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“It’s difficult to straddle the line between being professional and radical –
at what points do you oppose the normative?”

CASE STUDY OF IGLYO NEGOTIATING QUEER

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Abstract

The potential tension between being a pan-European umbrella organisation and engaging in queer politics was the starting point of this thesis that investigates the implications that the concept and practice of queer has within IGLYO (International Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Youth and Student Organisation). My interpretations are informed by aspects of Queer theory and social movement theories. The qualitative case study follows a multi-method design and is based on empirical material that consists of 1 focus group interview and 8 semi-structured individual interviews with representatives of IGLYO member organisations and participant observation at IGLYO's General Assembly 2013. I found that queer is generally manifested in alternative forms of event proceedings and ways of organising. On the other hand, there were various ways IGLYO failed to live up to queer ideas or consciously chose to distance themselves from the queer approach. The study finds that IGLYO undertakes various balancing acts in order to negotiate queer within the cultural and financial constraints of European institutions. The contradictory political impulses within the organisation gave way to various strategic compromises such as "doing it all" by combining identity politics with a queer approach.

Keywords: Queer, LGBT, politics, social movement organisation, collective identity, NGO

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1. Introduction

Since I first encountered debates about queer I have been grappling with conflicting emotions about it. In part I am highly fascinated by its bold and radical potential, but the same time I am painfully aware of the constraints. Similarly to numerous others I have been wondering about the possibilities for queer in practice. When IGLYO (International Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Youth and Student Organisation) kindly accepted my offer to cooperate for the purpose of this research, I knew I had found a case that would help me further engage with this internal conflict of mine (and others alike).

1.1 Research problem

I decided to conduct a case study about IGLYO because they seem to pose an interesting paradox by their very existence. On the one hand, IGLYO is a multinational umbrella organisation, that carries out their activities within the European (and international) legal and policy framework. On the other hand, the term “Queer” in IGLYO’s name refers to the potential of being to some degree informed by anti-normative and radical ideas. This is a tension that requires further investigation. This research problem is addressed through reflections by representatives of IGLYO member organisations and my own observations at IGLYO’s General Assembly 2013.

1.2 Aim and research questions

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the concept and practice of queer within IGLYO. The overarching research question is *how does IGLYO negotiate the concept and practice of queer?* This can be further divided into smaller questions:

- *How is queer manifested in the ideas and practice of the organisation?*
- *What kinds of challenges, tensions and complications emerge from a queer approach?*
- *What kinds of strategies are used to address these concerns?*

My pursuit of those questions is not supposed to produce a general explanation, but to engage in a detailed investigation of the particular case of IGLYO. Locating the case in wider debates about queer will hopefully expand understandings of queer in practice and thus contribute to existing knowledge in the field of Queer Sociology.

1.3 Outline of the thesis

This thesis is divided into six main parts. Firstly I start with an introduction to IGLYO as a social movement organisation. Secondly I will present some research that has been previously

conducted in the field of Queer Sociology. Thereafter I will discuss the theoretical entry points that have informed the thesis. The central theoretical concept that runs through the thesis is queer as a concept and practice. I will situate queer in historical debates and recount the various critiques to it, as well as connect it to theories of collective identity and organising. After that comes the section on the methodological approach, where I provide reflections around qualitative research and case study in particular; present the sample and discuss my research methods – participant observation, focus group and individual interview. Throughout the methodological discussions I will reflect on my position as a researcher and consider various ethical issues. Then the analysis of my empirical data follows, which is organised in three parts. In the first part I will examine how queer is manifested in the ideas and practice of IGLYO. Thereafter I will discuss the ways IGLYO fails to be or purposely avoids a queer approach. The final part of the analysis is dedicated to the various strategies IGLYO uses in order to negotiate queer within institutional constraints. And last, I will provide concluding remarks and reflections.

1.4 Delimitations

My research provides an insight into the workings of IGLYO with a very specific focus on negotiations around queer. The research does not intend to serve as a complete analysis of the organisation nor does it reflect the perspectives from all the different member organisations. Further limitations concerning my research methods, material and my role as a researcher are thoroughly discussed in Chapter 5.

As a final note before delving into the theoretical discussions about queer, it is necessary to point out the paradoxical nature of any such attempt. Organising ideas into an academically acceptable text is by itself an act of abiding by normative structures. Moreover, it is not only the structure of writing but also the content that thus becomes constrained. Presenting ideas in a consistent narrative, with ideas following smoothly after one another or being in seemingly clear opposition to each other constitute crude simplifications and distortions. Being confined by norms in academic writing reflects the constraints that political movements face when trying to bring about radical social change. Attempting queer action, whether in academia or politics is certainly a challenge.

2. Presentation of the organisation

IGLYO is a pan-European network of LGBTQ youth and student organisations (IGLYO, n.d.). IGLYO can be located in the field of social movement organisations (SMO's) – formal

organisations whose aim is the collective pursuit of social change (Armstrong & Bartley, 2007). Similarly to many other multinational non-profit organisations (Hudson & Bielefeld, 1997, p. 32), IGLYO is structured as an umbrella organisation and their activities are coordinated through a network of autonomous indigenous organisations. Consisting of 83¹ Member organisations from 41 different countries (IGLYO, n.d-d), they aim to counteract various causes of discrimination against LGBTQ youth and students; to empower and gather LGBTQ youth and students and to act as one of their representatives (IGLYO, 2011a, p. 1).

IGLYO was founded as a permanent organisation in 1986, as a reaction to the previously identified need for cooperation among LGBTQ youth and student organisations (IGLYO, n.d-b). Initially consisting of member organisations from Western Europe, Central and Eastern European participants were included first in 1992, thus setting on the path to becoming a pan-European network (ibid). Another landmark in IGLYO's history was changing its name from International Gay and Lesbian Youth Organisation to International Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Youth and Student organisation in 2005 (ibid).

In order to become a member of IGLYO, the national organisations need to fulfil the following criteria: 1) Be registered in one of the Council of Europe member states; 2) Mainly consist of LGBTQ youth and/or students, or have a specific youth/student-led department dedicated to such issues; 3) Have a minimum of ten members; 4) Accept IGLYO's statutes; The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948); The European Convention on Human Rights (Rome, 1953); and The Declaration of the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) (IGLYO, 2011a, p. 2).

IGLYO's activities can be roughly divided into two - capacity building and advocacy (IGLYO, 2011b). IGLYO's lobbying activities are mainly undertaken at such organisations as the European Youth Forum, the European Commission, the Council of Europe and the United Nations (IGLYO, n.d-a). Capacity building is carried out through conferences and training events where LGBTQ youth activists can exchange information and practices (IGLYO, n.d-c). Their activities are centred around 6 focus areas: Education, Health, Human Rights, Social Inclusion, Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, Regional development (outside of the EU) (IGLYO, 2011b, p. 12). Four of these focus areas (Education, Health, Human Rights and Inter-religious and Intercultural Dialogue) are further examined in the work of thematic working groups (IGLYO, n.d-d).

¹ IGLYO's website lists 79 members but according to the Secretariat IGLYO has 83 members.

IGLYO is an organisation run by and for young LGBTQ volunteers. Their highest decision-making body is a General Assembly. Convening once a year, it approves IGLYO's budget, activity and strategic reports; adopts Annual Work Plans, elects the Board and the Financial Control Committee etc (IGLYO, 2011a, p. 4).

Between the General Assemblies, IGLYO is managed by Executive Board, composed of 6-8 people from different member organisations that are located in different countries. Board members have to be between 18 and 30 years old and at least 2 gender identities must be represented on the Board (ibid, p. 5). The Board being the elected leadership of IGLYO, is responsible for carrying out IGLYO's Annual Work Plan (IGLYO, n.d-d).

The IGLYO Secretariat in Brussels supports the Board in implementing the Work Plan. The Secretariat currently consists of two paid staff members – an Office Manager and a Programmes & Policy Officer (ibid). Finally, there is the Financial Control Committee that provides independent assessment on IGLYO's finances (ibid).

As of now, IGLYO gets its funding from the European Commission Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity PROGRESS (2014), the Government of the Netherlands, and the Council of Europe European Youth Foundation, as well as from membership fees (IGLYO, n.d-d). But IGLYO went through a period of serious financial distress in their history. They stopped receiving financial support from the European Commission in 1999 and regained funding first in 2006 (IGLYO, n.d-b).²

3. Previous research

There is a tradition of studying gender and sexuality in Sociology and the related field of Lesbian and Gay Studies in particular has been focusing on life and conditions of non-heterosexual people. However, accounts in those fields have often emphasized the subordinate groups' efforts towards resistance through identity construction and community-building and have neglected the invention and preservation of identity categories (Ward, 2008, p. 41) and the queer drive to blur and deconstruct such categories (Gamson, 1995, p. 393).

The exchange between Queer theory and Sociology is a much more recent and ambivalent phenomenon. Queer theory was for a long time mainly influential in Humanities, with rare cross-overs to Sociology. Almost 20 years ago Steven Seidman wrote in the introduction to their³ "Queer theory/Sociology" that Queer theory and Sociology have barely

² Further information about IGLYO's mission, activities, membership and partners can be read in [Appendix 1](#).

³ I use gender-neutral pronouns „they, their, them“ throughout the thesis, unless gendered pronouns are used in the original quote. I prefer gender-neutral pronouns for the sake of coherence but also for political reasons. I

acknowledged one another even though dialogue between them would be mutually enriching (Seidman, 1996, p. 13). A decade after Seidman's call for dialogue the cross-fertilisation had not yet succeeded, as Stephen Valocchi observed that "sociologists of gender and sexuality are only now beginning to see Queer theory as a legitimate and useful contemporary theory" (Valocchi, 2005, p. 750). But in the most recent decade research that is located at the intersection of Queer theory and Sociology has been plentiful.

