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Queer Romania: exploring LGBTQ+ (social) movements, struggles and actions in an Eastern European reality.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

CONTENTIOUS POLITICS AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS OVERVIEW. US AND USSR DISTINCTIVE DEVELOPMENTS

CHAPTER II

WHAT A SOCIAL MOVEMENT REALLY IS: DEFINITION, THEORIES, ACTIONS AND THE LGBTQ+ (SOCIAL) MOVEMENT

CHAPTER III

ROMANIA: THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY:

POLITICAL, INSTITUTIONAL, SOCIAL, RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENTS

Introduction

28th June 1969, 1 am – Stonewall Inn, New York

Sylvia Rivera throws a bottle onto a police officer during the confrontation between queer people enjoying themselves in one of the few places accepting their presence and the police, irrupting once again in the bar.
That night marked the beginning of what we now recognise as the "Stonewall Uprising": the first night of violent queer opposition to police raids, which were perpetuated for weeks and months before.

Being queer in the 1960s was still incredibly difficult, with laws defining being queer as a deviance, doctors labelling queerness as insanity, religion describing it as an immoral act. In 1960s USA, gays and lesbians were outlaws, living in secrecy and in most cases, struggling to exist. The community was not having it anymore. No more playing nice and hiding: the queer community decided to fight back violently, for LGBTQ+ rights and to be (finally) seen. Previous action was always unseen and dismantled by authorities, or not so violently subversive; organisations and actions were boycotted. No significant change was achieved.

However, that famous night is the incredible symbol of the spark pushing forward the wave of resistance of the LGBTQ+ community, facing a society which repressed them for too long. It was the turning moment, bolstering the movement for gay rights, leading it to be the key revolutionary moment in the Western world.
Peoples such as Sylvia Rivera and Masha P. Johnson have marked the history of LGBTQ+ movements from that night on, and the surge of Pride parades the West has thus obtained is unique in its kind. The close ideological tie between the US

and Western Europe, as liberal democratic realities, made collective action and activism in both realities coordinated and similar.

Diverting our attention beyond the US and Western Europe, on the other side of the Iron Curtain, history has not been so linear. Despite the geographical proximity to the Western European Countries, Eastern European countries were under the influence of the communist ideology, and existence was completely different.

The dominion of the USSR on Eastern Europe shaped another view of the world, where communism was the leading and totalising ideology, where the West was seen as deviant and capitalism and liberalism heavily criticised. The leading system encouraged a way of living which was modest, equal, and dignified. Rights and duties were shaped by the State, the economy was controlled, and systematised, common ownership was the leading idea, and the focus was on the abolition of classes to promote the working class and eradicate inequalities. Starting from a solid premise, the political, economic, social systems soon merged to become a totalitarian reality, where strong populist leaders, under the systematic control of Moscow, led entire countries, with a one-party system and one accepted ideology. For obvious reasons, the landscape was totally different: the West was arguably liberal, capitalistic and democratic, while the East was living under a totalitarian totalising ideology. The development of social movements (or any kind of action against the system) was most definitely challenging. While the West experienced a surge of new social movements in the 1960s onward, from feminist to environmental, the Eastern part was not able to do the same.

The analysis I will pursue will, for this reason, focus on the emergence of social movements, with particular attention to LGBTQ+ movements, their repertoires of action and the importance they have in challenging the dominant social norms

and ideas. Furthermore, I will analyse Romania as a key country to represent the Eastern part of the European Union, where the development of social movements was very different from the Western counterpart, and where LGBTQ+ groups and actions developed way after Western ones did. Even being officially part of the European Union since 2007, the process of adaptation and integration of European values is still active and ongoing, due to the fact that the switch from "East" to "West" was disruptive and represented a major ideological revolution in all domains. I will thus explore differences in the Romanian case, from the legal background and the challenges that the LGBTQ+ community is facing to make sure rights are recognised, to the influence of the Church and the consequences of the Communist era on the openness and development of this country.

The aim of the analysis is, ultimately, to recognise the degree of differentiation between the development of social movements, social norms, and attitudes. The recognition of the "other" (in this case, geographically close yet ideologically far) is essential to identify different sets of actions and strategies to achieve (in the peculiar case of the LGBTQ+ community) the rights they need and deserve as an integral part of society in all countries of the EU.

Chapter 1: Contentious politics and social movements overview.
US and USSR distinctive developments

The current analysis starts from the exploration of social movements in a general perspective, due to their importance in contentious politics, collective action and influence they exercise on our societies, as tools of reinterpretation and reshaping of norms, ideologies, and culture. Furthermore, they represent a key tool in society to portray the degree of representation of citizens, the state of democracy and wellness of the system of a certain State and the change in the ideas in the public sphere, disrupting the current mindset represented in the political conventional sphere, to try and bring to the attention of all (may it be the political, the institutional, the cultural or the social sphere) a certain idea, issue, to be implemented in the current system, or suggesting a change in the narrative. Finally, social movements are tools of innovation, meaning that repertoires of action may reinvent themselves according to the goals to be achieved, the cultures they formed in, or the tools they have. Some would argue that they are tools of innovation also in the sense that they push for change in society, thus innovating the system, rendering it progressive and not rigid and static, where the State follows and welcomes change to satisfy its citizens firstly, and secondly responds to global changes and innovations.

1.1 Contentious politics: why social movement is not enough of a definition

However, it is equally essential to define the broad category that is contentious politics. Social movements are not the only active modality to represent minorities, to challenge the system and to bring forward a certain issue. This is why social movements, interest groups, any collective or individual action holding a certain goal, representing a certain identity or with the intent to challenge the system, are englobed in a more general category: contentious politics. Sydney Tarrow and Charles Tilly address it as:

"[…] involving interactions in which actors make claims bearing on other actors' interests, leading to coordinated efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which governments are involved as targets, initiators of claims, or third parties. Contentious politics thus brings together three familiar features of social life: contention, collective action, and politics."[1]

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[1] Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, 2nd Edition (Oxford University Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan Proquest, 2015).

Thus, contentious politics englobe all conventional and non-conventional, institutional, and extra-institutional actions to advance claims in the existing political and social regimes. Repertoires of activities vary from petitions to public demonstrations, from press releases to lobbying, which have become, over time, modular performances, meaning that they could be adopted across a variety of contentious situations, and adapted to a broad category of conflicts. Defining a set of modular performances does not mean that there is no degree of innovation and variation.

Even though we recognise a wide variety of repertoires of actions, of groups and claims, we shall even consider that there is a system of coordination and alliances among actors in the contentious situation, for example a social movement could be supported by a certain political party or an alliance among movements could be found (obviously sharing, totally or partially, goals, strategies, claims) to try and achieve the best results possible, or to advance in the achievement of said goals.

As an example, The London Lesbian and Gays Support the Miners represents a moment of alliance between workers and the LGBTQ+ community during the Thatcher government. A vast network of support groups was developed throughout the UK and overseas during the British miners' strike of 1984–1985, mostly to offer financial support. The mining community in South Wales encountered the London Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, which raised money for the miners to help them and connect two very different domains: sexual politics and trade union politics. The goal was firstly to weaken class differences and show that openness and diversity are achievable. Secondly, the creation of a network of (reciprocated) support and help across classes to achieve society's recognition was desirable.[2]

Even keeping in mind all these factors, operations and intricacies, there is the tendency among analysts, students, and some scholars to use the term social movement to represent all contention politics' partakers or any form of contention.

The overlapping in place when social movements are used as synonyms of contentious politics, is fundamentally wrong and incomplete, since they do not embrace all collective actions, all situations, all repertoires of action of contentious politics. Social movements are not synonym of civil wars or terrorist acts, and even not interest groups, which all hold different organisational structures, goals and participants. Thus, comparison is not possible

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[2] D. Kelliher, "Solidarity and Sexuality: Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners 1984-5," *History Workshop Journal* 77, no. 1 (January 21, 2014): 240–62, https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/dbt012.

across different types of contentions, and one does not substitute the other. Social movement is an insufficient label and does not hold in itself all nuances of contentious politics.

As previously mentioned, actions are not entirely identical in all contentions and all societies: there is the need to consider (among all other aspects) the institutional facet and the regime in which the contention takes place. Different regimes, different countries, could experience the formation of different contentious actors and groups, and even among the same social movement, repertoires of action could be different, because they adapt to the political opportunities they can foresee, and campaigns crafted to embrace the unicity of a certain society and culture too. Charles Tilly and Sydney Tarrow focus their attention on this aspect: they divide regimes into 4 categories[3]:

- High-capacity undemocratic regimes are the arena of mostly clandestine opposition, with brief confrontations and public performances ending in oppression, due to the capacity of the system to maintain power and coercion, also over contestation. The history of undemocratic regimes in these areas is long-lasting, thus they hold sets of organised political actions and strategies, powerful and solid institutions and presence in all domains of life of citizens;

- Low-capacity undemocratic regimes host the majority of civil wars, because the system, unlike the high-capacity authoritarian ones, does not have the capability to control the population and does not exert the same hold and power. Ultimately, the system is fragile and when dissent erupts, it does so through violence, civil wars and high-scale conflicts;

- High-capacity democratic regimes are the ground of social movements: where the possibility to express dissent exists and where multiple ideas are valued and not repressed, more opportunities are possible and social movements thrive. Campaigns, online activism, manifestations are all tools of non-violent ways of expressing claims and dissent;

- Low-capacity democratic regimes are characterised by military coups: cultures, religions, ethnicities clash and create a regime of uncertainty and confrontation. Institutions are newly formed, not radicalised and not developed, thus it is extremely difficult to grant rights, protection, and stability to citizens. The diverse personalities in the system seize the perfect opportunity to assert their dominance or their ideas, leading to a constant state of alert and overthrowing of the regime in place.

As considered above, social movements are active mostly in high-capacity democratic regimes. To consider the social movement as a broad description of all contentious actions

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[3] Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*, 2nd Edition (Oxford University Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan Proquest, 2015).

and actors, is wrong due to the non-existent role they play in the other three identified systems. Social movements are growing in significance and magnitude, but they do not substitute other movements and do not represent all conflicts, particularly in those areas in which they cannot act. Nevertheless, social movements embody the main tools and campaigns that have been utilised for the fight for feminist rights, gay rights, environmental and black movements, as they are the vehicles of transmission of claims and identities in most occasions, from low to high democratic regimes.

1.2 New Social Movements: from the 1970s onward

Social movements, as previously stated, are a form of collective (contentious) action: they are groups of individuals holding a shared or collective identity or belief. This basic definition does not consider the array of actions, performances, actors and campaign which define and differentiate social movements from other forms of organised contentious manifestation (which I will analyse later on).

What makes social movements essential is the tool for protest against a certain system of beliefs or for the recognition of a certain identity that they represent: from the 1960s onwards, a surge of social movements can be recognised, from the United States to Italy and France, in those areas that are grouped under the term "West", where regimes could be described as democratic and liberal, where contention could consolidate and become a stable, long-term, organised action.

The new social movements that have emerged, from feminist and environmental movements, differ greatly from past traditional movements focused on capital and labour, and beyond the Marxist interpretation of class conflict and class consciousness, which were mostly inclined to explain the relations between the working class, modes of production, capitalists, and the capital. The cleavage capital/work was not the main motive of contention anymore. Workers movements, which were essential to start the discussion on social movements, do not correspond to the ones from the 1970s onward, which focus themselves more on identities and cultures outside the economic and material area, on the representation of a certain identity in society and as challengers of the current system of ideas, not necessarily for material gains, but for the cultural and institutional change leading to being recognised and seen.

The Marxian approach was not, however, totally erased in the conception and development. In the second place, new movements did not completely substitute more traditional movements and issues in the contentious arena.

