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1

Introduction

Phillip M. Ayoub and David Paternotte

Of course, this means the expansion of the sphere of the so-called gay culture, which has now turned into the official policy of the EU.

Alexei Pushkov, Chairman of the Russian Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee, December 2013¹

Alexei Pushkov's remarks were made in the winter of 2013, in the context of escalating tensions between Russia and the European Union (EU), when thousands of Ukrainians lined the streets of Kiev to protest against their government's intensifying relationship with Russia, which threatened Ukraine's deeper relations with the EU. As both Ukrainian society and state authorities weighed the tradeoffs of orienting themselves to "the East" or to "the West," Pushkov's warning to Ukrainians reflects the prominent role that lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans (LGBT) rights have come to play in geopolitical struggles across the region. His cautionary remarks harp on the idea that an alignment with Europe not only would result in forgoing decisive Russian economic support for Ukraine, but would also affect Ukrainian identity: national values and morals were at stake in the face of a rainbow-tinged European threat.

Connecting LGBT rights to the idea of Europe has become a recurring theme in international politics; such rights become a contentious element of belonging to Europe and a rhetorical vehicle used by those offering an alternative cultural paradigm to the EU. The global relevance of this association by those who oppose LGBT rights, and the various reactions provoked by its policies, only strengthens the bonds that tie this association and reinforce its perceived reality. Indeed, current debates in Russia and Ukraine, as well as worldwide reactions to the anti-gay propaganda law of Vladimir Putin's Russia, demonstrate that

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LGBT rights increasingly belong at the core of European values in the imagination of many actors.

Putin's position is, for example, partly inspired by a nationalistic project that aims to return Russia to the world stage. As he outlined in his 2013 State of the Federation speech, Russia is prepared to be the leader of a new political and cultural model that offers an alternative to both the EU and "the West."² One of the model's defining features is the promotion of traditional values and the defense of "authentic" national cultures, through the rejection of democratic standards imposed from abroad:

We know that there are more and more people in the world who support our position on defending traditional values that have made up the spiritual and moral foundation of civilization in every nation for thousands of years: the values of traditional families, real human life, including religious life, not just material existence but also spirituality, the values of humanism and global diversity. (Putin 2013)

As Putin outlines his alternative project, LGBT rights become a powerful symbol of the Europe he seeks to oppose.

At the same time, the reactions of institutional and civil society to Putin's policies, both in Russia and in Ukraine, have contributed to a further isolation of Russia from Europe, and subsequently also to an increasingly strengthened value association between Europe and LGBT rights. This was clearly illustrated by the European Parliament's resolution on the joint EU–Russia Summit, adopted in February 2013, which voiced serious concerns over the status of LGBT rights in Russia.³ Such reactions often confirm the imagined "Europeanness" of LGBT rights, which have been used in geopolitical contests at the margins of the continent.

These comments made by Pushkov and Putin refer to a "special relationship" between LGBT rights and a certain idea of Europe, in which "Europe" as a concept extends beyond strict institutional categories. Indeed, such an association between Europe and LGBT rights is not new in the scholarly literature (e.g. Kollman 2009; Stychin 2001; Kuhar 2011; Paternotte 2011; Paternotte and Kollman 2013; Ayoub 2013b; Wilson 2013), tracking occurrences of this association in countries as geographically and politically varied as Romania (Carstocea 2006), Poland (Chetaille 2011), and Hungary (Rédai 2012). Furthermore, this phenomenon is not restricted to Europe. As exemplified by recent scholarship on debates surrounding LGBT rights in Africa (e.g. Currier 2012),

the relationship is also used as a rhetorical tool in other parts of the world, where Europe is often conflated with the United States (US) or “the West.” With actors at both ends of the ideological and political spectrum increasingly repeating this mantra, the idea that Europe and LGBT rights are linked has taken on a role of its own, with important implications for the political sociology of the region.

This book is an attempt to understand better the emergence and the historical development of the “special relationship” that unites issues of sexuality and Europe. By looking at its various dimensions, we hope to critically examine how this relationship has been constructed and how it has become, especially in rhetoric and the imagination, a reality. We aim to explain the origins and the development of this relationship, addressing the paradox that, while being marginal within EU policies, LGBT rights have become a powerful symbol of Europe, featuring centrally in debates ranging from foreign relations to economic trade. We thus hope to shed light on the reasons why contemporary discourses, such as those surrounding the crisis in Ukraine, can refer to LGBT rights as a meaningful symbol with which to oppose the idea of Europe.

In doing so, this book explores the alleged uniqueness of the European experience, and investigates its ties to a relatively long and established history of LGBT and queer (LGBTQ) movements in the region. As we demonstrate, the earliest notions of the idea that Europe has a special relationship to LGBT rights first appeared in activists’ discourses, long before it was adopted and championed by European and national institutions. We argue that LGBT movements were inspired by specific ideas about Europe – democratic values and a responsibility toward human rights –, and sought to realize them on the ground through activism, often crossing borders to foster a wider movement. While LGBT issues are linked to Europe’s normative structures from above, by using “Europe” as an argument for demanding LGBT recognition from their states and societies, the activists on the ground subsequently, and indirectly, recreate the idea that Europe is united around the LGBT issue. In turn, the link between being European and accepting LGBT people becomes established, and the understanding of LGBT rights as a European value is further cemented, paradoxically also allowing others to use it as a strategic argument against the idea of a united Europe itself.

