

ROUTLEDGE ADVANCES IN CRITICAL DIVERSITIES

# Sexualities Research

Critical Interjections, Diverse Methodologies,  
and Practical Applications

Edited by  
Andrew King, Ana Cristina Santos  
and Isabel Crowhurst



# Sexualities Research

How is sexuality studied methodologically? How are we innovating, methodologically, in the study of sexuality? What impact, if any, has the increase in mixed methodologies had on the study of sexuality?

Sexualities Research is a collection of original chapters by emerging and world-leading scholars of sexuality. Through this volume the authors seek to address how theoretical and methodological choices enable wider dissemination and social impact of sexualities research. Indeed, covering a diverse range of theoretical perspectives and methodologies to provide important new insights into human sexuality, the chapters cover an array of topics from the experience of researching sexuality, to using theories in new and innovative ways. With an international scope, Sexualities Research also builds on the re-emergence of the European Sociological Association Sexuality Research Network and asks important questions about the study of sexuality in contemporary societies against the background of political upheaval and economic troubles. Certainly, this collection shows the importance and vitality of sociological understandings of human sexuality in the 21st century.

An enlightening volume consisting of a variety of case studies and theoretical research, Sexualities Research will appeal to undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as postdoctoral researchers who are interested in fields such as Sociology, LGBT/Queer Studies and Gender Studies.

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## 12 Uncomfortable Bargains?

### Networking Between Local Authorities and LGBT Associations in the Context of Neoliberalism

*Beatrice Gusmano*

This chapter examines the relationship between research, activism and politics. It explores how LGBT issues are translated into policies or demands, to understand if queerness can still escape from the politically sedative articulation of a homonormative sexual citizenship. Hence, the chapter asks critical questions about the relationship between sexual politics, social structure and collective action. In so doing, it draws on research gathered from in-depth interviews and focus groups with LGBT activists, the LGBT Office of the Turin City Council and its local, regional and national network in Italy.

#### **Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

In the neoliberal context of welfare cuts and governance overload, networking between local authorities and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans (LGBT) associations is playing a core role in the development of policies addressing sexual orientation and gender identity. This is the case in Italy, where the central state appears to be stuck in a legislative standstill over LGBT rights, lacking a national framework of formal rights provision. Despite a substantial absence of civil rights recognition, national anti-discrimination policies for non-heterosexual people are starting to be introduced with the promise of improved sexual citizenship for victimized lesbian and gay individuals (the ‘T’ and ‘B’ of the LGBT acronym are not even contemplated in these developments).

This chapter looks at how LGBT issues and national-level politics related to them are translated into local policies, asking whether queerness can escape the politically sedative articulation of a homonormative sexual citizenship (Duggan 2003). It asks critical questions about the relationship between social structure, collective action and sexual politics in a neoliberal regime of governance. In order to grasp the importance of the local-level impact of these dynamics, I present a case study of Turin,<sup>2</sup> where the only example in Italy of the long-term institutionalization of LGBT policies through the local LGBT Office can be found. This case study is drawn from the research project AHEAD (*Against Homophobia. European local Administration Devices*)<sup>3</sup> which focused on identifying strategies implemented by local administrations and associations to foster LGBT equality. More specifically, I examine the networking developed in Piedmont, the region

where Turin's LGBT Office is located and where it coordinates its activities with other institutions at various levels of governance, in addition to the local board of LGBT associations. The analysis builds upon data gathered in 2010 through documentary analysis, 12 in-depth interviews and five focus groups with representatives of local LGBT associations, public administration employees and city councillors who had supported the activities of the LGBT Office in Turin since its foundation.

The first section of the chapter will address key theoretical perspectives, which draw from observations of other Western European contexts to shed light on the specificities of LGBT politics and how they have been operationalized in the Italian neoliberal framework. I will then highlight the process of governance, through networking, which has been put in place by the LGBT Office since 2001, when the Office was built and when more power was given to local authorities through Italian Constitutional Reform.

The case study of the LGBT Office in Turin will then be explored in conjunction with different legitimizing discourses arising in the Italian public arena on LGBT social and civil rights, thus showing how the politics of inclusion pursued by the Turin LGBT Office stretches the hegemonic discourse of LG victimization, driven by its committed mission to achieving full sexual citizenship through the pursuit of both civil and social rights. However, I will argue that some uncomfortable bargains within the context of neoliberalism have had to be made. In this landscape, the LGBT Office uses its institutional power to accommodate grassroots associations' demands through the means of mainstreaming, networking and training, challenging the neoliberal framework of welfare cuts, privatization of responsibilities and assimilation for victimized LG subjects.