New social movements are thoroughly examined by the German sociologist Claus Offe. In his view, there is a break with the old neoconservative view stating that politics must not be concerned with civil society, representing the values outside governmental control, such as family, social issues, and identity conflicts. This elimination would render institution and civil society stronger, not focused on representation and social protection, but focused on property and the market: fewer fixed ideals to uphold would alleviate institutions, therefore more efficient and arguably stronger (since any other issue would be privatised, not public, not represented, not protected).

The new social movements, however, detach themselves from the ultimate goal of creating increasingly rigid and stringent institutions and civil society. Unlike the neoconservative idea:

"[…] the politics of new social movements, by contrast, seeks to politicize the institutions of civil society in ways that are not constrained by the channels of representative-bureaucratic political institutions, and thereby to reconstitute a civil society that is no longer dependent upon ever more regulation, control, and intervention. In order to emancipate itself from the state, civil society itself - its institutions of work, production, distribution, family relations, relations with nature, its very standards of rationality and progress must be politicized through practices that belong to an intermediate sphere between "private" pursuits and concerns, on the one side, and institutional, state-sanctioned modes of politics, on the other."[4]

Social movements require a depoliticisation of social issues and civil society, in the sense that they want to escape institutional control, dependent on regulation and state intervention, but simultaneously seek to maintain a degree of presence in politics of the issues, bringing forward a new conception of identity, with the definitive goal of change and progress. The liberal public/private categories are insufficient: the space of action is rather a non-institutional politics one, a merging of the two opposing concepts.

Furthermore, the liberal-democratic welfare-state of after World War II, was increasingly welcoming of social movements as non-violent contention, and to the acceptance of a multitude of identities, progress and to the expansion beyond the mere economic sphere. Representation and security, helped by the economic growth represented the conditions shaping the West at the time. Yet, it was not without difficulties and impediments, the road to social progress was extensive and arguably still ongoing.

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[4] Claus Offe, *New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics* (New York: Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science, New School for Social Research, 1985).

Before focusing attention on the organisation of social movements, and their unique characteristics, it is essential to define a historical example of a (new) social movement which has been essential during the 1970s onward to highlight their importance as vehicles of identities, and the rapid formation of social movement in time of need.

The key moment embodying the beginning of the gay rights movement is the Stonewall Uprising of 1969, as briefly seen in the introductory part of the study. However, gays, lesbians (and other queer identities) were not totally inexperienced before the events of that night. A small but active movement could be recognised, and a web of unique languages, places, groups before Stonewall indicates that the LGBTQ+ community was already organising a hidden but dense community. The Mattachine Society and The Daughters of Bilitis represent only two examples of active social life of the community. The existence of these groups was not purposely political or confrontational: they existed as common spaces for encounters, which were hidden and not public. They contributed to the formation of different experience, language, identity, essential to construct a sense of belonging to the group.

Furthermore, gays and lesbians had their own ways of knowing when raids would happen or insights about the political and institutional situation even without being part of it. Even being institutionally and legally targeted and purposely secreted, they infiltrated in the system. The police raid of that famous night was totally unexpected, since the Stonewall Inn was informed of police arrival, but not that specific time.

The Stonewall Uprisings concurred in the radicalisation of the movement and the proper creation of public dissent. Without being ready and properly organised, the community fought back, and for days, through continuous manifestations.

This moment resonated in renewed ways because it took place in the late 1960s, which, as briefly mentioned before, was constituted by the formation and action of racial justice movements, feminist movements, cultural upheavals. The Stonewall uprisings became a symbol for the expanding movement as a result, and made significant organizational growth possible. Needless to say, drag queens Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson are the absolute protagonists of the Stonewall Uprisings, and it is essential to denote that they were young, gender nonconforming people of colour, representing the most marginalised individuals even within the gay rights movement, and society overall. They were the promoters of the confrontational aspect, while privileged white gay men took the campaigning aspect onto their hands, taking credit for the Stonewall Uprisings and neglecting the intersectionality aspect

(which explains how different degrees of oppression and privileges are the result of different combinations of identities). The LGBTQ+ movement, known also as gay rights movement, highlighted how, generally speaking, the queer identity was shrunk and condensed in an unique gay identity and fight.

All in all, the Gay Liberation Front was created shortly after Stonewall, upholding anti-capitalist, pro-Marxist principles, and revolutionary anti-system radical stances, as the current liberal and capitalist system was viewed as particularly oppressive to minorities and marginalised groups. Visibility and recognition were the crucial objectives: the uniqueness and the identity of all queer individuals had to be recognised, no hiding in the closet and repression anymore. The reformation of society was desirable for the attainment of freedom and rights for most of social movements.

Alongside the GLF, several other radical homosexual and lesbian organizations emerged. However, the GLF, in terms of organizational development, visibility, and political activity, achieved more in two years than the homophile movement had in the prior twenty. Before the summer of 1969, there were about 50 or 60 organizations, but by the time of the Stonewall revolt, this number to at least 1,000, if not more than 2,000.[5]

With the dismantlement of the GLF, the GAA (Gay Activists Alliance) was founded, with less radical ideals and more accommodationists: the desire was not to destroy capitalism and did not consider that the roots of inequalities are inherent in the system. They upheld the importance of gay rights and gay pride, of the freedom of expression and of being: integration not destruction and re-creation.

The first Pride March was organised in New York was held a year later the disruptive and revolutionary events of the Stonewall Uprisings and spread quickly even outside the US, to (Western) European countries.

In the 1970s, a web of organised gay and lesbian groups was present in the United States, characterised by less directly confrontational actions such as violent demonstrations, but with structured campaigns towards the acceptance in the mainstream, cultural production and diffusion for the legitimation in all spaces, may them be social, political, legal or cultural.

It goes without specifying that the situation was not extremely linear and not even easy: the rise of the right movements and religious ones challenged the presence of gay rights movements with anti-gay propaganda.

The death of Harvey Milk (1930-1978), political activist in the US and one of the first openly gay elected officials, revived violent protest of the gay rights movement and the revolutionary

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[5] Lisa M. Stulberg, *LGBTQ Social Movements* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2018).

sentiment of the first wave of contestations. The reason behind the protest was the unjustly short sentence of Dan White, former member of the Board of Supervisors, Harvey Milk's colleague and lastly, killer. May 21st 1979, the day of the verdict, angry demonstrators stormed City Hall and set fire to police vehicles, while the SFPD retaliated by destroying homosexual clubs and assaulting people. The so-called "White Night Riots" resulted in at least 120 injuries, including about 60 police officers, and in a general increased consciousness and demands.[6]

Once started, the movement for LGBTQ+ rights never stopped, and reorganised repertoires of actions and contentions to adapt to the issues that the social and political spheres were creating, or problems from within, taking place for organisational technicalities or even for the development of different incompatible ideals within the movement itself.

All factors considered, the campaigns, actions, manifestations, obtained huge milestones in the acceptance of the community and the recognition of the right to exist peacefully.

In the first place, the first Pride March was held in 1970 and forged the path for the organisation of yearly parades all over the USA, and the recognition of June as the pride month. In the second place, queer individuals secured public offices, from the 1974 onward (Harvey Milk, as previously mentioned, in 1978). In the third place, homosexuality was removed from the list of mental illnesses by the American Psychiatric Society in 1973, and consequently each state decriminalised homosexuality or homosexual behaviours over time, even though the conclusion of the process would have to wait the beginning of the 21st century. Social perception and sympathy for the LGBTQ+ community were growing, even though social movements and the LGBTQ+ community still face difficulties in being accepted and recognised, especially considering the rise of conservatism and uncertainties that democracies face periodically.

1.4 Social movements in the USSR: different narration

The Soviet Union, in place from 1922 to 1991, was completely different from the US and Western counterparts: the communist regime totally opposed capitalism and the liberal/libertarian economic and social structures. Civil society was restricted and controlled, as all other matters of citizens' lives. The economic structure was centralised, and highly systematic redistribution was enacted. The Communist Parties and the charismatic populist

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[6] History.com Editors, "Harvey Milk," HISTORY, August 21, 2018, https://www.history.com/topics/gay-rights/harvey-milk.

leaders were always present, shaping the common identity and the nationalist sentiment, while repressing any dissent whatsoever.

Stalin was recognised as the most stringent and authoritarian leader: the string of time from 1922 to 1953, was characterised by purges (The Great Purge of 1936-1938 was the biggest attempt of repression and elimination of political dissenters, intellectuals, basically everyone constituting a threat to his power and the Communist regime), forced labour in gulags, mass repression and famines. After him, no leader pursued the same cruel grip and terror on society; next personality to take power, Nikita Khrushchev, denounced the atrocities of that era and inverted the route towards de-Stalinisation. Yet, one-party system was still in place, there was repression of dissent, the vehiculation of a single identity and ideology.

Understandably, a degree of differentiation among the former states of the Soviet Union and satellite States could be recognised, as they were controlled and directed by Moscow and the (central) Communist Party but obtained a certain degree of autonomy in their respective realities. Even though economic and civil society had to modulate themselves to directives coming from Moscow, each country met different leaders, with different attitudes, discourses, all in a cultural and unique context.

In the 1980s, with Gorbachev as USSR Communist leader, the internal organisation and the economic structure met an unprecedented openness. The two pillars of his politics were the Perestroika as reconstruction of political, institutional and, most importantly, economic spheres and Glasnost as governmental transparency: the dissimilarities among him and his predecessors, among the rigorous authoritarian regimes of previous governments and his new view of socialism, were clear. The West viewed him positively, as he was more open to change, openness, economic privatisation and decentralisation, and incline to pluralism, which were all values common to the West. The East, on the contrary, quite opposed his mindset, and citizens were skeptical of the sudden changes he pursued.

The election of Gorbachev was the turning point in civil society and collective action. His new innovative stances created the foundations for the creation of collective action and the expression of public opinions. The fundamental idea was that social movements were the vehicle through which the population could express requests and needs. For this reason, it was valuable social input, welcomed in the political and social discourses.

Before, a web of secret dissent existed, but was clearly inhibited and crushed with all means, and met with violence and repression if made public.

The rise of collective action, and social movements can be explained also by the growing cynicism and apathy that citizens were developing towards the system. Gorbachev tried to

solve an already doomed to fall regime, due to the extreme economic stagnation and non-existent economic growth of years and years, which were leading to extreme poverty. Yet, the propaganda in the Soviet Union was acclaiming economic growth and prosperity: citizens knew that it did not represent reality anymore. Lastly, elections were controlled and useless from the 1920s, meaning that the vote was not meaningful and not meaningfully attributed (even considering that the one-party system made the election of one single party possible).

His attempts to democratise socialism were bound to fail, due to the accumulated and long-lasting non-satisfaction that previous governments created. Notwithstanding the huge asset that the black market constituted: as the Soviet Union was a stagnated economy, with little production and availability of goods, people formed new hidden channels to procure for themselves basic survival goods. The growing importance and stabilisation of the black market made it a proper institution: citizens easily found high quality imported goods, as an example, but also found a place where the State was not present, where ideals could circulate, even from outside the Soviet Union.

It is true that, thanks to Gorbachev, collective action was forming, through the development of networks and the possibility to organise. However, what he saw as a possibility of amelioration of the current system, became in fact the root of revolution, as he wished to maintain socialism and a controlled civil society, in the sense that ultimately, collective organisation and actions would have to be implemented in the institutional realm and absorbed by policies.