In the Introduction to this volume, we first discuss the idea of Europe and highlight how it relates to LGBT rights. Second, we give a brief overview of the history of LGBT movements in the region. Third, we

introduce the historical role of European institutions in adopting policies on the issue. Fourth, we explore the problematic construction of European “others” – those at the disciplined margins – who are left out of the process as Europe starts to wave its rainbow colors. Finally, we close the chapter by outlining the content of this book according to the three thematic areas we address: (1) *meaning-making*, how LGBT activists define “Europe” in the LGBT movement; (2) *practice*, how LGBTQ movements deploy the “idea of Europe” on the ground; and (3) *identity*, the ways in which this activism strengthens the European identification of regional LGBT movements.

LGBT rights and the making of Europe

The European project

Questions of what it means to be European have perplexed observers – whether scholars or not – for centuries. The broad sweep of a concept that has no clear boundaries in terms of geography and culture has left open the questions of “what is Europe” and “who is European.” While these questions have gone unanswered, there has always been a plurality of interpretations of the ideas that bind Europe together. From a revolution in France, to the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community, to discussions of “East” and “West,” “Europe” as a multi-faceted idea is always present. It helps shape the political understandings of a plethora of issues and the values that become associated with being “European.” In this volume, we do not attempt to answer these questions, but we do note an association with the “idea of Europe” and LGBT rights in contemporary politics, an association we wish to chart and explain.

While the “idea of Europe” has been deployed “by anarchists, nationalists, and romantic poets as a motto for everything from socialism to pan-Slavism” (Case 2009: 116), Deutsch’s (1969) theories considered the project of European identity building to be pronounced among groups that had sustained positive interactions and solidarity that functioned across borders. If a European identity were to emerge, then such groups would need “to come to a positive sense of solidarity based on the idea that they were all members of an overarching group” (Fligstein 2009: 136). This is true of European LGBT politics, where the idea of Europe re-forms and re-presents itself in multiple dimensions, and in the reverse process in which LGBT politics have become associated with European politics. When the organizers of LGBT marches wave EU flags and use

European slogans to define their claims (Ayoub 2013a: 299–300), they establish this relationship, giving “Europe” symbolic meaning, beyond the common institutional understanding of what Europe is.

Checkel and Katzenstein carefully distinguish between Europe as a *political project*, driven by purposeful political elites and their choices, and as a *socio-political process*, driven by “social mediation and exchange” (2009: 3). This latter process is a far more fluid conception of Europe, beyond institutions and elites in Brussels and Strasbourg (Hooghe 2005), which relies on deliberation, social networking, and political bargaining at subnational, national, supranational, and transnational levels. Thinking of both top-down and bottom-up approaches to Europe more reasonably captures the processes of European identity- and value-making that shape the spaces in which minority groups can pursue their specific European identity projects. These spaces are important for minority claims making, because supranational institutions do indeed allow for similar issues to become politicized in multiple countries in the European public sphere (Risse 2010). While the idea of Europe is appropriated in different ways across national contexts, 50 years of European integration have led both to an emotional attachment to Europe, as well as to a secondary identity, which Europeans attach to the broader European idea (*ibid.*).⁴

Beyond the institutions and economics commonly theorized in contemporary studies on politics and markets, Europe holds normative content – and some argue “soft power” – in terms of the ideational and symbolic impact it exercises over its own international identity (Manners 2002: 238). According to this understanding, the idea of Europe has an “ability to shape conceptions of ‘normal’ in international relations” through a set of values (239), covering a broad range of core issues from environmentalism to inalienable human rights. Scholars have criticized a Habermassian understanding of core European values (Castiglione 2009: 45), encompassing a rich sense of Europeanness and overestimated value convergence, but most agree that Europe has been made and remade over the centuries in the image of different values. While there is no mass consensus around a European value-based identity (Checkel and Katzenstein 2009), we do recognize such a link between LGBT rights and European values in international politics.

The idea of Europe and LGBT rights

In his abdication speech in July 2013, Albert II, former king of Belgium, discussed the unique contributions that the European project

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offers. Drawing on the memory of the Second World War (WWII), he emphasized that Europe's importance and relevance depended on it protecting its fundamental values:

In our world, the European project is more necessary than ever. In numerous domains, challenges can only be met at European level and it is at this level that some values can be best defended. I think of the wealth of diversity, democratic pluralism, tolerance, solidarity and the protection of those that are weak.⁵

The same values are put forward when talking about the European contribution to LGBT rights. For instance, in March 2013, the Belgian, French, and Italian ministers of equal opportunities, Joëlle Milquet, Najat Vallaud-Belkacem and Elsa Fornero respectively, published a statement in leading European newspapers to announce a European LGBT strategy. The ministers related Europe to specific values and claimed that these values provide the moral grounding for EU action on LGBT rights:

EU member states put the respect of fundamental rights at the top of their values. We want to foster these values, the defense of freedoms and the rejection of discrimination. We want to see these values in the external policy of the European Union... We want to adopt new European legislation against homophobia... We want to live in a European space in which individual freedoms are effectively protected, regardless of one's sexual orientation or gender identity... We, Europeans, must be united... These are the conditions to develop the project of a full recognition of the right of all citizens in the world to have their identity respected.⁶ (Vallaud-Belkacem, Milquet, Fornero 2013)

As the ministers' statement and the former Belgian king's speech exemplify, Europe's normative resonance is rooted in a set of values that LGBT activism has latched onto. This is not to say that there is consensus around these values (Hooghe and Marks 2009). There are multiple "ideas of Europe" in Europe, but one of these core ideas in contemporary European politics is that the European project is associated with the same values that are at the foundation of LGBT rights. Both those who attack and those who support LGBT rights as a value acknowledge that the association exists, which is exemplified in the politics we chart in this book.

