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Imaginaries of Sexual Citizenship in Post-Maidan Ukraine: A Queer Feminist Discursive Investigation

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Imaginaries of Sexual Citizenship
in Post-Maidan Ukraine:
A Queer Feminist Discursive Investigation

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Abstract

This doctoral project is an investigation of the imaginaries of sexual citizenship in post-Maidan Ukraine. I used a queer feminist discourse analysis method to examine how LGBT+ communities seek to position themselves in relation to hegemonic discourses of state and nationhood. Collecting data from focus group discussions and online forums, I identified the Euromaidan (2013-2014) as a pivotal moment wherein sexual citizenship was intensified as a dynamic process of claims-making and negotiation between LGBT+ communities and the state. Analysing how LGBT+ communities imagine and make sense of sexual citizenship, I demonstrated how the dominant discourse of sexual citizenship – homopatriotism, as I call it – emerged as a specific form of homonormativity at the complex intersection of the post-Maidan nationalist mobilisation, war in the eastern part of Ukraine, global human rights discourse, post-socialism, neoliberalism and axes of colonial power. Through homopatriotism, the universal discourse of (neoliberal) human rights and the particular discourse of Ukrainian 'civic nationalism' have become intertwined. This enmeshment, I argue, positioned LGBT+ communities as patriots and 'good citizens' and enabled instrumentalisation of the LGBT+ claims for sexual citizenship by the state. Being oriented towards Western models of 'LGBT+ progress' and away from 'Russian' and 'Soviet' regimes of sexuality, homopatriotism in Ukraine reinvigorated the geotemporal position of Eastern Europe as undeveloped and, therefore, 'catching up'.

Following the methodological and ethical bases of queer feminist studies, I looked closely at the counter-discourses that are scattered across the communities, with particular emphasis on grassroots 'queer activism'. Opposing both heteronormativity and homonormativity, critiquing capitalist/neoliberal, militarist, racist, ableist, misogynist and Western-centred tendencies within mainstream LGBT+ politics, the counter-discourses point to the analytic limits of the concept of sexual citizenship and enable alternative imaginaries of belonging, subjectivities and solidarities to emerge beyond the framework of sexual citizenship.

International Conference at University of Bucharest; *Feministische Zirkulationen Zwischen Ost und West* International Conference at Literaturhaus Stuttgart; ESA Sexuality Research Network Midterm Conference at Jagiellonian University in Kraków.

Before starting this project, I was affiliated with the Philosophy Department at the National Aerospace University in Kharkiv for many years. I am deeply thankful to my former teachers and colleagues for making me a scholar and supporting all my endeavours. Please, know that I am always 'yours', and I am grateful. Finally, I would like to express the deepest gratitude for this thesis to my family: Maria, Lev, Taras, Vova and Ira. Thank you all for waiting, meeting me in airports and railways stations, and upholding our bonds via the Internet for more than three years. If the amount of hearts that was transferred between us could be converted to electricity, it would be enough to light up all our homes. This is especially true regarding my fabulous parents. This thesis is dedicated to my wonderful father, Vasyl' Plakhotnik, and to the loving memory of my mother, Zinaida Plakhotnik.

Table of contents

List of abbreviations

CDA – Critical Discourse Analysis

CEE – Central and Eastern Europe

FCDA – Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

FGD – Focus Group Discussion

FPDA – Feminist Poststructuralist Discourse Analysis

GAU – 'Gay Alliance Ukraine'

IMR – Internet-mediated research

LGBT – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender

MSM – Men who have sex with men

QAFB – Queer Anarcho Feminist Block (at the 2017 Kyiv Pride)

QFDA – Queer Feminist Discourse Analysis

SOGI – Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Transcription notation used

CAPITALS – words spoken more loudly than surrounding talk

Underline – denotes emphasis on word/syllable

... – pause from 1 to 3 seconds

(pause) – pause 3 seconds and longer

(laughter) – laughter within speech

(indiscernible) – unclear recording, unable to transcribe

[text] – text added by the researcher to make the statement clear

[...] – deleted part of a quotation that does not change the meaning of the statement

Table of Illustrations

1. Introduction

Once upon a time, I liked to wear vyshyvanka[1] and camouflage trousers; the latter has been inherited from my uncle who used to serve in the military. Also, I had a passport cover in yellow-and-blue colours; I spoke Ukrainian, liked Ukrainian folk songs very much and attempted to study ethnic culture. What else to say, I loved the land I inhabited and cared about improving the life of folk in this territory...

Eleven or twelve years have passed. When I see vyshyvanka today, I feel sick; when I see a camouflage outfit, I hear the sound of the Air Force planes. I try to avoid the yellow-and-blue combination of colours in my life and have thought about switching to spoken Russian. In my country, settlements are set on fire and people are attacked solely because they belong to 'other' ethnic groups. In my country, feminist and LGBT events are systematically disrupted. In my country, there are music concerts where flags with swastika are waved and people perform the Nazi salute. In my country, the Academy of Sciences publishes books on how to cure homosexuality; government authorities release racist statements; the President will consider a petition calling to ban the 'homosexual propaganda'. In my country, I can't join any activist event without the risk of being beaten or pepper-sprayed. In such a country, I am ashamed and scared to live. I don't want to love everything described in the first paragraph anymore. I won't be a patriot especially because the burning down of a Roma settlement or concerts with a Nazi salute or all of the other things mentioned above are not recognised as unacceptable, as crimes. In my country, all this is normal and isn't considered to be fascism... (Tanya[2], Facebook post, May 2018)

This extract of data epitomises the emotional and analytical heart of my study: how do we, LGBT+ people and communities in Ukraine, feel about and position ourselves in relation to the nation and the state? It evokes questions: what happened? Why have views and priorities changed so dramatically? How has *vyshyvanka,* that was once a symbol of anti-colonial resistance to Russian cultural hegemony, become stained with

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[1] *Vyshyvanka* is the colloquial name for the embroidered shirt in Ukrainian ethnic costumes.

[2] *Tanya* is a pseudonym. See rationale in Chapter Three.

nationalist hatred? Do all LGBT+ people in Ukraine feel the same? The situation in post-Maidan Ukraine is ambiguous and complex, particularly at this moment when LGBT+ communities have clearly become a political subject in claiming sexual citizenship. On the one hand, this is a time of celebration of (newly obtained or revived) belonging to the Ukrainian nation for many active citizens. In addition, for many LGBT+ people, it is also a moment of 'progress' in terms of becoming (slowly, though) first-class citizens. On the other hand, as Tanya's story points out, this is a time of 'anti-gender' obscurantism, re-traditionalisation and growing ultra-right[3] violence towards LGBT+ communities, as well as other vulnerable groups. How do all these things work together? How do they affect our (different) lives today and our imaginaries of a desired future?

The context of LGBT+ communities before and after the Euromaidan

After the fall of the Soviet Union, transformations with respect to sexual politics in Ukraine were driven by processes of democratisation. In 1991, a few months after Ukraine proclaimed its independence, the criminalisation of consensual same-sex relations between adult men[4] was abolished as part of a general process of guaranteeing civil rights and freedoms. In the middle of the 1990s and 2000s, the first LGBT+ NGOs appeared, supported by international HIV/AIDS foundations.

Before the Euromaidan, the state performed rather anti-LGBT+ attitudes through corresponding legislative initiatives in the parliament. In 2011-2013, three bills aimed at prohibiting 'homosexual propaganda' were introduced in the Parliament serving to outlaw any positive mention of homosexuality to minors in public (bills № 8711, № 10290) and in the public sphere in general (bill № 10729). All of them mimicked similar legislation adopted in the Russian Federation at regional and federal levels. Although these anti-LGBT+ bills did not pass in Parliament, heated public discussions around them revealed the complex strategies being formed and mobilised against LGBT+

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[3] A working definition of 'ultra-right' (or 'far-right') groups in my study includes all types of ultranationalist organisations and informal groups which see the Ukrainian ethnic nation as the absolute value and the nation-state as a tool to realise the nation's will.

[4] According to the so-called Anti-sodomy Law in the USSR, same-sex acts between men were punishable by 5–8 years imprisonment. Female homosexuality was not criminalised but was defined as a medical pathology, such that women were subjected to compulsory treatment.

rights, as developed by *Svoboda* (ultra-right party), churches and religious right-wing civil initiatives. A new term 'gayropa' (gay + Europe) enriched the anti-LGBT+ slang vocabulary in Ukraine and neighbouring post-Soviet countries, referring to the idea that homosexuality is promoted by the 'West' and has the capacity to destroy the 'naturally heterosexual' Ukrainian nation.

New challenges for Ukrainian LGBT+ communities emerged following the events of Euromaidan (or, just Maidan[5]). Maidan began on the night of the 21st of November 2013 with public protests in *Maidan Nezalezhnosti* (Independence Square) in Kyiv, with protestors demanding closer European integration. Maidan protests lasted for almost three months and went through both peaceful and violent phases. It was a dynamic process, concluding with the fall of President Yanukovych's regime. Being closely followed by annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and the war[6] in the eastern part of Ukraine, the Euromaidan signifies the beginning of dramatic political transformations in society, including in LGBT+ communities. Notably, more and more scholars use the term 'post-Maidan Ukraine' to underline that these dramatic changes separate Ukrainian society from the pre-Maidan state (typically called 'post-Soviet'). Use of the term 'post-Maidan' in my thesis is not to say that Ukraine does not have any Soviet legacy; rather it aims to underline this symbolic rupture that dominates contemporary public discourse (including LGBT+ communities) in Ukraine.

The victory of the Euromaidan produced a new powerful discourse of Ukrainianness that has become reoriented towards Europe and in opposition to Russia (Kulyk, 2016). A new politic of 'decommunisation[7]' has been launched to facilitate the modern nation-building project that combines surmounting Soviet 'colonisation' with a 'return to Europe' (Samokhvalov, 2015). As studies in other post-socialist European regions show, when similar processes of nations' re-

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[5] The events in Ukraine in the Winter of 2013-2014 were called initially the #EuroMaidan protests but subsequently the shorter interchangeable titles, Euromaidan or just Maidan, have more commonly circulated.

[6] In spite of the absence of the word 'war' in the official titles of what is happening in the eastern part of Ukraine starting from the Spring 2014 (namely, 'anti-terrorist operation', 'the military conflict' etc.), in my study I use the wording of 'war' because it corresponds to my political positionality and personal experience.

[7] After the Euromaidan, a new wave of 'decommunisation' processes started in Ukraine. It targets variously interpreted communist symbols in toponyms, monuments and architecture, public holidays, etc.

definition on their way from socialism to 'democracy' took place, these transformations led to the rise of nationalism together with a form of 'Euro-enthusiastic' patriotism (Kania-Lundholm, 2012; Snochowska-Gonzalez, 2012). This rise also happened in Ukraine, being evoked by the Euromaidan but even more notably boosted by the annexation of Crimea and the war in the eastern part of Ukraine (Mamonova, 2018).

In this context, a new understanding of Ukrainian nationalism has taken hold. Leading scholars and public intellectuals have argued that the Euromaidan led to Ukrainian nationalism becoming reframed as a new, civic or political nationalism, that is not ethnically-exclusive but, on the contrary, is inclusive of different ethnic groups (Kulyk, 2014b; M. Ryabchuk, 2014). This assertion has been promoted in many ways, including through the 2017 Eurovision Song Contest (analysed in Chapter Six) which sought to 'celebrate (ethnic) diversity', for example. The imaginary of 'civic nationalism', examined theoretically in Chapter Two and through analysis of my data in the consequent chapters, plays a crucial role in the construction of sexual citizenship in Ukraine. The assertion of 'civic nationalism' has entailed important political consequences in wider Ukrainian society as it served to justify public tolerance towards right-wing radicals at the Euromaidan, presenting them as the 'lesser evil' in the struggle against the Yanukovych regime (Djagalov, 2014). Whilst in the dominant discourse (including those in LGBT+ communities), the right-wing radicals are presented as 'heroes' at the Euromaidan and 'hooligans' today, the more critical voices stress that the right-wing domination at the Euromaidan was a first step towards the growing 'right-wing turn' in Ukraine (Bondar', 2018b; Herasym & Petik, 2016; Mayerchyk, 2014). As left-wing oriented Ukrainian scholars argue, the collective 'Euro-enthusiastic' aspiration has become gradually framed in nationalist and conservative terms (Ryabchuk, 2014, p.133). Furthermore, feminist scholars have argued that this right-wing turn has become possible in large part 'because the Ukrainian society easily accepted the domination of white, normative, military, and tradition-oriented male figures' at the Euromaidan (Mayerchyk & Plakhotnik, 2015, n.p). In the five years following the Euromaidan, the 'turn to the right' has resulted in a growing escalation of ultra-right violence towards a variety of groups, including the Roma population, internal refugees, and feminist and LGBT+ communities (ECRI, 2017).

After the Euromaidan, the situation of LGBT+ communities in Ukraine became even

more complicated. LGBT+ people from the so-called LPR and DPR [8], as well as Crimea, had found themselves under the direct threat of Russia's state-sanctioned intolerance of LGBT+ communities, such that many of them had to flee. In the non-occupied part of Ukraine, the victory of pro-European political choice and strong detachment from Russia reduced the risk of new anti-LGBT+ legislative initiatives for a couple of years. Furthermore, for the first time in Ukrainian history, the law identified LGBT+ people as citizens and claimed the protection of their rights: in November 2015, under pressure from the European Commission and civil protests, prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of SOGI (sexual orientation and gender identity) was included in the Labour Code. The National Human Rights Strategy for 2016 – 2020 included the introduction of civil partnerships and provisions for the development of new sex reassignment and legal gender recognition procedures for transgender people, also granting them permission to adopt children. However problematic these legal changes are in the eyes of some in the LGBT+ communities (as my analysis in Chapters Six and Seven will show), the fact of their adoption sends an important signal to Ukrainian society. Notably, these legal changes happened due to the rapidly increased importance of strategic EU-Ukraine relations for post-Maidan Ukraine. It is commonly understood that adoption of the Labour Code amendment was a pre-condition for the visa-free access to Schengen zone for Ukrainian passport holders which started in June 2017.

Simultaneously, these legislative changes were accompanied by new challenges for LGBT+ communities. Human rights activists have highlighted the growth of street violence against LGBT+ people in Ukraine after the Euromaidan. The *Equal Rights Trust Country Report 2015* on Ukraine underlines that

> high levels of stigma and prejudice and the failure of the legal framework to provide protection from discrimination has resulted in particularly high levels of discrimination against individuals on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity (2015, p. 62)

A similar conclusion was made by *Nash Mir* Centre in their longitudinal study comparing data on crimes and incidents motivated by homophobia and transphobia: 'the situation of violence and discrimination against LGBT people in Ukraine over the past three years did not evidence any signs of improvement' (Nash Mir Center, 2018b,

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[8] LPR and DPR stand for the territories of Ukraine around the cities Luhansk and Donetsk, i.e. self-proclaimed 'Luhansk People's Republic' and 'Donetsk People's Republic'.

p. 52). Today, public LGBT+ events in Ukraine are invariably under threat of being fiercely attacked, gas-sprayed, stoned or disrupted by other means by far-right groups.

The attitudes of the Ukrainian State towards LGBT+ communities after the Euromaidan are overtly ambiguous. On the one hand, the prohibition of SOGI- based discrimination in the sphere of labour and the efficient protection of Kyiv Pride in 2016-2018 (analysed in Chapter Five) send a message that is often interpreted as supportive of LGBT+ communities. On the other hand, it has become clear that 'the government is failing to fulfil its obligations to ensure equality of LGBT people, including those in the National Human Rights Strategy' (Yarmanova, 2018a, p. 90). The introduction of civil partnerships (that has been drafted and actively lobbied by several LGBT+ NGOs), as well as the development of new sex reassignment and legal gender recognition procedures for transgender people, has not led to any significant progress within governmental structures. The anti-LGBT+ bills projects started appearing in local and central governments and receiving public support from political leaders and the conservative quarters of civil society. In addition to militarisation and nationalist and religious re-traditionalisation, there are other alarm signals, namely: the ultra-nationalist groups regularly started receiving substantial financial support from the state for organising massive 'national-patriotic' training for children and youth. According to the open data, the state has sponsored the 'C14' organisation that destroyed several Roma settlements and initiated disruption of the Kyiv Pride march (Bondar', 2018a, 2018b).

The 'Euro-enthusiastic' aspirations evoked by the Euromaidan affected LGBT+ communities in many ways. They invigorated questions that in my data are discussed in terms of national belonging and patriotism, relations with the state and institutions, LGBT+ activism and citizens' duties, alliances and solidarities. Altogether, they comprise a discursive constellation, which I study through the concept of sexual citizenship.

Why study sexual citizenship in Ukraine?

The term *'sexual citizenship'* has been circulating in academic discourse since the 1990s (Evans, 1993), with its aim to alter traditional understandings of citizenship as a status that is solely defined by the state (Marshall, 1950). It can be described as a 'momentum concept' (Hoffman, 2004; Lister, 2007) that broadens the scope of 'citizens'' identities, and uncovers the gendered and racialised nature of citizenship (Evans, 1993). Despite somewhat varying meanings of sexual citizenship existing in the academic literature, my study adopts an understanding that combines a feminist appreciation of citizenship as a deeply gendered concept (Lister, 2002, 2003; Pateman, 1988) and the queer theoretical account of sexual citizenship that calls for deconstruction of its normative assumptions in the struggle for recognition (Bell & Binnie, 2000; Berlant, 1997; Cossman, 2007; Seidman, 2001). Drawing on the contemporary debates on sexual citizenship in academic literature (examined in Chapter Two), I conceive of sexual citizenship, firstly, as diverse practices of 'doing citizenship' that can be understood as discourses and thus investigated by means of the discourse analysis method (delineated in detail in Chapter Three). Secondly, the performative framework allows seeing citizenship as a political process of 'becoming' sexual citizens as 'recognized subjects' (Cossman, 2007) or 'political subjects' (Sabsay, 2016). From this perspective, the rights that are demanded by LGBT+ communities have a regulatory role but also a performative aspect that makes comprehensible an imaginary about the desired configuration of citizenship, as well as the political community of citizen-subjects. Finally, understanding citizenship as a political practice of constant differentiation from those who are not (should not be) citizens is crucially important for my study since it allows seeing how (normative) sexual citizenship is produced through and productive of its 'constitutive outside' (Mouffe, 1992; Sabsay, 2016).

My research project is situated in Ukraine – a region that resides in the former 'second world' that tends to disappear from the Western imaginary in the process of its never-ending 'transition' from socialism to neoliberal democracy (Suchland, 2011). This context compels me to approach sexual citizenship from a perspective that is informed, in particular, by studies of sexual politics in the post-socialist parts of Europe

(see Ayoub & Paternotte, 2014; Bilić, 2016; Mizielinska & Kulpa, 2011 among others) and Asia (Bao, 2018). I draw on critiques of the multiple hierarchies between the global North and Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). In this regard, I adopt a concept of 'geotemporality' (Mizielinska, 2011) that opens up insight into the ways in which spatial differences are substituted by temporal terms (such as 'lagging behind' and 'catching up') to veil the power relations that are constitutive of centres and peripheries, the 'West' and 'the rest'. In addition, I pay particular attention to how the structure of sexual citizenship has been shaped by the former socialist regime and then by the so-called 'transition' that brought 'retraditionalisation' and 'repatriarchalisation' of the gender order (Einhorn, 2006), on the one hand, and liberation of the various oppressed social groups, including LGBT+ communities, on the other.

My research is amongst the first studies of sexual citizenship in Ukraine. This position reflects a broader scarcity of sexuality research in Ukraine and other post-Soviet regions in comparison with the Anglo-American context. At the same time, whilst citizenship remains an entirely legislative term in Ukrainian scholarly discourse, the number of research projects that study various aspects of sexual citizenship in Ukraine without using the term explicitly has grown over the last decade (Mayerchyk, 2015; Pagulich 2016, 2017; Pohribna, 2015; Teteriuk, 2016a; Yarmanova, 2012a, 2012b). In this context, I made the choice to use the term 'sexual citizenship' as it grasps the 'object' of my study and connects my research (and the studies listed above) with the existing body of publications on sexual citizenship in different Eastern European regions. Through introducing and further popularising the term within my thesis I aim to make a substantial theoretical contribution to the Social Sciences and interdisciplinary research in Ukraine. Even more importantly, my study seeks to support LGBT+ communities in Ukraine by means of encouraging more self-reflective and accountable LGBT+ politics and promoting an anti-nationalist and anti-militarist LGBT+ agenda, as I explore in later chapters. Finally, positioning 'sexual citizenship' as a key concept within my study, I am making a political gesture that opposes a neo-conservative right-wing turn in Ukrainian public discourse and promotes critical queer feminist studies of sexualities in Ukrainian academia and beyond.

Research questions and aim

This thesis is focused on some of the key discourses that constitute sexual citizenship in post-Maidan Ukraine (2014-2018). More specifically, I study how sexual citizenship has been imagined and narrated by its subjects – the members of LGBT+ communities. My goal is to understand how imaginaries of sexual citizenship are substantiated in the narratives that address relationships between LGBT+ communities, on the one hand, and the nation-state, on the other. Situating my study in a specific place and time, I seek to produce not a comprehensive genealogy but rather a snapshot of the momentum that illuminates the complex and contradictory process of 'doing' sexual citizenship in Ukraine. The aim of this study, therefore, is to provide a more nuanced and situated analysis of discourses that accounts for both internal (i.e. inside LGBT+ communities) and external (i.e. LGBT+ communities in wider Ukrainian society) discursive structures and their political implications. In saying this I pay tribute to all forms of LGBT+ activism in Ukraine because this work makes a difference. At the same time, being particularly focused on the discourses produced from within LGBT+ communities, I seek to shed light on the power regimes that are barely visible from outside these communities: those that privilege certain voices/ discourses whilst silencing and excluding others.

The guiding **research question** of my study is:
- How has the discourse of sexual citizenship become constituted in the narratives of Ukrainian LGBT+ communities?

The supplementary questions I explore are:
- How do Ukrainian LGBT+ communities seek to position themselves in particular ways in relation to broader hegemonic discourses of state and nationhood?
- How are imaginaries of active citizenship and patriotism, public and private, sameness and differences, normalcy and aberration, contested and negotiated in the narratives of LGBT+ communities?
- To what extent are counter-discourses performed in LGBT+ spaces and how do they challenge the predominant construction of sexual citizenship?

These research questions inform my decision to use discourse analysis as this has the capacity to advance a sophisticated theorisation of the relationship between social

practices and discursive structures. Further operationalisation of the method in the process of my research has led to crafting a method of analysis that is specifically attuned to the epistemological framework, ethics, methods and data of my study – namely queer feminist discourse analysis (QFDA). Being grounded in a queer feminist epistemology, QFDA seeks to take account of how different axes of inequality and domination manifest themselves through social interactions.

There are two main cases (sites) of my study – the Queer Homes network and the Kyiv Pride. These were chosen because they represent different aspects of Ukrainian LGBT+ communities' lives in public and semi-public domains. I have visited all seven Queer Homes that were active at the time of my fieldwork and during these visits generated original focus group discussion data. The Kyiv Pride has been studied through multiple sources: I collected public statements issued by the Kyiv Pride organising committee; I discussed Kyiv Pride in focus group discussions with local LGBT+ communities; finally, I gathered publicly available materials from online discussions on various aspects of Pride marches and related events, as well as broader debates about Pride in Ukraine.

Chapter outlines

In this chapter (Introduction) I have provided background information about the situation of LGBT+ people and communities in Ukraine and the impact of the Euromaidan events on this situation as well as on broader society. Outlining my interest in the controversies and paradoxes that inform relations between LGBT+ communities and the state, I introduced the core concept of my study – sexual citizenship – and set out my research questions. The theoretical framework of my research – queer feminist discourse analysis – and the main sites of data collection have also been delineated and justified.

The remaining chapters are organised as follows. Chapter Two outlines the conceptual framework of my research, contextualises my study with respect to the relevant literature and operationalises the term 'sexual citizenship' as used in my study. In Chapter Three, I reflect on my methodology, methods and ethics from the perspective of their deep entanglement and co-constitutive character in feminist research. Then I provide a detailed account of the main methods of data collection and data analysis.

Chapters Four to Seven present my analytic examination of the collected empirical data. The analysis in Chapter Four traces how the dominant discourse of sexual citizenship in Ukraine (homopatriotism, as I refer to it) emerges at the intersection of the universalist human rights discourse and the particular discourse of 'civic nationalism'. In Chapter Five, a closer examination of discourses produced by the Kyiv Pride delineates what type of LGBT+ subjects appear to become 'sexual citizens' through the entanglement of the discourses of 'LGBT+ progress' and patriotism. The investigation set out in Chapter Six identifies how counter-discourses from inside LGBT+ communities oppose homopatriotism through anti-militarist, anti-capitalist and anti-state critique. In Chapter Seven, I extend my arguments to explore how the imaginaries of sexual citizenship have been contested and negotiated in LGBT+ communities by examining the paradoxes of its constitutive discourses: human rights, diversity, inclusion and normalcy/normativity. More specifically, in this chapter I seek to understand how the paradoxical assumptions that underlie these discourses substantiate their domination and, simultaneously, inform their potentiality for subversion.

In conclusion, I provide a brief review of the key points of my research, namely, what is specific about sexual citizenship in post-Maidan Ukraine, how does it work and for whom? I reflect on methodological challenges and ethical problems that arose during the course of my study, and the limitations (biases) that have emanated from my specific positioning within the field. Finally, I delineate the perspectives of how my study could be elaborated in the future through a productive dialogue of queer, feminist and transgender studies, on the one hand, and citizenship studies, on the other, in order to multiply and complicate the criticality of normativities and power.

2. Conceptual Framework

This chapter outlines the conceptual framework of my study. It starts with an examination of the concept of 'sexual citizenship', with particular emphasis on those interpretations that best suit my research scope and foci. I engage with feminist and de-centring conceptualisations of sexual citizenship, and the performative dimension of citizenship, which situates it as a complex process of 'becoming' through which citizenship and subjectivity are co-constituted. Since, in my study, sexual citizenship is conceived as a specifically sexed and gendered construct that absorbs ideological assumptions of the nation-state, the core constituent ideologies of sexual citizenship are identified and operationalised. More specifically, I discuss how the peculiarities of nation and nationalism in post-Maidan Ukraine, as well as global capitalist regimes and neoliberal governmentality, facilitate the emergence of sexual citizenship in Ukraine as a local configuration of homonormativity.

Sexual citizenship

The story of sexual citizenship, as Brenda Cossman has highlighted, is about 'how some sexual outlaws have been reconstituted as legitimate citizens, and incorporated into the folds of dominant modalities of sexual citizenship' (Cossman, 2002, p. 484). Sexual citizenship has been conceptualised in a number of ways in academic literature – from interpreting it as a sign of growing inclusion of LGBT+ communities into polity (Weeks, 1998) to a more critical view of sexual citizenship as a process of assimilation and de-politicisation (Bell & Binnie, 2000; Berlant, 1997). It has also been theorised through a dialectic between assimilationist tendencies and transgression (Langdridge, 2006, 2013). The entry point of my study is informed by the body of works on sexual citizenship that distinguishes between two forms of LGBT+ politics, namely between so-called assimilation and some other (presumably more radical) alternatives that are often called 'queer politics'. Whilst assimilationist politics were developed as a strategy of homosexual normalisation, 'queer politics' rather resists normalisation through 'both rethinking democratic citizenship and remaking individual and collective life by imagining bodies, selves, and intimacies that are formed and organised in a non-

normalising social order' (Seidman, 2001, pp. 327–328). From this perspective, the assimilationist approach has become an object of critique, inasmuch as it requires LGBT+ communities to position themselves as 'acceptable' citizens (Bell & Binnie, 2000) whilst heterosexuality remains the 'norm' and the reference point for equality (Richardson & Monro, 2012). Within this framework, investigation of sexual citizenship shows how assimilationist strategies reproduce and are produced through neoliberal consumerism (Duggan, 2004; Walters, 2014), de-sexualisation and familiarisation (Bell and Binnie, 2000; Cossman, 2007; Evans, 1993), and patriotic mobilisation (Berlant, 1997; Puar, 2007).

At the same time, some academic debates point out that application of the Western-centred construction of sexual citizenship reinforces the imperialist and neo-colonial politics of the West (El-Tayeb, 2011; Puar, 2007; Sabsay, 2016; Weber, 2016). Furthermore, scholars of sexual politics in the post-socialist part of Europe (Bilić, 2016; Einhorn, 2006; Mizielinska & Kulpa, 2011) have argued that it is important to take into account the specific temporal and spatial configuration of sexual citizenship in those regions marked by notions of (everlasting) 'transition' and 'lagging behind'. Being completely in agreement with this argument, I consider the Western queer critique of the assimilationist desire for sexual citizenship to be a starting point for my study. For further development of my conceptual framework, however, a critical examination of the West/non-West power circulation in production of knowledge on sexual citizenship is needed.

De-centring sexual citizenship

The concept of citizenship has a different history and a different set of meanings in Ukraine, as compared to the UK and the broader Anglo-American context. This requires that I must remain cognisant of the colonising potential of the universalist conception of sexual citizenship as 'the mere imposition of a Euro-North Atlantic sexual paradigm onto other worlds' (Sabsay, 2014, p. 99). In this regard, I learnt from the corpus of knowledge that is called today a 'decolonial option' (Cusicanqui, 2012; Lugones, 2007; Marcos, 2006; Mendoza, 2016; Smith, 1999). This critical viewpoint challenges the colonial construction of identities and citizenship in non-Western

societies as well as the epistemic hegemony of the West. The latter, as Stuart Hall (1992) pointed out, functions in ways which characterise and classify societies into categories through providing a standard model of comparison and criteria of evaluation against which other societies are ranked. Through these procedures, indigenous peoples and their societies are coded into the Western system of knowledge (Hall, 1992), with the concept of sexual citizenship being a case in point.

My research project is situated in Ukraine, which is perceived as 'white' enough and Westernised enough not to be considered a European postcolonial 'Other' (Pachmanová, 2010). The place of the 'Other', as current studies on sexual politics in Western Europe show (El-Tayeb, 2011; Haritaworn, 2015), has been primarily reserved for racialised populations. At the same time, together with other post-socialist regions of the non-Western part of Europe, Ukraine resides at the 'semiperiphery' (Blagojević, 2009) of the global structure of knowledge production. Ukraine's belonging to the former 'second world' facilitates exclusion of the Ukrainian perspective from transnational feminist studies (Koobak, 2013; Suchland, 2011), as well as critical sexuality studies, that typically prioritise 'the dialogue between the first and the third world and thus cementing a binary between the Global North and the Global South' (Koobak, 2013, p. 91).

The in-betweenness of Ukraine within the imaginary of the world's centres and peripheries poses a challenge to developing my conceptual framework without a straightforward application of the 'sexual citizenship' concept. Though I have learnt a lot from postcolonial and decolonial feminist critique (Gandhi, 1998, 2006; Grewal & Kaplan, 2000; Mendoza, 2016) and a decolonial approach to gender and sexuality studies (Bakshi, Jivraj, & Posocco, 2016; binaohan, 2014; Smith, 1999), I do not directly reference coloniality in naming my conceptual framework. Whilst the body of scholarly works using a decolonial perspective in studies of post-socialist regions is growing (Boatcă, 2016; Koobak & Marling, 2014; Tlostanova, 2010), the applicability of the decolonial option beyond the context of its origin (which is Mesoamerica) can be seriously contested. Importantly, the strong racial and anti-capitalist focus of the decolonial option should not be lost in such applications. As a result, I have adopted the term 'de-centring', which has proven its analytic potential in the Central and

Eastern European (CEE) context (Mizielinska & Kulpa, 2011). It was argued that 'any critical reimagining of the concept of sexual citizenship needs to be accompanied by a de-centring of the focus on the Global North' (Richardson, 2017, p. 219) to advance theoretical understandings of the concept.

Studies of sexualities in the former socialist states of Europe (Butterfield, 2014; Kahlina, 2014; Kulpa, 2014; Mizielinska & Kulpa, 2011b) and Asia (Bao, 2018) have proven to be particularly helpful in developing the conceptual framework for my study. More specifically, I draw upon the concept of 'geotemporality', as elaborated by Joanna Mizielińska and Robert Kulpa (2011). This concept represents, in Doreen Massey's words, 'a discursive victory of time over space':

> That is to say that differences which are truly spatial are interpreted as being differences in temporal development – differences in the stage of progress reached. Spatial differences are reconvened as temporal sequence (D. Massey, 1999, p. 28).

In my study, the concept of 'geotemporality' signifies not just 'truly spatial' differences but rather how the discursive substitution of spatial differences by temporal terms serves to veil the power relations that are constitutive of centres and peripheries. From this perspective, a 'geotemporal' approach allows for the problematisation of such key categories of sexual citizenship construction as 'progress', 'democratisation', 'human rights', basic identity categories ('sexual orientation' and 'gender identity' - SOGI) in the Ukrainian context. In this regard, I have found particularly productive the conceptualisation of 'geotemporality' by Mizielińska and Kulpa by means of juxtaposition of two separate 'geotemporal' modalities of sexual politics – the Western 'time of sequence' and the Eastern 'time of coincidence' (or 'temporal disjunction/ knotting (looping) time') (Mizielińska & Kulpa, 2011, p. 15). The authors introduce the Western 'time of sequence' not to simplify the (indeed complex) histories of Western sexual politics and not to unify this complexity under the signifier of the 'West'. Instead, they seek to stress the over-determination of sexual politics in Central Eastern Europe (CEE) through the imaginary of 'Western' historical models. The Eastern European 'knotting time' means that nearly 60 years of 'Western' sexual politics are now squeezed into CEE in order to be reworked in a much shorter time period. The same 'chronological' paradox has been aptly pointed out by Agnieszka Graff in regard

to feminism in Poland that 'exists in a cultural climate of backlash – but this backlash was not preceded by any feminist gains' (Graff, 2003, p. 114).

The Western model of 'time of sequence' and 'progress' has already been challenged with respect to CEE experiences, as recent studies show (Baker, 2017b). My research also seeks to examine how the popular discourses of 'progress' and 'backlash' are produced through and productive of the specific 'geotemporality' of Ukraine as '"European enough" (geographically), but "not yet Western" (temporarily)' (Mizielińska & Kulpa, 2011, p. 23). This also presumes re-thinking the applicability of such concepts as 'progress' and 'backlash' to the situation of LGBT+ communities in CEE[9].

At the same time, a critique of the Western hegemony from the position of post-socialist CEE localities appears to be a difficult (if not impossible) task, if we are to consider the global dynamic of power and knowledge production. In such post–Cold War 'three-worlds metageography[10]', as Jennifer Suchland has noted, the former 'socialist bloc' has been framed as a 'second world' that cannot be critical of the West. More specifically, 'the third world' was associated with anticolonial criticism of the West whilst 'dissident voices originating from the second world were understood as opposing totalitarianism and Soviet hegemony' (Suchland, 2011, p.845). In other words, being 'left to the normalizing processes of democratization and Europeanization' (Ibid, p.846), the former socialist part of CEE appeared impotent to produce a critique of Western neoliberal hegemony[11]. Whilst the populist political regimes in CEE have found a place within the purview of anti-EU nationalisms, this is not the case for Ukraine. The arguments of Suchland, therefore, provide an important theoretical ground for my analysis of how the discourse of Europeanisation (and, more broadly, Westernisation) and the current politic of 'decommunisation' co-produce a specific configuration of sexual citizenship in Ukraine.

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[9] This rethinking of 'geotemporality' determines quotation marks around the words 'progress' and 'backlash' in the text of my thesis. They remain without marks, however, when used by other people.

[10] Suchland notes that the concept of metageography, borrowed from Martin W. Lewis and Karen E. Wigen, stands for 'the set of spatial structures through which people order their knowledge of the world' (Lewis and Wigen, 1997, p.ix).

[11] I thank Nadzeya Husakouskaya for drawing my attention to this idea and discussing it with me.

Since politically my study seeks to contest the epistemological hegemonies in knowledge production, a question about the relevance of sexuality studies conducted in Russia to my research is not an easy one. Whilst Western colonial power's place in knowledge production has been critically addressed in the literature examined above, a question about the (post)colonial subordination of ex-Russian and ex-Soviet regions to Russia is still a subject of academic debate (Koobak & Marling, 2014; Tlostanova, 2012). The disproportional prevalence of sexuality research in Russia (in comparison with the other former republics of the Soviet Union) was noticed many times and this signals the unique place of Russia with respect to the relationship between the West and the East (Kulpa, 2014)[12]. At the same time, studies of sexualities in Russia (Baer, 2009; Essig, 1999; Healey, 2001; Stella, 2016) often activated important academic discussions on the matter of methodologies and, in particular, the Western epistemic colonisation (as, for example, happened after the book by Laurie Essig (1999) had been published). I consider these discussions to be highly relevant to my study and further reflect upon them in relation to my positionality in Chapter Three.

In contemporary Ukrainian scholarly discourse, citizenship remains an entirely legislative term that signifies a formal belonging to the state bestowed through possession of a passport, which affords certain sets of rights and responsibilities. Correspondingly, the broader meaning of citizenship and, in particular, the term 'sexual citizenship' was introduced, perhaps for the first time, within my Ukrainian-language presentation of this study in Kyiv (Plakhotnik, 2017). A few publications on sexual citizenship in Russia typically use the term to designate a regime imposed by the state through legislation and law-related practices (Kondakov, 2014; Stella & Nartova, 2015). Despite the different conceptualisation of sexual citizenship, I consider these studies to be an important point of reference for my study in Ukraine. Whilst these two societies have a common Soviet experience, the differences between current Ukrainian and Russian public discourses towards LGBT+ issues facilitate significantly different discursive framing of the 'Soviet past' in the imaginaries of sexual citizenship. I will further elaborate on these differences through analysing my data in Chapter Four.

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[12] Another exposing detail: among the seven articles of the special issue 'Post-Soviet Intimacies' of the 'Sexuality & Culture' journal (19, 2015) five are based on Russian materials.

The number of research projects on sexualities and LGBT+ issues in Ukraine that do not use the term 'sexual citizenship' explicitly has grown over the last decade. One of them was focused on how LGBT+ rights and gender and sexuality issues were discursively framed in pre-Maidan Ukraine under the influence of 'conservative consensus' between nationalist right-wing and religious discourses (Yarmanova, 2012a). Another study compared pre- and post-Maidan structural conditions of sexual politics in Ukraine and analysed argumentative strategies used by opponents and proponents of LGBT+ rights in policy documents and media discourse (Teteriuk, 2016a). These projects informed an important backdrop to my study: how the discourses of sexual citizenship have been produced from *outside* LGBT+ communities, namely from the state and various institutions. A number of studies, on the contrary, were directly focused on the experiences and voices of LGBT+ people in regard to family and kinship issues (Yarmanova, 2012b), religion and faith inside LGBT+ communities (Shymko, 2011) or reconstruction of women's non-heterosexuality in Soviet times (Yarmanova, 2018b). Having a strong feminist focus, these publications played an important role in designing my project since they gave an insight into how intimacies and the 'private' are conceptualised from *inside* LGBT+ communities.

Finally, several publications examined relations between LGBT+ communities and the state in Ukraine with a focus on LGBT+ activism. Scholarly papers by Tamara Martsenyuk discuss Ukrainian LGBT+ activism for the English-language audience (Martsenyuk 2012a, 2012b, 2016) but represent it from the specific perspective of LGBT+ leaders. The comparative study of the Kyiv Pride in 2013 and 2015 by Maria Teteriuk was also based on the leaders' statements and concluded that there was a shift to the 'homonationalist strategy' in the LGBT+ movement but evaluated it in positive terms, as a 'successful' one (Teteriuk, 2016b). The contrary view was presented by Lesia Pagulich (2016) in their study of the Kyiv Pride in 2015 and 2016. Using similar data – the public statements of Pride organisers – the author approached Pride from a different perspective and showed how a predominantly patriotic Pride agenda narrows LGBT+ politics to the issue of visibility and recognition, thus producing exclusions inside LGBT+ communities. Finally, some papers were directly focused on the critique of the patriotic/nationalist standpoint in mainstream LGBT+ discourse

from feminist, leftist and queer perspectives (Mayerchyk, 2015; Pagulich, 2016, 2018; Pohribna, 2015). As the latter set of publications best correspond to my positionality and approach, I will refer to them in analytic chapters of my thesis. Overall, all studies examined above have informed my initial understanding of the field and also indicated a 'gap' that my study seeks to fill.

Sexual citizenship in my study

Drawing on contemporary debates relating to sexual citizenship in academic literature, I have operationalised the term 'sexual citizenship' as a process that has been deployed predominantly between LGBT+ communities and the state. The term 'state' stands for the set of legal and institutional structures that is supposed 'to service the matrix for the obligations and prerogatives of citizenship' (Spivak & Butler, 2007, p. 3). In my study, however, understanding of 'sexual citizenship' extends beyond the legal framework provided by the state. More specifically, in line with the 'both/and' feminist logic (Collins, 1990), sexual citizenship is conceived as '*both* a set of practices (cultural, symbolic and economic) *and* a bundle of rights and duties (civil, political and social) that define an individual's membership in a polity' (Isin & Wood, 1999, p.4; italics mine). In this approach, both legal 'rights and duties' and diverse practices of 'doing citizenship' can be understood as discourses and thereby be analysed by means of the discourse analysis method (detailed in Chapter Three). Furthermore, according to the performative perspective (Austin, 1975), citizenship is not membership but rather a complex process of 'doing' citizenship and 'becoming' citizens-subjects. Considering rights to be at the core of citizenship, Engin Isin defines citizens as 'claimants of rights' (Isin, 2009); elaborating this idea further, Leticia Sabsay assumes a subject of citizenship to be 'constituted within and through the very same struggles over citizenship' (Sabsay, 2016, p. 114).

The emphasis on the performative character of sexual citizenship is crucially important to my work inasmuch as it retains the focus on the agency of LGBT+ communities in the performative political process of 'becoming' sexual citizens as 'recognized subjects' (Cossman, 2007) or 'political subjects' (Sabsay, 2016). In Davina Cooper's words, such an understanding of citizenship 'seeks to contest and go beyond what the state offers',

and thus 'identifies the capacity of non-state agendas to permeate, influence and guide institutional practice' (Cooper, 2006, p. 923). From this perspective, both state and non-state actors (including various LGBT+ communities) are in the contrast process of negotiation; this is a process of 'doing citizenship'. Importantly, the performative framework focuses analytic attention not only on the regulatory aspects but also on the performative dimension of the 'demanded' rights. Whilst the LGBT+ communities' claims for sexual citizenship are typically articulated in legal terms, these claims also do other work which does not depend on the adoption (or not) of the law: they delineate a horizon of the imaginary with respect to desired citizenship, as well as to the political community of citizen-subjects (Sabsay, 2016, p. 114). In the citizenship studies literature, the performative perspective often opens the possibility for exceeding the juridico-political regimes of citizenship through the inclusion of 'myriad forms of activism and cultural expressions that we may not at first identify as citizenship-oriented' (Sabsay, 2016, p.114).

The concepts of 'active citizenship' (Cooper, 2006) and 'activist citizenship' (Isin, 2009) have gained currency and proven to be useful for studying citizenship (Fagan & Sircar, 2017; Zaharijević, 2015) and, in particular, sexual citizenship (Rhodes-Kubiak, 2015) in post-socialist regions of Europe. Since my study seeks to provide a more nuanced account of how *different* LGBT+ communities position themselves in relation to the discourses of state and nationhood, 'stretching' and making the citizenship concept more inclusive is less helpful. On the contrary, it seems important to focus on the actors' agenda regarding citizenship. Thus, my study relies on the distinction between active and activist citizenship as conceptualised by Adriana Zaharijević:

> *Activist* forms of citizenship involve redefinition of the basic tenets of a certain citizenship regime and its enactment, whereas *active citizenship* refers to an active engagement in the enactment of a citizenship regime with the view of its expansion and inclusiveness (Zaharijević, 2015, p.94; italics mine).

This conceptualisation helps to distinguish between different agendas within LGBT+ discourse, namely between claims to be 'included' in citizenship and calls for 'smashing the system'. Whilst this distinction is tentative and somewhat simplistic in the context of my study, it seems to be a useful analytic lens for more accurate investigation of what discourses of sexual citizenship emerge within and beyond the mainstream LGBT+ agenda, as well as within and beyond the professionalised NGO-based activism

that is currently influential in Ukraine (Husakouskaya, 2018).

Finally, citizenship in my study stands for a political practice that is constituted through the process of differentiation from the 'others' through 'an imaginary of citizenship [...] around which a "constitutive outside" is constantly (re)configured' (Sabsay, 2016, p.118). This conceptualisation is important for my study since it aligns with Foucauldian theorising of how norms are produced through and by means of 'aberrations' (Foucault, 1998). More specifically, my study of (normative) sexual citizenship requires a constant focus on the 'constitutive outside' – those who do not deserve to be sexual citizens.

Nationalisms in post-Maidan Ukraine

Since sexual citizenship has been defined in my study in terms of belonging to the nation-state, a conceptualisation of nation and nationalism is crucial for my analysis. Relying on theoretical works on the social construction of nation (Anderson, 1991) and national belonging (Billig, 1995; Yuval-Davis, 1997, 2006), I conceive of nationalism as an ideology that constitutes and maintains nation-states. It embraces 'a complex set of themes about "us", "our homeland", "nations" ("ours" and "theirs"), the "world", as well as the morality of national duty and honour' (Billig, 1995, p.4). Whilst studies by Billig and other authors that critically examine nationalisms in the 'established nation-states' helped to frame the concept in my study, the peculiarity of nation-building and nationalism in Ukraine has to be taken into account[13]. As historians have pointed out, the Ukrainian word 'nation' was not synonymous with 'state' (as typically understood in the Anglo-American context) but stood for an 'ethnic community of people who have a common origin, language and culture' without necessarily possessing a state of their own (Yekelchyk, 2007, pp. 5–6). This means that the common Western terminology of the 'nation-state' (as it was discussed, for example, by Judith Butler and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in a virtual dialogue with Hanna Arendt [Spivak & Butler, 2007]) had a different meaning in the Ukrainian context where the two parts of this term were historically separated. In other words, at various times the Ukrainian nation

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[13] I am deeply grateful to Maria Mayerchyk for discussing this section with me and developing the conceptualisation in a dialogue.

was stateless or had a state that in fact did not protect the interests of the Ukrainian nation (as was the case during the Yanukovych regime before the Euromaidan [M. Ryabchuk, 2014]). In the dominant scholarly discourse, the 'modern Ukrainian nation' is being built through the process of the nationalist mobilisation right now, not in some past (Yekelchyk, 2007), and this process had been critically boosted by the Euromaidan (M. Ryabchuk, 2014)

Furthermore, as noted in the Introduction, some Ukrainian scholars and public intellectuals have claimed that the meaning of Ukrainian nationalism has been significantly reframed as a result of the Euromaidan events. Before 2014, it was argued, the nationalist discourse was grounded in an ethnic-cultural conception of the Ukrainian nation. Being shared mainly by ultra-right radical nationalists, this conception presumes the Ukrainian ethnic nation to be an absolute value. On the contrary, a new Ukrainian nationalism was born on the Euromaidan – a nationalism that is civic or political, and is grounded in citizenship, not ethnicity. Exactly this new 'civic nationalism', it was argued, is the main mobilising force for building the Ukrainian nation as a modern political nation (Balcer, 2018; Kulyk, 2014a, 2016; M. Ryabchuk, 2014). In my reading, these arguments are signalling the emergence of sexual citizenship at the moment when the Ukrainian nation has been reframed as a 'nation-state' in the Western understanding of this term.

In their conceptualisation of the current forms of nationalism in Ukraine, Mykola Ryabchuk (2014) discusses the historical premises of potential compatibility between liberalism and nationalism and calls for fostering so-called liberal forms of nationalism[14] since they are 'the only viable alternative to the illiberal, intolerant, and xenophobic nationalisms of both Ukrainian and Russian/Russophone radicals' (M. Ryabchuk, 2014, p. 95). Despite the centrality of this argument to scholarly and public discourse, in my study it is challenged, firstly, from a feminist perspective. As Maria Mayerchyk (2014) aptly noted, the aforementioned view is limited by its recognition of ethnicity-based xenophobia whilst its misogynist assumptions remain completely obscured. This argument will be further developed within my data analysis in Chapter

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[14] Though Ryabchuk explicitly names this type of nationalism 'liberal nationalism', I do not use this term and prefer the synonymic and more commonly used notion of 'civic nationalism'.

Four. Secondly, the notion of liberalism in the conceptualisation of 'civic nationalism' embraces not only individual freedoms but also adherence to the unlimited freedom of the market. Notably, the rhetoric of democracy slips into the 'free market' rhetoric in Ryabchuk's paper when they argue that the 'Ukrainian identity' of citizens strongly correlates with their 'pro-Western, pro-market and pro-democratic orientation' (M. Ryabchuk, 2014, p. 108). The critical anti-capitalist view can reveal how the neoliberal assumptions of 'civic nationalism' are hidden behind the rhetoric of democracy and freedom. My analysis in Chapters Six and Seven will show how the ideology of neoliberalism thoroughly underpins the dominant discourse of sexual citizenship and wider LGBT+ activism. Finally, the alleged absence of ethnicity-based xenophobia in the justification of 'civic nationalism' seems not to be a viable argument: as Neil Davidson reminds us, referring to Germany in the 1930s, 'there is no reason why "civic" nationalism cannot be transformed into "ethnic" nationalism under certain determinate conditions' (Davidson, 2016, p. 26). The ongoing war in the eastern part of Ukraine increases the possibility of such a condition's occurrence.

With these counter-arguments in mind, I distinguish between ideologies of 'civic nationalism' informed by (neo)liberal values of democracy and freedom, and 'ethnic nationalism' that is performed through the ideology of ultra-right Ukrainian nationalists. Although I conceive of the border between these two forms as porous and demonstrate in my study how it has been easy blurred (Chapter Four), this distinction proves to be productive for understanding how 'civic nationalism' and human rights discourses appear to be well combined to form a ground for sexual citizenship in post-Maidan Ukraine.

Gender and nation

A starting point for my conceptualisation of nationalism from a feminist perspective has been informed by the classic feminist studies that stressed the inextricability of nationalism and patriarchy. The extensive scholarship on this matter (Enloe, 2014; Mayer, 2000; Yuval-Davis, 1997, 2011) has developed a feminist view on nationalism as a process when the generic 'we' of the nation is (re)produced by the patriarchal elites (Grewal & Kaplan, 2000). The set of discourses that substantiates the ideology of

nationalism inevitably draws upon socially constructed ideas of specific 'female' and 'male' participation in nation building (Banerjee, 2003; Yuval-Davis, 1997). Though LGBT+ communities are positioned ambiguously with regard to national belonging, the gendered structure of nation and nationalism informs imaginaries of sexual citizenship to a large extent (Bonfiglioli, Kahlina, & Zaharijević, 2015; Kahlina, 2013; Kulpa, 2012).

Since my project investigates discourses and ideologies, it requires attention to be paid to the discursive construction of the dominant gender order with respect to its interplay with nationalism and sexuality. This gender order – patriarchy – is always intertwined with and substantiated by nationalism; in other words, nationalism is always deeply gendered and sexualised in a particular way. This inextricability poses a particular challenge for feminist analysis since, as Grewal and Kaplan point out, nationalism and feminism are constructed through each other (Grewal and Kaplan, 2000). A significant body of scholarly literature on the gendered character of nationalism evidences the close linkage between patriarchy and nationalism (Enloe, 2014, 2016; Yuval-Davis, 1997). It has been argued that all nationalisms are gendered and 'invented' (McClintock, 1991) and occupy the domain of the 'idealised masculine mainstream' (Mayer, 2000, p. 10). This has become a case in point for wartime: as Adi Kuntsman has shown in the context of Israel/Palestine, patriarchal masculinity plays a central role in the formation of the luring 'sexiness' of nationalism (Kuntsman, 2008c, p. 143). At the same time, the defensive (in a sense, anti-imperialist) character of the war in Ukraine makes a potential anti-nationalist feminist position especially difficult and, sometimes, incomprehensible in LGBT+ communities, as discussed in Chapter Six. In the context of my study, this points to the limited applicability of the transnational feminist and queer anti-nationalist scholarship (cited above) that emerged predominantly in the context of imperial wars.

In seeking a means of conceptualising the impact of the war on the formation of nationalist public discourse, I have employed the concept of *militarisation* (Enloe, 2012; 2016), which means the 'step-by-step process through which something becomes *controlled by*, *dependent on*, or *derives its value from* the military as an institution or militaristic criteria' (Enloe, 2000, p.281; italics in original). The processual aspect of this term helps to grasp a dynamic of everyday changes that are normalised, thereby becoming barely noticeable within common-sense thinking. This perspective

opens up the possibility of seeing how gender and sexuality have been instrumentalised by militarised nationalism, for example, through the growing celebration of 'LGBT+ warriors' (analysed in Chapter Four) or the increasing securitisation of the Kyiv Pride (Chapter Five).