"[…] Yet the basic structure of the order remained unchanged, particularly regarding the realm of state-society relations. The regime attempted to mobilize and control all social participation, effectively channelling it in harmless directions that coincided with its policy objectives. índependent civic initiative was proscribed, and when it was attempted, the regime usually responded with harassment, arrest, and imprisonment of the instigators. Central planning, pricing and supply reigned supreme, and autonomous economic activity was either illegal or, in the case of the black market, ignored. Society was dominated, indeed virtually subsumed, by the state."[7]

Social movements, group actions were thus present but up to the benefit of the system as a whole: where ideals were too anti-system, too distant from the general view of the Communist Party, or not feasible for the maintenance of the status quo, they were suppressed.

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[7] Judith B. Sedaitis and Jim Butterfield, *Perestroika from below : Social Movements in the Soviet Union* (1991; repr., New York, NY: Routledge, 2019).

Still, the social movements and the groups which were forming, were very different from the ones of the Western experience. Firstly, the history of authoritarian governments, of suppression and control, made it difficult to create a base of contentious activities before. Gorbachev equipped citizens with the first tools to consent their creation. Thus, collective action was still rudimental, and not proper social movements with campaigns, organised action. Furthermore, the first movements to ever take place were less focused on human rights, and more on the economy, and were not disruptive or had the intent to revolutionise the entire system. Most movements were led by workers: mid-1980s, they founded unauthorized labour unions and workers' groups to defend their rights considering the shifting Perestroika economic goals, as they were upholding changes to the worker's conditions, for the worse and the benefit of others. Peripheral states were resistant to change, and were fragile due to the distance from the centre, which created the indifference of these countries towards the centre, even considering that each leader of each state was enacting his programmes and ideals.

The concrete shift in themes and power of the movements, both at the centre of USSR and on the more peripheral states, was to be found at the end of the 1980s, more precisely between 1988-1991, culminating in revolutions and the definitive collapse of the Soviet Union.

It is crucial to underline that most non-violent protests were fostered and supported by what activists and academics refer to as "parallel institutions" in the civil society, including religious institutions, civic groups, and cultural institutions, as they are public institutions which are not directly political. The Church, media platforms and academic institutions were pillars of network formation, diffusion of ideas and organisation.

Those years showed the growth and development of revolutionary non-violent movements, the rise of truly democratic claims, and the nationalist sentiment, which started from the peripheries and then reached the centre.

It could be argued that actors guiding protests were not proper social movements, but revolutionary groups, for the overthrowing of the system, with political and economic aims.

The attitude of the former leader Gorbachev and his political colleagues to not respond harshly to protest in those countries, facilitated quasi-non-violent transitions.

In countries such as Romania, East Germany and (former) Czechoslovakia, where protests were met with violent repression, the transition was rendered harder, but still inevitable: the paradox of repression led to, for example, to the public execution of former Romanian Communist Leader Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife as the definitive act of the overthrowing and rejection of the system.

It must be clarified that tougher protests and revolutions happened in harsher systems of oppression: Romania was less connected to the rest of Central and Eastern Europe politically and economically. Because of this, Ceausescu could have felt less pressure from external influences, such as Gorbachev's support for changes. He did not hesitate to meet opposition with police control, and his Securitate (secret police) was one of the biggest, most efficient mean of repression and containment. Additionally, it's likely that the Romanian government had fewer pressures from the West and was cut off from the spread of peaceful methods that other European countries had experienced.[8]

All things considered, the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. The network of social movements (leading to the independence of most of the Soviet bloc countries and to arguably democratic systems) modernised and flourished, catching up with the Western counterparts to the attainment of all those human rights and the discussion of all the issues that under the Soviet Union's control were simply unthinkable. Even the feminist and women's issues were too modern and too distant to be accepted in discourses before the democratisation process. At the beginning of the 1990s, with the push and support of the European Union, feminist, gay rights movements, environmental movements were active and revolutionary in Central and Eastern Europe. It is not new information that those systems had to transition rapidly and catch-up with the West to be properly helped, accepted, and eventually integrated in the federal economic unitarian system that the EU represents.

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[8] Lee Smithey and Lester R. Kurtz, *"We Have Bare Hands": Nonviolent Social Movements in the Soviet Block*, 1999.

Chapter 2: What a social movement really is:
Definition, theories, actions, and the LGBTQ+ (social) movement

"[...] I will argue that contentious politics emerges in response to changes in political opportunities and threats when participants perceive and respond to a variety of incentives: material and ideological, partisan, and group-based, long-standing and episodic. Building on these opportunities, and using known repertoires of action, people with limited resources can act together contentiously – if only sporadically. When their actions are based on dense social networks and effective connective structures and draw on legitimate, action-oriented cultural frames, they can sustain these actions even in contact with powerful opponents. In such cases – and only in such cases – we are in the presence of a social movement."[9]

Sydney Tarrow elucidates, with the definition above, what a social movement is in a comprehensive manner, including the main characteristics that differentiate social movements from any other contentious action. This extract will be utilised throughout the chapter as basis in the explanation of what truly composes a social movement.

2.1 Political opportunities: political change leads to transformation

In the previous chapter, a preliminary glance at new social movements was given. However, further explanation is needed to present how changes in society and politics, (especially those that led to the surge of social movements from the 1960s onward) offered new possibilities to the development of collective action; how different theories on the study of social movements were formulated, and why a difference between new and traditional movements is acknowledged.

The new social movements define a broad range of collective acts that are seen to have replaced the previous social movement of the proletarian revolution associated with classical Marxism, representing the traditional cleavage capital/work, and representing economic and class reductionisms. The influence of Marxist theories still permeates cultural spheres and social movements: the contribution in contemporary debates cannot be wiped out, however there are non-negligible differences and ruptures between traditional and new theories on social movements, dependent on different political, cultural, and social shifts.

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[9] Sidney G. Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

The two main theories in the study of social movements at the present moment are political opportunity theory and resource mobilisation theory. They have been widely recognised in the past, and still hold major influence in the analysis of social movements. The political opportunity theory focuses on the state of the political system as explanation of the emergence of social movements:

"[...] In short, elements in the environment impose certain constraints on political activity or open avenues for it. The manner in which individuals and groups in the political system behave, then, is not simply a function of the resources they command but of the openings, weak spots, barriers, and resources of the political system itself. There is, in this sense, interaction, or linkage, between the environment, understood in terms of the notion of a structure of political opportunities, and political behaviour."[10]

What are those changes in the political opportunities, the changes in the environment prompting the creation of collective action, or defining the amount thereof?
Primarily, the capitalist-liberal system of Western societies in the aftermath of World War II was stabilising and following the path towards neoliberalism and free market achieved in the 1980s, reducing the presence of the welfare state towards less and less intervention in the economy and workers' conditions, ultimately leading to inequalities and economic crisis. Defiance of authority is encouraged in periods of crisis and major changes, such as globalisation and deindustrialisation, and recognition of the declining state of the environment. These define the milieu in which political changes occur: governmental volatility leads social movements to the exploitation of instability to exert power and make claims. Globalisation, for example, has led social movements formation and a shift to new types of collective actions, such as transnational social movements and urban social movements. Globalisation led to interconnectedness between States, economies, peoples, governments, creating a web of connections which can be viewed as positive if we consider the facilitation of communication and vehiculation of experiences, culture, news and awareness, but as negative for the creation of interdependence and homogenisation. Consequently, the 1999 Battle of Seattle is a perfect example of a transnational social movement, which proclaimed itself as anti-globalisation, mixing economic claims with human rights ones, using the WTO meeting as crucial moment to present their claims through protest, against current developments and the inequalities that the new globalised

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[10] Peter K. Eisinger, *The Conditions of Protest Behavior in American Cities* (Madison: Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin--Madison, 1972).

world and structure was creating.[11] Globalisation opened new opportunities of political activities (such as the renewed importance of NGOs, the progressive formation of the EU, and so on), accompanied with a system increasingly accepting of communication of dissent and individual/collective activities.

On the other hand, urban social movements arise pinpointing the city as a social product of different interests and values compared to the broader reality that is the state (or even broader realities), that does not comprehend all these facets. Urban social movements act in defence of cultural identity, in the representation of the needs of the community, which can be class-based or non-class-based, in contrast with globalisation leading to a sort of homogenisation that does not consider the subjectivity of people towards a certain matter or issue. In Castells' view, decentralised forms of government ought to render the city more autonomous in decision-making processes, as it is the trusted representative of the interests of the community.[12]

2.1.2 Beyond the political opportunity structure: resource mobilisation perspective

Even though the political opportunity structure is one of the main frameworks in the analysis of social movements, it is not exhaustive to explain all collective action formation, structure, and motives. The second framework that will be taken into consideration is the longstanding resource mobilisation perspective: it considers the importance of resources guaranteeing possibilities for collective action. This means that social movements arise when sufficient resources for mobilisation are found, does not matter the degree of dissatisfaction, inequality, that a certain group holds. It is not the discontent that mobilises people, but the facilities that emerged to render it possible. However, this does not mean that discontent does not activate people, nor that emotions, ideals, identity, are not integral parts in the formation of contentious groups: the resource mobilisation perspective does not hold in itself the complete annulment of these variables. Yet, they consider that society is characterised by inequalities, class conflicts and discontent, of groups which suffer and identities which are not represented, but the spark that activates an organised collective action is the resources and incentives of society to effectively pursue contentious action.

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[11] "The Battle in Seattle - November 29, 1999," edition.cnn.com, 1999, https://edition.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/time/1999/11/22/seattle.battle.html.

[12] Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots : A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

If discontent is a feature of society, there should exist something more that effectively makes contentious action possible.

McCarthy and Zald as principal theorists of the resource mobilisation perspective, explain the relationship between resource availability, existing preference structure organization, and entrepreneurial efforts to satisfy demand for preferences.[13]

Focusing on the resource mobilisation perspective, resources may vary from access to media, to financial means, to support by external sympathisers, and even weapons: everything that can be used collectively, and transmittable from one person to another. The consequence of the finding of resources is social movement creation and mobilisation as a set of activities to secure more dominance and control in society or even to obtain more resources.[14]

Still, theorists when considering resource mobilisation theory, recognise that different amounts of resources may be needed through different times, and that periods of crisis (so the increasing lacking resources) may still contribute to the emergence of spontaneous social movements. Thus, the concepts of "movements of crisis" and "movements of affluence" are found. Movements of crisis arise when life-disrupting situations occur, rendering it impossible to not notice the major change in society that is creating discontent and deprivation. Movements arise for an immediate need to solve the new issue. Obviously, discontent is the primary base of the formation of this type of movements, where resources needed are a step of the process but not the generating one. On the other hand, movement of affluence do not arise in fragile situations, they do not need disruptive social changes to exist. They consist of groups formed in non-life-threatening situations or major crisis. Basic needs of life are not an issue for activists in movements of affluence, and mobilisation is not rushed, and this makes the accumulation of resources easier. Activists themselves already have resources that they can devote to social movement activities from the start.[15]

This differentiation serves the purpose to reconcile both the deprivation theory and the resource mobilisation theory to obtain a more comprehensive theory of social movements. Singularly, they are partial and non-exhaustive, as they are interlinked in all social movements.

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[13] John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald, "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory," *American Journal of Sociology* 82, no. 6 (May 1977): 1212–41, https://doi.org/10.1086/226464.

[14] Karl - Dieter Opp. *Theories of Political Protest and Social Movements : A Multidisciplinary Introduction, Critique, and Synthesis*. London ; New York: Routledge, 2009.

[15] Harold R. Herbo, "Movements of Crisis and Movements of Affluence," Journal of Conflict Resolution 26, no. 4 (1982): 645–63.

2.2 *Incentive, participation, and repertoires of actions*

The concept of incentives is considered by Sydney Tarrow as those opportunities created by shifting opportunities, as changes in the political opportunities and constraints. As seen before in the model of political opportunities structure, they can be seen as those shifts in culture, society, politics, the environment, leading to contention.