### **Shifting LGBT Demands in the Context of Neoliberalism**

Shaped by the expansion of neoliberalism<sup>4</sup> in the last 40 years, LGBT policies in Western Europe have moved from a focus on the fight for civil and social rights to a defence of personal security, thus changing the subject of policies from an active agent of change to a consumer citizen (Cooper 2006; Richardson and Monro 2012; Richardson 2005). As I advance in this chapter, this shift can be understood by looking at the processes whereby social rights are being dismantled through the withdrawal of social policies, while at the same time residual civil rights that do not question unequal social structures are granted. The Italian translation of this shift can be observed in the contemporary focus on upholding the civil right to personal security, which in turn creates a new subject of policies: namely, a victimized subject (Bertone and Gusmano 2013).

As far as local authorities are concerned, some features of the neoliberal agenda in Italy operate by reinforcing structural conditions of inequality such as: the austerity-led reduction of public funding to social services; the dismantling of concepts such as 'the public good' or 'community', in favour of 'individual responsibility'; and the precarious job and life conditions in an increasingly privatized labour market lacking social protections.

Much of the above can apply to LGBT politics in Western Europe more generally: in the 1970s LGBT claims went beyond political recognition in the public arena, fighting for “the reformulation of the (positive) self” (Richardson 2000, 35). It was a period in which visibility and embodied differences were considered concepts to be proud of: demands were framed as the right to be different, not as a request to fit in. In Italy, this approach was fostered by the 1969 riots that took place through students’ and workers’ protests against conservative powers in the realms of family, education and work.<sup>5</sup> This was the context in which the launch of the first homosexual movement in Turin took place in 1972: *FUORI (Fronte Unitario Omosessuale Rivoluzionario Italiano)* which positioned itself as part of the leftist revolutionary movement of the time, similar to other LG movements in other European countries.<sup>6</sup> Its first action was on April, 5th 1972, supported by its international allies, when *FUORI* protested against the Italian Centre for Sexology’s international conference on sexual deviations. As repressive tolerance, more than legal banning, has characterized the condemnation of homosexuality in Italy (Dall’Orto 1988), medical discourse has been used to criminalize it through pathologization. *FUORI*’s demonstration was aimed at publicly condemning how homosexual people *did not* recognize themselves in medical discourse, and how they could speak for themselves as political subjects. This protest is considered the ‘Italian Stonewall’, as it gave rise to the national LGBT movement. However, from this very beginning, the Italian LGBT movement split between *FUORI*, which became part of the Radical Party<sup>7</sup> in 1976, and autonomous collectives convinced of the need for a revolutionary approach to politics. The latter groups were able to exist as political entities in the social and political context of Italy until 1977, when differences between the Communist Party, on one hand, and the working class and radical students, on the other, eventually led to an irreconcilable rupture. Once this conflict had waned, the re-emergence of radical claims was accompanied by the affirmation of the need to establish effective collaborations with local authorities in Milan, Rome and Bologna. At the same time, this new approach to dialogue with public institutions was visible in the LGBT politics of other Western European countries in the 1980s, as Richardson explains:

Unlike earlier social movements that sought to transform key institutions, contemporary struggles for “equality” help to reaffirm the regulatory power of the state by reinforcing the authority of the institutions appealed to which confer rights and responsibilities [. . .] and through which sexualities are regulated.

(2005, 532)

In Italy, the creation of the first gay association *Arcigay* in 1985 opened space for this type of less provocative, more pragmatic new politics. *Arcigay*’s political commitment was to civil rights, cultural education, dialogue with institutions, political participation in elections and fighting AIDS—which was presented in mainstream discourse as a ‘gay disease’. Despite a lack of information on AIDS prevention at the national level, local councils started to invite gay associations

as experts in preventing the diffusion of AIDS stressing their expertise in safe sex practices, the destigmatization of (homo)sexual acts, solidarity with HIV-positive people and access to healthcare. *Arcigay's* citizenship agenda of the 1990s consisted of three points: anti-discrimination law; fighting AIDS; and recognizing same-sex unions. This corresponded with developments in other Western European countries in the 1990s, when a 'third way' of doing politics was pursued as a viable strategy between the conservative right and the progressive left—what Santos calls “a politics of containment, whereby controversial issues are negotiated amongst liberal and conservative sectors of society. The aim is to achieve a wider consensus through the suspension of radical strategies or arguments” (2013a, 56–57). In both Italy and beyond, this led to a shift in demands and political discourses: from transformation to reformation of society; from liberation to equality (Richardson and Monro 2012), focusing solely on civil rights and giving up on the aim of fostering social rights as a way of fighting inequalities.