Another ground for potential anti-nationalist feminist critique can be found in the neoliberal underpinning of 'civic nationalism' in post-Maidan Ukraine. In this regard, an anti-capitalist feminist critique provides an insight into how being a state-at-war serves as universal justification for the cutting of social programs and other forms of capitalist violence. Critically focusing upon the entanglement of nationalism, capitalism and war helps to see a connection between the much celebrated 'LGBT+ progress' (Chapter Five) and the increasing precariousness of particularly gendered, sexed, raced, aged and abled parts of LGBT+ communities. Thinking on this connection, I draw on feminist critique of capitalism (Fraser, 2013; Gibson-Graham, 2006) as well as on critical anti-capitalist perspectives on sexuality (Hennessy, 2000; Pellegrini, 2002; Rao, 2015). I also rely on conceptualisations and studies of neoliberalism, examined later in this chapter.

Homonationalism and homopatriotism

In the process of the modern nation-state's formation the 'normal' sexual order of the nation has been articulated in terms of (certain modes) of heterosexuality (Foucault, 1998; Rubin, 1992); George Mosse named this status quo 'heteronationalism' in their pioneering book (1985). As critical scholarship on the relationship between sexuality and the nation shows, 'despite the imperatives of globalization and trans-nationalism, citizenship continues to be anchored in the nation, and the nation remains heterosexualized' (Bell & Binnie, 2000, p. 26). Homosexuals[15] are conceived as the 'strangers' of the nation: not exactly the enemy but not quite members either (Phelan, 2010).

In the contemporary world, however, the relationship between sexual 'others' and the

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[15] Since the main body of the examined studies on sexuality and nationalism has been developed through contrasting heterosexuality and homosexuality, I cite the original formulations but presume them to be transferrable to other LGBT+ groups.

nation(alism) is more ambivalent. In my study, I seek to re-think this intersection by exploring, in Jon Binnie's words, 'how the "national" and the "global" are produced by the "sexual"' (Binnie, 2004, p. 2). A more nuanced account of the Ukrainian nation and nationalism, provided earlier in this chapter, keeps me alert to conceiving of political projects of belonging as 'always situated and always multi-layered', thus requiring the contextualisation of sexual citizenship in Ukraine 'both locally and globally' (Yuval-Davis, 2011, p.vii).

At the same time, incorporation of homosexuality into the symbolic body of the nation is not only possible but also an increasingly prevalent process (Haritaworn, 2015; Haritaworn, Tauqir & Erdem, 2008; Kuntsman, 2009; Puar, 2007). As Haritaworn et al. (2008) exposed, the rhetoric of LGBT+ rights in Germany and the UK is constituted through defining Muslims as both anti-queer and as a threat to Western democracy. Studies by Adi Kuntsman (2008a, 2008b, 2009) show how establishing queer migrant communities in Israel/Palestine does not necessarily challenge the existing racial and national order but rather reinforces racism and Orientalism. A growing body of literature that is focused on the ways in which contemporary forms of sexuality and nationalism intersect, explores the issue through the trope of *homonationalism*. This term was coined by Jasbir Puar (2007) as a useful category of analysis for dividing practices between patriotic national sexual subjects (worthy of protection by the nation-state) and 'others' (who differ by race, citizenship, gender performativity, etc.). This division produces 'good' and 'bad' sexual subjects and maintains power relations and privilege (male, white, cis-, middle-class, able-bodied etc.), simultaneously signifying the contribution of certain sexual subjects to nation-building (whilst a non-nationalist position is policed).

The relevance of the 'homonationalism' concept to the CEE region, however, has been variously queried. In the Croatia-based study by Katja Kahlina, for example, homonationalism signifies a hegemonic EU politic to implement LGBT+ rights in national states – a politic that often produces contradictory outcomes on a local level (Kahlina, 2014). Analysing sexual politics in Poland, Robert Kulpa uses a 'leveraged pedagogy' term instead of 'homonationalism' to justify a specific subaltern position of CEE as 'the European (homophobic) Other in the emerging discourses of "homoinclusive EUropean Nationhood"' (Kulpa, 2014, p. 431). These studies are

important instances demonstrating how the 'politics of location' (Rich, 1986) have to be accountable in re-thinking concepts emanating from the Anglo-American world; however, the differing position of Ukraine to Croatia and Poland with respect to so-called 'EUropean Nationhood' urges me to search for a more relevant argument. This can be found in the words of Kevin Moss, as follows: 'critique of homonationalism seems at best completely irrelevant for much of Eastern Europe, where good old-fashioned 'heteronationalism' continues to flourish' (Moss 2014, p. 216). Furthermore, Kevin Moss insists that discussing 'homonationalism' in the CEE context unavoidably produces 'neocolonialism and Orientalizing projection' onto local LGBT+ people (Moss, 2014, p. 217). Recognising the significance of discussions of coloniality and power in knowledge production, my study, however, proposes a counter-argument. Exactly the colonising gesture, I argue, has been produced by the first statement through measuring and comparing a level of 'heteronationalism' where the Western model of sexual citizenship is assumed to be a paragon. At the same time, I agree with the second argument, conceiving it not as a universal concern but as one addressed to the 'outsider' Western researchers. In this regard, the question of researcher positionality, discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, is essential. Therefore, it is possible to avoid colonisation and use 'homonationalism', as well as other Western terms, insightfully and productively from the 'insider' position. And this is what has happened with 'homonationalism' in Ukraine.

My study presents evidence that the concept of 'homonationalism' started circulating in Ukraine from approximately 2015 and has been employed and critically elaborated predominantly *inside* LGBT+ communities in Ukraine. Analysing the 2015 Kyiv Pride, a feminist scholar Maria Mayerchyk wrote ironically in their blog:

> L, G, B and T collaborated with ultra-right groups on the Maidan gladly. Even those who recognised the aggression, misogyny, xenophobia and chauvinism of the ultra-right groups, usually connived at this. [...] Today, for the Kyiv Pride organisers, the only problem with the ultra-right groups is that they are hostile to LGBT people; for the rest, they are just 'nice *passionarii*[16]'. Such a *homo-nationalism* (Mayerchyk, 2015; italics mine)

'Homonationalism' in this quotation stands for LGBT+ leaders' strategy of building a respectful dialogue with ultra-right organisations on the basis of 'support of the

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[16] *Passionarii* (Ukrainian) are people that are filled with revolutionary passion.

Euromaidan' and patriotism as a common ground for collaboration. Examining a public appeal to the 'Right Sector[17]' issued by the 2015 Kyiv Pride organisers on the eve of the Pride rally, Mayerchyk concludes that the underpinning assumption of such 'collaboration' lay in the discourses of racism and misogyny. Several other Ukrainian scholars also used the 'homonationalism' concept as part of their analysis of Ukrainian LGBT+ activism (Martsenyuk, 2016; Pagulich, 2016; Teteriuk, 2016b) and so contributed to the legitimation of the term in academic discourse. Meanwhile, the most heated debates on the issue of a supposed collaboration between LGBT+ leaders and ultra-right nationalists, as well as a broader interpretation of 'homonationalism', took place in non-academic LGBT+ spaces and communities. More specifically, the term has been picked up and further elaborated by 'queer activists' - the grassroots groups and initiatives inside LGBT+ communities that participate in debates on sexual citizenship by means of opposing both heteronormativity and homonormativity (as analysed in detail in Chapter Six).

Notwithstanding the tradition analysed above, in my study the term 'homonationalism', in the Ukrainian context, is always bracketed by quotation marks, signalling that the term has been applied by other activists or scholars, and not by me. This helps to distinguish between 'homonationalism' and the key concept of my study, namely *homopatriotism*. This is not to challenge the use of the term 'homonationalism' in the Ukrainian context but to develop a more contextualised and nuanced framework for my data analysis. Recognising a great deal of similarity between the two terms, which have both originated from the same area of critical studies of sexuality and nationalism, I have chosen the term 'homopatriotism' for several reasons. Firstly, it explicitly points towards the specific configuration of sexual citizenship in the state-at-war: how 'queer fantasies' of militarisation and eroticised warfare inform LGBT+ claims to national belonging (Kuntsman, 2008a, pp. 114–117). Whilst the war in Israel/Palestine (where Adi Kuntsman coined the term) and the war in Ukraine are different in many respects, the factor of war is critical to understanding how discourses of sexual citizenship have been framed and performed in LGBT+ communities in Ukraine. Secondly, the most common form of political self-definition in

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[17] 'Right Sector' is an ultra-right political organisation (later, a party) and a paramilitary unit.

LGBT+ communities appears to be 'patriotism'; whilst, conversely, the word 'nationalism' is currently reserved for the ultra-right LGBT-phobic groups (as shown in Chapter Four). In this specific context, the words 'patriotism' and 'patriot' represent the emic terms which appeal to my research participants.

Finally, in my study homopatriotism emerges as an analytic term that exceeds war-related political participation and sexualised militarisation to designate sexual citizenship as a broader project of transforming 'previously pathologized homosexuals into respectable homopatriotic citizens' (Montegary, 2015, p. 893). From this perspective, the emergence of the discourse of 'good sexual citizens' (Chapter Five) can also be interpreted in terms of homopatriotism. At the same time, I am very aware of the specific racial context from which both terms, 'homopatriotism' and 'homonationalism', have originated. In the initial conceptualisation of homonationalism as a 'discursive tactic' that 'disaggregates US national gays and queers from racial and sexual "others"' (Puar, 2006, p. 68), a strong emphasis is placed on race. Similarly, the homopatriotism of Israeli queers is constituted through racist violence towards Palestinians (Kuntsman, 2008a, 2009). Although the discourse of sexual citizenship in Ukraine *is* racialised in a way, through being constituted via the discursive production and disaggregation of multiple (often, racialised) 'others', this process cannot be equated to the race/racist contexts in the U.S. or Israel/Palestine. With this awareness in mind, I use homopatriotism as a tentative term in my study whilst continuing to search for a more accurate concept.

Neoliberal sexual citizenship

Critical conceptualisations of capitalism and neoliberalism permeate this study, as in times of globalisation, capitalism can be seen as a major force creating vast inequalities and producing certain subjectivities (see Berlant, 2011; Duggan, 2004; Fraser, 2013 among others). Recognising the crucial constitutive role of economic inequalities in the discourse of the formation of sexual citizenship, at the same time I consider capitalism, and particularly neoliberalism, to reach far beyond the issue of the free market and capitalist exploitation. In this regard, I follow Foucault's (2008 [1979]) conceptualisation of neoliberalism, and those of feminist theorists (Brown 2015), that

conceive of it as a type of governmentality grounded in vigilance, activity, and intervention (Foucault, 2008). Elaborating on Foucauldian insights, Wendy Brown delineates neoliberalism as a specific type of governing rationality that extends its power to every dimension of human life (Brown, 2015). Whilst the basic assumption of classical liberalism considers the market to be only one social force amongst others, within the neoliberalist ideology a practical rationality of the market has become 'the universal law governing our social existence' (Somek, 2011, p. 85). Since my study is particularly concerned with the production of LGBT+ subjects and sexual citizens, I consider neoliberal governmentality to be the main ideological framework of such subjectivation. The core of this ideology is informed by such social values as a heavy individualism and basic overstating of the responsibility of individual choices and decisions (Gregor & Grzebalska, 2016). Constructing citizens as individual entrepreneurs of themselves (Brown 2003) and placing the emphasis on individual responsibility for one's own life, neoliberalism veils socio-economic structural injustice and devalues collective political struggle. In Ukraine, neoliberal ideology permeates LGBT+ communities in many ways, as I investigate in Chapters Six and Seven.

At the structural level, the domination of neoliberalism has been strongly sustained by two ongoing interrelated processes: the NGO-isation of LGBT+ activism (Bagić, 2002) and the professionalisation of NGOs (Husakouskaya, 2018). The first concept, coined by Aida Bagić within their analysis of the women's movement of Southern Eastern Europe, can be transferred to LGBT+ activism inasmuch as it aids our understanding of how NGOs gradually become the main actors and representatives of 'civil society' (Bagić, 2002; Lang, 2014). The professionalisation of NGOs is a corresponding process that prioritises the project-based, institution-oriented and business-style organised strategies at the price of local grassroots activist initiatives (Butterfield, 2014, p. 236). In so doing, as Inderpal Grewal and Victoria Bernal aptly argued, NGOs as such appear to produce a parallel form of governmentality, inasmuch they convert 'what is outside the state into a legible form' (Bernal & Grewal, 2014, p. 8).

On a discursive level, neoliberal governmentality is considered to be the main vehicle of 'the new homonormativity' – a term coined by Lisa Duggan (2004) to designate the sexual politics of incorporation of certain homosexuals into the U.S. neoliberal mainstream. Echoing Diane Richardson's critical argument against sexual citizenship,

Duggan claims that these politics of incorporation sustain, rather than contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions. Also, in line with other critiques of the assimilationist character of sexual citizenship (see Bell & Binnie, 2000; Richardson, 1998; Seidman, 2001), Duggan stresses how homonormativity has been formed by 'a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption' (Duggan, 2004, p. 50) with an increasing focus on access to same-sex marriage. Whilst the main argument that foregrounds Duggan's conceptualisation, namely the crucial role of neoliberalism in the production of LGBT+ subjects, informs the theoretical horizon of my study, the recent processes of the patriotic mobilisation and politicisation of LGBT+ communities in Ukraine shape the local meaning of homonormativity.

In this context, another related notion – 'good sexual citizens' – has also proven productive. As extant scholarship has shown, sexual citizenship is grounded in the assumption that 'lesbians and gay men can be citizens only if they can be "good" citizens' (Stychin, 1998, p. 90). Notably, being 'good' serves as a pre-requisite for achieving rights and protection from the state, and never the other way round. As Ann Pellegrini ironically put it, we have 'to show what good citizens we are and can't we have our rights too?' (Pellegrini, 2002, p. 137). Though meanings of being a 'good gay citizen' vary in different historical contexts, the production of a 'norm' through its detachment from 'aberration' remains a major discursive vehicle. Studies in the Anglo-American world have stressed this aspect of sexual citizenship, as a 'respectability' that appears to be produced through division between the 'norm' ('good gays') and 'aberration' (disreputable 'bad queers') (Stychin, 1998, p. 200). Some scholars have interpreted this division critically – as a cost of sexual citizenship which must be paid (Bell & Binnie, 2000; Stychin, 1998) or as reinforcing a heterosexualised frame of citizenship through the centrality of family and reproduction in the construction of 'good gay citizens' (Richardson, 1998). With this scholarship in mind, I examine the specific model of 'good sexual citizens' that is produced in LGBT+ discussions in Ukraine as a pre-requisite of sexual citizenship. Focusing my analysis in Chapter Five on how 'good sexual citizens' appear to be constructed primarily as 'workers and consumers' (Burkitt, 2008, p.241) or 'employed taxpayers', in my study participants' terms, I seek to expose the centrality of neoliberalism to the production of sexual

citizenship in Ukraine. Further investigation of the links between claims to sexual citizenship and discourses of normalcy/normativity in LGBT+ communities (Chapter Seven) is aimed at understanding how the 'good sexual citizen' model is produced through and productive of the 'constitutive outside' of sexual citizenship. At the same time, the specificity of 'civic nationalism' and the war urges to rethink the very conception of 'good sexual citizens' and its 'others' in a contextual de-centring way.

Chapter summary

This chapter provided a rationale and justification for the conceptual framework of my investigation. It started with an extensive examination of the key concept of my study: sexual citizenship. Considered with respect to its performative aspect, sexual citizenship is conceived as a complex process of 'doing' citizenship and 'becoming' citizens (as recognised or 'political' subjects). This conceptualisation allows for keeping analytic attention on the performative dimension of the 'demanded' rights where the claimants of LGBT+ rights are becoming sexual citizens not after achieving the rights but in the process of making claims in dialogue with the state and society (Isin, 2009; Sabsay, 2016). In addition, the performative framework facilitates interpretation of this process as 'active citizenship' (Cooper, 2006), where 'doing' citizenship means political participation in public affairs and dialogue/negotiation with state forms of governmentality (Zaharijević, 2015). Finally, citizenship in my study stands for a political practice that is constituted through the process of differentiation from its 'constitutive outside' (Mouffe, 1992; Sabsay, 2016) – those who do not deserve to be sexual citizens. In my operationalisation of the term, I combined a feminist appreciation of citizenship as a deeply gendered concept and the poststructuralist account of sexual citizenship that calls for deconstruction of the normative assumptions of sexual citizenship as the LGBT+ struggle for recognition. Simultaneously, I situated this conceptualisation within a de-centring framework in order to explore the theoretical potential of the concept of sexual citizenship within Ukraine and, more broadly, in post-socialist CEE localities and post-Soviet spaces. Relying on the concept of geotemporality (Mizielińska & Kulpa, 2011), I considered how the location of Ukrainian LGBT+ communities at the intersection of Western imperial power informs and creates a novel discourse of sexual citizenship.

Unpacking the meaning of nation in post-Maidan Ukraine, I tentatively distinguished between two forms of nationalist mobilisation: 'civic nationalism' (that is based on citizenship) and 'ethnic nationalism' (that privileges the Ukrainian nation in ethnic terms). This distinction helps us to see how the emergence of sexual citizenship has been boosted by 'civic nationalism' whilst the discourse of 'ethnic nationalism' appears to be oppositional to LGBT+ liberation in Ukraine. As a result, sexual citizenship appears to be embedded in the 'nation-state-building' process in Ukraine. At the same time, as I will discuss in Chapter Four, the growing LGBT-phobic violence of the ultra-right groups determined the tendency of rhetorical dissociation from the word 'nationalism' in LGBT+ discourse; instead, the rhetoric of patriotism has gained common currency.

In my examination of the intersection of nationalism and sexuality, I drew on the literature that examines this juxtaposition from the critical queer perspective of 'homonationalism' (Puar, 2007) and debates the relevance of the concept of 'homonationalism' to the CEE region. As a result, I introduced 'homopatriotism' (Kuntsman, 2008a) as a key concept of my study that partly stems from the emic notion of patriotism in my data. This concept allows for the grasping of the complicity of sexual citizenship, the imaginary of which appears at the intersection of (universal) discourses of human rights, the (particular) discourse of 'civic nationalist' mobilisation and the war in Ukraine. Exploring the concept of neoliberalism, this study advances its conceptualisation as a type of governmentality (Foucault, 2008) that takes the shape of a specific rationality (Brown, 2015). In my study, considering sexual citizenship to be a process of becoming citizens-subjects inevitably requires analytic examination of how the governing rationality of neoliberalism shapes this subjectification in a certain way, and how the processes of NGO-isation of LGBT+ activism and professionalisation of NGOs sustain the neoliberal character of claims to sexual citizenship in LGBT+ communities. Finally, I introduced the concept of 'homonormativity' (Duggan, 2004) and the related notion of the 'good sexual citizen' as analytic lenses through which I analyse the local specificity and complicity of the imaginary of sexual citizenship in Ukraine.

3. Epistemology and Methodology

> That's what de-construction is about, right? It's not just destruction. It's also construction. It's critical intimacy, not critical distance. So you actually speak from inside. That's deconstruction. My teacher Paul de Man once said to another very great critic, Fredric Jameson, 'Fred, you can only deconstruct what you love.' Because you are doing it from the inside, with real intimacy. You're kind of turning it around. It's that kind of critique
>
> — Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (2016, n.p.)

This chapter examines the epistemological assumptions of my project and how I have situated, designed and conducted my investigation within poststructuralist epistemological framework in the social sciences. I introduce this chapter through elaborating on my (researcher's) positionality as an important aspect of my queer feminist study. Summarising it in terms of multiple and ambiguous forms of belonging and non-belonging, I discuss how my positionality determines and shapes produced knowledge through relations of 'critical intimacy' with my 'object', as the epigraph to this chapter suggests. I further discuss how conceptualisation of 'cultural' and 'intercultural' translation facilitates practical solutions of using language and terminology in my study.

I start unpacking the main epistemological framework of my study – a queer feminist discursive approach – via examination of the underpinning terms of discursive research such as discourse, power, dominance, and construction of the subject. Engaging with the ways in which these terms are operationalised, I present the 'imaginary' as a useful term that grasps the complexity of the discourses produced from within LGBT+ communities. Stressing the linkage between epistemology, methods, data and ethics, I delineate the ethical premises of queer feminist epistemology and explain their meanings in the context of researching discourses of sexual citizenship in Ukraine. In the second part of the chapter, I discuss the methodology of my study, detailing my methods of data analysis and data

collection/production that have informed the study process. More specifically, I explain how the main method of this thesis – queer feminist discourse analysis (QFDA) – has been developed. I justify the choice of cases/sites for my research project (namely, the annual Kyiv Pride events and 'Queer Homes' LGBT+ community centres) and explain how I study them using methods of focus group discussions and online study. The final part of the chapter clarifies the ethical principles and practical ethical considerations regarding all cases/sites and types of data.

Thoughts on positionality

In adhering to feminist reflexivity throughout my project, I sought to exercise a permanent vigilance with regard to my epistemic commitments, in order to recognise how 'researcher subjectivities and subject positions inform knowledge practices' (Gabb, 2016, p.896). Summarising reflections on my positionality, I would like to stress my *insider* position in Ukrainian LGBT+ communities. In this regard, I have been inspired by Kamala Visweswaran's concept of 'homework' (1994), which not only refers literally to the change of perception of where the 'object' of my study is spatially situated. Rather, it calls upon researchers to explore how particularly 'hybrid' identity formations 'may be linked to particular theoretical dilemmas or representational strategies' (Visweswaran, 1994, p. 139). Though I did not carry out ethnographic research, I conducted my study in the field and communities where I have spent my entire life – my 'home'. This does not automatically privilege my viewpoint and make me a better researcher; however, it does open up certain epistemic possibilities that are typically not open to 'outsiders'. My involvement in various forms of NGO-based and grassroots activism in Ukraine proved beneficial for recognising sites and discourses beyond the most visible and dominant ones. Finally, my commitment to dehegemonising Western epistemologies has made the potentially decolonising concept of 'homework' particularly relevant for my study.

At the same time, I am an outsider in the 'field' inasmuch as I have conducted this project at the Open University in the UK, thereby possessing specific privileges and less vulnerability in the eyes of the study participants. Being seen by them as an 'academic' outsider in 'non-academic' LGBT+ communities, I signalled my activist commitment

and, simultaneously, reflected upon the different meanings of 'activism' that sustained the distance between me and the study participants. In this regard, I consider myself to be a scholar-activist, as articulated by Jasbir Puar: 'I could not tell you where my activist analysis ends and my academic work begins, or vice versa' (Greyser, 2012, p. 841). In so doing, I seek to challenge several things, namely the existing distinction between academia and activism, the mainstream understanding of activism and, finally the institution of academia. This complicates my positioning by means of multiple levels of belonging and non-belonging; my positionality has become an object of the continual feminist self-reflections in my research diary. The same can be said regarding my national belonging. The inevitability of nationalism as the 'ideological habits' of thinking, underlined by Billig (1995), facilitates the understanding of my researcher positionality as informed and affected by the domination of nationalist ideology. I do belong to my nation, and my anti-nationalist queer feminist critique has been determined by this belonging, not by its denial. At the same time, I reflected upon how my affiliation with the British university was perceived by the study participants and, likely, increased my academic privileges and authority in their eyes.

Finally, my thoughts on positionality have been informed by understanding the latter not only in terms of 'who I am', but with a stronger focus on my actions, which are translated into the research: so it is more about 'what I do' in every concrete moment and situation within the study. Interpreting positionality in terms of actions, as Lann Hornscheidt argued, means acting

> by questioning interdependent structures of discrimination and how they are realized in concrete actions – and how they can be changed, challenged, intervened into […] by constantly reflecting upon my own social positioning and what effects that has on my knowledge building and the forms of politics that I choose (Hornscheidt, 2015, p. 42).

My positionality can therefore be best represented throughout my whole research project that has been conducted within a queer feminist epistemology, permeated by the de-centring sensitivity and a scholar-activist commitment to producing situated knowledge and facilitating societal change.

(Inter)cultural translation and language politics

The venue and epistemological framework of my project require thinking in depth about translation not only in linguistic terms (between Ukrainian/ Russian and English) but also as an issue of methodology and ethics. There are at least two layers to this problem. The first layer can be conceptualised in terms of 'cultural translation'. The term was borrowed by Encarnación Gutiérrez Rodríguez (2006) from Homi Bhabha (1994) and re-conceptualised to signify the issue of positionality. It points to the limits of my (as a researcher) understanding of the data that is determined through the unavoidably different positionalities of the study participants and me. In other words, since translation presumes a transfer of meanings, there is always something untranslatable between us even if we speak the same mother tongue. The adherence to the 'situated knowledge' production and a careful account of the multiple systems of power relations (examined in the previous section) give an insight into possible solutions to the 'cultural translation' challenge in my study.

The second layer of the translation issue occurs in the process of transitioning the 'story' of sexual citizenship in Ukraine to the British academy and the English-reading audience. Sharing an anti-colonial critical view on translation as a colonial tool to transfer Western epistemologies (Gutiérrez, 2006), I have found the concept of 'intercultural translation' (Santos, 2014) productive for my study. The concept proposes a solution to the existing dilemma where non-Western cultures are either turned into objects of Western epistemic violence or discarded as incomprehensible. Challenging both options, 'intercultural translation' calls for a search for 'isomorphic concerns and underlying assumptions among cultures' and developing

> new hybrid forms of cultural understanding and intercommunication that may be useful in favoring interactions and strengthening alliances among social movements fighting, in different cultural contexts, against capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy and for social justice, human dignity, or human decency (B. de S. Santos, 2014, p. 212)

The emphasis on social justice, anti-colonial, anti-capitalist and feminist struggle provides an insight into how the 'isomorphic concerns' can be identified across different cultural context. In my thesis, I elaborate on this issue in Chapter Seven. The conceptualisation of 'intercultural translation' seems relevant to the queer feminist premises of my study since it conceives of intercultural translation as a 'living process'

that is 'carried out both with arguments and with the emotions deriving from sharing and differing under an axiology of care' (Santos, 2014, pp.212-213).

Utilising the concepts of 'cultural translation' and 'intercultural translation' as an important premise of my study, I have further operationalised my approach on the basis of a queer critique of globalisation (Cruz-Malave & Manalansan, 2002). This critique stresses how in the process of globalisation local sexual differences have been rendered through the discourse of 'development'; how 'pre-modern, pre-political, non–Euro-American queerness' attains political subjectivity only by means of naming itself with respect to the established terms of global modernity (Cruz-Malave & Manalansan, 2002, pp.5-6). Understanding this hegemony helps to see how the discursive power of 'global modernity' shapes the process of sexual citizenship construction in Ukraine, as well as my own patterns of thinking. As a result, my concern about the coloniality of categories and politics that form and make sense of non-Western sexualities had to be reflected upon throughout the different stages of my project. This includes re-thinking the language I use, by conceiving it as a medium that produces 'reality' rather than representing it in a transparent and mimetic way (Lykke, 2010, p.173). This concern has also determined my specific interest in the use of language in different LGBT+ communities in Ukraine, including linguistic experiments in queer activism (Chapter Seven). In the section that follows, I explain and justify the logic of language politics in my thesis.

Terminology and language

The urgency of queer feminist accountability and the importance of cultural and intercultural translation facilitated my thinking with respect to basic terms and names, but it was not easy. It started from the question of how to name those communities my study is focused upon. Whilst the 'LGBT' acronym (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) is the most common and internationally recognised for non-heterosexual, non-cisgender and non-binary people, there are growing attempts to expand the LGBT title by means of adding new letters, such as Q, I and A, as a signifier of including new identities and subjects in communities (queer or questioning, intersex, asexual or agender). Also, adding the + or * symbols is used to show the

potential infinity of non-normative identities (e.g. LGBTQIA+).

In my study, I decided to adopt the *LGBT+* term as a political strategy that opens up the number of sexual and gender categories and, simultaneously, destabilises identity categories as such. This decision has had consequences. As I have observed in the course of focus group discussions in Queer Homes, participants who used the term 'LGBT' in their spontaneous speech often switched to 'LGBT+' after noticing that I use the latter. This is an important point to reflect upon with respect to power in knowledge circulation and researcher's accountability. Whilst this study adopts the *LGBT+* acronym in my narrative, I keep the original versions of the acronyms used in all quotations. At the same time, in line with Jasbir Puar, I recognise the inadequacy of the terms used, 'because they are over-determined and vague, too specific yet too broad. It is precisely the attempt to mediate these tensions that is symptomatic of the problem' (Puar, 2006, p.86). Naming as such sets symbolic boundaries that do not grasp the 'reality' adequately enough but produce performative practices of exclusions and over-determination. A similar dilemma occurred regarding the term 'community'. Despite the common usage of the term 'LGBT community' (in singular form) by the study participants, the recognition of multiplicity and diversity within communities determines my usage of the plural form. Thus, the term '*LGBT+ communities*' serves to indicate the field of study and, simultaneously, to stress its flexible borders and non-homogeneous character.

Importantly, a tendency to substitute the LGBT acronym with the term '*queer*' (n.) in Anglo-American literature does not work for my study since the word 'queer' has a particular meaning in Ukraine. In both local languages it sounds like a loanword from English: *kvir*. In mainstream LGBT+ discourse, *kvir* stands for a type of identity that does not fit the 'LGBT' categories, such as genderqueer, genderfluid and non-binary people, and is reflected in the 'LGBTQ' acronym that sometimes appears in the data. Also, *kvir* is seldom used as a synonym or shortcut for LGBT+ as, for example, in the case of Queer Homes (that will be interpreted in Chapter Seven). At the time of my study, the word 'queer' was also used as part of self-naming in such forms as *kviry* ('queer' [n., pl.]) and 'queer (adj.) activism' to signify the political position of some grassroots initiatives rather than an identity. Leticia Sabsay called such positionality 'politically queer' (2013). In this thesis, therefore, 'queer activism' is used tentatively

and contextually to designate a specific political position and forms of collectivities within broader LGBT+ communities that existed in Ukraine at the time of my study. The analysis in Chapters Six and Seven focuses in detail on how the queer activists position themselves with regard to the nation-state and how their agenda shapes the discourse of sexual citizenship in Ukraine.

The queer theoretical framework of my study presumes problematisation of the binary understanding of gender (i.e. a common-sense assumption that only two types of gendered subjects – women and men – can possibly to exist) in my 'language politic'. Being inspired by transfeminist studies of language (Enke, 2012b; Hornscheidt, 2015), I have developed a strategy of using the singular '*they*' and avoiding personal gendered pronouns in my narrative (but leave them unchanged in quotations). At the same time, I carefully respect people's self-identification and use their preferred identity categories and pronouns according to their self-naming in personal communication. Since the area of transgender terminology is a dynamically changing field and has its local specificities, in my thesis I use '*transgender*' (adj.) as an umbrella term[18] for the broadest range of non-cis identities and identifications as well as a form of activism. Finally, whilst not having transgender experience myself, I attempted to act responsibly and self-reflectively in every concrete moment and situation of my study as a means of converting my cis-gender privileges into queer feminist accountability.

Finally, some other terms require further explanation. The word *gei* ('gay') is strongly gendered in the Ukrainian and Russian languages and stands for homosexual men only. So, I translate common Anglo-American concepts such as 'gay rights' or 'gay liberation' into the Ukrainian language/context as 'LGBT+ rights' and 'LGBT+ liberation'. Pride marches or rallies in Ukraine are never called 'parades' in the narratives of LGBT+ communities (this is analysed in Chapters Five and Seven). Contrarily, today the 'parade' rhetoric has pejorative LGBT-phobic connotations and is typically used in anti-LGBT discourse.

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[18] Whilst some scholars (Enke, 2012a) consider the terms trans or trans* to be inclusive and respectful terms available for use by people outside transgender communities, in Ukraine the word 'trans' has an offensive note when used by a cis-person.

Discourses, ideologies and imaginaries

Theorising on discourse, power, dominance, and construction of the subject, as instigated by Michel Foucault and further elaborated by feminist theorists, underpins the conceptual framework of my study. Here the concept of 'discourse' needs to be explained in detail. For Foucault, discourse is about the political currency that is attributed to certain meanings, or systems of meaning (1977). Discourses form and, simultaneously, are formed through specific regimes of truth that mark the limits of acceptable speech (Butler, 1997). This is the core of the subject-making process: 'to become a subject means to be subjected to a set of implicit or explicit norms that govern the kind of speech that will be legible as the speech of a subject' (Butler, 1997, p. 133). These norms constitute the 'domain of the sayable'. According to Butler, speaking within the domain allows for the achievement of one's status as a subject of speech, whilst moving outside of this domain means to risk one's status as a subject.

In 'The History of Sexuality' Foucault outlined their method as focused not on the origin of discourses but on the question of what makes them necessary: what 'effects of power and knowledge they ensure' (Foucault, 1998a, p. 102). Power is inextricably linked with discourse insofar as:

> multiple relations of power traverse, characterize, and constitute the social body; they are indissociable from a discourse of truth, and they can neither be established nor function unless a true discourse is produced, accumulated, put into circulation, and set to work. (Foucault, 2004, p. 24)

Productive (rather than oppressive) power relations constitute a subject; subjects are neither prior to nor apart from power relations. In this context, power formations are neither coherent nor rational: 'their makeshift nature is instrumental to their hegemonic force' (Braidotti, 2013, p. 26). The economy of power in the circulation of discourses tends to establish hegemony not through coercion but through producing a set of ideas that become persuasive for people, formulating common-sense knowledge. In my study, the concept of common-sense is important since it helps in navigating dominant discourses and analysing their internal contradictions or 'dilemmatic structure', in Michael Billig's terms (2001). In this regard, I rely upon Billig's insight that ideologically-related utterances are typically framed in a 'dilemmatic' way, i.e. contain contrary themes (Billig, 2001, p. 218). This provides the

resources for common-sense thinking that can serve as an indicator of dominant discourses and hegemonic ideologies in society. It also facilitates analysis of how the dominant discourses, once they become normalised and naturalised (or become common-sense), establish the limits of the thinkable and the domain of the sayable.

The Foucauldian understanding of power as productive as well as constraining (that not only limits but also open up new ways of acting and thinking) means that power relations contain their own possibilities for resistance to the dominant discourses. Foucault conceived this resistance in the form and process of producing alternative power-saturated knowledge as 'counter-discourse' (2004). In this study, the term 'counter-discourse' is adopted to signify 'new truths' that appear in the same discursive field wherein the dominant discourses are situated. Whilst a dominant discourse attempts to exclude heterogeneity from the domain of the sayable, counter-discourses create an alternative 'historical potentiality for difference' (Terdiman, 1989, p. 343). Similarly to the dominant discourses, counter-discourses are neither coherent nor rational but distributed, in Foucault's words,

> in irregular fashion: the points, knots, or focuses of resistance are spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilizing groups of individuals in a definitive way... (Foucault, 1977b, p. 96)

Adopting this conception of counter-discourses in my study helps to grasp these alternatives (or 'resistance', in the quotation) that are scattered across the data in 'irregular fashion' (as analysed in Chapter Six).

Finally, in the context of discourse analysis of sexual citizenship, my operationalisation of the term 'imaginaries' stems from several conceptualisations. Firstly, it signifies a collectivity and stands for complex discourses that weave together a collective picture of the world that defines us as a separate community (Anderson 1991). This meaning informs, for example, the concept of 'national imaginary' that, in Shane Phelan's words, means 'the persistent cluster of images and rhetoric that, however inadequately and imperfectly, signal to a population who and what it is' (Phelan, 2010, p. 7). Secondly, according to theorising by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, social imaginaries are substantiated through a 'logic of equivalence' that opposes a 'logic of differences' in order to establish a community as a 'common project' (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001). Whilst generally national imaginaries are overlapping and

contradictory, some are hegemonic over others, 'carrying with them the weight of cultural, economic, and political dominance of certain groups' (Phelan, 2010, p. 7). Thirdly, notwithstanding the common-sense meaning of imaginary as related to the realm of fantasies or illusion, in my study I rely on a critical interpretation of the collective imaginary as the condition for being and a reason for actions (Castoriadis, 1984). More specifically, I take the idea developed by Donna Haraway that 'the imaginary and the rational [...] hover close together' (Haraway, 1991b, p. 192) and expand it further from the area of science to the realm of civil activism and social life, in general.

There is one more reading of imaginaries that makes this concept particularly appealing to my project: imaginaries are affectively charged. Leticia Sabsay, for example, argues for the crucial role of the imaginary in the process of subject formations, thereby calling for analytic attention to be paid to 'the psychic dimension' in subjectivation (Sabsay, 2016, p. 13). Though my project does not include psychological research, the notion of imaginaries is best suited to grasping 'the mutual entanglement of the work of reason, emotion and fantasy' (Koobak, 2013, p. 35) in the narratives of sexual citizenship and national belonging in my study.

Queer feminist epistemology and/as ethics

Defining epistemology at the outset of my study is important since it determines basic assumptions about social life, the research (methods), the researcher (Loseke, 2012, p. 21) and research ethics (Lykke, 2010). This study has been initially situated, designed and conducted within poststructuralist frameworks in the social sciences (Gannon & Davies, 2012; Loseke, 2012). This framework presumes social life to be multifaceted and fragmented, and objects to be constituted, 'enacted' in and by the process of study (see Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1972, 1998; Haraway, 1991b; J. W. Scott, 1991, among others). I seek to understand how citizenship and nationhood, communities and subjectivities are all constituted through the discourses that frame them.

Several key features and concepts of poststructuralist feminist epistemology inform my research design. Firstly, the notion of *feminism* is utilised as an analytic framework to probe the implications and intersections of power, knowledge, and politics through

which global and local regimes of inequalities are substantiated and sustained. Correspondingly, power is seen as complex and unstable; relations of power are understood as established and maintained through discourse; agency, freedom, emancipation and resistance are always contingent and limited (Gannon & Davies, 2012, pp.72-76). Secondly, understanding 'objectivity' in terms of producing knowledge that is always *partial* and *situated* (Haraway, 1988, p. 583) requires researchers to consciously reflect upon their positioning (situatedness) and research technologies. Thus, the call to *positionality*, developed by anti-racist feminisms in 1980-1990s (see Anzaldua, 1987; Collins, 1990; Lorde, 1984, among others), has become a pivotal point in my epistemological framework. Being inspired by the set of ideas that stem from the feminist intersectional perspective (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 1990; hooks, 1989), 'left intersectional analysis' (Cohen, 1997) and intersectional trans politics (Spade, 2011, 2012), I focus my critical analysis on how the 'object' of my study – sexual citizenship – has been produced through and become productive of the complex interconnection of power relations. In other words, how various forms of power structure the discursive regime of sexual citizenship and subjectivate LGBT+ people in such a way that some fit the model of sexual citizen whilst others do not. My study also draws upon the argument that a research project concerned with power relations must be guided by 'a desire to center those living under the most severe forms of coercive violence as a guide for prioritization' (Spade, 2012, p. 193). In other words, it is essential to start the study from the most discriminated position and not the other way round; failure to do so privileges prototypical norms and (re)produces neglected and/or marginalised positions. Following this approach in my study means contesting assertions of the 'progress' achieved for LGBT+ communities from the perspective of its impact on the most vulnerable part of those communities. As shown within critical trans studies, most often 'progress' in LGBT+ issues occurs at the price of a 'backlash' that often hits the most discriminated members of the communities (Spade, 2016). A focus on the 'price' permeates my analysis and facilitates reflection upon structural power-related interdependencies in a profound and existential way.

Thirdly, q*ueer theorising*[19] that aims to trouble more than prove or disprove certainties

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[19] Following the insights of Jacqui Gabb, I adopt 'queer theorising' as a more appropriate term than 'queer theory' in order to stress the multiplicity of perspectives that inform this way of thinking, and its reluctance to being completed and academically institutionalised.

(Gabb, 2016) also informs my epistemological framework. It challenges the essentialism of the 'binary sexual regime', and instead proposes an understanding of sexuality as something that is grounded in historical and cultural contexts (Berlant, 1997; Butler, 1990; Edelman, 2004; Halberstam, 1998, 2005, 2011; Muñoz, 2009; Puar, 2007; Sullivan, 2003). In line with Ki Namaste, I recognise 'the impossibility of moving outside current conceptions of sexuality' (Namaste, 1994, p. 224) which means the 'impossibility of locating oneself "outside" the dominant discourse' (ibid.). At the same time, I seek to negotiate the limits of these conceptions. Reconciling a queer critique of identity politics with feminist sensitivity to self-identification and self-representation of the study participants, simultaneously, I keep my methodological focus on the constructed nature of experience and consider the subjects' views to be structured through discourse (Scott, 1991).

The combination of the feminist and queer approaches described above is often called *queer feminist studies* (Wiegman, 2014), and is a research area rooted in 'ongoing suspicions of anything regarded as "normal" and "essential"' (Wright, 2009, p.57). A queer feminist epistemology was also conceptualised as an *ethical position* inasmuch as it further elaborates on a Foucauldian (1997) understanding of 'thought as a critical and ethical practice' that challenges the customary ways of thinking and doing (Sawicki, 2013, p. 75). In addition, I have found inspiring the call of Seyla Benhabib (1985) to exercise both 'explanatory-diagnostic analysis' and 'anticipatory-utopian critique' in feminist studies. Whilst the former means analysing women's oppression across history and societies, the latter is focused on projecting 'new modes of togetherness, of relating to ourselves and to nature in the future' (Benhabib, 1985, p. 405). In my interpretation of this call, the task of my study is two-fold: to demonstrate how the complex interrelations of power produce multiple othering, exclusion, oppression and violence in the construction of sexual citizenship, and to show the potentialities of new alternative forms of affinities and belonging that emerge within the same construction. Being conceptualised in various ways (see Ahmed, 2010; Judith Halberstam, 2011; Muñoz, 2009; Wiegman, 2014), this idea has gained currency in queer and feminist theorising, and my study has been driven by this two-fold objective.

Queer feminist discourse analysis method

Throughout the process of my research, I have crafted a method of analysis that is specifically attuned to the epistemological framework, ethics, methods and data in my study – queer feminist discourse analysis (QFDA). Being determined by a queer feminist positionality, my QFDA method presumes exercising the accountability of different axes of inequality in social interactions. This method has been informed by the critical re-conceptualisations of several approaches in discourse analysis. Firstly, I drew upon the premise of Foucauldian genealogy, namely seeing the 'history of the present' as a discontinuous and erratic process. I have learnt from Foucault to avoid a judgemental view, but instead to be focused on the origins and functions of discourses in order to 're-establish the various systems of subjection: not the anticipatory power of meaning but the hazardous play of dominations' (Foucault, 1984, p. 83).

Secondly, the operationalisation of my QFDA method has followed a particular elaboration of Foucauldian theorising within the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach (Fairclough, 1995, 2001; Fairclough & Fairclough, 2013; Jäger, 2001; Reisigl, 2013; van Dijk, 2001). More specifically, in line with CDA, I conceive of discourse as 'a form of social practice which both *constitutes* the social world and is *constituted* by other social practices' (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002, p.61; italics in original). In my study, the discourse of sexual citizenship is understood as a social practice emphasising the situatedness resulting from the interdependent contexts of its co-constituting discourses. Also, notwithstanding some differences between the various approaches to CDA (Reisigl, 2013), this method claims to be 'critical'. It is socio-politically engaged in the critique of various forms of discursively constituted power and hegemonic social structures that lead to injustice and social discrimination. Since it is always concerned with 'making transparent opaque, contradictory, power-related, manipulative relationships among language and society or social structures' (Reisigl, 2013, p. 75), this makes CDA the most relevant approach for my study, due to its political premises.

Thirdly, feminist re-thinking of Foucauldian methodology has substantially contributed to the development of the method of my study (see Bartky, 1997; Phelan, 1990; Ramazanoglu, 2002, among others). More specifically, I draw on the conceptualisation of feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) that seeks to examine

the complex, subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways in which frequently taken-for-granted gendered assumptions and power asymmetries get discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and contested in specific different communities and discourse contexts (Lazar, 2014, p. 182).

Two basic premises of FCDA have contributed to the conceptualisation of my method: the call for 'analytical activism'[20] and a critical focus on reflexivity (in several senses, including one's own positionality). Whilst these two interrelated principles are of great significance to my research project, I cannot agree with the political aim of FCDA denoted in terms of 'emancipation' or, correspondingly, with other principles of the FCDA method that are derived from this aim. Aligning with the feminist call for a self-critical rethinking of 'the neoliberal emancipation model' in favour of the transformation of the patriarchal system (Pető, 2015), I challenge the 'emancipatory' discourse in my study. Instead, I direct my analysis towards a 'transformative quest' - a principle that has been developed within one more source of my methodological inspiration: a feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis (FPDA) method (Baxter, 2008, 2015).

For developing the method of my study, I use a principle of the FPDA method which opposes the tendency of both CDA and FCDA to polarise studied subjects into categories of 'the more powerful' and 'the less powerful'. On the contrary, the FPDA method provides an account that is more relevant to the queer feminist theoretical framework of my study. Conceiving of identities as complex, shifting and multiply located, one of the FPDA principles presumes that speaking subjects 'continuously fluctuate between subject positions on a matrix of powerfulness and powerlessness' (Baxter, 2008, p.249). This methodological feature of the FPDA method had been adopted for my study, since it allows for recognition of how certain LGBT+ subjects are produced through the interaction of competing discourses of sexual citizenship. It helps to move away from understanding social groups in stable 'oppressor - oppressed' terms and to re-think subjectivation and agency from a queer feminist perspective. At the same time, being predominantly developed as a method for studying gender

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[20] Michelle Lazar utilises the terms 'analytical activism' and 'academic activism' as interchangeable notions: 'The intervention of a feminist CDA in current practices of recuperative reflexivity is a form of analytical activism, which keeps going critical feminists' efforts at radical social change (Lazar, 2007, p. 160).

identities, FPDA does not pretend to be a 'stand-alone' method and presumes the juxtaposition of other approaches. That is why I had to develop a specific method for my study that corresponds with a queer feminist epistemology.

In terms of processual aspects, my QFDA method stems from the aforementioned Foucauldian framework, the basic premises of CDA and insights from FCDA and FPDA. The detailed step-by-step schema of the QFDA method attunes the procedure of the 'feminist relational discourse analysis' method developed by Thompson, Rickett, and Day (2017) in the field of psychology. In my study, the main steps of QFDA have been deployed as follows.

Step 1. Listening to audio recordings and reading the transcripts of focus group discussions or captured online materials, in my study, presumes not only a careful examination of the narratives, as well as 'reading' the visual materials, but also an account of the visible/accountable social interactions. In particular, I have noticed and marked every case of interruption, one person speaking in a different voice, laughter and other emotional reactions, emphasised words and phrases, dialogues and arguments between people, and so on. These details are reflected in quotations according to the transcription notations (see the list at the beginning of the thesis). Also, I accounted for all the visible and pronounced indicators of social position (gender performance, age, cis- or transgender status, class, ableness etc.), as well as the situational positions of the study participants (for example, status in the community hierarchy).

Step 2. 'Chunking' textual materials into sections means marking each moment when the topic was changed. Technically, I did this using NVivo 11 software.

Step 3. Labelling 'chunks' with descriptive codes means identification of general topics in each 'chunk'. Some topics in my data occurred 'naturally' but some themes were proposed by me as a researcher during focus group discussions. Being aware of the power of the researcher in the discursive process of 'chunking' and 'setting' the themes, I attempted to perform a close and attentive feminist listening and reading, described above, in order to grasp the direct voices of the research participants and to identify 'their' themes specifically.

Step 4. Collecting all the 'chunks' under the same code allows for identifying recurring topics in the material. In my study, I have used NVivo to produce a thematic coding frame entitled 'Topics (what was said)'. Examples of my thematic codes are: 'legislation', 'police', 'marriage equality', 'Euromaidan' and so on. This grouping was tentative; in the process of analysis, I had to revisit the original narratives and undertake re-grouping several times. Also, thematic coding requires analytic work that connects 'what was said' and the research questions of my study. The narratives in the dataset delineate the research participants' locally situated experiences and thoughts, the lacks and concerns, the stories of their lives. Since most typically they do not use the term 'sexual citizenship', at this stage I have to identify analytically those themes which constitute a story of sexual citizenship in Ukraine.

Step 5. Identifying discourses at this stage means to examine how each theme is constructed through sets of statements that talk about a theme in similar ways. Being driven by the research questions of the study, my identification of discourses included analysis of the underpinning assumptions, interdiscursive relations and production of particular types of subjectivation. All substantial chapters of my thesis, namely Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven are dedicated to the identification and investigation of how the dominant and counter-discourses of sexual citizenship are produced through and productive of discussions in LGBT+ communities. These chapters are also focused on how and what sexual citizens are produced in the discourse by means of detachment from the 'constitutive outside' of sexual citizenship.

Step 6. At this stage, I proceeded to a more fine-grained analysis of the constituent discourses of sexual citizenship in order to identify argumentative strategies and their underpinning assumptions. In my study, the term 'argumentative strategies' stands for a particular type of 'practical reasoning' (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2011) that provides arguments in favour of or against particular courses of action. More specifically, my analysis includes evaluation of the argumentation from both sides: on the part of those who narrate it and those who critically analyse it. This helps to see the dilemmatic structure of statements (Billig, 2001) and, eventually, unravels the internal paradoxes of discourses. At the same time, discursive controversies and paradoxes

enable the occurrence of counter-discourses, as examined theoretically in Chapter Two and demonstrated in Chapters Six and Seven.

Step 7. Identifying discursive realms is the final stage of QFDA, which involves turning back to the conceptual framework of the research and making sense of the identified discourses. This involves a re-thinking of the study 'object' in terms of the circulation of power and processes of subjectification. In other words, this presumes drawing a more or less comprehensive genealogy of the process of my 'object's' formation through the transformation of practices and 'the intersection of chance-events as conditions for the production of discourse' (Arribas-Ayllon & Walkerdine, 2010, p. 99). At this stage, I identify the dominant and counter-discourses of sexual citizenship and show who from LGBT+ communities has become the 'new normal' of sexual citizenship and who has become excluded as the 'constitutive others.'

Cases (sites)

As such, the data for this project are texts and images produced within particular contexts and concentrated around several cases as follows.

(1) **The Kyiv Pride.** As a central annual LGBT+ event in Ukraine, the Kyiv Pride perfectly instantiates a constellation of discourses that inform relations between LGBT+ communities, the state and the nation. As a result, a great deal of my analysis has been driven by data from the Kyiv Pride. I collected narratives and images issued by the Kyiv Pride as an institution and its leaders in public space; I discussed the Kyiv Pride in the course of focus group discussions in Queer Homes; I gathered publicly available materials of online discussions on various aspects of Pride weeks/marches, as well as broader debates about Pride in Ukraine. Also, I personally participated in the 2017 Kyiv Pride rally and was able to undertake participant observation (take photographs and make field notes).

(2) The **'Queer Homes'** case aims to contribute to deeper understandings of how sexual citizenship has been performed in local LGBT+ communities; how the communities as such are constituted with regard to different modes of public and private, personal and political contexts, and how the discursive configuration and

dynamics of these communities reflect the global and local politics of sexual citizenship. At the time of my fieldwork, seven Queer Homes were active in different regions of Ukraine (see map and more details in Appendices Four and Five). They were all opened in 2014-2016 under the support and curatorship of 'Gay Alliance Ukraine' (GAU) and were claimed to be a safe space for 'meetings, learning, communication, personal and creative development' of people 'regardless of their sexual orientation'[21]. I consider Queer Home communities to be a semi-public space including members of local LGBT+ communities and allies but not easily accessible to the public (the Queer Homes' addresses were never advertised publicly).

According to GAU requirements, Queer Homes were opened at least four days per week and had to organise at least 16 different events per month. Being community centres, Queer Homes addressed the needs of the local community through different kinds of activities, from political discussions to free English lessons, from self-help workshops to parties. At the same time, the condition of GAU support was that the aim of activist mobilisation remained central to the Queer Homes agenda. After the GAU project ended in 2017 all Queer Homes were closed. A few community centres that started being affiliated with other NGOs were able to reopen, typically under another name. This signals the crucial role of professionalised NGOs and a grant economy, in general, for sustaining LGBT+ community centres. Since the Queer Homes activity was significantly informed by the donors' agendas, I consider these LGBT+ community centres to be not grassroots local initiatives but an extension of NGO-based activism in the regions involved. For the purpose of my project, I did not study Queer Homes as institutions but visited all seven of them in order to produce original data from focus group discussions. In addition, I have collected some textual and visual materials on the Queer Homes activities before, during and after my visits. Since from 2017 onwards Queer Homes do not exist anymore, the material that I have collected/produced on Queer Homes is archival and unique.

(3) Several smaller cases are identified in my dataset and used for more fine-grained analysis of the discourses of sexual citizenship. These are the case of so-called 'scandalous placards' at the 2017 Kyiv Pride march, analysed in Chapter Five, and the

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[21] Quotation captured from the GAU website; this page does not exist anymore.

Drag Queen Show and Queer Anarcho Feminist Block (QAFB) at the same rally (Chapters Six and Seven). Another case is the T*rans-Archive[22] in Kyiv. It belongs to the 'Insight'[23] NGO but has been collected by a particularly enthusiastic person[24] who used to work as a coordinator of the Transgender program in 'Insight'. In terms of size, the archive fits inside a big cardboard box (figure 3.1) and yet it remains the first and only LGBT+ archive to exist in Ukraine.

Figure 3.1. T*rans-Archive: view from above[25].

I worked in the archive during my first fieldwork trip to Ukraine in the Summer of 2016. However, this case has not been included in the final version of my thesis because all the archival materials were collected from 2009-2013 (as indicated by the

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[22] I use the original name of the archive, as labelled by its founder. See the picture (figure 3.1). Internationally, Trans* or T* with an asterisk is the form of queering the term that addresses the deficiencies of language to express self-identifications beyond binary gender.