However, there exist organisational aspects and an array of strategies to increase participation or render it possible at all: how social movements attract people by exploiting those social opportunities and make collective action possible. These are selective incentives, which may vary from individual private rewards to social incentives such as social approval for participation or ostracism for the contrary. These incentives serve the purpose of reducing the free rider paradigm and drive towards participation also those people who do not freely decide to take part into contentious activities. The psychological personal reasons, such as commitment and self-sacrifice (which cannot be imposed but come from the self), are part of the incentives arena, since there is individual satisfaction arising from the achievement of a certain goal knowing that there was personal involvement and investment towards the attainment of the goal itself. Nevertheless, to base social movements or any contentious action only on personal attitudes and willingness is reckless, since it does not assure participation and leads to unpredictability.[16]

Among social groups' incentives we can find a rhetoric of solidarity and the creation of an identity to feel attached to, and the creation of bonds among individuals of the same identity, all means of persuasion. Moral shock can also be considered as moral incentive to mobilise: a tragedy may arise consciousness in people, who will then want to mobilise to improve the situation, or by perceived urgency. Also, the creation of an "us" versus" them rhetoric has been found to be effective in the recruitment of individuals, as people identifying with a certain problem or identity may feel an increased bond with the social movement and an increased aversion for the identified enemy (usually government and political elites).

All in all, social movements try to formulate social incentives and incentives touching personal values and morals, create indignation and strengthening the identification with the movement.

After the identification of modalities to attract people into mobilisation, the definition of repertoires of action is needed. Yet, an important premise is to be formulated on who are

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[16] William A Gamson, *The Strategy of Social Protest* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Pub, 1975).

participants in social movements, because they do not have a formal and structured internal organisation: no hierarchy exists because, as participation is not formalised trough proper adhesion, there is no clear definition of roles. Furthermore, participants in a social movement do not need to be of a certain class, and even not identify themselves with the identity portrayed or directly affected by a certain problem. Supporter from "outside" which engage in action or help the direct participants' action are more than welcome and useful. Still, groups do not begin with large amounts of participants, they need time and the building of linkages.

"[…] These initial groups are not always activists. Many women's consciousness-raising groups were formed around old friendships. The point is that a number of people have similar reactions to the same information and events. What results is the "politics of small things," small things that can grow into big things."[17]

Thus, action and group-formation start small, in public institutions such as schools, universities, but also houses, cafes, with small associations of individuals connected by the same concerns. Infiltration of a certain concern and the subsequent creation of groups can happen also exploiting already existing networks for other purposes. Participating in a protest for a specific issue may result in a moment of bonding between participants, and a moment of exchange where people with the same concerns may find themselves and create/join another group in response. Most importantly, nowadays, the influence of the internet is essential in the spreading of information, in network-formation, revealing to be an asset for contentious politics. Social networks, blogs, have facilitated connections and the construction of webs among individuals with the same interests, even by being far away.

Taking a step back, we shall consider the repertoires of action used by movements to convey ideals, discourses, and achieve specific sets of goals. Protests, public gatherings, rallies, demonstrations, sit-ins, petitions, statements to and in public media, boycotts, riots, strikes, and pamphleteering are just a few examples that frequently appear in repertoires of conflict. Needless to say, repertoires of action vary, considering specific social movement campaigns, taking into account opportunities, culture, historical moment.
Digital activism is the new rising area of social movement action on internet platforms, as the significance of the internet, technological advancements is not irrelevant, but quite the

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[17] James M Jasper, *Protest: A Cultural Introduction to Social Movements* (Malden, Massachusetts: Polity Press, 2015).

contrary. Traditional modes of protest are believed to be substantially facilitated by the internet, which also gives these protests a more international aspect by quickly diffusing communication and mobilization efforts. Considering again the Battle of Seattle example, activists, groups, and social movement organizations from a variety of backgrounds coordinated actions against the WTO conference both in the streets, and online.[18] Generally speaking, the newly available virtual activities consist in online petitions and email bombing, but also in hacking the websites of large companies, organizations or governments (hacktivism), which are becoming essential for the expression of dissent broadly speaking.

In Italy, in 2021, government put at citizens' disposal a new platform which consents the online request of referendums. Citizens, trough an electronic ID system can sign petitions from referendums from everywhere.[19] Major referendum requests were brought up, from the abolition of animal hunting to the legalisation of euthanasia and the legalisation of cannabis. Requests have to get at least 500,000 signatures, and then it can start its legislative and political process. This case is significant since it brought to the attention of all that, by technological means, there has been a facilitation in communication of wants and needs of the population. It was easier to connect the younger generations to politics and the legislative process, even though the response of the political field were not satisfactory. Digital platforms have the capability to mix and support the traditional repertoires of action, bringing innovation and large-scale diffusion, going international and transnational, with the implementation of IOs, multinational corporations, NGOs in the discourse. The transnational aspect has brought the emergence of transnational protests, where the same protest could have place in different parts of the world, or even transnational social movement meetings. The internet algorithm learns from its users, learning their ideas, their behaviours, their attitudes, and most of the time will use information at its advantage, showing to social media users, for example, advertisements of products which may interest them, but even activities, groups, people, which may share the same interests, ideas and so on. It is clear that this mechanism may be extremely helpful for social movements information dissemination.

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[18] Jeroen Van Laer and Peter Van Aelst, "Internet and Social Movement Action Repertoires," Information, Communication & Society 13, no. 8 (December 2010): 1146–71, https://doi.org/10.1080/13691181003628307.
[19] "EIDAS-Compliant ESignatures Make Online National Referendums Possible in Italy," ec.europa.eu, 2022, https://ec.europa.eu/digital-building-blocks/wikis/display/DIGITAL/2022/04/06/eIDAS-compliant+eSignatures+make+online+national+referendums+possible+in+Italy.

Considering social movements, they now have the possibility to open protest websites and social media profiles and be in direct contact with supporters all around the globe, at any time.

Politics and politicians too, moved onto digital platforms to reach the citizens, vehicle ideas and promote campaigns.

2.3 The importance of culture

The aspect of culture shapes beliefs, habits, the way in which a certain a social movement or its participants act, due to the fact that culture is an embedded longstanding system in all States shaping their citizens. Theorists often talk about cultural frames:

"[…] Frames have been defined as schemes of interpretation that enable individuals "to locate, perceive, identify and label occurrences within their life space and the world at large". A frame thus "is a general, standardized, predefined structure (in the sense that it already belongs to the receiver's knowledge of the world), which allows recognition of the world, and guides perception… allowing him/her to build defined expectations about what is to happen, that is to make sense of his/her reality."[20]

Nevertheless, different groups of people have distinct worldviews, classify the world in various ways, and have various values and beliefs, all of which have a considerable impact on actions and thought patterns. Given that social movement participants frequently have values, attitudes, beliefs, and ideological orientations that are often quite different from the broader culture and that changes in beliefs result in social change, this definition of culture can be easily applied to social movements. Given that differences among people are less and less due to processes of interconnectedness and globalisation, culture is more fluid but still everywhere.

There are three fundamental types of cultural factors: ideations, artifacts, and performances. This is a recurring topic in numerous research throughout the years. Ideation includes traditional aspects such as normative speech patterns as well as values, beliefs, social representations, habits, and ideologies. Whether created individually or collectively cultural artifacts like music, painting, and literature stand on their own in terms of materiality and are accessible to others after the initial (cultural) action that produced them. Performances might

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[20] Mario Diani and Donatella Della Porta, Social Movements: An Introduction, 3rd edition (S.L.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020).

be described as symbolic activities, of interpretation of culture and subsequent concretisation.

Social movements combine this array of factors when shaping campaign, discourses, symbols, integrating the culture of a certain State in their strategies, but developing a sort of resistant counterculture, developing different narratives and bringing innovation, to appeal to both members of the movement and bystanders.[21]

Culture is not one-dimensional aspect in society: citizens of a nation, for example, may share the same cultural background, but each identity has different sets of perceptions and cultural differences which all mix together. This is the reason why there is a socially accepted general

hegemonic culture, and different cultural frames attempting to change, combine or break it. Cultural frames refer specifically to the ability of social movements to use a scheme of interpretation, composed by three stages, which are, in the analysis of Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani the diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational dimensions of framing[22]:

• Diagnostic element consists in the identification of the problem and issue at stake in a broader model of reference. Secondly, actors and respective opponents are found, with the affirmation of subjective interpretation against the others available. As a result of cultural development, actors are able to select the different potential targets for reprisal and frustration and their emotional affiliation, which is a complex and selective process.

• Prognostic element consists in the effective practice of developing campaigns and strategies, seeking solutions, forming consensus and hold power. Different actors in the same movement can hold different strategical assets and ideas, some may be more disruptive while others more lenient.

• Motivational element connects to incentives and the formation of discourses, identities, symbols to increase participation and legitimate action. To participate in contentious politics, actors need to recognise that benefits of participation are higher than the costs, may it involve psychological, cultural, and social incentives. Movements illustrate the applicability of a specific matter to particular life situations and generalize a given issue or dispute by making linkages to related issues or conditions in other social groups, as strategy. The development and creation of a frame is successful when there is frame alignment (when people adhere to it). The frame must be coherent, credible and meaningful, it must consider traditional heritage but also produce innovation. It obviously is up to the movement itself to

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[21]Hank Johnston, *Culture, Social Movements, and Protest* (Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2009).

[22] Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani, Social Movements: An Introduction, 3rd edition (S.L.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020).

decide if the dominant culture will be rejected, modified or embraced, considering also that it will ask from actors different kinds of adherence and action.

2.4 The LGBTQ+ social movement

The LGBTQ+ social movement will be taken into consideration as an example of new social movement of postmodernist ideals, with a set of specific experiences and identity claims. Firstly, the diversity of social organisation and resistance is observed. Early gay liberationists planned large marches and demonstrations as well as more intimate direct acts. Additionally, individuals have used culture, language, and alternative institution-building to forge group identities and secure environments for themselves, each of which served as a sort of resistance in and of themselves. Secondly, movements interacted with one another, borrowing terminology, tactics, and self-assurance from other contemporary social movements.

Before the events of the Stonewall Uprisings, communities of queer people existed in the US, but not in a proper social movement and mobilisation construction. They were creating bonds between themselves to find a communal private space. With the increased repression of gays and lesbians, queer people shifted their attention to campaign-organisation and subsequent mobilisation. As previously mentioned, the chain of events and protests of the Stonewall Uprisings, were effective in the formation of the social movement, which responded to societal and political repression and the arising general discontent. Queer people were upholding a subversive identity and culture from the dominant ones, the latter pushing the LGBTQ+ community into dark corners to preserve traditional gender roles. Radical GLF group held a radical rejection of the system of capitalism towards the recognition of a Marxist viewpoint and LGBTQ+ activism to resemble worker's protests, to benefit all the other oppressed categories and minorities. However, not all groups were so radical and subversive: a more collaborative and calmer protest was preferred. Furthermore, the challenge in the first years of LGBTQ+ activism was the difference in fights and representation within the community:

"[…] Even as they faced homophobia within both mainstream and radical feminism, lesbians within the gay movement often felt marginalized by gay male activists. Both the GLF and the GAA were primarily founded, led, and joined by men and women within these organizations experienced male

activists as sometimes aggressive, dismissive, and stuck in their own traditional notions of gender roles"[23]

The representation of other categories within the LGBTQ+ community was and still is marginal when compared to gay activism. Different difficulties and issues pertain to each minority in the queer community, with different experiences and viewpoints. Racism, the centrality of white "race" and of men, the gender inequalities characterised huge differences within the movement and even internal discriminations. In 1970 Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson co-founded STAR, the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries, as specific tool of aid for all, but with special consideration of trans homeless people and trans youth. Going back to the analysis of LGBTQ+ social movements' symbols and discourses formation,
one of the early expressions of sexual difference (homosexual versus heterosexual) by activists was gay liberation, and lesbian feminism. Their formation dates the 1970s and represent a rupture with the homophile movement of the 1950s/1960s. Lesbian feminists favoured social and cultural separatism; gay liberationists, in contrast, advocated coming out, authenticity, and pride. In New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles in 1970, the first "gay liberation day" parades to remember the Stonewall riots appeared. Gays and lesbians used these pride parades as a form of collective action to spread across the nation and proclaim their identities while defying heteronormative cultural norms through displays of sexuality and gender transgression.