Nevertheless, queer-sociological approaches are less common in the narrower subject area of social movements and organisations. In fact, when conducting my literature search it was almost easier to come across current calls for papers than find results for previous studies. For example, in 2014 a special issue of the journal *Gender, Work and Organization* will be dedicated to Queer theory and politics. The issue will be interrogating how gender and sexual politics are played out through organisational practices (Pullen, Thanem, Tyler, & Wallenberg, 2013). Transnational Queer Activism is the theme of another call for papers that will yield in an edited volume first in 2015. This volume will pay particular attention to the notion of queer and the opportunities as well as obstacles it presents to political movements and their strategies of action (ZtG, 2013). So the knowledge gaps in this particular area have been recently acknowledged and there are ongoing attempts to fill them. My research that investigates how a social movement organisation negotiates the notion of queer is located in that collective effort of bridging the gaps.

I used Lund University Library search system LUBsearch for my literature search. The keywords I searched for were *queer* in various combinations with other keywords such as *organisation*, *social movement organisation* (or *SMO*), *NGO* etc. I found some influential works with a cross-disciplinary approach that have inspired and informed my own research. These works are using insights from Queer theory and applying them in the field of studies of social movement organisations.

Joshua Gamson was among the first to discuss the dilemmas that a queer approach to identities poses to (gay and lesbian) social movements (Gamson, 1995). But more importantly, their investigation of two New York gay and lesbian film festival organisations (1996) served as a case study of organisational mediation of collective identity. In this study they argued that (collective) identities are not just expressive but strategic and instrumental, as they are shaped by organisations' institutional environment and resource dependency. One of the festivals they studied sought to challenge and destabilise gay identity while the other

might know the gender identity of some authors but not of all authors and I do not want to assume their gender and ascribe pronouns to them based on their name.

aimed to affirm and unify it, but yet over time both of them reframed those attempts in response to their institutional context. That the organisations were either increasing their cultural capital through closer ties with the elitist art world or with the commercialised and depoliticised film world, was to Gamson a sign of resolving the challenges posed by organisational context. However, they noted that such strategic moves towards organisational survival were at the same time threatening the organisations' legitimacy among the social movement community (Gamson, 1996). So Gamson's study served as a reminder that any attempts to queer politics will have to be negotiated within the constraints of particular cultural and institutional opportunity structures.

Tim Jones-Yelvington (2008) researched two Southern US LGBT/Q social movement organisations committed to intersectional justice. They found that due to the multi-issue focus of the organisations, they constructed complex and multi-dimensional collective identities that were furthermore complicated by individual priorities and the activists' positions in social hierarchies. Such internal diversity needed to be negotiated within the organisational bodies in order to connect the diverse constituents, turning each organisation into a coalition within coalitions (Jones-Yelvington, 2008a). Jones-Yelvington also pointed to the constraints and expectations that the political environment posed. So depending on their audience and environment, the organisations communicated their identities differently, using different languages and explanatory frames and acting as border-crossers and translators (Jones-Yelvington, 2008b).

A more critical analysis of LGBT/Q organisations was provided in Jane Ward's (2008) case study of three LGBT organisations in Los Angeles. Examining the diversity discourses in these organisations, they reveal the various ways intersectionality was co-opted for instrumental purposes. In one organisation, diversity was professionalised through replacing the working-class activists with respectable corporate professionals. In the second organisation, diversity was instrumentalised through a set of bureaucratic procedures such as collecting and managing statistical data. The emphasis was on producing an active "diversity talk" which rarely resulted in structural change. Thirdly, Ward directed their critique at commodification of diversity, when discussing how the third LGBT organisation prioritised among its issues and constituents in order to secure funding. But despite their harsh criticism, Ward maintained some hope for subversive strategies of resistance. The queer paths they visualised for LGBT social movement organisations would be realised through rejecting the drive for professionalism, discursivity and commodification (Ward, 2008).

Each of these studies examines LGBT or LGBTQ organisations and their collective political identities in different ways. While they provide useful theoretical and methodological insights, they do not offer answers to my research questions. Firstly, the abovementioned studies were researching organisations in the US, while my study intends to shed some light on the pan-European context. But more importantly, all of these studies use the terms LGBT and queer interchangeably, applying the terms as synonyms when referring to organisations advocating for non-heterosexual people. I see such slippage in terms as most unfortunate, as it causes one to gloss over important questions about the (potential) differences in LGBT and queer political agendas. My research is doing the opposite – it is trying to separate and zoom in on these political approaches in order to scrutinize the functions they serve in the work and identity of IGLYO. Directing closer attention to queer politics within a particular social movement organisation would thus complement the growing body of research.

Finally, it is important to mention that IGLYO has been the object of research before my initiative to investigate their politics. For example, a study into the history of IGLYO and their role in supporting international LGBTQ youth was conducted in 1995 by a social worker Kevin Shumacher⁴. This research covered the evolution of IGLYO from their inception until the year 1995 and described the political structures and workings of the organisation (IGLYO, n.d-b). Moreover, there is a published journal article that discusses the work of IGLYO with a special focus on their research effort on social exclusion of LGBTQ young people (Vella, Nowotnick, Selun, & van Roozendaal, 2009). But both of those reports are general overviews of the organisation and its activities and do thus not consider the queer dimension and its possible discontents. My research fills the gap left open, as it contributes with a detailed examination of the queer dimension in IGLYO's politics.

4. Theoretical reflections

In this chapter I will go through the theoretical reflections that informed my analysis. I draw upon the body of knowledge that surrounds Queer theory and politics in order to use this diffuse collection of understandings in a sociological analysis of IGLYO.

4.1 Historical background of LGBT/Q movements

Throughout the past century several movements have tried to counter-act the causes and effects of homophobia by imagining diverse forms of social change. Movements often

⁴ The research is not accessible online nor could IGLYO's Secretariat locate a copy of it. Information about the research was found on IGLYO's homepage "Memories" section.

emerged in reaction to or in conversation with each other. But the demarcation lines between the different approaches are never entirely clear, as overlaps and recycling of ideas are ever-present⁵. Today's social movements, of which also IGLYO is a part of, draw upon different discourses, often without complete consistency and sometimes with outright contradictions. In order to analyse the ways IGLYO relates to queer, it is crucial to sketch a historical overview of the development of political ideas that have culminated in queer thought and action. The following is by no means a comprehensive history but it serves as background knowledge for understanding the origins of queer - a concept which is of central importance in this thesis.

Homophile movement

Homophile movement originated in Europe at the end of the 19th century (Jagose, 1996, p. 24). Their political aim was assimilation into the mainstream culture by downplaying any possible differences and appealing to the shared humanity of homo- and heterosexuals. At this time there was a tendency to accept a medical model of homosexuality, as various groups asserted that homosexuality is a biological condition that cannot be helped. This argument was supposed to achieve pity and tolerance instead of persecution (Sullivan, 2003, p. 23). Another assimilationist tactic was distinguishing between private and public spheres. The assumption was that privacy of sexuality would grant freedom to practice same-sexual acts; this however had the unforeseen consequence of depoliticising private affairs (ibid, p. 24).

Gay liberation

A major resistance to the assimilationist agenda emerged during the surge of radical political movements in the 60s and 70s (ibid, p. 29). Instead of claiming sameness with mainstream society, gay liberation mobilised around a new public gay identity – a source of pride and positive sense of self (Jagose, 1996, pp. 31-32). Gay identity was declared through a coming-out narrative. Identity was no longer seen as a private matter but a political matter and open declarations were assumed to transform homosexuality from its marginal position to a legitimate way of being in society (Jagose, 1996, p. 38).

Gay liberationists rejected the determinist understanding of homosexuality as inborn and replaced it with the notion of choice. This was a political decision that was assumed to grant more agency over one's feelings and act as a protest against the assimilating powers of mainstream society (Sullivan, 2003, p. 30). Moreover, instead of accepting the medical view

⁵ Although there was no smooth progression in history, I am presenting the different impulses separately and successively, for the sake of clarity and ease of reading (see also Delimitations 1.4)

of gays as an abnormal fragment of society, they sought general sexual revolution through insisting that all humans are innately bisexual and polymorphous (Seidman, 2004, p. 115).

Towards the ethnic model

As Duggan (1992) writes, lesbian feminists formed separatist groups in the 70s, parting their way with gay men. But their political critique included an essentialist assumption that all women would be lesbians if it weren't for patriarchy and compulsory heterosexuality (Duggan, 1992, p. 222). Over time, both lesbians and gays built subcultures that despite their differences shared the preoccupation with identity-based politics, lifestyle and community building. This marked a move away from liberationist model towards an ethnic minority model of homosexuality (Seidman, 2004, pp. 116-117).

The ethnic model is a strategy of constructing gays and lesbians as a "minority" group, based in the assumption that this position is shared with other ethnic minorities as is the fight for equal rights and participation in social, economic and political life (Duggan, 1992, p. 217). However, this shift meant abandoning the initial radical ideas about transforming societal structures and starting a sexual and gender revolution for everyone. Instead, the movement settled for demanding recognition and protection within the existing system and building communities around identity (Jagose, 1996, pp. 60-61).

Tensions within the ethnic model

According to Seidman (2004), there were three major sites of conflict that undermined the ethnic model of gay liberation – based in race, bisexuality and nonconventional sexualities (Seidman, 2004, p. 118). Women of colour started to call into question the assumption that sexuality (or gender) would be the master category upon which to claim rights (Sullivan, 2003, pp. 37-38). People who identified as bisexual challenged the underlying premise that sexual object choice would define one's sexual identity (Seidman, 2004, p. 121). Marginalised sexualities challenged the premise that communities can be organised around one defining feature because their primary identification was not related to gender (but to a particular form of power play such as in S/M community) (Jagose, 1996, p. 63). All in all, there was a general growing dissatisfaction with the ethnic model during the 80s as it represented the privileged experiences of particular groups of people (Seidman, 2004, p. 125).