[23] *Insight* is a Ukrainian public LGBT+ organisation, see details in Appendix Six.

[24] I asked this person how to name them. Whilst they would be delighted to see their work publicly recognised, so far they cannot be named by their real name in the thesis since revealing their transgender identity might be harmful to their social life.

[25] The picture is taken by myself.

label on the box)[26]. Since the Euromaidan (winter 2013-2014) and the war (2014 – present) appeared to be the crucial events in the production of discourses of sexual citizenship in Ukraine, and these materials were generated before this time period, they, therefore, fall outside the remit of my analysis. It is my intention to use these unique materials in future analyses once I have completed this doctoral study.

Data collection and production

Since the study is deployed within the poststructuralist epistemological framework, I think of my data not as merely 'collected', but rather 'produced' in the research process, as it gives meaning to the social world and is determined by the researcher's gaze. The data for this thesis are comprised of different materials:

(1) Located in semi-public spaces and/or produced solely for the research project – recordings from the focus group discussions and online-based data from social media (Facebook). The practicalities collecting this type of data, in terms of methods and ethics, are unpacked in the following sections.

(2) Located in public spaces (including an open-access segment of the Internet) in the form of documents, public interviews and talks, manifestos and resolute statements, and other public utterances from LGBT+ communities. Whilst relatively unmediated voices of LGBT+ people are substantially prioritised in this study, the analysis also relies on a broader range of sources, including publications in the mainstream and LGBT+ media. A reason for this is that media sources are a space in which dominant discourses emerge; also, they help to shed a light on the connections between discourses produced by LGBT+ communities and other social actors: the state authorities, political parties and organisations, international agencies, public intellectuals and so on.

Focus group discussions

During the main stage of my fieldwork in Ukraine (March - September 2017) I ran focus group discussions in seven Queer Homes located in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odesa (big cities),

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[26] This end date was not specified but is taken from the latest dates on archival documents.

Vinnytsya, Kryvyi Rih, Uzhgorod and Zhytomyr (medium size towns; see also map and details in Appendices Four and Five). I started approaching the Queer Homes using the contacts presented on the GAU webpage. I sent the Information Sheet (Appendix One) to the Queer Home leaders and asked if I could invite active members of their community to participate in focus group discussions. Simultaneously, I sent a letter to GAU to inform them about the aims and methods of my research. Since GAU as a sponsoring organisation required to prioritise activist/mobilising events within Queer Homes activities, all community centres hosted me gladly, among other reasons, because of being able to include this 'political' event in their plan of work and their report to GAU.

Though all the participants had to receive the Information Sheet via email prior to the focus group discussion typically I started the meeting with a brief introduction to my study and signing of the Informed Consent form (Appendix Two). According to the form, participants could withdraw their consent to be audio recorded before the start of the focus group; also, participants could withdraw their consent to participate in the study at any time during the discussion and for a one-month period after it was completed. I did not make any monetary recompense for focus group participation but provided snacks and refreshments according to the specific needs of each Queer Home. All discussions lasted from 1.5 to 2 hours, with between five and fourteen participants (see more details in Appendix Five). I made notes during every focus group discussion and later wrote down my reflections in my research diary. All the recordings were transcribed and translated from Ukrainian and Russian into English using NVivo 11 software. All research data were securely stored according to the legal and ethical requirements of my university (The Open University, 2014a).

In academic literature, focus group discussion has been conceptualised as a method that allows for the grasping of mainly normative views and dominant discourses (Kitzinger, 1994; Smithson, 2000). This is an advantage of the method as a 'forum for generating public discourses about a topic, and not as a way of uncovering participants' "real" views' (Smithson, 2000, p. 114). At the same time, the analysis of argumentative strategies used by the focus group discussion participants (in particular, the cases of 'dilemmatic utterances') can be helpful in identifying the areas where public discourse is contradictory (Smithson, 2000, p. 115). This happened during focus

group discussions in my study. I received a rich variety of (often contradictory) narratives that were informed by dominant discourse, as well as counter-discourses (i.e. those that transgress or challenge the dominant discourses of sexual citizenship). Since I initiated and moderated the focus group discussions, I was able to encourage the widest possible variety of opinions, including the 'alternative' ones. At the same time, I would not overestimate my influence on the dynamic of the discussions and the obtained data. All the discussions produced a wide range of opinions and argumentative strategies because of the significance of the discussed topics for members of LGBT+ communities. Notably, all focus group discussions followed the same pattern in terms of dynamics: more normative statements were voiced at the beginning; 'alternative' opinions appeared later in the course of discussion and their concentration had grown by the end of our meeting. Another common feature for all focus group discussions was that counter-statements were typically accompanied by disclaimers like 'this is my personal opinion' (analysed in Chapter Six).

According to my plan, in every focus group discussion we discussed three sets of questions. Firstly, we debated the 'real' and desired relationships of LGBT+ communities with the state, local governments, the police and other institutions in post-Maidan times. Secondly, we debated our place within the Ukrainian nation and the current meaning and significance of patriotism. The third group of topics was focused on activist strategies and tactics, Pride marches and other forms of local and national LGBT+ activism. A detailed topic guide is presented in Appendix Three.

Social media

At the outset of my study, two social media platforms were equally popular spaces for communication in LGBT+ communities: *Facebook* and *VKontakte*[27]. Since in May 2017, *VKontakte* had been legally banned in the territory of Ukraine as a part of political sanctions against the Russian Federation, the only source of my data from social media is *Facebook.* I have a personal account where my affiliation and research intentions are stated clearly in Ukrainian. From February 2017 to September 2018, I closely monitored a number of Facebook pages and groups addressing the activities of LGBT+

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[27] *VKontakte* is an analogue of *Facebook* developed and based in Russia.

NGOs and informal groups (see Appendix Six) and captured the relevant data using NVivo 11 software. At the same time, I include data from social media with certain ethical precautions that are driven by current debates on the ethical aspects of Internet-mediated research (IMR). Whilst I was seeking to collect data from the 'public domain' only, in an IMR context the distinction between public and private space becomes increasingly blurred (British Psychological Society, 2013, p. 6). In this regard, there is a clear statement in Facebook's 'legal terms and agreement' section that has to be read and accepted by each user in the course of their Facebook account registration:

> When you publish content or information using the Public setting, it means that you are allowing everyone, including people off of Facebook, to access and use that information, and to associate it with you (i.e., your name and profile picture) (Facebook, 2014)

However, many scholars doubt that accepting this statement is equal to fully informed consent to be a study participant since a research purpose is not stated explicitly (Coughlan & Perryman, 2015; Townsend & Wallace, 2016; Zimmer, 2010). Although I published an announcement of my research intent and linked it to my OU webpage on the 'bio' section of my personal Facebook page there is no guarantee that this statement had been read and taken into consideration by all people whose statements I use as data. The lack of awareness of the 'participants' with respect to being researched entails another problem: the impossibility of fulfilling an important aspect of informed consent – the right to withdraw. Eventually, a post or account could be deleted by a user at any time without informing the researcher: in this case, if the researcher continues to use captured information or it has been published, it would pose a new complex ethical issue. These debates together with the basic ethical principle of confidentiality have informed my practical ethical decisions regarding the use of data from Facebook, as delineated in the next section.

Ethical principles and considerations

My understanding of ethics relies upon the argument that epistemology, methodology, method and ethical issues are always interrelated and co-constitutive (Lykke, 2010). Situating my research in poststructuralist studies, I consider it to be

embedded in a specific form of ethics, where all basic categories are 'unstable, multi-layered, incalculable, and they "leak," that is, their meanings spill over into each other and cannot be unambiguously defined' (Lykke, 2010, p. 157). Such an understanding of ethics disregards lack of ambiguity and universalism. This stance informs the ethical basis of my study and helps to navigate ethical dilemmas that occurred in the course of my research during its different stages. It also fuels my sense of moral responsibility – 'accountability', in Donna Haraway's term (1991) – for the consequences of my study for 'those networks, processes and relations' in which I participate (Lykke, 2010, p.159). The practical ethical considerations of my study have been also informed by the basic ethical norms of sociological study (BSA, 2002), my university's ethical regulations (The Open University, 2014a, 2014b) and the ethics code of the Ukrainian Sociological Association (SAU, 2004), of which I am a longstanding member.

The principle of safety of study participants (representatives of LGBT+ communities in Ukraine) and minimising the risks of any harm is a core ethical premise of my study. The situation of LGBT+ communities in Ukraine remains precarious, especially for less privileged people, e.g. transgender people with problematic ID, refugees, low-class and racialised people. That is why I have applied a 'Confidentiality' principle (The Open University, 2014b) in order to minimise the risk of disclosure of the study participants' identities. More specifically, in citing and representing materials from focus group discussions, I anonymised all personal data during the process of transcription (removed real names of people and other information that might enable their identification) and used pseudonyms in the text of the thesis as well as in other publications.

Regarding the materials from Facebook, only the data from open-access collective pages and groups are used. At the same time, I took into account the difficulty of maintaining a principle of anonymity and confidentiality of participants' personal information gathered online because the networks are not under the control of the researcher. Even anonymised, published verbatim quotes may be traced through the use of search engines to the social media archives from which they originated, where they are likely to be linked to an individual's profile. That is why I exercised two-levels of protection of the participants' anonymity and confidentiality in reporting materials obtained from Facebook. All data that are published verbatim are 1) anonymised and

2) translated into English from original languages (Ukrainian or Russian). The latter can be equated to paraphrasing – the ethical solution for social media research proposed by some scholars (Townsend & Wallace, 2016).

The politic of naming in the data quotations has also been developed according to the ethical considerations of my study. All names from the dataset are given in Ukrainian transliteration and italicised. When quoting utterances made in a public space (such as press conferences, public talks or interviews to mainstream media), I provide a full name that is a person's real name. The sources of this type of data are indicated in Appendix Six. All the authors of quotes from semi-public space (i.e. focus group discussions and online discussions) are denoted by first name only as a pseudonym (except for cases where an author of a statement made in a semi-public space insisted on using their real names). Such quotes are supplemented with an indication of their source as FGD (focus group discussion) or 'Facebook post' without further details. In addition, copyright for artistic expressions and photographic materials used in the analysis has been protected via seeking individual informed consent from their authors.

Whilst the comprehensive ethical clearance through the OU HREC took place before the data collection started (see the Proforma in Appendix Seven), ethical issues arose and had to be addressed at every stage of the research process. Dealing with them, I constantly consulted as many recourses and professionals as possible. Eventually, I adopted a 'contextual integrity' approach (Nissenbaum, 2009) that facilitates the understanding of privacy in terms of expectations and consensus. When there is a level of ambiguity concerning whether data are collected from the 'public domain' or not, I considered the extent to which undisclosed observation may have potentially damaging effects for participants, before making decisions on whether to use such data and whether gaining valid consent was necessary. In this regard, I followed the key guiding principle of Internet research ethics: to balance the rights of subjects (research participants or authors), the researcher's right to conduct a study and the potential social benefits of the research (Markham & Buchanan, 2012).

Chapter summary

This chapter set out the epistemological assumptions and unpacked the methodological practicalities of my project. Summarising my study's framework in terms of a queer feminist epistemology, I claimed this as an ethical position inasmuch as it draws on a Foucauldian understanding of 'thought as a critical and ethical practice' that challenges customary ways of thinking. Since this epistemology presumes an ethical affirmative dependency with the 'object' of queer feminist study, I sought to exercise both 'explanatory-diagnostic' and 'anticipatory-utopian' critiques (Benhabib, 1985) for building a rigorous and ethical grounding for my study. This stance fuelled the sense of my moral responsibility – 'accountability' – and helped me to navigate ethical dilemmas that occurred at different stages of my research. Thinking about my positionality within the research, I introduced this in terms of 'homework' (Visweswaran, 1994) and 'critical intimacy' (Spivak, 2016), which together reflect the complex and shifting configuration of my belonging and non-belonging. The premise of engaging a critical view of Western epistemic hegemony in my project evoked a problem of 'cultural' and 'intercultural' translation. Considering this problem within a broader anti-colonial and queer critique of the discourse of globalisation, I developed my language politics as a combination of feminist accountability and the queer problematisation of naturalised categories.

The theorising on discourse, power, dominance, and construction of the subject that was initiated by Foucault and further elaborated by feminist theorists underpinned the conceptualisation of these terms in my study. From this perspective, sexual citizenship is conceived of as a discourse in constant process of becoming, performed through and constituted by other discourses, though the effects of this performance could be very material and concrete (e.g. particular life conditions or the adoption of laws). The economy of power in the circulation of discourses tends to establish cultural hegemony, which achieves power not through coercion but through producing a set of ideas that become persuasive for people, namely common-sense knowledge. The concept of common-sense helps to navigate dominant discourses and to analyse their internal contradictions or 'dilemmatic structure' (Billig, 2001); it also facilitates analysis of how dominant discourses, once they become normalised and naturalised (common-sense), establish the 'domain of the sayable' (Butler, 1997).

Since I have chosen to employ discourse analysis as the main method for my study, I have developed a method that is specifically attuned to the epistemological framework, ethics, methods and data used in my study – queer feminist discourse analysis (QFDA). Elaborating on how this method has been informed by the critical re-conceptualisation of the Foucauldian concept of discourse, critical discourse analysis (CDA), feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) and feminist poststructuralist discourse analysis (FPDA), I demonstrated how this combination enabled the transformative agenda of the research to emerge and opened up the potential for a more nuanced account of dynamic power relations in social interactions.

The choice of data cases/sites for my research project was informed by my intent to produce concrete, context-dependent and situated knowledge to represent my fieldwork (or 'homework', as explained earlier). I have collected/produced my data from the main sites (that are the Kyiv Pride and the chain of Queer Homes – local LGBT+ community centres) using the focus group discussion method and online study. In the chapter I provided a detailed account of the methods of data collection and the practicalities of their application to my study.

It is not an accident that I discussed ethics both at the beginning and in the final part of the chapter. This stems from my alignment with the idea of deep entanglement and the co-constitutive character of epistemology, methodology, method and ethics in feminist research (Lykke, 2010). I summarised the main ethical premise of my research in terms of critical questioning of universalist categories. Prioritising 'differences' in my study allowed keeping not only dominant discourses but also counter-discourses in constant focus. On a more practical level, the means of data collection/production and their presentation in the thesis narrative has been determined through the ethical principle of confidentiality. I have provided a detailed account of how confidentiality has been ensured in reporting data from focus group discussions and social media. In addition, dealing with ethical challenges that emerged at various stages of the research process, I have adopted a 'contextual integrity' approach as a way to balance the study participants' rights, my research interests and the potential social and political benefits of the project.

4. Predominant Discourse of Sexual Citizenship: Homopatriotism

Within the four subsequent chapters that present the data-driven analysis, this chapter is focused on the dominant discourse of sexual citizenship produced in Ukrainian LGBT+ communities. The chapter starts with an analysis of the LGBT+ leadership and how it relates to the discourse of active citizenship, as evoked by the Euromaidan. I investigate how the enmeshment of 'active citizenship' discourse with institutionalised LGBT+ activism produces 'sexual citizens' and their 'constitutive others' in a certain way. In order to unpack the structure of the dominant discourse of sexual citizenship, I analyse those argumentative strategies used to make sense of nationalism and patriotism in LGBT+ communities and to justify homopatriotism. These are the engagement of LGBT+ communities in the Euromaidan and the war, dissociation from the Soviet legacy and current Russian political regime, and a close symbolic association with Europe and European values. This conformation enables me, in the following chapters, to elaborate how co-constitutive discourses of homopatriotism and 'LGBT+ progress' are produced through Pride (Chapter Five), to explore the ways in which counter-discourses operate (Chapter Six) and paradoxical readings proliferate in various LGBT+ communities (Chapter Seven). Throughout this chapter, I examine what types of LGBT+ subjects have been produced by homopatriotism and how they have become sexual citizens.

Who is speaking on behalf of LGBT+ communities?

To investigate how the structural aspects of the 'domain of the sayable' shape discourses, this section zooms in on hierarchies inside and between LGBT+ groups and communities. The analysis of materials from mainstream and LGBT+ media shows that the dominant voice, aimed at representing '*the* community', is a voice of LGBT+ leaders but that leadership is very specific in the Ukrainian context. First and foremost, it has been produced within the context of the domination of NGO-based activism. Typically, LGBT+ leaders are public people who hold leading positions in NGOs. As they speak at

press conferences, open Pride rallies and are frequently filmed and pictured by mainstream and LGBT+ media, LGBT+ leaders have come to represent LGBT+ communities in negotiations of sexual citizenship. The 'authorised language' of LGBT+ leaders enables mechanisms of performativity in the discursive field and produces a specific 'regime of truth'. As Óscar García Agustín put it, 'the performative magic' occurs when somebody becomes the representative of the group. The prerequisites for this occurrence are recognition of the authority of the speaker and acceptability of the speech with regard to the institutional framework (Agustín, 2015, p.77-78).

Against the backdrop of the frequent conflation of the 'grassroots' with NGOs in the rhetoric of Western agencies and scholars, in my study, I distinguish between NGOs and grassroots activism in Ukraine. Whilst NGOs are institutionalised as legal entities in the state register and function as non-profit institutions, grassroots organisations are those autonomous groups that are not institutionalised, and so typically remain invisible to state agencies and Western donors. As in the other post-socialist regions (Dilanyan, Beraia, & Yavuz, 2018), NGO-based activism in Ukraine is significantly privileged over grassroots initiatives in terms of recourses and public recognition. From a queer feminist perspective, it can be claimed that the major NGOs conduct their activity *at the expense* of grassroots activism (Butterfield, 2016). There is evidence in the dataset of how certain forms of public grassroots activism in Ukraine have been hijacked by NGOs, such that grassroots groups were excluded from discussions (Popova, 2018). Simultaneously, the radical statements of grassroots activists are policed and silenced (as discussed in Chapters Five and Six). Up to 2018, none of the annual and other miscellaneous reports on LGBT+ issues in Ukraine includes information about grassroots activism. At the same time, the grassroots activist voices can be heard in 'internal' discussions within communities. Since I am investigating the discursive production of sexual citizenship, in my study I consider those grassroots groups and initiatives that participate in debates by means of opposing the mainstream LGBT+ agenda. As explained in Chapter Three, I name this positionality 'queer activism'. Taking into account the notable scarcity of public representation of grassroots queer activism that is situated on the margins of LGBT+ discourse, I provide a brief up-to-date outline of grassroots LGBT+ activism in Chapter Six.

NGO-based activism in Ukraine is explicitly gendered. As of 2014, there were 44 civic

and charitable LGBT+ organisations in Ukraine (Register of LGBT Organizations 2014). Most of these organisations were launched within HIV/ AIDS international aid and continue to be focused on 'MSM service'. Up to December 2018, there were only a few NGOs addressing issues relating to lesbian and bisexual women and only a couple of NGOs included transgender and intersex issues in their agenda. The domination of a specifically gendered and gendering agenda was admitted by male LGBT+ leaders themselves:

> We have to conclude that there is unequal development of different components [of the LGBT+ movement]. The most visible are gay [men's] organisations, the richest are HIV prevention organisations; the number of women's and transgender groups is incommensurable with men's ones (Naumenko, Karasiychuk & Kasianchuk, 2015, p. 129).

This conclusion is made on the basis of such indicators as the number of gender-specific organisations, their visibility and financial sustainability. Whilst this quotation importantly points to whose voice is foregrounded in discussions surrounding the LGBT+ agenda and sexual citizenship, in my analysis I am more concerned with the ways in which structural regimes of patriarchal cis-normativity are discursively (re)produced in LGBT+ communities. My queer feminist analysis seeks to understand how the discourse of sexual citizenship in post-Maidan Ukraine works for women and men, for cis-gender, transgender and intersex people. I also identify the conditions under which some lesbian and transgender identities/bodies are being incorporated into the mainstream (cis-men-dominated) discourse of sexual citizenship.

The tendency of NGOs towards professionalisation (examined in Chapter Two) facilitates the growing resemblance of NGOs to business structures in terms of project-oriented activity and corporate ethics. The emerging discourse of sexual citizenship in post-Maidan Ukraine has additionally shaped the recruitment policies of LGBT+ NGOs, as evidence illustrates:

> Since I am leaving [name of LGBT+ NGO], recently new staff were employed, and these new staff members are very patriotic and very heterosexual, it seems to me (laughter)… So, finally, they have real Ukrainian men and women, not me who have just discredited [them]… Because I was told: Anna, don't express your political views so openly in social media, you are a public person, you are a face of [name of LGBT+ NGO]. So, now they have very patriotic new staff for whom it seems normal to connect activism and patriotism, to praise Ukraine and the Ukrainian future (Anna, FGD)

The political views of Anna, in this quotation, did not meet the NGO's expectations because they were different from the patriotic ones and were expressed publicly. This is a case in point of how only a certain political position is allowed to 'represent' LGBT+ communities in public space (as discussed later in Chapter Six), and how homopatriotism is embedded within NGO-based LGBT+ activism. The rhetoric of 'employee' and details about the alleged (hetero)sexuality of the new staff is also notable. It is not to call for policing sexuality in LGBT+ activism but does point to how the politics of professionalisation enables channelling of the resources of LGBT+ NGOs (salary, in this case) to more privileged people/groups outside of LGBT+ communities.

Active citizenship

One of the key societal changes in Ukraine produced by the Euromaidan is the political empowerment of civil society, as noted in many studies (Burlyuk, Shapovalova & Zarembo, 2017). The fact that people appeared capable of dismantling an unsatisfactory political regime evoked the imaginary of empowered communities which are responsible for further post-Maidan political transformations. There are testimonies in my dataset that reflect personal experiences of such mobilisation during and after the Euromaidan:

> I think this process had been boosted by the Maidan, I mean, we started being engaged, feeling ourselves to be a civil society and participating more... yes? Erm... this is my personal experience: for the first time, I had a feeling – however ephemeral and detached from the reality it was, but! - I had a feeling that I can influence the process somehow (*Maria*, FGD)
>
> ***
>
> In the last years, it started to be! It did not exist earlier, [people thought] like: ah, they decide everything without me; it's none of my business, etc. But not now! Today people control the powerful. Not enough so far, but... (*Ihor*, FGD)

The statements above are typical of my data from different sources. Being led by this evidence, I call this imaginary 'active citizenship'. Whilst a broader population of newly activated citizens could manifest their participation in different ways, in LGBT+ communities this transformation has often led to the rise of the institutionalised LGBT+ activism:

> The [LGBT+] movement was weaker before the Maidan because the Maidan has woken the spirit to fight in many people, a feeling that we must do

something since we are *concerned citizens*[28]. That is why all these [LGBT+] places open and something is going on (*Nina*, FGD)

The statement occurred during the focus group discussion in a Queer Home. As outlined in Chapter Three, Queer Homes were launched as spaces of community building that was conceived mainly in political terms: awareness raising, and engagement in national LGBT+ projects, including Prides. Another participant in the focus group discussion stressed that since the Euromaidan human rights NGOs have been growing 'like mushrooms'. The underpinning assumption of both assertions links 'concerned citizens' with institutionalised activism; in doing so, the imaginary of sexual citizenship is discursively constructed around NGO-based activism and its agenda.

Correspondingly, the 'constitutive other' of sexual citizenship appears to be informed by those LGBT+ subjects who are politically engaged but act beyond the institutionalised NGO-based activism and often voice criticism of mainstream LGBT+ activism, including Pride politics in Ukraine. These subjects have produced diverse counter-discourses of sexual citizenship, examined in detail in Chapters Six and Seven, and were 'othered' in different ways depending on the site of their counter-utterances. For example, a direct intervention of queer activists in the 2017 Kyiv Pride (examined in Chapter Five as a case of so-called 'scandalous placards') evoked discussions on censorship and self-control in LGBT+ communities. The criticism of Pride politics from inside LGBT+ communities has been blamed mostly for being counter-productive:

> Do you have any positive agenda: what should we do differently? [...] We honestly tried to address this criticism but... (*Zoryan Kis*, the 2017 Kyiv Pride organiser, comment on the public lecture[29]).
>
> ✱✱✱
> Come to our meetings and discuss your agenda. But please, stop pressing it upon us (*Agata*, the 2017 Kyiv Pride organiser, Facebook comment).

These are typical replies of Pride organisers to the critique: an invitation to participate in organising Pride next year and 'do it right'. However reasonable this argument

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[28] Since citations from focus group discussions are transcriptions of speech, all *Italics* are mine without further notification.

[29] The 'Pink capitalism' lecture, December 2017. The quote is from my field notes and audio recording of the lecture and the discussion.

sounds, it originates from the assumption of the unquestioned central role of Pride in claims for sexual citizenship (discussed in Chapter Five) and the centrality of NGO-based LGBT+ activism in speaking on behalf of the communities. From this perspective, the statements given by grassroots initiatives in public space (within and beyond Pride) and online are not counted as 'LGBT+ activism' by LGBT+ leaders. On the contrary, these statements and interventions were silenced and erased from official reports. Furthermore, as the story of so-called 'scandalous placards' at the 2017 Kyiv Pride shows (Chapter Five), grassroots activists are subjected to denial of their belonging to LGBT+ communities. Though the discourse of belonging has been produced by grassroots activists in a paradoxical way (as analysed further in Chapter Seven), my argument in this section underlines the dominant role of institutionalised LGBT+ activism in the construction of active sexual citizenship. In the next section I investigate how notions of patriotism and nationalism interplay to produce the dominant discourse of sexual citizenship in Ukraine - homopatriotism.

Meanings of patriotism and nationalism

The data show a complex juxtaposition of the notions of patriotism and nationalism in LGBT+ discussions. Two rather contradictory discourses are at play. The first, the dominant one, clearly distinguishes and contrasts the notion of patriotism (which is 'our') and that of nationalism (that is 'their'). As Billig has argued, this rhetorical distinction is necessary to justify 'our' loyalty to 'our' nation-state (Billig, 1995, p.55). Billig noticed that for identification of 'our' beliefs, people prefer to use different words, such as 'patriotism' but not the term 'nationalism'.

My data accords with Billig's observation: LGBT+ communities often state their patriotism and reserve the word 'nationalist' for outside ideology. However, 'their nationalism' in the imaginaries of LGBT+ communities is attributed not to 'outer enemies' of the nation-state (as Billig suggested) but 'inner "opponents"' of LGBT+ communities that perform LGBT-phobic violence: the far-right Ukrainian nationalists. As a result, rhetorically, 'their' nationalism has been placed on the extremist periphery of political life whilst 'our' patriotism has been imagined as peaceful and noble. At the same time, the inner place of both 'patriotic' and 'nationalist' positions within the

same nation-state makes this distinction blurred and unstable. This enables the second tendency: appropriation of the 'nationalist' label inside LGBT+ communities when some LGBT+ people started calling themselves 'homonationalists' or just 'Ukrainian nationalists 'proudly. Though it was a contextual response to the charge of 'homonationalism' from queer activists (see more in Chapter Six), this self-naming is telling. The co-existence of two concurrent discourses regarding nationalism in LGBT+ communities is indicative of how the dilemmatic structure of ideology is produced through rhetoric. Then, being ostensible counter-directional, both denial and celebration of the nationalist ideology in LGBT+ communities serve to strengthen and broaden nationalism.

The differentiation between patriotism and nationalism in the narratives of LGBT+ communities has a particular dynamic within the scope of my study. These two notions were rather blurred when the enormous rise of nationalist discourse in wider Ukrainian society took place in the course of the Euromaidan protests 2013-2014 and even more after the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation and Russian military intervention into the eastern part of Ukraine. Common celebration of the allegedly 'civic' character of nationalism (outlined in Chapter Two) has served to justify Ukrainian nationalism as a progressive and empowering tendency in post-Maidan society. The appearance and notable popularity of (self-defined) 'nationalist feminism' represented by the Women's Squad at the Euromaidan and 'Feminism UA' online community also served to legitimise the nationalist standpoint in activist spaces (Mayerchyk & Plakhotnik, 2015). As a result, nationalism and patriotism often appear to be indistinguishable in LGBT+ narratives, for example:

> I have noticed after the Maidan the [newly emerged] type of people with a specific nuanced view, who are obviously *nationalists, patriots and all of this,* but at the same time, they are pro-feminist, pro-LGBT and opposed to conservative views in many ways (*Maryna*, FGD).

Presenting nationalism and patriotism as synonyms, this statement highlights how nationalist views may combine with anti-conservative attitudes. In other words, nationalism could be 'good' if it shares the values of emancipation and human rights. Another way to justify nationalism can be identified in contemporary discourses around the military conflict with Russia:

> You know, I have never been a *patriot*, I am sick of any forms of *nationalism*. But to defend Ukraine from Russia means to defend humanism, human rights and peace across the entire world. *Patriotism* and *nation* are the tools used by our citizens. In peaceful times, I also expressed such [*anti-patriotic*] statements but now I have stopped and even started wearing a blue-and-yellow ribbon (*Semen*, Facebook comment; italics mine).

This statement indicates a discursive shift emanating from the war, through which nationalism and patriotism merge their meanings and appear taken for granted and naturalised in public discourse.

Starting from approximately 2017, a distinction between patriotism and nationalism has become more salient in the narratives of LGBT+ communities, and the label 'nationalist' has been attached to far-right groups who conduct LGBT-phobic violence. The day after far-right attackers disrupted the LGBT+ performance in Kharkiv, the leader of the local Queer Home stated at a press conference:

> I would like to talk about patriotism. This topic is very painful to me […] I would call what happened yesterday *an occupation of patriotism*, an occupation of the patriotic discourse and ... *the discourse of love of our country*. Yesterday they [attackers] behaved like that and named themselves 'patriots'. That is why today I was scared when I entered this room and saw *vyshyvanka*s. This is *not normal*; it should not be like that. Now, when I see people with Ukrainian symbols on the street, I wonder whether they will attack me and shout at me that I am a pervert. I think all Ukrainians are responsible for not letting this *occupation of patriotism* happen – the occupation that we have witnessed yesterday (*Anna Sharyhina*, Nakipelo LIVE TV-channel; italics mine).

This quotation defines 'proper' patriotism as a 'love of our country' and states that this is 'our', LGBT+ communities', position. Correspondingly, when the far-right attackers call themselves 'patriots', they 'occupy' patriotism that actually does not belong to them. Through the claim 'this is not normal when LGBT+ people fear Ukrainian symbols', a discourse of normalcy is activated (analysed in detail in Chapter Seven), which embraces patriotism in LGBT+ communities as *normal* and 'true' and calls for its preservation from being appropriated. This argumentative strategy has been picked up and further elaborated in LGBT+ rhetoric. A communications director of GAU stated on the organisation's website:

> Yesterday, on May 17th in Kharkiv several dozen unknown people attacked a peaceful action. [...] Typically enough, the attackers, as usual, covered themselves through *pseudo-patriotic* rhetoric. [...] That is why my organisation 'Gay Alliance Ukraine' recorded a video-appeal to the National Police. We trust

in our dialogue and collaboration [with the police]. Without your [police] intervention we cannot distinguish *truly patriotic citizens* from the *occupants of patriotism* (*Alisa Pyvovarchyk*, a blog post on the GAU website; italics mine).

Though this statement was published in a form of the personal blog, the de facto context transformed this opinion into an official view of GAU – a large national LGBT+ NGO. In the quotation, a contrast between 'pseudo-patriots' and 'truly patriotic citizens' was further emphasised, utilising a 'true/ false' discursive dichotomy. Moreover, it switches the meaning of patriotism from the signs of symbolic belonging to the nation ('love of our country', *vyshyvanka,* national symbols in Anna's quotation) to a notion of citizenship which relies on protection of state institutions (the National Police). This transition from the articulation of nation in ethnic terms to the notion of citizens indicates how the Ukrainian 'nation' is becoming the 'nation-state' right now, as discussed in Chapter Two.

The data contain more evidence of how 'our patriotism' and 'their nationalism' have been contrasted in the narratives:

What I see around me is typically represented as patriotism. But, in fact, they are just *natsyki*[30] [...] This is not patriotism, this is Nazism (*Viktor*, FGD)

This statement employs the same 'true/false' dichotomy and further elaborates the 'our patriotism - their nationalism' distinction by deepening a negative image of nationalism and equating it with Nazism. It reinforces a specific 'regime of truth' that distinguishes between patriotism and nationalism and attributes the former to LGBT+ communities whilst the latter is attributed to the *natsyki*. In so doing, the statement celebrates the patriotic stand of LGBT+ communities whilst condemning the nationalism of far-right groups.

Concurrent with the growing distinction between 'our patriotism' and 'their nationalism', an alternative tendency has appeared in LGBT+ communities. In 2015, when the critique of 'homonationalism' appeared for the first time, LGBT+ leaders developed the answer: 'homonationalism is a useful strategy today'. This answer has been proliferated through several publications on the Kyiv Pride website (cf. Zlobina, 2016), as well as by means of public opinion from the most visible LGBT+ leaders, for

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[30] *Natsyki* is a derogatory word for 'Nazi' in Russian.

example:

> Homonationalism is part of the whole spectrum of political views of Ukrainian LGBT people, which could be *useful for all*. We all are in shit, and we need to get out of there *together* (*Denys*, the LGBT+ leader, Facebook comment; italics mine).

In this statement, 'homonationalism' has been represented as a political position of some people/groups within LGBT+ communities; being 'useful for all', however, implies that this position could become common ground to unite the community. This argumentative strategy has been picked up and further elaborated in other narratives. For example, during the public lecture 'LGBT+ movement in Ukraine: from homonationalism to queer-anarchism', some LGBT+ leaders proudly called themselves 'homonationalist'. By means of the performative power of the authorised language of LGBT+ leaders, 'homonationalism' has been finally justified as a deliberate and legitimate strategy in LGBT+ activism and a political standpoint on the part of communities. It is no surprise that the legitimating 'homonationalist' strategy and emergence of 'homonationalist' subjectivity coincided with the rapidly growing militarisation of LGBT+ patriotism in 2018 (analysed later on in this chapter) and has been promoted mostly by male LGBT+ leaders. In this regard, my observation aligns with Katja Kahlina's conclusion in their study of the sexual politics of belonging in Croatia: the 'assimilationist' strategy that 'is characterised by the reinforcement of dominant nationalist idea of citizenship' has been performed mostly by gay men (Kahlina, 2013, p. 4).

Whilst both rhetorical strategies – the dissociation from 'their' (meaning the ultra-right groups') nationalism and appropriation of the 'homonationalist' label – co-exist in LGBT+ discourse, the former seems to dominate. This domination produces and is produced by the combination of 'our' patriotism and human rights in the mainstream LGBT+ discourse. On the contrary, nationalism has been positioned as non-compatible with human rights, and therefore LGBT+ rights:

> The discourse of nationalism has recently been equated with patriotism, I don't know why. Nationalism is against human rights because human rights are represented as an influence of the Decaying West. As if there are ostensibly specific Ukrainian traditional values, but nobody knows what they actually are (*Olena Shevchenko*, the LGBT+ leader, a public discussion 'Human rights and rise of the ultra-right movement in Ukraine').

This statement further elaborates on the claim that nationalism (that opposes human rights) must not be equated to patriotism. Since this equation is manipulated in LGBT-phobic discourse, we, LGBT+ communities, should resist it through the argument that patriotism is different from nationalism. 'Our' patriotism does not oppose but, on the contrary, supports and sustains human rights. In the next section, I investigate how this discursive conjunction shapes the discourse of sexual citizenship.

Homopatriotism as conjunction of human rights and 'civic nationalism'

Discussions on sexual citizenship in Ukrainian LGBT+ communities are typically framed by the combination of two discourses: the (universal) discourse of human rights and the (particular) discourse of nationalism represented through the rhetoric of patriotism. Against the backdrop of the presumed universality of transnational human rights discourse, the particularity of patriotism reflects the political situation that LGBT+ communities face in Ukraine, namely the post-Maidan transformations and, especially, the war. The patriotic standpoint of LGBT+ communities was often assumed to be non-alternative:

> I remember, I attempted to explain in Germany why *we do not have a choice* – to be or not to be patriots, to be or not to be feminists. We ought to be both. And the German audience was just shocked, they were horrified by the word 'patriot' [because] this was a leftist audience; they consider it to be a swear word. But in Ukraine... (*Sofia*, FGD).

In this statement, the leftist audience renders patriotism inappropriate because it has very negative historical connotations in Germany and means in their context the absence of a critical view of the nation-state. The author understands these assumptions (why else would they need to explain their patriotism?) but argues for the particularity of the context, that 'it is different' in Ukraine. Notably, the absence of choice is articulated in relation to the feminist position too. This does not mean that the feminist standpoint is popular in LGBT+ communities in the same way as the patriotic one. My data provides evidence to the contrary, namely the domination of patriotism, as against the ambiguous and often marginalised status of feminist ideology within mainstream LGBT+ discourse. The combination of patriotism and feminism in the statement above is rather indicative of the emergence and bloom of so-called 'nationalist feminism' (Mayerchyk & Plakhotnik, 2015). Being activated at the

particular historical moment of the Euromaidan and war, Ukrainian 'nationalist feminism' has promoted an idea of women's equal participation in the struggle for the Ukrainian nation.

Concurrently, the discourse of sexual citizenship in Ukraine is closely intertwined with a broader discourse of human rights. The famous statement of the Secretary of State of the USA Hillary Clinton, 'Gay rights are human rights, and human rights are gay rights' (Amnesty International, 2011), was picked up by and became a core discourse of mainstream LGBT+ activism in Ukraine. Rich evidence of this can be found on the websites of LGBT+ organisations, on public LGBT+ events and in the public narratives of LGBT+ leaders. The aim of the Kyiv Pride is a case in point: 'Kyiv Pride is a human rights event that supports human rights, access to human rights for LGBT people' (Sharyhina, 2018). The deployment of human rights discourse is sustained through the significant influence of national and especially international human rights organisations like *Human Rights Watch* and *Amnesty International*. The latter, for example, regularly publishes statements on issues related to LGBT+ rights and participates in the Kyiv Pride marches as a separate block with 'corporative-style' placards (figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. *Amnesty International Ukraine* at the 2018 Kyiv Pride march[31].

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[31] Reproduced with permission from Anastasia Vlasova/ Hromadske.

Some slogans that can be seen in the picture are direct translations of their international counterparts: 'Human rights are my pride' (on the central banner); 'LGBTKI rights are human rights'. The 'human rights above all else' slogan is specific to the Ukrainian context as it reworks a famous nationalist greeting, 'Ukraine above all else' that became popular during the Euromaidan protests. Such a combination of transnational slogans (and formats) and nationally-specific political statements is typical of Pride marches in Eastern Europe (Baker, 2017b; Renkin, 2009). Overall, all of the slogans in the picture above employ the human rights rhetoric and instantiate a powerful human rights discourse in the national LGBT+ agenda.

The human rights discourse does important work within the discourse of sexual citizenship. Firstly, it symbolically places Ukrainian LGBT+ communities within the framework of the global LGBT+ struggle and, importantly, with respect to international financial aid. In so doing, it produces a feeling of belonging to the 'global' LGBT+ communities and support from them. Secondly, the human rights discourse facilitates a possibility for building alliances between LGBT+ communities and other social groups, whose human rights are violated, through collaboration between LGBT+ NGOs and other human rights NGOs. The selectivity of this alliance-building process (analysed in Chapters Six and Seven) has important political implications and shapes the discourse of sexual citizenship in a particular way. Thirdly, human rights discourse provides a universal language for speaking about sexual citizenship to different target audiences: to LGBT+ communities, to wider Ukrainian society, to the state, and to global communities and agencies. Overall, it is difficult to overestimate the importance of the human rights discourse in homophobic and transphobic societies such as Ukraine. At the same time, being 'culturally translated' into the Ukrainian context, the discourse of human rights contains a number of the internal paradoxes that are constitutive of ambiguous political outcomes. The analysis in Chapter Seven unpacks these paradoxes in greater detail and shows how the allegedly neutral and universalist language of human rights can reinforce right-wing nationalism and a neoliberal capitalist regime.

The data provide evidence of how both discourses of human rights and 'civic nationalism' merge in the narratives and make sense of patriotism in a specific way:

> In my opinion, everyone has their own sincere personal understanding of patriotism and their own way of living and acting... Patriotism towards the whole of Ukraine - erm... this is too vague a notion... To me, *patriotism is* to do good and to *defend human rights* directly in my region, or my city, or in my house... yes, this is my way of understanding patriotism... to be proud of being able to do something and to help somebody (*Valentyn*, FGD)

The author of the statement reclaims the meaning of patriotism in terms of defending human rights. In this quotation, patriotism and human rights are not just non-problematically combined but constitute each other. The participants' extensive disclaimers indicate their awareness about the potentially problematic character of such a combination; as a result, the statement has a form of 'dilemmatic utterance' (Billig, 2001). At the same time, the argumentative strategy of reclaiming the meaning of patriotism has become popular in LGBT+ communities, including in the public space of Pride marches (figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2. 'Be a patriot [,] support human rights' (in Ukrainian): placard at the 2018 Kyiv Pride rally[32].

Like the previous quotation, the slogan in the picture also redefines what 'being a

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[32] The picture was taken by me.

patriot' means: to support human rights. At first glance, the placard seeks to challenge the discourse of 'ethnic nationalism' by means of directing attention away from the nation and reorienting it towards universal human rights. At the same time, the picture above does something else; it produces another discourse. The symbol Ó in the second word resembles the so-called *Narbut* font, which is strongly associated today with Ukrainian right-nationalist discourse[33]. Together with the Ukrainian flag that is wrapped around the placard's holder, these details produce an ambiguous discourse where the distinction between 'civic' and 'ethnic' nationalisms is porous and unstable. Also, in Chapter Seven, I will discuss further how the paradoxes of reclaiming as a performative act might work both with and against the initial intentions of activist statements.

'We do not have a choice': structure of homopatriotic discourse

The patriotic standpoint of LGBT+ communities has been claimed regularly by LGBT+ leaders in their narratives, which are directed at a broader Ukrainian audience. These patriotic views are also expressed by 'ordinary' members of LGBT+ communities. Altogether, they produce a certain 'story' that begins with the enormous rise of patriotism during and after the Euromaidan and employs particular argumentative strategies, for example:

> [P]atriotism appeared not so long ago and it was necessary for mobilising people under a common slogan. And only patriotism could be this common slogan, like: this is our common state; we all must defend it (*Max*, FGD).

This statement uses a common-sense argument: the necessity to mobilise the population to defend the nation-state against the external aggressor. The rhetoric of defence points to the war as a pivotal event that boosted patriotism in LGBT+ communities and in the whole of Ukrainian society. The data from 2014-2015 exemplify how this common-sense argument had been proliferated in public space through different channels, including professional arts. Whilst this study is not specifically focused on artistic expression, the exhibition analysed below is an interesting case since it employs the direct narratives of LGBT+ people. Also, it was and

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[33] The *Narbut* font is named after its creator, Ukrainian graphic designer Heorhiy Narbut (1886-1920). Today this font is actively used in the symbolic of Ukrainian ultra-right groups.

continues to be a powerful act of the representation of LGBT+ communities in public space.

The installation 'Patriots, Citizens, Lovers...' by Carlos Motta - an internationally famous artist from New York - was exhibited in 2015 in *PinchukArtCentre* in Kyiv. It was composed of ten interviews with Ukrainian LGBT+ activists 'who discuss the critical and dire situation of lesbian, gay, trans and intersex lives in Ukraine in times of war' (PinchukArtCentre, 2015). Each 10-15-minute video presents a monologue answering to a (non-heard) artist's questions. Today, all videos and the texts of the transcriptions translated into English are accessible on the website, so the work of representation continues up to today for both local and English-speaking audiences.

The title of the exhibition is telling. Cultural critic Anna Pohribna aptly noted in this regard:

> "Patriots, Citizens, Lovers..." These three signifiers conclude all the stories and represent the desire to inscribe LGBT+ within the dominant discourse of the 'time of war' when national identity and civil duty became the most important virtues (Pohribna, 2015).

The explicit rhetoric of patriotism in the title of the exhibition was amplified by the choice of yellow-and-blue colours – the colours of the Ukrainian flag (figure 4.3). Notably, another part of the exhibition, that was titled 'We Who Feel Differently' and consisted of similar narratives of LGBT+ people from other countries, was visually arranged in rainbow colours, not the national flags. This difference in marking the people's national belonging via flags amplifies a statement about the political positioning of LGBT+ communities, exemplified by the title of exhibition. The fact that it was displayed in the most prestigious art gallery in the heart of Kyiv additionally legitimised the exhibition's statement.
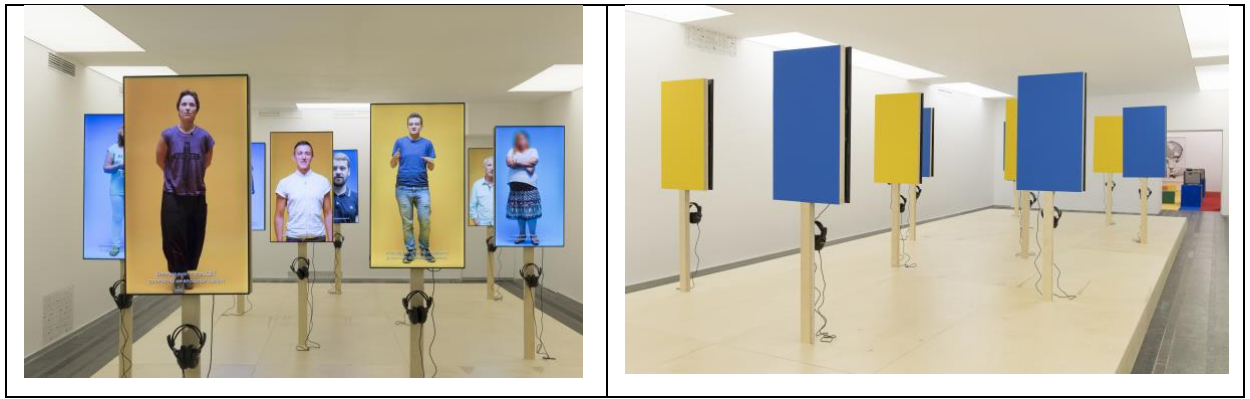
Figure 4.3. 'Patriots, Citizens, Lovers...' exhibition by Carlos Motta in Kyiv[34].

Another notable detail in the title of the exhibition is the word 'citizens'. It is not a commonly-used notion in LGBT+ communities; in my data it is typically altered by descriptive designations. Furthermore, there is evidence in my dataset of using the word 'citizen' with an ironic intonation that resembles a specific meaning of the word in Soviet times. Then, the words *grazhdanin/ grazhdanka* (in Russian) were practically used for an accusatory interpellation of a person by a state representative (typically, a policeman) whilst a benevolent call was expressed through the word *towarishch* (comrade). This detail is indicative of how the discrepancy between the Western notion of citizen and local concepts and interpretations has been negotiated in the process of the development of sexual citizenship. Being created through and for the Western eyes, the exhibition employs video-monologues as a first-hand account to produce a specific 'truth' about LGBT+ communities in Ukraine. Entangling both Western ('citizens') and local ('patriots') in the discursive 'regime of truth', the exhibition proliferates the terminology of citizenship in its Western meaning and, eventually, contributes to the development of not only the discourse but also the direct rhetoric of sexual citizenship in Ukraine. Since the Euromaidan and the war appear to be pivotal events in this construction (and the exhibition presents this to the fullest extent), in the section that follows, I examine one of the main arguments that substantiates the discourse of homopatriotism, namely the participation of LGBT+ people in the Euromaidan protest and the war.

The Euromaidan

In this section, I analyse the relations between the Euromaidan and discourses of sexual citizenship produced by LGBT+ communities. In so doing, I seek to contest the dominant image of the Maidan as a one-time integral event and to stress a particular moment in the Maidan dynamics that seems to be crucial for the understanding of homopatriotism. During the first week of the Euromaidan, several feminist and leftist performances that raised issues of gender justice and social-economic human rights took place at the Maidan venue (Kravchuk, 2013). Though, at that time, the protest was manifested through peaceful occupation of the public space, all of these performances were physically attacked and displaced from the Maidan by the ultra-right groups which, as experts argued, were a 'statistic minority' amongst all protesters. Importantly, these acts of aggression were not publicly condemned by either other protesters or public intellectuals. None publicly dissociated from the ultra-right violence; on the contrary, the feminist and leftist groups were blamed for 'provoking' the far-right's aggression. This moment of the Maidan's dynamics appears to have been a turning point for the right-wing discourse to grow and flourish. At the same time, an absence of this moment in the recollections and testimonies about the Euromaidan in my dataset, as well as in broader public discourse, is indicative of how dominant discourses tend to take the shape of coherent and non-contradictory common-sense narratives. The absence of loud public dissociation from the ultra-right violence was productive of a situation where 'everyone in the Maidan were involved in the construction of the right-wing superiority' (Mayerchyk & Plakhotnik, 2015), including LGBT+ communities that also participated in the Maidan.

In the imaginaries of sexual citizenship, the Euromaidan appears to be a central event, as this extract of data shows:

> Before the Maidan, we were afraid of the state. After the Maidan, we are afraid of the ultra-right nationalists that were actually born on the Maidan (*Ira*, FGD).

The assertion that 'we are not afraid of the state' anymore is very important since it points to the Euromaidan as a pivotal event that boosted sexual citizenship as a form of public negotiation between LGBT+ communities and the state. It is assumed that this process was not possible before the Euromaidan because the government

systematically pursued an LGBT-phobic political agenda. Contrasting the state and non-institutionalised ultra-right groups, the quotation portrays the state as trustworthy, as if it is 'on our side'. Notably, the assertions about 'being not afraid' of the state anymore or trusting it (and the police, as shown in Chapter Five) are typical of the dataset. At the same time, the quotation points towards how sexual citizenship and 'ultra-right nationalism' are juxtaposed, having both been engendered by the Euromaidan.

Since the Maidan itself was an event of huge patriotic significance, the discourse of homopatriotism is often substantiated by the claims that LGBT+ people joined the Euromaidan protest immediately and continue to pursue its agenda:

> The LGBT community is a part of society, and there are LGBTI people *everywhere*, including the army, including the volunteering movement, including the doctors who rescue our soldiers every day... (*Zoryan Kis*, the LGBT+ leader in the UA|TV-channel interview, March 2017; italics mine).

This statement uses the 'omnipresence' argument to claim LGBT+ participation in military or civil society supporting the army. Notably, these are not just any medical doctors but 'the doctors who rescue our soldiers'. Discursively, 'the volunteering movement' in this quotation stands for one that supports the army (like collecting and delivering supplies to the front line), not just for any volunteering. Differently put, the statement says that LGBT+ people do shed their blood for Ukraine themselves or support those who shed blood. This argument inscribes LGBT+ communities into the imaginary of 'heroic history' and serves to substantiate the claim for sexual citizenship 'because we deserve it'. The rhetoric of 'deserving' is an interesting one: it inevitability produces the 'constitutive outside' of sexual citizenship, namely 'others' who do not 'deserve' to become citizens. In the statement above, the 'others' are those who do not shed their blood for Ukraine. Another premise of this statement is that all Ukrainian society is patriotic; otherwise, the 'omnipresence' argument would lead to an ambiguous conclusion. As a result, this rhetoric produces a self-evident deduction, 'obvious' for LGBT+ communities and wider Ukrainian society.

Another argumentative strategy goes beyond a logical deduction and provides a rationale for patriotism. This is an extract from the same interview quoted above:

> When I went to the Maidan from the first days, I was there because of what was called 'the European values', and one of them is human rights and the rule

of law. I realised that the situation in Ukraine would not change overnight, but I was there standing and fighting for ... the chance... for the LGBTI community to ... to have these rights in the near future... because if the Euromaidan failed, it would be, you know, part of the *Russkiy Mir*[35] and we would not have any chance at all (*Zoryan Kis*, the LGBT+ leader in the UA|TV-channel interview, March 2017; italics mine).

This statement develops an argument that the Euromaidan agenda complied with LGBT+ aims, namely: to achieve the 'European' level of LGBT+ rights' protection and to avoid a Russian-style LGBT-phobia performed by the state. In this logic, support of the Euromaidan seems like the only option for LGBT+ communities, like 'we do not have a choice'. Whilst I do agree with this logic, at the same time I want to stress once again: without solidarity with the feminist and leftist activists that were subjected to the ultra-right violence on the Maidan, without recognition and problematisation of the right-wing turn at the Maidan, uncritical supporting the Euromaidan means our political participation in further reinforcement of right-wing domination in Ukraine.

In LGBT+ communities, the rationale of homopatriotism has been further elaborated as follows:

> The LGBT movement [is] a bastion of Ukrainian patriotism. For any intelligent person, it is an ultimate truth that gays and lesbians, and even more, gay activists – who are the most advanced part of the LGBT community – are the vanguard of the struggle against any totalitarianism and dictatorship [...] Ask any gay or lesbian in Ukraine, and they appear to be unconditional and strong supporters of the Maidan (*Ivan*, Facebook post)

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> [After the Euromaidan] many LGBT organisations took a patriotic stance, they try to please the state in order to be allowed to flourish and develop. And [they attempt] to prevent the state from following the route of other countries like Russia or Belarus where this [LGBT+] is oppressed at the institutional level (*Stas*, FGD).