"[…] In a similar way, the chant "out of the closet, into the streets" illustrates how gay liberationists smashed open the doors of secrecy and silence to dispel stereotypes, assert a public identity and normalize homosexuality"[24]

The AIDS emergency of 1980s changed the gay liberation movements towards queer activism focused on the elimination of differences and coalition of the queer community towards the recognition of the pressing issue, which was affecting gay people the most but was overlooked by government and the general society. Queer activists combined political and cultural aims in their combative, in-your-face protests. Through public demonstrations,

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[23]Lisa M. Stulberg, *LGBTQ Social Movements* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2018).
[24] Amin Ghaziani, Verta Taylor, and Amy Stone, "Cycles of Sameness and Difference in LGBT Social Movements," Annual Review of Sociology 42, no. 1 (July 30, 2016): 165–83, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-073014-112352.

they followed a program of cultural provocation and theatrical politics while addressing pharmaceutical firms, researchers about their approach to treating AIDS.

Nowadays, the LGBTQ+ activism has experienced (as all contentious politics in general) an NGOisation and a shift of online activism. As disruptive events are less and less, and acceptance of diversity and opinion communication are increasing, activism is mostly transnational and online. However, the impact in national politics is still huge: in Italy the debate over LGBTQ+ rights was extremely active in 2020-2021, when an anti-discrimination (on the basis of sexuality and disability) draft law was approved in the Chamber of Deputies and repealed in the Senate, after months of obstructions from the Right Coalition and discussions both within government and outside in the public realm and in the media. When the definitive repeal happened, the big discrepancies between the political class and citizens was found, due to the fact that the majority of people was favourable to the enactment of the anti-discrimination law. Furthermore, the repeal led to the referendum proposal on same-sex marriage: online petitions et similia are absorbed into social movements' repertoires of action and represent the state of the debate in a certain society, as checks and balances of public opinions.

On the other hand, NGOisation refers to the professionalisation, bureaucratisation, and institutionalisation of LGBTQ+ social movements, and to the participation of organisations in discourses and in politics, as they set rules and ideals which create transformation and legal duties for States that adhere to them. ILGA Europe works as the perfect example of a body englobing hundreds of organisations and 54 countries towards the attainment of common goals of social, political and legal changes for the LGBTQ+ community.[25]

ILGA Europe and the NGOisation broadly speaking, are an attempt of institutionalisation of social movements, from loosely organised and horizontal groups to vertical institutionalised and formally organised groups. Furthermore, they require an expertise that social movements did not need before, leading to the professionalisation of contention. These groups' speech is often depoliticized and is technical and policy oriented. They mostly use lobbying as part of their action plan. High-level competence and a wide network across EU institutions are their key sources of resources. Finally, these organizations are set up similarly to a professional secretariat, and frequently function mostly independently from national member organizations.[26]

ILGA Europe works, together with the EU as tool of Europeanisation of social movements.

[25] "ILGA-Europe - about Us," ILGA Europe, February 4, 2018, https://www.ilga-europe.org/about-us/.
[26] David Paternotte, "The NGOization of LGBT Activism: ILGA-Europe and the Treaty of Amsterdam," Social Movement Studies 15, no. 4 (September 14, 2015): 388–402, https://doi.org/10.1080/14742837.2015.1077111.

Europeanisation is viewed as the processes of construction, diffusion, and institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, shared beliefs and norms, which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, political structures, and public policies. The top-down and bottom-up vertical connections between domestic states and Brussels facilitate the Europeanization of LGBT movement, but also facilitate horizontal networks of actors among member states. The EU has the legal capacity to impose formal rules to member States helping social movements and civil society from above. Europeanisation helps the transnational activism providing more spaces, even outside the State for advocacy and issue mobilisation. The main goal of the EU is the harmonisation of sets of fundamental beliefs and rights across member States, even though differences in political, social, legal areas are significant. Support is given to all States, even those that are more resistant to change, but asks

for accountability and transparency through legally binding treaties.[27]

2.5 Eastern European perspective

The EU, Europeanisation and NGOisation are fundamental aspects in the formation of LGBTQ+ social groups or queer activism in Eastern Europe. Broadly speaking, this process started with the fall of the Communist Bloc in 1989 and the need of these countries in crisis to be supported and welcomed in the EU. The biggest enlargement of the EU took place in 2004 and was also the most difficult one: years of negotiations between the EEC (Eastern European Countries) and the EU led to an accelerated process of total reformation in these countries to meet the expectations of the European Union. We could argue that the process of adaptation to those liberal, capitalist, European paradigms is still ongoing, and that these countries march at different paths compared to the Western ones.

Without much consideration for its historical particularism or applicability to their environment, CEE countries relatively universally adopted a Western style of political and social involvement after the fall of the Iron Curtain. The West had already reached the "queer" stage, with a lengthy history and a variety of models when lesbian and homosexual

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[27] Phillip M. Ayoub, "Cooperative Transnationalism in Contemporary Europe: Europeanization and Political Opportunities for LGBT Mobilization in the European Union," European Political Science Review 5, no. 2 (August 1, 2012): 279–310, https://doi.org/10.1017/s1755773912000161.

activism started to emerge in the Eastern counterpart. From this point of view, Joanna Mizielińska proposed Western 'time of sequence' and Eastern 'time of coincidence'[28] The two areas have two completely different temporalities: while the West was in full capitalist capacity, the East was communist. In 1989 the East found itself catapulted abruptly in the time of coincidence with the West, in a liberal and capitalist system that was too distant from its system. The West continued its path and followed its time of sequence: the fall of the Iron Curtain was a decisive event even for this area, but was just one event in a sequence of historical events touching the region. Eastern Europe was catapulted in a sequence of events that for the West would have been as "going back in time", while for the East was totally new. The West had years of progressive development towards the development of feminist, queer, environmental movements, and for the sedimentation of rights and duties for citizens. The East did not have this privilege, and had to compress "Western time", experiencing discordant models and realities, tactics, and opportunities, uses and understandings "all at once."

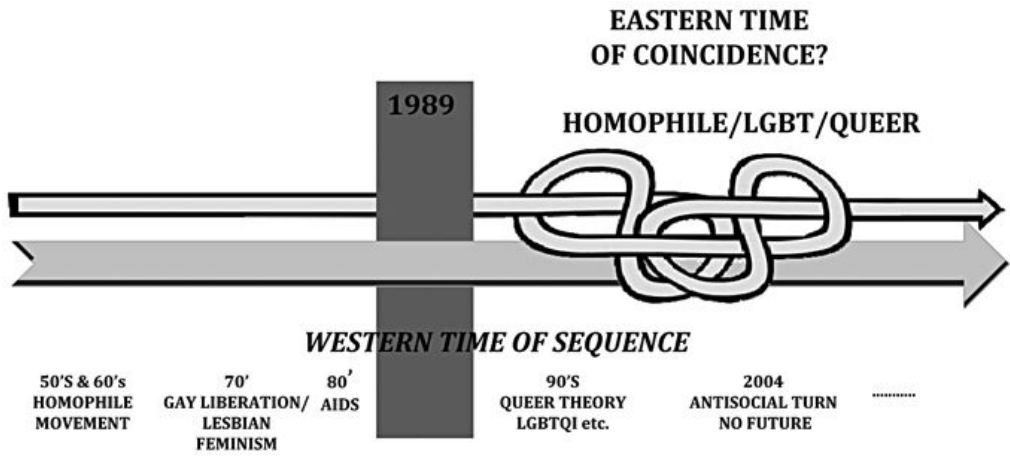To represent the knotting and looping of time in Eastern European queer experiences:

Figure 1.1 Western time of sequence and Eastern time of coincidence[29]

This reality is still present: East and West are still recognised as two parallels, in developments and times, in LGBTQ+ movements but also at economic viewpoint. The West is hegemonic and the East is more peripheral.

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[28] Robert Kulpa and Joanna Mizielińska, De-Centring Western Sexualities : Central and Eastern European Perspectives (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011).

[29] Robert Kulpa and Joanna Mizielińska, De-Centring Western Sexualities : Central and Eastern European Perspectives (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2011).

Keeping in mind the dissimilar historical viewpoints, the distinctive cultures, the differential time perception, the difficulties to transform in social, political, legal, economic spheres, the ultimate omnipresent East/West divide, the analysis of next chapter will focus on the experience of Romania, as satellite country of the USSR up to 1989 and official member of the EU from 2007. Romania is not considered as substitute of the entire Eastern experience, but as an example of the differential development of this area compared to the West.

Chapter 3: Romania: The LGBTQ+ community
Political, institutional, social, religious developments

Romania's case is an example of an Eastern European viewpoint on the development of queer issues, identities, social movements, and repertoires of actions to help broaden our perspectives and integrate in cultural discourses also peripheral countries (within the EU and "the West"). The exploration of Romania will not focus on social movements only, but on all aspects which influence queer discourses and progress.

3.1 Historical and legal viewpoint of queerness

Article 200 of the Romanian Penal Code made same-sex partnerships and any acts of that sort illegal from 1968 until 2001. It was adopted under the Communist Regime, more specifically under the command of Ceausescu, which has been widely recognised as one of the most violent and repressive communist leader of the Eastern Bloc.

The Article defined as illegal any homosexual conduct, and punishable with 5 years of prison. In 1996, due to international pressure to remove the article from the Penal Code, the second comma was modified as to penalise only public homosexual relationships and public encounters, or the ones creating scandal, continuing in this way to discipline homosexuality up to 2001.

The pressure of the Council of Europe in its 1993 Report to repeal Article 200 was useless. Romania government responded stating that the total decriminalisation of homosexuality was impossible due to longstanding Romanian mentality perceiving homosexuality as a major moral and religious offense. Members of Parliament, during the open discussion about Article 200, considered themselves as detached from the West and preserved the communist rhetoric, affirming that, to accept homosexuality and to decriminalise it is to succumb to western deviances and lose all moral principles in the name of progress.[30]

Furthermore, the general public itself was still reluctant to accept homosexuals. Religious organisations took upon themselves the role of opposing the repeal of Article 200, through petitions and appeals. The change in the wording of the second comma of Article 200 was just a façade change to compromise between the external international pressure and

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[30] "Scandaluri Publice Orientarea Sexualã Si Legea Penalã În România," Human Rights Watch, n.d., http://www.accept-romania.ro/images/stories/scandaluri_publice._orientarea_sexuala_si_legea_penala_in_romania.pdf.

complete rejection of homosexuality in the country. The small change in the Article, made the formation of social movements and LGBT associations possible, supported by external actors. The Open Society Foundation and Western European Government Ministries founded in 1996 ACCEPT, the first gay NGO to support the fight for the recognition of LGBT rights, more specifically born to definitively push government to repeal the infamous article. In 1998, there is the last known imprisonment for homosexuality of Mariana Cetiner, released after increasing pressure from both the international community and the internal pressures from activists' groups.[31]

As already mentioned, in 2001 the article was completely repealed. However, major changes were achieved from that moment onwards:

• In spite of the fact that it is a broad rule and does not specifically target the LGBTQ+ population, ordinance 137/2000 was adopted in the 2000, modified from 2002 to 2006 and forbids any form of discrimination based on sexual orientation and sex/gender.[32]

• The age of consent was equalised between heterosexual couples and non-heterosexual ones in 2002 (firstly recognised at 15 then changed at 16).