The influence of Poststructuralist critique

The existence of a true (and autonomous and static) self that can be liberated from societal constraints was called into question by poststructuralists (Sullivan, 2003, p. 41). Foucault

(1978) revealed how the self is in fact an effect of a system of power/knowledge. Foucault re-conceptualised the concept of power, understanding power as an all-encompassing network of relations (Foucault, 1978, pp. 92-93). Power is not only repressive but also positive and productive, as it produces possibilities for action along with historically specific forms of subjectivity. So resistance is never external or oppositional to power but takes place within the realm of power, thus making true liberation a delusion (ibid, pp. 95-96).

According to Seidman (2004), poststructuralism deals with deconstructing the binary oppositions that are posited as natural and coherent. Demonstrating the oppositional logic of identity construction, poststructuralist theories inform how heterosexuality gains meaning in relation to its imaginary opposite – homosexuality. This relation is necessarily hierarchical and built on subordination of homosexuality, while elevating heterosexuality as a natural condition (Seidman, 2004, p. 130). In short, poststructuralist thought was critical of identity as a feasible mobilising ground for political interventions (ibid, p. 131).

The role of activism

The emergence of queer as a concept is also linked to a wave of activism prompted by the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s (Jagose, 1996, p. 93). According to Hall (2003), uniting against the outbreak produced a new kind of decentralised political activism that momentarily left behind the differences in opinion between lesbians and gay men. In the US, the organisations ACT UP and Queer Nation were flagships of this new radical movement, rejecting the gay mainstream appeal for tolerance and privacy (D. E. Hall, 2003, p. 52). Their message to the public was “*We’re here, we’re queer, get used to it!*” and they spread it through theatrical displays of direct action, such as kiss-ins in public spaces. They initiated reclaiming the offensive slur “queer” and turning it into a positive marker of difference from the norm (ibid, pp. 53-54). The provocative opposition to heteronormative⁶ values became thereafter a central aspect of queer.

4.2 Queer as a concept and practice

In order to be able to look for queer meanings and practices in IGLYO, I will present the different ways queer has been conceptualised among theorists or enacted in politics so far.

There are numerous and contradictory understandings of what queer is or should be. Sullivan (2003) mentions that for some people, queer does denote an identity - a common

⁶ Heteronormativity can be understood as „the institutions, structures of understanding, and radical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent – that is, organized as a sexuality – but also privileged” (Berlant & Warner, 1998, p. 548)

umbrella term for all LGBT people, thus being a new label for old boxes (Sullivan, 2003, p. 44). Jagose (1996) writes that others use it as a self-identical term in order to distinguish themselves stylistically from older generation gays and lesbians, without engaging deeper in the more theoretically informed debates about queer (Jagose, 1996, p. 98). But most widely, queer is invoked as a critical stance towards identities and identity politics.

Deconstructing binaries

Someone who has done great work in showing that the construction of stable identities is a carefully maintained work of fiction is Judith Butler. Firstly Butler reveals the illusion of gender identity being grounded in biological reality, arguing that the act of sex determination is always already informed by cultural interpretations (Butler, 1990, p. 8). But apart from our bodies being divided into male and female and this illusion being maintained by culturally appropriate stylization of bodies, to be fully culturally “intelligible”, an appropriate sexual desire is seen to be unavoidable (ibid, p. 17). So our sexuality is regulated yet rendered seemingly natural, as we are supposed to have complementary sexual desire along the lines of binary gender division (ibid, p. 23). Inspired by Butler, among others, Queer theory is thus committed to denaturalising binary distinctions between women and men as well as heterosexuals and homosexuals. By revealing the fluidity and plurality of gender and sexual categories, queer is actively rejecting the idea of stable and unified subject positions (Richardson, 2006, p. 22).

From identity to positionality

If gay identity was constructed through a positive affirmation of one’s same-sex desiring self, queer on the other hand refers to a de-essentialised identity position that only becomes meaningful in relation to the norm. “*Queer, then, demarcates not a positivity but a positionality vis-à-vis the normative – a positionality that is not restricted to lesbians and gay men but is in fact available to anyone who is or who feels marginalised because of her or his sexual practices*”⁷ (Halperin, 1997, p. 62). Not being tied to particular object choices or a substance of a being opens various possibilities for reorganising constructions of gender, sexual behaviours, relationships and communities (Halperin, 1997, p. 62). Thus, resistance shouldn’t be dismissed for being only negative in the sense of merely reacting to the norms, but it is also positive and dynamic, enabling creative change (ibid, pp. 66-67). Moreover, the value in queer lies in that it cannot be consolidated into something concrete. It will always be

⁷ Throughout my thesis all direct quotes are marked in italics. When sections of the original quote are in italics, I have marked these sections in bold.

fluid and in state of becoming, always on a search for new ways of transformation, “*an empty placeholder for an identity that is still in progress*” (ibid, p. 112).

Questioning the political usefulness of “coming out”

Due to Queer theory’s critical position towards fixed identities, it has become to question the value of the coming out narrative. The promise of a stable identity and belonging to a unified community are revealed to be illusions that people invest in for the sake of upholding personal and political safety (Bravmann, 1996, p. 338). If having access to rights becomes a matter of belonging to a minority group, then there is a certain compulsion to “*act in a way that will constitute her or himself as a subject appropriate to civil rights discourse*”, that is, declare a gay identity (C. Patton, 2004, p. 174). The coming out narrative has achieved a limited kind of visibility and representation for some but has ended in new oppressions – stereotyping, invisibility for alternative forms of same-sex living etc (ibid, p. 175). According to some queer theorists, coming out as gay is not actually disrupting the dominant discourse, because coming out involves entering into the binary system of hetero/homosexuality and thus solidifying the current concepts (Kopelson, 2002, p. 22). The need to embrace the norm in order to claim a position outside of it shows the impossibility of existing outside of the dominant discourse. The task of Queer theory is therefore to negotiate those boundaries and investigate how they are created and challenged (Namaste, 1996, p. 199).

Redefining the field of politics

Queer activists are convinced that no level of assimilation into heteronormative society would be sufficient to achieve equality – no matter how well they would play along in the game, heterosexuality will always enjoy privileged legal and cultural rights (Sullivan, 2003, p. 46). Fearing the possibility of becoming complicit in the system that necessarily devalues them, some strands of queer politics openly dismiss the attempts to improve conditions for LGBT people through common channels of political intervention such as lobbying and petitioning (Jagose, 1996, p. 115). This approach has culminated in a recent stream within Queer theory that could be summarised with the term „queer negativity“.

Instead of striving for conventional notions of success (often associated with reproduction and capital accumulation), a queer position would be refusing to comply with the dominant logics of power and embracing the side of the binary that is usually deemed to be negative (Judith Halberstam, 2011, p. 2). According to Edelman (2004) embracing the negative ascriptions would not mean accepting that there is any essential negative quality to

queer, but it would be embodying a structural position in opposition to the social order (Edelman, 2004, p. 18). In addition, Edelman suggests that opposing the stigma of negativity as identity-based movements aim to do, would only retain the political system in its symmetrical form, endorsing the truthfulness of universal subjects. But inhabiting the structural position of queerness would mark a political dis-identification with the heteronormative social order and disrupt its seeming coherence (Edelman, 2004, pp. 24-27).

Non-identitarian coalition-building

Finally, queer notions have also brought new ways of organising and creating communities. If gay liberation united people based on homosexual identity, then queer community is constructed on different principles. Most often the defining feature is non-normative positioning with regard to the organisation of sex and gender dominant in a particular society (Duggan, 1992, p. 223). But there are also voices that call for a broader understanding of queer politics and community. Cohen (1997) states for example that sexuality should not be prioritised as the primary frame through which to pursue queer politics. Instead, queer politics should be based on an intersectional analysis that recognises the interaction of multiple systems of oppression (Cohen, 1997, pp. 440-441). Grounding movements in the shared marginal relationship to power could fulfil the radical potential of queer politics and help to move away from identity-based organising (ibid, p. 458). At the same time, Cohen contends that identity categories need not be abandoned altogether, but they should be destabilised by recognising their multiplicity and interconnectedness (ibid, p. 480).

4.3 Shifting strategies

Convictions about what constitutes political resistance change over time and along with them the strategies that movements use for carrying through their politics shift as well. I would like to focus on some mechanisms through which these strategies are filtered. The mechanisms that are relevant for investigating my research problem are collective identity and institutional environment.

Polletta and Jasper (2001, p 285) define collective identity as *„cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution. It is a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly [---]“*. But collective identities do not precede movements nor do they simply become expressed through political organising and action. Instead, collective identities emerge during the process of collective action (Gamson, 1995, p. 392) and the political activity itself provides a sense of “groupness” and solidarity to movement participants (Polletta & Jasper,

2001, p. 291). More importantly, collective identities take on particular forms when being shaped by and filtered through organisational bodies (Gamson, 1996, p. 235). As IGLYO is a social movement organisation its negotiations about queer that I will engage with in my research are situated in an organisational context. I will look at some aspects of organisational identity as a further concretisation of collective identity.

Postmodernist accounts dismiss a view on organisational identity as an enduring and distinctive aspect of an organisation. Gioia et al (2000) documented the rather dynamic nature of organisational identities. They hold that not only do organisations have multiple identities depending on context and audiences, but the apparent durability of identities is illusory. The labels that organisations use for describing core beliefs and values may remain unchanged over a period of time, but the meanings associated with these labels are subject to constant re-interpretation (Gioia, 2000, pp. 74-75). In other words, the organisational identity and ways of translating it into action are in flux and open for revision, while the descriptive labels remain stable – thus creating the appearance of a durable identity (ibid). So when it comes to analysing identities within organisations, there are many calls for abandoning the modernist myth of stability and structure and focusing on the messy process of making meaning work within organisations (Parker, 1992, pp. 6-10).

However, collective identities that are pursued by organisations are not free-floating but shaped and limited by organisational fields and institutional environments (Gamson, 1996, pp. 237-238). So in order to better understand the changing identity strategies among movements, it is important to take into account the political conditions under which the collective action takes place (Bernstein, 1997, p. 532) as well as the institutional dynamics and structural locations of social movement groups (Gamson, 1996).