Both statements present LGBT+ communities as the main beneficiary of the political turn that was produced by the Euromaidan and give an insight into an important constituent thread of patriotism: 'the EU vs. Russia' discursive opposition analysed in detail later on in this chapter. Whilst the EU is imagined as a model society where 'full citizenship' for LGBT+ people has been achieved, the Russian Federation (and,

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[35] *Russkiy Mir* (Russian World) is the social totality associated with the political regime in the Russian Federation under the leadership of Putin.

sometimes, Belarus) is perceived as a place of totalitarian state LGBT-phobic politics. In the frame of this binary, Ukraine is seen as gravitating towards the EU. This geopolitical disposition has been narrated extensively and is visually represented in local Queer Homes. Ukrainian flags together with the EU flag and Rainbow flag typically occupied a central place in the interior decoration of these premises (see figure 5.3 in the next chapter). This combination of flags symbolises the appreciation of pro-EU political choice made by Ukraine at the Euromaidan as well as recognition of the EU as a model for LGBT+ rights and sexual citizenship. The fact that EU-based foundations, such as the European Commission, SIDA, ILGA-Europe and the embassies of some European countries, are the major financial donors to LGBT+ organisations in Ukraine is likely to be another reason for holding the EU flag as an important symbol in LGBT+ spaces.

Russia, on the contrary, occupies the least desirable place in the collective imaginary of LGBT+ communities in Ukraine. The discourse of the political backwardness of Russia in terms of human rights (with an emphasis on LGBT+ rights) intensified significantly after the Euromaidan. Most typically, statements about the situation of LGBT+ people in Ukraine are supplemented by comparison with Russia. When in July 2015, *Bird in flight* media conducted an experiment in Kyiv (two men walking hand in hand), it took place shortly after the same experiment in Moscow. The actors in the experiment in Kyiv – a real couple who were Ukrainian gay activists – were attacked, pepper sprayed and kicked by a group of homophobic men at the end of their walk. This happened in the most central part of Kyiv; the police were present but did not interrogate (Bird in Flight, 2015). Notwithstanding these details, the actors repeatedly stressed the lesser homophobia in Kyiv than in Moscow in their interviews to numerous media outlets. It seems that the Kyiv experiment was designed to not just 'measure homophobia' in Kyiv but to compare the situation in the two countries and prove that 'it is better' in Ukraine.

Whilst the Euromaidan activated the imaginary of geopolitical disposition, as indicated above, the war additionally reinforced the discursive opposition between Russia and Ukraine in LGBT+ communities and wider society. Also, the war activated a process of militarisation that contributed to the domination of patriotism and shaped the homopatriotic discourse in a particularly gendered way, as the next section examines.

The war

The sentiment quoted earlier in this chapter states that LGBT+ communities 'do not have a choice to be or not to be patriots.' It is important to note that this statement was voiced from a particular time and place: the Spring 2014 in Kharkiv, when the war had broken out in Donetsk and Luhansk, and Kharkiv could become the next war zone any day. I also lived in Kharkiv at that time, so I understand and keenly feel the context. The physical and territorial danger that accompanied the war provided a compelling motivation for the rise of patriotism. As time passed, however, it became more possible to 'have a choice': to foster the anti-nationalist (in particular, queer feminist) positionality and to see what the war actually does – not only materially but also in terms of discourses. In what follows, I analyse the influence of the war on the discourse of sexual citizenship in Ukraine, starting with an examination of the military.

The relationships between LGBT+ communities and the military were imagined differently before and after the Maidan. Before 2014, a claim for equal access to the military – a typical component of the sexual citizenship agenda in many Western countries – was never the case in Ukraine as the army held very low prestige. Also, the Ukrainian military provided a significant reason to be avoided by LGBT+ people: as in any other male collective grounded in the domination of hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), levels of homophobia and transphobia[36] in the army are high and cruel.

After the war broke out, the rhetoric changed dramatically: gratitude to the army that 'defends us' and insistence on the presence of LGBT+ people in the military have become more and more popular. It started with rather speculative arguments about the omnipresence of LGBT+ people in all institutions, including the army (as the quotation in the previous section demonstrates), but later more evidence occurred to support this argument substantively. In 2017, the English-language article on NBC

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[36] Since 'trangenderism' remains a mental disorder diagnosis in Ukraine, transgender people cannot serve in the military legally. The discourse of transphobia, however, is flourishing in the army as well as other communities grounded in hegemonic masculinity.

News, entitled 'Ukraine's LGBTQ soldiers hope their service will change hearts and minds', featured several anonymous LGBT+ warriors from the Ukrainian army fighting in the eastern part of Ukraine. The article was widely reposted in Ukrainian LGBT+ media, and the alleged narrative of a non-heterosexual military officer was especially popularised through reposts and comments in LGBT+ spaces online:

> 'I hope they all come to the [Kyiv] Pride in their uniforms and medals to show that LGBTQ people existed on the front line,' she said. 'Are we not heroes? We have given our time, our strength, our blood and our sweat, and yet we are still being hunted and discriminated against. Have we done enough to be given respect and the right to be who we are?' (Chapman, 2017, n.p.)

The invocation of the 'blood and sweat' rhetoric is notable here and is used to argue that those LGBT+ people who fight in the military deserve to be recognised by the state and society as heroes, as first-class citizens who can march openly 'in their uniforms and medals' at Pride without being 'discriminated against'. The reference to Pride is indicative of a tight discursive bond between a patriotic stance and the Kyiv Pride, represented as the best reward for LGBT+ warriors to publicly 'parade' their heroic patriotism. Finally, interpreting sexual citizenship as a set of rights that can be earned ('by blood and sweat') reinvigorates the discourse of 'responsibilization' (Cossman, 2007) in neoliberal citizenship.

Most notably, this quote and other similar statements indicate the increasing militarisation of homopatriotic discourse in LGBT+ communities. In 2018, the art project 'We Were Here' exhibited portraits and stories of LGBT+ people who were engaged in the military operation in the eastern part of Ukraine as soldiers or volunteers. The exhibition was directly supported by the Kyiv Pride and received widespread endorsement from LGBT+ communities: 'it is a wonderful breakthrough for Ukraine', the commentators on Facebook said. In the same year, the first coming-out of Ukrainian gay military officers started appearing in the mainstream media (Ganzha, 2018). The first TV episodes about LGBT+ people fighting for Ukraine in the war zone started being broadcast by mainstream media and the online community 'LGBT in the military and their allies' was created on Facebook. Less explicitly, the militarisation of patriotism manifested itself through the glorification of the police in LGBT+ communities and harsh criticism towards anti-war statements (both analysed in Chapter Five).

Against the Soviet past and the Russian present

As shown in Chapter Two, the nationalist ideology in post-Maidan Ukraine is a complex phenomenon that is substantiated by the assumption that Ukrainian nationalism is 'civic' and not 'ethnic' (cf. Balcer, 2018; Kulyk, 2014a). To prove this claim, some Ukrainian intellectuals referred to the widely publicised statement of the leader of the *Right Sector* ultra-right organisation, talking in January 2014 after the first four people were shot at the Euromaidan:

> Those who have just died for Ukraine, namely a Belarusian and an Armenian, are much greater brothers to me than any, sorry, communist cattle (Yarosh, 2014).

Whilst the alleged ethnic inclusivity of Ukrainian nationalism, represented by this quotation, was widely celebrated, some feminists paid attention to the discursive structure of this utterance. They pointed out, in particular, how the rhetoric of brotherhood and 'death for Ukraine' produces a highly militarised discourse of patriarchal masculinity (Mayerchyk, 2014). The leftist authors also argued that despite the rhetoric of ethnic inclusivity quoted above, the activity of ultra-right groups (supported by the Ukrainian State) are grounded in and productive of ethnic-based xenophobia and racism (Bondar', 2018b). At the same time, contrasting the heroic deaths for Ukraine to the 'communist cattle', the statement above points towards an important constitutive discourse of current Ukrainian nationalism: rejection and demonisation of the Soviet legacy (or 'Soviet past', in popular rhetoric). In the current political climate in Ukraine, the Soviet past has become the discursive opposition to any 'progress'. This has been richly instantiated in the dataset, for example:

> What can I say? Until the last *komunyaka*[37] dies in this country, we will not have any good. Because all *this* is the aftermath of communism, do you understand? [...] Until the last communist goes to the hell, we will have what we have now (*Leonid*, FGD).

'This' in the statement contextually stands for the political-economic crisis in Ukraine. Any 'progress', therefore, including the progressive changes in the situation of LGBT+ people, is seen as a result of the total elimination of communist ideology. This point of view is typical of the dataset; it also often appears at the Kyiv Pride (figure 4.4).

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[37] *Komunyaka* is a derogatory form of Ukrainian word 'communist'.

Figure 4.4. 'Ukraine is not *Sovok*[38]' (on the right, in Ukrainian) and '*Sovok* is gone but homophobes remain. De-communise homophobia' (on the left, in Russian): placards at the 2017 Kyiv Pride rally[39].

The statements on the placard mock the Soviet regime using verbal and visual symbolism. The derogatory word *Sovok* is written in black letters in contrast to the rainbow colours of the word 'Ukraine'. They portray homophobia as a remnant of the Soviet time that is not pertinent to the Ukrainian nation today. This aims to secure further detachment from everything 'Soviet' as a means to combat homophobia. Interestingly enough, this discursive composition aligns with the view of the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko on the roots of homophobia and transphobia. In November 2015, when the Ukrainian parliament voted through an amendment to the Labour Code that would outlaw SOGI-based workplace discrimination, the President commented on this event in Twitter: 'Ukraine is breaking free from the shackles of discrimination from the Soviet past.' This statement links closely with the state politic of 'de-communisation' that started in 2015 and significantly contributed to further demonisation of everything 'Soviet' in public discourse. One of the placards above calls for 'decommunisation' explicitly. Thus, aligning LGBT+ views on 'the Soviet' with the state politic, the placards constitute LGBT+ subjects as loyal citizens. Another discursive product of the anti-Soviet rhetoric is a corresponding discursive detachment

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[38] *Sovok* in both Ukrainian and Russian languages is a derogatory name for the Soviet Union.
[39] The picture was taken by me.

from any statements marked as 'leftist' because of a strong association of 'leftist' with 'communist' in public discourse. This contributed to the triumph and naturalisation of capitalist ideology in Ukraine (analysed in Chapters Six and Seven) and closed down the possibility of thinking differently about the socialist experience.

At the same time, shreds of the Soviet legacy do appear in my dataset and challenge the totality of 'decommunisation' in a surprising way. There is evidence that some members of local Queer Homes translate the term 'LGBT community' as *komuna* (commune)[40]. They call their Queer Home 'our commune' and the local LGBT+ community 'LGBT commune'. This naming activates the discourse of egalitarian communion – a collective where equality and cooperation are cherished and inform a 'sense of common purpose and solidarity represented by the term community' (Weeks, 1996, p. 76). Through calling the Queer Home 'our commune', study participants signalled their attachment to this substitute 'family home', a safe and supportive space in the midst of a hostile LGBT-phobic social environment. At the same time, this evidence points to the paradoxical structure of anti-Soviet discourse in LGBT+ narratives, as pointed out by Neda Atanasoski and Kalindi Vora:

> socialist legacies are also present in structures of feeling that are marked as excessive to neoliberal disciplining, supporting new forms of collective action that may look very different from socialist forms, yet are often compared to them, or reference them through practices of memory and affects of nostalgia (Atanasoski & Vora, 2018, p. 6).

Notably, the discourse of detachment from the Soviet legacy is typically focused on the particular type of people who embody the communist ideology and, correspondingly, anti-LGBT+ views, for example:

> I am studying at the History School and indeed, there are much more LGBT friendly attitudes amongst students than amongst teachers. The teachers still have the Soviet views [...] towards LGBT people, i.e. negative ones (*Artur*, FGD).
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> People who live their entire life – ok, not entire, but childhood – in the Soviet Union, they will never accept this [LGBT+ equality] (*Andriy*, FGD).

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[40] The singular 'LGBT community' as the most typical self-nomination of 'who we are' is usually translated: LGBT *spil'nota*, in Ukrainian; LGBT *soobshchestvo*, in Russian. In other cases, the word 'community' is not translated but used in its English version.

> As long as there are people in ex-Soviet countries who praise Stalin and who consider, yes, 'homosexualism' to be a disease, nothing good will happen with respect to this [LGBT+ rights] (*Lena*, FGD).

These statements produce an image of the 'Soviet' people as those who belong to the older generation and are poorly educated, have tended to praise totalitarianism and, consequently, are LGBT-phobic. Also, the last speaker (Lina) implicitly points towards contemporary Russia as a particular place where LGBT-phobic people are concentrated. This discursive conjunction is indicative of how in the 'us' vs. 'them' dichotomy, produced by the nationalist discourse in Ukraine, the place of 'them' has been reserved for a Soviet past that collapses into the Russian present. In other words, the idea that Ukraine goes (forward) to Europe, whilst Russia goes (back) to the USSR has become popular in LGBT+ communities. This discursive configuration is instantiated in the data:

> Building a society that is dramatically *different from Russia and from the post-Soviet values* that we are still trying *to get rid of* would be a very important victory in this war. A victory for everyone, not only for the minorities but also for the whole country (*Maxim Eristavi*, Motta exhibition interview; italics mine).

As a result, a paradoxical 'geotemporal' phenomenon occurs, also noted in other regions of Eastern Europe. For example, researching post-Yugoslav Muslim-majority societies, Piro Rexhepi shows how LGBT-phobia has been registered there 'as a consequence of either the socialist past or the Islamic present' (Rexhepi, 2017, p. 244). In the case of Ukraine, it is the socialist past and the 'Russian present' that are presented altogether as a powerful source of LGBT-phobia, disseminated today via Russian 'propaganda'. The dataset contains much evidence of such an assertion. For example, one participant referred to their personal experience:

> I am from [name of the Eastern region in Ukraine], and I was surprised to see more fans of Vladimir Putin there than in Moscow. [...] Then I discovered such a thing... I did not notice at once where it comes from. Seven years ago or so, it was popular to connect a TV to satellites. And they all watched... they refused point black to watch Ukrainian TV channels, they watched only Russian TV channels. I was away from Ukraine for a while, and when the 'homopropaganda' law and the law about injured feelings of faithful people were adopted, even the people's lexicon changed in Russia... Suddenly they all rapidly became offended. Half of the people whom I know are like that. When I arrived here, to [name of the city], I saw that people use the same phrases in their speaking. This is so striking, so shocking to me... They have adopted the word 'homopropaganda', they did not know it before. All this has been promoted via media, and this influence is very strong (*Mark*, FGD).

This personal observation presents first-hand evidence about the role of Russian 'propaganda' in the development of LGBT-phobia in certain regions of Ukraine. The LGBT+ leaders often voice similar statements with reference to the authoritative scientific discourse, for example:

> The National Democracy Institute conducted a survey to study attitudes to LGBT people and discovered that the most homophobic region in Ukraine is a narrow line along the Ukrainian-Russian border in the Sumy and Kharkiv regions [because] the Russian TV channels are still accessible there (*Andriy Kravchuk*, the LGBT+ leader, the *Radio Svoboda* interview).

Both statements not only sustain the image of Russia as a domain of LGBT-phobia but also, importantly, constitute LGBT-phobia as an imposed ideology that comes from outside Ukraine. The discourse of the Russian (or, sometimes, Soviet but never Ukrainian) origin of LGBT-phobia is frequently deployed in LGBT+ communities and has important outcomes. First and foremost, it constitutes Ukraine as a nation, which is 'naturally' free from homophobia and transphobia. This discourse has been produced through symbolic detachment from the Soviet past and Russian present and, simultaneously, attachment to the European Union. Projecting LGBT-phobia 'onto a specific time, place, and religion outside the geopolitical imaginaries of "Western civilization"' (Rexhepi, 2017, p.255), the dominant LGBT+ discourse in Ukraine reproduces the East-West dichotomy where Ukraine belongs to the 'West' pole. Secondly, it produces hierarchical relations between regions of Ukraine, where some regions appear to be more 'contaminated' by the Russian LGBT-phobic propaganda than others. This differentiation contributes to a broader discourse of 'othering' that has been deployed in post-Maidan Ukraine towards the population of the eastern regions and culminated in a victim-blaming discourse, which portrays dwellers of Luhansk and Donetsk as those who 'deserve' to have the war in their home. In this regard, the discourse produces more 'genuine' Ukrainian people and regions, and less 'genuine' ones, better and worse citizens. In addition, the public discourse of hatred towards Russia provoked by the annexation of Crimea and the war in the eastern part of Ukraine appeared in my dataset as beneficial to LGBT+ communities. These events have produced a new enemy of Ukraine, and this seems to bring advantages to LGBT+ Ukrainians:

> Have social attitudes towards [LGBT+] changed? Yes, because a new enemy has appeared, one that is seen in an even more negative light than LGBT people. If

ordinary people had to choose between a so-called *Moskal*[41] and a gay person, the *Moskal* would be considered worse (*Anonymous*, Motta exhibition interview).

It seems the hatred towards Russian citizens, expressed in the quotation by the pejorative *Moskal* word, does not distinguish between the government and the population, including anti-state activists and LGBT+ activists in Russia. This discursive conjunction contributes to disruption of transnational collaboration between LGBT+ activists from Ukraine and Russia:

> Regarding the [collaboration with activists from] Russia... (long pause). I think, it's complicated now... not many organisations or initiatives would dare to collaborate with Russian organisations because it would produce a complicated reaction... (*Dasha*, FGD)

The data collected from social media, indeed, provides scant evidence of invitations being extended to LGBT+ activists from Russia to participate in events in Ukraine, or vice versa. On the contrary, there is evidence of mocking statements towards Russia and Russians, including Russian LGBT+ activists, as those who are 'lagging behind' and incapable of achieving 'LGBT+ progress'.

In this context, placing the main source of LGBT-phobia in the Soviet past, as seen in the data quoted earlier on in this section, produces a new set of meanings in (re)thinking the history of sexual politics. Evocation of the discourse of a 'haunting Soviet past' (Kuntsman, 2009, p. 25) that traces the roots of homophobia back to Soviet prisons and Gulag cultures appears to be compliant with the 'decommunisation' politics of the Ukrainian State. Whilst in the Russian context considering the 'haunting Soviet past' in LGBT+ discourse might become a sign of a critical standpoint against a continuation of the homophobic state politics, the usage of the same tactics in Ukrainian LGBT+ communities serves to reinvigorate homopatriotism and our loyalty to the state.

Finally, the discourse of the Russian origin of LGBT-phobia produces one more important output: it serves as a crucial argument against far-right groups which claimed themselves to be 'Ukrainian patriots' during their attacks on LGBT+ people and

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[41] *Moskal* is a derogatory term for a person from Russia.

events. In other words, LGBT+ communities seek to rhetorically disarm the far-right attackers through the argument that their 'activism' is fuelled by Russia ideologically and, possibly, financially:

> Russian propaganda was the main source of these myths about 'Gayropa' and about 'LGBT culture' being a Western trend aimed at destroying civilisation and what they call the 'Russian World'. *Ukrainian nationalist far-right forces have taken up the messages delivered to Ukrainians through Russian propaganda* (*Zoryan Kis* and *Tymur Levchuk*, the Motta exhibition interview; italics mine).

In a media report, an LGBT+ leader further elaborated this argument:

> In my opinion, *this* has been used by the second class and third-class political technologists who learn from Russia [...] because they don't know English. They think it works in Ukraine, but it does not (*Zoryan Kis*, the LGBT+ leader, the Apostrophe interview, June 2017; italics mine).

In the second quotation, 'this' stands for the LGBT-phobic scripts of the Russian propaganda (described in the previous statement). Pointing towards the backwardness of this political technology, the statements implicitly build the opposition between the first class 'political technologists' (who have access to superior Western knowledge) and the lower-class ones (who do not, and therefore learn outdated technologies from Russia). Reinforcing the discourse of the superiority of the West, the statement produces the superiority of the pro-Western Ukraine over the 'backwardness' of Russia. Though this discourse can be seen as the revenge of a former colony towards a former empire, it does not presume contesting a system of coloniality. Rather, it means a break from one imperial centre for the sake of loyalty to the other. This discourse does not challenge the global regime of colonial power but reinforces it through the recalibration of our alignment. The discourse of Europe and the claims for European belonging of the Ukrainian nation, analysed in the next section, appear to be central to this recalibration.

Towards Europe and Europeanness

In addition to the proliferation of the 'civic nationalism' assertion, another way to legitimate nationalism is through asserting the primordial belonging of the Ukrainian nation to Europe:

> Since an Ancient Kyiv Rus time, Ukrainians were closer to Europe. Later Ukraine was occupied by Russia and other empires and was under their political and other types of influence. All *this* was imposed. But now Ukraine has more freedom, more independence from foreign influence, so, I think... we were and are closer to Europe, so our politicians will follow the example of European activists and disseminate *these* ideas to ordinary people... (*Alex*, FGD)

Though the author did not clarify what 'this' was imposed, contextually it is possible to reconstruct the point of the statement. As I discussed earlier on, in the discursive construction of the Ukrainian nation in the imaginary of LGBT+ communities, such things as homophobia and transphobia are imposed, rather than being intrinsic to Ukraine. Paradoxically, 'these ideas' (that stand for European values) also have to come and be disseminated. In a dilemmatic way, the quotation states that Ukraine *both* has always been *and* has to become European.

The imaginary of our Europeanness has become as a driving force of the imaginaries of sexual citizenship in Ukraine inasmuch as 'LGBT rights have become a powerful symbol of Europe, featuring centrally in debates ranging from foreign relations to economic trade' (Ayoub & Paternotte, 2014, p. 3). In the dataset, the meaning of Europeanness and its significance for LGBT+ communities has been unpacked as follows:

> Now we are moving, more or less, towards Europe... If we *keep up with the world*, we have to develop everything and treat all parts of the population in a tolerant way, regardless of their identification, gender, race, religion... (*Volodya*, FGD)

The Europeanness in these statements means tolerance of all social groups and support for different manifestations of diversity, including LGBT+ communities. The rhetoric of 'keeping up with the world' is signalling how the 'geotemporality' of 'our backwardness' and the necessity of 'catching up' informs Ukraine's positioning in relation to Europe. Many other statements, however, stress how LGBT+ communities can *strategically* utilise the highest popularity of the idea of Europeanness for lobbying their claims:

> Yes, we are subject to *European servitude*, but Ukraine benefits from this because the EU will control Ukraine and insist that Ukraine follow European law and European frameworks. So, we - LGBT - will gain from this. That is why it is likely that *new legislation* will be adopted: with respect to partnership, maybe even the adoption of children and so... Our government does gain from Euro-integration, with regard to some of their business-schemes, they do. And whilst they see their profit, we should dance to their tune and live a better life while it

is possible (*Anton*, FGD).

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The leaders of our LGBT community, I think, use excellently the situation, that
when the state wants to show that we are ostensibly Europeans, we move to
these values. So, they [LGBT leaders] smartly use this and achieve *the
protection* for the Equality Marches... so, the state is forced to provide the
protection. Not because they want to, but because they must... in order to
receive the visa-free regime, some financial aid... And the LGBT community -
leaders of this community – use this very efficiently (*Kira*, FGD).

Both quotations express scepticism towards the state, as well as the EU, but celebrate
the *strategy* of LGBT+ leaders to play a 'European' card for the sake of a 'better life' for
LGBT+ people in Ukraine. Notably, the first statement reflects upon Western colonial
power ('European servitude'), as discussed in the previous section, but calls for using it
to our benefit. The received and expected gains from this 'strategic usage' include, in
the statements above, a 'new legislation' that would legalise same-sex partnerships
and adoption of children, and protection of Pride marches. Basically, the study
participants listed the main set of claims for sexual citizenship: marriage/partnership
equality and the right to peaceful assembly in public spaces. In other words, the pro-
European political course of Ukraine has been seen in LGBT+ communities as a path to
'European' (i.e. full-fledged) sexual citizenship. Though the idea of potentially
achieving this model is very popular in LGBT+ communities, its limitations and
paradoxes, analysed in detail in Chapters Six and Seven, should not be obscured.

The leading role of Europe (and, more generally, the West) in the imaginary of sexual
citizenship produces a complex geotemporal effect. In the dataset, the premise of an
ongoing comparison with the 'European' model is typically articulated in terms of time,
for example:

When we look at the West, we see Ukraine 40-50 years in the future. Forty
years ago, everything started in Western Europe in a very similar way,
everything was in its initial stages (*Andriy Kravchuk*, the LGBT+ leader, *Radio
Svoboda* interview).

Whilst this statement gives a clear prognosis through which a 'European' model of
sexual citizenship should be expected in Ukraine, another study participant proposes
an alternative timeline:

Ukraine is now going through a moment where everything takes place in an
express regime, like, with accelerated speed. Erm... the European countries

needed much more time to organise safe Pride [rallies] that today actually require a minimum of police... And we had a short time, and this is like... fast run: Pride is happening now, partnership [law] is coming... when is it planned – next year, yes? I mean, we should not expect more, everything goes well ... because we had a little time, and basically, we have done a lot in this short time (*Ihor*, FGD)

The statement evaluates the Ukrainian situation as running with increasing speed along the 'European' path of LGBT+ liberation. In so doing, it produces a specific temporality that illustrates the point of Joanna Mizielińska and Robert Kulpa about the temporality of LGBT activism in CEE as a 'queer time', that is 'a time of mismatched models and realities, strategies and possibilities, understandings and uses, "all at once"' (Mizielińska & Kulpa, 2011, p. 16). Yet, in both quotations, the 'original' in relation to which the 'LGBT+ progress' in CEE has to be measured remains intact, it is a Western model. In terms of discourse, 'it is forcing the "Western present" as a "CEE future" to be achieved' (Mizielińska & Kulpa, 2011, p. 17). Used strategically or not, by means of 'dancing to the state's tune' or not, the image of Europe appears to be an important constitutive discourse of homopatriotic sexual citizenship in Ukraine.

Chapter summary

Throughout this chapter, I have elaborated my argument about how the dominant discourse of sexual citizenship has been produced in LGBT+ communities. It was shown that voices of LGBT+ NGOs are significantly foregrounded in representing LGBT+ communities in discussions on sexual citizenship. In these discussions, the imaginary of sexual citizenship appears to be intertwined with the idea of active citizenship that is concentrated around institutionalised LGBT+ activism. Correspondingly, in the Ukrainian context, the 'constitutive others' of sexual citizenship are constructed as those LGBT+ subjects who are involved in public discussions on sexual citizenship beyond (and, often, against) NGOs, namely grassroots queer activists.

In LGBT+ communities, nationalism and patriotism were articulated through two concurrent argumentative strategies: firstly, the rhetorical distinction between 'our' patriotism and 'their' (meaning: ultra-right groups) nationalism and, secondly, appropriation of the nationalist rhetoric by LGBT+ communities for strategic reasons.

Whilst the first strategy seemed to dominate by the time of my fieldwork, the distinction between patriotism and nationalism remains blurred at the level of discourse. At the same time, manifestations of the Ukrainian 'civic nationalism' discourse through the patriotic rhetoric have proven to be complicit with a universal discourse of human rights. Altogether, they cemented domination of homopatriotism in mainstream LGBT+ discourse.

Investigating how homopatriotism is structured and justified, I identified several constitutive discourses. First and foremost, homopatriotism has been produced through the assertions of active engagement of LGBT+ communities in the Euromaidan protest and the war. In the dataset, such engagement has been naturalised through the argument that the aims of the Euromaidan and the current political course of the Ukrainian government coincide with LGBT+ aims, namely: movement towards 'European values' and away from the opposing values of the 'Russian world' and the 'Soviet past'. The latter two appeared to collapse into one another in the rhetoric and to compose a discursive conjunction that is represented as the main obstacle to sexual citizenship in Ukraine. On the contrary, the imaginary of Europe and Europeanness composes the 'desired future' of sexual citizenship. Thus, a specific and paradoxical geotemporality of Eastern Europe has been produced: whilst its 'queer time' (Mizielińska & Kulpa, 2011) is twisted, mixed and basically non-linear, it has been measured with respect to the model of 'Western' time. Finally, the Euromaidan has been marked as a pivotal event that boosted sexual citizenship as a process of negotiation of LGBT+ communities with the state – a process that seems to have been impossible prior to the Euromaidan. This has produced a discourse of 'LGBT+ progress' that is analysed in the next chapter. At the same time, the absence of a critical view of the right-wing turn, as well as the absence of solidarity with feminist and leftist groups that were subjected to ultra-right violence at the Maidan, recalibrated the narratives of belonging to the Maidan in terms of alignment with the right-wing discourse.

5. Pride, Progress and Patriotism

This chapter continues my investigation of how the dominant discourse of sexual citizenship – homopatriotism – operates in LGBT+ communities. By exploring the politics and rhetoric of Pride, I analyse how the discourse of 'LGBT+ progress' participates in constructing sexual citizenship. Focusing on the security measures of 'successful' Kyiv Pride marches (2016-2018), I discuss who benefits from this 'success' in the broader political context of Ukraine. Similarly, analysis of the discourse of 'progress' with respect to relationships between LGBT+ communities and the police helps to identify the beneficiaries of this discourse. Examination of the 'scandalous placards' case at the 2017 Kyiv Pride gives additional insight into the process of the 'sexual citizens' subjectivation within homopatriotic discourse. In the final part of the chapter, I investigate how interpretations of patriotism in LGBT+ communities relate to such major forms of the state's economic regulation as tax and produce 'good sexual citizens'.

In the collective imaginary of LGBT+ communities, the post-Maidan period is typically evaluated in terms of 'LGBT+ progress'. The data show that 'it's getting better after (due to) the Euromaidan' assertions utterly prevailed at the beginning of all seven focus group discussions – the time when the most normative statements typically occur. The discourse of 'LGBT+ progress' in Ukraine has also been largely produced through the authorised language of LGBT+ organisations. For example, the titles of the 2013 - 2017 annual reports issued by *Nash Mir* (one of the oldest LGBT+ NGOs) vividly exemplify this discourse:

> *On the Threshold.* The situation of LGBT people in Ukraine in 2013
> *From Despair to Hope.* LGBT situation in Ukraine in 2014
> *The Ice Is Broken.* LGBT Situation in Ukraine in 2015
> *A New Beginning.* LGBTI situation in Ukraine in 2016
> *On the Rise.* LGBT situation in Ukraine in 2017 (translation in original; italics mine)

Notably, the title of the 2010-2011 report - 'One step forward, two steps backwards' - assumes the absence of 'LGBT+ progress' before the Euromaidan. Concurrently, *Nash Mir* centre actively collects and investigates cases of LGBT+ hate crimes and discrimination, and concluded in their 2018 report:

Comparing the results of the investigation of crimes and incidents motivated by homo/transphobia for the period of 2014-2016 with the results of a similar previous study for the period 2012-2013, *Nash Mir* can see that the situation of violence and discrimination against LGBT people in Ukraine over the past three years *did not evidence any signs of improvement* (Kravchuk *et al.* 2018, 52; italics mine).

How do these seemingly opposing conclusions – 'LGBT+ progress' and 'no sign of improvement' co-exist? In my reading, this contradiction exemplifies a 'dilemmatic utterance' that does not undermine but strengthens the 'truth' of both statements. The same discursive juxtaposition can be traced in the data from focus group discussions:

There are *more cases of, let's say, macro-violence*, I mean – to be beaten, killed or stabbed – but this is a backlash. This is the normal reaction of the majority, who think that we limit their rights to be violent. It was the same at the beginning of the Black liberation movement in America, and there was a backlash after that. But! At the same time, we can say that this is a *good sign* because simultaneously, society became more informed, so the backlash will stop sooner or later... (*Inna*, FGD).

This quotation relies on the assumption of 'historical progress' as a stable dimension whilst the increase of violence (against Black or LGBT+ people) is a temporary 'backlash'. In doing so, it activates the discourse of the *inevitability of 'progress'*. That the rhetoric of 'backlash' occurs in the dataset with the same frequency as that of 'progress', appears to be a co-constitutive part of the 'progress vs. backlash' binary opposition. As a result, assertions about 'backlash' do not challenge the domination of the discourse of 'progress' (conceived in its specific Western form) but instead reinforce its colonial power, as discussed in Chapter Two. The analogy to the history of the Black movement was instrumentalised in the quotation to fuel the imagination of the linear and unstoppable 'progress' but not to start a discussion on whiteness and racism in Ukrainian LGBT+ communities. Finally, another dilemmatic aspect of this sentiment concerns the rhetorical justification of violence as a 'normal reaction of the majority'. The use of the notion of the 'majority' attaches a 'minority' status to LGBT+ communities that discursively creates assumptions of 'LGBT- secondariness' (conveyed through the 'sexual minorities' term) and the abnormality of homosexuality ('homophobia is normal' claim).

In the dataset, typically two main proofs of 'LGBT+ progress' are presented: the

'successful' (i.e. those that were not violently disrupted) Kyiv Pride marches in 2016-2018 and the improvement of relations between LGBT+ communities and the police (who guard Pride). In the next section, the Kyiv Pride case is closely analysed to understand how this event and, in particular, its 'success' has been produced through and been productive of discussions on sexual citizenship.

The politics and rhetoric of Pride

As with other Pride parades in Eastern Europe today, Pride in Ukraine is positioned within the human rights legal framework and serves as a manifestation of 'the right to assembly' and an important marker of democratisation and the promotion of sexual rights (Holzhacker, 2013). Since one of the aspects of sexual citizenship is access to public space and politicisation of this space through political claims, to measure the development of sexual citizenship by means of Pride parades has become a common trend (Ayoub & Paternotte, 2014; Baker, 2017b; Renkin, 2015). As Catherine Baker has noted, Pride marches in Eastern Europe serve as easy recognisable indicators of 'LGBT+ progress' for the international public inasmuch as they are symbolically associated with Europeanness or Westernness: 'by drawing on the march as an established campaign model, organizers knowingly inserted their cities into the core imaginary of a global "politics of pride"' (Baker, 2017b, p. 234). The growing employment of the 'Pride movement' notion in the rhetoric of Pride organisers in Ukraine seems to comply with Baker's argument.

As of the end of 2018, at least four cities have hosted Pride marches in Ukraine: Kyiv (2012, 2013, 2015-2018), Odesa (2015-2018), Kherson (2018) and Kryvyi Rih (2018). However, the significance of the Kyiv Pride is incomparably higher in terms of its place in broader discourse and media representation. The 'official' history of the Kyiv Pride is presented on its website and, eventually, has become broadly disseminated via mainstream and LGBT+ media. Notably, this narrative is distilled from other diverse stories of LGBT+ public rallies in Ukrainian cities in the last two decades, organised by lesbian-feminist groups or within leftist-feminist-anarchist public events. Starting from 2016, the Kyiv Pride is an NGO; correspondingly, Pride week and march in Kyiv are its projects. Since Pride marches in cities other than Kyiv were organised mainly as a

result of the financial and other support of the Kyiv Pride-as-institution, they can be considered as an extension of the Kyiv Pride to these regions. Also, the Kyiv Pride provides 'small grants' to support various LGBT+ events across Ukraine.

Another important point is how Pride is named and framed. This in part stems from a persistent rhetorical detachment from words such as 'parade' and 'gay'. The word 'parade' had been brushed aside from the very beginning; the word 'gay' was negotiated up to 2013 and, eventually, has been completely removed from the rhetoric of Pride. From 2015, the Kyiv Pride rally is officially named 'Equality March'. Starting from that time, the Kyiv Pride organisers ceaselessly insisted on this name for Pride because, in their public narratives, 'Equality Marches' in Ukraine and 'gay parades' in the West are very different. As a result, by the time of my fieldwork, the rhetoric of 'gay parades' had practically disappeared from LGBT-friendly media reports and is still considered to be a sign of LGBT-phobic speech. These details are telling with respect to how Pride in Ukraine navigates its strategies, through juxtaposition of the Western model of Pride with the local political context.

The role of Pride marches and, in particular, the Kyiv Pride in the construction of sexual citizenship is crucial. Pride is seen as the main channel of communication between 'the community' and broader society and the state:

> An important aspect [of Pride] is to show that we exist, and we want, and will fight for, our rights... I mean, Pride is a statement. A very loud statement, so the more Pride [rallies] take place, the more the state and society will have to take us into consideration... That's why this is important, surely (*Oksana*, FGD).

The expression of celebration and unambiguous support for Pride is typical of my dataset. The above quotation employs the discourse of the visibility of LGBT+ communities in society (analysed in detail in Chapter Seven) to build the reasoning for Pride. Notably, the importance of Pride seems so obvious that it has never been challenged in the course of my focus group discussions. On the contrary, many participants shared their personal excitement with respect to being empowered by marching at Pride:

> When I attended Kyiv Pride for the first time, I realised: this is *freedom*! (*Olesya*, FGD)
>
> ***

> This is the only *safe public place* in Ukraine where I can hold hands with my partner (*Bohdan*, Facebook comment; italics mine).

> ***
> You know, I personally understood how Pride works when I spoke to my Mom [...] She said: there are more of you, you are visible, so *it is normal*, so I am less afraid for you, that's why everything is ok. I mean, this is my personal experience of how Pride works for me and affects my relationship with Mom (*Nadya*, FGD).

These statements praise Pride for different reasons but are united in their passionate celebration of the event. In what follows, I do not intend to discount these feelings. What I do want is to analyse the price that is paid for the possibility of conducting a Pride march in the centre of Kyiv. If Pride is considered to be the main indicator of 'LGBT+ progress' and, more broadly, of pro-European 'progress' in Ukraine, what has it shown and, correspondingly, what has it concealed? How have the extraordinary security measures of Pride shaped its message and the discourse of sexual citizenship? In answering these questions, what has been 'said' about Pride by the state is significant.

The position of the state regarding Pride can best be summarised through a broadly publicised statement from Petro Poroshenko, the President of Ukraine. In June 2015, answering a journalist's question about their attitudes to the planned Kyiv Pride, the President stated:

> I am looking at it as a Christian and as a President of the European country. Being a Christian, I will not participate in it, but I don't see any reason to impede this march because it's a constitutional right of every citizen of Ukraine (National LGBT Portal of Ukraine, 2015).

In LGBT+ communities, as well as within public discourse, this was interpreted as a statement of the President's support for Pride – for the first time in Ukrainian history. So, already for three years (2016, 2017 and 2018) we have had so-called 'successful' Kyiv Pride marches protected by the police and military units. Taking into account that in the same time period the state government has not demonstrated any other signs of LGBT+ support at any level (on the contrary, it supports right-wing organisations ideologically and financially, as shown in the Introduction), it is important to ask: why then does the state protect the Kyiv Pride? Could the word 'European' in the quotation above be a key to this conundrum?

The 'successful' Kyiv Pride marches were guarded heavily. The 2016 Kyiv Pride march comprised of 1,500 participants and was guarded by 5,500 police officers and 1,200 National Guard soldiers. So those on the Pride march were outnumbered by those 'protecting' them by over 5:1. In 2017, the number of fully armed guards at the Kyiv Pride march (around 2,500 participants) was announced as 'not less than it was in 2016' (Janjevic, 2017). Although in 2018 the number of armed guards was less, new and unprecedented security measures took place. The central part of Kyiv was closed to any traffic from the previous day and several central underground stations were closed on the day of Pride. The security measures for all 'successful' Pride marches included installation of metal-detecting gates that were the only entrances to the otherwise fenced territory of Pride.

Both the police and the National Guard were fully equipped and armed (figures 5.1 and 5.2). The National Guard's participation in the protection of the Pride march seems not to have concerned LGBT+ communities but was noticed by other human rights activists and evaluated as a cause for alarm. They pointed out that participation of paramilitary forces in guarding peaceful assemblies reinstates the regime of violence, facilitates its impunity and is against the Constitution of Ukraine (No to Police State, 2017).

Figure 5.1. Police and the National Guard protecting the 2017 Kyiv Pride march[42].

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[42] Reproduced with permission from Aleksandr Goncharov.

Figure 5.2. Police and the National Guard protecting the 2018 Kyiv Pride march[43].

I could not find any evidence of the discussions in LGBT+ communities as to whether such protection was adequate or not. The Pride organisers stated very clearly that we must trust the police as they do a risk assessment and provide a necessary level of protection:

> As for the exact number of the guards for Kyiv Pride, this is a sphere of *the police's competence*. They make their decision not on the basis of the number of expected Pride participants but considering the *anticipated threats and potential danger* (*Zoryan Kis*, the 2017 Kyiv Pride organiser, press conference at Ukraine Crisis Media Centre; italics mine).

My question in this regard is not about the adequacy of the militarised protection of Pride but about the discourses produced. Against the backdrop of the police's unwillingness or failure to protect LGBT+ events other than the Kyiv Pride, what do the security measures at Kyiv Pride marches say about the position of the Ukrainian State regarding sexual citizenship and broader LGBT+ issues? To answer this question, it is important to keep in focus the current political situation in post-Maidan Ukraine, which is pro-European political choice, military conflict with Russia and the state politics of 'decommunisation'. The fact that Ambassadors of 'strategically important' countries like Canada, Sweden, the UK and the USA usually participate in the Kyiv Pride

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[43] Reproduced with permission from Dmytro Desiateryk.

is also a factor. In this context, the state that otherwise does not demonstrate any other signs of LGBT+ support but provides protection of Pride in Kyiv once a year, appears to be particularly interested in the 'theatre' of Pride, as Ukrainian scholar-activist Maria Mayerchyk put it:

> The theatre of Pride includes far-right groups who shout their threats, LGBT+ communities who demonstrate their vulnerability and, finally, the state which comes, hits a table with its fist and shows who is the real master here – and provides 6,000 police officers to protect this theatre. That is why the state needs both the far-right and LGBT+ communities to be involved in this theatre (*Maria Mayerchyk*, comment at a conference, June 2017).

The state is the main beneficiary of the 'successful' Pride marches as this demonstrates its 'Europeanness' and adherence to human rights protection. In addition, the state demonstrates the 'success' of the police reform that started in Ukraine after the Euromaidan and continues up to now. Since the old *miliziya* (militia) was an inefficient and corrupt institution, the reform aims to replace it by renamed, newly hired and innovatively trained *poliziya* (police), such that it became commonly known as 'new police'. Hence, 'successful' Pride marches serve to demonstrate the 'success' of police reform. This 'proof' became particularly important in the context of growing criticism of the 'new police' for often being sympathetic or even collaborating with ultra-right groups whilst protecting LGBT+ and other human rights events (Bondar', 2019). The evidence for this will be discussed in the next section. Finally, taking into account that the highly militarised performance of the police and National Guard seems to be taken for granted and almost never problematised in LGBT+ discussions, could it be a sign of the increasing militarisation of society and public discourse becoming naturalised, and therefore barely noticed by the members of communities?

In the eyes of wider society and foreign observers – who appear to be the main audience of the 'theatre' of Pride, as the quotation above suggests – such extraordinary security measures are often interpreted as proof of how vulnerable LGBT+ communities are and how much the state cares about them. For example, *Amnesty International* called the 2018 Kyiv Pride a 'new human rights triumph' and interpreted it as follows:

> In a country where homophobic attitudes are still strong, and where LGBTI rights activists face growing intimidation, harassment and violence from far-right groups, the Kyiv Pride demonstration was a genuine achievement and celebration of national significance (Amnesty International, 2018).

116

This statement was published on the main website of this organisation and directed to the international audience. For the Western public, the picture of people marching with rainbow flags inside the heavy cordon of the police looks extraordinary and heroic. The participants also discussed the potential risks of being involved in the Pride march:

> This [Pride march] is about the support of the whole community, erm... a readiness to fight against the moral pressure because during Pride [...], there were many people with cameras around us. This produced a huge moral pressure.... like, 'you all are recorded and later you will be traced'... (*Max*, FGD)

In addition to the 'moral pressure' of being photo- and video shot, and the possibility of being identified in media reports and threatened afterwards, there are other risks for Pride participants in Ukraine. Notwithstanding the heavy protection of Pride, the participants are often attacked before or after the Pride march, and, according to my data, the police are not helpful in these cases. This vulnerability, in combination with the state-directed 'theatre' of Pride discussed above, produces an important consequence: it does not leave room for discussing the necessity, conception and messages of Pride. When discussions are predominantly focused on issues of security and safety, in LGBT+ discourse Pride appears to be an event of self-evident significance. As a result, criticism of the Pride agenda from inside LGBT+ communities by queer activists (examined in Chapter Six), has not been shared by most community members.

The police and LGBT+ communities

The improvement of the police's attitudes towards LGBT+ communities is typically presented as further evidence of 'progress' in the situation of LGBT+ people in Ukraine. The data contained much evidence for this, for example:

> If we consider how the last two Marches were conducted – nobody was beaten, everything was safe, we had *good agreement with the police* – in this regard, with regard to the safety, it's getting better... (*Ihor*, FGD).
>
> ***

> Five years ago, I could hardly imagine us [...] marching in Kyiv whilst guarded by the police. I would have answered then – come on; the police will beat us immediately! But now this all [is possible] (*Borys*, FGD).

In the first statement, the bar of expectation was set according to the realities of Ukraine and neighbouring countries. In this context, 'nobody was beaten' signals 'progress' when compared with previous Pride marches in Ukraine. The discourse of improving relations with the police is formed through 'good agreement' (support) and 'it gets better' (progress) rhetorics. The second statement produces the discourse of 'progress' through comparison to the situation 'five years ago' (when there was no Pride and the police were violent towards public LGBT+ actions) and now (when the police protect Pride). Whilst this argument points to changes at an institutional level, there is also evidence in the dataset asserting positive changes in the personal attitudes of 'new police' officers:

> The attitudes of the police towards the LGBT community have changed significantly. There is no mockery or sneering anymore, it really becomes serious work – escorting the people, maintaining safety... for LGBT community representatives, I mean (*Dmytro*, FGD).

In this quote, the implicit comparison of 'before' and 'now' is also employed to prove changes. Both statements are narrated in an emotionally exciting way: for many members of LGBT+ communities, the very possibility of marching at Pride marches in Ukraine still feels like a miracle. There is evidence that a large group of the 2017 Kyiv Pride participants all shouted together 'Thanks to the police!' during the final part of the march's route.

Whilst the discourse of positive change predominantly stems from the police's protection of Kyiv Pride, it also embraces other factors, for example, the launch of human rights departments in the police:

> I like our new police a lot... I like a lot that the department of human rights had been established... It was not possible before – to contact somebody in the police and invite them in a normal and official way to come and discuss LGBTQIK issues, to discuss some joint events, to talk about how they will maintain the *safety* of our activities... So, I am very glad that this department does exist because I feel that the community has the opportunity to communicate with the police *safely*. And this feeling of *safety* is very important; in my opinion. It appeared recently, so I think the more successful Pride [rallies] we have the more it grows... And this is very important for all LGBT+ representatives, to have *safe* communication with national security forces,

generally speaking, because… they *feel protected!* Well, it is still a long way to this situation, of course, but we are moving towards this (*Valya*, FGD).

The quotation above, from a leader of Queer Home, employs rhetorics of 'collaboration' and 'safety' to argue for the positive institutional changes in the police. Since the urgency of safety for LGBT+ people cannot be overestimated in Ukraine, even approaching this sense of ease means a lot. Another piece of evidence also employs the rhetoric of 'collaboration' to advocate an argument about the emerging 'trust' between LGBT+ communities and the police:

> The collaboration and communication with the police are similarly constructive and productive to last year. It would not be an exaggeration to say that we started *trusting* each other even more (*Zoryan Kis*, the 2017 Kyiv Pride organiser, press conference at Ukraine Crisis Media Centre; italics mine).

These two leaders' quotations generate a discourse of trustworthy police service as yet another proof of 'progress'. This move is of great significance insofar as it moves beyond the situation of Prides and represents the police as 'LGBT+ protectors' in a wider range of situations, including in everyday life. This discourse is richly represented in the data from focus group discussions where LGBT+ people testify about their trust in the police or, at least, absence of their previously existing fear. As a result, the discourse of gratitude and celebration of the police brings LGBT+ communities into the fold of a citizenry that is not only loyal but also grateful to the state and its institutions. Together with other manifestations of homopatriotism, this loyalty serves as a key argument in the negotiation of sexual citizenship with the state. That is why it is often assumed that the patriotism of LGBT+ communities has to be demonstrated openly and unambiguously in public space, especially at Kyiv Pride – the biggest and arguably most important display of homopatriotism, as illustrated in the next section.

Patriotism in symbols and slogans

In LGBT+ spaces, a particular political standpoint is typically signalled by means of flags and other national symbols. In Queer Homes that had their own premises, the Ukrainian flag (together with the EU flag and the rainbow flag) typically occupied a central place in the interior decoration (figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3. Flags as part of the interior decoration of Queer Homes[44].

These flags represent modes of belonging: to LGBT+ communities, to Ukraine, and to a symbolic 'Europe' (as discussed earlier). In both pictures, by 'coupling queer symbolism with national symbolism' (Szulc, 2016), LGBT+ communities signal their belonging to the nation. Also, the Ukrainian flags were held, waved or wrapped around the bodies of participants in Pride marches in Kyiv and other cities.

Another newly popularised national symbol is *vyshyvanka*. Together with other national symbols, *vyshyvanka* became extremely popular in post-Maidan Ukraine, and so too in LGBT+ communities. For example, the *vyshyvanka*'s motifs are seen in the logo of the 'Same-sex Partnership in Ukraine' conference (figure 5.4).

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[44] Pictures are taken by myself.

Figure 5.4. Logo of the conference 'Same-sex Partnership in Ukraine' (February 2017)[45]. All figures on the picture wear *vyshyvanka*; also, the *vyshyvanka*'s style of embroidery ('cross') in rainbow colours, is used for the general design. The bottom line synthesises the colours of the Ukrainian and rainbow flags.

Photo and video reports from public LGBT+ events contain evidence of Ukrainian national symbols (such as the flag, *vyshyvanka*s, and a wreath of flowers with ribbons) often being held or worn by participants. In addition to the visual national symbols, the National Anthem and nationalist slogans were also used in LGBT+ spaces. After the 2017 Kyiv Pride rally, an LGBT+ leader reported proudly:

> At the Kyiv Pride march, we appropriated the main argument of our opponents. How? We marched and sang the Ukrainian Anthem ten times or more. Moreover, we shouted 'Glory to Ukraine!' and even 'Glory to Nation, death to Enemies' several times. Everyone was cheerful and cool, some people even held Ukrainian flags... Well, why I am saying 'even'? It's normal to attend public events in Ukraine with Ukrainian flags... And this de-occupation of patriotism and re-appropriation of their main argument eventually demoralised them (*Alisa Pyvovarchyk*, communications director of 'Gay Alliance Ukraine', the 'Obozrevatel.LIVE' interview, June 2017).

In this quotation, as well as in typical LGBT+ rhetoric, the term 'our opponents' stands for ultra-right LGBT-phobic groups. The slogans 'Glory to Ukraine, glory to heroes!' and 'Glory to the nation, death to enemies!' were created in the Ukrainian Insurgent Army – a Ukrainian nationalist paramilitary and later partisan army during World War II. Before the Euromaidan these slogans were mostly used by right-wing nationalist groups. During and after the Euromaidan, they have become popular greetings amongst the broader patriotically oriented population in Ukraine. This process of legitimation was finalised in August 2018 when 'Glory to Ukraine, glory to heroes!'

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[45] Reproduced with permission from *Nash Mir* Centre.

became the official greeting of the Ukrainian military. Unsurprisingly, the idea of re-appropriation of nationalist slogans became popular amongst LGBT+ communities, too. The quotation above and the picture below (figure 5.5) provide evidence of this.

Figure 5.5. The leading banner of the 2017 Odesa Pride states: 'Glory to Ukraine, glory to equality'. This is a reworked version of the nationalist slogan 'Glory to Ukraine, glory to heroes!'[46]

The re-appropriation of nationalist symbols and slogans by LGBT+ communities is a particularly interesting case for my analysis. The rationale of the re-appropriation is explained in the earlier quotation from the LGBT+ leader as a means of 'demoralising' far-right groups through taking their 'main argument' away. However, for some communities' members, such re-appropriation does not work:

> 'Glory to the Nation' sounds like the biggest provocation at the LGBT rally because violence [towards LGBT+] is accompanied and legitimised by exactly this slogan. This produces an absurd situation where the group's members use the slogans of those who want to kill them (*Myron*, Facebook comment)

This statement occurred within a discussion about the so-called 'scandalous placards' at the 2017 Kyiv Pride, something that I return to later in this chapter. The

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[46] Reproduced with permission from Dumskaya © 2008–2019.

commentator refused to claim these placards to be a 'provocation'; instead, they consider the usage of the nationalist slogans by Pride participants to be 'the biggest provocation'. Insisting on the absurdity of the nationalist slogans and symbols at LGBT+ events, the commentator points towards the inherent paradox of re-appropriation as a rhetorical tactic. This paradox will be further explored in Chapter Seven within the analysis of re-appropriation performed in queer activist rhetoric.