• Lastly, in 2004, Bucharest hosted the first LGBT event, Festivalul Diversității, a festival honouring diversity. The first Pride March was organized in 2005, one year later. Gay and lesbian associations have from 2004 onwards organised gay cinematic festivals, meetings, books publications, pride parades to promote and diffuse LGBT identities and cultures.[33]

By 2006, however, Romania's legal framework LGBT people transformed, being one of five countries named by Human Rights Watch for exemplary progress on LGBT rights.[34]

3.2 Cultural framework, societal perceptions

It has to be remarked that LGBT issues even in post-communist times did not find a welcoming society and a solid ground for acceptance. Firstly, the change to democracy in 1989 was ideological, more than institutional and social: even though the fall of the Communist regime was purposely led to democratise the country, it does not mean that the proper structures to sustain it were present. Quite the contrary, Romania and other CEE

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[31] Amnesty International. "Romania: Amnesty International Appeals for the Release of Mariana Cetiner," March 18, 1998. https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR39/010/1998/en/.

[32] Oana Iacob, "Romania: Government Ordinance No. 137/2000 on Preventing and Sanctioning All Forms of Discrimination | European Website on Integration," ec.europa.eu, 2015, https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/romania-government-ordinance-no-1372000-preventing-and-sanctioning-all-forms_en.

[33] "Istoric – Asociatia ACCEPT," Asociatia ACCEPT, n.d., http://www.acceptromania.ro/istoric/.

[34] Human Rights Watch. "'The Hall of Shame,'" May 17, 2006. https://www.hrw.org/news/2006/05/17/hall-shame.

countries needed time for transforming and dismantling the residues of Communism. From the political class to citizens, the vast majority had strong homophobic inclinations, shaped by years and years of totalitarian command either hiding the issue of homosexuality, by classifying it as a Western abnormality, or by religion affiliation with the Orthodox Church which was extremely against it. The first steps towards acceptance were mostly taken to please the European Union which was demanding the recognition and protection of human rights, among which we find gay and lesbian rights, as premises for accession. Under Ceausescu's regime, the LGBTQ+ community was silenced and repressed, but was not publicly attached in media representation, in political and religious discourses as in the immediate post-communist period. For most of the 1990s, the media's presentation of homosexuality was the homophobic coverage of Romania Mare, politically affiliated with the right-wing party in power. If not, sensationalism, crime and gossips were the tools to describe sexual minorities. With the progressive settlement of freedom of speech and freedom of the press, even media portrayal of the community changed, but did not support it either. It placed itself in a middle-ground.

A nationalistic rhetoric was essentially held to push back the issue of homosexuality as "taking modernisation too far", at the expenses of national identity and ideals which could not be sold at all costs. Popular tactics of right-wing organizations include the appeal to the declining birth-rate as a pretext for populist policies, and anti-abortion legislation. In these discourses, gender norms are stressed, and anything perceived as "non-traditional" is considered as dangerous. The importance of transnational networks to even bring about the discourse in the public arena and to support the creation of movements inside the country was relevant and made the change possible.

"[…] Explaining this variation offers broader insights into backlash's role as a catalyst of social movement development, especially in contexts with unfavourable political opportunity structures (POS) and scarce resources for collective action. As this book argues, when LGBT movements face threatening opposition, it allows them to solve several collective action problems at once, and with minimal resources. Coming under attack generates solidarity."[35]

This is how Romania went from not even knowing the definitions of gay, lesbian and trans, to an array of protests (both for and against homosexuality), and concentrated political gains.

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[35] Conor O'Dwyer, Coming Out of Communism: The Emergence of LGBT Activism in Eastern Europe (New York: New York University, 2018).

The continued oppositional discourses, petitions and protests centred the discourse and made the country hyperaware of the issue and vehiculated the new definitions which will then be used in social movements contestations, basically achieving the exact opposite of what was wanted. The push of transnational networks and the EU made sure that activism would not end in repression, due to the fact that Romania started its history as a democratic country with hard right political parties in government, perpetuating closeness and no particular sympathy for the West. Each single word was under the radar of the West, which was monitoring the situation since Romania was the most openly anti-gay country and one of the least cooperative in the Eastern bloc. The European Parliament's 1998 resolution on the acceptance within the EU only of those countries respecting the human rights of lesbians and gays accelerated transnational investments which truly supported the work of the association ACCEPT, which was, however, based in Bucharest and did not cover the entire country efficiently.

Social perceptions of homosexuality were bad also due to the fact that the main supporters were not Romanians: ACCEPT itself was composed by foreign activists with support from the outside. The nationalistic rhetoric was very strong and there was a divide between Romanians and "Westerners", and this obviously had similar effects on the divide created between the socially accepted identity and the gay identity. Even here the influence of the Communist era is significant: the cult of the last former Communist leader was effective in separating Romania from other CEE countries and in directing all attention towards him as only promoter of the well-being of the country. He was a national hero.

Still in the 1990s, both government and religion were exploiting the nationalist approach to put distance among any deviant identity and the socially accepted one. As Romanians were used to these frames of interpretation, they did not see the need to activate themselves because they were accepting them unconsciously as they were (and to some extents still are) embedded in the cultural master frame.

Furthermore, the Orthodox Church was present in politics and being Orthodox was a fundamental feature of Romanianness: if homosexuality was and is deemed a negative thing for the preservation of the race and as an impure act for the Church, people believe it. The Orthodox Church constituted the most reliable body and the most trustworthy in Romanians' opinions after the army[36] Even more, the influence of the Orthodox Church has changed

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[36] Aleksandar Štulhofer and Theo Sandfort, *Sexuality and Gender in Postcommunist Eastern Europe and Russia* (New York: Haworth Press, 2005).

over time fairly speaking, but it is still able to influence the majority, more specifically older individuals or people living in rural areas. A study conducted by Pew Research Center found that up to 2018, Romania was the most religious country in Europe.[37]

The ACCEPT strategy to combat the fixed view of Romanianness was exactly to vehicle the view of being Romanian by citizenship and lineage, not by ethnicity and infused traditional patriarchal values, to bring the acceptance of different identities in the nation, rendering homosexuals "Romanians" and close the gap that religious and political discourses formed. Thus, the main cultural aspects stem from Communist heritage: the view of nationalism and single identity, the perceived distance between Romania and "the others" in the EU, the influence of the Church and the perceived view that homosexuality is an invention of the West are the elements of the master frame which limit the action of LGBTQ social movements.

3.3 The influence of the Orthodox Church in disrupting LGBT social movements

The case of the Orthodox Church as main challenger of the queer community has to be expanded with reference to the continuous anti-gay propaganda and anti-gay activism, from the beginning to the latest developments.

As mentioned, the Church's activism towards the boycotting of the repeal of Article 200 of the Penal Code was just the beginning of systematic counter-activism against the queer community.

In 2004, the "Festival of Diversity" was just a compromise between the need to institutionalise LGBT representation and the stark opposition of the extreme right and religion. The far-right movements threatened people of violence if a Pride March (as originally intended) would have taken place; the Church was organising a counter-parade to express its aversion towards the initiative: both forces merged to express discontent.[38]

In 2005, for the same reasons, the first Pride March of 2005 was a historically significant step, but still reticent and controversial. The Church and the far right merged again to organise a counter-march and threaten with violent contestation the LGBT community. Bucharest was, at first, hesitant in granting public soil to have the march for security purposes and order. The March Day, participants were more or less five hundreds, and many

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[37] Center, Pew Research. "How Religious Is Your Country?" Pew Research Center, December 5, 2018. https://www.pewresearch.org/interactives/how-religious-is-your-country/.

[38] Asociatia CATHOLICA. "Semnal de Alarmă Privind „Festivalul Diversităţii" | Catholica.ro," May 5, 2004. https://www.catholica.ro/2004/05/05/semnal-de-alarma-privind-festivalul-diversitatii/.

more LGBTQ+ people were even scared to take part to it. Even representing a big first step, it is obvious that individuals were scared to participate for fear of reprisals and violence, and judgement all over was still a pressing issue.

One would imagine that with the passing of time, and with the continuous annual successions of Pride Marches would have led to a normalisation and acceptance of the event. Clearly, it is not the case: in 2021, after 16 years of marches and discourses, impediments to Bucharest Pride are still present.

Firstly, restrictions of COVID-19 had major importance and presence during 2021, and many events all around the globe have been postponed or cancelled. Allegedly, this is the reason why many issues arose during its organisation: the mayor of Bucharest refused at first to even consider the Pride march. Then, after social pressure and bargaining with the association, they set up a date and a threshold of 500 people maximum. The far-right parties, with the same old support by the Church, on the same day at the same place, organised the "March of normality". Even if the Pride parade was restricted to five hundred people, almost three thousand showed up: the biggest affluence ever was registered, and for this, the president of ACCEPT was fined. On the other hand, the counter-march was deemed perfectly legal, not obstructed by the mayor, could present with slogans such as "stop the destruction of Romanian families". The day after, Gigi Becali, former owner of FCSB (a Romanian football team), known for his extreme political opinions, led another manifestation, to "cleanse" the roads where the LGBTQ+ community marched the day before, singing and praying and washing away the "demons" with holy water.[39]

No fines or obstruction by government or public indignation were seen after these two counter-marches. From one side, the march was a success since it registered the highest participation rate, on the other opposition is still very present and poses serious threats.

3.4 The work of ACCEPT Romania and the emergence of other grassroot activity

As the main organisation focused on the fight for LGBT rights, it is important to consider it was and still is the pillar in lobbying, advocacy, and coordination of actions. ACCEPT Romania is the primary organisation for the vehiculation of identity, for the promotion of cultural production and the connection between Romania and the European Union.

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[39] Otopeanu, Cristian. "Gigi Becali, Declarații Homofobe După „Bucharest Pride"." Libertatea, August 15, 2021. https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/gigi-becali-declaratii-homofobe-dupa-bucharest-pride-3692479.

ACCEPT Romania defines itself as promoter of human rights and anti-discrimination broadly speaking, trying to represent in a comprehensive way the queer community as a whole but transmitting a broader anti-discrimination message. Between 2001 and 2005 it had the power to push for the decriminalisation of same-sex relationships, it promoted and effectively convinced government to adopt an anti-discrimination law, to grant the Pride Parade each year, accompanied by the recognition of an entire week of LGBT activities.

"[…] The year 2009 saw the first gay pride parade without violent incidents, a reality which has perpetuated since then. Even though Western embassies issue since 2005 letters of support for the gay pride parade and for the Gay Fest, and also hosted events and supported financially ACCEPT for different projects, in 2009 ambassadors decided to attend the gay pride parade. This was not only a symbolic signal, but it also meant an increase in security of participants"[40]

The extract highlights how situation was changing towards tolerance of the LGBT community in common spaces, even though it is impossible to say that the queer community was accepted as an identity. Thanks to the activity of ACCEPT, a clear legal background was in act and general perceptions were shifting, leading to a stabilisation of social movements.

ACCEPT, for the broaden recognition of anti-discrimination and acceptance of multiple identities, takes part to the Coaliția Anti-discriminare (Anti-discrimination coalition)[41] since the early 2000. This is important, since Romania holds a very strong anti-Roma rhetoric, which for them is not recognisable as discrimination since they are portrayed as bad people, stealers, manipulators. Generally speaking, the hate towards the Roma identity is what unifies Romanians. This is a step towards the legitimation of all identities.