According to Schmid (2013) relations to institutional environment are especially important in the non-profit sector. Due to the lack of financial means, many organisations depend on external entities for resources, legitimacy and accreditation (Schmid, 2013, p. 244). The external entities that provide resources (state institutions as well as the public, philanthropic and commercial foundations) often have expectations for the goals, programmes, management or staffing of the receiving organisations (ibid). As a result of their dependency, organisations are likely to obey by the rules presented by external funding bodies, which in turn would distance them from their original ideology and constituents (Pfeffer & Salancik 2003 in Schmid 2013, p. 244). All in all, the strategies for deploying an identity are dependent on various external factors such as relationships with oppositional

movements and with the state, access to the political structures, interactions within the activist communities etc (Bernstein, 1997, p. 560).

Yet, as Gamson (1996) suggests, neither “top-down” structural imposition nor “bottom-up” voluntaristic construction of collective identities is sufficient for explaining the selection of particular strategies, targets and organisational forms over others within an organisation. Research should pay attention to how organisational bodies are strategically filtering identity formulations, when trying to balance demands from their constituency as well as pressures from the institutional environment (Gamson, 1996, p. 257).

All in all, it is evident that collective identities are fluid rather than fixed and that activists deploy them strategically, depending on their understanding of politics and while being constrained by institutional environments.

4.4 Queer organising

After recounting various ways to understand Queer theory and politics it is time to connect the discussions to more concrete forms of social movement organising. Following Epstein (1996), this attempt falls on fertile ground. They find that the numerous ways of conceptualising queer point to the potency of queer politics as a particular case in the investigation of collective action within social movements (Epstein, 1996, p. 158). Trying to tease out the meanings and practices of queer in a social movement organisation like IGLYO is particularly in line with this observation.

However, adjoining queer with movement organisations introduces many complex contradictions, as already outlined by Gamson in their 1995 landmark article “Must Identity Movements Self-destruct? A Queer Dilemma“. As the title reveals, Gamson attempts to tackle the main dilemma that queer poses to political organising. Glossing over the nuances that I accounted for in the previous sections, Gamson portrays the central controversy between two oppositional strategies for organising –gay vs queer. In the ethnic/essentialist approach, clear identity categories are deemed to be the basis for political organising and resistance. The opposite logic is keen on deconstructing the clear collective categories and questions the utility of these categories for social change. Thus, the fundamental quandary that queerness poses is that “*fixed identity categories are both the basis for oppression and the basis for political power*” (Gamson, 1995, p. 391).

But recognising the paradox is only the first step on the way, as Gamson points towards paths forward. Firstly, they suggest that the queer impulse to destabilise identities from within should be included in the theory of collective identity formation (which so far

only acknowledges the political utility of collective identity categories). This move would be advantageous because it “*calls attention to the fact that secure boundaries and stabilised identities are necessary not in general, but in the specific*“ and would thus enable researching the link between the two logics of organising (ibid, p. 402). Secondly, serious confrontation with the fact that the goal of queer collective action is destabilising collective identities would point to novel questions in sociology. Instead of asking how collective identities are constructed and solidified, it becomes relevant to investigate who (and when and how) needs fixed collective identities as a ground for social action (ibid, p. 403). In short, Gamson calls for understanding of social movements in which collective identities are both constructed and deconstructed.

Similarly, Halperin (1997) holds that arguments about whether queer or gay/lesbian approach would be the right choice are unproductive and distracting. Instead, the focus should be on the strategic functioning of the terms and the effects that using any of those terms produce (Halperin, 1997, p. 63). This is also the approach I am going to take in the analysis of my data. An organisation that aims to cater for both LGBT and Q is bound to make strategic use of various approaches to identities. I intend to examine manifestations of queer in IGLYO’s politics without descending into judgements about whether one or another approach to politics would be preferred.

However, another gap must be bridged on the way. Insofar as Gay and Lesbian Studies have been mainly focusing on the institutional matters and Queer studies on the textual and discursive level, the relationship between them tends to be under-researched (Gamson, 2003, p. 561). I will make an attempt of tending to both of those levels, when I am going to discuss queer notions in a social movement organisation. This also means that I will be taking on the analytical challenge that Polletta & Jasper (2001) point to - „*to identify the circumstances in which different relations between interest and identity, strategy and identity, and politics and identity operate, circumstances that include cultural processes as well as structural ones*“ (Polletta & Jasper, 2001, p. 285).

4.5 Criticisms of queer

Also critical voices about queer are important to record, as it can contribute to an understanding why IGLYO might find some aspects of queer inapplicable in their politics. There are various critiques of queer but I shall mainly concentrate on the ones that are relevant to my analysis, i.e. critiques that are related to political organising.

Halperin (1997) mentions that the lack of specificity that queer revels in may leave the misleading impression of inclusiveness and solidarity among all non-normative subject positions (Halperin, 1997, p. 64). There are fears about renewed omission of lesbian presence (Jagose, 1996, p. 116), continued marginalisation of transgender voices (Stryker, 2004, p. 214) along with concerns about neglecting class, race, ability etc. All in all, using queer as an umbrella term can have totalising effects and ignore distinctions between different marginalised subject positions.

Another common criticism of the free-floating nature of queer is that it destroys the very premise of political action – a coherent identity to mobilise around (Jagose, 1996, p. 103). According to Seidman (2004), refusing to name the agent of politics is a great drawback of poststructuralist critique of identity (Seidman, 2004, p. 132). They point out that queer proponents ignore the practical efficacy of affirmative identities. They hold that “*identity constructions are not disciplining and regulatory only in a self-limiting and oppressive way; they are also personally, socially and politically enabling [---]*” (ibid, p. 134). They argue that reducing identity to a mode of domination and hierarchy and rejecting it on this premise leads to “empty politics” or a non-constructive anti-identity politics (ibid).

Many people feel a great emotional attachment to the sense of identity that has been built up over a long period of struggles against marginalisation. It’s informative to consider bell hooks’s reply to the postmodernist critique of black identity, “*It is easy to give up identity if you have one*” (hooks, 1990, p. 28). Similarly, some people feel that LGBT identity can be personally empowering, as it provides a sense of community – a treasured feeling that they did not used to have access to and that they have a hard time letting go of.

Some critics don’t believe in the effectiveness of strategically reclaiming the term “queer”. As reported by Jagose (1996) they argue that it is difficult to rid this word of homophobic connotations and even if redeploying the term would be successful, new homophobic terms would spring up in their stead. Games on the semantic level will not put an end to homophobia (Jagose, 1996, pp. 104-105). Instead, focus on the discursive nature of social practice and textual deconstructions is said to result in a tendency to neglect the material/institutional aspects of the discursive practices (Seidman, 2004, p. 132) and overlook the lived reality of people (Jack Halberstam, 2013, p. 179). Finally, Queer theory has been criticised for being rather inaccessible due to complicated jargon and obscure analysis (Jagose, 1996, p. 110). For those reasons many activists believe that attempting to bring queer ideas into the practice of political organising is a futile, impossible or even harmful initiative.

Jagose (1996) refers to pragmatic voices in the LGBT community who criticise queer for dismissing the conventional forms of political intervention. These pragmatists that Jagose refers to believe that remaining outside sanctioned structures is naïve, as queer voices would not be heard nor taken seriously (ibid, p. 107). On the other hand, Jagose points out that there are those who are alarmed about queer becoming too successful, i.e. widely accepted. According to those voices, if queer is institutionalised then it loses its potential for denaturalising cultural critique (ibid).

But there are critics who call into question the very central tenet behind queer – that it cannot be fixed, named, assimilated because its transgressive potential lies in the forever ephemeral resistance to dominant discourses. As McKee (1999) points out, shared ideas about what queer is, are present at least within the academia. Judgements about which texts to include in a journal or a course, which speakers to invite to a conference are based on a certain understanding of Queer theory, without acknowledging the existence of or engaging with the unspoken criteria (McKee, 1999, pp. 236-237).

Furthermore, Queer theory often posits itself against any normative inquiries because it deems them inherently disciplining and oppressive. But Zanghellini (2009) holds that normative commitments do in fact animate the queer project, but they are not acknowledged nor reflected upon. Queer theory is inspired by certain political and moral positions. Moreover, it even shares some values (such as ideas about respect, value pluralism, personal autonomy) with its arch enemy – liberal humanism (Zanghellini, 2009, pp. 7-8).

Queer can also introduce a number of new binaries or reinforce old dichotomies. As Cohen (1997) notes, queer analysis sometimes falls into the trap of portraying the world in terms of simplified “hetero/queer” divide. Some activists depict heterosexuals as a monolithic group with full access to all axis of power, while depicting all queers as powerless, thus gravitating towards an “us/them” understanding of the world (Cohen, 1997, p. 447). But radical queers could also be calling into play a new hierarchical binary opposition, if they construct their outsider status in opposition to gays and lesbians, who are perceived to have been assimilated into the heteronormative culture (Sullivan, 2003, p. 45).

5. Methodology, Methods and Material

In the following sections, I will describe the research methods that I chose for the study and how I have made use of them. The section also addresses the limitations of these methods and reflections about my own position as a researcher.

5.1 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is an endeavour that seeks “*to describe social phenomena and their meanings to relevant actors (the **what** questions) and to understand and explain social patterns and processes (the **how** questions)*” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 39). Thereby, the observable phenomena are not considered to exist independently of the world where people act, but as constructed through interactions. A constructionist ontological position necessitates an interpretative epistemological position, where knowledge is an outcome of a process of interpretation and negotiation (Bryman, 2004, p. 266). There are multiple subjective interpretations, all coloured by the social and historical context that participants find themselves in. Therefore experiences but also background of these experiences are always at the centre of qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 2007, pp. 20-21). At the same time, critical strands within qualitative research caution against essentialising experience and understanding. Since we are living in power-laden environments, our understanding of the world is shaped by hegemonic discourses. Thus it is important to be critical of and challenge the (often binary) categories that are used for making sense of our experiences (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, pp. 15-16, 20).