Social movements contribute to these processes of establishing new “ideas of Europe” from below, which scholars have demonstrated in the rising use of European targets, frames, and transnational networks that have responded to Europe’s multilevel governance structures (Della Porta and Caiani 2007; Imig and Tarrow 2001). An idea of Europe is shaped differently, according to the local and national goals of movement actors, blurring boundaries of a national and supranational conception of European identity (Case 2009: 111, 131). For LGBT movements, this sense of “Europe” – appearing both as a set of values and normative commitments, and as a strategic means by which to gain rights in various domestic realms – is present.

The movement is embedded in multiple institutions and connected through a series of transnational ties across the region, as a geographical, political and (sometimes) cultural entity. However one defines “Europe,” LGBT activists have contributed to transcending its traditional borders by symbolically associating the continent with LGBT rights. Europe is a normative framework that constitutes LGBT actors’ interests and strategies, and in turn these actors (re)create European structures and institutions by linking them to LGBT rights. Thus, activists are not simply extending a liberal European notion of rights to an unrecognized group; they are helping define what the definition of “rights” encompasses. For these activists, LGBT people have always belonged to the project of a united Europe.

We thus look at domestic and regional forms of activism and the imagined community that has come to span the European continent. While campaigns still often target states, both the grievance and vision driving this activism contribute to contemporary ideas of Europe. Adopting a constructivist approach to European identity, which recognizes that agents and structures interact and are mutually constituted (Katzenstein 1996), we explore how transnational LGBT activists represent Europe and what kind of Europe they build through their strategies and actions. In our story, LGBT civil society actors are nested in institutional and normative European structures. This environment, within which these actors function, is not only material but also imagined and socially constructed (Anderson 1983). By discussing the contours of Europe that social actors imagine (Anderson 1983; Diez-Medrano 2009; Favell and Guiraudon 2011; Kauppi 2013), we show that these ideas – and more importantly the various ways in which they are embodied – further contribute to the making of Europe, an insight that is crucial for the study of European integration. The idea of a rainbow Europe is shaped by, and shapes, LGBT activism.

LGBTQ activism in Europe

LGBTQ activism in Europe provides a particularly useful vantage point from which to study the contribution of contemporary social movements to the construction of Europe. In particular, it highlights the multitude of levels on which contemporary politics take place (local, domestic and supranational), and the dense networks that are formed across state borders.

Europe is indeed the birthplace of homosexual activism. According to Foucault's (1978) analysis, doctors and psychiatrists invented the concept of "the homosexual" in the 1800s, as they transformed morally condemned sexual practices and applied them to a derided social personage and a scientifically established species. It was also during this period that homosexual identity was politicized, leading to early forms of activism in the late 1800s (Hekma forthcoming). The word "homosexuell" itself (it was first written in German) was coined in 1864, when the Hungarian journalist Karoly Maria Kertbeny used it in a letter to Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (Takács 2004). Ulrichs, a homosexual German lawyer, is often considered to be the first homosexual activist; he mobilized against the extension of Prussian Paragraph 175 – which criminalized same-sex intercourse – to Catholic southern Germany, where same-sex intercourse had been decriminalized prior to the German unification of 1871. Just over three decades later, in 1897, Magnus Hirschfeld established the first homosexual organization, the *Wissenschaftlich-humanitäre Komitee* (Scientific Humanitarian Committee) in Berlin, which campaigned for the decriminalization of same-sex relations in Germany. Interestingly, such groups born before WWII mostly emerged in countries in which the idea of a pathology of homosexuality was reinforced by legal discrimination, including Germany, the Netherlands (after 1911), and the United Kingdom.

The persecution of European homosexuals under the Third Reich put an end to these early organizational experiments, leaving neutral Switzerland the only place where organized forms of homosexual activism survived the War (Delessert 2012). A new wave of activism – called homophile activism – began after 1945, and groups were established in the Netherlands, Scandinavia, the United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium and France (Chapter 2, this volume). The sexual liberation of the 1960s and 1970s brought with it new forms of activism, as gay liberation groups contested the aims of earlier homophile movements. This was the time of the first gay pride marches and the invention of the rainbow flag, when gay movements regarded gay identity as revolutionary and encouraged coming out of the private sphere for both

personal and political fulfillment (Weeks forthcoming). With gay liberation, new groups emerged in most Western European countries, and national movements were formed in Italy and Francoist Spain. Lesbians, who had often been absent from earlier forms of organizing, mobilized in increasing numbers, together with men, as well as within women's groups (Podmore and Tremblay forthcoming). In the 1980s, gay and lesbian organizations also emerged in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) (Greif 2005), but the movement there developed far more extensively after the fall of the Berlin Wall (Chetaille 2011). Finally, trans rights groups began to appear in the 1990s in most European countries, blossoming at the turn of the century.