In a comparative study of the 2013 and 2015 Kyiv Pride marches, Maria Teteriuk noted a new tendency that appeared in the rhetoric of Pride organisers in 2015 (i.e. after the Euromaidan): 'the framing of the LGBT community as part of newly-emerged Ukrainian political nation' (Teteriuk, 2016b, n.p.). The scholar provides evidence as to how the rhetoric of our belonging to the Ukrainian nation, extensively employed by Pride organisers, produced a powerful patriotic discourse. Similarly, in their study of rhetorical strategies of Kyiv Pride in 2015 and 2016, Lesia Pagulich concludes that Pride is aimed at inscribing LGBT+ communities in nationalist discourse (Pagulich, 2016). My analysis of Kyiv Pride in 2016 – 2018 shows that the tendency noticed by Teteriuk and Pagulich has not changed but rather intensified: Kyiv Pride remains a central public manifestation of the discourse of homopatriotic sexual citizenship. What has changed, however, is where patriotic statements may be uttered. At the 2015 and 2016 Kyiv Prides the organising committee was the main translator of homopatriotic discourse through the Pride topic and official slogans, and also through the formal and informal instructions for the Pride marches' participants. My data shows that the 2018 Kyiv Pride looked different in a sense, in that the 'ordinary' participants and members of LGBT+ communities have become much more involved in the production and guarding of homopatriotism. I examine how this change happened and which debates preceded it in the next section, using this to focus on the more fine-grained discursive mechanisms of homopatriotic discourse.

A story of 'scandalous placards'

The 'scandalous placards' incident took place immediately after the Kyiv Pride rally on June 18th, 2017 and ignited an explosion of debates in LGBT+ communities a couple of weeks thereafter. The fact that these debates were re-activated several times in LGBT+

and feminist communities in the following year is indicative of their significance. The story starts when, in addition to the 'official' topic and slogans announced by the Kyiv Pride organisers, many participants brought their own hand-written placards. When photo and video reports of the Pride march started circulating on the Internet, three 'unofficial' placards attracted the attention of both LGBT+ communities and a broader audience. The first stated *'Make Love, Not Civil War'* (in English, figure 5.6). In the context of the extremely politicised issue of naming the war in the eastern part of Ukraine, the 'civil war' expression was interpreted as a denial of the role of Russia in the military conflict. As a result, this statement provoked the most heated criticism in LGBT+ and other communities as a crime of national treason.

Figure 5.6. 'Make Love, Not Civil War': placard at the 2017 Kyiv Pride march[47].

The second placard *'Death to Nation, Queer to Enemies'* (figure 5.7) was blamed for being non-respectful to the Ukrainian nation and therefore anti-patriotic. A similar critique was directed towards the third placard *'Let your patriotism go to hell, queer anarcho feminism is our choice'* (figure 5.8).

Figure 5.7. 'Death to Nation, Queer to Enemies' (in Ukrainian): placard at the 2017 Kyiv Pride march[48].

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[47] Author of the picture is unknown.
[48] The picture was taken by me.

Figure 5.8. 'Let your patriotism go to hell, queer-anarcho-feminism is our choice' (in Russian): placard at the 2017 Kyiv Pride march[49].

The second and third placards appeared within the Queer Anarcho Feminist block[50] (QAFB) of Kyiv Pride; the statements and their visual design clearly referred to the block's agenda (namely, black and violet colours are part of the anarchist and feminist symbolic). The first ('civil war') placard was held somewhere in the middle of the regular Pride rally, far from QAFB. The 'investigation' of the first placard that followed on social media led to a public statement from the anonymous author of the placard that the slogan refers solely to the 'Captain America' Marvels comics and nothing else. Social media commentators continued to insist, however, that regardless of the author's intention, the current political context facilitates a particular meaning, which alleges 'civil war' in Ukraine, and this is extremely harmful to the public image of LGBT+ communities. The authors of the second and third placards did not provide any additional interpretations since the QAFB manifesto was published before the Pride march and clearly stated the political position of the QAFB. Yet, notwithstanding the different authorship and context, in this section I consider all three placards as material artefacts under the 'scandalous placards' case as a whole since the analysis is aimed at investigating the responses of LGBT+ communities to the placards.

The first and predominant reaction to the case from LGBT+ communities was harsh condemnation:

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49 The picture was taken by me.

50 The Queer Anarcho Feminist block was a bloc (a union) and a separate block within the rally.

> The *provocative* placards on the Equality March[51] are nothing other than an attempt by those people, who contributed nothing to enabling the march, to *discredit* the Ukrainian LGBT movement and its allies. I hope to hear a *resolute statement* from the [Kyiv Pride] organising committee on this matter (*Taras*, the LGBT+ leader, Facebook post; italics mine).

The quotation includes several component statements. Firstly, using the words 'provocative' and 'discreditable', the commentator claims that significant harm was done by the 'scandalous placards'. Secondly, it builds an opposition between Pride organisers (who worked hard) and the authors of the 'scandalous placards' (who 'contributed nothing' to Pride). In so doing, it implicitly points out who are the owners of Pride and whose labour is countable and worthy. The intruders, in this quotation, are denied from belonging to the 'LGBT movement and its allies'. Finally, a call for a 'resolute statement' emanates from the assumption of the unequivocal patriotic standpoint of Kyiv Pride as an institution. Other commentators extended this call to other LGBT+ leaders and organisations:

> All public LGBT activists have to express their opinion about these placards. Because if we don't support Ukraine, Russia will come here. If Russia comes here, there will be neither LGBT activists nor Prides nor human rights (*Alisa Pyvovarchyk*, communications director of 'Gay Alliance Ukraine', the 'Obozrevatel.LIVE' interview, June 2017).

The call for a response from 'all public LGBT activists' was persuasive. Three days after the rally, not only Pride organisers but also several other leading LGBT+ NGOs issued resolute statements on the 'scandalous placards' matter. Whilst Pride organisers stated rather laconically that 'all slogans and placards, except those published on the Kyiv Pride website, express a personal position of their authors and isn't a matter of responsibility of organisers', many commentators were not satisfied and required clearer statements as to the political position of Kyiv Pride and other LGBT+ organisations:

> In the situation of the war, we should evaluate such things more thoughtfully […] It's a shame that the resolute statement of the Kyiv Pride organising committee was naff, and so, in fact, supported the provocateurs (*Yakiv*, Facebook comment).

Other LGBT+ organisations, including *Nash Mir* LGBT+ centre, expressed an unambiguous condemnation of the 'scandalous placards':

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[51] Equality March is an official name of Pride marches in Ukraine.

> Regarding the provocative placards on the Equality March, *Nash Mir* Centre officially declares:
> 1. We don't know the people who hold those placards; moreover, we don't know them as LGBT activists.
> 2. We respect the freedom of opinion and expression but categorically disapprove the content of the slogans on those placards.
> 3. There is no civil war; there is a 'hybrid' war of Russia against Ukraine. Defending the Motherland is the moral and legal duty of every citizen of Ukraine (*Nash Mir* Facebook page).

The last sentence in the above quotation simultaneously produces two statements: it places the task of 'defending the Motherland' in the arena of ethical obligation and it inscribes into the fold of citizenry those LGBT+ subjects who share this 'moral duty'. Hence, sexual citizens appear to be patriotic citizens. On the contrary, stating that 'we don't know them as LGBT activists', *Nash Mir* denies the belonging of the authors of the placards to LGBT+ communities and constitutes them as the 'others' of sexual citizenship. Employing the 'us-them' binary, the statement seeks to publicly display a unified utterly patriotic image of 'the LGBT community'. Eventually, many LGBT+ leaders and organisations came to share this standpoint. The only alternative statement was issued by the *Insight* NGO:

> We consider inappropriate any bullying and chasing of activists for their position, expressed in a peaceful and non-violent way. […] In the after-Pride discussions, people are divided on the basis of their patriotism. But we consider this destructive for LGBTQI+ communities since it entails stronger stigma and violence towards activists and others … and provokes hatred inside the community. We don't support this.
> […]
> *Insight* NGO advocates for a unitary Ukraine and its territorial integrity and recognises Russian military aggression. But we don't advocate censorship and the limitation of human rights or freedom of speech; we completely support people who are intimidated because of their views and beliefs (*Insight* Facebook page).

This statement differs from the resolute statements of the other NGOs in several ways. It claims that the placards' authors are activists, so they do belong to LGBT+ communities. Also, it points out how the matter of patriotism serves to divide LGBT+ communities, and that this is 'destructive', in their words. At the same time, a closer look reveals a dilemmatic structure to this utterance, which advocates freedom of speech (and denounces bullying of the activists) and, simultaneously, reinstates the centrality of a patriotic stance. In other words, while the vast majority of LGBT+

organisations have chosen to sacrifice such human right as 'freedom of speech' for the sake of the patriotic public image of LGBT+ communities, *Insight* rejected this choice and stated the importance of both standpoints. Both human rights and patriotism are therefore prioritised in *Insight's* statement. It is worth noting, that the statement from *Insight* has met with a lot of criticism over the course of the debates on the 'scandalous placards' case for not being patriotic enough. However, this standpoint was eventually adopted a year later to represent an official position of the 2018 Kyiv Pride. Meanwhile, condemnation of the 'scandalous placards' evoked another question in LGBT+ communities, namely: how far can we go for the sake of maintaining/ demonstrating our patriotic standpoint in public space? In the section that follows, I analyse a particular thread of this discussion, namely the issue of censorship and its impact on the production of sexual citizenship.

Censorship and vigilant sexual citizens

The discourse of censorship with regard to LGBT+ statements in public space was activated through the case of the 'scandalous placards' and further developed during the following year. Whilst the explicit notion of censorship was typically used in critical counter-statements (i.e. 'no to censorship'), the call for more control over Pride placards was typically articulated without use of the word 'censorship', for example:

> We are in a *transitional* moment now with regard to societal attitudes to the LGBT community. So, we must be very *careful* and conduct our work in a *nuanced and thoughtful* way. I mean... we should not do this chaotically (like, everyone draws their own placards at home) because then the whole process will be slower and messier... and may lead in an unpredictable direction. Ideally, it has to be a *separate team* that develops and *controls everything*... (*Vika*, FGD).

In this statement, the reference to a 'transitional moment' serves to justify a call for centralised control which a 'professional' team must exercise over 'unprofessional' LGBT+ communities. Another study participant answered my question 'Do you agree with Pride agenda? How would you improve or change the agenda?' as follows:

> Basically, all slogans and all the moments planned by the organisers were *absolutely right*, thoughtful and well elaborated... so, the organising committee has done a good job, they worked a lot. But... it was *one weak moment* regarding (pause) There were many people who came there to represent and to say something of their own... how to say? ... There were many problematic

slogans there [...] Next time I would draw the organisers' attention to this moment. All slogans and placards *must be focused* ... erm... somehow related to the main topic of Pride (*Serhiy*, FGD).

The assertion here evaluates the appearance of the unsanctioned placards as a 'weak' moment of Pride, thereby indirectly calling for stronger control over placards. Notably, the discourse of control/ regulation of Pride appeared to dominate in discussions, whilst protest against such regulation rarely occurred. It seems that the entire context of Kyiv Pride, including the heavily militarised protection by the police and the far-right threats and attacks, frames Pride within a discourse of 'securitisation' as an organising principle of contemporary governmentality (Goldstein, 2010).

In one year, between the 2017 Kyiv Pride and the 2018 Kyiv Pride, the discourse of censorship in LGBT+ communities had altered significantly. These changes are particularly interesting for analysis as they seem to reflect the ongoing (re)negotiation between a human rights discourse and the patriotic standpoint within imaginaries of sexual citizenship. Eventually, the rhetoric of the 2018 Kyiv Pride organisers clearly prioritised the human rights discourse:

> We are not going to censor placards because it goes against our fundamental values (*Ruslana Panukhnyk*, director of the 2018 Kyiv Pride at the press conference).

The 'fundamental values' in this statement contextually stand for freedom of speech as a human right. At the same time, the practical actions of the organising committee produced a different discourse. According to the rules issued a month before the 2018 Kyiv Pride, all collectives that seek to form separate blocks within the Pride rally must apply in advance and provide thorough information about their title and main statements/slogans. The requirement to provide personal information about applicants seems to prevent anonymous groups (such as QAFB in 2017) from marching at Pride. Whilst the same regulating document states that 'censorship is not allowed' at Kyiv Pride, the new registration rules produced an efficient practical solution for exercising control over the placards. In addition to the (rhetorically denied but practically enabled) censorship exercised by Kyiv Pride as an institution, there is evidence that Pride leaders encouraged 'ordinary' participants to be watchful and take the initiative themselves:

We have a problem when some political groups and marginal people bring placards. This makes us very angry because, in doing so, they change the agenda completely: everyone discusses their placards rather than the initial focus of the event. We – *organisers – respect freedom* [of speech] and will not take such placards away. But *participants,* let's say, *can take a look at the placards around them and intervene themselves…* (*Tymur Levchuk*, the 2018 Kyiv Pride organiser, 'Focus' interview).

What does this statement do? Referring to the 'scandalous placards' case and identifying it as 'a problem', the quotation evokes the discourse of concerned and active citizens, vigilant community members who intervene in any wrongdoing without authorisation from leaders. As Butler argued, censorship 'is not merely restricting or privative' but also 'formative of subjects and the legitimate boundaries of speech' (Butler, 1997, p. 132). The discourse of censorship that has been voiced and practically embodied in LGBT+ communities is formative of not only patriotic but also hyper-vigilant citizen-subjects who have interiorised the 'norm' enough to follow it themselves and to stop others from violating it. As Brenda Cossman put it, the 'new sexual citizen [...] acquires its status as a subject through self-discipline, and an implicit recognition that a legitimate subject requires a shadow of illegitimacy cast elsewhere' (Cossman, 2007, p. 63).

The analysis of online discussions before the 2018 Kyiv Pride shows that the expectation of the quotation above has been fulfilled. Many members of LGBT+ communities expressed their willingness to protect Pride from 'anti-Ukrainian' placards. As a result, the measures exercised by the Kyiv Pride organisers and the vigilant members of LGBT+ communities worked well, so no counter-statement or oppositional group appeared at the 2018 Kyiv Pride. On the contrary, the patriotic messages were more visible than before. Some placards were cases in point (figure 5.9), and it was these placards which received much publicity and support in LGBT+ communities afterwards.

Figure 5.9. 'Thanks to the Ukrainian army for the possibility of conducting this rally' (in Ukrainian, on the left); '#FreeSentsov Freedom to political prisoners of the Kremlin' (in Ukrainian, on the right): placards at the 2018 Kyiv Pride rally[52].

One of the Pride organisers commented upon these and other pictures from the 2018 Kyiv Pride rally:

> In terms of discourse, this is a complete victory [smile emoticon] (*Glib*, Facebook post).

In this statement, the author refers to the discourse, which was produced by all placards and slogans combined altogether as a cumulative message of Pride. In the context of my study, it indicates the complete 'victory' of homopatriotism. There is evidence that, eventually, Pride as such has been perceived as an utterly patriotic event, and participation in the Pride march has become interpreted as a manifestation of patriotism. This tendency is instantiated by a comment from an LGBT+ leader on the 2018 Pride in Kryvyi Rih:

> What city will take the torch relay of Pride from Kryvyi Rih? Where will new placards be shown? What streets will Ukrainian LGBT-patriots march down next time? (*Fedir*, Facebook comment).

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[52] Reproduced with permission from Dmytro Desiateryk.

So far, the analysis in this and previous chapters has been concerned with how the explicit rhetoric of patriotism appears to be intertwined with the discourses of human rights and 'LGBT+ progress'. In the section that follows I further elaborate my argument by examining the rather implicit manifestations of homopatriotism in LGBT+ communities as an assumption of being 'good sexual citizens'.

Other faces of homopatriotism: LGBT+ as 'good' citizens

In parallel with more straightforward manifestations of patriotism, as discussed in the first part of this chapter, the discourse of homopatriotic sexual citizenship has been developed in LGBT+ communities through the rhetoric of being 'good citizens', for example:

> For me, patriotism means to do things that transform Ukraine into the Dreamland – a land that you or your kids would never want to leave. Didn't we conduct revolution for this; don't we fight for this now? Wasn't it for a better life? True patriots are able to maintain a high quality of life for themselves and their families here, in Ukraine, rather than leaving the country (Sheremet, 2018).

This widely publicised statement from a well-known LGBT+ leader activates a set of discourses. Stressing that 'we did a revolution', it aligns with claims about the active participation of LGBT+ communities in the Euromaidan, as analysed in Chapter Four. The gendered model of citizen-patriot in the statement has been constructed through a traditionalist patriarchal image of a 'breadwinner' who is solely responsible for sustaining a 'high quality of life' for their families and is strong enough to stay in the country in spite of hardship. The rhetoric of Dreamland points towards a specific neoliberal model of citizenship grounded in production and consumption (Burkitt 2008); in the context of sexual citizenship, this is called homonormativity (Duggan 2004). Notably, in the quotation, this model of citizenship is rhetorically equated to 'true' patriotism. This is an important moment, where homonormativity and patriotism merge in the discourse and become a unified whole. Finally, the statement constructs 'good citizens' as 'active citizens' – responsible agents of social transformations. In the context of significant LGBT+ emigration from Ukraine to the EU

and the USA[53], this statement excludes LGBT+ emigrants from the sexual citizenry. This exclusion is rather typical of the data from focus group discussions, too:

> We must love our country, not to say 'Our Ukraine is shit' or things like that. And I dislike very much when our *citizens* try to sneak out from the country to go abroad, to go somewhere seeking a better life (*Evhen*, FGD).

This study participant uttered the word 'citizens' with the same accusatory-ironic tone that used to be typical of the Soviet discourse (as discussed in Chapter Four). Together with the derogatory term 'sneaking out', this signals the author's denial that actual or potential emigrants may be good citizens, or citizens at all. Both this and previous statements are voiced from a certain social position, namely: middle-class, middle-aged, able-bodied men, representatives of the dominant ethnic group, big city dwellers with a good job. This positionality informs their narratives and indicates how gender, class, race, ability and other categories of social stratification are embedded in the discursive construction of citizenship. This intertwining has become more visible in the counter-discourses of sexual citizenship, to be analysed in Chapter Six.

In other data, the imperative 'we must love our country' has been softened through the rhetoric of 'respect' for the nation-state. In this regard, a particular document – the 'Ethical code of civil movement for the LGBT+ freedoms and human rights in Ukraine' (Ethical Code, 2017) – is a good case for analysis. It was developed in 2015 by the Council of LGBT+ organisations and later updated several times. Listing the main moral duties of the members of LGBT+ communities in relation to the state, the latest version of the code, issued on May 10, 2017, requires:

> 15. Notwithstanding the absence of general 'ideological dictate' in LGBT movement, in public space LGBT-subjects must:
>
> 15.1. Show *respect* to the Ukrainian state and its symbols, international laws and the Constitution of Ukraine.
> 15.2. Refrain from public acts that could be interpreted as facilitation of separatism, contempt of Ukrainian history, culture or Ukrainian *folk*.
> ...
> 15.5. Exercise caution when expressing their view on sensitive topics of geopolitical agenda, including the perspectives of the restoration of the Ukrainian state control over temporarily occupied (annexed, uncontrolled) territories (Ethical Code 2017, 2; italics mine).

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[53] The 'Fulcrum' NGO provides the following statistics on their website: 700 Ukrainian LGBT+ people received a refugee status in the US during the first 5 months of the year 2018.

This excerpt produces, first and foremost, the imperative for respect of the nation-state where the nation, notably, emerges in rather ethnic terms ('Ukrainian folk'). Being conveyed through a dilemmatic utterance ('notwithstanding the absence of ideological dictate, you must'), the statement provides a powerful resource for common-sense thinking and proves that the topic of the relations between LGBT+ people and the state is explicitly ideological. The underpinning assumption of the excerpt and the Code as such presumes a priority of the collective interests/image of 'civil movement' over the individual views of community members. Utilising the language of ethics informs a specific regime of governmentality that presumes LGBT+ subjects will become self-governed 'good citizens' and produces comprehensive instruction as to what it means in the contemporary Ukrainian context: to be patriots.

In addition to the symbolic manifestations of respect for the nation-state that ought to be shown by LGBT+ communities in public space, the discourse of respect is also informed in the data by a more materialistic account, namely, the discourse of taxes. For example, the 'Appeal to the state authorities on legal recognition of same-sex partnership' (Nash Mir Center, 2017) states:

> Sociological data show that hundreds of thousands of people in Ukraine are interested in legal recognition and protection of their same-sex partnerships today – hundreds of thousands of Ukraine's citizens who, as well as the rest, *pay taxes* and contribute to the development of our country and its *defence from foreign aggression* (Nash Mir Center 2017b; italics mine).

The notion of 'paying taxes' as a means of contributing to the country's development, is combined here with a patriotic statement, 'defending the country'. Altogether, they serve to prove that LGBT+ people are already good citizens, and thus worthy of citizenship rights, including the right to same-sex partnership. Whilst this statement was produced by a high-ranking NGO in the context of their negotiation with the state, similar sentiments are typical amongst 'ordinary' members of LGBT+ communities, for example:

> I am a legitimate citizen of Ukraine, I was born here, and I live here, my child was born here, my child lives here, my girlfriend was also born here, [she] works here and pays taxes as many others do. Why am I different? There is no difference! (*Maria*, FGD).

This statement aims to justify sameness – the discourse that is analysed in detail in Chapter Seven – in order to claim our rights for fully-fledged citizenship. The assertion of 'born here, live here' produces a naturalised discourse of belonging to the nation; together with the rhetoric of working and paying taxes, it imposes a discursive limit in that it excludes 'born there', non-working and therefore not paying taxes 'others' from the imaginary of sexual citizenship. These 'others' do not fit within the economically privileged LGBT+ groups and are gendered, classed, raced and aged in a particular way. Namely, these are migrants, retired people (pensioners), people relying on welfare, workers on strike and, importantly, a large part of the population who work illegally or half-legally (Gorbach, 2015). The material conditions of this section of the population can significantly challenge the imaginary of sexual citizenship that is based on the 'paying taxes' assertion. Finally, if tax is to be considered as a key element within state-sanctioned citizenship, then the imperative of being loyal taxpayers means yet another way to perform patriotism through 'respect' to core state institutions.

Chapter summary

Analysis of how homopatriotism has been performed in LGBT+ communities revealed the central role of Kyiv Pride marches in the demonstration of homopatriotism in public space. Another important mission of Pride appeared to be the demonstration of 'LGBT+ progress' to national and international audiences. Analysing the security measures employed in the 'successful' Kyiv Pride and their reception in LGBT+ and broader communities, I have developed the idea of the instrumentalisation of Pride by the state within a context of growing militarisation and securitisation. Similarly, the analysis of the discourse of 'progress' in relationships between LGBT+ communities and the 'new' police has shown how the state's interests are foregrounded in the construction of the image of the trustworthy police, allegedly the main LGBT+ protectors. Investigation of the 'scandalous placards' case at the 2017 Kyiv Pride has given an insight into how homopatriotism has become an imperative, a compulsory political stance, and has been constructed through rhetorical detachment from the opposite, namely anti-patriotic, political position. The case helped to show how the discourse of censorship, performed in the first instance by LGBT+ leaders, has gradually become internalised by broader LGBT+ communities in the form of a

'vigilant' patriotic positioning of active sexual citizens. Simultaneously, Kyiv Pride as an institution has developed a more complex strategy that upholds a human rights rhetoric and the patriotic stance intertwined within the discourse of 'civic nationalism'.

Throughout the chapter I elaborated my argument that a homopatriotic discourse of sexual citizenship produces a specific type of LGBT+ subject at the intersection of patriotism and the imaginary of being 'good sexual citizens': patriotic, vigilant and loyal to the state. Analysis of data with regard to tax as a form of economic regulation has shown how the discursive construction of sexual citizens as 'employed taxpayers' appears to be saturated with homopatriotism. This is indicative of how the emerging discourse of sexual citizenship in Ukraine is rooted in the neoliberal discourse of productive work and consumption. At the same time, the power of this discursive hegemony enables (even produces) possibilities for resistance to the dominant discourses. In the next chapter, therefore, I will employ the concept of 'counter-discourse' in order to identify 'new truths' that appear in the same discursive field where the dominant discourse is situated and has proliferated. I will explore how (where, when) counter-discourses of sexual citizenship occur, what forms they take, what argumentative strategies they employ and, finally, what their impact is on the dominant discourse of sexual citizenship.

6. Counter-Discourses: Imagining Sexual Citizenship Differently

In the previous chapters, I analysed how the dominant discourse of sexual citizenship in Ukraine – homopatriotism – had emerged at the intersection of the universal discourse of human rights and the particular discourse of 'civic nationalism'. I examined how homopatriotism has been rhetorically justified in LGBT+ communities; how its more or less explicit forms manifested and strengthened each other within the dominant discourse. Continuing my discursive investigation of sexual citizenship, this chapter is focused on the *counter-discourses* of sexual citizenship that have emerged from within LGBT+ communities. My analysis seeks to understand how counter-discourses are being crafted and negotiated within LGBT+ communities; what alternatives to homopatriotic sexual citizenship are imagined, voiced and heard; how alternative temporalities and imaginaries occur. My plan in this chapter is to use different alternatives, in Foucauldian terms, 'as a chemical catalyst' to locate power relations through the antagonism of strategies rather than 'analyzing power from the point of view of its internal rationality' (Foucault, 1982, p.780). The aim of this chapter is, therefore, two-fold: to identify and analyse counter-discourses that oppose the domination of homopatriotism, and to reconstruct alternative futures/formations from these counter-discourses.

Since all the analysed counter-discourses of sexual citizenship emanate from and are determined by the dominant discourses, the structure of this chapter mostly reflects the structure of Chapters Four and Five. My analysis is focused on the counter-discourses which oppose the patriotic standpoint (mostly represented by discussions on 'homonationalism' in Ukrainian LGBT+ activism), the anti-militarist queer critique, and critical counter-narratives regarding the relationships of LGBT+ communities with the police and the state. Also, I explore how the queer critique of capitalism and neoliberalism challenges the homonormative model of 'good sexual citizens'.

Domains of 'speakability': how are counter-discourses possible?

As shown in the previous chapters, the domination of homopatriotic discourse has been sustained through different argumentative strategies and structural patterns. One such mechanism is the limited visibility of any alternatives to homopatriotism within the public LGBT+ arena. The case of the 'scandalous placards' has illustrated that when such alternatives occur in public space, mainstream LGBT+ activism dissociates itself from non-patriotic statements and denies the belonging of their authors to the allegedly unitary 'LGBT community'. At the same time, the counter-statements challenging homopatriotism cropped up in the semi-public spaces of social media and focus group discussions in local communities. They can still be voiced in public space too (though not without consequences). Their occurrence is enabled by the discursive structure: counter-statements are voiced and heard insofar as the universal human rights discourse (that includes freedom of speech) remains a constitutive part of the dominant discourse of sexual citizenship.

The opportunity for counter-statements to occur presumes certain terms and conditions of what Judith Butler called the 'domain of the sayable': a discursive formation constituted by a set of explicit and implicit norms that enable 'speakable discourses', i.e. dominant and counter-discourses, to emerge (Butler, 1997). My analysis distinguishes between two sites/sources of counter-discourse. The first site is informed by statements within the dataset from both offline and online discussions, typically accompanied by apologies and disclaimers like 'this is my personal opinion'. This indicates the participants' awareness of the atypical or 'alternative' status of their utterances, which cannot be voiced on behalf of wider LGBT+ communities. The materials from focus group discussions contain clear evidence of this rhetorical framing of counter-statements, for example:

> As a community member, I support people who need marriage. Welcome, if you want, I will support you. But personally... *This is just my personal opinion*. Marriage is obsolete; it's not needed anymore (*Katya*, FGD).

This quotation is underpinned by the assumption that the fight for same-sex marriage is part of the collective LGBT+ agenda. By means of a disclaimer, the speaker draws a line between 'personal' and 'collective' and, in doing so, points out the limit of

'speakability' on the matter. In other cases, this line has been drawn not by the speaker but by other interlocutors:

> *Ihor*: In 2015, I remember, police refused to protect Kyiv Pride...
>
> *Olena* (interrupting, with anger): They did protect! I don't understand why you are saying this.... Give me evidence or shut up! (FGD)

This dialogue took place in a focus group discussion in a Queer Home where Olena is a leader[54] whilst Ihor is not. The issue of the limits of 'speakability' arose once again one hour later when Olena suddenly asked 'Are we talking here on behalf of ourselves? As 'I'?' It seems that the leader had an initial assumption that focus group discussion is a space for representing the collective viewpoint of 'the community'. By the end of the meeting, this assumption had been re-visited and contested by the leader themselves. Such a dynamic is typical of my dataset: in my observation, counter-statements occurred later on in the course of focus group discussions and their frequency was growing by the final part of the meeting. Whilst my study does not presume a group dynamics analysis of focus group discussion, the dialogue quoted above and my observations at the time facilitate a better understanding of the condition under which counter-statements occurred. Furthermore, the specific understanding and dynamic of what is considered to be 'personal opinion' gives an insight into how the public/private divide has been produced in the course of focus group discussions. As Iris Marion Young has noted, 'ours is still a society that forces persons or aspects of persons into privacy' (1990, p. 120). From my methodological perspective, however, it is not (only) a voluntary manifestation of the person's right to exclude some aspects of their life from public space, as Young suggests; it is rather an indicator of how the line between public and private has been drawn in the course of discussion on sexual citizenship. Differently put, if doing sexual citizenship presumes challenging a public/private divide (where sexuality has been traditionally assigned to the 'private' [Lister, 2003]), then in my data, a new dividing line between public and private has been drawn between 'normative' and 'other views' within the area of sexuality. Only the former is eligible to produce sexual citizenship in public space.

The second site where counter-discourses are particularly concentrated is grassroots

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[54] In Queer Homes, a leader was typically a GAU employee who received salary and reported back to GAU on the QH activities.

queer activism[55] which has a great deal of specificity in Ukraine. According to my data, grassroots queer activism became visible in LGBT+ spaces after the 2015 Kyiv Pride, was active in 2016 and 2017, and almost disappeared from public space before the 2018 Kyiv Pride. At the time of my fieldwork, queer activism in Ukraine was performed by several grassroots groups that acted online (*FRAU*[56], *Pva Pva*[57] and some others) or combined online and offline activism (*ROR Kyiv*[58] samba-band, *ReSew*[59] cooperative and the 'Queer Anarcho Feminism[60]' community, among others). The *ZBOKU* creative initiative was aimed at archiving, studying and supporting artistic expressions of gender dissent/resistance in culture[61]; recently, it has become an offline space in Kyiv. The separate 'Queer Anarcho Feminist block[62]' (QAFB) at the 2017 Kyiv Pride march united several groups, with many supportive individuals coming together for a one-time street event. Notably, almost all queer activist collectives operate anonymously online. In the case of off-line (street) actions, people usually hide their faces behind balaclavas, masks or veils (the latter was purposely used by QAFB). This detail is telling as to both the place of LGBT+ communities in wider Ukrainian society and that of queer activists inside LGBT+ activism. Being 'strangers' (Phelan, 2010) in broader society and 'outsiders within' (Collins, 1990) in LGBT+ communities, these particular groups possess a specific positionality that shapes their collective voice.

'Let your patriotism go to hell': counter-discourses

The title of this section quotes one of the so-called 'scandalous placards' at the 2017 Kyiv Pride. Whilst the analysis in Chapter Five was focused mostly on the discussions surrounding the placards, in this section I examine what the 'scandalous placards'

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[55] As explained in Chapter Three, I use the term 'queer activism' as a tentative umbrella term for grassroots activism that opposes both heteronormativity and homonormativity.

[56] https://www.facebook.com/fraugroup/

[57] https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100013546515296

[58] ROR – Rhythms of Resistance – a transnational samba-band movement that campaigns mainly for freedom, human rights and equal opportunities, and fights against social injustice and racism (https://www.rhythms-of-resistance.org).

[59] https://www.facebook.com/ReSewKyiv/ Notably, ReSew positions itself as a Ukrainian-Russian project. In so doing, it opposes the mainstream discourse of total dissociation from Russia in the Ukrainian LGBT+ activism (analysed in Chapter Four).

[60] https://www.facebook.com/queeranarchofem/

[61] https://zbokuart.wordpress.com/about/

[62] https://www.facebook.com/events/1349154425133716/

actually said in the public space of Pride. The statement '*Let your patriotism go to hell; queer anarcho feminism is our choice*' (figure 5.8) was written on a large side banner of the Queer Anarcho Feminist Block (QAFB). Contrasting 'queer anarcho feminism' to patriotism, the slogan opposes the domination of homopatriotism in mainstream LGBT+ activism. Being also held at the feminist march three months earlier, in March 2017, the banner criticised the discourse of 'nationalist feminism' too. The rude language ('hell') signals that anger is an underpinning emotion of this statement, and this was typical for the other QAFB statements. I will further elaborate on the topic of political emotions in Chapter Seven.

The statement of another placard – '*Death to Nation, Queer to Enemies*' (figure 5.7) – produces a seemingly absurd utterance that plays with the popular 'Glory to Nation, death to enemies' nationalist greeting. It ridicules both the greeting as such and its re-appropriation at Pride marches (analysed in Chapter Five). Whilst the first part of the statement ('death to nation') sounds clearly anti-nationalist, the second part has a rather ambiguous meaning and can be read as a call for queering the concepts of both enemies and nation. A similar argument has appeared sometimes in the course of focus group discussions:

> I personally think that patriotism is, firstly, a delirium, secondly, is damn unnatural. Absolutely not a natural thing, patriotism! (laughter) Ok, my ancestors used to live here, so what's next? [...] I mean, this is a delirium. Ok, my ancestors lived, but I am not obliged to respect this country... If my ancestors lived here, it does not mean that they were good people. What if they stabbed *Zhydy*[63], how could I know? (*Artem*, FGD)

This statement was uttered in a dilemmatic way: condemning anti-Semitism, the participant simultaneously produces anti-Semitic violence through the pejorative naming of Jews. At the same time, it challenges the dominant historical representation of the Ukrainian nation as harmless, always colonised/oppressed by empires and never conducting ethnic-based violence itself. Since such a romanticised image of Ukraine has become a constitutive part of the contemporary nationalist discourse, the counter-narratives that oppose this imaginary are rare. On the contrary, the moral imperative of 'love of our country' has often become a subject of particularly heated discussions in local communities:

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[63] *Zhydy* (in Ukrainian and Russian) is a pejorative name for Jews.

Bohdan: We *must love our country*, not say 'our Ukraine is shit' or things like that. And I personally dislike very much when our citizens try to sneak out from this country, to go somewhere abroad to seek a better life...

Serhiy: Well, I do not consider myself a patriot, I don't see anything interesting in patriotism, I think also that this is something imposed, something like that. I don't understand why one must love a place only because they were born there... I *did not choose* where to be born! But *I can choose* the option that Bohdan has mentioned … If there is a possibility to move to a better place, I see nothing bad in this (FGD).

This dialogue took place between two men in the course of the focus group discussion in one of the Queer Homes. It sheds light on how the domination of homopatriotism is sustained but can also be challenged. Whilst the statement of *Bohdan* relies on the ethical imperative of 'we must', the opposing counter-statement of *Serhiy* employs the rhetoric of choice. In other words, the patriotic assertion grounded in a naturalised discourse of the obligatory love of 'our' country has been challenged by the evocation of the human rights discourse, more specifically, the right of freedom to choose a place to live. In this regard, this dialogue is indicative of how the complex relations between nationalist and human rights discourses are constantly negotiated in LGBT+ communities. Notably, the first statement was spoken with edifying and blaming intonations by an older professional person (who called other focus group participants 'kids') whilst the second came from a younger student and was voiced in rather a defensive tone. This detail is telling about how the power dynamics between the discourses are intertwined with axes of domination-subordination grounded, in this case, in age and social status. The statement that 'patriotism is a choice, not a compulsion' is a counter-discourse that opposes the 'compulsory' patriotism and has been further elaborated in assertions about the conditional character of this choice, namely, that nation-state should be loved when it 'deserves' it:

I cannot be a patriot of a country that oppresses me on the basis of my peculiarity (*Vlad*, FGD).

***

LGBT people are not fully accepted in Ukraine. If Ukraine will accept LGBT people, then we will talk... Otherwise, if I could live in a place where I am accepted as I am, I will move there, this is not desertion (*Roman*, FGD).

***

I don't like Ukraine very much... Well, not really, I mean, I like Ukraine as land, as a territory, but as the state – no! [...] Simply because it does not provide any

reasons to like it. Because if you look at what's going on in the country, there is no desire to like it [...] I mean, I don't feel obliged to perform a sort of patriotism to look better in the eyes of society. ... Why should I do this? This is my life; I do whatever I want... This is my personal opinion (*Gennadiy*, FGD).

The arguments above are built on the distinction between the nation and the state (most explicitly voiced in the last quotation), and as such focus on their criticism of the regime of sexual citizenship established by the state. Notably, the underpinning assumption of these statements turns upside down the logic of homopatriotic claims for sexual citizenship, as analysed in Chapter Five. Whilst the latter presumes that we must be patriots in order to receive fully-fledged citizenship, the counter-statements above state that we will become patriots when/if we have fully-fledged citizenship. Rhetorically, this upside-down move serves to place the burden of responsibility onto the state, not LGBT+ communities. In doing so, it neither criticises nor evaluates patriotism as such but opens up the possibility of altering and denaturalising the discourse of 'compulsory' homopatriotism. This counter-discourse (re)builds participants' agency through the articulation of the right to choose what to love and where to live. At the same time, it does matter who voices the choice and from what place. As Emma McKenna has argued, if the rhetoric of choice is voiced by a marginalised subject, it brings into discourse a completely different (even diametrically opposing) range of possibilities than the rhetoric of choice uttered from a privileged position. Within sexual citizenship that is grounded in negotiation with the state, the neoliberal state 'interpellates into the conservative state project those subjects whose language is audible', therefore 'renders invisible those claims that are illegible within the discursive terrain' (McKenna, 2015, p. 45). Differently put, the rhetoric of choice informs a counter-discourse that exists in LGBT+ communities; at the same time, this language appears to be 'inaudible' to the state in the negotiation of sexual citizenship.

There are nevertheless discursive limits to such counter-narratives that can be instantiated by a particular piece of data from the focus group discussion in one of the Queer Homes. When the question of rhetoric of choice occurred during the focus group discussion, another participant suddenly asked:

I would like to say something provocative about LPR and DPR[64]. Imagine that their governments claim: we organise a gay village! Wouldn't you agree to move there, to this village? I would move! … No, I don't mean ghetto. I mean, imagine that LPR maintains LGBT rights better than the rest of Ukraine… [Disapproving murmurs in the group] Ah, yes, we can't imagine this because we take it for granted that they are enemies, they are against us (*Galya*, FGD).

Other participants looked taken aback and said nothing, so this discussion did not continue. At the same time, the 'provocation' itself is notable since it marks the limits of the rights-based model of sexual citizenship. It signals that just receiving a status of 'first class' citizens may not be our ultimate goal: there are other conditions that have to be accomplished. The statement above activates a new counter-discourse, which asserts that it does matter which nation-state someone belongs to. In other words, the premise of homopatriotism is challenged through a closer look at the state as such. For example, do we share the basic values and political goals of this state? Do we agree with how other social groups are treated in this society? This counter-discourse was sketchy and not developed in the focus group discussion; however, it was elaborated upon in another segment of LGBT+ communities – queer activist groups – as follows:

We, queer anarcho feminist initiative, are mourning over the situation we are living in: pogroms of the Roma settlements, attacks on lesbians and queers […] No joy is possible when the ultra-right violence *had been covered up* [by the state], the *fascist ideology* has been legitimised and normalised, and *the state institutions justify violence and collaborate with perpetrators of violence* (QAFB manifesto; italics mine).

This quote is an excerpt from the manifesto of Queer Anarcho Feminist Block (QAFB) that was published a couple of weeks before the 2017 Kyiv Pride. Together with the list of QAFB slogans for Pride and other online statements, the manifesto has produced a counter-discourse that is based on a critical standpoint towards the state and its institutions. This counter-discourse substantially challenges the foundations of sexual citizenship, such as recognition of the state's authority by LGBT+ communities. I elaborate upon anti-state counter-discourse later in this chapter.

In my analysis of the case of the 'scandalous placards' (Chapter Five), I explored how this case reinforced the dominant homopatriotic discourse, and here I will argue that

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[64] LPR and DPR acronyms stand for the occupied territories of Ukraine around cities Luhansk and Donetsk, i.e. the self-proclaimed 'Luhansk People's Republic' and 'Donetsk People's Republic'.

this did not entirely occlude the counter-discourses which have simultaneously occurred. The official topic of the 2017 Kyiv Pride, 'The country is for all', often became the entry point for such counter-statements:

> Well, if *Ukraine is for all*, then everyone can bring their own messages [...] What amazed me is that... erm, after Pride, its organisers said: 'they are not with us, they don't relate to us in any way'. [...] This was wrong, in my opinion! (*Olya*, FGD)

> ***
> An awkward irony occurred. The slogan 'The country is for all' was transformed into 'The country is for all but not everyone' (*Veronika*, Facebook comment)

> ***
> Sadly, the LGBT community performs internal discrimination and the [Kyiv Pride] organisers seek to limit all to the framework of normativity. Next time say it openly: entry is for patriots in *vyshyvanka*s only (*Inna*, Facebook comment).

Whilst only the last statement explicitly challenges homopatriotism, all three quotations point towards a contradiction between the presumption of the 'inclusivity' of Pride (declared in its topic) and the discourse/practices of exclusion determined by the domination of homopatriotism.

The most direct and unequivocal discursive opposition to homopatriotism has been produced by the queer activist critique of the dominant discourse of sexual citizenship by means of the concept of 'homonationalism'. In the next section, I explore how queer activists understood and made sense of 'homonationalism', how it was discussed in LGBT+ communities, and what counter-discourses it facilitated.

What is 'homonationalism'?

Starting in 2015, the concept of 'homonationalism' has become common currency in LGBT+ discussions. Concurrently, it was proposed by queer activists as the main tool in their critique of homopatriotism and introduced in Ukrainian academic discourse (as analysed in Chapter Two). The key evidence as to how the concept of 'homonationalism' had been (re)interpreted by queer activists is a comic series 'Homonationalism is...' created by the *FRAU* group and popularised online. The series consists of four pictures, which propose four interpretations of what 'homonationalism

is' in the Ukrainian context. The first picture in the series unpacks 'homonationalism' as a desire of the LGBT+ activists to be friends with far-right nationalists; three others criticise such manifestations of 'homonationalism' as LGBT+ claims for marriage equality or 'national LGBT+ history', and the Kyiv Pride organisers' call for 'looking normal, not like freaks' on a Pride rally. Whilst the latter image will be examined in Chapter Seven, the analysis below is focused on the first picture only (figure 6.1) and combines 'reading' both the picture (as a piece of art) and discussions of it in LGBT+ communities.

Figure 6.1 'Homonationalism is… a desire to be friends with far-right [nationalists]'. Text in the bubble says: 'Different but equal'. Picture by *FRAU,* November 2015.[65]

The main statement is illustrated by male figures of a far-right nationalist and an LGBT+ leader who cross the national and LGBT+ flags. The text in the speech bubble reflects the LGBT+ leader's thought: 'Different but equal'. This is one of the most popular slogans in mainstream LGBT+ rhetoric in Ukraine, signifying the desire of LGBT+ people to be equal to other citizens despite being different (I will further analyse this slogan in Chapter Seven). In the picture, however, this slogan is caricatured as a desire of (the mainstream) LGBT+ activism for equality (meaning commonality) with far-right nationalists. Contextually, the ground for commonality is a nationalist ideology.

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[65] Reproduced with permission from *FRAU* group.

The reception of this picture in online LGBT+ communities provides an additional set of evidence that helps us to see what discourses are at play here. First of all, reaction to this picture was unprecedentedly heated in comparison with the other three images from the series. The number of comments received, and the character of debates provoked, indicate that the picture hit a nerve, connecting with one of the most pressing issues in LGBT+ communities. Notably, a large part of the audience did not get the ironic criticism, and so perceived the statement of the picture as an earnest call and approved it. Literally: 'yes, we should seek friendship with far-right nationalists'.

The statement about the desire of LGBT+ leaders 'to be friends with far-right nationalists' looks, at first glance, absurd since the vast majority of violence towards LGBT+ people in Ukraine is performed by far-right groups. However, the approving reception of this statement elucidates how this violence can become insignificant against the backdrop of the more important, more 'urgent' struggle for the nation. There is much evidence in the dataset of how far-right nationalists have become 'respected opponents' in mainstream LGBT+ discourse. Their statements are followed and discussed, and LGBT+ leaders frequently participate in TV shows to build a public dialogue with far-right leaders, etc. Furthermore, 'making friendship' appears possible too. This can be illustrated by the *Gay vs. Nationalist* episode of the 'Michael Shchur' TV-show[66]. Two guests on the show – a gay man and LGBT+ activist (Bohdan) and a public ultra-right nationalist (Dmytro) – discussed their positions, facilitated by a host of the TV-show (Michael Shchur). The dialogue below is a concluding part of their discussion:

> *Michael*: All right. It seems you will never agree... But, in fact, you are a minority and you are a minority, right?
>
> *Bohdan* and *Dmytro* (together): Yes!
>
> *Michael*: So, the task of the majority is...
>
> *Dmytro*: ... to decide whose side to take!
>
> *Michael*: No! The task of the majority is to prevent the fight between you both! To prevent you from killing each other […] but you both could be useful for me [meaning: the majority] …

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[66] Details and link are in Appendix Six.

> *Dmytro*: I have got an idea. We can together go and fight *moskali*. We will succeed, I think.

> *Michael*: Are you serious?

> *Bohdan*: Absolutely. We are doing this already. I have many friends who are now in trenches on the front line.

> *Michael*: Are they gays?

> *Bohdan*: Yes, they are gay men who bump *moskali* off with Tommy guns.

> *Dmytro*: Yes! (Nodding).

Whilst the main part of the TV-show represents a typically-heated discussion between the LGBT+ political standpoint (voiced through the rhetoric of human rights) and the nationalist argument about the inadmissibility of 'gay propaganda' in public space, the exchange here is particularly important. It gives a clear insight into the discursive ground being found for reconciliation: both men are patriots who are ready to 'bump *moskali* off' together. This conclusion, together with the stylistic aspects of the show (that was performed as a sort of 'guy talk' where two guests and a host were interrupting and humorously mocking each other with rude expressions), produces a complex political statement. It constitutes the prioritisation of patriotism over any political disagreements and constructs militarised patriotism as men's business. In addition, the host occupies a symbolic place upholding the principles of the neoliberal state that wants 'to prevent the fight' between the guests because they could both be 'useful' for their country. Being uploaded to the National LGBT Portal of Ukraine and widely popularised in LGBT+ social media, this dialogue has become an influential point of reference in LGBT+ communities. This offers evidence of how (male) LGBT+ leaders seek to build a dialogue with far-right leaders, the common ground for which appears to be militarised patriarchal nationalism.

In the interpretation of *FRAU*, 'homonationalism' stands for a particular type of politics performed by LGBT+ NGOs, including Kyiv Pride. In the online discussion on the picture (figure 6.1), *FRAU* actually cites the foundational work of Jasbir Puar (2007) and also extends these arguments by 'translating' the term to Ukrainian 'realities' and adopting it as a tool of critique from inside LGBT+ communities. This locally situated tool of

critique partly relies upon Puar's conceptualisation of homonationalism as a more systemic phenomenon, 'generated *both* by national rhetoric of patriotic inclusion *and* by gay and queer subjects themselves' (Puar, 2006, p.68; italics mine). It means that homonationalism is a global regime that has been organised discursively but may have very concrete material manifestations and consequences. In line with Puar and other scholars, who consistently stress the constitutive role of the 'West' in the global homonationalist regime (Puar, Pitcher & Dunker, 2008), queer criticism in Ukraine also targets the Western-centred agenda of local LGBT+ politics (as will be examined in Chapter Seven). At the same time, the issue of 'homonationalism' is not always understood within LGBT+ communities, and the queer activist critique of 'homonationalism' sometimes produces quite controversial outcomes, as I will show in Chapter Seven.

The queer activist critique of 'homonationalism' has stimulated active discussions on sexual citizenship in LGBT+ communities. On the contrary, anti-militarist counter-narratives were barely visible and almost undebatable in the Ukrainian LGBT+ context, particularly after the case of the 'scandalous placards' at the 2017 Kyiv Pride.

On the violence of the war

As the analysis in Chapter Four shows, the domination of homopatriotism has been sustained through recurring celebration of the heroic Ukrainian army and increasing evidence of LGBT+ people's participation in the military. In this context, the defensive character of the war in the eastern part of Ukraine powerfully prevents any critique of the Ukrainian military because it is a 'protector', not 'aggressor'. If it occurs, such critique is immediately evaluated as an 'anti-Ukrainian' (and therefore 'pro-Russian') statement which might thereby have serious legal consequences as a crime against the state. A significant part of feminist activism in Ukraine today is focused on the promotion of women's participation in the military and celebration of women's contribution to the war (Mayerchyk & Plakhotnik, 2015). Although critical feminist engagement with this inclusive politic (Enloe, 2014; Mohanty, Riley & Pratt, 2008) has compellingly argued that whilst the army remains an institution of state-endorsed violence, the inclusion of women and LGBT+ people challenges neither patriarchy nor

heterosexism in the society, these arguments are not popular in Ukrainian feminist communities. Correspondingly, anti-militarist feminist critique has even less influence in LGBT+ communities.

However marginalised and silenced, anti-militarist statements are voiced and heard. One particular example of such a statement is graffiti by the *Pva Pva* group (figure 6.2), which links militarised patriotism and patriarchal domination (both misogynist and violent) and, in doing so, facilitates a useful entry point for the analysis of counter-discourses.

Figure 6.2. 'My husband was raped by the war. Now he rapes me. Glory to the rapist, glory to heroes' (in Russian): graffiti by the *Pva Pva* group, December 2016[67].

This graffiti was produced in a public space, photographed, and then put on the Facebook page of the *Pva Pva* group, accompanied by the narrative explaining the authors' viewpoint. It received notably little reaction in LGBT+ communities, generating only two comments ('Solidarity!' from *FRAU* group and 'This is too much, IMHO' from a community member). These details show how this sort of critical statement is typically perceived in feminist and LGBT+ activist spaces. On the one hand, they remain barely noticed (therefore, discursively non-existent), and on the other hand, they have a small audience that supports them in solidarity.

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[67] Reproduced with permission from *Pva Pva* group.

The statement included in the graffiti has several layers of meaning. It clearly points to 'rape culture' as a prominent manifestation of patriarchal domination. As feminist scholars have convincingly argued, any rape is an act of violence ideologically grounded in misogyny, regardless of the 'sex' of the subjects (Brownmiller, 1993). This part of feminist scholarship is well known in Ukraine via accessible translations and textbooks[68]. It also points to rape as a 'weapon of war', something that remains one of the more 'undebatable' topics in Ukrainian society as it pertains to sexual violence committed by Ukrainian military officers towards their female colleagues and the civil population. The domination of patriotism in public discourse and celebration of the Ukrainian army as 'defenders' leaves no room for the discussion of sexual crimes facilitated by the war, even in feminist communities. The statement situates rape in the framework of heterosexual marriage and points to how the violence of war becomes 'domesticated', i.e. continues as a form of domestic violence against women (Bacchetta *et al.*, 2002). Finally, placing the slogan on the background of the national flag and ironically rephrasing the nationalist slogan 'Glory to Ukraine! Glory to heroes' (commented on in detail in Chapter Five), the *Pva Pva* group draws attention to how patriarchy, militarism and patriotism are intertwined, as illustrated in the accompanying statement:

> Let's support our sisters in their fight against rape culture. Be angry and rebellious, smash the institutions and systems of oppression! Wars, states, armies and churches facilitate the maintenance of white hetero-male privileges (*Pva Pva*, Facebook page).

Focusing their criticism on the army, the church and the state as core institutions of control and violence, the *Pva Pva* group voices a position that resonates with a broader queer critique of systemic power, which is inevitably gendered, raced and sexualised: 'white hetero-male privileges'. The perception of this critique (notably the absence of discussion) is indicative of the operation of discourses when certain topics appear unspeakable. As Butler argues:

> A subject who speaks at the border of the speakable takes the risk of redrawing the distinction between what is and is not speakable, the risk of being cast out into the unspeakable (Butler, 1997, p. 138).

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[68] See, for example: (Mayerchyk, Plakhotnik & Yarmanova, 2013).

The activists who raise the issue do not receive criticism; instead they are silenced and marginalised by being mostly ignored. The same can be said regarding counter-discourses that focus on the critique of the institution of the police, examined in the next section.

'A state is made up of the cops' batons': from criticising the police to critique of the state

As shown in Chapter Five, the discourse of 'progressing' relationships between LGBT+ communities and the police has been largely facilitated by the first 'successful' Kyiv Pride marches. In LGBT+ communities, the 'success' of Pride events was perceived to be a result of heavy police protection and for this, discourses of gratitude, collaboration and trust towards the police emerged. Altogether, these discourses significantly outweigh the potential criticism of the police in LGBT+ communities. At the same time, distrust of the police is also voiced in LGBT+ communities:

> This is window dressing… because they don't want to protect us … It is obvious from their comments during Pride, we overheard what they discussed among themselves, we could hear what they think about us, in fact... (*Borys*, FGD)

This statement points to the feigned character of police protection, something that is only done for show, to make it appear 'as if' they really care. The participant's inference is based on their personal experience as they overheard private talk between police officers during Pride that signalled their unwillingness to protect LGBT+ communities. The notion of window dressing is particularly important here since it assumes that there is an audience for the 'show'. This begs the question, who was the show intended for and why? This question is relevant not only for Pride marches but also for the broader context of sexual citizenship in Ukraine, as I seek to show.