There are several reasons for choosing a qualitative approach over a quantitative one for studying the queer dimension of IGLYO. Following (Creswell, 2007), there is a need to develop a sophisticated understanding of a complex matter, especially because the study addresses an issue that is not widely researched. Moreover, a qualitative approach helps to focus on the accounts that representatives of organisations provide, as well as the context in which these participants interact (ibid, p. 40).

5.2 Case Study and Ways of Judging its Quality

My thesis follows the research strategy of a case study. A case study is a detailed investigation into a phenomenon that is conducted over a period of time and where the context of the phenomenon is of crucial importance in the analysis (Hartley, 2004, p. 323). Making a distinction between the context and a case is necessary because a case is always a bounded entity. It is impossible to study the whole setting, so only aspects that are relevant to the focus of the research are emphasised in the case study, the rest is treated as context. An organisation like IGLYO is multi-faceted, but my case study only focuses on the aspects of queer politics and practices in the organisation. Moreover, a case is also temporally constrained, even though the case often extends beyond the period about which data has been collected (Gomm, Hammersley, & Foster, 2000, pp. 108-109). IGLYO as an organisation has existed for three

decades and will continue to do so, whereas my data collection period ranged from mid-October until mid-December 2013.

Research into IGLYO and the queer dimension of its politics constitutes an intrinsic case, as defined by Stake (1995). An intrinsic case is undertaken in order to learn more about a particular problem at hand. The case is considered interesting in and of itself and not because it would help us to understand other cases or a generic phenomenon (Stake, 1995, p. 3). IGLYO as a multinational umbrella organisation that attempts to connect grass root activism and European policy-making constitutes a particular case that is worth studying in its uniqueness. It is impossible to generalise from this single case to universal human experience. In fact, such generalisations are not desirable, as all knowledge is socially and historically contextualised. Instead of aiming for wide generalisations, it is more feasible to put “*emphasis on the heterogeneity and contextuality of knowledge*” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 261).

Related to problems with generalisation is the question of objectivity. Even when one dismisses the positivist notion of objectivity that is related to truth discovery, there can still be more or less accurate understandings of the observable phenomena. Various views of the world can be constructed, but the accuracy of the understanding (however partial) depends on how careful the researcher is in the process of observing, recording and analysing (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011, pp. 111-112). Furthermore, the quality of qualitative studies should not be assessed according to the criteria of quantitative studies, as the criteria for reliability and validity presuppose a single absolute account of social reality (Bryman, 2004, pp. 273-274).

So instead of aiming for universal, standardised and replicable results, the goal is to create a coherent description of existing patterns, follow scientific procedures and make the process clear to the reader (Schofield, 2000, pp. 70-71). If the researcher follows a rigorous process of constantly checking, questioning and theoretically interpreting the findings, the research procedures will become transparent and the results convincing (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 253).

Another aspect that will potentially increase the trustworthiness of the case study is its multi-method design. Results from different sources of information can be tested against one another in order to reach a wider understanding, i.e triangulating the data (Fetterman, 2007, p. 94). However, the goal of triangulation in a qualitative case study is not validation of a single interpretation but adding depth and richness or suggesting additional interpretations (Denzin, 2012, p. 82; Stake, 1995, p. 115). Moreover, using complementary methods helps to further investigate the initial findings that were collected with one data collection technique and thus compensate for each other’s shortcomings (Barbour, 1998, p. 356).

An important part of striving for transparency is being reflexive about one's own role in the practice of research. Reflexivity entails recognising that one's own background affects the research process and confronting this in a critical manner (O'Reilly, 2009, p. 191). Awareness of my positionality (personal attributes such as age, ethnic background, class, gender etc) will make me alert for the power relations between myself and the participants (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 2012, p. 34), as well as shed light on the lenses that always mediate my interpretations of the data (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 120).

However, it is important to note that positionality does not refer to fixed identities but to relational positions within power hierarchies. So while I am inspired by the critique of identity politics and do not believe that any of my personal attributes have any essential reality to them, I still need to be aware that I am situated in a social world where I'm both perceived to have particular qualities and accordingly, those privileges or disadvantages have real-world effects. Thus, as Riggs (2010) notes, "*What is needed, then, is a white middle-class queer post-identity politics identity politics that holds those of us who inhabit this location to account for the privileges we have [---]*" (Riggs, 2010, p. 345). For example, even though I am somewhat uncomfortable with the identity category of a woman, I can certainly relate to the structural inequalities that exist among people of different genders. Similarly, while I dream of a world without strict divisions into concrete genders and sexualities, I realise that here and now I have the privilege of being mainly cisgendered⁸ and straight.

Being young, white, able-bodied and highly educated may have helped to navigate my way at IGLYO's General Assembly, as those characteristics were shared by most participants. At the same this may well have alienated participants who did not fit these categories and thus may have contributed to overlooking some power structures within the organisation. Furthermore, my experience and engagement with political activism, mostly in the form of running a queer/feminist discussion group and writing debate articles on gender and sexuality align me somewhat with the participants of the study. Shared values may be beneficial to the analysis, but with it comes the danger of assuming that I understand more than I actually do.

While it is important not to deny the participants the agency they have as producers of their own interpretations (Haritaworn, 2008, p. 2.4) it is the researcher who is in the power position of writing the research down. This imbalance can be somewhat alleviated by testing the findings in a process of member validation. Thereby the participants will be able to review the researcher's interpretations and engage in the discussion about the claims that are made in

⁸ Cisgendered means that „one's gender identity matches their assigned sex at birth. For example, a person assigned female at birth identifies with a feminine/woman/female identity“ (Sawyer, 2013, p. 34)

the study, perhaps even contributing with additional perspectives (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 556; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 255) The participants were given the possibility to review and comment on the first draft of the analysis. The ones who provided feedback did mainly agree with my interpretations. Some of them added clarifications and provided further context and many of them said that they would have answered slightly differently now (in May 2014), after having reflected more about queer since autumn 2013. It would therefore be interesting to continue the investigation in order to map the possible changes in the approach towards queer in IGLYO.

5.3 Sample

When the goal of the research is reaching in-depth understanding of the matter rather than creating statistical generalisations then non-probabilistic purposeful sampling is a suitable strategy (Merriam, 2009, p. 77). Purposeful sampling entails selecting information-rich cases (here – participants with various perspectives) who can inform an understanding of the central phenomenon of the study (Creswell, 2007, p. 125; M. Q. Patton, 2002, p. 230).

The type of purposeful sampling strategy I used was a combination of emergent (opportunistic) sampling and maximum variation (heterogeneity) sampling as defined by Patton (2002). Maximum variation sampling is useful for documenting common patterns of the phenomenon that surface from great variation (M. Q. Patton, 2002, p. 235). Since IGLYO has member organisations from the pan-European region, I was keen on ensuring at least some geographical diversity among the representatives. Moreover, knowing that a range of gender identities and expressions would be present at the GA, I wanted this to be reflected in the sample. This was a conscious attempt to avoid the often-reported dominance of certain voices in LGBTQ activist circles – of mostly cisgendered gay men. However, there were other potential features of the sample that I could not take into account due to lack of information, such as the type and size of member organisations or individual representatives' degree of experience within their home organisations. Therefore I also resorted to emergent sampling.

Emergent or opportunistic sampling is used when there is not enough information available upon which to decide the desirable features of the sample. Therefore the sampling decisions are made in the field, in response to the opportunities that arise and as more knowledge of the setting is gained (M. Q. Patton, 2002, p. 240). Once in the field, I recruited people not only when the opportunity presented itself during a conversation but I also sought up people who had left the impression of having much experience or who were more active

than others. This, however, formed a certain bias in the sample formation. At the end of the second day when the elections for the next IGLYO Executive Board took place, I realised that I had had conversations with most of the candidates (without previously knowing that they were running for election). This is not to say that those people ended up in the final sample, but to point out that I might have gravitated towards people who were more active and vocal in the setting.

I am confident that the participants who ended up in the final sample gave their full informed consent. Requirements for informed consent include being informed about the purpose and procedures of the research project, participating voluntarily and knowing about the right to withdraw, having information about who has access to the data; being aware that parts of the data can be published and also knowing about the potential access to the transcription and analysis of the data (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, pp. 70-71). All of these steps were included in the process of recruiting people for both individual and focus group interviews. Firstly, I had informed IGLYO's Executive Board about my research and asked their permission to recruit participants at the General Assembly (see [Appendix 2](#)). When talking to the participants at the General Assembly, I handed out leaflets (see [Appendix 3](#)) with information about the research and encouraged them to contact me in case they wanted to participate. Upon receiving an e-mail response from the participants I provided another reminder about my research that covered the issue of confidentiality. Moreover, I also solicited consent anew before the start of any new interview.

When describing the sample it is impossible to separate out the individual and focus group interviews, as the small number of participants would compromise their anonymity. Therefore I can only describe the sample in general terms, without going into any specifics. For instance, there was some gender diversity among the 12 people I interviewed. 6 of them used male pronouns, 2 preferred female pronouns, 2 used strictly gender-neutral pronouns (ze, they), 1 person chose to use both he and they and 1 preferred not to disclose any pronoun. Their ages ranged from the beginning of 20s to over 30, although most of the participants were in their mid-20s. All of the participants were without visible disabilities and although it is impossible to know whether they belong to any ethnic minority, it was not by any means apparent that they did. Furthermore, I cannot disclose the exact countries that the representatives were from, as it would make them easily identifiable. In general, I interviewed participants from countries within and outside of the European Union, from different geographical and cultural locations within the wider region of Europe.

When reporting the results of the study, I will not attach any personally identifiable information to particular quotes, because I promised to secure the confidentiality of participants. This is also why the participants' reflections are not analysed from the perspective of their social positioning (gender, age, ethnicity, etc). I have marked the participants of individual interviews with letters from the beginning of the alphabet (A to H) and the participants in the focus group with letters from the end of the alphabet (W to Z).