For many of these groups, Europe has been a propitious region for transnational activism. Notwithstanding linguistic diversity, short geographic distances and efficient transport networks have given an incentive to activist collaborations across borders. LGBTQ movements were no exception, and the first displays of transnational exchange can be traced back to the early twentieth century. The roots of transnational activism are tied to the aforementioned Magnus Hirschfeld, who later established the *Weltliga für Sexualreform* (World League for Sexual Reform) in 1928 (Kollman and Waites 2009: 3). Further attempts to build structured networks of LGBT groups across Europe occurred in the 1950s, when the Dutch COC (Cultuur- en Ontspanningscentrum) set up the International Committee for Sexual Equality (ICSE). This transnational organization met annually and included most of the homophile groups of the time (Chapter 2 this volume; Jackson 2009). In the 1970s, radical movements, such as the Italian FUORI! and the French FHAR, also attempted to establish transnational structures (Hellinck 2004: 22; Prearo 2012; Guaiana 2010).

The first enduring transnational LGBT organization, however, only appeared in 1978, when the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), called International Gay Association until 1986, was created in Coventry, United Kingdom (Paternotte 2012). This organization later played a central part in the globalization of LGBT activism (Binnie 2004; Paternotte and Seckinelgin forthcoming). Despite its global vocation, ILGA has been predominantly European. As suggested in Figure 1.1, the organization has always considered Europe a high priority, which mirrors its almost exclusively European membership for the first decade after its inception. From the start, ILGA was also inspired by a specific idea of Europe and, crucially, of its usefulness for the progress of LGBT rights (Ayoub and Paternotte 2014). Founding activists believed that European values held meaning

for LGBT people and thought that European institutions (the EU and CoE), along with the United Nations, could be used to gain rights by increasing pressure on reluctant states.⁷ This European orientation was further confirmed in 1996, when a specific European umbrella, ILGA-Europe, was established as the regional branch of ILGA-World (Beger 2004; Paternotte 2013). ILGA-Europe was the result of a regionalization process related to the globalization of LGBT activism, and a will to improve network structures in order to take advantage of emerging European opportunities. This trend toward the increasing Europeanization of LGBT activism has been confirmed in recent years, as exemplified by a diversification of European umbrella organizations, which include groups such as European Pride Organizers Association, the Network European LGBT Families Associations, the European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups or RainbowRose, the European network of socialist parties' LGBT caucuses.

ILGA and ILGA-Europe have been instrumental in organizing LGBT groups on a European scale and in articulating a stronger voice across the continent. However, as the authors of this volume demonstrate, they were neither the first nor the only groups to be motivated by an idea of Europe. Despite the fact that they do not always agree about what they mean by Europe and its usefulness for LGBT rights, numerous movements across the region were, and continue to be, inspired by "Europe," an inspiration they have tried to realize through activism. Their activism, which so often posits Europe as an imagined community, has also displaced regional borders, expanding Europe and reinforcing its definition as a set of values and a socio-political community linked to universal human rights, as illustrated by our opening remarks on Ukraine.

In brief, the history of European LGBT activism offers a rare opportunity to study the self-reflexivity of a social movement through time and to understand how it is shaped by a complex relationship between normative commitment, institutional support, and strategic aims. Especially for research on social movements, which was traditionally confined within the borders of nation states, LGBTQ activism in Europe provides a rich source of information from which we can broaden our understanding. Beyond a study of transnational and regional networks, this volume looks at the process of building a movement both from above and from below. It examines the various ways in which LGBTQ activists engage with regional politics and does not confine the study to the hallways of Brussels.

