took place. Later on, he added that Željka Markić was one of the best things that ever happened to him because she initiated the coming out process for him. Talking about the referendum and these kinds of perspectives, the vast majority of respondents agreed that this was something that triggered their desire to engage in the movement: 'I heard lots of stories about people who came out to their families just because of that referendum' (Issa):

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... I didn't feel comfortable. Because you always have that feeling that you are a target and you are only in high school and from that moment all newspapers are writing homosexuals this, homosexuals that... It empowered me to become politically aware, because until then I didn't even know what political parties there are in Croatia. (Nikka)

However, one respondent talked about the feeling of guilt she constantly has, even today. It started at the time of the referendum campaign when she was only 12, prompted by the reaction and comments she heard from her family:

Every conversation would end up being about LGBT issues, they would say 'Why do they protest so much, why do they impose that? That is all a trend.' [...] 'Those are girls that can't be with boys because they are ugly, so they go after girls!' (Smilja)

Another respondent talked about the perceived stigma that accompanies LGBTIQ people, that was imposed by organisations like 'In the name of the family':

We are not perceived as traditional, we are weirdos and sickos. And that is all because of the stigma which goes with us. [...] we don't have resources to fight against, I would say a 50 times stronger enemy. I know the word enemy sounds disgusting, but it is. The enemies are all those right-wing organisations that work under the Catholic Church and that advocate tradition... (Leia)

However, Haz presented an interesting and more analytical point of view when talking about young 'In the name of the family' activists, and asked whether it might be possible that those young people are more similar to LGBTIQ activists than everyone is willing to contemplate:

Recently I talked with someone about the motivation of those young people who are joining clerical-conservative organisations... Who are the 'family' volunteers who collected signatures? And then I got an answer that you don't hear often because you think they are evil, bad, disgusting and you ask 'How can they do such things?' But that doesn't explain anything [...] We have an extremely powerful Church which has a really strong community in every town just like we have an LGBT community that has empowered people and made them politically aware. That is the same way that the Church does it and then you realize we are similar in that way because those are young people that are insecure in a world where they don't know if they will get a job or what tomorrow will bring. So they join those choirs, religious classes in those parishes [...] and that would be just fine if at some point it didn't come to that group of people having really bad intentions and on the basis of hating diversity, wanting to attain political power. (Haz)

3.5. Stigmatisation

When asking respondents about the stigmatisation they encounter, they would often talk of hearing comments like 'they only want attention', 'that is a choice', 'that is someone who grew up without one parent' (Grey) when hearing people talking about LGBTIQ people.

One respondent who was bullied by his peers and later on had to change school, talked about how he tried to get away with his gender identity and sexual orientation:

I fit in, how to get away with it when I need to, how to stand, how to hold a cigarette, how to talk, how to spit... how to behave in a masculine group full of testosterone that starts to grow. How to watch out for every move because you can't be femme otherwise it won't go well (Lars)

Another respondent talked about how there is so much pressure placed on LGBT people in order to meet the sensationalized expectations of the media and entertainment industry. He said that he often felt like a 'pet' because of 'a lack of understanding of LGBT people as people, but as entertainment' (Lotrius):

All those boxes that gay people are put into [...] No matter how much we are accepted into a female group, we are still put in those boxes, some kind of standards, stereotypes and that is something that was more harmful to me than being bullied. [...] I would come to school and to all the girls I would be their gay best friend, but no one really had an interest in me... What do I love? What do I want? Who am I? I was only that gay figure. (Lotrius)

He even went on to describe how he was put under the pressure of such high expectations among his female friends that he soon began to skip classes so he would not be under so much pressure to be everyone's 'gay best friend' (Lotrius). Soon after, he was expelled from school because of his absence. Furthermore, he concluded that 'no matter what good intentions those media platforms have, they are not authentic and I really think they do more harm than good' (Lotrius).