This political landscape changed slightly in 2001, after September, 11th, when security and safety became the new common ground of right and left politics, making the buzzwords 'property' and 'safeness' more prominent than the concepts of 'freedom' and 'equality'. This change emerged due to another shift that characterizes the 21st century, namely the rise of a new enigmatic figure that crystallized politics on diversity, shifting the focus from inequality (due to structural conditions) to discrimination (linked with individual responsibility): the victim subject. The prominence of this subject is evident in the issue of violence against women, as explained by Ratna Kapur:

The focus on the victim subject has led to a proliferation of rights for women, but it has not resolved the problem of gender subordination [. . .]. This subject risks denying women the agency [. . .]. This category is disempowering and does not translate into an emancipatory politics.

(2005, 134–135)

This argument can be applied to illuminate the process of LGBT subjects' inclusion: the latter are neglected in their access to agency and empowerment by a dominant discourse on security that focuses on their condition as victims. In order to be protected by a paternalistic state, these newly designated 'victims' have to comply with the role designed for them. Only once they agree not to deconstruct the 'victim' subjecthood they are ascribed, can they easily be assimilated.

Given the silencing of the homosexual subject in Italy (Bertone and Gusmano 2013; Rossi Barilli 1999), victimization's power lies in the ability to protect homosexual people from discrimination, without changing the negative imaginary associated with them. Indeed, the victim subject, thus constructed, paves the way to represent LGBT people as weak and helpless. Given the lack of positive imaginaries concerning LGBT people emerging out of state rhetoric and politics, non-heterosexual and gender non-conforming people remain relegated to the lower levels of the hierarchy of citizenship, respectability and agency.

Moreover, since the economic crisis of 2008, European governments have asked citizens to collaborate in the name of austerity, such that issues of access

to education, services, healthcare and employment have become dimensions of personal responsibility—a private, primarily economic matter. Through the containment of all social rights, one of the main objectives of neoliberalism has therefore been reached: “privatization, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision” (Harvey 2005, 3).

In the Italian context of state withdrawal, local networking has become an essential strategy to cope with privatization. As a result of the 2001 Italian Constitutional reform of local authorities, the State has handed down some of its responsibilities to local administrations, while outsourcing other services. This has led to the diminishing of the universalist, public nature of the welfare state (Brenner and Theodore 2002). In order to cope with the scarcity of resources, local councils have established networks with civil society, pursuing a bottom-up approach that stresses their social duty to comply with citizens’ claims (Bertone and Gusmano 2013). As far as LGBT claims are concerned, these can be analytically divided into what Santos (2013b) defines as ‘individual claims’ (focusing on individual rights such as employment law, protection from violence, welfare benefits) and ‘relational claims’ (addressing rights stemming from relationships such as parenting, partnering, friendship). In Italy, LGBT relational claims are still contested, because the only socially respectable and legally sanctioned relationships are heteronormative ones.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the last decade has seen active lobbying by lawyers from LGBT associations, aimed at shaking the national standstill over relational claims, while some local authorities have exercised their power to grant equality to same-sex cohabiting couples. Concerning individual rights, the age of consent is 14 years old for both homosexual and heterosexual people, while the only Italian anti-homophobic law regards protection from discrimination in the workplace as a response to the binding EU Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC).

The empirical data presented in the next section will show how the Turin LGBT Office continues to resist the containment of LGBT rights by constant networking with the board of LGBT associations. The following empirical sections therefore start by exploring LGBT associations’ claims and how these are translated by administrators in public institutions by applying the ‘continuum of five institutional approaches to LGBT equalities’ developed by Richardson and Monro (2012, 127) as the five possible responses enacted by local councils in relation to LGBT citizenship claims: ‘proactive’ (“something we positively support”); ‘compliance’ (“we do it because we have to”); ‘omission’ (“we would if we could”); ‘erasure’ (“is there a need?”); ‘active resistance’ (“we oppose LGBT equality”).