Whilst in many testimonies, members of LGBT+ communities argued for gradually decreasing the homophobia and transphobia of the police, there are counter-narratives that present the situation differently:

> I wanted to attend Pride but couldn't, and I don't regret it. I don't want to anymore. Instead of discussing important issues, they [organisers] wank and tag[69] cops, who actually don't reply. Like, 'thank God, finished working on fags and ok'. A master stopped whipping us, and now we are licking the master's

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[69] The author means tagging the National Police on Facebook whilst expressing gratitude.

ass: look, we gays are so nice. We will praise you to stop you feeling infuriated and spitting because you were forced to protect gays today (*Nick*, Facebook comment).

Being spoken through largely pejorative terms, this statement highlights the inequalities of power between the police (a 'master') and LGBT+ communities ('fags'). The police obey their orders (though 'feeling infuriated and spitting') but this does not change their LGBT-phobic views or the systemic characteristics of the police as an institution. Importantly, the gratitude to the police has been criticised in the quotation as a form of assimilationist homonormativity ('we gays are so nice') that occupies a central place in LGBT+ discourse. This has repercussions because it diminishes the space for discussion on 'important issues' in LGBT+ communities and within Pride as such.

The assumption that the police are an agent of unjust violence underpins one more thread in the discussions. These counter-statements are not limited to the cases of the police's LGBT-phobia but rather address a more complex intersection of violence:

> We make a stand against a police state. The homophobic, lesbophobic, transphobic, racist and xenophobic crimes are covered by new police in the same way as by the old police [...] The same police, who must protect us from *pogroms*[70] and violence, conduct pogroms and violence themselves. [...] Remember, Prides emerged from the riots against police outrage, and were initiated by Black transgender women (QAFB manifesto).

In this statement, 'pogroms and violence' refer to the police's covering up of (and, possibly, participation in) cases of burning out Roma settlements and other violence towards vulnerable groups. Solidarity with Roma people and protest against Romaphobia[71] was also expressed by QAFB at the 2017 Kyiv Pride march by means of the slogan 'Yes to Roma, no to pogroms' shouted out-loud. The reference to Stonewall in the quotation above serves to inscribe QAFB activism to the international history of queer resistance and challenges the recent politics of the whitewashing of Stonewall riots, pointed out by scholars (Pagulich, 2018). Simultaneously, other anti-racist and anti-transphobic statements from QAFB inform the particular context of the reference

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[70] *Pogrom* is an organised massacre of a particular ethnic group, in particular that of Jews in Eastern Europe.

[71] I use the concept of 'Romaphobia' as it is more common in Ukraine than 'anti-Gypsyism'. I conceive Romaphobia to be a form of racism; see more: (McGarry, 2017).

to Stonewall, for example the issue of police brutality towards transgender and non-white people in Ukraine. This points to the situation that some LGBT+ people are at greater risk in communicating with the police than others. The dominant discourse of 'progress' and trust in the police, therefore, reflects the experience and expectations of more privileged LGBT+ groups.

Another extract of data helps to unravel the counter-discourses named above, that is the critique of police brutality and the entanglement of the state and police. This is another series of graffiti created by *Pva Pva* and supplemented by the following comment: 'We are protesting against "cops' outrage" and "ultra-right terror"' (figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3. 'There are no police to protect, there are only police to punish' (in Ukrainian, on the left); 'A state is made up of the cops' batons' (in Russian, on the right): graffiti by the *Pva Pva* group, October 2017[72].

Contrasting 'protection' with oppositional 'punishment' (by means of material armament in the form of batons) signifies the police's complicity in upholding state power. This implies that the state is indistinguishable from the police ('the police state') and challenges the dominant discourse of the police as 'protectors'. The statements, therefore, reaffirm the idea of the police as an institution that maintains the power of the state through control and punishment.

The activist argument about the inseparability of the state and police has been further elaborated in other graffiti from the same series that names several paramilitary

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groups in Ukraine and claims that they are *natsyky*[73]. The Ukrainian State has been called *ul'traprava derzhava'* ('ultra-right state') and blamed for support of far-right ('Nazi') groups. Importantly, the composition of critical statements such as these identifies the state, the police and the nationalist paramilitary organisations as interdependent axes of power. Like the pictures by Maks Rachkovskyi, analysed in the next section, the graffiti by *Pva Pva* considers the police and the far-right groups to be 'brothers' in their task of control and punishment – actually, the task of the state, which they both serve. Revealing these interconnections in activists' statements calls into question a core assumption of sexual citizenship. If citizenship means belonging to the nation-state then how can the right-wing character of the state challenge our desire to belong? Can it?

'Theatre' of Pride revisited

Critical counter-views on the protection of Pride by the police have been further elaborated in the artwork[74] of Maks Rachkovskyi in the series 'Equality March 2015' (figures 6.4 and 6.5). Analysis of this artwork helps us to see how the police protection of Pride shapes and frames LGBT+ communities in public discourse. These artistic statements point to the ways in which the institution of the police is substantiated through the discourses of militarism and hegemonic masculinity.

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[73] *Natsyky* is a derogatory word for 'Nazi' in Ukrainian.

[74] This artwork belongs to online political arts. It was also chosen for the 'Pedagogical acts' exhibition in Kyiv (April 2018). Notably, the exhibition did not open in the end because of threats from ultra-right groups. All the artworks (including these by Maks Rachkovskyi) were destroyed not by the ultra-right groups but by the administration of the Pedagogical University on the campus of which the exhibition was organised.
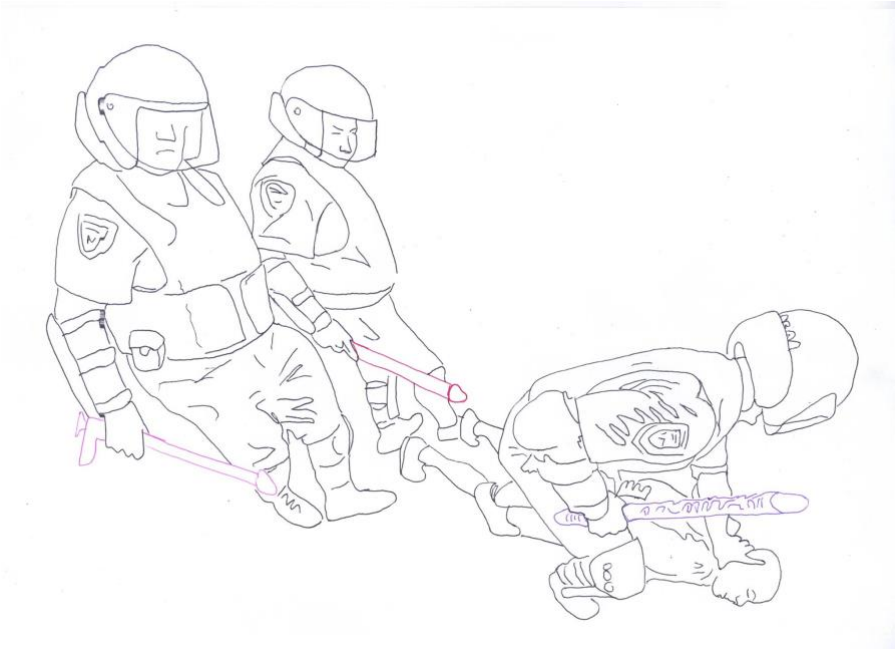
Figure 6.4. 'The Pride march will go on as normal': picture from the series 'Equality March 2015' by *Maks Rachkovskyi* (2016)[75].

Figure 6.5. 'The police announced that they will not beat patriots': picture from the series 'Equality March 2015' by *Maks Rachkovskyi* (2016)[76].

The two pictures here mirror each other. In the first, two police officers stand behind a far-right protester whilst other pins him down (figure 6.4). In the second image (figure 6.5), two far-right protesters can be seen to knock a police officer off their feet. The

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[75] Reproduced with permission from Maks Rachkovskyi.
[76] Reproduced with permission from Maks Rachkovskyi.

police batons (or 'rubber dicks' in common police jargon in Ukraine) are depicted in the form of a dildo. The word 'patriots' in the title of the second picture means 'ultra-right attackers'; this meaning is typical of the right-wing public discourse in Ukraine. In a later reposting of these pictures, the artist entitled the series as 'Homoeroticism in boys' cultures' and commented on this as follows:

> Men measure whose phallus is bigger on the private, public and national level. In doing so, they defend not only territories, property or lives but also their own masculinity and their position in a hierarchy of domination (*ZBOKU* Facebook page).

The images, title and accompanying comment combine to discursively equate violence committed by the police and violence committed by the far-right groups, presenting these as two sides of the same coin of heteropatriarchal hegemonic masculinity, in Connell's terms (2005). Notably, participants in Pride (LGBT+ people) are absent from the pictures, so they are not identified as belonging to the 'boys' culture'. On the contrary, two categories of 'tough guys' – the police and far-right groups, 'protectors' and 'attackers' – appear to be represented as ostensibly the main protagonists in the 'theatre' of Pride, as discussed in Chapter Five. And this is exactly how the discourse of Pride has been formulated in public discourse (in particular, through mainstream media reports).

The pictures give an insight into how the extraordinary protection of Pride has discursively framed Pride participants and LGBT+ communities, in general. They appeared strikingly contrasting to the thousands of armed police inasmuch as 'masculinized cultures of police affirmed the status of LGBT people as perverse' (Dwyer, 2014, p. 154). In other words, heavy protection did not contest but rather reaffirmed the domination of LGBT-phobia in public discourse. Since Pride participants have occupied a position of 'guarded subjects', this challenges the entire imagination of Pride as a public protest. As Cynthia Enloe says,

> If you're protected, you are domesticated. And you're in the private sphere, and you're definitely in the local, domestic sphere—and you're grateful. [...] That just sets up the whole political hierarchy (Enloe, 2012, p.7).

From this perspective, the claim for the right of LGBT+ people to occupy public space by means of Pride marches looks impossible, as this presence requires heavy protection by the police (something that domesticates participants and thus signifies

their subordinate status to the state), whilst Pride itself is contained by the permissive confines of time and space, happening in one street of the capital city, once a year. This paradox was noted and ironically addressed by a participant in the Pride rally (figure 6.6):

Figure 6.6. 'A freedom of actions under control of the police' (in Russian): a placard at the 2017 Kyiv Pride march[77].

The statement above plays with the oppositional terms 'freedom vs. control' to challenge the commonly celebrated protection of Pride. It asks, if public claims of our rights are only possible under state control, then do we really have the freedom to express them and the agency to make a difference? Would it be possible to express our demands if the state did not provide permission to do so?

Finally, some details on the pictures (dildos/phalluses) and the title of the series 'Homoeroticism in boys' cultures' represents both the police and far-right nationalists as objects of male homoerotic desire. This corresponds to evidence in my dataset that the highly militarised performance of the police was often met with a certain excitement in LGBT+ communities. The cult of militarised masculinity represented by male muscular bodies is typical of male homoerotic fantasies (Mosse, 1985); as one commentator in online LGBT+ discussion stated, 'boys usually love boys in uniform, it

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[77] The pictures were taken by me.

happens'. Nationalism can also become 'sexy', as Kuntsman (2008) has pointed out. From this allegedly antagonistic perspective, police and far-right nationalists appear to be strikingly similar in terms of the (homophobic) hegemonic masculinity and their (more or less explicit) service to the state, as shown in the previous section. In this regard, the 'theatre' of Pride, analysed earlier from the perspective of the state's interests and power, produces another set of discourses that entangle gender and sexuality in a particular way. In other words, the homopatriotism and homopatriarchy of Pride has become paradoxically entangled with the reaffirmation of homophobic and transphobic public discourse.

Against capitalism

In the political climate of post-Maidan Ukraine, it is no surprise that neoliberal ideology dominates LGBT+ discourse but remains invisible within discussions. As shown in Chapter Four, this domination has been substantiated through the growing marginalisation of left-wing views in broader public discourse, as well as within LGBT+ communities:

> When I told my friends about the 8 March rally and mentioned that leftist groups were there, I was asked: 'Why are you joining with them? Don't! They are bad'. So, it seems that *we* are good already in the eyes of ... erm... a person who does not belong to the LGBT community, but left-wingers [are not] … (*Dasha*, FGD)

This member of a local LGBT+ community points out how public opinion demonises leftist activism and demonstrates a willingness to accept/integrate LGBT+ people only if they do not share leftist ideas. Though the participant's non-belonging to the leftist group has been implicitly stated, the ironic tone of the quotation indicates their disagreement with public opinion on this matter. On the contrary, some LGBT+ leaders claim the right-wing positionality of Ukrainian LGBT+ communities proudly:

> In every country, the LGBT community is mirroring the local society. Where the leftist ideology is strong, there are many left-wingers amongst LGBT, and vice versa. The majority of Ukrainian LGBT people – and I know personally many Ukrainian LGBT activists as well as ordinary gays, lesbians and transgender people – are the same as the majority of Ukrainian society, i.e. they support right-wing ideology (*Andriy Kravchuk*, the LGBT+ leader, *Radio Svoboda* interview).

This statement uses an argument about the right-wing political position of the 'LGBT community' to make a claim for sexual citizenship. Asserting that 'we are the same as other people are', it seeks to inscribe LGBT+ communities into the body of the nation-state, as citizens whose political position is in line with the 'majority'. I will further elaborate on the paradoxes of the 'sameness vs. differences' dilemma in Chapter Seven; meanwhile, another excerpt from the same narrative gives an insight into how political views are connected with economic benefits:

> We have six active LGBT organisations in Ukraine, and only one of them is rather leftist with the rest being ideologically neutral. I would define them as right-centrist, let's say. The left-wingers are not popular amongst us. This is a big disadvantage for the LGBT movement in Ukraine because traditionally the Western LGBT [organisations] are pro-leftist, they started all these reforms. But this is also changing. Recently, one of my interlocutors [from the Western donor agency] used the name 'Soros' as a swear word (*Andriy Kravchuk*, LGBT+ leader, *Radio Svoboda* interview).

This statement is indicative of how the capitalist/neoliberal discourse is reproduced in NGO-based LGBT+ activism. As explained in Chapter Two, the growing process of NGO-isation, fuelled by the economy of Western donor agencies, is typical of the region (Husakouskaya, 2018). The statement thus illustrates how the domination of right-wing political ideology aligns with the capitalist economic regime of Western financial aid, which, to the leader's relief, is becoming politically right-wing too. This conjures up a powerful discourse of total dependence of activism on donor funding, something that is instantiated in the statement of another LGBT+ leader:

> More recently we have expected an increase in the development – I mean, institutional, organisational development – of the transgender movement. The reason for this is that transgender people have become identified as an at-risk group in the HIV prevention sector. Thus, international organisations have started to allocate money for HIV prevention amongst transgender groups. This will stimulate people to self-organise and be involved (*Anna Sharyhina*, public lecture 'LGBT movement in Ukraine: from homonationalism to queer-anarchism').

Here financial support is identified as a pre-requisite and the main reason for the rise of activism and thus applies business logic to the area of social justice. In so doing, it privileges 'organisational development' (i.e. NGO-isation and professionalisation) at the cost of (already existing) grassroots activism and prioritises financial reward as the main reason for engagement in activism. Consequently, this contributes to a specific model of sexual citizenship that is largely grounded in a capitalist/neoliberal imaginary.

Another case which can help us to understand how capitalist ideology paves the way to domination in LGBT+ discourse and how it could be challenged from within LGBT+ communities is the discourse of diversity, examined in the next section.

What do we celebrate, 'celebrating diversity'?

The rhetoric of diversity intensified in Ukrainian public discourse when the Eurovision Song Contest took place in Kyiv just a couple of weeks before the 2017 Kyiv Pride. Although Eurovision was organised and conducted as a separate event, the international reputation of the song contest as 'an emerging site of gay and trans visibility' (Baker, 2017a, p. 97) determined its importance in Ukrainian LGBT+ discourse.

Kyiv Pride expressed its affinity with Eurovision in many ways. The slogan of the 2017 Eurovision contest, 'Celebrate diversity!' was concordant with the Pride motto 'The country is for all'. The Kyiv Pride website referred to Eurovision as a congenial and kindred event (figure 6.7), and during the course of more than a year presented Pride and Eurovision as 'twin' projects.

Figure 6.7. The homepage of the Kyiv Pride official website, 2017[78].

Pride organisers and other LGBT+ NGOs considered Eurovision to be a unique opportunity to promote the LGBT+ agenda. On one hand, they used the extensive

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[78] The screenshot was taken in April 2018; now the homepage looks different.

media coverage of Eurovision to draw attention to the insufficient protection of LGBT+ rights and the multiple cases of LGBT-phobic violence in Ukraine. On the other, the tone of such publications was often balanced so that it did not prevent a potential international audience from visiting Ukraine. In order to assure guests that Kyiv was a safe and friendly city, the Kyiv Pride published a map of LGBT-friendly places. Simultaneously, 'We are friendly' rainbow stickers were produced by Kyiv Pride and distributed to bars, shops and clubs that were indicated on the map (typically, expensive high-street enterprises). Notably, both the map and the stickers were in English only. These details are telling with respect to which LGBT-subjects were 'included' in the category of consumers: rich English-speaking tourists. Through this discourse, the specific positioning of Ukraine in the global 'metageography' of 'LGBT+ progress' – developed enough to visit and yet in need of international aid – has been reaffirmed.

The discourse of diversity within mainstream LGBT+ activism was constituted mainly through business rhetoric. Pride programmes included a business-lunch 'Practices of inclusion in Ukrainian business' (the 2017 Kyiv Pride week), a seminar 'Tolerance and diversity as new trends and opportunities for business' (the 2018 Odesa Pride week), the fairs/sales of rainbow-coloured clothes and accessories, and so on. A celebration of any business that supports Pride seems common sense in LGBT+ communities:

> This will happen later: some serious companies will join (Pride) [...] Abroad, during Pride week, everyone [all business companies] advertises themselves via Pride and they also force their employees to attend Pride (laughter) [...] So, when we have more such companies, people will react differently, in my view. We just need more time for this to happen (*Ivan*, FGD).

In this statement, the gradual commercialisation of Pride is presented as beneficial for LGBT+ communities because it will reduce LGBT-phobia ('people will react differently'). The commercialisation of Pride parades 'abroad' is used as a model, and the development of Ukrainian Pride marches according to this model is presented as a natural, and therefore predictable, process. Correspondingly, the lack of such development has been perceived as a shame. Participants in another focus group discussion lamented the position of the city government:

> They just don't understand that they can make good money through Pride for the city budget... They don't understand! They think: 'Why? We don't want faggots in boas on the streets... They must stay at home' (*Nastya*, FGD).

162

Considering the LGBT-phobic attitudes of the city government to be a reason that prevents them from receiving potential profit from Pride, the statement produces a discourse of business interest as a cure for LGBT-phobia. Correspondingly, 'making good money' by means of supporting Pride looks in this discourse like an unambiguously noble enterprise. There are, however, counter-narratives in the data that problematised the celebration of 'LGBT-friendly' businesses by LGBT+ communities. These clustered around discussions of the 'Lush' store that took place during the 2017 Pride week.

The appearance of the 'We are friendly' rainbow stickers in some enterprises during Eurovision had been typically celebrated in LGBT+ communities as a sign of the growing visibility (therefore, legitimation) of us in public space. When one such store, 'Lush', which sells handmade cosmetics, was vandalised by graffiti 'Ukraine is against perverts, get out' (in Ukrainian), Pride organisers issued an appeal to LGBT+ communities to support the store by visiting it and buying something. They called for solidarity with 'LGBT-friendly business' and, in so doing, created a paradoxical discursive knot that ties together neoliberal discourse of consumerist homonormativity (Duggan, 2004) and counter-cultural activism. The appeal has transformed the act of consumption in the 'Lush' store into activism, an act of protest against LGBT-phobia. Some members of communities, however, drew attention to the contradictions within this command:

> This year, Pride is friendlier to businesses [...]; it seeks closer cooperation with them. I don't see, for example, how the rainbow stickers would help me to feel safer in the city, which is full of racist and other violence [...] And the fact that some businesses are LGBT-friendly ... it's not obvious to me how it can help to draw attention to this violence.
> [...]
> To me, it would be better if the facilities make the toilets gender-neutral or worry about the accessibility of their spaces for people with disabilities, for example... But the sticker, erm... it does not work for me, honestly. I gain nothing but can see how some capitalists have gained more profit now from the LGBT community (*Mariam Agamian*, queer feminist activist, discussion on UkrLife TV).

This statement draws attention to the intersections of structural inequalities and oppressions that are occluded through the promotion of business solidarity with Pride. Issues of violence are not included in the rainbow stickers campaign, and neither are

accessibility issues for people with disabilities and safe toilets for transgender people. In addition, the activist recalled that exactly the same 'Lush' store was using sexist and fat-phobic commercial advertisements that have received much critique in feminist (but, notably, not much in LGBT+) communities. In this context, would support for the allegedly LGBT-friendly 'Lush' indicate our approval of other kinds of their xenophobia, for example?

'Is poverty also a diversity?'

The ironic question in the heading was proposed as a slogan for the 2017 Kyiv Pride by QAFB. Reclaiming the notion of diversity, it produces a counter-discourse that opposes celebration of (the neoliberal) diversity in mainstream LGBT+ discourse. Whilst such counter-statements have never occupied a central place in LGBT+ discussions, their existence points to the horizon of potentiality in LGBT+ discourse. An online project 'Poverty. War. Eurovision' has produced, probably, the most extensive critical counter-discourse opposing the glossy media picture of 'celebrated diversity':

> Homophobia, trans*phobia, lesbophobia, racism, militarism, ableism, ageism and violence against animals are the only diversity that we observe both in everyday Ukrainian realities and in preparations for Eurovision ('Poverty. War. Eurovision' manifesto, May 2017)

Created by an anonymous grassroots activist group, the project drew attention to the numerous cases of violence and exclusion that took place in the course of preparation for Eurovision in Kyiv and were often conducted or approved by state institutions. All these cases were carefully documented in the project and publicised on the Internet in the German, English, Russian and Ukrainian languages. Concluding that 'Eurovision is a try-out for the least protected segments of the population', the activists point out how the rhetoric of diversity has been instrumentalised to reinforce poverty, racism and multiple social and economic exclusions. These exclusions were further unpacked in the slogan of QAFB as follows:

> Celebrate diversity: Romani settlements, stipends for students, pensions, care for homeless people and health care for all! (QAFB slogan, Facebook page)

Ridiculing the 'celebrate diversity' slogan and reclaiming 'diversity', queer activists draw attention to the ways in which the mainstream discourse of diversity veils

ongoing cuts to social care programs for vulnerable groups. In this context, when LGBT+ communities 'celebrate diversity' without paying attention to issues of poverty and violence (that appear to be the 'price' of holding Eurovision in Ukraine), they contribute to the invincibility of capitalism. The other slogan of QAFB – 'we support miners of *Kryvbas*[79], not white capital-city business' (figure 6.8) – implicitly refers to 'Lush'. Portraying the high-street store as a 'white capital-city business' the slogan contrasts it with the miners' strike that took place at the time of the 2017 Kyiv Pride but did not attract the attention of Pride organisers.
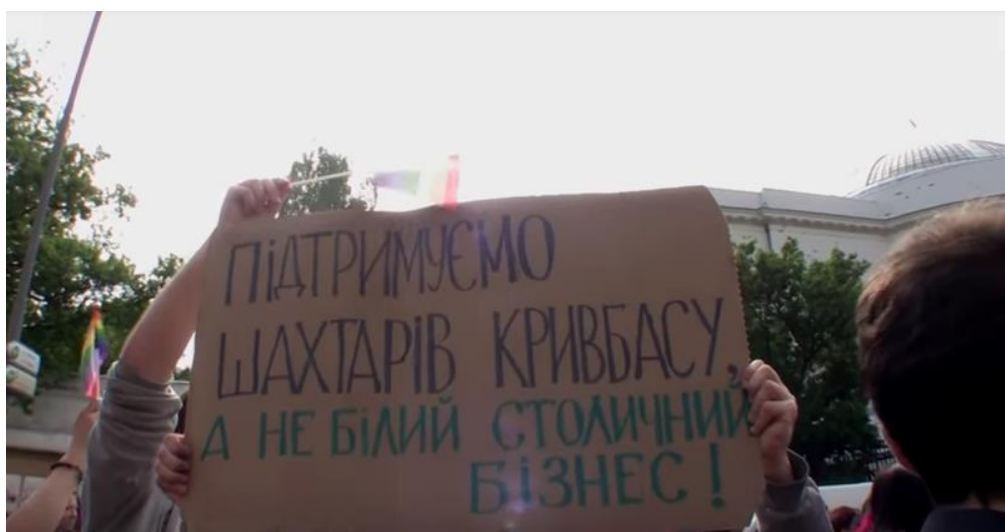
Figure 6.8. 'We support the miners of *Kryvbas*, not white capital-city business!' The placard at the 2017 Kyiv Pride (in Ukrainian)[80]

Evoking the anti-capitalist discourse of solidarity with over-exploited miners, the slogan also produces a particular discursive amalgamation of race and class in contrasting a 'white business' with presumably 'non-white' miners. This and other statements from queer activists, quoted above, point towards the entanglement of race, class, gender, and health status with respect to the citizenship issue. In a specific way, they respond to the call for a 'new queer politics', as articulated in another context by Cathy Cohen – a politics where:

> one's relation to power, and not some homogenized identity is privileged in determining one's political comrade... where *nonnormative* and *marginal* position of punks, bulldaggers, and welfare queens, for example, is the basis for progressive transformative coalition work (Cohen 1997, 438; italics in original).

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[79] *Kryvbas* is a mining region of Ukraine.
[80] The picture was taken by me.

Stating their solidarity with Roma people, students, pensioners and homeless people, queer activists symbolically mark these groups as 'queer subjects' who are already 'improper' citizens. Transgressing the symbolic borders of the narrowly defined 'community', they interrupt the dominant discourse of sexual citizenship, which is focused mainly on the rights of white middle-class 'employed taxpayers' who belong to the 'LGBT community' on the basis of their identity. Grounding their collective actions in affinity rather than identity, the queer activist critique generates an alternative imaginary in the form of partial and particular ('situated', in Haraway's words) narratives, rather than through the grand universalising rhetoric of sexual citizenship: 'We do not need a totality in order to work well' (Haraway, 1991a, p. 173).

Chapter summary

In this chapter, my investigation focused on counter-discourses: where and how do they emerge, how do they interact with dominant discourses, and how does this interdiscursive interaction reshape them both and open up a space for new imaginaries? In the process of analysis, I have defined two main domains of 'speakability' where counter-discourses might occur. The first domain is offline and online discussions in LGBT+ communities where counter-statements were typically disowned as 'personal opinions'. This disclaimer is indicative of how a new dividing line between public and private has been drawn, between 'normative' and 'other views' within the arena of sexuality. Only the 'normative' seems to be eligible to produce sexual citizenship in public space. The second site where counter-discourses were produced is the area of queer activism – a specific political positionality inside LGBT+ communities that opposes both heteronormativity and homonormativity.

The counter-discourses opposing the domination of homopatriotism (explicitly or not so much) were typically produced through the queering/deconstruction of such basic categories as 'nation', 'enemies' or 'Motherland'. The resistance to the moral imperative of unconditional 'love of our country' was often articulated through the rhetoric of choice (i.e. 'patriotism is a choice, not a compulsion'): these two positions correspond to discourses of 'ethnic' and 'civic' nationalism and reflect the discursive

tensions between them (discussed in Chapter Two). Correspondingly, the evocation of the 'choice' concept, which plays a central role in neoliberal discourse (McKenna, 2015; Nussbaum, 2012), points to the neoliberal character of 'civic nationalism'. This is also indicative of the complicity of 'civic nationalism' with the ideology of neoliberalism, typically voiced through a rhetoric of freedom and human rights. Whilst the counter-statement 'the nation-state will be loved if it deserves this' turns upside down the logic of homopatriotic claims for sexual citizenship, it did not challenge the central position of the state as a 'provider' of desired citizenship, or indeed the capitalist premises of sexual citizenship. Another set of counter-discourses against homopatriotism was concentrated in queer activist spaces within the critique of 'homonationalism' that, in the activists' interpretation, stands for the assimilationist right-wing politics performed by mainstream LGBT+ organisations, including Kyiv Pride. The reworked and localised concept of 'homonationalism' has facilitated intense discussions surrounding sexual citizenship in LGBT+ communities, saturated the counter-discourses and made the 'alternatives' not only intelligible but also materially palpable (as in the case of the Queer Anarcho Feminist block at the Kyiv Pride 2017).

Whilst the queer activist critique of 'homonationalism' stimulated active discussions in LGBT+ communities, the anti-militarist counter-discourse appeared barely visible in the Ukrainian LGBT+ context. In my study, anti-militarist statements were voiced mostly from a feminist position, revealing the interconnectedness of patriotic militarism and hegemonic masculinity, both misogynist and violent. The counter-discourses subverted the common-sense celebration of the military that 'defends us' and pointed out the gender-based violence that is immanent to the concept of 'defenders' and that has been committed by 'defenders' in real life. Revealing the discursive linkage between militarisation of the state, certain modes of masculinities and, eventually, the regime of gender and sexuality, the queer activists elaborated a substantial critique of the police as the militarised institution aimed at controlling the population. From this perspective, a core assumption of sexual citizenship – the belonging of LGBT+ subjects to the nation-state – has become questioned by means of pointing out the right-wing and utterly unjust character of the state and its institutions.

The analysis of anti-capitalist counter-discourses has shown how processes of the NGO-isation of LGBT+ activism facilitates the 'naturalisation' of capitalism in LGBT+

discourse and its compliance with right-wing political ideology. Another vehicle that proliferates capitalist logic in LGBT+ communities is the discourse of diversity that has been particularly produced through the conjunction of the 2017 Kyiv Pride and the Eurovision Song Contest. As queer activists pointed out, the strategy of using a transnational show for making Ukrainian LGBT+ communities visible has produced complex and ambiguous outcomes (partly stemming from the internal paradoxes of visibility, analysed in Chapter Seven). The close collaboration of Pride-as-institution with Eurovision has invigorated a neoliberal capitalist discourse at the cost of further marginalisation of the leftist and anti-capitalist agenda in LGBT+ communities. On the contrary, the growing popularity of LGBT+ collaboration with businesses seemed to mesh well with human rights discourse. Thus, as Wendy Brown has suggested 'the civil rights language works as a supplement to the marketplace language', and two different strands are mobilized to manage this process: 'the classic progressive equal-rights argument and the more recent all-are-enriched-by-diversity argument' (Brown, 2015, p. 166). In this spirit, in the next chapter, I will further elaborate on my analysis of how the discourse of sexual citizenship has become co-constitutive through the human rights argument and the neoliberal economic-ideological order.

Examination of counter-discourses has shown how the capitalist meaning of 'diversity' could be reclaimed through anti-capitalist statements of solidarity with the most vulnerable segments of the population. The anti-capitalist statements of queer activists, voiced in various sites, pointed to the entanglement of race, class, gender, and health status within the citizenship issue. Interrupting the dominant discourses of sexual citizenship as those focused mainly on the rights of white middle-class 'employed taxpayers', queer activists generated an alternative imaginary of belonging based on collective actions based upon affinity rather than identity. In so doing, the queer activist critique of mainstream LGBT+ politics enabled (albeit temporarily) a discursive formation that can be called a counter-public sphere. Nancy Fraser conceptualised the counter-public sphere as 'parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs' (Fraser, 1990, p.67). Through this counter-public sphere, an alternative imagination of sexual citizenship and other forms of belonging has been

produced, with alternative subjectivities and forms of collectivities being animated. Sometimes, however, these alternatives need to be reconstructed inasmuch as they are not narrated directly but, in Halberstam's words, 'dwell in the murky waters of a counterintuitive, often impossibly dark and negative realm of critique and refusal' (Halberstam, 2011, p. 2). The question, though, remains: how did these counter-discourses affected the meaning of sexual citizenship? Did they stretch the agenda, calling for a more inclusive model of citizenship? Did they undermine, dismantle, 'undo' sexual citizenship as such? To answer this question, a more fine-grained investigation of the discourses and their paradoxes is required.

7. Paradoxes of Discourses

In the previous chapters, the discursive investigation of sexual citizenship in Ukraine was focused on the dominant discourses and counter-discourses that are produced from inside LGBT+ communities. In this chapter, I extend my arguments with regard to the question of how the imagination of sexual citizenship has been constituted, contested and negotiated, through examining the paradoxes of its constitutive discourses: human rights, diversity, inclusion and normalcy/normativity. I seek to understand how the paradoxical assumptions that lie at the core of these discourses substantiate their domination and, simultaneously, inform the potentiality for 'anticipatory-utopian' imaginaries to emerge. More specifically, I discuss contradictions in human rights formulations and mobilisations using the case of identity politics in LGBT+ discourse: how the SOGI-based discourse of identity has been reinforced but also contested in LGBT+ communities from a feminist and transgender perspective. Exploring paradoxes of the discourses of diversity and inclusivity, I analyse how the 'same-versus-different' dichotomy (Weber, 2016) informs the subjectivation of LGBT+ people as sexual citizens via the discourse of normalcy. The final part of this chapter investigates how a particular type of LGBT+ subject is subjectivated through denial of belonging to both homonormative and heteronormative communities and through deliberate activist subversions of normativity. Examination of these strategies and the paradoxes that exist within their assumptions helps us to see what and how the potential counter-politics of sexual citizenship are discursively performed.

Paradoxes of human rights discourse

As shown in Chapter Four, LGBT+ claims for sexual citizenship are substantially informed by the rhetoric of human rights, for example:

> People have changed [...] Human rights have become *mainstream* now, so today people are interested in human rights more than, let's say, three years ago. And the *growing number of [Pride] march participants* is evidence that our society is changing step by step... (*Vadim*, FGD)

> ***
> Awareness is always good. Now more and more people know what human rights are. Yet five years ago, people did not understand what, why and how,

especially in the regions... But now the awareness grows. [...] Many human rights organisations became visible. Well, they existed before but did not attract so much attention then because people did not know what human rights were. Now their authority is growing because they defend human rights, and people understand and respects this (*Semen*, FGD)

These statements from a focus group discussion assert that the growing interest of 'ordinary' people in human rights is proof of 'progress' in the attitudes of Ukrainian society towards LGBT+ communities. Connecting human rights and Pride marches, the first statement reiterates the 'LGBT rights are human rights' formula that forms an ideological foundation for Pride, as well as LGBT+ activism in Ukraine in general. At the same time, since the idea of citizenship is perceived through its opposition – the 'absence of rights, the derogation of responsibility and the lack of capacity to exercise responsibility and agency' (Halsaa, Roseneil & Sümer, 2012, p.3) – the lack makes human rights palpable to the study participants:

We need some benefits to be given to us by the state. I mean, marriage and so on. Because we are also people, so in a way, our rights – human rights – are violated (*Veronika*, FGD).

Underpinning the same 'LGBT rights are human rights' assumption, this statement points towards marriage equality as a concrete example of a (as yet violated) human right. The rhetoric of rights 'being given by the state' is typical of the dataset; and at the same time, the opposite statements also exist, as, for example, one of the Pride slogans 'Rights are not given, rights are taken'. Yet the central role of the state has not been contested in either formulation: they both place claims for sexual citizenship within the framework of relations between the state and LGBT+ communities and convey them through the human rights rhetoric.

The highest authority of human rights discourse appears so common-sense in LGBT+ communities that it almost does not leave room for its questioning or contesting. Furthermore, the proponents of far-right attacks on LGBT+ events have recently started employing the human rights rhetoric to justify their interventions as manifestations of their right to public protest. This discursive shift is indicative of the hegemony of the human rights discourse. My analysis of the data, however, allows for the unpicking of its internal paradoxes as follows.

The first paradox of the discourse of human rights can be identified as a tension between the performative power of legal discourse and the limits of legal categories. This paradox can be traced in the dataset, for example:

> Legislation in the post-Soviet countries does not include any notice of 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity'. So, the fiercest battles are for the inclusion of these terms within legislation. Why? Because, *if you are not named, you don't exist* [...] On the other hand, our conservative opponents concentrated their efforts on the disallowance of the inclusion of 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity' in the law because otherwise, it would mean the legitimisation of these terms, their appearance in a legal framework. In other words, [...] we are dealing with the 'legitimisation of the people' without which we cannot be *recognised* in society as valid humans with the same set of rights other [citizens] have had (*Zoya*, the LGBT+ leader, Facebook post; italics mine).

In the statement, 'sexual orientation and gender identity' (SOGI) appears to be a key and essential descriptor for LGBT+ communities. The performative power of the legal discourse has been stressed through the statement 'if you are not named, you do not exist'. In a way, it frames the inclusion of SOGI into the set of legal terms as a performative act that 'enacts or produces that which it names' (Butler, 1993, p. 13). Whilst Butler argues that the performative act does not enact pre-existing meanings but rather constitutes meanings through action (Butler, 1988, p. 521), in the second part of this narrative 'we' appear as already existing, albeit 'ashamed' of ourselves:

> Many of us cannot even say 'sexual orientation' or 'homosexuality' or 'lesbian' out loud and openly because these notions are so stigmatised and excluded from the legitimate and/or legal discourse. So, people internalise this *stigma* and are *ashamed* to speak about this out loud. This proves the need to include these terms in legal discourse (*Zoya*, the LGBT+ leader, Facebook post; italics mine).

Thus, in this quotation, to be properly named in the language of the law entails rather symbolic or psychological consequences: it facilitates de-stigmatisation of the named identities and liberation of their bearers. In addition, the employment of the rhetoric of stigma and shame is indicative of how the entanglement of legal and psychological discourses works to further strengthen identity politics in LGBT+ communities. Together with references to the politics of recognition, the statement evokes the discursive supremacy of group identity and prioritises the liberating potential of naming it out loud over more complex issues of LGBT-phobic injustice and violence.

The domination of SOGI-based identity politics in mainstream LGBT+ discourse produces a set of corresponding outcomes. Firstly, it determines a greater focus on the discourse of recognition (via civil human rights) than on that of redistribution (manifested through social-economic human rights), or 'recognition without redistribution' (Fraser, 2000). Secondly, the discourse of SOGI assumes 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity' to be inborn, natural characteristics of people. This assumption substantiates naturalisation of civil rights; to the contrary, social and economic rights are interpreted as something individually achievable ('you can do it', in the neoliberal ideology of success). The ultimate emphasis on identity has been produced in LGBT+ discourse through the formula of 'being ourselves' or 'being who we are'. The premise of the 2018 Kyiv Pride motto 'The country of free people: be yourself!' (Figure 7.1) for example, is grounded in the discourse of a 'true' and stable identity' that has to be recognised (first of all, by its bearer), properly named and publicly celebrated in the 'free' space of the Pride march. Then and only then will it be recognised by society, in this logic.

Figure 7.1. 'The country of free people: be yourself!' The central banner of the 2018 Kyiv Pride rally[81].

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[81] Reproduced with permission from Dmytro Desiateryk.

The domination of SOGI-based identity politics constitutes LGBT+ subjects and the 'LGBT community' in a particular way. For example, during the 2017 Kyiv Pride week, a roundtable entitled 'LGBT+ is a friendly community for all identities,' involved several speakers representing different identity groups within LGBT+ communities discussing how to make these groups equal, especially newly emerging identities like asexuals and pansexuals, as well as their more specific variations. The opposite tendency, of resistance to such inclusion, also takes place and can be found in the dataset. Discussing how 'our community' must be named, online commentators stated:

> *Katya*: Oh, you have forgotten LGBTQQIAAAPPPD+ : it includes aromantic, polysexual, demisexual people and the platonic orientation.

> *Taras*: This is schizophrenia, dear friends. Let's [not] invent a letter for every crazy idea and institutionalise it. We have a common name, LGBT, and it's enough (*Insight* Facebook page).

This dialogue, as well as the roundtable, shows how the identity-based discourse of human rights has been reproduced in both claims by those with newly emerging identities for their inclusion and recognition and refusal from those adhering to 'old' identities to do so. These debates have potential for revealing how privilege operates in LGBT+ communities and challenging the multiple normativities in LGBT+ discourse. At the same time, the ultimate focus on identities and their recognition inevitably entails certain limitations, in particular regarding potential solidarities across various social groups, as discussed in Chapter Six.

The second paradox of human rights discourse can be summarised as follows. Whilst the international human rights doctrine includes several types of rights – civil, political, social, economic and cultural (UDHR, 1948) – civil LGBT+ rights are substantially prioritised in Ukrainian LGBT+ discourse. The main discussions on LGBT+ rights are concerned with protection from discrimination and hate crimes on the basis of SOGI, promotion of marriage equality and upholding the right for peaceful assemblies in public space. Correspondingly, such social and economic rights as the right for education, for housing, for health care and for sufficient wage occupy a very marginal place in LGBT+ discourse:

> For many lesbians as well as for gays, the issue of marriage is very important. If a study was conducted in the community [...], I am sure that people would express more interest in marriage or partnership than in *social care* or

something else (*Anna Dovgopol*, the LGBT+ leader, discussion on UkrLife TV; italics mine)

This public statement from an LGBT+ leader presumes the priority of marriage equality over socio-economic and welfare rights in LGBT+ communities, thereby producing a specific discourse of neoliberal sexual citizenship (discussed in Chapter Five). This is not a specifically Ukrainian issue but rather a global tendency: as Kate Nash has noted, 'the way in which human rights are currently being interpreted in legal terms accommodates inequalities: human rights give little purchase on structures of social and economic inequality' (Nash, 2009, p. 1080).

The hegemony of the civil human rights discourse has been produced in the dataset in several ways. Firstly, the naturalised ideology of neoliberal capitalism appears to be constitutive of LGBT+ subjectivities as sexual citizens (as analysed in Chapter Six). On the contrary, solidarity with economically disadvantaged sections of the population seems hardly intelligible within LGBT+ discourse, which tends to celebrate collaboration with business enterprises. The quotation above, as well as the set of queer activist statements on the issue of poverty in the previous chapter, are illustrative of the entanglement of human rights discourse and neoliberal ideology. This discursive slippage can be instantiated through the statement of another LGBT+ leader:

> I personally work hard every day in order to prove that LGBT communities are moving in the same direction as the whole of Ukrainian society, namely: away from Russia, away from violence, towards majesty of the law, towards protection of [human] life, dignity and *private property* (*Tamara*, Facebook comment; italics mine).

The inclusion of private property in the list of fundamental values of LGBT+ communities is not accidental but rather indicative of how capitalist categories are naturalised in the discourse of human rights. Since the 1990s, the beginning of LGBT+ liberation coincided with democratisation and the establishment of the free market economy, both of which are inseparably bound in the collective imaginaries of LGBT+ communities:

> You, fucked *livachky*[82], go to your communist masters and come together in ecstasy [...] And conduct parades with them but don't come to Pride next time.

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[82] *Livachky* is a derogatory word for 'left-wingers' in Ukrainian.

Because Pride is *Capitalism*, Pride is *Western democracy*, Pride is a Disco [smile emoticon] (*Tymur*, Facebook comment; italics mine).

This comment came up in the course of an online discussion on 'scandalous placards' (Chapter Five). It points to the entanglement of capitalism, Western democracy and disco (which also came from the West in the 1990s) as constitutive discourses of Pride and, more generally, of sexual citizenship today. As a result, domination of civil human rights at the cost of social-economic rights removes economic inequality from the agenda of LGBT+ human rights organisations. This tendency can be examined using the data from a focus group discussion in a Queer Home in a large industrial city. In the dialogue below, participants discuss a recent local incident: residents of the workers' dormitory[83] blocked a central avenue protesting the disconnection of electricity from their homes. A discussion on this matter occurred without my prompts as follows:

Hennadiy: Look, what's going on in our city? Protesters have blocked the street because the electricity to their building was cut. Why we are not in solidarity with the protesters? Why did nobody come and block the street with them? Because we do our own actions for our own rights, so these ordinary people and their problems with electricity are not our business...

Artem: This is the ongoing problem; they have protested for several years already and block the street regularly. There is this problem, indeed, but there are many other problems in the city. [...] The LGBT community can't help everyone. We have to help ourselves. In my opinion, this is exactly this situation. [...] Disconnection of electricity is definitely wrong but this is the issue of relations between people and a company. They can write an appeal to the court ... and resolve the situation via juridical tools.

Andriy: I would [gesture of the fist hitting the palm] them... because public transportation is disrupted! Did you have problems getting to the railway station? Because I did! It's forbidden to block the roads!

Artem: They fulfil their right to assembly. They can cross the road. It's legal.

Olya: Yes, but this is cheating because, in fact, they block the road.

Artem: They block the road, they pull a dirty trick on other people, but from the perspective of the right to assembly they are right. It is possible to harm other people in order to protect their rights, that's ok. Yes, it's a disputable situation but it is not illegal.

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[83] In Ukraine, dormitory typically means very cheap and small condos in a multi-storey building.

> *Olya*: Look, they walk back and forward on the crosswalk. If they do this in any other place, they would be arrested and ... erm, prosecuted.

> *Artem*: That is why they walk on a crosswalk. Yes, this is a kind of peaceful assembly.

> *Olya*: This is not a kind of peaceful assembly; this is a fraud!

> *Artem*: Yes, a fraud that is completely legal (indiscernible, many voices).

This dialogue is particularly indicative of how the initial call for solidarity with economically disadvantaged people has immediately been transformed into a legal debate. The actions of protesting workers have been legitimised by Artem by means of the human rights argument – a right for peaceful assemblies, in particular. Celebrating workers' awareness of human rights and their creative means of keeping their protest legal, all the participants, however, condemned the protest for making their lives in the city less comfortable.

The third paradox of the discourse of human rights is a discrepancy between its presumably broad meaning (as in it is about ideal human lives) and the predominantly legal framework of its interpretation. In other words, the emphasis on legal mechanisms produces the cause-and-effect logical link 'between the presence or absence of juridico-political reforms and liveabilities of LGBTQ persons' (Banerjea & Browne, 2018, p.170). As a result, a taken-for-granted assumption that juridico-political reforms are the main key to making LGBT+ lives more liveable reoccurs. The domination of this assumption and, simultaneously, its paradoxical character can be traced in the narratives of study participants:

> For claiming our rights... In fact, the ultimate goal of all this, as I see it, is that a human could feel *calm and free* regardless of their *gender identity and sexual orientation*, so could *fulfil* all their human rights completely. That's it. [...] So to say, to feel *free and safe*, at the same time (*Lyuda*, FGD).

Being voiced by a Queer Home leader, involved in NGO-based activism, the statement refers to SOGI as a substantial characteristic of the community. At the same time, articulating a broad interpretation of the human rights of LGBT+ people, it delineates a more complex picture that extends the legal framework by including a wider set of

conditions that allow for 'fulfilling' of rights and living a good ('free and safe') life. The importance of this broader set of conditions has been discussed as follows:

> If, for example, same-sex marriage would be by some miracle legalised but gays still killed as before, it will not work (*Viktor*, FGD).
>
> ***
>
> My stepfather is from Georgia, and he said that the only reason same-sex marriage was legalised in Georgia is the state's goal to join the EU. ... But the mentality there is that... despite this issue being resolved in legislation, if you are in a same-sex relationship, you are not a human [...] I mean, the mentality is completely different from the legislation [...] Perhaps we do have a chance of receiving the right to marriage at the legislative level, but on a human level this is still very dangerous, even if the law is adopted (*Vadim*, FGD).

These quotations from different local communities stress the discrepancy between the legislation and the social practice (or 'mentality', as it was termed in Vadim's statement). They reveal a paradoxical situation where securing human rights in legislation does not protect people but, on the contrary, subjects them to further violations of their fundamental human rights, including the right to life. In addition, the second quotation challenges the often-celebrated assumption that the strategic use of LGBT+ rights by the state is always and unambiguously beneficial for LGBT+ communities. The reference to the case of Georgia can sober these expectations by pointing towards the other side of this process, namely: *instrumentalisation* of LGBT+ rights by the state when legislation is adopted but life has not become more liveable. Notably, whilst the critique of such instrumentalisation is present in the dataset, the idea of learning from the Georgian experience of sexual citizenship's development seems incomprehensible within Ukrainian mainstream LGBT+ activism, as they are so devotedly looking 'to the West' and imagining themselves (white) 'Europeans'.

Finally, there are statements in the dataset that express scepticism towards practical aspects of the legislative framework and, simultaneously, insist on the high symbolic role of SOGI-based rights in facilitating changes to public discourse. The following quotation addresses the only Ukrainian law that contains the term SOGI – an anti-discrimination norm on the basis of SOGI in the Labour Code:

> In matter of fact, I consider this norm to be absolutely declarative because it has zero chance of being efficiently implemented [...] By the way, it does not protect any non-cis-gender and transgender people, who are transitioning but have not changed their IDs [...] Because almost all of them, 99% of them work unofficially, they are not protected by the Labour Code at all. Unfortunately.

> And... well, from a practical point of view, I don't see any reason to fight for this norm. But if we see it as *a field of ideological struggle*, then ... (*Ivan*, FGD)

Pointing towards the serious flaws in the practical implementation of the law with regard to transgender people, the statement concurrently argues for the importance of such legislation in the field of 'ideological struggle'. This provides an avenue through which LGBT+ communities may seek to define their interests and, eventually, themselves as sexual citizens, whether the practical implementation of the law is successful or not.

Visibility in the context of human rights

As discussed in the previous section, formal legal equality does not automatically guarantee improvement of LGBT+ people's lives but requires more complex entanglement of the legal framework and 'the possession of moral or material recourses, which generally operate informally' (in Lockwood's words, cited in [Nash, 2009, p. 1070]). The discourse of visibility in LGBT+ discussions is especially indicative of this complexity:

> People who register marriage became immediately *visible to the government*. And the government has power, and who knows what person is in charge, what their attitudes are towards such people... and this person *would know*. And more people will know, and this will go *against our safety*. So, when society is ready – with our help, of course – for this... then big changes will be possible. Otherwise, if they immediately legalise marriage [...] it might create a mechanism of *outing*... it will be too soon and too dangerous. This is my personal opinion (*Vitaliy*, FGD).

As in the example of Georgia quoted earlier, it is stressed that for some LGBT+ people, the legal registration of same-sex marriage or partnership with government agencies can be seen as a 'coming out' to public institutions and government officials. Mulling over the practical outcomes of potentially adopting a same-sex marriage/partnership law (something that is highly unlikely so far), the statement extends the argument developed in the previous section by pointing towards the state as a source of (new) threats, not a protector. Neither 'mentality' nor societal attitudes produce the threat, but the state as such, because it 'would know' and therefore would 'see' this particular section of the population and be able to control and police it. In a paradoxical way,

when the state agrees to protect a social group by means of recognising it, naming it and adopting specific legislation, this simultaneously reinvigorates the power of the state over this social group. The statement above points towards the important paradox of the juridico-political framework of human rights, namely: one has to be visible in the law to become a 'legal subject'; concurrently, the growing visibility of individuals places them at risk of LGBT-phobic violence. Thus, marking the limits of rights-based sexual citizenship, the statement emphasises that juridico-legal reforms might be useless, if not risky, for some LGBT+ people if they are not supplemented with wider societal changes.

The topic of visibility is very salient in the rhetoric of LGBT+ leaders who often portray visibility as an important and non-alternative strategy for achieving human rights for LGBT+ people:

> Ukrainians, just ordinary Ukrainians from Ukrainian cities, they say that they don't see LGBTI people on the streets very often. They don't. Many of them don't know anyone [from LGBT+ communities] in person but those who do have very, very positive attitudes towards the [LGBT+] community. So, my call to LGBTI people is: by means of your example, your openness and your coming-outs, you can improve the situation in Ukraine (*Zoryan Kis*, the LGBT+ leader, *UA| TV-channel* interview).

This statement unequivocally calls for 'coming out' as an act of individual everyday activism. Reducing the issue of LGBT-phobia to the matter of personal familiarity with LGBT+ people, the call evokes a discourse of individual responsibility (and fault) for LGBT-phobic violence, and this discourse aligns with the neoliberal imaginary of endless personal opportunities. This discursive production has been further strengthened in another public and widely publicised statement by the same openly gay leader:

> In my opinion, people who conceal their homosexuality are the most dangerous because they can be easily manipulated and blackmailed. They are accustomed to hypocrisy (*Zoryan Kis*, the LGBT+ leader, the *Glavcom* interview).

Assessing 'closeted' homosexuals as 'dangerous' (sic! not 'in a danger'), the statement excludes them from the community of 'good sexual citizens'. As a result, it produces a discourse of sexual citizenship that further privileges openly LGBT+ activists whilst condemning the more precarious members of these communities for whom 'coming

out' could be dangerous, if not fatal. Within this neoliberal celebration of personal achievements, no room is left for discussing structural inequalities and the systemic basis of LGBT-phobia.

Domination of the discourse of visibility has been sustained, among others, through the 2018 Kyiv Pride topic: 'Visibility'. Together with the main slogan 'The country of free people. Be yourself!" it further reinforces the straightforward discursive connection between visibility and freedom, as activated in the quotation above. Notably, Pride organisers presented the topic as chosen not by leaders but by 'ordinary' members of LGBT+ communities:

> It was the first time we organised democratic voting for topics, it was open voting so everyone could vote on social media. 'Visibility' won, this means that there is a *high demand for this topic in the community* (*Tymur Levchuk*, the 2018 Pride organiser, *Informator.ua* press conference; italics mine).