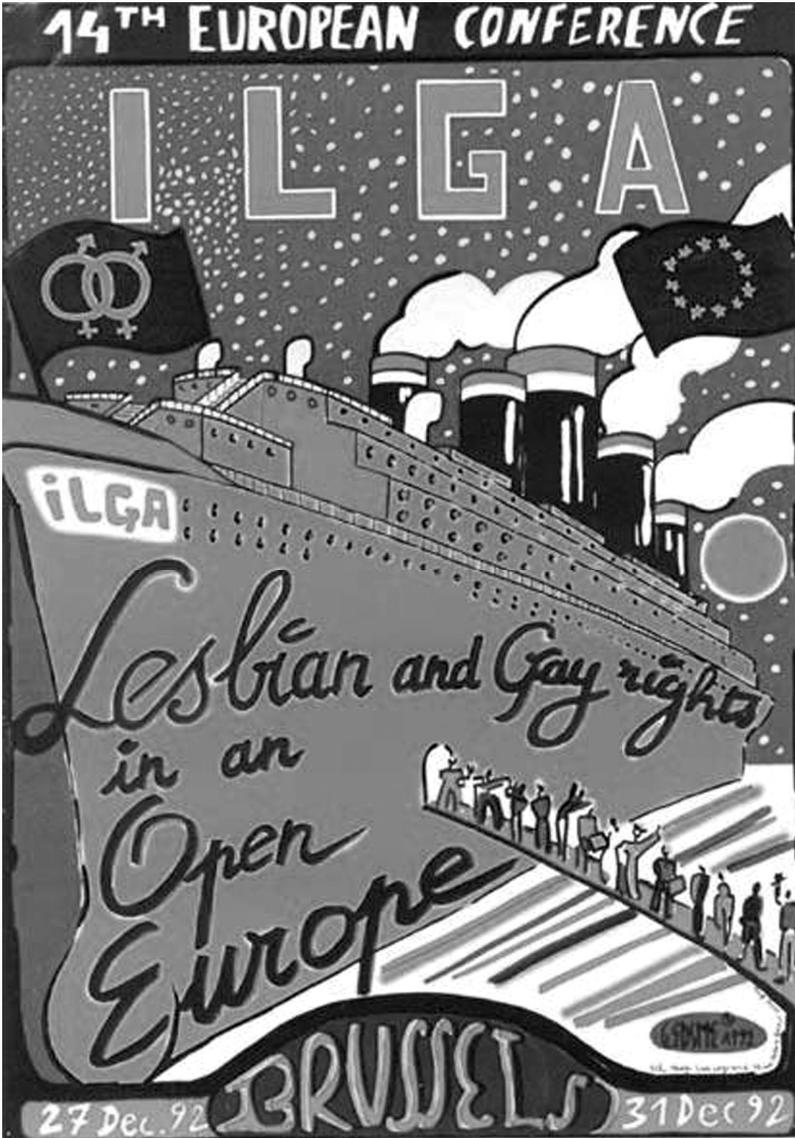


Figure 1.1 Poster for ILGA's 14th European Conference, held in Brussels in 1992
Source: © Gérard Edsme, gerard.edsme.over-blog.com.

Europe and LGBT rights

The idea that Europe enshrines fundamental values crucial to LGBT rights has not only been imagined by LGBT activists across the continent, but has also been increasingly endorsed by national and European institutions. In a global comparison, Europe is the region where LGBT rights are the most “advanced.” LGBT people enjoy comparatively high levels of tolerance and a vibrant LGBTQ community life characterizes many parts of the continent. On a legal basis, same-sex intercourse has been decriminalized throughout the region, most European countries offer generous antidiscrimination provisions, and many recognize, in some form, same-sex partnerships. Nine of the fourteen countries that recognize same-sex marriage at the federal level are European (Paternotte and Kollman 2013). Over the years, Europe, in its various forms, has emerged as a distinct space for sexual citizenship.

While legal changes have happened at a national level, European institutions have increasingly endorsed LGBT claims, confirming the latter are related to Europe’s normative commitments. Without attempting to give an exhaustive summary of achievements at the European level (Beger 2004; Bonini-Baraldi and Paradis 2009), it is important to bear in mind that the Council of Europe was the first international institution to consider LGBT issues, partly because of its human rights mandate (unlike the former European Economic Communities).⁸ In 1981, in the Dudgeon case, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) obliged the United Kingdom, one of its member states, to decriminalize same-sex intercourse in Northern Ireland. This first ECtHR ruling in favor of LGBT rights was later confirmed by court cases both within (Ireland, Cyprus) and beyond European borders. The decision opened a key venue for the contestation of LGBT rights in Europe, and the ECtHR has been instrumental on issues such as freedom of assembly, expression and association (in particular, pride marches), age of consent, partnership benefits and family life, access to the military or gender reassignment. In the same year, 1981, the parliamentary assembly of the Council of Europe adopted the report and recommendation on the discrimination against homosexuals, calling for the decriminalization of homosexuality, an equal age of consent, and for equality in employment and in custody rights. The political institutions of the Council (the parliamentary assembly and the Committee of Ministers) have regularly endorsed the defense of LGBT rights in the region, and the Human Rights Commissioner Thomas Hammarberg more recently (in 2009 and 2011) cemented his broader support for the cause by conducting an extensive report on the discrimination of LGBT people in Europe.

The European Community, which became the European Union in 1992, took on a social mandate later, despite the fact that ILGA's foresight had made this organization a target of their activism since 1979. Beginning with the adoption of the Squarcialupi Report in 1984, the Parliament became the movement's core ally within the European institutions, adopting numerous resolutions, including the crucial 1994 Roth Report. In 1997, the Parliament's Intergroup on LGBT Rights was established, rapidly becoming the driving force for LGBT rights inside the institution.

Other EU institutions have increasingly supported LGBT activists. The first contacts with the European Commission date back to 1990, when ILGA representatives met Vaso Papandreou, the European Commissioner for Social Affairs, who agreed to fund a study on "the rights of lesbians and gay men in the legal order of the European Commission" (Waaldijk and Clapham 1993). At the end of 1995, ILGA activists had their first meetings with representatives of the president of the Commission.

However, official collaboration only flourished after the adoption of the Treaty of Amsterdam by the Council in 1997; it officially included protection against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation as part of the European project. As a result, a directive forbidding discrimination based on sexual orientation in the workplace was adopted in 2000 (Waaldijk and Bonini-Baraldi 2006; Mos 2014). During the same period, ILGA-Europe was recognized as the official partner of the European Commission on LGBT issues (which includes its significant core funding) and started to play a central role in EU policymaking (Swiebel 2009). The European Court of Justice, which played a minor role until recently (Chapter 6 this volume), as well as the Fundamental Rights Agency (established in 2007) created new venues for LGBT activists.