Furthermore, ACCEPT is not the only organisation in Romania, considering the post-2000 era and grassroots activity: support groups were established outside of the capital city, which for many years was the only city in which formal LGBT+ groups existed. Examples include the Cluj-Napoca organization Les Sisterhood (now known as Queer Sisterhood), Timișoara's LGBT+eam, and Iași's Rise OUT group[42].

In 2015 Mozaiq too entered as full-force organisation in the capital, effectively organising and

[40] Vlad Levente Viski, "'AN ARMY of GENERALS without RANK-AND-FILE': BUILDING a GAY and LESBIAN SOCIAL MOVEMENT in ROMANIA after 2001," Www.academia.edu, 2015, https://www.academia.edu/14329375/_AN_ARMY_OF_GENERALS_WITHOUT_RANK_AND_FILE_BUILDING_A_GAY_AND_LESBIAN_SOCIAL_MOVEMENT_IN_ROMANIA_AFTER_2001.

[41] "Despre Coaliție: Coaliția Anti-Discriminare," www.antidiscriminare.ro, n.d., https://www.antidiscriminare.ro/despre-coalitia-antidiscriminare.

[42] Radzhana Buyantueva and Maryna Shevtsova, *LGBTQ+ Activism in Central and Eastern Europe : Resistance, Representation and Identity* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020).

participating in protest and manifestations.[43]

Finally, problems and limitations of ACCEPT are to be considered. Firstly, it was seen as too distant from the public, as its configuration was shaped and controlled mostly by foreign participants, which did not help Romanians to connect with them through nationalist discourses. Secondly, ACCEPT tried to import Western ideals into a ground which was and is not ready to receive them completely. The close collaboration with the EU, NGOs of transnational imprint, the repertoires of action and discourses were imported from the need to be accepted by these bodies and proceed with the enlargement process.

Activism and problems continued to arise between 2010 and 2018, but I would like to focus on the period from 2018 onwards to consider the rise of the right and the new major increasing attacks to the LGBT community on the legal sphere.

3.5 2018-2021, major setbacks for the LGBTQ+ community

In this period of time I identify 2 major setbacks for the LGBT community, indicating resistance to structural changes and a regression that is globally diffused in those democratic aspects, exacerbated by periods of crisis, such as the one caused by the COVID pandemic.

- As a first aspect, I would like to analyse the proposal of 2018 to amend the existing law on marriage coming from the Coalition for Family, backed up by the Orthodox Church, the Social Democrat party, and the Right-wing parties. Article 48 defines individuals entering into marriage as "spouses". The goal is to further specify that "marriage should be celebrated exclusively between a man and a woman", as the obvious intent to exclude any non-heteronormative interpretation and further discriminate against same-sex couples. The proposal sparked hate in all society and in political arena. Liviu Dragnea, leader of the Social Democrats party: "Many people fear that what happened in other countries could happen here, for example that a human and an animal could get married" on national television. This is plain resistance to change and innovation, still pursuing the rhetoric of the West as not pure and contaminating Romania with deviant ideas[44].

  The results of the referendum did not count as the voting threshold (which was lowered to 30% by the Social Democratic government just before the referendum) fell short to little over 20%. However, the votes cast were mostly in favour of the change of law.

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[43] "Despre MozaiQ," MozaiQ, June 1, 2020, https://www.mozaiqlgbt.ro/despre/.

[44] Shaun Walker, "Romanians to Vote in Referendum LGBT Groups Say Is Fuelling Hate," The Guardian, October 5, 2018, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/oct/05/romanians-to-vote-in-referendum-lgbt-groups-say-is-fuelling-hate-marriage-corruption.

This homophobic and nationalist effort sought to create division in society and provide the groundwork for a new right-wing political movement that would reflect and advance existing trends in Europe.

- Secondly, in 2020 theologist of the People's Movement Party proposed a bill to Parliament on the discussion of gender in schools. After discussions, the Romanian Parliament approved the law that would have made it illegal to discuss gender identity in educational settings, and any course or teaching on the matter. Holding that sex and gender consist in two different things would have been considered gender identity theory and not permitted. Even though widely recognised as such by the WHO and pervading discourses in other countries, Romanian parliamentarians viewed it as indoctrination of children to western "gender ideology", which is not real and not to be absorbed (as they like to think). All universities, writers, journalists, were opposing it, claiming that it would have been the ultimate control over freedom of speech, and a return to the Middle Ages. It would have led to a breach of essential laws on anti-discrimination, plus it would have undermined one of the essential and fundamental cultural and democratic bodies we have: schools, and more generally, education and their freedom. Thus, the president Klaus Iohannis did not sign it and criticised it at the national Constitutional Court televised hearing, supporting the liberty of educational settings, of the LGBTQ+ community, and the preservation of the division of powers in a well-functioning democratic state.[45]

- Lastly, the resistance of the institutions to recognise that the EU has supranational powers that are binding when considering fundamental rights (such as LGBTQ+ recognition and rights) that all States of the Union shall adopt.
  Adrian Coman's and Clai Hamilton's marriage is an unsolved case which reflects this Romanian resistance to same-sex marriages and gay rights. The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) heard the case, and in 2017 it decided that marriage should be recognised even though national law did not legalise same-sex marriages. Romania had to do so because it was in line with the right of citizens to move and reside freely within the Union with family members, as Coman is Romanian and wanted to live in the country with his husband. The CJEU decision was anticipated by the Romanian Constitutional Court, but the Romanian authorities said nothing in response[46].

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[45] Cristian Gonzales Cabrera, "Romanian Court Slams Law Banning Discussion of Gender in Education," Human Rights Watch, December 17, 2020, https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/17/romanian-court-slams-law-banning-discussion-gender-education.

[46] "The Coman Case, 3 Years On," ILGA Europe, June 11, 2021, https://www.ilga-europe.org/blog/freedom-of-movement-same-sex-spouses-coman-case-3-years-on/.

The last bit of information that will be taken into consideration is the measurement though indexes of the change in people's view of homosexuality and queerness. Even though different indexes measure different aspects, the focus is on the general overview of how people feel towards the LGBTQ+ community.

According to a survey by Adela Moraru that was published in 2010, but considered data of 2003, 45% of respondents agreed that gays should not be given the same rights and 40% even agreed that they should not live in Romania. She then identifies the groups of individuals who are often more homophobic: those with higher educational standing are more tolerant; those who are less religion are more tolerant; and those who have LGBTQ+ friends or family members are more likely to accept them. There is little doubt that historical context has influenced how individuals perceive and think. When analysing the gap between people's political and social views, the distinction between urban and rural locations is actually of utmost importance. Furthermore, the most important cultural frame is found: Romanians tend to distance themselves from the different, in this case accusing the West for the diffusion of queerness. Those who have met or know LGBTQ+ individuals are more accepting because they had the opportunity to make first-hand experience.[47]

The second survey looks at data of ILGA Europe, Rainbow Europe Annual Report. In 2022, social perception is different from the one of the previous studies at first glance:

It was found that 68% of Romanians think all families should be protected by law, including same-sex families. 71% thought introducing marriage equality would not affect them. However, in the legal institutional recognition, the situation is different: 43% thought that same-sex families should have some form of legal recognition and 26% agreed with introducing same-sex marriage.[48]

The last considered survey looks at the perceptions of queer people of acceptance, discrimination, gay rights in Romanian society. The survey comes from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights on LGBT equality of 2020.

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[47] Moraru Adela, "Social Perception of Homosexuality in Romania," Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 5 (2010): 45–49, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2010.07.048.
[48] "Annual Review 2022 - ILGA-Europe," Rainbow Europe, February 14, 2022, https://ilga-europe.org/report/annual-review-2022/.

45% of LGBTQ+ individuals felt discriminated in one (or more) areas of life in the year before the survey, 43% claim to have been harassed the year before the survey. Interestingly, 12% of LGBT of teenager respondents (15-17 years old) said their school education at some point addressed LGBT issues positively or in a balanced way, highlighting non-inclusiveness in schools.[49]

Data generally confirm the fact that social perception of LGBTQ+ people is still negative, that it is still difficult to legitimise the queer community, especially when they demand rights of any sort. Even though data takes three different moments in time, results seem pretty similar (of course non-comparable and non-generalisable). Yet, even though most people seem to be accepting (up to a certain extent), it is obvious that the public and institutional spheres are still permeated by traditional viewpoint of individuality, culture and the "privatisation" of different sexual orientation. It means that change may be happening and could happen in the future, but people's adaptation to new values and the dismantling of the old ones takes time.

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[49] "EU LGBTI Survey II a Long Way to Go for LGBTI Equality," 2020,
https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/lgbti-survey-country-data_romania.pdf.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis undertaken was an attempt to reconcile the view of LGBTQ+ social movements and identity issues in a Western perspective and in an Eastern one.

As social movements are a broad area of analysis, the focus was on the two fundamental frameworks of resource mobilisation theory and political opportunity structure, with a brief consideration of movements stemming from discontent. I would argue that the latter suits best the Eastern case, even though social movements are, for the most part, a mix of opportunities, resources, discontent, culture, innovation, all in different degrees and situations. No movement is like to the other, even though modular repertoires can be identified. Thus, speaking of Western and Eastern social movements serves the purpose of framing contention in two opposed systems that are trying to find a common ground under the European Union body. The West had the liberal capitalistic and democratic background developed through time, while the East was catapulted in it. Therefore, two different times of sequence and time of coincidence: they are moving at different speeds with different needs.

Even considering these differences in possibilities, the West still tried to export its way of doing contention, ideological basics, and institutions to the East to save it from crisis.

The EU Enlargement at East may be considered by many academics as a bad idea, since the East is perceived as pushing down the West in terms of innovation, economic growth, but I would argue that the East needed that push in the right direction, since the Fall of the Iron Curtain left them devastated.

The support of the EU and transnational NGOs rendered social movement formation and the change of law possible in arguably few years, especially in Romania. If negative or positive, it is up to interpretations.

The fundamental aim of the study was to put on the spot one country which is often overlooked in all domains, as it is not centre of power and is deemed

peripheral in the current view of the world. The production of literature and studies on queer theory and LGBTQ+ movements in Romania (and CEE more generally) is quite recent and not extensive yet. To know our neighbours and to know different cultural frames serves the purpose of broadening one's knowledge and comprehension of the other but leads to the recognition of the need of differential and subjective (not one size fits all) approaches to each reality.

ABSTRACT

Il presente elaborato si focalizza sullo studio dei movimenti sociali, considerandone la nascita nei Paesi Occidentali, lo sviluppo delle pratiche e dei repertori di azione. Particolare attenzione è stata dedicata ai movimenti sociali negli Stati Uniti, per descrivere la differenza tra i nuovi movimenti sociali (che si sono originati negli anni Sessanta), basati meno su un ritorno materiale ma più ideologico e istituzionale, e quelli tradizionali, che sono generalmente identificabili con i movimenti socialisti. Inoltre, varie teorie sono state sviluppate su quali possano essere le ragioni di fondo che consentono la nascita dei movimenti sociali. Charles Tilly e Sydney Tarrow sostengono che essi trovino terreno fertile nelle democrazie, dove il sistema è di fondo basato sulla rappresentanza dei cittadini e del loro volere. Intrinsecamente predisposte ad accettare il pluralismo ideologico, le democrazie inglobano i movimenti sociali come strumenti di innovazione, progresso e rappresentanza delle minoranze e delle identità e delle idee non presenti nella sfera politico-istituzionale di un determinato Paese). In questo contesto politico, un movimento sociale può trovare l'opportunità di formarsi e di guadagnare sostenitori quando le opportunità politiche sono favorevoli, le risorse economiche e ideologiche sono presenti, quando c'è grande insoddisfazione e scontento verso le istituzioni, o quando il senso di appartenenza e le emozioni forti sono canalizzate contro il sistema e verso il movimento sociale.