Respondents often spoke about stigmatisation experienced in their family or among their friends who would think 'in negative terms about my community' because of their traditional and religious beliefs. Still, one respondent concluded that 'rejecting that identity [LGBTIQ identity] was never an option' (Madison). Stigma attached to LGBTIQ people, repeated from a young age by close family members is something that can develop into fear and insecurity that is then internalised in a person:

Your parents talk about gay people like 'Oh God, did you hear? That kid is gay. His poor mother!' That is the context in which you hear about gay people who are considered rare. You hear about them in curses, you don't see them, they are not here. There are some other people and if they are here, then they pity them, they pity their parents and ask them what they did wrong. And then you grow up in that kind of small community. From a young age it is internalised in you. (Oliver)

Apart from stigma inside the family, there is a certain stigma that often emerges in the context of job and college. One respondent talked about a job interview she had had. When she got to the final round, however, her employers kept asking her about her engagement in Zagreb Pride:

[...] during the whole job interview they were asking me about Pride, my haircut, about what I worked on in Pride and how I plan to join up my activism and corporate work. [...] In some cases this is my paranoia, I can't be sure, but sometimes I know what is going on. (May)

Another respondent talked about the 'double life' she is forced to live because she does not feel safe to come out to her college friends:

[...] emotionally it is a huge pressure that during the day, from 8 am until 2 pm I am in college, I have to watch how I talk, you have to accept some really disgusting heteronormative norms of how men treat women [...] and you have to fight with yourself not to let everything spill out face to face[...]. Then you leave those behavioural patterns and go back to your private life, with your friends, clubs, organisations, where you still have to be careful not to address someone in the wrong gender and those two worlds are sometimes emotionally exhausting [...] sometimes I feel so hypocritical seeing who I am during the day and then at night. (Mila)

Stigma attached, based on someone's gender identity or sexual orientation, is often accompanied by a reaction that indicates that 'it isn't okay to talk about that' (Archi). One respondent had an experience whereby she wanted to rent an apartment and the person who was renting it did not want to rent it to her because her girlfriend was with her:

'She said that she doesn't discriminate against anyone [...] my colleague called an hour later and the apartment was still available. Another colleague called a week later and the apartment was still available, but she told me that she picked someone else. Yet she asked me on the phone 'Are you that lesbian couple?'' (Gabi)

Another respondent encountered a situation in which she was denied her gender identity to the extent that her parents stopped communicating with her and her siblings as soon as they noticed that they could ask questions about her gender: '[...] I saw that recently my sister began to notice so she asked me why I talk using female pronouns... then they took her off the phone.' (Issa)

Furthermore, one respondent talked about how there is a certain stigmatisation that parents have to deal with when their children come out and other people find out about it. He called it a 'secondary coming out':

I think that just as I came out to my parents, they have to 'come out' to other people. That secondary coming out, that parental coming out is as hard for parents as it is for us. They are simply scared, they are scared to approach their friends with that fact. So that is a big step for them, too. I think that those parents who now work with parents of gay kids are really valued and necessary because I think that all in all that is the biggest problem every gay person has – their relationship with their parents. (Mark)

3.6. Being young – experiences and representations

When asked about their experiences of being young today in Croatia, and especially about being a young LGBTIQ person, respondents would often mention geographical differences. More specifically, they would point out the differences between a young LGBTIQ person living in Zagreb and those living in smaller communities and cities. While some say that 'you can always end up in the wrong place at the wrong time' (Fox), for most of the respondents, 'it depends on where they are. If they are in Zagreb or Rijeka, it will be easier than if they are in Split or in some shithole because [in Zagreb/Rijeka] there is less of a chance to be discriminated against because of their orientation...' (Issa). Another respondent sees this as 'double discrimination': 'Of course, there is a difference, class position is important, it is not the same thing to be a lesbian from the middle class

in Zagreb and, I don't know,... some gay person with a low socio-economic status in some village' (Mika). In her study on non-normative sexualities in small towns and rural communities in Croatia, Butterfield (2017) concluded that narratives of LGBQ individuals do not support an image of those spaces to be homogeneously hostile, homophobic and threatening. Even though there is methodological difference in the selection of respondents, most of my respondents who grew up in smaller towns and rural communities talked about having hostile environment in regard to their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

One respondent that works with young LGBTIQ people highlighted that there is lack of infrastructure in the education system for LGBTIQ youth. She analysed the problem she encountered in her work and concluded that there is a discrepancy between the message the global entertainment industry is sending to young people and the support they are actually able to get:

I noticed, not only in Pride, but in my job that young people are coming out younger than before and I think that is a good thing. Also, I think there are some traps we are not aware of when we say that it is a good thing. An infrastructure of global trends has been created through which young people get information about LGBT issues via the Internet, because they google, read, inform themselves, they are part of all kinds of global trends, music... and they get the really affirmative message that gay is okay, that coming out is okay, that your friends are here for you... that whole pack of positive messages. On the other hand, what we forget is that this is not our infrastructure, that this is an imported infrastructure that maybe exists in Berlin or Los Angeles or where the production of those things comes from, but in Croatia – we don't have a support system for that. And then you have some girl from Slavonski Brod, who through this flood of positive messages decided to come out at her high school where you don't have an employed psychologist, because the [government] Ministry didn't approve that job. You have a school guidance counsellor buried in papers, you don't even have one expert associate⁹ in the school. Her class teacher is a Physical Education teacher and he is a homophobe, [...] and ten people in her class bully her and then you have to ask what can be done about that? [...] Of course, I think that for your wellbeing it is better to come out as young as possible, but you have to ask yourself, what can be done with those young people? How can they be supported? [...] on the one hand it is a positive thing, on the other, we leave those kids betrayed. (May)

When discussing whether or not it is a good time to be a young person today in Croatia, opinions are also different; sometimes even the opposite, although those saying that it is a good time to be a young person today are significantly in the minority.

Some respondents stated that they think that the 'prospects available to us are not so good' (Elza) and that bearing in mind job opportunities and youth unemployment, 'expectation and reality are totally incompatible' (Haz). Respondents agreed on the opinion that the main problem for young people is the economy and politics saying: '[...]our country is economically going to hell, everything is beginning to be more and more conservative and no one will have a pension. Education is bad, the education system is regressive' (Issa). Another respondent said that the 'essential problem for a young person today is the economy':

⁹ In Croatian legislation on obligations of teachers and associates in primary school, expert associates are pedagogues, librarians, psychologists, special education teachers, health worker sand social workers. See more on:

https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/1999_05_51_954.html (20 April 2018)

[...] all those political things, In the Name of the Family, and those organisations, right-wing organisations... I think the problem is not so much about an ideological or value issue, but that it is strictly economic. [...] I think that all those organisations grow to hide the situation as it is, as in 'Let's talk about abortions, about ideological issues and ignore what is determining a person's life the most – the economy'. Nothing can determine this more than the fact that you pay your rent and bills, or you don't. We can agree on something about values, but if we don't have enough to pay our rent and bills, we have problems. [...] So I think that the essential problem of a young person today is the economy. (Mila)

One respondent went on to talk about not having hope that things will be better for young people, and that the main problems are the divisions he often sees and feels:

I am discouraged, I generally don't have hope for our society because we let ourselves remain divided on the basis of WW2 or the Homeland War and that is... [...] personally, I don't know how to fight hate against national minorities and the fact that when you condemn ICC crimes they call you Yugonostalgic and a Commie, but when you condemn communist crimes, they call you an Ustasha... I just don't know how to outgrow those problems. [...] maybe we just need to let old generations go away, to die and then we, young people will be the new hope, but then among the reactions of my peers and younger generations I see that on the Norijada [Celebration day when finishing school], 18 year olds march and make Nazi salutes... [...] it really leaves you without hope. (Madison)

On the other hand, one respondent said that she would feel hypocritical to leave a country where no one has any rights and move to another country to protest for some other rights: 'So I think that it is really hypocritical to go, I think that it is a great time to be a young person in Croatia!' (Archi).

When asked about who they see as those who have it better or worse than they do when speaking about rights, the majority would often mention Roma people as the group they see as a minority dealing with more discrimination and stigmatisation in Croatian society: 'People will maybe beat me for kissing my girlfriend in public, but imagine what they would do if I were Roma' (Leia).

In addition, when talking about young people today, respondents would often mention a new 'wave' of young people in the LGBTIQ community as well as the fact that the 'organisational committee definitely has a record of young people' (Lota). But those of them who belong to the younger generation of LGBTIQ activists emphasised that for them, topics like parenting are something they rarely think about, while on the other hand they 'want to have some safe spaces and freedom of speech' (Archi). A lack of safe places for LGBT youth came up on several occasions during the interviews. One of the respondents even talked about squatting in a place near the city centre with a few other underage LGBTIQ teenagers, so they would have a place in which to hang out, read and live. They stayed there during the Pride Month but were later forced to move out after a right-wing group came in and broke their things. One respondent said:

On the door we wrote 'Don't go out, they don't like us there'. And that was really significant because it was written on the exit to the squat. We all felt safe in that squat

and then every time we would come in or go outside it was like moving between dimensions – one in which you are accepted and another in which you are not. (Lars)

In addition, as concerns young people, most of the respondents were glad that more and more young people were participating in the Pride March as well as in the organisational committee. One respondent said 'I see a new force [...] I am really happy about that. I have the feeling that a change of generations is occurring and that now I am the old one.' (Gabi). Another respondent who was active for a few years in the organisational committees noticed that the new generation is outed at a young age: 'This is a new generation that is out in their seventeens, and even younger' (Haz).