5.4 Research Methods

According to Flyvbjerg (2011), opting for a case study is a choice about the unit of research and not a methodological choice, as the case study design itself does not dictate a particular method (Flyvbjerg, 2011, p. 301). In fact, very often multiple research methods and data sources are employed within one single case study. This allows various facets of the same phenomenon to be explored (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 544; Creswell, 2007, p. 73). In order to reach a better understanding of the complex case of IGLYO I used participant observation, focus group interviews and individual interviews, all of which are examined more closely in the following sections.

5.4.1 Participant Observation

Since IGLYO is a network of organisations that does not meet very often, it is difficult to analyse their day-to-day activities. The 2.5-days long General Assembly⁹ taking place in Copenhagen 17.-19. October 2013 was the only opportunity where I could witness the activities of a network in real time, as it was an occasion that gathered representatives of 49 member organisations. So the GA was a "key event" in terms of providing me with a lens through which to view a social group and its activities (Fetterman, 2007, p. 99).

My data gathering process was partly inspired by elements from „focused ethnography“ as proposed by Knoblauch (2005). Focused ethnography is a flexible form of ethnography that is characterised by intense short-term field visits that generate a large amount of data (ibid, p. 2). So the short duration of the data collection period is compensated for by intensity in data analysis (ibid, p. 16). Focused ethnography concentrates on particular aspects of the field, such as certain situations, interactions and activities (ibid, p. 28). So rather than hoping to learn how the whole organisation functions and understand its culture, I was focusing on the potential manifestations of queer during IGLYO's GA.

⁹ See [Appendix 4](#) for GA's Agenda.

The focused approach to data gathering was carried out through participant observation, with varying levels of participation. For example, I was taking a more passive role during the official discussion sessions, as I was by no means in a position to participate in the governance process that unfolded in front of my eyes. But regardless of the particular balance between participation and observation, researcher influence is inevitable. Therefore a high level of self-observation is necessary, attending to the biases a researcher brings into the construction of information and their observer impact on the research setting (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011, p. 80).

Since there was a workshop before the official start of the General Assembly, I was already present and participating/observing. In group exercises or casual conversation I was immediately asked about “my organisation”, assuming that I was a regular participant at the GA. So I already outed myself as a researcher to a number of people before I had the chance to do so openly. In the morning of the first day of the GA I was welcomed to present myself and my research project in front of everyone. That helped to settle me into a semi-overt role, where participants are informed about my position but not always actively thinking about it (O'Reilly, 2009, p. 9).

But as Bryman (2004, p. 299) notes, gaining entry to the organisation is only the first step in the ongoing process of securing access. Moreover, rapport is usually built over a long period of fieldwork, while I only had 2.5 days of access to the field. Such constrained circumstances certainly won't allow for a full understanding and sharing of each others' goals. On the other hand, establishing „instant rapport“ is still based on the same principles of good communication, listening, respect for participants' rights and the information they provide (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011, pp. 51-52).

During coffee breaks, lunch, dinner I was on the more active end of the participant/observer continuum, balancing between casual conversations and informal interviewing. However, I avoided informal interviewing during evening social events, out of respect for participants' free time. Instead, I was present for the purposes of networking and establishing rapport.

5.4.2 Focus Group Interview

Focus group interview is a form of a group interview on a particular and rather focused topic, where the emphasis is upon the interaction between participants and their collective construction of meaning (Bryman, 2004, p. 346). Participants react to the views of others, may voice (dis)agreements or offer alternative viewpoints. Moreover, they may also change

their mind about previously held beliefs or be exposed to thoughts they would otherwise not have the opportunity of hearing (Bryman, 2004, p. 348). Group dynamics may also limit the interaction in the sense that some participants may be dominating the conversation or that participants are prone to expressing views that they perceive to be culturally expected (ibid, p. 360).

Focus group interviews are known to be a useful method for gaining exploratory data in the beginning of the research project as a form of establishing first information that is often followed by other types of research (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007, p. 15). The exploratory nature of this step in the data gathering process called for a less structured approach. Focusing on the participants' perspectives on the general theme and allowing them to guide the conversation to topics that they would choose to discuss can elicit more new ideas and insights, which is crucial for shaping future research (Morgan & Scannell, 1998, pp. 45-47). Nevertheless, as (Stewart et al., 2007, p. 18) notes, it is not fair to describe focus group as a „*freewheeling conversation among group members*“ as it does have a certain focus and an agenda. Indeed, it was a mildly moderated discussion for which I had devised an interview guide (see [Appendix 5](#)) with broad open-ended questions that were inspired by my main research question.

Since the GA took place from Thursday afternoon until Saturday night, the only potential time window for focus group interviews was Sunday – the only day off for participants. So despite having initially recruited two groups of 6-7 people, I managed to only carry out one focus group with 4 people. With only one interview, one can hardly speak of data saturation. But Morgan & Scannell (1998) point out that even a single focus group can be useful as long as the data are interpreted cautiously (Morgan & Scannell, 1998, p. 83). It is impossible to separate the content of the discussion „*from either the unique characteristics of the participants or their group dynamics*“ (ibid). However, comparing this particular data with information from other sources would help to further determine the consistency and put things into context (ibid).

The focus group interview lasted for over an hour and I was keen on not prolonging it further than promised, as I was highly aware of their generosity with their time at this very unsuitable point in time. The discussion was running rather effortlessly, with a slight tendency for one participant to dominate the conversation. There were also some language difficulties, as one participant had somewhat limited English skills.

5.4.3 Individual Interviews

I chose a semi-structured approach towards interviews in order to find a balance between focusing on a certain topic and yet allowing for flexibility in the way participants can present their understandings of issues and patterns. Semi-structured interviews follow a rough interview guide (see [Appendix 6](#)), although the wording and order of the questions differs from one time to another. The participants have a relative degree of freedom in their replies and they are encouraged to bring up topics of interest rather than be restricted to a rigid set of questions (Bryman, 2004, p. 321). But despite the lack of concrete structure, interview is not simply a conversation. It is a constructed situation where the interviewer urges the participants to talk about their topic of interest and the participant complies by attempting to produce replies that they assume could count as relevant (Dingwall, 1997, pp. 58-59).

Kvale & Brinkmann (2009) point to various power asymmetries that influence the process of co-constructing knowledge in an interview. Firstly, the interviewer, having specific scientific competence is the one initiating and thereafter having control over the interview situation. The conversation is clearly unidirectional, as the interviewer is posing the questions and the participant's role is to answer. Moreover, the interview dialogue is only constructed to serve an instrumental purpose of providing the researcher with material on a particular topic of interest rather than valuing the conversation in itself. And finally, the interviewer will have the privilege to interpret the narratives that the participants have provided and to present these interpretations in a written report. The participants can react to this power imbalance by withholding information, providing deliberately vague replies, questioning the researcher and the project etc (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, pp. 33-34).

I eventually succeeded to conduct 8 individual interviews. Despite displaying initial interest in participating in the interview and support for the topic, many participants did not manage to follow through with their intention. Such difficulties in securing interviews is not surprising, as recruiting participants is often unpredictable and may result in a reduced sample size (Robinson, 2014, p. 31). Out of the 8 interviews, 5 were conducted with regular representatives of member organisations and the remaining 3 with IGLYO Board members.

Since the representatives of IGLYO's member organisations are located in various countries all over Europe, the interviews were conducted online via Skype. The interviews were recorded using the software MP3 Skype Recorder and transcribed. In one occasion the participant had very lacking Internet connection and the only way to conduct an interview was through a Skype chat. Some researchers advise against online interviews, as the lack of access to body language and other cues makes it more difficult to gather rich and detailed data

(Elmholdt 2006 in Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, pp. 149). However, collecting data through Skype was the most feasible option for this particular research project.

Most of the interviews ran rather smoothly, with high participant involvement. However, one participant was giving short answers and refused to elaborate when probed further for more details. On the other hand, several others expressed their appreciation for an opportunity to reflect on the topic. Like Hesse-Biber and Leavy point out, an interview may provide an opportunity to learn not only for the interviewer but also for the interviewee, as the questioning may prompt processes of reflection (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 31). My hope is that reading the analysis will provide an additional source for the process of reflection.

6. Analysis

My interpretations of the material are divided into three parts. Firstly, I will discuss manifestations of queer in IGLYO, thereafter I will examine the challenges that queer poses to IGLYO and finally I will discuss IGLYO's balancing acts between the different political impulses.

6. 1 Queer in IGLYO

When discussing queer in the context of IGLYO, there was a certain sense of caution among respondents. Even though they associated IGLYO with queer, they included a caveat, thus referring to IGLYO as queer to a certain extent. If it is possible to distinguish queer from non-queer and refer to degrees of queerness, then there must be some standards that these judgements are based on. But as McKee (1999) and Zanghellini (2009) point out, there is generally very little openness about the existence of any shared principles that make up the criteria that action or entities are measured up against in order to be declared queer. As can be seen in the later part of the analysis, spelling out the criteria was never easy, yet respondents had opinions about the degree to which IGLYO could be considered queer.

"I'd say that IGLYO is queer at heart and when it comes to its values. In many of its, in the ways that IGLYO works I'd say that yeah. [---] But I wouldn't say that IGLYO is completely queer and I wouldn't say that everybody in the Board is queer." (D)

The ways IGLYO is perceived to (be) queer will be examined at length below. As the above quote already indicated, manifestations of queer can be divided into two rough categories – *ideas* (what kind of relations does IGLYO have to queer on the ideological level) and *practice* (what is perceived to be queer in the activity of the organisation). This separation will be the basis for the following discussion of manifestations of queer in IGLYO.

6.1.2 Ideas

As mentioned in Chapter 2, IGLYO added Queer to their name in 2005 (IGLYO, n.d-b). Inclusion of queer is said to reflect IGLYO's connectedness to grassroots in two ways. Firstly, queer was included as a response to a need that was identified by members. But after IGLYO had embraced queer, the organisation became attractive to a new segment in the non-heterosexual community – people who either identified as queer and/or were supposedly informed by queer ideas. Reacting to the demands of the constituency and accommodating new values and meanings demonstrates the flexibility of organisational identity (Gamson, 1996). However, Gamson also writes that pressures from grassroots always need to be balanced with constraints of the institutional environment, something that I will return to in later chapters.