In my study, however, participants from local communities have provided a more nuanced account of the matter of visibility. Being basically in agreement with the importance of visibility in terms of recognition and acknowledgement of LGBT+ communities as a whole (Phelan, 2010), they addressed the issue of individual visibility, typically framed by the rhetoric of 'coming out', as complex and contextual. Some participants voiced their personal experience:

> I cannot show up to Pride. I am not prepared for... Well, I don't care about a broader society – if they see me, I would *survive* somehow... But regarding my family... My father has very harsh attitudes to *this*, he is capable of hurting me physically if he finds out. This would be a horrible problem, so I understand that it would be better not being out anywhere... (*Vasyl'*, FGD).

The quotation itself together with the pronoun 'this', used as a substitute for 'homosexuality', indicates the specific position of the focus group participant: a college student living with their parents. For them, attending Pride means to become visible there, and this is not a matter of pride (dignity) but of survival. A leader of the same community – a man in their 30s – also confessed to the impossibility of being publicly 'out', due to this potentially leading to them not being able to secure a position or find a new job in their small hometown. These sentiments are indicative of the discrepancy between the imperative of 'visibility' in the human right-based LGBT+ discourse and the material conditions of LGBT+ people's lives.

Another layer of the discourse of visibility – visibility of LGBT+ as a social group in public space and in legislation – has been composed in LGBT+ discussions as a strategic goal on the way to sexual citizenship. As Phelan aptly put it,

> Citizenship is about participation in the social and political life of a political community, and as such, it is not confined to a list of legal protections and inclusions. It is just as much about political and cultural visibility (Phelan, 2010, p. 6)

At the same time, this aspect of visibility also has a paradoxical structure:

> I can conclude that, on the one hand, visibility [of LGBT people] has been increased, so to say, the visibility in public space... erm... On the other hand, there is a corresponding rise of aggressive attitudes, I would say, reactive attitudes of heteronormative society... and cis-normative society around ... I mean, it's something like ... an *objective social process*, so to say, it's a conservative agony or normative agony of Ukrainian society, I hope. So, the LGBT+ community gained a bit of *legitimacy*... in mainstream eyes but, on the other hand, it became more *vulnerable* (*Ruslan*, FGD).

The statement establishes a cause-and-effect linkage between the growing visibility of LGBT+ communities (by means of Pride marches and the public activity of NGOs) and the corresponding rise of LGBT-phobic violence. In so doing, it recuperates the discourse of the inevitability of historical 'progress', assuming the violence to be 'objective' and 'natural' proof of the 'progress' (discussed in Chapter Five).

The quotation above gives an insight into another paradox that occurs when LGBT+ communities become a legal subject through their inclusion (via SOGI terminology) in national anti-discriminatory legislation. Since the formation of LGBT+ as a collective 'legal subject' has been determined through cases of discrimination and violence, political visibility makes the group essentially dependent on this discrimination and violence. Wendy Brown addressed this paradox calling it 'wounded attachment' and pointing out its inevitability for any politicised identity:

> In its emergence as a protest against marginalization or subordination, politicized identity thus becomes attached to its own exclusion both because it is premised on this exclusion for its very existence as identity and because of the formation of identity at the site of exclusion (Brown, 1993, p.406).

This paradoxical dependence is instantiated by the participant's sentiment, as quoted above, as well as other data that indicate the central place of such forms of NGO-based activism as collecting and documenting the cases of LGBT-phobic violence across

Ukraine. Many local LGBT+ community centres and individual activists are engaged in this activity; several leading LGBT+ NGOs summarise this data and issue reports on the matter of hate crimes towards LGBT+ people (Nash Mir Center, 2018b).

The employment of the SOGI terminology as an actual foundation of the 'legal subject' reinforces the essentialist discourse of 'sexual orientation' and 'gender identity' as 'if transparent characteristics pertaining to an individual' (Butterfield, 2014, p. 103). From this perspective, domination of the 'born this way' rhetoric in the interpretation of 'who we are' in LGBT+ discourse can be linked to the underpinning assumptions of the anti-discriminative legislation as such within a broader legal framework of human rights. Furthermore, the paradoxical interdependence of LGBT+ visibility and LGBT-phobic violence has its gender-related dimension, as addressed in the data:

> Remembering the 2015 Kyiv Pride, I understand that they [the far-right attackers] attempt not to beat women. So to say, it's not cool (*Vera*, FGD).

Referring to personal experience, this statement reiterates an assertion that is typical of the dataset, namely: men are targeted more often than women in the course of physical LGBT-phobic attacks. This assertion has been allegedly proven statistically in the recent study of *Nash Mir* Centre: according to the report, in 2014-2017 in Ukraine, a ratio of men/women/'persons of another gender' among the victims of LGBT-phobic crimes is approximately 100/10/1 (Nash Mir Center, 2018b, p. 4). Aside from questioning the conceptual apparatus of this study, as well as the wider methodological problem of measuring violence and LGBT-phobia, the conclusion regarding a gender-related distribution of hatred is particularly notable here. If visibility and recognition require the act of injury to become a 'legal subject', then becoming sexual citizen-subjects appears to be the prerogative of cis-gendered men. In other words, 'behind the cloak of gender-neutrality', the process of a visibility-driven struggle for sexual citizenship produces 'a definitely male citizen' and a male-centred configuration of citizenship (Lister, 2003, p. 4).

In the context of such assertions and publicised statistics on the gendered aspects of LGBT-phobic violence, the discussion analysed below provides an insight into how LGBT+ identities and subjectivities are negotiated in relation to their visibility in public space. This dialogue took place on the Facebook page of an open lesbian activist and

started as follows:

> April 26 is the Lesbian Day of Visibility. Nobody celebrates it because there is no such visibility at all. Especially in Ukraine, where lesbians do a lot of important activist work in the LGBT movement: they manage many activities but never participate in the strategic decision-making. When they start claiming lesbian interests and demands, they are just listened to politely, at best. So, compare today with, for example, Transgender Day of Visibility. [In contrast], we have neither special Facebook avatars, nor expressions of solidarity in social media, nor statements from respected politicians (*Vika*, Facebook post).

This statement unpacks the gendered meaning of 'visibility' in the typical terms of what was defined as a 'liberal feminist' framework in Western taxonomies, namely the critique of lesser participation of women in political life, lesser access to resources etc. (Mann, 2012). Contrasting lesbians and transgender people, the statement assumes the former to be exclusively cis-gendered within the framework of a firm trans/cis binary; inscribing lesbians into the framework of the 'LGBT movement', the narrative produces a paradoxical interpretation of lesbians as activists whose sexuality 'does not matter' and therefore could be erased (King, 2002). I will return to discussion of the erasure of sexuality in the last part of this chapter.

The assertion that transgender people are more visible and better supported in LGBT+ communities than (supposedly cis-gender) lesbians was picked up and commented upon by other discussants:

> Firstly, what is the point of comparing? Yes, invisibility exists, and we should fight against it [...] For many trans[gender] people, however, there is no option to be invisible or closeted at all. In this situation, all their energy for survival is channelled into visibility and attempts to gain at least some legitimacy, some recognition through this visibility (*Masha*, comment on Vika's post).

Whilst in the first quotation, the notion of visibility has replaced 'recognition' within LGBT+ discourse, the second employs the term with two meanings. Firstly, it stresses the hyper-visibility of individual transgender bodies, and therefore, their higher vulnerability. In its second meaning, visibility designates a survival strategy to improve the lives of transgender people, a tool for recognition in wider LGBT+ communities. Thus, challenging dominant cis-normativity in mainstream LGBT+ discourse, the transgender account provides an insight into one more discursive paradox of visibility. Being taken for granted as a general aim of the allegedly unified 'LGBT+ community', the discourse of visibility automatically facilitates the higher vulnerability of certain

bodies, namely those which are transgender and gender non-conforming. Exactly those bodies which do not fit one of two boxes in the male/female gender binary are especially vulnerable; at the same time, they are typically subjected to policing and normalising within LGBT+ and even transgender communities. This paradox has been noted by a transgender activist:

> A trans*person, the very existence of which theoretically contests the inviolability of the gender binary, has been forced to guard and fit this binary. Otherwise, there is a risk to become 'non-true man or woman' because all trans*people are imagined to be similar, clearly gendered and satisfied; if not, why did they do the transition at all? (von Klein, 2017, p. 108).

This statement refers to the dominant discourse of transgender transition as a clear route from point F to point M or vice versa, which marginalises non-binary and gender-non-conforming people in LGBT+ communities. Paradoxically, those whose bodies are the most visible (literally) and, therefore, vulnerable, are the least visible (recognised) as LGBT+ subjects. Celebrating and supporting the fight for transgender visibility as a strategy for achieving rights and recognition, it is equally important to ask, together with transgender activists and scholars (Chavez, Conrad & Nair, 2016; Halberstam, 2016; Spade, 2011), what price is paid for this new visibility and by whom? In this regard, a feminist critique of sexual citizenship for pursuing a male-centred agenda must be complicated by criticism of cis-normativity and transnormativity.

The paradox analysed above leads to the corresponding question: what is (should be) visible and where? In what capacity or image must we, LGBT+ people, show up to society? The dataset provides a lot of evidence for this question, for example:

> In my opinion, the foremost task of Pride is visibility, and this... erm... Why does homophobia exist? Very often it's just a lack of knowledge. People have their own fantasies about LGBT people, so they picture [us as] awful unrealistic monsters. But when they see LGBT as *ordinary* people that are very *similar to themselves* – two hands, two legs – they change their perception (*Ira*, FGD).

This statement is indicative of how the discourse of visibility interrelates with discourses of normalcy/normativity and 'sameness' in LGBT+ discussions. The analysis of this entanglement will be further elaborated in the next section.

Paradoxes of differences

In the course of my analysis of how a discourse of diversity has been produced in the context of the Eurovision Song Contest (Chapter Six), I have noticed a tendency as follows. The rhetoric of diversity was predominantly employed in public statements from the 2017 Kyiv Pride. On the contrary, it is almost absent in the data from focus group discussions in local LGBT+ communities, except for those cases when diversity was discussed as a 'useful' rhetorical strategy in negotiation with the state, as illustrated by this extract:

> The matter is [name of the town] positions itself as a European town. So, if we say that we respect *diversity* and encourage different cultures, languages and so on, i.e. we encourage *differences*, we encourage creativity and everything like that... then we have to support *all varieties of diversity*. And this would indicate that we could really be named a 'European town'. This is something that *could be used in our negotiations with the government*. For claiming ourselves and equal rights... In fact, the ultimate goal of all this, as I see it, is that any human being could feel calm and free regardless of their *gender identity and sexual orientation* and could accomplish all their rights completely. That's it. I mean, *like everyone else*, roughly speaking (chuckles) (*Nata*, FGD).

A close reading of this statement helps us to see how the discourse of diversity assumes differences, which must be respected and encouraged. In the current political course of Ukraine towards Europe and 'Europeanness' (as explored in Chapter Four), the rhetoric of diversity can be efficiently utilised in negotiation with a local government that seeks to achieve the 'European' image of the town. At the same time, this statement produces a contradictory message through asserting and, simultaneously, denying that we, LGBT+ communities, are different. Referring to SOGI as criteria for our difference, the quotation concurrently stresses that we are 'like anyone else'. The dilemmatic structure of this statement points towards a discrepancy between the discourse of difference (that is constitutive of diversity) and the discourse of sameness (that dominates in claims for sexual citizenship in Ukraine). It seems that the notion of diversity has been used rather *strategically* in LGBT+ narratives directed to 'outside' communities: the state, businesses and wider society. On the contrary, the rhetoric of diversity occupies rather an ambiguous place inside LGBT+ communities because of the 'differences vs. sameness' discursive tension, as analysed in the next section.

'Sameness vs. differences' dilemma

Whilst within mainstream LGBT+ activism in Ukraine, claims for sexual citizenship draw substantially on 'the classic progressive equal-rights arguments' (Brown, 2015), the most typical argumentative strategy of these claims is grounded in the 'sameness vs. differences' dichotomy, where the 'we are the same' argument has become significantly prioritised over the discourse of differences:

> Today LGBT people must focus their efforts on showing non-LGBT people that we are all the *same people*, the *same bodies*, hands and legs, the *same identities* because... It often happens that LGBT people start emphasising the differences, and this is a mistake. [...] In contrast, we must seek ways of showing that we all are *essentially alike*. The only site of our difference is... yes, our choice of whom to love. Erm... I mean... Probably, it's more about integration or acceptance in order to avoid a division between *us and them* [...] In fact, there is a public opinion now that hetero- and non-hetero [people] are like different species, as Cro-Magnons and Neanderthals. As soon as this difference vanishes from people's minds, we will be able to speak about upholding equal rights (*Sveta*, FGD).

This statement points towards the dilemma that is basically constitutive of all communities, namely a tension between the 'logic of equivalence' and the 'logic of difference' (Laclau & Mouffe, 2001), which presumes the production of equivalence inside the group and its difference from the outer society; or, the difference between 'us' and 'them'. The quotation calls for rejection of the 'logic of difference' in LGBT+ communities for the sake of integration and achieving 'equal rights'. Notably, not 'equality' but 'sameness' has become the key argument in this call. The statement recognises the existence of differences but addresses them as 'a choice whom to love'. In so doing, it talks about differences using the socially acceptable rhetoric of love that discursively produces a denial of differences: love is about all human, not just LGBT+ people.

The emphasis on sameness was especially salient in the Kyiv Pride discourse before 2017. Being developed through the process of a constant negotiation between the Western models of pride parades and the peculiarities of the local political situation, the self-positioning of Pride was changing. Before 2017, Kyiv Pride presented itself as a 'Pride march', as contrasted to 'gay parades' (interpreted as apolitical carnival street shows). Starting from 2014, Pride rallies in Ukraine are called 'Equality Marches' in

order to stress their human rights political agenda and to detach them from the clichéd image of 'gay parades'. The 2015 Kyiv Pride organisers claimed there was a substantial difference between typical 'gay parades' in the West and the Equality March in Ukraine:

> The 2015 Kyiv Pride was not a *carnival*; it was not a *provocation*; it was not what we used to watch on TV streamed from Amsterdam, or Berlin, or New York. It was a *very usual* human rights demonstration, *like any other* that we can see [in Ukraine] *every day* (*Zoryan Kis*, Pride organiser, *Idealist.Media* interview; italics mine).

Contrasting the Pride march in Ukraine to Western 'provocative carnivals', the statement reinforces the discourse of sameness through its emphasis on the everydayness of this rally: 'like any other'. The discursive opposition between the human rights rally (that is serious and political) and the (merely entertaining) pride parades-carnivals privileges the former over the latter, and therefore, sameness over difference. There is also evidence that the 2015 Kyiv Pride organisers instructed participants to wear casual, unremarkable attire at the rally. The official Kyiv Pride website stated: 'If to judge by appearance, nobody will be able to recognise homosexual, bisexual or transgender people at the Equality March'. This assertion appeared to be so common-sense that when *FRAU* collective ridiculed it in the comics (figure 7.2), many members of LGBT+ communities did not understand the satire and seriously approved of the importance of 'looking normal'.

Figure 7.2. 'Homonationalism is... looking "NORMAL, not like freaks"': picture by *FRAU*[84], November 2015. The quote symbols mark a quotation from the narrative of the Kyiv Pride organisers.

In the context of other pictures from the series 'Homonationalism is...' (see details in Chapter Six), it is possible to assume that the image above criticises homonormativity, namely domination of the discourse of normalcy and multiple exclusions in LGBT+ communities produced by this domination. There is, however, an alternative way to read this picture if it is taken into account that, contrasting the 'normal looking' man in a suit and *vyshyvanka* to four images of 'freaks', the picture portrays the latter as entirely Western characters. These are Elton John, Jo Calderone (drag alter-ego of Lady Gaga), an image of the cover of the 'Female Masculinity' book by Halberstam and Conchita Wurst. Intentionally or not, this disposition discursively reproduces the West-East dichotomy. Caricaturing the 'normal looking' Ukrainian gay man, the picture seems to criticise Kyiv Pride for its 'backwardness' against the backdrop of the Western models of queer culture. This discursive paradox, where the critique of normativity has ended up as a reproduction of (another) normativity was noted by one of the commentators:

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[84] Reproduced with permission from *FRAU* group.

The point here is that a wise *FRAU* made it too profound. So, folks are confused as to who is condemned here, gays in boas or gays in suits [...] In general, this is once again about proper and improper gays (Stepan, Facebook comment).

Claiming the satire to be 'too profound', the statement stresses that understanding of the irony requires a specific pre-existing assumption that certain ideas can be ridiculed. It seems, however, the LGBT+ audience was disposed towards neither understanding the irony of the picture nor approving of the point of the critique. This is not to say that the picture caricatures homonormativity inaccurately (though doing this in a binary way, it obscures the variations on the 'sameness vs. differences' continuum). Rather, this 'failure' instantiates too well the difficulty of producing a critique of the Western hegemony in Ukrainian activist spaces, to a great extent determined by the specific position of Eastern Europe in the global 'metageography'.

The discourses of sameness and normalcy appear to be closely intertwined in the statements of LGBT+ communities' members:

Pride is <u>not</u> the same as a Gay Parade! People at Pride hold slogans and placards, they aren't naked, they come absolutely *normally* dressed in order to show that we are in *no way different from the rest*, we are *the same* people, absolutely *the same*... (*Max*, FGD).

Later on, in the course of the group discussion, the same participant stated:

Look, there are Gay Parades in Sydney, in the States, in different cities across the world. Usually, people come there half- or completely *naked*, they wear *feathers*, they jump and behave *indecently*... <u>It's disgusting</u>! I am gay, and I feel disgusted to see such things. I would not wish my sister – who <u>knows</u> about me – to see this, or my parents to see this and understand that... (indiscernible) (*Max*, FGD).

Entangling sameness and normalcy, both quotations mark the condition of the author's potential participation in the Pride march: Pride has to demonstrate 'normalcy'. The statements localise the meaning of normalcy through an opposition between 'normally dressed' and 'naked' and employs the notions of 'indecently' and 'disgust' to make a moralist judgement. Constituting sexual outcasts through discourses of pathology and moral decline, the sentiment seems to provide much-needed arguments to justify the participants' 'normalcy' by means of delineating the 'non-normal' and detaching from them. It is important, however, to understand that this particular imaginary of normalcy vs. aberrations has been not invented but rather

absorbed from an already existing dominant discourse of (desired) sexual citizenship to be reworked and reinvigorated in the narrative. Because, as Cossman put it, 'the self-disciplining citizen needs an unruly subject against which to emerge, an obscenity against which it can be produced as normal' (Cossman, 2007, p. 68).

Whilst the discourses of sameness and normalcy have dominated in Pride politics for a while, a rapid change has been facilitated by the appearance of the Drag Queen Show at the 2017 Kyiv Pride march. Analysing the heated follow-up discussions in LGBT+ communities on this matter in the next section, I am particularly concerned with the question of how the 'sameness vs. differences' dilemmatic tension has been resolved within the negotiation of sexual citizenship.

Paradoxes of inclusion

In the rhetoric of Kyiv Pride, the discourse of diversity appeared to be intertwined with another discourse: inclusivity. The latter was instantiated in the 2017 Kyiv Pride theme:

> The main topic of Pride this year is *inclusivity*, human rights and solidarity. The motto of the 2017 Kyiv Pride is 'The country is *for all*' (Kyiv Pride website; italics mine).

The data show that the rhetoric of inclusivity has been actively employed in communication with wider society and has thus became constitutive of LGBT+ claims for sexual citizenship as 'we want and demand to be included'. In this sense, inclusivity has been constructed as a desirable quality of Ukrainian society, a prerequisite for fully-fledged sexual citizenship. However, inside LGBT+ communities, the rhetoric of inclusion has been employed in a specific way, such that it has produced a different and rather paradoxical set of meanings. For example, a roundtable dedicated to inclusivity took place during the 2017 Pride week and was announced as follows:

> The issue of inclusivity comes up in the work of human rights organisations with increasing frequency. Inclusivity is often understood as something *general* and *limitless*. [...] At the roundtable 'Inclusivity and the *borders* of organisations, communities, society' we will get together with LGBT+ representatives, human rights organisations and international agencies to discuss the conundrum of *limits* of inclusivity (Roundtable announcement on Facebook; italics mine).

The wider text of the announcement unpacked the Roundtable topic as the inclusion of 'various segments of the population', not just LGBT+, into the human rights agenda. The organisers' concern about 'too much inclusivity' being a threat to the 'borders of organizations, communities, society' gives an insight into the paradox of the discourse of inclusivity, namely the dilemmatic tension between the high importance of inclusivity within human rights discourse and, simultaneously, the necessity to limit inclusivity for the sake of protecting community 'borders'. This paradox has been richly instantiated in the discussions on the Drag Queen Show analysed below.

The Drag Queen Show

Accustomed to the domination of discourses of sameness and normalcy in the rhetoric of Pride, many LGBT+ people were shocked by the first appearance of the Drag Queen Show at the 2017 Kyiv Pride march (figure 7.3). It provoked heated discussions in LGBT+ communities, which were reinforced after an even bigger Drag Queen Show featured amidst the 2018 Kyiv Pride rally. Analysis of these discussions helps to unpick the complex interaction between the discourse of inclusivity and its limitations, and negotiation of sameness, normalcy and differences within the sexual citizenship agenda.

Figure 7.3. Drag Queen Show at Kyiv Pride 2017[85].

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[85] The picture was taken by me.

The Drag Queen Show changed the representation of the Kyiv Pride in the mainstream media dramatically: all the visual materials started to predominantly focus upon the show. It was no surprise that images of the Drag Queens were picked up by the far-right nationalists to visualise the 'LGBT+ community' whilst contrasting it to 'traditional family values', as represented by the image of a heterosexual couple with children in Ukrainian ethnic costumes (figure 7.4).

Figure 7.4. 'What country will your children live in?' Poster by *FRAYKOR* – the ultra-right nationalist organisation[86].

[86] Source of the picture:
https://www.facebook.com/freikorps.org/photos/a.1606330512751416/1922902077760923/?type=3&theater

This changing of the image of Pride and extensive usage of the Drag Queens' images in anti-LGBT propagandist materials worried some LGBT+ communities and their allies. This was summarised in the report issued by *Nash Mir* NGO as follows:

> The main complaint of some LGBT communities and the external public against the 2018 Kyiv Pride was concerned with the Drag Queen Show, which, in their opinion, *discredits* the human rights character of the march. [...] Notably, there is a tendency of increasing similarity between Kyiv Pride and the more entertaining Pride parades that are typical of Western society (Nash Mir Center 2018, 8; italics mine).

The rhetoric of 'discredit' in the statement, as well as the notion of 'provocation' in the earlier quotation from a Pride leader, reinforces the discourse of human rights as a serious political business that is not entertainment. The second part of the quotation, however, provides a justification for the show, namely 'we are becoming more Western'. The same rationale has been elaborated by a focus group participant:

> Do you know why platforms with *transukhy*[87] were not possible during the first Pride marches? Because then... How was it articulated? <u>'We are not doing a sub-cultural event'</u>. [...] This was very smart! They [LGBT leaders] said – I remember! – That we are marching for our rights, therefore no platforms, no make-up, no... erm... pink boa... Maybe, I would wear a boa myself but it was not... like, allowed. But now, *step-by-step*, they allow boas and high heels, so... Yeah, it's smart... *Little-by-little*... (*Oleh*, FGD).

Approving the Drag Queen Show as an indicator of the step-by-step 'progressive' movement of Pride towards Western models, the statement simultaneously performs a disdain for the Queens through the pejorative *transukhy* naming. This is not a clear criticism of drag culture but rather a disdain that is conflated in the statement with transphobia and misogyny. Such a conflation appears to be typical of the dataset; it points towards the marginalised place of both drag queens and transgender people (even more so, transgender women) in mainstream LGBT+ discourse, shaped by the domination of cis-normative patriarchy. The frequent presence of drag queens as part of the entertainment in LGBT+ events (parties) and the total absence of visible drag king performances in Ukraine is also telling. Such gender difference evokes a more general question, famously posed by Halberstam: 'why is femininity easy impersonated or performed while masculinity seems resilient to imitation?'

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[87] *Transukhy* is a derogatory term for transgender women, similar to 'trannies' in English. It is clearly gendered in both the Ukrainian and Russian languages.

(Halberstam, 1998, p. 28). Whilst reproduction of the patriarchal ideology might concur with the subversive potential of drag to challenge the binary gender regime, many scholars point towards the ambiguity of the discourses produced through drag, namely both subversion and reinforcement of patriarchy, where 'images of the feminine are still employed to realize male dominance' (Schacht, 2002, p.174).

Provoking heated debates in LGBT+ communities and beyond, the Drag Queen Show seems to have hit a nerve with respect to some internal discrepancies and contradictions. But what did it subvert in the Ukrainian LGBT+ context, what normativities did it challenge? If we are to read this instance of drag 'symptomatically rather than to insist it is always radical or conservative', as Carole-Anne Tyler has suggested, then 'in whose eyes is what chic radical?' (Tyler, 1991, p. 33) The analysis of discussion allows distinguishing several argumentative strategies in this regard. Firstly, Pride organisers (who decided to include the show) defined its subversive aspect as follows:

> Even a small element of *celebration* within the LGBT-community today in Ukraine is a *protest* because [LGBT] people are oppressed throughout the whole year. So, once a year they can be themselves [...] and *celebrate* this for 20 minutes (*Ruslana Panukhnyk*, the 2018 Kyiv Pride organiser, *Ukrainian News* interview; italics mine).

This statement is symptomatic of a significant shift in Pride discourse. Before 2017, the reason for conducting the Equality March differently from the 'Western parades-carnivals' was articulated as 'we have nothing to celebrate yet'. In this context, 'celebration' refers to victories or gains. A new argumentative strategy employs another meaning of 'celebration', namely: we celebrate being 'ourselves' despite the overall oppression, and this is our protest. Together with the 'Be yourself' slogan of the 2018 Kyiv Pride, the call for celebration of 'our nature' reinforces the essentialist 'born this way' imaginary. Simultaneously, this discursive shift indicates an attempt to rethink Kyiv Pride in terms of protest and resistance, to interpret drag as 'a defiant act',

> that allows people who feel oppressed by gender's binds to find liberation, even more so as the gender oppressions of 'real life' loom overhead. It can function as a celebration of the persistence of the human spirit (Bauer, 2013, p.108).

My data shows, however, that this change in Pride politics did not receive much support in the communities:

> In my opinion, this [the show] is an attribute of the carnival or celebration, but we have nothing to celebrate yet. That's why... It is needed, of course, but it's *too early*... (*Mika*, FGD).
>
> ***
>
> In our country, it [the show] was a provocation […] *We are not prepared* for this, our people perceive this as a provocation and then it starts, like: 'Look at them, we warned you! They [LGBT] have finally proved that they are *freaks*!' So, the show gives them absolute freedom to [criticise Pride] ... (*Olya*, FGD).

Whilst the first quotation reiterates a rather common-sense meaning of celebration that corresponds to the 'old' rhetoric of Pride leaders, both statements are similarly concerned that the 2017 Kyiv Pride was not the proper time and place for the Drag Queen Show. Calling for taking into account the consequences of the show in the contemporary Ukrainian context, they evoke the discourse of time as a constitutive axis of LGBT+ activism. In this discourse, the Western 'time of sequence' (Mizielińska & Kulpa, 2011) is the only possible script to define what time is 'right' for certain 'steps' in Ukrainian LGBT+ activism (as discussed in Chapter Four). Also, the word 'freak' in the second statement evokes the discourse of normalcy and points to its crucial role for LGBT+ integration into society.

This leads to another thread in the discussion on the subversive potential of the Drag Queen Show, namely an assumption that LGBT+ communities must be publicly represented as 'normal' people. The dataset contains much evidence as to how members of LGBT+ communities directly blame the show for an outrageous disruption of this premise. The quotation below is an extreme example of such a charge:

> Wait, what IS THAT? What was on that truck platform? What are those painted *ugly creatures*? Is this how the Kyiv Pride organisers represent the Ukrainian LGBT community – by means of these *fat freaks* impersonating the Russian propagandist cliché? Excuse me, I CATEGORICALLY disagree! *The Ukrainian homosexuals* are NOT LIKE THEM!!! The Ukrainian homosexuals are *ordinary* people, *the same as the rest* of the Ukrainians. [They are] not painted, not with a feather in the ass, not an embodiment of the wet latent dreams of the Kremlin *whores* impersonated by the *caricature-looking freaks* (*Fedir*, Facebook post; italics mine).

This piece was published in the days following the 2017 Kyiv Pride. It produces hate speech that is simultaneously misogynist ('whores'), dehumanising ('creatures'), fat-

phobic and nationalist, at the minimum. The nationalist position of the author has been informed through the 'LGBT+ Ukrainians' rhetoric and the accusation that the Drag Queen Show was 'made in Russia'. Though this statement is exceptionally offensive, similar narratives are typical of the dataset. The multiple otherings produced in the statement above can serve as a magnifying glass to give some insight into how the discourse of normalcy, produced through detachment from its opposition ('freaks'), constructs normalcy by means of delineating particular types of normative bodies. In other words, it shows how 'Ukrainian homosexuals' have been constituted at the discursive conjunction of multilateral normalcy and the patriotic standpoint.

Domination of the discourse of normalcy appears to be so powerful in LGBT+ communities that it appeared to be (re)produced not only by disapproving but also through supportive statements, such as the sentiment of a self-identified transgender girl:

> In my opinion, *they* [Drag Queens] must be there because *these freaks* also belong to the discriminated group, they also want to be visible, they also want to show up on the street. There is nothing awful about having tattoos, piercing, looking erm... having violet hair... We do have a *right* to be like that, and *these people*, though they are often perceived as not LGBT, they often are – not everyone, but quite often – they really belong to the LGBT community. I think that the show... it has to be, sooner or later! (*Tonya*, FGD)

This statement, like many others in the dataset, has been uttered in a dilemmatic manner. On one hand, it defends the eligibility of the Drag Queens to 'show up' at the Pride march, using the familiar rhetoric of human rights. On the other, not naming the show directly but using the terms 'freaks' and 'these people', the statement produces a discourse of othering and contests the Queens' belonging to LGBT+ communities. In this quotation, the Drag Queens appear to be not completely, but only partially, 'our folk'.

Finally, discussions of the Drag Queen Show have evoked the 'sameness vs. differences' discursive opposition with a new force. This can be instantiated by the statement of the Kyiv Pride leader:

> Drag Queen is a symbol of the *freedom* and *emancipation* of LGBT people [...] This year, five beautiful Queen images were featured at the Kyiv Pride march. This was a *strategically* important decision for demonstrating to the broader public that the LGBT community does exist; lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual people are *different*; they have their own subculture and it has to be

198

presented in the urban space of Ukraine (*Anna Sharyhina*, director of the 2017 Kyiv Pride, *WOMO* interview; italics mine).

Providing a rationale for the importance of the Drag Queen Show at the Pride rally, this public statement refers to the human rights discourse, in particular, the right to assembly in public space. From this argumentative perspective, the show does not 'discredit' but, on the contrary, embodies a victorious manifestation of human rights. Naming the decision of Pride organisers to include the show 'strategic', the speaker points towards their awareness of the controversial discourses that are produced by the show. Though it was a risky choice, as many disapproving debates in LGBT+ communities have demonstrated, it was made for the sake of 'progress'. The 'freedom and emancipation' signifiers are indicative of the discourse of progressive development of the LGBT+ movement, manifested through the growing similarity of Kyiv Pride to the Western models of pride parades.

Paradoxically, the rhetoric of differences in the statement above (namely, the 'LGBT+ community' is different and has to show this difference in public space) appears to mark a limit to 'speakability' rather than a tendency. This evocation of the discourse of differences passed unnoticed without further discussions, at least, in a positive tone. On the contrary, the Drag Queen Show has often been disapproved of in the statements of LGBT+ communities precisely because it sends the unsettling 'difference' signal. The discourse of differences appeared to be marked in the narratives as a 'problem' or 'wrong strategy'; discussions in LGBT+ communities on the matter of 'sameness', analysed earlier on in this chapter, illustrate this predicament in many ways. In this regard, the Drag Queen Show has challenged the entanglement of the discourse of sameness and normalcy/normativity and, paradoxically, reproduced it. I would say that the show has challenged LGBT+ communities in the same way as Pride poses challenges to wider Ukrainian society: both cases tend to subvert the norm and, simultaneously, have become complicit with hegemonic discourse.

Overall, the Drag Queen Show has produced a set of contradictory discourses. Part of this is related to the internal paradoxes of drag as a genre that both denaturalises the gender binary and reinforces it, as argued by many queer theorists (Butler, 1990). Some controversial discourses have reflected the local configuration of

homonormativity: in particular, the Drag Queen Show has produced a rather contradictory message regarding the patriotic standpoint. The show has become yet one more performance of patriotism at Kyiv Pride. The mainstream media widely streamed the loud statement of one of the Queens: 'we will feature this show on the second day of de-occupation of Crimea. We will enter Simeiz[88] with the same rally'. Another participant in the show wrote in their blog:

> On the night before Pride, I told my colleagues: 'girls, don't you understand that tomorrow we will make a history of the European Ukraine?' But it appeared that we made even more: a history of freedom and the global integration of our country (*Denys Kratt*, Facebook post).

These two statements comply with the dominant homopatriotic discourse and reinvigorate the imaginary of Ukraine as a European nation that is following the path of 'progress'. At the same time, as the hate speech quoted earlier pointed out, the very appearance of drag queens at a Pride march may be perceived as the treachery of normal and patriotic 'Ukrainian homosexuals'. For the LGBT-phobic public discourse, the Drag Queen Show impersonates the 'other' of the Ukrainian nation who are denied national belonging, as the poster above (figure 7.4) aptly illustrates.

Finally, examination of the wider context of Kyiv Pride helps us to grasp a more nuanced account of what discursive labour the Drag Queen Show does within the Pride machinery. As shown in Chapters Five and Six, the 2017 Kyiv Pride organisers have silenced and marginalised queer feminist voices. In this context, announcing the Drag Queen Show as the most subversive element of Pride is telling. This is in accord with Susanna Walters's worrying 'about the centrality of drag and camp to queer signification' because 'in a culture in which drag queens can become the hottest fashion, commodification of resistance is an omnipresent threat' (Walters, 1996, pp.854-66). In other words, how does the Drag Queen Show refute (or prove) the queer activist critique of Kyiv Pride as predominantly representing the interests of white cis-gendered men? When Pride-as-institution supports and celebrates drag queens whilst repressing a queer feminist agenda, what does this say about the

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[88] Simeiz is a town in Crimea; before the annexation, it was famous as the most LGBT-friendly place amongst Crimean resorts.

political positioning of mainstream LGBT+ activism regarding feminist vs. patriarchal ideologies?

Paradoxes of normativity and subjectivation

In this section, I further elaborate on my investigation of the discourses of sexual citizenship with a more precise focus on the process and paradoxes of subjectivation. According to Foucauldian theorising of subjects as an effect of discourse that are constructed rather than discovered, subjectivities in my study are always already implicated in circuits of power where 'certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires come to be constituted as individuals' (Foucault, 1980, p. 98). Referring to subjectivities as dynamically changing and ever-shifting (as opposed to more stable identities), I deploy a more fine-grained analysis of the processes of subjectivation in order to understand how some LGBT+ subjects emerge as sexual citizens whilst others do not.

Although the concept of norms is a core assumption and a main constitutive force of the process of sexual subjectivation (Foucault, 1998b), a distinction between the derivative terms of normalcy and normativity is not so straightforwardly conceptualised in academic literature. I base my analysis on a provisional distinction between these concepts that Antje Wiener (2016) has delineated as follows. The discourse of normalcy is grounded mostly in constitutive assumptions; in my data, it can be typically traced to the rhetoric of validation and justification of norm-following behaviour. The discourse of normativity has been produced through and productive of the assumptions of 'contestation' (Wiener, 2016): this means that normativity as a 'norm-based' discursive regime of power has been constantly and inevitably contested. In this sense, the emergence of 'homonormativity' (Duggan, 2004) inside the hegemony of 'heteronormativity' (Warner, 1991) illustrates this underpinning assumption quite well.

The process of subjectivation is paradoxical in itself. Foucault pointed towards this paradox, stressing the double meaning of the word 'subject', namely being both:

subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to [their] own identity by conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to (Foucault, 1982, p.781).

In other words, a process of subjectivation is constituted by this counter-directive inextricability of subjugation and the struggle of the individual against subjection, and against forms of subjectivity and submission (Foucault, 1982, p. 781). The problem entailed by this paradox, as Ian Burkitt aptly noted, is that of agency: 'how it could be possible for subjects to ever change relations of power – the very conditions that have formed them and the possibilities for their agency' (Burkitt, 2008, p.237).

The domination of homonormativity, as shown in previous chapters, has been sustained through the discourses of patriotic and neoliberal citizenship and often directly articulated through claims of 'sameness' and 'normalcy' in Ukrainian LGBT+ communities. At the same time, this domination has been contested in various ways. Importantly, the potentiality for subversive discourses is enabled through the hegemony of the normativity; in Butlers' words, 'the subject who would resist such [regulatory] norms is itself enabled, if not produced, by such norms' (Butler, 1993, p. 15). Whilst the previous chapters of this thesis examined the discursive production of homopatriotic sexual citizens, in the section that follows I am concerned with the alternative register of subjectivation: namely, what subjects are produced by counter-discourses towards homonormativity? More specifically, I focus my analysis on those queer activist practices which are involved in discussions of sexual citizenship in public and semi-public spaces and, simultaneously, directly oppose the 'we are normal' argument in LGBT+ discourse. In the next section, I examine how queer activist claims about their non-belonging to mainstream LGBT+ activism and non-alignment with the discourse of normalcy produce a specific type of LGBT+ subject.

'We won't be included!' (Paradoxes of non-belonging)

The title cites a hand-written assertion that was held by a QAFB participant at the 2017 Kyiv Pride march (figure 7.5).

Figure 7.5. 'We won't be "included" on your terms' (in Ukrainian): a placard at the 2017 Kyiv Pride march[89]

This statement seems to be directed at both broader Ukrainian society and Pride, in the space within which the placard appeared. Speaking to the former on behalf of LGBT+ communities, the placard challenges those societal norms and 'terms' inherent in the dominant discourse of cis-normative and heteronormative citizenship. Simultaneously, being held within the Queer Anarcho Feminist Block, the statement aligns with the QAFB critique of mainstream Pride politics:

> We are an anarcho-queer-feminist initiative that joins the Kyiv Pride with our slogans. This time, we join the Pride march to show that there are people in LGBT+ communities who approve of *neither the state politic nor the politic of Pride organisers* (QAFB Manifesto; italics mine).

This call, together with the placard's statement, articulates a double refusal to belong but does this in a dilemmatic way. Being grounded in (and, simultaneously reproducing) the binary 'neither/nor' logic, the statements deny belonging rhetorically and seek it discursively. In other words, when one joins Pride in order to state their refusal to belong, this does not overcome the value of the place of denied/longed for belonging. However, negotiating 'the terms' of inclusion, the subjects reinstate their agency and difference. In other words, the 'we won't be "included"' slogan of queer activists can be rearticulated as a desire to pursue their own agenda within the LGBT+

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[89] The picture was taken by me.

struggle. Whilst various aspects of this agenda have been unpacked and reconstructed in Chapter Six, the emphasis on the dilemmatic character of the queer activist position sheds a light on the paradox of their subjectivation. However silenced and marginalised queer activists are in mainstream LGBT+ activism, as long as they perform their agency through physical participation in Pride and discussions in online LGBT+ spaces, they are already 'included' in the negotiation of sexual citizenship. This, however, does not automatically make them sexual citizens. I will elaborate on this idea in the final section of this chapter; meanwhile, I examine the mechanisms through which a particular type of LGBT+ subjectivity emerges in queer activist discourse.

'We are not normal' (Paradoxes of reclaiming)

Against the backdrop of the significant prevalence of 'we are normal' claims in my dataset, there are people and groups in LGBT+ communities who deliberately refuse to be 'normal'. A distinguishing line between 'normal' and 'non-normal' LGBT+ subjects has been drawn between the 'LGBT agenda' and the 'queer agenda':

> I have realised recently the difference between the LGBT agenda and the queer agenda. The goal of the LGBT agenda, in simple words, is a struggle for 'being recognised as *normal*'. 'Normal' is those who are able to marry, to reproduce, to run for president and to walk along the street safely. *'Non-normal'* is not being allowed. [...] LGBT activism fights for recognition of this group of people as 'normal' in order to be allowed to do all this. How? Proving constantly that 'we are very *normal*' [because we are] decently dressed people with a well-paid job, monogamous, praising family and children, and many of us, in addition, are good Christians! (*Galyna*, Facebook post; italics mine)

The 'normal' LGBT+ subjects are depicted in the quotation above using the set of normative characteristics that has been analysed in previous chapters. In addition, the ironic 'good Christians' expression points towards an ongoing process of normalisation of the faith and religion within mainstream LGBT+ discourse[90]. Opposing the discourse of normalcy, the statement signals the loyalty of its author to a 'queer agenda'. More explicitly, the discourse of non-normalcy has been developed through reclaiming the rhetoric of perversion by other queer activists:

> One of the shops was attacked by homophobes who wrote 'Perverts, get out!' on the store's window. By the way, we – queers – well, at least, I don't mind *re-*

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[90] Though I do not discuss the religious aspects of sexual citizenship in this thesis, there is evidence in my dataset of a growing coalescence between normative religiosity and homonormativity.

appropriating the term 'perverts' (Mariam Agamian, queer feminist activist, discussion *on UkrLife TV*; italics mine).

This statement occurred during discussion of the 'Lush' store (examined in Chapter Six). Contextually, re-appropriation means taking the term 'perversion' from LGBT-phobic discourse, which assigns it to the LGBT+ communities to stress their aberration. Whilst mainstream LGBT+ discourse focuses on the denial of our 'perversiveness' and seeks to prove the contrary (namely, a normalcy), the call for re-appropriation signals the double opposition of queer activists to both heteronormative and homonormative discursive regimes of sexuality.

The re-appropriation of the 'perversion' rhetoric has been further developed within queer activists' experimentation with 'queer' terminology. As delineated in Chapter Three, the word 'queer' does not have any historical connotations in the Ukrainian and Russian languages and exists in both local languages as a loanword from English: *kvir*. In mainstream LGBT+ discourse, *kvir* often stands for non-binary identity (reflected in the 'LGBTQ' acronym that sometimes appears in the data). Sometimes, it stands for a synonym of LGBT+ that is not easily recognisable by the public outside these communities. In this regard, the 'Queer Home' naming was a case in point since, among other reasons, it served to veil 'LGBT+' and prevent potential LGBT-phobic violence. Notably, according to my data, the Queer Homes' members did not call themselves *kviry* ('queers') but there is evidence of self-naming as *kvirovtsy* (in Russian). This name signals belonging to the community and, simultaneously, rejecting 'queer' (n.) self-naming. A closer listening to this naming can reveal its similarity with *komsomol'sty* (Komsomol[91] members). Once again, the dominant discourse of demonisation of the Soviet past appears to be surprisingly interrupted by lingering shreds of socialist affinities and collectivities.

In this context, the part of LGBT+ communities that calls itself 'queers' seeks to signal a difference from the aforementioned meanings of 'queer' though experimenting with its modifications in the Ukrainian or Russian languages. These are *kviry, kvirnya, kviryo* that mean 'queers' (n., pl.), and *kvirnuti* that means 'queered' (adj.). Notably, almost

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[91] *Komsomol* (All-Union Leninist Young Communist League) was a communist youth organisation in the Soviet Union.

all these versions in both languages sound like pejorative forms. One of the activists explained this inclination:

> Last time, when I was asked about my identity, I answered 'nothing'. [...] Recently, however, I have realised that I would rather associate myself with 'fucked *kviryo*'. This is sort of my political act (*Lin*a, Facebook post).

This statement has a dilemmatic structure: trying to resist the imperative of a stable and clearly defined identity, it eventually answers the question and thus recuperates the discursive power of identity. At the same time, naming their identity in a pejorative way draws a distinguishing line between 'respectful queers' and 'fucked *kviryo*'. The statement points to the marginalised position of the speaker in identity-based LGBT+ discourse and, importantly, rearticulates this positionality in the speaker's own terms.

The experiments with translation of the word 'queer' into local languages are also interesting with regard to the question of subjectivation. One such translation employs the Ukrainian word *zbochenstvo* (perversion-ness); correspondingly, 'queer people' are *zbochentsi* (perverts). In the QAFB Manifesto the word *zbochentsi* has been used to claim the political positioning of the group:

> We are those who are not afraid to be called *zbochentsi* for our critique of the social order, bi-gender system, 'decent' sexuality, religious morality and 'traditional family values' (QAFB Manifesto; italics mine).

This statement reclaims (though not without dilemmatic articulation) the *zbochentsi* word in the self-naming of 'politically queer' subjects and unpacks its meaning through the list of normativities they are opposed to. Another example of the activist translation is a transformation of the Russian word *oskvernyat'* (to desecrate) into *oskvirnyat'*. This modification emphasises a connection between *kvir* (queer) and its work of desecration of 'Christian values', so praised in the conservative heteronormative (and, recently, homonormative) discourses.

The rhetoric of perversion has been mobilised in queer activism in various ways. Rhyming with 'diversity', the English word 'perversity' has appeared in a caricature that ridicules a logo of the 2017 Eurovision Song Contest (figure 7.6).

Figure 7.6. The official logo of the 2017 Eurovision Song Contest in Kyiv[92] (on the left); a parody of the logo and slogan, created by *FRAU*[93] (on the right).

Ridiculing the official logo and slogan of Eurovision, the caricature hits out not at Eurovision itself but at its uncritical celebration in mainstream LGBT+ discourse and the neoliberal assumptions of the diversity discourse. Whilst the symbolism of the necklace in the Eurovision logo refers to the ethnic/cultural meanings of diversity, the caricature redefines it in terms of sexual diversity. Furthermore, 'the sexual' (Sabsay, 2016) has been exaggerated to the extent of 'indecency' through the image of a sex toy and the rhetoric of perversity. In so doing, the picture seems to challenge the discourse of normalcy that produces sexual citizens as 'de-eroticized subjects' (Cossman, 2002, p. 484). In other words, the caricature interrupts the persistent 'we are normal' and 'Pride is not about sex' arguments (that are typical of mainstream LGBT+ discourse) and claims exactly the opposite: we *are* perverts, and this *is* about sex.

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[92] Source of the picture: https://eurovision.tv/

[93] Reproduced with permission from *FRAU* group.

Reclaiming/ re-appropriation of the 'perversity' rhetoric inside LGBT+ communities is a particularly interesting case from the gender perspective because it was produced by collectives that typically do not include cis-men. In this regard, the claims for 'the sexual' in the rhetoric of queer activists challenge the dominant LGBT+ discourse, where usually gay men appear to be 'the sexual beings'. In my data, these gay men who are not involved in LGBT+ activism are portrayed as hyper-sexual. This was discussed in a dialogue that took place in the focus group discussion:

> *Oleh*: Gay men rarely come to Queer Home, particularly those who are single and want to meet somebody, but not to learn a language or participate in the Home's activities. In other words, [gay] guys are actively seeking a partner. They have no interest here. They have another aim (laughter).

> *Andriy*: Well, I have heard opinions more connected to the assumption that Queer Home is a sort of activism, something serious and institutionalised, so this is a source of their discomfort (FGD).

Though interlocutors have provided different argumentation, both statements discursively prioritise institutionalised LGBT+ activism over those LGBT+ people who have 'other aims' (that stands for 'sex' in the first utterance). Paradoxically, the dialogue that took place between two men: it seems, men are more visible in LGBT+ communities both as 'active citizens' and as these hyper-sexualised members who refuse to participate in activism. On the contrary, images of lesbians and transgender people are mostly de-sexualised, as analysed in the section on visibility earlier in this chapter. This evidence aligns with the argument of Ann Pellegrini that the image of 'perverse public sexuality', predominantly attached to gay male figures, produces an erasure of 'lesbian sexuality' and pleasure (Pellegrini, 2002, p. 146). In this context, the re-appropriation of 'perversity' self-naming by members of queer activist collectives (who are anybody but cis-gay men) both challenges homopatriarchal domination in LGBT+ communities and discursively regenerates sexual desire in bodies that are typically denied their links to 'the sexual' in LGBT+ and public discourse.

Whilst the dominant discourse of LGBT+ normalcy has been substantiated, among other ways, by the image of 'normally dressed' and 'decently behaving' participants of Pride, the opposing counter-discourse produces rather unruly subjects. A close reading of queer activist statements allows us to perceive a connection between rude

rhetorical forms and anger as a political emotion. One of the statements instantiates this observation as follows:

> Let's support our sisters in the fight against rape culture. *Be angry and unruly; undermine the institutions and systems of oppression!* Wars, states, armies and churches facilitate the upholding of white hetero-male privileges (*Pva Pva*, Facebook post; italics mine).

Being voiced within the '16 days against gender violence' feminist campaign, the statement employs the same rhetoric of anger that has previously been associated with radical feminist and queer activist manifestations across the globe. The call of the ACT-UP[94] group to being 'angry, confrontational, and beyond sexual identities' (Eleftheriadis, 2014, p. 149) and the famous 'I'm angry' statement in the Queer Nation manifesto (1990) are only a few examples of many. In my dataset, as intense an emotion as anger has often been expressed by study participants towards ultra-right LGBT-phobic violence or Russian military aggression. At the same time, within the homopatriotic discourse, the rhetoric of anger is limited and controlled (especially in public space) in order not to undermine the rationality of claims for sexual citizenship. In queer activist statements, on the contrary, anger and rage are intensified to the point of rebellion against 'the system' and placed at the centre of political claims. This seems to transgress a dominant discourse of sexual citizenship and to produce 'unruly' LGBT+ subjects instead of 'loyal sexual citizens'. I will further elaborate my analysis of this transgression in the final part of this chapter.

Meanwhile, it seems particularly interesting how the rhetoric of anger in queer activist statements has been intertwined with claims for difference. The slogan 'Unequal! Different! Angry!' was one of the central placards of QAFB at the 2017 Kyiv Pride (figure 7.7); also, it was shouted out loud by QAFB participants during the Pride rally.

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[94] ACT-UP - The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power

Figure 7.7. 'Unequal! Different! Angry!' Picture by *FRAU* from the series of placards proposed for the Feminist march in March 2017[95] (on the left); materialisation of the same slogan on the 2017 Kyiv Pride rally[96] (on the right).

The slogan produces several interrelated counter-discourses. Firstly, it employs the rhetoric of anger, as discussed above, and contrasts it to the dominant emotional climate of Pride, which presumes expressing gratitude, celebration, pride and anything but anger. Secondly, it directly opposes one of the central slogans of mainstream LGBT+ activism, namely 'All are different, all are equal[97]' (presented in figures 4.1 and 6.1). Being often held in the 'mainstream' part of Pride rally and shouted out loud, the slogan is productive of the discourse of our 'natural' differences that are (have to be) insignificant in the context of human rights-based equality. In other words, stating that equality overcomes differences, the slogan discursively diminishes difference and prioritises sameness within the 'same-versus-different' dilemma. In this context, the QAFB slogan 'Unequal! Different! Angry!' turns upside down the logic of the 'official' slogan of Pride to stress that inequality is not a result of differences but constitutes them. From this perspective, differences are not 'natural' but naturalised; our struggle,

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[95] Reproduced with permission from *FRAU* group.

[96] The picture was taken by me.

[97] Another variant of the same slogan is 'Different but equal'. It signifies not the current state of affairs but a desired future when all who are 'different', including LGBT+ communities, will be 'equal' in terms of rights.

therefore, must be based not on denial but on moving our differences to the centre. The combination of the 'difference' and 'anger' rhetorics in the QAFB slogan produces a call for radical 'politically queer' politics grounded in differences. To some extent, this call can be seen as a contextualised and localised continuation of the radical activist practices of difference that historically appeared inside such social movements as lesbian feminism, womanism, people of colour queer and transgender activism. At the same time, the invocation of the discourse of differences provides an important insight into the process of subjectivation of those unruly subjects who seek not to slip away from the policing gaze of identity politics but to openly stand against homonormativity.

Engagement with the discursive production of 'perversity' helps us to see its subversive potential but also the ambiguities entailed in the inherent paradox of the irony and (ironic) reclaiming act. The first such problem was noted earlier within the discussions on the 'Homonationalism is...' caricatures (figures 6.1 and 7.2 in this and the previous chapter). As analysis of the comments on these pictures has shown, the irony can be easy misunderstood from an 'outsider' perspective, which has become unavoidable in cyber-space. Perhaps, this problem is peculiar to digital activism in cyber-space where 'any posting can be appropriated, misconstrued, or go viral for all the wrong reasons' (Smith-Prei & Stehle, 2017, p. 1118). Correspondingly, Carrie Smith-Prei and Maria Stehle suggest digital (or 'popular', in their words) forms of activism to be inherently 'awkward' because of the unavoidable slippage and co-option in the process of the statements' circulation. At the same time, the concept of 'awkwardness' might be an insightful way to think about queer feminist activism in Ukraine from the perspective of performative citizenship since 'awkwardness moves beyond being a descriptor or attribute of experience, but becomes an action – even work – of craft and creation in imagining alternatives' (Smith-Prei & Stehle, 2017, p. 1119).