3.6.1 Intergenerational relations

I noticed during the fieldwork that a lack of intergenerational knowledge transfer would often repeatedly present itself as a problem. When asked about experiences with knowledge transfer, respondents had different opinions, some even stating that: 'We are really bad at that. [...] I think that, in comparison with any other organisation I have worked with, Pride has little to no organisational memory. Every year we start from the beginning. It is terribly ineffective' (Zele). One respondent that was active in the organisational committee for a few years, recognised this problem in interpersonal relationships:

We never saw them. They barely answered our e-mails, but if they were to send an e-mail, then we had to answer. I think they didn't even read our meeting notes... they didn't come to the meetings. [names co-activist] would come to the meetings of the PR team, but [names co-activist] didn't come. He controlled everything from the outside [...] (Bela)

Even though one respondent concluded that 'maybe they were too exhausted, and so they didn't come by so often this year' (Elza), another explained this intergenerational problem as something that could happen as a result of long-term activist work and a lack of initiative from the older generation:

On the one hand, people who are activists for a long time are seen as Gods. I also had that issue with [names co-activist]. He is a person I saw on TV and now, I work with him. Like wow! So maybe young people don't feel strong enough to ask for something, for help or similar. On the other hand, I think there is a lack of initiative from us, the older generation, to pass that knowledge on. And then we come to the point where it is too much for us and we feel like we don't want to do it anymore, let's find someone else to do that, and knowledge transfer isn't completed as it should be. (Gabi)

Although some respondents talked about having problems in communicating with the older generations, some had better experiences: 'It was done really well and whenever you had a problem, they asked you and helped you. And you could come and ask at any moment' (Juno).

One of the members of this year's organisational committee said that for him 'it was a friendly atmosphere [...] because at any given moment we had a feeling that we can talk to members of the organisation, which is great, progress [...] '(Madison).

When talking even further about the differences between older and younger generations, one respondent talked about how she sees young people as being raised differently and that difference could be seen in the way people approach their activism:

Young people up to the age of 24-25, they are activist aggressive, but not aggressive in the way they fight, but in the way they show their teeth. Those over 25 were raised in a nicer way and the authority of parents was different then. They are more tactical, polite, nicer... but that doesn't work, it doesn't work, you have to show your teeth. If you are nice, everyone will trick you as they wish, so all in all I think that those things are changing... we have had enough! (Archi)

3.7. Social innovations

When speaking about innovation in the work of Zagreb Pride, respondents would often mention certain activities such as high school lectures on the Pride March, the history of the movement in Croatia, as well as hate crimes and hate speech. Furthermore, one of the activities that was often mentioned in this context is the education of police officers where people from the organisation and their external associates would talk about hate crimes. One respondent mentioned activities that took place during the first years of the organisation, as well as in the way the organisation functioned at that time:

Almost everything we did in those years [2008-2015] was innovative. Which wasn't so hard because there was nothing else. It doesn't mean it is less valuable. In 2010, the campaign included a total change of discourse compared to everything that had been done before. In 2010, 2009 we had faces on the banners for the first time [...] For me it was really inspiring during that first period. It was a space of freedom and aimed to function totally differently. And for some time, it did function differently from the rest of the world, because no matter how utopian it was, it was never ideal, but it was a pretty good experimental playground concerning how it could work. So the results were really visible and that was motivating for me. (May)

An organisational committee that was open for a community to join was something others also mentioned saying that it 'was innovative when we had it' (Bela) and that:

The organisational committee was a new form, that form doesn't exist anymore, but then everyone could join and participate and in that way we assured the legitimization of the community to represent ourselves, and we come from the community... (May)

A lack of recognition of innovation for the majority of the respondents was most often a problem with understanding what innovation in this context would mean, saying that 'it is mostly the same as in other NGOs, those lectures, education programmes, but I'm not sure I would call it innovative necessarily' (Elza). Other respondents said that they 'don't see it as something innovative, but I see that they are trying' (Lara) and that the problem is in the lack of initiative from the inside because 'there is not enough people and they are preoccupied with words. So I do not think that there is anything innovative' (Tea).