### **Governance and Networking in Italy: the Turin LGBT Office**

In February 2001, the Turin City Council, after a proposal by the “GLBT Turin Pride Coordination” (the Coordination hereafter),<sup>9</sup> founded the ‘Office for the overcoming of discriminations based on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity’ (later officially renamed ‘LGBT Office’). The LGBT Office’s explicit, albeit narrow aim (as clearly stated in its very name) of fighting discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity can be explained

by the fact that the most legitimizing discourse regarding LGBT issues in Italy centres around guaranteeing personal security to a discriminated minority that needs to be safeguarded. As the Director of the Turin Provincial Council declared, the strategy of supporting policies against homophobia was shared by all administrations, “irrespective of their political orientation” (interview excerpt, 2010). The approach of the LGBT Office challenged this paternalistic focus, considering it just as a small step towards the main objective of achieving positive visibility:

We’ll have to exit the logics of discrimination, I mean. . . if we want to overcome it, we shouldn’t keep sticking to it.

(interview excerpt, 2010)

Visibility was matched with a strong political commitment to promoting social rights by the City Councillor that provided legitimacy to the new-born LGBT Office through its ‘proactive approach’ (Richardson and Monro 2012) to LGBT equalities. Although policies were still presented in terms of overcoming homophobia, the Office reframed these into issues of citizenship rights through three different levels of action: via the academy, the Municipality and the Coordination. As a staff member of the LGBT Office declared:

[LGBT] Organizations revealed who homosexual and transsexual people were in their everyday life. The research further stressed the most important aspects to be taken into account [in pursuing sexual citizenship]. The Municipal deliberation carried out such information and aimed at handing it over in order to change Public Administration.

(interview excerpt, 2010)

In this quote, the LGBT Office presents its legitimization strategies: an on-going dialogue with the Coordination who participated in the designing of both the research and the deliberation. The research was conducted by the University of Turin (Bertone et al. 2003) and provided data to counteract the institutional approach of ‘erasure’ defined by Richardson and Monro (2012), which questions the existence of a specific need carried by LGBT citizens in a heteronormative society. The Municipal deliberation on the establishment of the Office provided a commitment to LGBT issues and to pursuing a thorough analysis of the social needs that the LGBT Office could address (as we will see in more detail in the next section). The LGBT Office, rather than focusing on civil rights only (the realm of liberty of each citizen, such as the right to freedom, property, personal security and marriage), kept the centrality of social rights (the need to recognize citizens as members of a community, and protected by the welfare state in order to limit social inequalities). As defined by the Italian Constitution, the latter includes protections and services provided by all levels of governance to ensure a social safety net, through rights to education, healthcare, pensions, social security, social services, employment, strike, trade union participation and family formation. In order to grant these social rights, the LGBT Office turned to networking, because

fields of intervention and competence in these matters are assigned to different levels of governance.

Therefore, the LGBT Office started to build and has continued to rely on different nodes of networking, which are:

- a) The Municipality Piloting Group, in which each department's representative brings to the fore the practical needs that emerge in their sector, trying to identify effective measures to address them. All the interviewed members of this Piloting Group seemed enthusiastic about this mainstreaming which allowed them to share duties and responsibilities within the administration at large, as stated by a member of the Piloting Group:

It is a group that has grown over time, a group with little chitchat and lots of results [. . .]. This is a group that walks the talk. Things might take their time, [but] the involvement has always been tangible: the fact of working out how to link up between us to work on shared projects.

(interview excerpt, 2010)

Fundamentally, this pragmatic mainstreaming aimed not only at welcoming citizens' demands in a more inclusive way, but it also helped out LGBT employees working within the administration.

- b) The Coordination, strengthened by the LGBT Office, which emphasises agency rather than victimization (Bertone and Gusmano 2013). As declared by the Coordination, working with public institutions represented a challenge:

When you work with institutions you know they have their *modus operandi*, their ignorance, their rigidities: they aren't the movement. They are another kind of animal. However, I am sure we never felt crushed [. . .]: we kept our constructive, autonomous and plural soul.

(interview excerpt, 2010)

In order to grant an autonomous space to the associations which comprise the Coordination, the solution was to explicitly identify the dimensions of collaboration. As a result, associations could maintain their independence, their specific aims and activities that continued beyond the institutional dialogue.