The second problem has resulted from the paradoxical structure of the irony itself. There is evidence in the dataset that being publicly asked about the rationale of their 'humorous' strategy, a queer activist has justified it by referring to James Scott's conception of humour as a 'weapon of the weak' (1987). In doing so, they stressed the marginalised position of grassroots queer collectives against the dominant positioning

of professionalised NGO-based LGBT+ activism; this also explains the anonymity of queer groups. This argument, however, remains in contradiction to the disciplinary role of ridicule in social life (Billig, 2005). In this regard, I do not discount the greater vulnerability of queer activists in Ukraine, and the case of the 'scandalous placards' (Chapter Five) is only one of many cases of harsh cyber-bullying and othering. At the same time, the combination of irony and anonymity paradoxically produces queer activists as powerful subjects: all-seeing but invisible themselves, as in the centre of Foucauldian Panopticon. On the one hand, pointing towards the problematic aspects of mainstream LGBT+ politics, queer activists produce counter-discourses that mobilise a part of LGBT+ communities. They also make LGBT+ leaders 'nervous', as one of the Pride organisers confessed. On the other hand, ridiculing LGBT+ leaders through queer satire probably makes LGBT+ communities more sympathetic to the objects/victims of such ridicule. As a result, the hierarchical relations of power inside communities remain intact.

Finally, there is a paradox in reclaiming as a performative act because, as Suzanna Danuta Walters has shown with respect to the example of reclaiming the term 'queer', it needs 'to reckon with the arguments ... against recirculating a language constructed in hate and bigotry' (Walters, 1996, p. 833). In the case of the reclaiming of the 'perversion' rhetoric by queer activists, this paradox might produce a slippage of meanings when the re-signified term merges with its 'original' – the pathologising LGBT-phobic rhetoric – and becomes indistinguishable from it.

This problem of ambiguity, however, has been losing its urgency since the end of 2017 when production of queer critical statements in LGBT+ spaces (both online and offline) significantly dropped. In other words, participation of queer activists in discussions of sexual citizenship in public and semi-public LGBT+ spaces decreased. Simultaneously, practical experimenting with the creation of new concepts is growing in queer activist spaces. In the next section, I analyse these experiments, with a particular focus on the process of subjectivation and its impact on the construction of sexual citizenship.

'Radical differences' revisited

My analysis of how new concepts were invented in Ukrainian LGBT+ communities begins with the case of the *ZBOKU* creative initiative. The name of the initiative plays with the common root of the words *zboku* (aside, next to) and *zbochenstvo* (perversion-ness): '*Zbochensv*o begins next to the norm,' states the project information page. Though initially, the *ZBOKU* creative initiative identified their activism in terms of 'queer art', at a certain point they stopped referring to *kvir* (queer) rhetoric in their self-descriptions and positioning the '*zboku*' concept as a translation of the word 'queer' into the Ukrainian context [98]. On the contrary, the group started presenting the concept of '*zboku*' as an act of resistance to the Anglo-American word 'queer' and the Western power attached to it:

> *zbochenstvo* distorts even 'queer': turns it over and alters the direction of conversation from west to east, from north to south, from top to bottom. because there is wretchedness and anger in '*zbochenstvo*'… (*ZBOKU* website).

This is an excerpt from a very poetic manifesto (in Ukrainian) that plays with meanings and sounds and does not use capital letters. The statement points towards the main axes of power in the contemporary world ('west', 'north', 'top') and calls for turning them 'over'. A similar positionality that is critical of Western power can be seen in another case of the invention and conceptualisation of new terms. The concept of *'heteroobrechonnost'* (in Russian) or *'heteropryrechenist'* (in Ukrainian) started proliferating in queer activist communities after its appearance in a form of graffiti near the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy (figure 7.8).

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[98] I am grateful to Syaivo, a member of the ZBOKU creative initiative, for discussing this topic with me.

Figure 7.8. *'Heteroobrechyonnost'*: graffiti in front of the main building of the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, September 2017[99].

This neologism can be approximately translated as 'heterofatality' or 'heterodoom'. Semantically it is close to the term 'heteronormativity' (Warner, 1991) but constitutes a more affectionally coloured concept. It signifies not just a social regime that is grasped analytically but the state of mind that determines people's lives painfully and hopelessly. The concept has been coined by an anonymous activist collective. Whilst the concept of *'heteroobrechonnost'* circulates in activist communities in both its Russian and Ukrainian variants (see Agamian, 2018 for the latter), some queer activists prefer to transliterate, not translate, it for the English-speaking audience (Yarmanova, 2018b) in order to de-centre Western hegemony in queer knowledge production. I also hope to see the new concept recognised in the transnational academic discourse and cited according to the context of its appearance, namely: *'heteroobrechonnost'* (Anonymous activist collective from Ukraine, 2017). At the same time, this concept, as well as other experiments with reclaiming old concepts and inventing new ones, are indicative of one more axis in the process of queer activists' subjectivation: the dominant position and epistemic authority of Western knowledge have also become contested. In addition to the already examined opposition to 'normalcy' in both

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[99] Reproduced with permission from Galka Yarmanova.

214

regimes of heteronormativity and homonormativity, queer activists challenge 'Western-normativity'.

In addition to the different practices that oppose 'Western-normativity', there is evidence of a queer activist critique of mainstream LGBT+ activism for mimicking Western models of sexual citizenship:

> In my view, mainstream LGBT activism in Ukraine – I mean the more visible and rich organisations, including Kyiv Pride – uses models borrowed from Western mainstream LGBT activism, namely from the EU and, most of all, the US. These are politics linked to visibility […]. Also, they aim at [inclusion to] the institute of marriage and [achieving] marriage equality, i.e. civil partnership or same-sex marriage. The third component of the agenda is focused on hate crimes and, sometimes, hate speech criminalisation. All this is exactly what Western mainstream LGBT activism has been doing over the last 15-20 years. They, indeed, have achieved significant legislative change in this regard. This agenda is perceived in Ukraine non-problematically, as a successful model, as a strategy that works. And here, in my opinion, it is important to ask: for whom does it work? Because for many it does not. [...]Why, then, don't we sit and think about how to use our resources for other goals, work on other social transformations? In my opinion, the answer 'it works there, therefore, it will work here' isn't so obvious, no! We should not use only these models, we don't have to! There are *other ways*... (*Galka Yarmanova*, queer feminist activist, discussion on UkrLife TV; italics mine)

This activist's opinion was voiced during a TV-discussion between Pride organisers and queer activists a couple of days before the 2017 Kyiv Pride march. Notably, this was a rare case where the issues of sexual citizenship were discussed from different positions within LGBT+ communities both publicly and face-to-face. A quoted queer activist's call for critical reflection upon the 'successful' Western models of LGBT+ politics is particularly important against the backdrop of the dominant Western-centred discourse of sexual citizenship. The final statement that 'there are other ways' summarises the main point of the queer activist critique and alternative practices: namely, focusing on the 'anticipatory-utopian' envisioning of alternative imaginaries, politics and collectivities.

Thus, my analysis of how queer activists are being subjectivated within LGBT+ communities can be summarised as a series of paradoxes. Firstly, developing counter-discourses that oppose both Ukrainian nationalism and Western-centred hegemony, queer activists in Ukraine navigate their position at the intersection of global and local

regimes and discourses. In this regard, queer activists are both a new and not new type of LGBT+ subjects, simultaneously. The genealogy of 'queer subjects' can be traced through various forms of anarchist, feminist and leftist activisms that existed before the Euromaidan and tend to be erased in post-Maidan imaginaries; through different and contingent knowledges that are both adopted and contested. This complexity has been addressed within the *ZBOKU* manifesto as follows:

> … *zbochenstvo* begins somewhere outside of the norm. It grows from inside, and from outside, and from all the sides, it melts you and me into something else, something new that always was for a while forgotten old, or just forgotten? (*ZBOKU* website)

Another paradox of subjectivation can be traced through the employment of the pejorative and obscene lexicon, including mobilisation of the 'perversion' rhetoric, in queer activist communities. This creates a counter-discourse that transgresses the dominant script of mainstream LGBT+ activism as a path of 'progress' from marginalisation to normalisation. Simultaneously, it refers to the story of how the word 'queer' has been reclaimed in English-speaking societies by means of radical ACT-UP and Queer Nation activism (Walters, 1996). In this context, referring not to normative 'LGBT+ history' but rather to marginalised 'queer stories', the activists' experiments seek to inscribe the local 'story' onto the global context whilst simultaneously keeping a critical distance from Western meta-narratives.

Finally, the analysis of the queer activist position regarding sexual citizenship can also reveal a certain paradox. On the one hand, as long as queer activists participate in discussions of sexual citizenship online or offline, they are legitimate and very important actors with respect to sexual citizenship. On the other hand, articulating the complex critique of the state and its institution, as well as of the mainstream LGBT+ agenda, queer activists deny their desire for belonging to the nation-state and becoming 'normal' sexual citizens. Furthermore, being significantly marginalised with respect to mainstream LGBT+ discourse, queer activists deliberately re-appropriate and reinforce this marginalisation through reclaiming the term 'perverts' in self-naming. In so doing, they transgress the 'active citizenship' model that presumes 'enactment of a citizenship regime with the view of its expansion and inclusiveness' (Zaharijević, 2015, p.94). On the contrary, and in line with a conceptualisation of queerness as 'failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming' (Halberstam,

2011, p. 2), this positionality can be interpreted as *undoing* sexual citizenship and *unbecoming* sexual citizens. From this perspective, the growing practices of inventing new concepts signal the emergence of alternative counter-public spaces that are being built *beyond* sexual citizenship.

Chapter summary

This chapter further elaborated the discursive investigation of sexual citizenship in Ukraine. Though the constitutive role of the discourse of human rights in the production of homopatriotic sexual citizenship was partially examined in Chapter Four, in the first section of the current chapter, I continued this analysis with a particular focus on the paradoxes of the human rights discourse. The data allowed for capturing the centrality of the human rights formulations in the argumentative strategies that inform claims for sexual citizenship. A famous 'LGBT rights are human rights' formula has been extensively employed in LGBT+ claims, producing sexual citizens as 'gay rights holders' in Cynthia Weber's words (Weber, 2016). Though Weber's analysis is concerned with the arena of international relations, the data of my study provide enough evidence of the constitutive role of the human rights discourse (and its juridico-political interpretation, in particular) in the subjectivation of the sexual citizen-subjects. Whilst the highly symbolic role of the legal recognition of LGBT+ subjects by means of SOGI-based legislation has a significant impact on the attenuation of homophobia and transphobia in public discourse, there is a paradox between the broad imaginary of human rights as a model of life and the inevitable limitations of legal categories. Thus, being focused on lobbying for SOGI-based legislation with respect to LGBT+ rights, mainstream LGBT+ activism reinvigorates the pitfalls of identity politics and reinstates the problematic bio-determinist and essentialist assumptions behind the SOGI-based discourse of identity.

Another indicated paradox of the human rights discourse is the domination of civil rights at the price of socio-economic rights. Mainstream LGBT+ discourse in Ukraine aligns with a tendency once noticed by Fatima El-Tayeb as follows: 'current [Western European] LGBT+ activism has a lot to say about "marriage as a human right," but virtually nothing about human rights such as the right to food, work, and a living wage

or to be protected from arbitrary detention' (El-Tayeb, 2016, p.154). Correspondingly, in a dominant model of the civil rights discourse, sexual citizens have been formed, in Cynthia Weber's words, as:

> a variation of the entrepreneurial neoliberal subject who is (re)productive in/for capitalism [...]. This situates this particular 'gay rights holder' firmly within neoliberal economics and within neoliberal cultures of tolerance and diversity (Weber, 2016, p.105).

The discourse of visibility appeared to be closely intertwined with the politics of recognition and the anti-discriminatory framework of human rights discourse. Celebrated in mainstream LGBT+ discourse as a tool for recognition, and therefore integration into society, the idea of visibility produces contradictory outcomes in LGBT+ communities. As Catherine Baker argued, whilst Pride's symbolic goal of visibility is 'tactically significant for activists', it is 'not necessarily desired by all LGBT people at all times, nor did it automatically have emancipatory potential' (Baker, 2017, p.235). Furthermore, often being transformed into a call for individual disclosure (coming out), the imperative of visibility reinforces the vulnerability of some LGBT+ individuals and deepens the gap between the more privileged and marginalised parts of LGBT+ communities. In the context of anti-discriminative legislation, the legal implications of visibility constitute a paradoxical situation: namely, to be recognised as 'legal subjects', LGBT+ individuals have to continue to be subjected to LGBT-phobic violence. Finally, feminist and transgender perspective revealed how the discourse of visibility privileges cis-gendered men and, in so doing, reinvigorates the classic 'men in public space' model (Pateman, 1988) of sexual citizenship.

Analysis of the diversity rhetoric showed its rather ambiguous place in LGBT+ discourse inasmuch as diversity presumes a focus on difference. On the contrary, claims for sexual citizenship are grounded in an assumption of the sameness of LGBT+ people with the non-LGBT part of society whilst the rhetoric of differences approaches the limits of 'speakability' within LGBT+ communities. This 'sameness vs. differences' dilemma has become particularly salient in the discussions of the Drag Queen Show that participated in the 2017 Kyiv Pride for the first time. A close reading of these discussions has shown how the public image of the diverse 'LGBT+ community' has been productive of the complex interplay of inclusion and exclusion. The inclusion of the Drag Queen Show in Pride, intended to demonstrate the 'diversity' and

'progressiveness' of LGBT+ communities, produced contradictory outcomes. Whilst some communities celebrated this inclusion, the hatred and othering of the Drag Queen Show recuperated the domination of homonormativity and transnormativity in LGBT+ discourse. Finally, through the argumentative strategies of the Kyiv Pride organisers, the Drag Queen Show was instrumentalised to demonstrate a radical protest whilst queer activist intervention in Pride (QAFB) has been silenced and neglected.

In the final section, I investigated the paradoxes of subjectivation using the case of the queer activist position, occupying the margins of LGBT+ communities. One such paradox appeared in the queer activist positioning regarding LGBT+ communities and broader society, expressed through both denial of belonging and longing for it. Another paradox was identified in the queer activist tactic of using harsh satire with respect to mainstream LGBT+ politics whilst being anonymous in public and semi-public LGBT+ spaces. In addition to the usage of pejorative words and brutal images, the satirical statements of queer activists recuperated the discourse of anger as political emotion and the discourse of radical differences as a tool of political protest. The reconstruction of this satire made visible counter-discourses that celebrate cross-sectional solidarities, an anti-capitalist and anti-racist agenda, transgression of identity-based politics, and de-essentialisation and re-erotisation of LGBT+ discourse. At the same time, the disciplinary effect of ridicule as such (Billig, 2005) facilitated the ambiguous reception of queer activist critique within LGBT+ communities.

Finally, experimenting with the translation and further modification of 'queer' terminology and inventing new concepts, queer activists have activated a new de-centring discourse that is critical towards Western hegemony in relation to knowledge production and LGBT+ politics. This further complicates the queer activist positionality as those who oppose both Ukrainian nationalism and Western-centred hegemony in LGBT+ discourse. This is indicative of one more paradox: the positioning of queer activism in relation to the construction of sexual citizenship. I have shown that, as long as queer activists participate in discussions on sexual citizenship online or offline, they are legitimate and important actors with respect to sexual citizenship. At the same time, articulating a complex critique of the state and its institution, as well as of homonormative LGBT+ politics, they contest the idea of belonging to the nation-state.

In so doing, I argue, they *undo* sexual citizenship and *unbecome* sexual citizens. From this perspective, the queer activists seem to recalibrate their focus from participation in sexual citizenship to building alternative counter-public spaces *beyond* sexual citizenship.

8. Conclusion

This chapter summarises the main arguments of my study, the findings of my empirically-based analysis and how these advance theoretical knowledge. Discussing the main challenges that occurred in the course of my project's progression, I propose a more polemical view on the epistemological premises and methodological approaches of studying sexual citizenship in post-Soviet regions of Eastern Europe.

Sexual citizens and 'others'

In this thesis I have investigated the contours and discursive structure of sexual citizenship in contemporary Ukraine. The guiding research question of my study was: how has sexual citizenship been understood, imagined and produced by LGBT+ communities in post-Maidan Ukraine (2014-2018)? My supplementary questions were: How do Ukrainian LGBT+ communities seek to position themselves in relation to broader hegemonic discourses of state and nationhood? How are imaginaries of patriotism and active citizenship, sameness and differences, normalcy and aberration, public and private, contested and negotiated in LGBT+ communities? To what extent are counter-discourses performed in LGBT+ spaces and how do they challenge the predominant construction of sexual citizenship? Situating my study at the intersection of the queer feminist epistemological framework and a de-centring perspective that is critical to Western epistemic hegemony, I sought to produce a 'situated knowledge' about imaginaries of sexual citizenship in Ukraine and their political implications.

I have identified the Euromaidan events and the war in the eastern part of Ukraine as a crucial moment that enabled sexual citizenship as a form of active political negotiation of our, LGBT+ communities, demands and claims with the state. The dominant discourse of sexual citizenship has emerged as an entanglement of the global/universal discourse of human rights and the local/particular discourse of post-Maidan 'civic nationalism' in Ukraine. I have adopted *homopatriotism* as a working term to designate this conformation.

Accounting for the local specificity of LGBT+ activism in Ukraine helped me to envisage the structural mechanisms through which homopatriotism has been produced and

sustained in LGBT+ communities. In the context of the growing NGO-isation and professionalisation of LGBT+ activism, the voices of NGOs are significantly foregrounded in discussions of sexual citizenship. In the performative process of sexual citizenship, LGBT+ NGOs are the most visible actors who speak on behalf of communities and produce the 'authorised language'. As a result, the imaginary of sexual citizenship appears to be intertwined with an idea of active citizenship that is discursively centred around institutionalised LGBT+ activism. The 'constitutive others' of sexual citizenship, correspondingly, are those LGBT+ subjects who are involved in public discussions on sexual citizenship beyond (and, often, against) NGOs. In my study, these are grassroots queer activist collectives. Accountability of the power relations between institutionalised activism and the grassroots helped me to see the structural mechanisms of discursive domination and discourses at work. On a theoretical level, the combination of a performative framework and a queer feminist perspective, elaborated in my study, further advanced both approaches to theorising citizenship, agency and power.

The discursive structure of homopatriotism, analysed in Chapter Four, is composed of several interrelated components, including the active engagement of LGBT+ communities in the Euromaidan protests and the armed fight for Ukraine in the war zone. Altogether, they are productive of a strong discourse of longing for national belonging and 'deserving' fully-fledged citizenship through 'shedding blood' for Ukraine. At the same time, the emergence of sexual citizenship concurrently with the right-wing turn of the Euromaidan has recalibrated the LGBT+ imaginary of national belonging in line with right-wing discourse. The annexation of Crimea by Russia and the war gave an additional impulse to homopatriotism through the discursive polarisation between the imaginary of Europe (as a paragon of sexual citizenship) and the contrasting image of Russia (as an incarnation of the LGBT+ hostility rooted in the Soviet regimes of sexuality). This appeared to be a powerful driving force for sexual citizenship in Ukraine; yet again, its alignment with state politics, and in particular the politic of 'decommunisation', shaped the discourse of sexual citizenship according to right-wing ideologies and closed up possibilities of thinking differently about our 'geotemporal' positioning. In the context of the discursive enmeshment of the 'Russian present' and the 'Soviet past' in the composition of sexual citizenship, it seems we are

now at war with both. Being imagined as a liberating Western model against a backdrop of the totalitarian 'Soviet past', the neoliberal premise of sexual citizenship in Ukraine makes almost incomprehensible the potential critique of capitalism and Western coloniality. Erasing socialist imaginaries from the genealogy of our communities, the discourse of sexual citizenship makes our dependence from the neoliberal nation-state total and nonalternative.

The imaginary of the ongoing and inevitable 'LGBT+ progress' in post-Maidan Ukraine, analysed in Chapter Five, appeared to be one more constitutive discourse of homopatriotic sexual citizenship. Within mainstream LGBT+ discourse, the imaginary of 'LGBT+ progress' has been produced as a specific 'regime of truth' that links the Euromaidan (as a pivotal moment-event of sexual citizenship) and the process of Westernisation ('Europeanisation') into a coherent narrative. The 'successful' Kyiv Pride marches (2016-2018) serve as central proof of 'LGBT+ progress' to both national and international audiences, as well as to LGBT+ communities in Ukraine. Whilst recognising the symbolic significance of Pride for changing public discourse, I have discussed how Kyiv Pride has been instrumentalised by the state to demonstrate its progressiveness and 'Europeanness'. Facilitating the image of the supportive state and the trustful police, allegedly the main LGBT+ protectors, Kyiv Pride produces a specific discourse of sexual citizenship that does not leave room for a critical view of militarisation and securitisation, or the patriarchal and patronising state politics. Pride participants (and LGBT+ communities in general) have been discursively positioned as 'good sexual citizens': patriotic, vigilant and loyal to the state. In addition, the meaning of patriotism in LGBT+ communities has been extended to such components of neoliberal sexual citizenship as staying in Ukraine in spite of all hardships, working, taxpaying and consumption.

Investigation of counter-discourses to the dominant imaginary of sexual citizenship (Chapter Six) identified two domains of their occurrence in LGBT+ spaces. These are the 'collective voices' of grassroots queer activism and individual 'personal opinions' scattered across the data. The analysis of how 'alternatives' are voiced and heard gives an insight into how feminist rethinking of citizenship (Lister, 2003) can be theoretically advanced by means of further reconceptualisation of the public/private divide. More specifically, when sexual citizenship is becoming a part of political life (as is happening

in Ukraine), the dividing line between 'public' and 'private' is shifting towards the pole of normative views: only they are allowed to represent LGBT+ communities as newly emerging political subjects in public space.

The domination of homopatriotism has been challenged in various ways, including queer activist critiques of 'homonationalism'. In the activist interpretation, 'homonationalism' stands for the assimilationist right-wing politics performed by mainstream LGBT+ organisations, including Kyiv Pride. Situating 'homonationalism' in Ukraine at the intersection of such discourses as hegemonic masculinity (grounded in patriarchal misogyny) and militarised nationalism, queer activists localised the terms and used this as a tool for critique. Whilst this adoption opened up the possibility for counter-discourses to emerge, thinking on what possibilities have been foreclosed is also important. I started this discussion within debates on the '(inter)cultural translation' of concepts across contexts (Chapter Two) and elaborated it through analysis of my data in Chapters Six and Seven.

The counter-discourse which opposes nationalism and militarism proposes an alternative way of thinking about sexual citizenship. More specifically, stressing the systemic violence of the 'police state' and its institutions, it questioned a core assumption of sexual citizenship, that is, the desire of LGBT+ communities to belong to the nation-state. In the most exaggerated terms, what does this belonging mean if the state is a focal point of power and violence? The anti-capitalist counter-discourses further challenged sexual citizenship construction pointing to how the increasing process of NGO-isation of LGBT+ activism facilitates the domination of capitalist ideology and its relatively non-problematic compliance with a right-wing political position. As a matter of anti-capitalist resistance, a call for solidarity with the most vulnerable segments of the population, performed by some grassroots queer activist groups, has interrupted the dominant discourse of the identity-based 'LGBT+ community' and revealed how 'sexual citizens' appear to be mainly white middle-class 'employed taxpayers'. Hence, the anti-capitalist counter-discourse has been generated through an alternative imaginary of belonging that is based on collective actions relating to affinity rather than to sexual and gender identity.

A more nuanced analysis of the internal paradoxes of constitutive discourses in Chapter Seven helped me to understand how seemingly contradictory ideologies appear to be compatible in the dominant discourse of sexual citizenship in Ukraine. Investigation of the human rights discourse has shown how its rootedness in the 'sexual orientation and gender identity' (SOGI) categories and domination of civil rights at the price of socio-economic rights facilitate a compliance of the human rights formulations with the homopatriotic standpoint. In such a neoliberal framework of the human rights discourse, who has a chance of becoming sexual citizens (or 'human rights' holders' [Weber, 2016]) and who does not? How are these potential non-citizens gendered, raced, classed and situated in many other ways at the intersection of power relations in a capitalist society? Similarly ambiguous outcomes in LGBT+ communities are determined by the paradoxical structure of the discourse of visibility that substantiates such premise of sexual citizenship as public recognition. Furthermore, the legal implications of visibility constitute a paradoxical situation where, in order to be recognised as 'legal subjects', LGBT+ communities have to remain subjected to LGBT-phobic violence. Finally, investigation of the discourses of diversity and inclusion has shown how their rootedness in the 'sameness vs. differences' dilemma (Weber, 2016) has been resolved in favour of the 'sameness' between 'LGBT+ community' and the non-LGBT part of society. Even when the discourse of differences has been instrumentalised in the case of the Drag Queen Show to demonstrate the (West-oriented) 'progressiveness' of Kyiv Pride, it paradoxically reproduced its opposition: the domination of 'sameness' in a form of homonormativity and transnormativity in LGBT+ communities.

Analysis of how the discourse of 'radical differences' has been developed in queer activist communities (Chapter Seven) shed a light onto a process of subjectivation that alters the discourse of sexual citizenship and the production of 'good sexual citizens'. The queer activist positionality in relation to mainstream LGBT+ activism and homonormativity appeared to contain an internal paradox where refusal to belong and longing for belonging coincide in the discourse. This paradox has the potential to be resolved within queer activist experimenting with the translation and invention of political terminology. This activity can be seen as a process of developing our 'own' language that enables 'politically queer' resistance towards not only

heteronormativity, homonormativity and nationalism, but also the 'Western-normativity' of sexual citizenship. Through the performative effects of this language and by switching the focus in the discussions on belonging, new counter-spaces are being created. Thus, questioning and subverting 'the rules of enactment of a certain citizenship regime' (Zaharijević, 2015, p.94), queer activists, I argue, are moving from participation in the discussions on sexual citizenship (so, 'doing' sexual citizenship in a specific way) to another discursive register: 'undoing' sexual citizenship and 'unbecoming' sexual citizens.

The political positionality and acting strategies of queer activist groups have an important impact far beyond conventionally understood 'activism'. In the context of almost absent academic discussions in Ukraine on the matter of queer–theoretical terminology, activist experiments with the interpretation, re-appropriation and creation of concepts can be seen as fully legitimate knowledge production. It is indicative of the specific status of queer theorising as 'low theory' (as Halberstam argued [2011] using the term coined by Stuart Hall) that emerges beyond, and often against, academic institutions. This is the case in contemporary Ukraine where the most seminal critical knowledge, including on the issue of sexual citizenship, emerges in the liminal spaces between academia and activism, artistic and activist endeavours. In this regard, I would like to develop further what has been called an 'activist turn' in translation studies (Wolf, 2013) and to speak about the 'activist turn' in critical knowledge production more broadly as a 'theorization of alternatives within an undisciplined zone of knowledge production' (Halberstam, 2011, p.18).

Hence, the main argument of my thesis can be summarised as follows: the dominant discourse of sexual citizenship in Ukraine enacts (and has been enacted by) homopatriotism as a patriotic and neoliberal configuration of homonormativity. This discursive realm produces material-symbolic outcomes in LGBT+ communities in Ukraine: it privileges the already privileged and further marginalises the most precarious groups and people. In other words, the dominant discourse of sexual citizenship does not challenge the system of oppression but sees LGBT+ liberation as climbing up the existing ladder of power. At the same time, counter-discourses that are critical of power and domination constitute alternative counter-public spaces where different imaginaries and futurities are possible *beyond* sexual citizenship.

226

Challenges and discussions

Although I have elaborated answers to the research questions of my study, new important questions have occurred in the process of investigation, as often happens. One of the most significant challenges has been posed by the issue of coloniality. My adherence to a de-centring approach required ceaseless self-reflection with respect to 'geotemporality' and coloniality at every step and stage of the research process. Being critical towards Western epistemic hegemony but having no other scholarly language, I had to contest each and every concept in my study, from 'sexual citizenship' to basic terms such as 'research'. As Linda Tuhwai Smith has argued, 'Research is one of the ways in which the underlying code of imperialism and colonialism is both regulated and realized' (Smith, 1999, p.8). In this regard, drawing on particularly selected ideas, scholarship and literature within my thesis, I sought to be accountable of global epistemic structures, thus paying particular attention to various forms of knowledge from within my 'field'. I learned from postcolonial and decolonial critique, did the work of 'de-centring' and '(inter)cultural translation', and yet the theoretical project of re-thinking citizenship in the Ukrainian context (that is both Eastern European and post-Soviet) has to be far further advanced. This urgency is particularly salient within the specific meanings of nation, nationalism(s) and the nation-state formation in contemporary Ukraine, as examined in Chapter Two, as these peculiarities largely determine the meanings of sexual citizenship in Ukraine.

Another facet of coloniality was evoked by my affiliation with a British university that has inevitably affected my communication with study participants and the data collected. Writing this thesis in a thought dialogue with both LGBT+ communities in Ukraine and British academics, I was eager to contest the hegemony of the Western view but was always concerned not to produce yet more evidence of the 'backwardness' of Ukrainian LGBT+ communities for British readers. Thinking about my Ukrainian interlocutors, I had to navigate between my critique of the regimes of discursive power that shape LGBT+ politics and communities, and my appreciation of the agency and dedication of Ukrainian LGBT+ activists in a difficult time of crisis and war.

Finally, my reflections on coloniality and 'geotemporality' have noticed but did not elaborate profoundly the axis of colonial power that is informed by relationships between Ukraine and Russia. Accountability of this axis posed theoretical questions, namely to what extent and how should I draw on the relatively rich scholarship on sexualities and citizenship in Russia? Though I partly discussed this issue in Chapter Two, this was with rather a 'light touch' that I would like to elaborate in depth in future projects. Such a prospective study must account for discourses of language in post-Maidan Ukraine where the bi-lingual population navigates between Ukrainian and Russian in the dynamically changing political context. A practical implication of this problem occurred in the process of my fieldwork when I had to decide what language, Ukrainian or Russian, to use for communication with study participants in different regions of Ukraine. Whilst I deliberately excluded a 'language question' from the discussion on nationalism in Chapter Two and sought to be flexible on a practical level (i.e. to use both languages contextually), I continue to reflect upon how my choices of language shaped my positionality and affected the collected data.

Another set of questions arose from the epistemological framework of my study – the queer feminist perspective – regarding the basic assumptions of my project as follows. Who owns this research? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Whilst I have elaborated my view on these issues in Chapter Three, a discrepancy might occur between the conclusions of my study and the expectations of some research participants. For instance, my work does not comply with the popular assumption that internal discussions inside LGBT+ communities should not be publicised to broader society because it may harm the LGBT+ reputation in our struggle for sexual citizenship. This made me think carefully about the strategies and tactics of reporting my research back to LGBT+ communities in Ukraine. Another challenge is informed by my commitment to make my study visible in the Ukrainian academy. How can I introduce the concept of 'sexual citizenship' which does not exist in Ukrainian academic discourse without reinforcing Western epistemic hegemony? How can I avoid a conundrum that is composed by Western-centric universalism and, simultaneously, challenge the opposite claim of incommensurability between cultures (Santos, 2014)? Finally, how to present a queer feminist critical study of LGBT+

communities to a Ukrainian academic audience that is typically not free from LGBT-phobia or 'benevolent heterosexism' (Langdridge, 2018; S.G.Massey, 2009)?

In the process of my research project's development and progression, a set of related topics and issues occurred that were not addressed in the final version of the thesis. One such topic is the claim for marriage equality which is a constitutive part of the sexual citizenship agenda in Ukraine. As mentioned in the Introduction, the draft of 'civil partnership' law that would enable civil partnership for same-sex couples has been lobbied by LGBT+ NGOs since 2016. The draft was being actively debated in LGBT+ communities at the time of my fieldwork. Having collected rich material on this topic, I decided not to include it to the thesis in order to focus on the main thrust of my study. However, I plan to complete my study of how the discourse of marriage equality has been produced within the sexual citizenship agenda and publish it as a separate paper or chapter.

Though paying ceaseless attention to the impact of sexual citizenship on transgender communities was among my commitments, the topic of transgender citizenship as such is not addressed in my study. Needless to say, the relevance and impact of sexual citizenship to transgender communities is complex and ambiguous. Whilst the centrality of 'sexual orientation' in the agenda of sexual citizenship produces multiple exclusions of transgender and intersex experiences, there are overlaps too. The latter includes, for example, the right to be protected from discrimination and hate crimes and the right to assemble in public space. Marriage equality is also of relevance to transgender people inasmuch as the requirement not to be married remains a strict condition for legal gender recognition in Ukraine, as well as in many countries of the EU: this forces married transgender people to choose between legal recognition of their gender identity and their marriage (Open Society Foundations, 2015). Having collected materials from the T*rans-Archive in Kyiv, I eventually decided to conduct a separate study that is entirely focused on transgender citizenship in Ukraine.

Some topics could not be fully addressed in my thesis because they transgressed the limit of 'speakability' in those LGBT+ communities to which I had access. My focus and method did not allow for collecting complex data on the issues that otherwise remain of significant interest to me: race/racism and religion in LGBT+ discourse. Being

situated differently in the structure of sexual citizenship, both topics appeared to be almost undebatable not as a result of censorship. As shown in Chapter Five, censorship does not restrain but activates discussions, and so facilitates proliferation of the discourse (Butler, 1997). On the contrary, 'unspeakable' topics in my study are produced through and productive of incomprehensibility ('what are you people talking about?') when discussion cannot continue. From this perspective, a different methodology and specifically designed methods are needed for exploring the undebatable topics; this will inform one of my future projects.

Another predicament of the study was informed by biases in my positionality. Working on this research, I have learnt a lot but also constantly had to unlearn (Rancière, 2010) a lot: for example, the deeply internalised habits of thinking through binaries, establishing taxonomies and creating cause-and-effect explanatory schemes. I had to master and, simultaneously, contest Western-centred epistemic frames. Yet, my white and cis-gender privileges remain unshakable (though painstakingly reflected upon) and determine what I can't see. In this regard, the topics of transgender citizenship and race/racism, mentioned earlier, involve an additional level of difficulty for me because of my more privileged position. At the same time, seeking to de-essentialise the concepts and develop further my queer feminist analysis, I plan to continue an investigation of how race and transgender identity are constituted by and constitutive of the specific 'geotemporality' of post-socialist Eastern Europe.

With regard to transnational citizenship studies, my project has a great deal of novelty. Being focused on an understudied region, applying innovative methodology, developing the original method and collecting unique data, my thesis contributes to the discussed areas of studies and 'includes' the post-socialist Eastern European experience within this intersection/dialogue. Furthermore, considering contemporary Ukraine as a case of the emerging nation-state (as I argued in Chapter Two) seems to be an extremely important point for rethinking citizenship. This perspective recalls the question once asked by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Judith Butler: when previously dissociated 'nation' and 'state' terms started being 'cobbled together through a hyphen, what work does the hyphen do?' (Spivak & Butler, 2007, p. 2). Does the hyphen that signals the emergence of the Ukrainian 'nation-state' also facilitate the discursive slippage of the nation (our country) and the state (government)? If we,

LGBT+ communities, see the Ukrainian 'nation' as a 'victim' of Russian military aggression, could potential critical views on the state be prevented by this slippage? Is this why alignments with the 'nation-state' seem to be a non-alternative political position in mainstream LGBT+ discourse? And if the answer is 'yes', what possibilities could be opened (and what foreclosed) through the opposite move, namely disentanglement of the 'nation' from the 'state' whilst keeping both in the focus of (queer feminist) critique?

A new fertile ground for rethinking citizenship can be found in the past socialist experiences of Ukraine and other former socialist states. Considering the relations of people with the state beyond an oversimplifying 'assimilation vs. resistance' binary (Yurchak, 2005) might shed light on how specific forms of doing socialist citizenship engender contemporary political practices and subjectivities. This can provide new insights into understanding why the dominant discourse of sexual citizenship in Ukraine (as well as counter-discourses) have been shaped in this way and not another. Why does the 'object' of my investigation in this thesis fit neither the familiar model of Anglo-American sexual citizenship nor the Western model of queer resistance? If it were not (or despite being) demonised and erased from the collective imaginaries of LGBT+ communities, what new potentialities could socialist citizenship open up today?

Though I do not see my study as policy-oriented, it has a potentiality for political implications. For example, it might stimulate various LGBT+ activisms towards more reflective politics and a more accountable positionality. More specifically, this project can support grassroots LGBT+ activism and further facilitate the queer politics of cross-sectional solidarity between disadvantaged and vulnerable social groups. Also, I see my study as a contribution to the development of anti-nationalist and anti-militarist thinking and acting in LGBT+ communities and beyond. Finally, this study advocates and promotes 'queer knowledge' that has been formed in Ukraine as a 'low theory' and activist praxis rather than an academic field. At the same time, this is only the beginning of the difficult but urgently needed conversation about how we, LGBT+ people from a specific place and time, can imagine our belongings, affinities and collectivities in 'other ways'.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Information sheet for participants

Olga Plakhotnik
olga.plakhotnik@open.ac.uk
mob. in Ukraine: XXX XX XX

Further information (Q&A) about the research project:

Queer(y)ing Citizenship, Queer(y)ing Nationhood: A Critical Discourse Analysis of LGBT+ Narratives of Belonging in Contemporary Ukraine[100]

What is the aim of this research?
The purpose of this study is to investigate how members of LGBT+ communities in Ukraine understand their identities and belonging to the nation, their relationship with the state and civil society.

Who is conducting the research?
I, Olga Plakhotnik, a Ukrainian citizen and PhD Candidate, am carrying out this research on behalf of the Open University (United Kingdom). I have received training in carrying out focus group discussions and analyse them using feminist critical discourse analysis method. I design and carry out this research in the fields of sociology in order to complete and defend my PhD thesis. Further information about the Open University and my project can be found on the website:
http://www.open.ac.uk/research/main/people/op898

Why am I being invited to participate in this research?
The part of my study is focused on the Queer Homes activity. You are invited to participate in the focus group discussion as a member of the local Queer Home's community. Your participation is completely voluntary and based on informed consent. You may withdraw your consent to participate at any time during the focus group discussion and after it. If you choose to do so, any information derived from your participation will be deleted from the focus group transcript.

If I take part in this research, what will be involved?
We will be conducting one focus group meeting during _____ 2017. The focus group discussion will take approximately 1.5 hours and will be conducted at your Queer Home, at a date and time that is convenient to the Queer Home's community members. Refreshments and snacks will be provided.

What will the focus group discussion be like?

---

[100] This was a tentative title of my study at the time of fieldwork (spring – autumn 2017)

The focus group is very similar to a group discussion. The Queer Home's community members will discuss the issues that relate to your usual activities, possibly supplemented by a few questions from my side. The sessions will be audio-recorded and the records will be transcribed, to ensure accurate reporting of the information that you provide.

What will we be talking about?

My questions to the Queer Home team might be focused on the routine activities, the description of the local LGBT+ communities. We will also discuss the main challenges and problems that the LGBT+ communities in Ukraine face recently.

Is it confidential?

Your participation will be treated in **strict confidence** in accordance with the Data Protection Act. No personal information will be passed to anyone outside except me. No one's name will be asked or revealed during the focus groups. However, should another participant call you by name, I will remove all names from the transcription. I will write a report of the findings from this study, but no individual will be identifiable in the published results of the research. The tapes will be stored in locked files before and after being transcribed. Tapes will be destroyed within 2 weeks of completing the transcriptions and the transcriptions will be destroyed 3 years after the completion of this evaluation.

What are the potential risks and inconveniences?

There are no anticipated physical risks to participants. Focus group discussion participants will be asked to keep the information provided in the group confidential; however, a potential risk that might exist for some would be that your personal experience might be discussed outside the group by other participants and be traced back to you. If this is a potential issue for you, and you would like to participate in the research in another way, please contact me via phone or e-mail and we will discuss possible solutions for ensuring the confidentiality.

What are the benefits?

A potential benefit of participating in the focus group discussion for you could be having an opportunity to describe your opinion and share it with other community members. The benefits to Ukrainian LGBT+ communities and society would be based on establishing a clearer understanding of the expectations and experiences of LGBT+ communities.

What if I have other questions?

If you have any other questions about the study, we would be very happy to answer them. Please contact Olga Plakhotnik XXX XX XX or by email to olga.plakhotnik@open.ac.uk

	Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
The Open University	

Consent form for persons participating in a research project

Queer(y)ing Citizenship, Queer(y)ing Nationhood: A Critical Discourse Analysis of LGBT+ Narratives of Belonging in Contemporary Ukraine

Name of participant:

Name of the principal investigator(s): Olga Plakhotnik

1.   I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written statement in plain language to keep.

2.   I understand that my participation will involve focus group method and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the plain language statement.

3.   I acknowledge that:
   - I have read the information sheet related to the 'Queer(y)ing Citizenship, Queer(y)ing Nationhood: A Critical Discourse Analysis of LGBT+ Narratives of Belonging in Contemporary Ukraine' and understand the aims of the project.
   - I am aware of the topics to be discussed in the focus group discussion.
   - I am fully aware that I will remain anonymous throughout data reported and that I have the right to leave the focus group meeting at any point.
   - I am fully aware that data collected will be stored securely and safely in the researcher's password protected computer with backups on hard drive disk and Clouds. Data will be available to the researcher only.
   - I am fully aware that I am not obliged to answer any question, but that I do so at my own free will.
   - I agree to have the focus group discussion audio-recorded, so it can be transcribed after the focus group meeting is held. I am aware that I have the right to edit the transcript of the focus group discussion once it has been completed.
   - I am aware that I can make any reasonable changes to this consent form.
   - I have been informed that a summary copy of the research findings will be forwarded to me, should I request this.

Participant signature: Date:

Olga Plakhotnik, http://www.open.ac.uk/research/main/people/op898

Appendix 3. Topic guide for focus group discussions in Queer Homes

The topic guide is organised as three sets of questions/ prompts that correspond to the areas of citizenship, nationhood and local community.

Set 1. Citizenship (relationships with the state, local government and the police)

- How has the life of LGBT+ people like us changed in post-Maidan Ukraine? Do you think it is getting better or worse?
- What do you think about the current Ukrainian government and its attitudes towards LGBT+ communities? Do you feel protected by the government?
- What do you think about the Ukrainian police? Is it supportive of LGBT+ people? Why is it (not) supportive?
- What do you think about the Kyiv Pride? Will you attend the next Kyiv Pride? Why (or why not)? What is Pride about? What message does it send out and to whom?
- Are you thinking about organising a local Pride? Do you have any allies - groups or institutions - in your city that you can collaborate with?
- LGBT+ communities in many countries have fought for same-sex marriage. To what extent this is relevant to Ukraine and your community? What do you think about same-sex marriage in general and respective legislation in Ukraine? What are the potential advantages and disadvantages of same-sex marriage law? Who would benefit most from it? Should LGBT+ communities prioritise this issue in their agenda today?

Set 2. Nationhood

- How do you understand the place of Ukrainian LGBT+ communities within the Ukrainian nation? Do you think it is important for LGBT+ communities to be patriots today? Why (or why not)? How do you understand patriotism?
- What do you think about ultra-right groups: who they are? What strategies should we, LGBT+ communities, develop towards these groups?
- What do you think about potential collaboration with LGBT+ activists from Russia today?

Set 3. Local community and activism

- Why you are here? What do you get out of your Queer Home? What does it do for you and the local LGBT+ communities?

- Do you think the Queer Home's activity is political? Why (or why not)?

- How (and to what extent) do LGBT+ communities have to be involved in politics? Which strategies you celebrate, accept and which not?

- Some politicians say that the more visible LGBT+ communities are, the more tolerant Ukrainian society is towards them. What do you think? If you agree, how to make LGBT+ communities more visible?

- What do you think about the support of Pride by businesses? Do we need more of such support or less? Whom we would like to be supported, in general? Who are our allies?

Appendix 4. The venues of focus group discussions on the map of Ukraine

Appendix 5. Details about focus group discussions in Queer Homes

Date	Place	Number of participants	Comments
March 2017	Kharkiv	11	QH had its own premises and was a collaborative project of GAU and local women's NGO (http://sphere.org.ua/en/). The community organised LGBT+ and feminist activities.
April 2017	Vinnytsya	10	The QH community did not have its own premises and gathered in the premises of the local branch of an HIV-prevention MSM organisation.
April 2017	Zhytomyr	10	QH community had its own premises and considered themselves to be focused on 'creative' forms of protest in public space. The territorial proximity to Kyiv enabled participants to be actively involved in Kyiv Pride and other central LGBT+ events.
April 2017	Kyiv	5	QH community had its own premises but were aware of their closure soon.
July 2017	Kryvyi Rih	16	QH community had its own premises. They had a clear focus on drag culture and activist interventions in public space.
July 2017	Uzhgorod	8	QH did not have its own premises. The community gathered in the premises of the local branch of an HIV-prevention MSM organisation. Some community members also organised feminist actions and actively collaborated with Pride in Prague.
September 2017	Odesa	7	At the time of FGD, QH stopped receiving support from GAU and lost their premises. The community gathered upon my request in a co-working space. They organised Odesa Pride marches in 2015-2017.

Online open-access sites

Title	Type	Web-address
LGBT Discussion Space	FB group	https://www.facebook.com/groups/lgbt.discussion/about/
Kyiv Pride	FB group	https://www.facebook.com/groups/246301902228617/
Kyiv Pride	Website	https://kyivpride.org/
Kyiv Pride 2013	Web-archive	https://web.archive.org/web/20130927201211/http://kyivpride.org
Insight NGO	FB group	https://www.facebook.com/groups/208181886054491/
Insight NGO	Website	http://www.insight-ukraine.org/
LGBT+ Kharkiv (former QH)	FB group	https://www.facebook.com/groups/1016184668393602/
GAU in Odesa	FB group	https://www.facebook.com/groups/301450003313233/
Queer Home Kryvbass	FB group	https://www.facebook.com/groups/1439240516317599/
Gay Alliance Ukraine (GAU)	Website	https://upogau.org/eng
Nash Mir LGBT Human Rights Centre	Website	http://gay.org.ua/en/
Fulcrum All-Ukrainian Charitable Organization	Website	http://t-o.org.ua/?lang=en
Queer Anarcho Feminism	FB page	https://www.facebook.com/pg/queeranarchofem/community/?ref=page_internal
ROR Kyiv group	FB page	https://www.facebook.com/KyivROR/
PVA PVA group	FB page	https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100013546515296
FRAU group	FB page	https://www.facebook.com/fraugroup/
ZBOKU Art initiative	FB page	https://www.facebook.com/zbokuart/
Lavandovaya Ugroza (Lavender Menace)	FB group	https://www.facebook.com/groups/lavandovaya.ugroza/

grassroots initiative		
Poverty. War. Eurovision activist project	FB group and website	https://www.facebook.com/poverty.war.eurovision/ https://eurovisionsongcontest.noblogs.org/
Sol' group	FB group	https://www.facebook.com/queerfemsalt/

Online data (cases)

Case	Web-address	Date
'Nationalist vs. Gay' at Michael Shchur TV-show	Video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QL_Y15IJ70Y&list=UUF_ZiWz2Vcq1o5u5i1TT3Kw	November 28, 2014
'Zoryan Kis about LGBT issues in Ukraine' (*Idealist.media* interview)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vg80PTnRI0Q	October 31, 2015
Twitter page of the President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko	https://twitter.com/poroshenko/status/664764177882423297	November 12, 2015
'Patriots, Citizens, Lovers…' art-exhibition (2015) by Carlos Motta. Ten interviews with LGBT activists	Video available at: http://pinchukartcentre.org/en/exhibitions/29397/patriots-citizens-lovers	November 2015
'Ukraine's LGBT Community: Realities and Perspectives' Interview of Zoryan Kis to *UA| TV-channel*	Video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xfV1BR6yE2g&t=222s	March 1, 2017
Press-conference 'Kyiv Pride 2017: What, Where and When?' at Ukraine Crisis Media Centre	Video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IW4Mi5lPhU8&t=393s	April 24, 2017
Queer Anarcho Feminist Block at the 2017 Kyiv Pride: Manifesto	https://www.facebook.com/events/1349154525133716/	May 2017
Press-conference about the disrupted LGBT performance in Kharkiv at *Nakipelo.LIVE* TV-channel	Video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XgpmYzgGXcA	May 18, 2017

Pyvovarchyk, Alisa. *The occupation of the patriotism*. Blog at the *Gay Alliance Ukraine* website	http://upogau.org/ru/blogs/blogs_13.html	May 18, 2017
'Homophobia is an illness of our society that cannot be cured without provocations'. Interview of Pride organiser Zoryan Kis to *Glavcom* media portal	http://glavcom.ua/interviews/zoryan-kis-gomofobiya-hvoroba-nashogo-suspilstva-a-deyaki-hvorobi-nemozhlivo-vilikuvati-bez-provokaciy--418339.html	June 2, 2017
Anna Sharyhina: 'Even a child understands how homophobic our country is' Thoughts of a mother after Pride (interview to *WOMO* media portal)	http://womo.ua/ganna-sharigina-navit-ditini-zrozumilo-v-yakiy-gomofobniy-krayini-mi-zhivemo/	2017
TV discussion between Kyiv Pride 2017 organisers and politically queer activists, *UkrLife* TV	Video available at: http://www.ukrlife.tv/video/suspilstvo/kievpraid-2017-za-i-protiv-diskussiia-organizatorov-i-kvir-feministok	June 14, 2017
'Multiculturalism. Gender. Identity. Queer Studies in the Post-Soviet region' International Conference, Kyiv National University	Video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4lmetKShyA&t=34s	June 14-15, 2017
'Russian propaganda is used in Ukraine to fight against LGBT': Interview of Pride organiser Zoryan Kis to *Apostrophe* media	https://apostrophe.ua/ua/article/society/kiev/2017-06-17/v-ukraine-ispolzuyut-rossiyskuyu-propagandu-dlya-borbyi-s-lgbt---organizator-marsha-ravenstva/12959	June 17, 2017
Interview of Alisa Pyvovarchyk, communications director of 'Gay Alliance Ukraine' to *Obozrevatel.LIVE* media project	Video available at: https://www.obozrevatel.com/society/43857-v-gay-alliance-ukraine-rasskazali-kak-protivniki-kievprajda-poterpeli-fiasko.htm	June 19, 2017
Public lecture by Anna Sharyhina 'LGBT movement in Ukraine: from	Video available at: https://www.facebook.com/IZOLYATSIA/videos/1850029535030390/	March 16, 2018

homonationalism to queer-anarchism'		
Except of Olena Shevchenko's talk at public discussion 'Human rights and a rise of the ultra-right movement in Ukraine'	Event page: https://www.facebook.com/events/879549825566206/?active_tab=discussion Video also available at: https://www.facebook.com/insight.ngo/videos/1901628496808120/	March 26, 2018
'We were here': exhibition by Anton Shebetko, organized by IZOLYATSIA and KYIVPRIDE NGO (2018)	http://cargocollective.com/shebetko/WE-WERE-HERE	May 2018
'The country of free people. Be yourself!' A press conference of the Kyiv Pride organisers in the Centre of Human Rights Information	https://humanrights.org.ua/material/krajina_vilnih_bud_sobojiu_organizatori_kijiv_prajdu_rozpovili_pro_zaplanovani_zahodi	June 7, 2018
Press conference of the organisers of 'Equality March' within the 2018 Kyiv Pride (*Informator.ua*)	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A43mPHBsaas&feature=youtu.be&app=desktop	June 8, 2018
'Day X. What to expect from March of Equality in Kyiv' (*Focus* Journal)	https://focus.ua/ukraine/399997/	June 16, 2018
Ruslana Panukhnyk, Executive director of the Kyiv Pride: 'Equality March is an opportunity to be ourselves for 20 minutes' *Ukrainian News* interview	https://ukranews.com/ua/interview/2000-ruslana-panukhnyk-marsh-rivnosti-mozhlyvist-20-khvylyn-pobuty-soboyu	June 26, 2018

Appendix 7. Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Proforma

From   Chair, The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee

Email

Extension

To   Olga Plakhotnik, FASS

Subject   Queer(y)ing Citizenship, Queer(y)ing Nationhood: A Critical
Discourse Analysis of LGBT+ Narratives of Belonging in
Contemporary Ukraine

Memorandum

The Open University

HREC Ref HREC 2016 2435 Plakhotnik
AMS ref
Submitted 02/12/16
Decision date 27/01/17

This memorandum is to confirm that the research protocol for the above-named research project, as submitted for ethics review, has been given favourable opinion by the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC).

Please note the following:

1. You are responsible for notifying the HREC immediately of any information received by you, or of which you become aware which would cast doubt on, or alter, any information contained in the original application, or a later amendment which would raise questions about the safety and/or continued conduct of the research.

2. It is essential that any proposed amendments to the research are sent to the HREC for review, so they can be recorded and a favourable opinion given prior to the any changes being implemented (except only in cases of emergency when the welfare of the participant or researcher is may be effected).

3. You are authorised to present this memorandum to outside bodies such as NHS Research Ethics Committees in support of any application for future research clearance. Also, where there is an external ethics review, a copy of the application and outcome should be sent to the HREC.

4. OU research ethics review procedures are fully compliant with the majority of grant awarding bodies and their frameworks for research ethics.

5. At the conclusion of your project, by the date stated in your application, you are required to provide the Committee with a final report to reflect how the project has progressed, and importantly whether any ethics issues arose and how they were dealt with. A copy of the final report template can be found on the research ethics website - http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/human-research/human-research-ethics-full-review-process-and-proforma#final report.

Kind regards,

Chair OU HREC http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/