Even though some respondents criticized the ways in which the organisation functions, one respondent linked the lack of innovation with that issue. She talked about seeing the organisation as something that had departed from its initial values:

Innovative... this will sound terrible, but in the meantime, Pride became a project-oriented organisation. Pride totally departed from basic grassroots activism, from the community, and the only thing that is innovative in Pride is finding different ways of staying in that position. [...] What was called innovative in Pride was direct democracy and non-hierarchy. Unfortunately, it looks great on paper, but in reality hierarchy exists, democracy is an unknown term and all in all it is a tyranny of one person who has the support of one group of people in the organisation. Pride is innovative only on paper. Innovation cannot be only a word, because then we are all theoretical activists. Innovation has to be about acts. It would be innovative to give the community a free hand to do what they feel right to do and not to have those 'schemers', and those political games that are present in Pride at the moment because some people think they know what is right for the community. Innovation doesn't exist in Pride anymore, everything is a political game and something we all fight against. [...] Values are what are innovative, just like principles, but like I said, they are only empty words. [...] Pride is not innovative anymore and that is really sad. (Leia)

3.8. Bringing about change

When talking about change in society as a result of Zagreb Pride's activities throughout the years, it is unsurprising that almost all of the respondents talked about change being visible and significant on a social, legislative, as well as on a day-to-day level. Complemented by the activities that Zagreb Pride works on during the year, as well as the consequences of the Pride March, 'media perceptions are changed, visibility is bigger, the community has been built up' (May), which is especially reflected at the 'legislative level with the Life Partnership Act that would not have happened if Pride wasn't so visible' (Mika). Due to all this, 'Pride started to be important to everyone' (Oliver) because change was obvious not only in the work they do, but also in terms of its acceptance by a wider section of society:

I think it is important to say that there is a difference, I mean over 16 years you can see a difference. For me personally, I think that there was something, that people are glad to see it, even those who weren't in the March this year... they waved, took pictures, there was one woman who was fascinated, she was giving us a thumbs up and I was glad... maybe she didn't want to be on the inside, but it is important to hear people from the outside, who don't march, that they are supporting us [...] (Elza)

Respondents also talked about how reactions towards the Pride March changed over the years because the 'public in Zagreb have gotten used to Pride [...] they learned about tolerance' (Issa). This has led to more people coming to the March every year: 'the number of people that come [to the March] has grown, the number of those who agree with us has grown, as well as those who support us in our fighting for our rights' (Jo). What this means on a personal level to young LGBTIQ people in Croatia is that Pride has indubitably helped young people to come out at a younger age and in wider areas of their life:

You couldn't come out before, you wouldn't dare to come out in school or at your job, anywhere...now that has changed, you can. In some schools it isn't well accepted, but either way you feel a freedom, you feel that you can come out no matter what. So that is also something Pride made possible. (Lara)

However, some respondents took a more critical approach when talking about Zagreb Pride's work today and whether it is contributing to change as regards the LGBTIQ movement in Croatia today:

[...] at the moment I think that it doesn't. And this is a methodological issue, over whether someone will agree with me, but I think that the function of Pride and the March is to empower the community and that the community feel that the March is theirs. That March is from community to community. The community is the one that marches and you march for the community [...] What Zagreb Pride is really successful in, over the last three years, is in losing influence in the community, because it went in that direction. [...] So I think that Pride is not bringing about the social change it should.' (May)

However, viewing the Pride March as the 'biggest activist act of the whole year' (Archi), some respondents talked about their experience of their first Pride March as being 'one of the most special feelings I felt in my life. I felt accepted and proud' (Archi), 'a liberating feeling. You can be who you are' (Bela) and 'I can't even explain how empowered I felt, like I belong somewhere. For the first time in my life' (Lotrius).