- c) The Turin Provincial Council, which decided not to create a structure specifically devoted to LGBT rights but, rather, to use the expertise already developed by the Municipality.
- d) The Piedmont Regional Council, a partnership defined by the regional representative as "a small miracle" (interview excerpt, 2010), because in Italy there has always been stiff competition between Provinces, Regions and



Municipalities. Networking represented a tool to overcome obstacles linked to the ‘active resistance’ (Richardson and Monro 2012) in the approach to LGBT equalities. This was possible, for example, when the ‘Regional Observatory on bullying’ did not acknowledge the relevance of homophobic bullying in schools. After the suicide of a gay teenager in Turin in 2007, the Coordination asked the Observatory to focus on this issue, but the Observatory failed to do so, despite the intervention of the regional administration. It was only in 2010, after the intervention of the LGBT Office, that the Observatory acknowledged the specificity of homophobia as one of the variables for bullying.

- e) RE.A.D.Y, a national network comprising local administrations fighting discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, aimed at sharing LGBT good practices throughout the country in order to avoid the ‘omission’ approach (Richardson and Monro 2012). The strength of this initiative is that the proposal of sharing best practices was an autonomous decision taken by local administrations in order to cope with discrimination.

In conclusion, networking was identified as the necessary strategy to concretely develop positive actions for LGBT people inside a framework of both civil and social rights. Based on this case study, the next section will explore further differences in how civil and social rights have been pursued in Turin in the choices made by the LGBT Office in order to translate LGBT claims in the institutional language of public administration.

### **Pursuing Sexual Citizenship Through Civil and Social Rights**

In 1999, the political struggle for the legalization of civil unions in Turin was defeated by the opposition of conservative parties, notwithstanding the long process of negotiations in which LGBT associations had engaged to achieve this goal. After this political defeat, the same associations refused to only accept funding for their activities, and decided to set up the GLT Coordination in order to present themselves as united in their common demands, insisting that the administration should take active responsibility in order to safeguard citizenship rights and equal treatment for all. As the Coordination affirmed, “LGBT rights [. . .] are not a question of safeguarding a minority, but a question of citizenship as a whole” (interview excerpt, 2010). Responding positively to this, from the start, the Municipality decided to frame LGBT demands as citizenship rights, seeing them as its public duty to guarantee them. The Equal Opportunity Councillor, who took up the task of addressing these demands by allowing the creation of the LGBT Office, recognized the political insightfulness of the Coordination in forcing the administration to comply with its duties, namely granting rights for all citizens, rather than providing an ideological resistance against the civil unions defeat. She stated: “It is unfair that rights are granted only to some citizens, while others have to rely on the voluntary work of associations” (interview excerpt, 2010).



An emphasis on rights was pursued by the Pride Coordination, the board created to host the 2006 Turin national Pride. Its aim was to revitalize the topic of rights, visibility and full citizenship, and this was considered a great success in terms of participation, as declared by one of its members. The emphasis on rights was kept in subsequent regional editions of Pride: in 2010 the event was organized in collaboration with feminist and migrant associations, giving voice to other identities who found themselves under attack, in this instance as a result of the success in the regional elections by the *Lega Nord*, a racist right-wing party. Thus, the 2010 Pride was described by the Coordination as “a counter-tendency in a moment of crisis” and “an extraordinary richness to counter the misery of politics” (interview excerpt, 2010). This focus and commitment to both civil and social rights had already been reached in the resolution leading to the foundation of the LGBT Office, which declared the following actions at the basis of its activities:

- the safeguard of rights in every aspect of social, cultural and working life;
- information about access to employment for transsexual people;
- widespread awareness-raising on LGBT issues;
- cultural events fostering dialogue between and beyond differences;
- healthcare information and prevention;
- training for staff operating in the education, schooling, social assistance and healthcare sectors;
- networking with associations to spread their work, promote training and develop joint activities.<sup>10</sup>

In this way, since in 2001 the LGBT Office started to ‘practice’ mainstreaming by a commitment to include LGBT issues in well-established national events (e.g. Memory Day, March 8th, Book Fair, etc.), emphasizing inclusion among citizens and all City Council departments. The Equal Opportunities Provincial Councillor presented this move as follows:

The issue of human rights is an issue of justice and equity [. . .]: our idea was to offer welcoming, sharing, and a work within the Municipality and the territories aimed at involving citizens in the struggle for LGBT people’s rights.  
(interview excerpt, 2010)

The overarching aim was to organize public events in such a way that the entire public administration would be able to promote a culture free from prejudice within the city, “transcending what today we call the heterosexist look” (interview excerpt, 2010). As a result, in 2008 one of the Turin Municipality Districts contacted the Office to help broaden the scope of their family policies by including LGBT parents’ needs and experiences, and with a view to improving LGBT families’ access to public services. This is an important accomplishment, especially considering that in Italy institutions tend to ignore or silence any LGBT relational

claim. In this instance, the inclusion of LGBT families' needs can be viewed as a commitment to social rights, because it facilitated a change of perspective by the public administration which made an unprecedented effort to meet the social needs of citizens who are more frequently excluded from these initiatives.