Adopting queer in the organisation is most often referred to as a sign of increased inclusiveness and diversity. In fact, aspiring for diversity in various aspects of the organisation was one of the main concerns for IGLYO.¹⁰ Including queer in IGLYO becomes one among many achievements on the way to the overarching goal of greater diversity – in terms of including and catering for more people, rather than constituting a groundbreaking contribution per se.

“Queer people [---] who say that sexual orientation doesn't matter and since they do not identify with either of the mostly common genders, they also would like to be recognised as those who don't identify with anything. And it actually adds to the diversity or the work that IGLYO does because a lot of these issues are rather new even for LGBT people. [---] That there are other people and they have different opinions, they live through different experiences and actually they also need to be taken into account. (G)

Celebrating IGLYO's inclusion of queer as a sign of increased diversity places queer within the framework of identity politics. Queer becomes a separate identity that stands on equal footing with the previously known and recognised identities such as lesbian, gay and trans*¹¹. The content of this identity - being outside of the dichotomous understanding of gender and sexuality - becomes less important than the right for this identity to exist and be included. The adoption of queer identity even resembles the (gay) coming out narrative described by Patton (2004) – a winning story of a group who used to lack visibility but through awareness-raising gained respect and recognition. Queer in this sense becomes another subject to be known,

¹⁰ The diversity rhetoric was so prevalent that it deserves greater scrutiny than is possible within the scope of this paper. I will limit myself to discussing the ways diversity is perceived to be a manifestation of queer ideas.

¹¹ „Trans* with an asterisk is a way to denote the widest possible meaning of who is included under the trans banner [---] such as transgender, transsexual, transvestite, genderqueer, genderfluid, non-binary, genderless, non-gendered, third gendered, trans man, trans woman.“ (de Valck, Loist, Loist, & de Valck, 2013, pp. 587-588)

recognised and included; something that broadens the dominant discourse about identities, but does not challenge it.

In fact, when inclusiveness is portrayed as a crucial element of queer then the very act of accepting and making space for conventional constructions of gender and sexuality is considered a queer act in itself. Any attempt to define a constituency are seen be normative and constraining and thus opposed to queer openness.

“We have to have room for more normative cisgender identities because otherwise it wouldn’t necessarily be very queer. In the sense that if queer is about like breaking borders and not excluding and working for a world where we can all be what we feel that we are or want to be then people also have the right to identify as cisgendered gay men.” (D)

There are at least two ways of trying to make sense of this somewhat controversial claim. If - taken at face value - the act of including normative categories is queer then it becomes evident that this way of understanding queer bears a resemblance to the liberal narrative (also pointed out by Zanghellini (2009)). The core liberal values of individual autonomy, inclusion and equality are supposed to lead to tolerance and value pluralism (Chatterjee, 2013, p. 119). LGBT people are often subjects to liberal rhetoric, with calls for tolerance by the straight population and for inclusion into heteronormative society. Interestingly, in the reflection by D, LGBT people once more become subjects of liberal rhetoric of inclusion, while this time the pleads for tolerance are directed at non-normative population within IGLYO.

Another way of approaching the issue would retain the connection to liberal rhetoric but drop the attempt of being associated with queer values. If queer is understood as a critical position towards whatever constitutes the norm at a certain point in time (Halperin, 1997; Jagose, 1996), then subscribing to binary understandings of gender and sexuality and self-determination through prescribed identity categories cannot count as queer. According to this logic it would not follow that actively embracing identitarian groups is crucial for achieving a state of “queerness” in an organisation.

However, there are those who believe that the inclusion of Q in IGLYO’s name brings (or should bring) concrete changes into the way IGLYO’s configures their politics. It would mean adopting an approach that is “conventionally” considered queer (see Sullivan 2003, Richardson 2006), i.e. being critical of mobilising around identity categories and thus going beyond identity politics. Queer in the context of IGLYO is at least on a theoretical level supposed to bring wider criticism of norms rather than appealing for rights for certain categories.

“For us as a network, I think that means that I’d need to think broader than just campaigning... To think more widely about gender norms, for example, as opposed to just

campaigning for women's equality. Actually thinking about the impact that gender norms and boxes have on all youth. So yeah, having that kind of critical approach rather than [---] lobbying in terms of those boxes." (C)

Furthermore, some consider IGLYO to be queer because they engage with certain matters that perhaps deviate from a LGBT-approach to politics. The matters that are considered to mark a commitment to queer are among others: homonormativity, intersectionality, norm-criticism in general and norm-critical pedagogy in particular, emphasizing trans* questions etc. Of this list of potentially queer ideas, homonormativity and intersectionality require further attention because they caused rather elevated debates at the General Assembly (GA). I shall first turn my attention to the notion of homonormativity.

Firstly it must be mentioned that the way the term was used at IGLYO's GA and later in interviews departs from the understanding that circulates in Queer theory. In academic literature, homonormativity is referred to as *„a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, but upholds and sustains them, while promising the possibility of a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption“* (Duggan, 2003, p. 65). Homonormativity in this sense is the result of the ethnic model of homosexuality, where the ideal is being assimilated to heteronormative institutions like market, military, marriage (as well as monogamous relationships and procreation) rather than disrupting norms around gender, sexuality and community in general. But in the context of IGLYO, homonormativity was referred to as a certain set of ideas about how the LGBT community is supposed to look or behave; a stereotypical understanding that constitutes a norm to which members of the community should live up to. This notion included little connection to criticism towards the tendency to embrace and mimic heteronormative and neoliberal ideals of society.

*“And many people on these applications (*dating websites¹²) will specifically talk about... straight-acting, straight-looking, fit, muscular and these... This is exactly what homonormativity is. It is this perception that we have to... We all, we are gay men, so we have six-packs, we are very attractive...”* (F)

At one of the plenary sessions at the GA, an animated debate arose about the proposition to include a statement that IGLYO should work against homonormativity, with many people expressing concern or outright opposition to the term. For example, some representatives feared that it would result in more harm than good as it would constitute accusations against a certain segment of the community. Others, who were also worried about retaining the unity of

¹² Throughout the thesis, an asterisk “*” in the middle of a participant's quote marks my comment or observation

the movement, thought that pointing to homonormativity would be creating even further differences in the movement.

The challenge of including intersectionality

Notions of diversity and queer meet in IGLYO's discussions around intersectionality¹³. On several occasions, intersectionality was mentioned as a key queer idea that IGLYO engages with. However, this was more of a projection into the future, as up until October 2013 IGLYO had not been dealing with this framework. There was a workshop on intersectionality before the official GA and intersectionality was also chosen as a thematic area for the coming two years, along with education and social inclusion. But it is still important to examine how representatives relate to the idea of intersectionality in the context of IGLYO, as it was extensively debated at the GA.

“To acknowledge that there are many identities and that you could be in one and then not be in one and that you can have several at the same time is kind of also queer. So talking that much about intersectionality I think is queer” (H)

At the GA, a long discussion about the desirability of intersectionality took place during the plenary session. Once more, there was a fear of displaying too much “difference”, but this time in the sense of not wanting to sacrifice clarity in political communication for diversity. Even more controversial were the voices who claimed that they “*don't want to put all the misery together*”. Being already marginalised in terms of their sexuality and/or gender, they did not wish to be associated with other disadvantaged groups, thus suggesting very meagre possibility for the kind of queer coalition-building that Cathy Cohen (1997) proposed. Finally, some representatives proposed a solution to talk about intersectionality internally but avoid using it in external political communication.

So IGLYO's member organisations seem to be rather conflicted both when it comes to the notions intersectionality and homonormativity. On the one hand there is a wish to keep a united front, unweakened by differences or internal conflicts. On the other hand there is some pressure to acknowledge diversity and multiple oppressions as well as counteract the expectations to live up to an idealised image. This is somewhat similar to findings in Jane Ward's research on three American LGBT organisations, where they concluded that “*lesbian and gay activists embrace racial, gender, socioeconomic and sexual differences when they see*

¹³ Nira Yuval-Davis on intersectionality: „*The point is to analyse the differential ways in which different social divisions are concretely enmeshed and constructed by each other and how they relate to political and subjective constructions of identities.*“ (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 205).

them as predictable, profitable, rational or respectable, and yet suppress these very same differences when they are unpredictable, unprofessional, messy or defiant”(Ward, 2008, p. 2). Indeed, also IGLYO seems to have a partly instrumental relation to the notion of diversity, as it embraces difference in certain cases and tries to downplay it in others.

6.1.2 Practice

Even those who actively endorse IGLYO’s association with queer ideas acknowledge that carrying the ideas into practice is a more complicated matter. This tension between ideas and practice becomes central in the current section, where some of the ways that IGLYO is thought to apply queer ideas in practice will be discussed.

Safe(r) space for queer action

Some were convinced that already the very action of creating opportunities for young LGBTQ people from various parts of Europe to gather and meet is norm-breaking in itself. Be that as it may, there was a shared sense of appreciation for IGLYO’s events, both in terms of learning value but also in terms of acting as a site for community-building.

Apart from providing a sense of solidarity and belonging, social movement organisations also represent a “free/safe space” (Polletta & Jasper, 2001, p. 288). This somewhat of an ambiguous concept is used much in activist environments and refers to “*small-scale settings within a community or movement that are removed from the direct control of dominant groups, are voluntarily participated in, and generate the cultural challenge that precedes or accompanies political mobilisation*” (Polletta, 1999, p. 1). The importance of creating a safe space at IGLYO events was a central theme among participants. Firstly, it served a political purpose, as the events are first miniature testing grounds for those political reformations they wish to implement in the wider society, e.g. respecting each other’s pronouns.