Mika talked about how her participation in the Pride March resulted in a discussion between her parents:

It was a significant moment for me. The drumming and [later on] there were so many photos and I remember that my mom took my dad to the seaside so he wouldn't be here during Pride. He then saw us on TV, because the first rows [of the march] are always on photos and he reacted, like, 'What is she doing there? What is going on?' And then she told him, 'Let her go, she is a [social science student], she has to be in one of the first rows in the fight for human rights!' And then he fell silent. (Mika)

Being afraid of their parent's reaction if their parents see them at the Pride March was something that would often emerge as a theme when talking about going on first marches: 'For me it was so stressful because of the cameras, what if my parents see me? That was such a stress for me' (Mila). During one Queer Teens workshop, the teenagers talked about how they would like to go on the Pride March, but for them, as minors, this was still something they were afraid to do:

What could be noticed among those kids was that they were really scared. That constantly present fear is something that is strongly expressed. They are all really frightened that their parent(s) will find out, their peers or family... When I asked them if they would like to go to this year's March, they said that they would be so excited to come. (Fieldwork diary, 25 March 2017)

3.9. Visual methodology

In April 2017, disposable cameras were distributed to ten young people who had showed an interest in participating in the photo elicitation and later in the interviews. Of these seven participants completed the photo elicitation, producing a total of 77 photographs. Out of three participants who did not provide photos, one withdrew from participation, while two others were not successful due to technical problems with the cameras. The age range of those participating in the elicitation was from 17 to 30.

All the participants were provided with an information sheet about the project, detailing the visual methodology and explaining the three core concepts that were chosen as the main themes: (personal) security, inequality, and making a difference.

3.9.1 (Personal) security

Personal security was one of the topics that stood out from the beginning. It turned out to be one of the best topics for this kind of methodology because the participants were empowered to think about feelings of security and a lack of security in everyday situations. For most of the respondents, the term security was associated with personal spaces, their private rooms or even with their friends. The lack of security was something they would often link to public spaces, as seen on Plate 1. and Plate 4.



Plate 1. 'I found this graffiti under my window one day [...] It was only days after they saw me with my partner [...] they attacked me a few times in my street...' (Lars)¹⁰

¹⁰ Signature BBB ZG that could be seen on Plate 1 is acronym for Bad Blue Boys Zagreb, supporters of football club Dinamo Zagreb. When talking about context of conflicts, my respondents would often mention BBB fans as being the ones perceived as potential danger because of their past negative experiences they had with physical or verbal attacks or experiences of others.



Plate 2. 'This is a view from my room, it represents my feeling of security. My room... those are my four walls in which I feel wonderful [...] and secure in my room.' (Medo)



Plate 3. 'This was when, at one point, I turned around and realized I am alone in the tram [...] it was a short moment of feeling secure.' (Ruby)



Plate 4. [We are cannibals! We will slaughter you! Faggots for the last time!]

This was a graffiti that appeared one day, across from the club where we organised an event during Pride Month [...] after a while it started to piss me off, even more so because after that event my friend who was there that night, was attacked. Because we had a 'Gender Bender' party [...] That unnecessary aggressiveness and my friend who had to get stitches... I don't know, it isn't pleasant. (Ruby)

3.9.2 Inequality

The term inequality was often mentioned when talking about 'outside' threats. In the examples chosen below, we can see that Lara chose a picture showing a Christian shop near the Cathedral in the city centre (Plate 5). She talked about seeing people, not the religion itself, as those imposing discrimination and stigma on the LGBTIQ community. Lara was not the only participant who linked photos of religious institutions with the term 'inequality', also talking about direct connections the Catholic Church in Croatia has with some of the biggest conservative and traditional political parties, initiatives and organisations.

Other photographs portrayed certain contexts in public space in which they would encounter associations with inequality, such as binary separated public toilets (Plate 6) and crossing points which Saša noticed and talked about in Plate 7.



Plate 5. 'This picture represents Christianity in Croatia, which is one of the main religions here. Christianity isn't a problem by itself, but people who are a part of that are, those who see us as sick and who try to deny us our rights.' (Lara)



Plate 6. 'This is in front of a toilet in a shopping center [...] Once I was there and I watched, like, female right, male left... where should I go now?' (Lars)



Plate 7. 'We were all together there because of the Pride March organisation and this seems to show two worlds [...] like the squat Medika and Westin... it shows two different societies, economically we are different...' (Saša)

3.9.3 Making a difference

When talking about the idea of making a difference, respondents often emphasised that it was hard for them to remember if the photographs they took were meant to be linked to the term 'security' or the idea of 'making a difference'. For most of them those photographs conveyed the exact same things – physical places in which they felt safe, but because of the context, what was happening in those photographs would often be something alluding to making a difference. The photographs would most often display this year's Pride March organisation and the places in which participants worked during that time (Plate 8, Plate 9, Plate 10).