Regarding the impact of local authorities, another effective way of pursuing social rights is through the provision of public services. This entails not only the cultural role of the authority as a public institution that shows commitment to its citizens' wellbeing, but also the provision of material support thus facilitating a fairer distribution of resources in all fields of local intervention. A fairer provision of public services was reaffirmed in the City Council resolution with a view to complying with the needs emphasised by the research (Bertone *et al.* 2003), which showed a substantial lack of attention to LGBT needs in schools, workplaces, healthcare and public services. In the education sector, in 2003 the University of Turin was the first Italian academy to promote the possibility for trans students (still in transition) of having a second *libretto universitario* (university student's record booklet) with their preferred gender identity stated on it.<sup>11</sup> In the same year, the Turin Municipality carried out a four-year European project on the social and labour inclusion of trans people in Turin. As far as public services are concerned, greater emphasis was placed on mainstreaming within the entire city administration through the creation of the Piloting Group addressing LGBT actions in all city departments.

Moreover, in order to challenge the administration's heteronormative assumptions, the LGBT Office identified training as another key response to the needs of the LGBT community—for example, by ensuring that staff working in the registry office were competently addressing the needs of transgender people. Training has thus become an effective action, at the local level, for promoting the social and civil rights of LGBT subjects through a cultural and political commitment to positively presenting LGBT experiences. It is a tool to reduce heteronormative policies and practices within the administration, and is also used as an instrument to tackle homophobic bullying in schools. However, training, a practice that started 15 years ago alongside the emergence of the LGBT subject as a 'victim', could be seen as limiting the opportunities for collective action by stressing the individual responsibility of the administrative staff to overcome inequality, as opposed to tackling the actual structural conditions of inequality.

### **Uncomfortable Bargains: Some Concluding Thoughts on Coming to Terms With Neoliberalism**

As we have seen with training, backlashes are 'always around the corner' and, notwithstanding the commitment towards civil and social rights demonstrated by the LGBT Office, a few uncomfortable bargains were struck with local institutions, which can be understood in the context of neoliberal politics.

One example regards the image on the very first LGBT Office's presentation leaflet, which was designed in consultation with the GLT Coordination that defined it as "a little watered down compromise [that] was not very queer" (interview

excerpt, 2010). The cover depicted stylized humans, defined by the GLT Coordination as “anorexic sticks aimed at not bothering anyone”, disembodied the “explosive power” of lesbian women, gay men, bisexual and transsexual people. The GLT Coordination would have preferred a more embodied representation of LGBT differences, but had to bargain with the institution that opted for a less disruptive portrayal of bodies, which were replaced by dull sticks.

Another uncomfortable bargain relates to the Office having to face the institutional ‘active resistance’ (Richardson and Monro 2012) of the Municipality’s director of the education sector regarding a training course on LGBT policies. The director insisted that the course should be cancelled unless the Office accepted to change its title into the generic “sexual discrimination”, rather than positively naming sexual orientation and gender identity. The LGBT Office accepted the ‘generic’ new title, but also addressed its inadequacy during the course itself. This is an example of the powerful incidence of the security discourse, whereby naming sexual orientation and gender identity is feasible only inside the framework of the well-established victimization discourse.

As far as the shift in LGBT demands is concerned, it would be useful to compare the differences perceived by the GLT Coordination (active at the end of the 1990s), and the subsequent Pride Coordination (still active). In the interviews it was possible to grasp these differences, starting from the GLT Coordination eliciting doubts about coming to terms with institutions:

I wondered how, at a certain point, GL associations stopped being oppositional and tried to find strategies to collaborate, and what this collaboration implies in terms of validating the institutional counterpart and giving it credit which remained to be proven.