These institutional achievements are largely the result of activism, both at the national and transnational levels, but they have also had an impact on social movements. At a transnational level, increasing recognition and support from European institutions has allowed ILGA-Europe to become a professional non-governmental organization (NGO) and an influential lobby for the defense of LGBT rights (Paternotte 2013). A similar process occurred with domestic organizations in several Western European countries. However, the impact is not comparable with what happened in CEE, particularly during the enlargement period. Indeed, within and alongside Europe's material resources, LGBT activists were often able to use the "idea of Europe" to frame the LGBT issue as a European norm. As European institutions adopted a normative structure that advanced the visibility of the LGBT issues – by introducing the issue

into the legal framework of member states (Kollman 2007, 2009; Ayoub 2013b, 2015(forthcoming)) – activists involved in the CEE developed innovative and appealing frames to deliver a coherent message on LGBT recognition. European frames offered an opportunity to link the issue to modernity and the responsibilities associated with being European (Kuhar 2011; Holzhacker 2012). For EU and Council of Europe members, these frames legitimized the LGBT issue through the constitutive effect of shared membership in a European community. European frames have also been used as a rationale for the mobilization of other Europeans in various domestic realms that are not their own. Foreign visitors are common participants at LGBT marches across the region, and they justify their involvement in such domestic affairs by highlighting that *Europeans* were protesting for shared *democratic values* (Ayoub 2013a). In doing so, they link their activism to shared values, solidarity and responsibilities as Europeans, especially in the face of state repression and societal resistance that so often cite national values as threatened by movements which challenge social mores (Ayoub 2014, 2010; Langlois and Wilkinson 2014). The idea of LGBT rights as European, and thus indirectly also Polish, Latvian, Hungarian, Slovenian, Romanian, and so on – because they are members of this shared community – is evident (Ayoub 2013a).

Constructing European others

When discussing the contours of what it means to be European, Risse (2004: 257) reminds us that “social identities not only describe the content and the substance of what it means to be a member of a group. They also describe the boundaries of the group, that is, who is ‘in’ and who is ‘out’.” In other words, this Europeanization process of internal identity construction will also fortify certain existing boundaries, as well as erect new ones at the periphery (Della Porta and Caiani 2007: 10).

Therefore, we are careful to not only enumerate the successes of social movements, but also think critically about the potential dynamics of exclusion in the process within which LGBT rights became conceptually linked to “Europe.” The hegemony of a new European LGBT discourse has overshadowed some claims and modes of organizing, created new hierarchies among activists, targeted both states and peoples as non-European, and paradoxically reinforced a distinction between the “modern West” and the “homophobic East” – all side effects that still characterize European LGBT politics. These issues raise crucial questions related to the way LGBT movements contribute to defining who and

what is considered European, where Europe is, and who has been left out in this process at three analytical levels: claims and modes of organizing, peoples and states.

First, successes of movement seem to be closely linked to a reorganization of both claims and forms of activism. Scholars have debated issues of normalization, both in LGBT people's everyday lives and in activism (e.g. Warner 1999; Duggan 2003; Hekma and Duyvendak 2011), a debate that we do not intend to reopen here. Yet, it is apparent that, as LGBT rights made progress in the region, some issues and some forms of organizing were deliberately left out, suggesting that an idea of rainbow Europe excludes certain forms of activism. This is true of a set of issues – ones that had inspired LGBT activism in the past and continue to do so in other parts of the world – that are increasingly more absent. HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive rights are rarely engaged, despite the central role they play at the UN level. The formulation of claims related to sexual expression has also changed. Sexual orientation has been turned into an abstract, legal and sometimes naturalized category (Waites 2005), as both movement claims and institutional discourses become focused on the three “Rs” articulated by the 2007 European Year for Equal opportunities: Recognition, Respect and Rights.

This process is closely intertwined with specific forms of activism, through which movements – often transformed into NGOs – have become more institutionalized and more professionalized (Lang 2013; Paternotte 2013). This was a striking feature of the expansion of LGBT activism to CEE, and of the process of selective endorsement of local groups by Western NGOs. As we have highlighted elsewhere (Ayoub and Paternotte 2014), beyond empowering LGBT groups and endowing them with financial resources and new mobilization frames, this process often creates hierarchies among LGBT organizations, namely between those who can and are willing to work transnationally and those whose work is locally focused. The transnationalization of the issue often privileges young activists who have spent time abroad and have language skills, particularly English, as well as those whose claims and repertoires resonate more harmoniously with the frames of Western European LGBT organizations and potential funders.

Second, through this process, a certain idea of who qualifies as European has been constructed. Connecting to the values defended by the former Belgian king and the three ministers discussed earlier, the notion of Europeanness intersects with an idea of civilization, positing some individuals and some peoples as less civilized than others. This not only creates cultural borders at the edges of what is considered

Europe but also reinforces internal boundaries (Jenson 2007). Within Europe, “homophobes” qualify not only on an individual basis, but also because of group membership. Critical scholars have indeed recently emphasized that members of some social groups are labeled “barbarians” because of their very belonging to this group, constructing them as “absolute others” and eliminating any opportunities for intersectional identities. This is especially the case for Muslim minorities in Western Europe (Mepschen, Duyvendak and Tonkens 2010; El Tayeb 2011; Fassin 2010; Petzen 2012), and can also apply to other peoples or nations, illustrated, for example, by debates surrounding homophobia among Poles around the time of EU accession (Chetaille 2013), or among the French following the mobilization of an opposition movement to same-sex marriage in 2012 and 2013.

As Carl Stychin (1998) has argued, “national” identities are often also constructed against an “other,” and, over time, we have seen the emergence of LGBT-Europe’s “sexual others.” Internally, Muslim and migrant communities have been at the fore of an “othering” process that has portrayed them as more homophobic, and thus less European. Externally, LGBT rights are used as part of European identity construction against countries at the questioned borders, such as Russia or Turkey. Scholars have also emphasized the distinct European path on LGBT rights in relation to the United States, noting that differences in welfare systems explain varied LGBT policies across the Atlantic (Wilson 2013), or, as illustrated by recurrent debates in France, that some countries have attempted to build a way toward LGBT emancipation that does not mimic American examples (Fassin 2009).