Plate 8. 'Pride is definitely positive, you don't have to explain that anymore because it is Pride [...] when you see in the movie how many people there were at the first March and how it looks today... there has definitely been a change and there is more to come!' (Saša)



Plate 9. 'As a matter of fact, all the photos that portray making a change, are also about personal security. Because the Pride March organisation was... you could really feel safe and connected with other people ... it is difficult to separate it out because Medika makes me feel safe, I couldn't feel bad in this space, it is really [a space of] positivity.' (Saša)



Plate 10. 'This was during Pride Month, when we had a banners workshop [...] you could see people who are part of the community but are not shown in the mainstream media, because when someone says lesbians and gays, people don't imagine a group of happy people writing graffiti in Medika, so that seemed to be an important moment to capture.' (Lars)

4. Conclusions

In 2017 Zagreb Pride organised the 16th Pride March for LGBTIQ people and their families, gathering over 10 000 supporters. Over thirty volunteers and members of the organisational committee worked on the Pride March and Pride Month programmes. Most of the volunteers in this year's organisational committee were young people ranging from 16 to 34 years old. This was one of the reasons why the local LGBT news portal reported on a 'new generation of a never younger Pride March: You won't split up our families and our friendships!' stating that 'Zagreb Pride grew up, but didn't grow old'¹¹.

During this ethnographic fieldwork, 31 interviews were conducted with respondents on their experiences of discrimination and stigmatisation, bullying in school, family relations, political contexts, being young today in Croatia, and feeling safe. The respondents were members of the Pride March organisational committees, volunteers in the organisation, members of the organisation, and young people attending the high school support group Queer Teens. Furthermore, they were members of former Pride March organisational committees and the founders of the Zagreb Pride organisation. Their age range was from 16 to 40 years, with the majority of respondents aged from 18 to 28 years.

The most important finding analysed in this ethnography is the existence of stigmatisation surrounding being a LGBTIQ person, as well as experiences of violence and bullying. All the respondents talked about having had some kind of violent experiences, whether verbal or physical, based on their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Bearing in mind the results of a study Zagreb Pride conducted (Milković, 2013) where over 74% of participants said that they had experienced some kind of violence, the fact that all of the respondents in this research stated that they had experienced violence strongly suggests that the situation is not getting better as regards hate crimes and hate speech. Even more so, Milković's (2013) results showed a significant lack of trust in the police and judiciary system with only a minority of the attacks having been reported. This result raises a lot of questions for wider academic research into the fields of the judiciary and legal system, as well as potential work for non-governmental organisations on empowering victims to report hate crimes. Yet most of all, basic problems that could be seen in these results tell us that there is a need for the proper education of police and judiciary officers in order to bring about the timely recognition of and responses to hate crimes and hate speech.

Conflicts in school or college are another significant problem that young LGBTIQ people in Croatia face, given the lack of support in recognition and reporting of bullying. Almost half of the respondents mentioned conflicts with educators, which highlights the need for the proper education of educators in order to recognize discriminatory behaviour.

The most common example of conflict among LGBTIQ youth is with family. This problem has already been emphasized (Milković, 2013) in the study 'Brutal Reality', where 29% of the participants talked of having intra-familial conflicts because of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

¹¹ This article was published on the local LGBT news portal CroL. The author Veronika Rešković concluded that the 16th Pride March was the youngest Pride March to date. She also alluded to the groups of young supporters that participated in the March. <https://www.crol.hr/index.php/politika-aktivizam/8669-nova-generacija-nikad-mlade-povorce-ponosa-necete-razdvojiti-nase-zajednice-nasa-prijateljstva-nase-obitelji> (20 April 2017)

Researching the LGBTIQ movement in Croatia not only brings visibility to LGBTIQ issues and the community, or recommendations for further work on legislative proposals, but also contributes to social movement studies. Consequently, these results show the growth and development of civil society and democratic changes which have happened over the last sixteen years. Zagreb Pride as an organisation, but also the Pride March, serve as good indicators of that change, demonstrating not only the significant and visible legislative work they have completed through their activities (the Same-Sex Life Partnership Act), but also how their activities have politically engaged and empowered young LGBTIQ people.

5. Future analysis

Through analysing this topic, several issues have been opened up that could provide possible new areas for research.