(interview excerpt, 2010)

On the other hand, the more recent Pride Coordination embraced involvement both within political parties, and the Council. What the GLT Coordination deemed “a risk of diminishing the political meaning of collective action” (interview excerpt, 2010), was now defined by the Pride Coordination as a way of getting through the dense complexity of institutional apparatus by establishing personal relationships of trust within. Another difference here is the fact that business enterprises, for example a gay sauna, have now become part of the Pride Coordination, while they were not present in the previous GLT Coordination since, according to a member of the latter, “business trading has a logic that is incompatible with a shared political dimension because it has other priorities” (interview excerpt, 2010).

Notwithstanding these compromises, the focus on civil and social rights in Turin has remained a constant objective of the demands taken forward by both the GLT and Pride Coordination, mirroring changes within the national hegemonic discourse: from the radicalism of collective movements in the 1970s to the active participation in political parties in the 1980s; from the focus on sexual citizenship of the 1990s to the focus on a victimization approach in the 2000s; and finally,

since 2008 in particular, the subject of the mainstream LGBT discourse is the responsible citizen achieving civil rights despite austerity.

During this time, the LGBT Office has constantly emphasized visibility when planning initiatives in the city, by developing tools for mainstreaming, networking and training. When the dominant discourse was that of victimization, the LGBT Office chose to positively name sexual orientation and gender identity as a priority, acknowledging that the discourse of discrimination hides the ‘positive self’ that was at the centre of politics in the 1970s. Finally, the long-sustained focus on social rights during the current economic crisis could be viewed as a way to foster queerness, while institutions at all levels of governance call for austerity through the privatization of both identities (sexual identity is considered a private matter) and responsibilities (citizens are in charge of their social needs). By showing how local authorities can reorient their policies to comply with LGBT social needs through networking with grassroots associations, the LGBT Office offers a proactive alternative to the victimization discourse by continuing to pursue with associations sexual citizenship rights that counteract the neoliberal model based on privatization of social rights, victimization and reproduction of institutional heteronormativity.

## Notes

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- 2 With an urban population of almost 1 million people, Turin is an economic and cultural centre in the northern-west part of Italy, in the Piedmont Region. Since the X century, Turin was home to Savoia, a royal family that led the Italian unification in 1861: therefore, Turin became Italy’s first capital city. It has always been a major European centre for what it concerns arts, culture, university, cinema, public television, radio, press, publishing, industry and trade. It was the symbol of economic upturn after WWII, accommodating migrants from the South arrived to work in the automotive industry, since Turin was the third economic productive pole in Italy. It is also the city where an Italian LGT collective gathered for the first time.
- 3 The project, funded by the European Commission, involved local authorities, universities and LGBT associations in Spain, Italy, Germany, England and Hungary. For the research, refer to Coll-Planas (2011); for the Italian case study, refer to Gusmano and Bertone (2011) and Bertone and Gusmano (2013).
- 4 This contested term can be understood in many different ways. In this chapter I draw on Lister’s definition: “*Neo-liberalism rejects [social] rights. It argues that citizens have their own responsibility to ensure themselves against social risk [ . . . ]. It has attempted to break down the relation between social and political citizenship. Furthermore, it focuses strongly on the obligation citizens have towards themselves and towards other citizens*” (Lister et al. 2007, p. 52).
- 5 Historical facts regarding the gay and lesbian movement in Italy are based on Gianni Rossi Barilli (1999) and Elena Biagini (2011).
- 6 Namely, MHAR (*Mouvement Homosexuel d’Action Révolutionnaire*) in Belgium, FHAR (*Front Homosexuel d’Action Révolutionnaire*) in France, and GLF (*Gay Liberation Front*) in the United Kingdom.

- 7 The liberal party that was in the first line in the fights for civil rights such as divorce and abortion. It was the first party to foster homosexual rights, as well.
- 8 In Italy, only heterosexual marriage is possible, while civil unions are not recognized, neither for homosexual nor heterosexual people. Moreover, there is no recognition of same-sex parenting.
- 9 Since 1999 to 2003, the board of LGBT associations in Turin was called “Turin GLT Coordination”; in 2003 they passed through a moment of standstill; with the national Pride in Turin in 2006, the board of associations changed its name in “GLBT Turin Pride Coordination”. Unless specified differently, hereafter both will be addressed as “Coordination”.
- 10 City Council resolution no. 905/42 of February, 13th 2001.
- 11 Even though things are changing, according to law 164/1982 of April, 14th 1982, changes in official documents are possible only by providing a final judicial decision which assigns that person a different sex after the surgical intervention that implies sterilization.

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