Therefore, while activists have seen the idea of Europe – and the deconstruction of traditional borders that is associated with that imagination – as having great potential for LGBT rights, activists and scholars alike must pay close attention to the cases where borders still exist and where new borders arise. Although European identity construction is often presented as a way to transcend violent European state nationalisms, activists and institutions have sometimes tried to foster a common sense of belonging, using strategies akin to those used by nation states in the past. In an attempt to aid the building of a common European identity, they have promoted the values of the LGBT activists that they would endorse, connecting to recent debates on “homonationalism” (Puar 2007; Jaunait, Le Renard and Marteu 2013). However, the study of sexual nationalism should not be restricted to nation states. Chapters 4 (Colpani and Habed) and 10 (Moss) in this book demonstrate this by exploring the emergence of a European form of sexual nationalism.

While reaching somewhat divergent conclusions, they analyze the various ways in which European sexual nationalism is deployed on the ground, establishing new forms of exclusion and privilege.

This brings us to our third and final point, which is that the “idea of rainbow Europe” has contributed to defining Europe’s geographic positioning. Indeed, the various processes of exclusion at work here not only target peoples on the basis of their alleged hostility, but also locate Europe in a specific space. It generates problematic questions: Are Ukraine or Turkey really in Europe and on what basis? Furthermore, are some parts of Europe more European than others? Indeed, as several scholars working on LGBT politics in the CEE have emphasized, EU enlargement and the expansion of LGBT rights further East has paradoxically reenacted the binary juxtaposition of “East” versus “West” (Chetaille 2013; Kulpa and Mizelińska 2011). Indeed, the values promoted by the EU and the wealthier LGBT organizations in Europe expand an understanding of LGBT rights that was consolidated in the Western experience, and LGBT activists, including in CEE countries, often present their claims in terms of “catching up” with this ideal. This is problematic, in the sense that a European LGBT frame inadvertently “others” some states as a deviation from the European norm. Additionally, discourses tend to aggregate many diverse CEE or Southern European countries into one, as if the situations of LGBT peoples were uniform across regions.⁹ This relates to old debates on the European core and its peripheries, which are engaged with in several chapters in this volume.

Meanings, practices and European identities

The volume addresses the themes of the idea of Europe and LGBT rights by focusing on the status of Europe in various forms of LGBTQ mobilization across time and space, covering the critical moments and types of movements in various geographic subregions. The chapters investigate European movements – homophile, lesbian and gay, queer, and trans – dating back to the 1950s, and in their different forms of radical and institutional activism. Geographically, we explore how movements employ the “idea of rainbow Europe” in Western, Southern, Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in the European neighborhood of Central Asia. Reflecting the kaleidoscopic nature of Europe itself and the diversity of its use in LGBT activism, we deliberately leave the definition of Europe open. This allows for a more complete inventory of what Europe means to LGBT activists and how they use it.

The book is divided into three parts, each tackling different themes. Part I tries to understand questions of meaning-making by exploring how LGBT activists have defined Europe in different forms of mobilization. Part II examines how actors both use and practice the “idea of Europe” in their work. Finally, Part III examines the various ways in which this activism reinforces the European identity of LGBT movements in the region. An intriguing aspect of European politics, explored in all the chapters, is that most forms of contemporary LGBTQ activism have deployed some notion of Europe, in some cases long before European integration had a social mandate.

Part I: Meanings of Europe

An underlying theme of all the chapters in this first part on meaning-making is that LGBT movements developed visionary understandings of the concept of “Europe” long before regional integration had social dimensions, and outside of the traditional geographic boundaries of the continent. These chapters illustrate the strong normative value of “Europe” for LGBT groups in the region, across time and place, which the authors execute in three different ways.

Leila Rupp’s chapter (Chapter 2) looks at the movement over time, tracing back the history of transnational activism to the postwar period’s homophile movement. By going back to the roots, she illustrates the formative role of “Europe” in shaping what we have come to understand by “Western” LGBT activism. Both transnational activism and sexual identity are entangled – often problematically – with a specific time and place that is anchored in “Europe.”

Cai Wilkinson (Chapter 3) shifts our focus to space by exploring the relationship between “Europe” and LGBT activism in Central Asia. Using the case of Kyrgyzstan, she provides an intriguing insight into the broad spatial reach of “Europe” – in this context, understood mainly as the EU – and how LGBT rights take on a meaning associated with European values. Though limited in many respects, Europe’s influence extends beyond its political role as a promoter of democracy to a wide range of informal roles – from bilateral relationships with NGO donors to the dissemination of know-how – that brand “European values” as a reference point for socio-political reform outside of its borders.

Finally, Gianmaria Colpani and Adriano José Habel (Chapter 4) investigate the meaning Europe takes for those at the European core, in relation to the consequences such a meaning holds for those at the Southern European periphery. Using the case of Italy, which is paradoxically situated both within and without the “European map

of liberal sexual politics,” they grapple with the political workings of European homonationalism, understood as distinct from national variations of sexual nationalism, and what it suggests for how we think of who fits within the core of contemporary Europe, and who is pushed to its disciplined margins. In all of these cases, the idea of Europe takes on a specific meaning in the vision and imagination of LGBT activism.