One possible future topic of analysis could research regional LGBTIQ movements in relation to their political and social contexts, as well as in relation to other post-socialist countries. This research perspective could offer insights into different levels of or the development of movements. Social analyses could also serve as a field review for legislative proposals. Bearing that in mind, a cross-case analysis within the gender/sexuality cluster could offer broader perspectives in relation to this topic. Furthermore, a comparison of views on violence and bullying could be compared and analysed across WP6 clusters, especially in relation to cases in the education/justice/society cluster, as well as the issue of stigmatisation which could be compared to cases in the culture/politics cluster.

After analysing the collected data, a potential for triangulation with quantitative data that will be gathered in WP5 is visible. This could be compared to the data gathered in WP4. More precisely, possible topics that could be further analysed are perceptions of activism, and especially political activism among young people; volunteering; authority figures in young people's lives; experiences of violence and hate speech; feelings of security; bullying in school and stigmatisation. As regards methodological triangulation, the visual methodology offered new perspectives on what safety, equality and making a change means to young people. Those issues could be additionally researched through focus groups and questionnaires.

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Appendix 1: Table of respondents' socio-demographic data

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Education	Employment	Residential Status	Family Status	Ethnicity	Country of birth	Religion
Archi	18	Non-binary	Currently in secondary education	In full-time education	Lives in care or foster care	Single	White	Croatia	Atheist
Bela	20	Female	Currently at university	In full-time education	Lives independently with friends	Single	White	Croatia	None
Borka	23	Female	Currently at university	Working and in part-time education	Lives independently with friends	Single	White	Croatia	Agnostic
Elza	27	Female	Completed general academic secondary education	Unemployed	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Atheist
Fox	21	Female	Currently at university	In full-time education	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Atheist
Gabi	26	Female	Currently at university	In full-time employment	Lives independently alone	Single	White	Croatia	None
Grey	21	Female	Currently at university	In part-time employment	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Atheist
Haz	27	Male	Completed university	Unemployed	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Atheist
Issa	24	Female	Currently at university	Working and in part-time education	Lives independently with friends	Not applicable	White	Croatia	None
Jo	24	Male	Currently at university	In full-time education	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Agnostic

Juno	18	Female	Currently in vocational secondary education	In full-time education	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Agnostic
Lara	19	Female	Completed vocational academic secondary education	Unemployed	Lives at home with other relatives e.g. grandparents	Single	White	Croatia	Other religion
Lars	19	Non-binary	Currently in vocational secondary education	In full-time education	Lives independently with partner/children	Married or living with partner	White	Croatia	Atheist
Leia	32	Female	Completed university	Unemployed	Lives independently with own partner/children	Married or living with partner	White	Croatia	Atheist
Lota	30	Non-binary	Completed vocational academic secondary education	In full-time employment	Lives independently with own partner/children	Married or living with partner	White	Other	Atheist
Lotrius	19	Non-binary	Did not completed secondary education and left	Unemployed	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	None
Madison	20	Male	Currently at university	Working and in part time education	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Atheist
Mark	26	Male	Completed university	In full-time employment	Lives independently with friends	Single	White	Croatia	None
May	28	Non-binary	Completed university	In full-time employment	Lives independently with own partner/children	Married or living with partner	White	Croatia	Atheist
Medo	21	Male	Currently at university	In full-time employment	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Hindu

Mika	27	Female	Completed university	In part-time employment	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Atheist
Mike	40	Transgender	Completed university	In full-time employment	Lives independently with own partner/children	Married or living with partner	White	Croatia	None
Mila	21	Female	Currently at university	In full-time education	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Agnostic
Nikka	20	Male	Currently at university	In full-time education	Lives at home with parent(s)	Not Applicable	White	Croatia	Atheist
Oliver	31	Male	Completed university	In full-time employment	Lives independently alone	Not Applicable	White	Croatia	None
Ruby	16	Female	Currently in vocational secondary education	In full-time education	Lives at home with parent(s)	Not Applicable	White	Croatia	Atheist
Saša	33	Female	Completed university	Unemployed	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Atheist
Smilja	17	Female	Currently in vocational secondary education	In full-time education	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Other	Atheist
Tay	25	Male	Currently at university	Working and in part-time education	Lives independently with friends	Single	White	Croatia	None
Tea	24	Non-binary	Currently at university	Working and in part-time education	Lives independently alone	Single	White	Croatia	Atheist
Zele	23	Male	Currently at university	In full-time education	Lives at home with parent(s)	Single	White	Croatia	Atheist