Il focus dei primi due capitoli sui movimenti sociali è dato dall'importanza di capire cosa siano effettivamente, cosa rappresentino, come si formino e quali siano gli obiettivi. Moltissimi movimenti sociali hanno raggiunto le nostre società, dal femminismo, ai movimenti ambientali, tutti con vari repertori di azione e varie strategie, sempre innovative e adattate al contesto sociale e culturale. Studiare i movimenti sociali vuol dire capire lo stato di salute di una democrazia, le idee di una determinata società, l'innovazione e il cambiamento ideologico, sociale, istituzionale, politico e culturale.

Gli Stati Uniti, con i moti di Stonewall, sono l'esempio fondamentale per affrontare la nascita dei movimenti LGBTQ+ come nuovo movimento sociale e di come un movimento organizzato possa portare scompiglio ma anche cambiamento all'interno di una società.

I moti di Stonewall, nel 1969, sono un momento essenziale nel quale la comunità queer si è definitivamente scagliata e ribellata alle continue discriminazioni su tutti i fronti, e ha lottato attivamente contro la polizia durante i raid nei posti di ritrovo LGBTQ+. Successivamente, le organizzazioni, i gruppi e i movimenti queer già presenti nel Paese, si sono coalizzati e riorganizzati contro uno Stato opprimente che non riconosceva loro il diritto di esistere e

condividere lo spazio con la popolazione non-queer, uno stato fortemente misogino ed eteronormativo. Studiando quel momento, riconosciamo come, in un Paese capitalista, liberale e libertario, la nascita di movimenti sociali possa avvenire anche con proteste violente, ma soprattutto come la pluralità venga riconosciuta ed integrata nel discorso istituzionale senza repressione totale. Il forte legame tra gli Stati Uniti e gli Stati Occidentali europei provvederà a diffondere i nuovi movimenti sociali e i moti LGBTQ+ anche in queste realtà. Seppur le lotte per il riconoscimento delle identità queer siano ancora in atto ovunque, i progressi ottenuti sono significativi: la decriminalizzazione dell'omosessualità negli Stati Uniti, seppur tardiva, è stata ottenuta progressivamente in tutti gli Stati, grazie alle proteste e all'attivismo. Il matrimonio tra coppie dello stesso sesso è generalmente riconosciuto negli Stati Uniti, e le unioni civili largamente riconosciute nei Paesi Occidentali in Europa.

La domanda da porsi è se effettivamente non stiamo affrontando anni di inversione di rotta, (data la generale adesione a destra degli ultimi anni), che porterebbero le democrazie indietro sui diritti. Basti pensare al caso Roe contro Wade sul diritto di aborto negli Stati Uniti, sentenza che è stata cancellata, lasciando milioni di donne senza la garanzia e la sicurezza di poter usufruire del diritto di abortire.

Una breve differenza è stata presa in considerazione, osservando l'Unione Sovietica e i Paesi satellite dell'attuale Est Europa, dove si procederà con la spiegazione di come le manifestazioni, l'attività politica, in questo regime fossero incoraggiati dallo Stato stesso, ma ovviamente non liberi e non controllati. L'effetto desiderato era quello di poter controllare la popolazione rendendola parte integrante del regime, favorendo la coesione, così che si illudesse di avere piena libertà di espressione. Qualsiasi atto propagandistico fortemente antisistema sarebbe stato represso duramente, come in qualsiasi Stato centralizzato e autoritario. L'ideologica socialcomunista divenne in questi Paesi una realtà totalizzante, dove l'economia era in stallo e i leader usavano falsi discorsi propagandistici per mantenere le persone sotto un velo di ignoranza e ubbidienza. Quella che doveva essere l'idea di Marx venne totalmente stravolta in questi regimi totalitari. Per questo motivo le prime attività di espressione cittadine non sono definibili movimenti sociali in pieno senso, neanche quando salì al potere Gorbachev, il leader più vicino agli ideali Occidentali tra tutti quelli che hanno detenuto il potere prima di lui. I primi movimenti sociali e le forti proteste antisistema in Est Europa non furono duramente repressi, ma accolti, indebolendo un sistema già debole, fino al crollo totale nel 1991. Da quel momento, la maggior parte dei paesi dell'Est ha scelto la via democratica, ma senza considerare le enormi difficoltà del caso. Questi Paesi hanno subito una trasformazione totale, e si sono dovuti adattare rapidamente a questo sistema molto

lontano storicamente ed ideologicamente dal proprio. Ad esempio, mentre gli USA nel 1969 stavano affrontando l'onda di movimenti queer, i Paesi dell'Est non avevano neanche la coscienza di cosa volesse dire essere queer, essendo a tutti gli effetti nascosto in qualsiasi ambito. Essere queer verrà, anche dopo la caduta del regime, definito una devianza puramente importata e Occidentale. Un linguaggio per definire i membri della comunità LGBTQ+ si è formato molto dopo la caduta del regime.

La pressione dell'Occidente nel rispettare tutti gli ideali fondamentali "europei" (quali il rispetto dei diritti LGBTQ+) per procedere con l'integrazione Europea, è stata molto importante ma anche molto ardua da rispettare. Ancora oggi, la differenza tra Est e Ovest è molto marcata in queste realtà, e seppur facendo parte dell'Unione Europea, se ne sentono molto distanti. Il voler diventare democratico, per un Paese dell'Est ex sovietico, non basta per esserlo veramente. Assistiamo quindi, dagli inizi degli anni Novanta, alla formazione di regimi ibridi lentamente equiparabili alle democrazie.

Fattore molto importante da considerare, quando si parla dell'importanza che l'Occidente ha avuto sulla formazione di una coscienza collettiva sui diritti, e sulla formazione dei movimenti sociali, si considera l'azione delle organizzazioni internazionali, delle organizzazioni non governative, e dell'internazionalizzazione dei movimenti sociali grazie anche alla globalizzazione e alle nuove tecnologie comunicative. Si assiste alla transnazionalizzazione dei movimenti sociali e delle lotte per i diritti.

Partendo da questo, ho preso come esempio la Romania, come Paese chiave per introdurre nel discorso i diritti LGBTQ+ in una realtà distante, periferica, "non occidentale".

La Romania, nel mio elaborato, non sostituisce tutti i Paesi dell'Est e non se ne fa portavoce. Tutte le realtà, le idee, le esperienze, che sono molto diverse tra loro, non possono essere equiparabili e intercambiabili, ma attraverso la Romania si cerca un filo conduttore tra Est e Ovest, e si trova una chiave di lettura iniziale dell'esperienza dei Paesi post-sovietici per mettere in luce esperienze spesso trascurate.

La Romania ha subito una transizione violenta da Comunismo totalitario con Ceausescu, a Repubblica democratica pluripartitica. Nel 1989 Ceausescu e sua moglie furono giustiziati pubblicamente, violentemente e a sangue freddo. Il regime imposto da Ceausescu stesso fu uno dei più violenti e repressivi tra quelli dei Paesi dell'Est Europa, con l'efficace repressione della polizia segreta, della forte propaganda nazionalista (eteronormativa e razzista), l'arretratezza economica e la totale disconnessione dall'Unione Sovietica.

Catapultata in una nuova realtà, la Romania non ha saputo adeguarsi ai parametri occidentali e non ha saputo smettere di propagandare l'idea di "Romanità" perfetta, che escludeva la

comunità gipsy e gli omosessuali. Il forte nazionalismo è tutt'ora presente e porta la popolazione rumena a sentirsi non capita, indifferente e distante dall'Unione Europea, e soprattutto crea divisioni interne tra le minoranze e questa idea del cittadino rumeno perfetto. L'impatto della religione sul pensiero comune non è sicuramente trascurabile: la Chiesa Ortodossa è stata (ed è) presente socialmente e politicamente. Basti pensare alla parata LGBTQ+ del 2021: la Destra e la Chiesa hanno organizzato una contro-parata per protestare contro la comunità LGBTQ+ lo stesso giorno del Pride. Nessuna multa, nessun impedimento è stato posto loro da parte della classe politica e le istituzioni. D'altro canto, la comunità LGBTQ+ si è vista dapprima vietare categoricamente la possibilità di effettuare la parata. Successivamente, è stata concessa con riserva, e una sanzione è stata fatta al presidente dell'associazione ACCEPT per aver superato la soglia massima di partecipanti. Nessuno si è preoccupato della quantità di partecipanti alla Parata per la Normalità.

Un cambiamento significativo è avvenuto nel 2018, quando la Coalizione per la Famiglia, supportata dalla Chiesa Ortodossa, ha proposto un referendum per cambiare l'Articolo 48 della Costituzione per specificare che i coniugi devono essere esclusivamente del sesso opposto, quindi che si possa celebrare solo tra un uomo e una donna. Seppur l'articolo 49 specifichi già che solo una coppia eterosessuale può unirsi in matrimonio, la Coalizione ha provato ad attaccare la comunità LGBTQ+ ulteriormente escludendo qualsiasi possibilità di riconoscimento. Il referendum non ha raggiunto il 30% di partecipazione richiesta e la proposta è stata dunque affossata. Il lato positivo è che l'influenza della Destra e della Chiesa in questo caso non ha procurato gli effetti desiderati, ma questo può essere riconducibile anche ad altri fattori. Il partito in carica era il partito Socialdemocratico di Liviu Dragnea, che stava subendo gravi accuse di corruzione. Il suo supporto e approvazione al referendum possono essere scaturiti dall'intento di trovare un argomento che potesse distogliere l'attenzione dei cittadini dagli scandali. I cittadini, non più contenti del partito in carica e timorosi della riuscita effettiva del referendum, possono aver scelto di non votare per "dispetto" al governo e sfiducia. Il lato negativo della medaglia è il riconoscimento del fatto che, del circa 20% di affluenza, la maggioranza era d'accordo con il cambiamento del testo della legge, mostrando quindi un'avversione verso la comunità LGBTQ+ (seppur minima in questo caso).

I movimenti sociali LGBTQ+ si sono attivati con campagne, dimostrazioni, proposte di referendum per contrastare l'ideologia omofoba e per l'accettazione della comunità, e i risultati ci sono e non sono di certo trascurabili. Eppure, la resistenza al cambiamento è ancora forte, lo confermano gli ultimi contrasti tra la Corte di Giustizia dell'Unione Europea e la Romania, che si rifiuta di riconoscere il matrimonio dei due coniugi omosessuali del caso

Coman, e soprattutto si rifiuta di garantire loro la possibilità di vivere ed essere riconosciuti su suolo rumeno.

Le statistiche considerate alla fine dell'elaborato sulla percezione della comunità queer confermano come il cambiamento sia un processo lento, soprattutto a livello ideologico. Statistiche di ILGA-Europe confermano come in Romania ci sia un'inversione di rotta negli ultimi anni, istituzionalmente e ideologicamente. Inoltre, le tre statistiche a confronto del 2010, 2018, 2022, confermano che i cittadini rumeni accettano la comunità teoricamente, ma non le riconoscono gli stessi diritti delle coppie eterosessuali.

I discorsi politici degli ultimi anni confermano ancora di più la resistenza al riconoscere maggiori diritti alla comunità.

Il cambiamento in Romania come ad Est, viaggia a velocità diverse rispetto all'Occidente, e con ideali e strategie differenti. A somme fatte, la possibilità di cambiamento è presente, ma è da effettuarsi gradualmente: la comunità LGBTQ+ ha ancora molto da ottenere e battaglie da affrontare.

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