Part II: Practicing Europe in LGBTQ Activism

The second part of the book examines how actors both use and practice the “idea of Europe” in their activism. By practice, we mean that social movement actors do not only imagine Europe, but that they put the concept in motion on the ground. This motion occurs in multiple forms in activism; just as the opening anecdote on the use of LGBT rights in political debates related to Russia and the Ukraine demonstrates, “Europe” and “LGBT rights” have become connected in contemporary political discourses as two halves of the same coin.

In Kelly Kollman’s chapter (Chapter 5), activists use Europe as a discursive instrument to push for rights in distinct national arenas. By comparing the debate surrounding same-sex unions in Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, she shows how “Europe” is discursively practiced in relation to the different national settings. Rather than build a transnational community, these activists bring important concepts of “Europe” from outside into the domestic contexts.

Next, Anna van der Vleuten (Chapter 6) investigates the use of “Europe” at the critical point where legal activism and European supra-national courts meet. She highlights how the idea of Europe enables and constrains both activism and court rulings, and how it is constructed and implemented by the courts. She compares the European Court of Human Rights and the European Court of Justice, highlighting the different uses and successes of such references. She also shows, in both cases, that the centrality of the idea that Europe relies on specific values, which must be enforced by the courts.

In other movements, as Konstantinos Eleftheriadis explains in his chapter (Chapter 7) on queer festivals, actors practice Europe without discussing the content of the idea of Europe. They embody Europe and produce it through their activities – by traveling to meet across borders, overcoming linguistic barriers, and building a transnational community of European activists – rather than imagining it or developing a discourse about Europe. In sum, the authors of this part explore the dynamic of practicing Europe on the ground and from above, from inside and

outside institutional settings and in both reformist and radical forms of organizing.

Part III: Becoming European (identities)

The third part examines the various ways in which this activism reinforces the European identity of LGBT movements in the region. It looks at the consequences of such activism in terms of constructing new rights and identities that come to be associated with the meanings and practices of Europe. All three of these chapters in this section explore how the “idea of Europe,” defined by a set of values and as an imagined alternative to the nation state, shapes the identity outcomes associated with movement.

Carsten Balzer and Jan Simon Hutta (Chapter 8) look at such consequences in the professionalization of a grassroots movement, which navigates both its grassroots and NGO identities in an increasingly pan-European understanding. By examining the formation of a network of trans activists in Europe, the authors explore how European identity becomes increasingly pronounced and produces a new institutionalized dimension of the movement that propels the movement from the national to the transnational sphere. At the same time, activists have negotiated this shift by maintaining a specific European space outside of LGBT organizational frameworks to better defend their grassroots claims.

Jon Binnie and Christian Klesse (Chapter 9) then shift the focus to Poland to look at the complexities and potential contradictions of European transnational grassroots solidarities. The challenges associated with negotiating a common identification across national (and other) boundaries illuminate the complex processes behind activism’s role in constructing European identity and reinforcing the European project. While there is an extensive literature on transnational actors and social movements, the deployment of transnational networks, solidarities and identities by LGBT activism is widely understudied and all three chapters further our understanding in this regard.

In another vein, Kevin Moss (Chapter 10) demonstrates how activists in Croatia established a direct link between LGBT rights and “Europe” as they introduced the issue to the public leading up to EU accession in 2013. The many references to the EU reinforce the European dimension of LGBT rights in “becoming European.” He emphasizes the role played by transnational LGBT activists in imagining Europe as a political alternative to confines of national borders and subsequently how it cements LGBT rights as constitutive of European values.

Taken together, the volume addresses issues of meaning, practice and identity to highlight an understudied movement and its ties to European integration. Far from being limited to LGBT activism and to Europe, however, we hope that the insights drawn from the analyses that follow will offer us much that we can extrapolate to further our understanding of transnational social movements and regional integration in contemporary world politics.

Notes

Some passages of the text in this chapter have appeared in our earlier publications (Ayoub and Paternotte 2012, 2014).

1. Cited in “Pro-EU protesters at Kiev’s Maidan cannot decide Ukrainian destiny for entire nation – Pushkov,” *The Voice of Russia*, 10 December 2013.
2. Take, for example, Ugandan President Museveni’s response to US President Obama’s condemnation of the Ugandan Anti-homosexuality Bill in which he claims he would prefer to work with Russia. <http://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/I-ll-work-with-Russians–Museveni-tells-Obama/-/688334/2217532/-/w6gkn6/-/index.html> (accessed 21 February 2014).
3. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=MOTION&reference=P7-RC-2014-0150&language=EN> (accessed 21 February 2014).
4. The diversity of views on what Europe represents makes it a challenge to see strong shifts in individual identities, but it is no longer disputed that an increasing attachment to Europe exists (Risse, 2004).
5. Translated from the French.
6. Ibid.
7. This echoes the literature on “boomerang politics” in international relations. According to Keck and Sikkink (1998: 12): “Where channels between domestic groups and their governments are blocked, the boomerang pattern of influence characteristic of transnational networks may occur: domestic NGOs bypass their state and directly search out international allies to try to bring pressure on their states from outside.”
8. ILGA activists also approached the Council for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), later the OSCE, because of its clear human rights mandate. Its accessibility to activists made it a strategically fruitful venue to lobby and it would play a role in combating homophobic violence.
9. Substantial variation in legislation and attitudes toward LGBT people exists across CEE countries (Ayoub 2013b).

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