But the space at the GA also functioned as a short-lived haven away from heteronormative oppression. Not that any place can ever be free of power relations, but the mere presence of likeminded people encouraged participants to embrace non-normative physical appearance and bodily conduct to a higher degree than they otherwise would.

“At least when it came to sexual identity and gender identity it was a safe space for us. And I think that people felt free. And freer than usual [---] I think that people kind of take liberties dressing more queer and dancing more queer when they are among queer people. (H)

Another practice that is certainly outside of conventional practices at conferences (youth or other) is the amount of physical contact between participants. When looking around in the

room during plenary sessions, there were people giving each other backrubs, leaning over and resting on each other's shoulders, tickling somebody's armpits when holding up a ballot paper etc. During mingling breaks it was not uncommon to see people hugging one another, reaching out to touch the other in the middle of a conversation, holding hands etc. Most of this was done in a non-sexual manner, but with a great amount of intimacy and affection.

This was certainly another example of how safe the participants considered the space to be at the GA. But more importantly, such public displays of affection could count as a queer act, as they constitute a refusal to comply with the heteronormative demand for privacy (Duggan, 2003). According to heteronormative standards, mostly romantically involved heterosexuals (no more than two at a time, best when married) are allowed to express their affection in public, and even then in moderation. So displays of queer public affection can be considered a form of resistance, while at the same time disrupting the lines between public and private. Certainly, occupying public space instead of pleading for tolerance is queer politics, much in the spirit of ACT UP and Queer Nation (D. E. Hall, 2003).

Also the way IGLYO's events are conducted can involve minor acts of everyday politics. If the formal parts of the event proceedings (presentations, plenary session, voting procedures etc) were otherwise rather conventional and not unlike any other organisation's GA, there could be sudden bursts of unexpected and playful actions. Humour can "queer up" cultural norms about seriousness and respectability and remind people of the show-like qualities of events like the GA.

"And even stuff like [---] let's get up in the middle of the Board meeting or General Assembly and just do a bit of an energiser because we are all knackered. That to me is quite an important way of working and recognising the needs of people" (C)

IGLYO's willingness to engage in controversial political action is also known among European NGOs. One example of this was the preparation for the „9th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth“that took place in 2012 in Russia, focusing on young people's general access to rights. Not knowing that IGLYO was not invited to the conference, one of the main youth organisations in Europe¹⁴ (that IGLYO cooperates with) contacted IGLYO with a suggestion for protest action that was considered too radical for the organisation's own respectability.

"Standing up and pulling on these Pussy Riot masks and maybe having signs about human rights and LGBTQ rights. [---] They felt that they couldn't do that kind of thing. [---] But they

¹⁴ The organisation's name is withheld from the thesis due to IGLYO's wish not to harm the other organisation's public relations

felt that IGLYO can because we are the LGBTQ organisation and we are queer. [---] It was a queer action within that context, because it was a high-level political meeting where you don't do those kinds of things [---] To create visibility for like, "Things are messed up in Russia! And we are here having a human rights conference. Is this a bad joke?" And those are also things that you can't really say or do within the mainstream political framework." (D)

Even though IGLYO never had the chance to carry through this action as they were not invited to the meeting, they demonstrated willingness to go beyond the mainstream framework of "politics as usual" where revealing absurdities of political hypocrisy is taboo. Breaking the rules of political conduct with an in-your-face attitude rather than hoping for slight improvements within the existing system is certainly the kind of counter-hegemonic resistance that defines queer ways of doing politics (see Sullivan 2003, Duggan 2003 etc).

Ways of organising

Many participants found that using non-formal education methods at events is a significant indication of IGLYO's actions being informed by queer as well as other critical ideas. Aiming for co-creation and sharing of knowledge goes against the normal/normative way of learning.

"From what I understand that when IGLYO have other meetings about learning that the learning & teaching workshops implement different learning styles [---] That learning and teaching can be done in a normative way e.g teacher at front of a classroom imparting knowledge onto students, and if IGLYO teaching is more about knowledge sharing then it might be a more queer organisation by going against conventions" (B) (Skype-chat)

Already in the 70s, the grounder of Critical pedagogy Paulo Freire criticised the Banking model of education, according to which students are empty and passive vessels that should be filled with knowledge from above (Freire, 2000). Queer theory shares a critical and transgressive potential with Critical pedagogy (Spurlin, 2002). For example, Queer theory's deconstruction of rigid binaries of hetero/homo, man/woman can easily be applied to the equally hierarchical binary of teacher/student. By disrupting the role-division between teachers and students, it is possible to create more dynamic ways of learning and more egalitarian learning spaces (Heckert, Shannon, & Willis, 2012, p. 18). Moreover, subverting the power relations (but never fully overcoming, as Foucault (1978) and Butler (1990) are keen to remind us) is a way of doing politics within everyday actions. Instead of directing political efforts at concrete institutions as imagined strongholds of power, transgressing norms and finding alternatives in own ways of organising is engaging with the power that is invested everywhere in our social relations (Heckert et al., 2012, p. 24).

Less hierarchy in working structures seems to be what IGLYO strives towards in their organising. This is also why volunteering becomes an important feature of the way IGLYO

works. In an otherwise meritocratic society (at least in ideal) where qualifications are used as an excuse for excluding people, voluntary work could possibly level some inequalities and contribute to greater inclusion of people.

*“Because essentially IGLYO is largely about people volunteering. We’ve got no huge Secretariat. It is about Board members volunteering, Working groups volunteering and prep teams volunteering and that kind of continues to that, to really bring people in, in a way that is kind of fun. Gives an opportunity for learning but doesn’t [---] exclude people based on their (*ironically) academic background or their CV or any of that kind of stuff.” (C)*

Commitment to de-centring of power and to non-hierarchical consensus-building is considered crucial in IGLYO’s make-up as an international network of organisations. Having people with different working methods and cultures coming together results in an initial “organisational culture crash”, as participant H put it. But this seeming disorder is less coincidental than intentional, as it refers to (queer)-politically informed approach to organising. It includes striving to shared ownership of the organisation through connection to grassroots and collective negotiation of meanings, rather than top-down imposition of predetermined structures.

“In an international organisation for example it means that you have to discuss lots of things lots of times. But there’s also value in that. It is not effective but it’s a question of trying to avoid hierarchies and creating static categories. And keeping IGLYO connected to the grassroots. [---] And if IGLYO does continue to grow it might mean that IGLYO will in some ways become less queer. At least if you see queer in practice as having non-hierarchical working structures and methods and discussions... And keeping things open for change.” (D)

As pointed out in the quote above and as recognised in social movement literature (Hensby et al 2012), social movements face inevitable pressures to professionalise and institutionalise. The transformation from a small movement to a large SMO also transforms the organisation’s relationship to their members and supporters. Losing touch with grassroots, becoming fully professionalised with subsequent hierarchies and high level of bureaucracy are the necessary downsides of institutional success, as also pointed out by Jones-Yelvington (2008) and Ward (2008). This happens due to a requirement of sustained political presence and due to a need for increased resources for managing the practicalities of a larger organisation (Hensby, Sibthorpe, & Driver, 2012, p. 812). So queer ways of organising are in constant danger of being gradually phased out in response to demands from the wider institutional culture.

However, less formal methods of working and organising come with a certain price. IGLYO does not live up to the comparison with more conventional organisations working within established structures. As a network that is based on the (mainly online) volunteering efforts of international youths with only 2 members of staff, IGLYO is bound to have a

temporary, fleeting character. Coming together at events is the time when the network comes into being “physically”, something not appreciated by those who value stable structures. But on the other hand, such an arrangement provides possibilities for constant re-figurations, as at each new event a different constellation of member representatives gather in order to share their knowledge and negotiate their politics anew.

“Honestly, IGLYO is only from event to event. [---] It never feels like this organisation that is always there. It more feels like this gypsy kind of camp that comes in your town. You enjoy it for a few weeks, you send someone for a training that is very good and informative. [---]. And then you forget about it.” (A)

All in all, alternative forms of organising and attempts at non-hierarchy could be seen as either an advantage or a disadvantage of IGLYO, depending on what kind of politics one is inspired by and what kind of goals one considers desirable.

6.2 IGLYO’s discontents with queer

After discussing the ways in which IGLYO are perceived to be informed by queer ideas or apply these ideas in their practice, I will now turn my attention to the ways IGLYO is either deliberately or unintentionally distanced from queer ideas and practice. Interestingly, some participants recognised that non-queer aspects about IGLYO were easier to identify than queer aspects. This can be related to the fact that queer is hardly defined in a clear manner, but rather serves as a positionality against whatever constitutes the norm at a particular time (Halperin, 1997), thus making it easier to point to the norms and be critical of actions that replicate them than give examples of actual transgressions.

So the current chapter is going to reflect on how and why IGLYO is not, fails to be, should not be or could not be queer. The chapter is divided into two sections – first, concentrating on the ways IGLYO fails to be queer (despite their attempts or claims to the opposite) and second, discussing the outright problems IGLYO sees with a queer approach.

6.2.1 Failure to (be) queer

When asked why IGLYO included Q in their name, some participants were convinced that it was not an individual action but part of a common trend. Thus, adopting queer in the name can be interpreted as a reflection of IGLYO’s strategic deployment of a particular identity in relation to the wider LGBT-activist community. Similarly, Ward (2008) has observed how inclusion of “diversity” programmes in LGBT-organisations has (among others) often served the purpose of competing with other organisations already attuned to the value of diversity (Ward, 2008, p. 77). Adopting queer (or diversity, intersectionality etc) becomes no more than

a way of being up to date with the latest developments in the world of “progressive” politics. This view is expressed in the following citation.

“IGLYO didn’t do anything. It’s what all the LGBT organisations around Europe decided. So it was just like intersectionality this year. Something becomes hip and popular and fashionable and people will talk about it and they include it. It’s simple.” (A)

Moreover, some participants were convinced that the inclusion of queer in a name did not contribute to any change in IGLYO’s politics. In fact, the popular judgement “politically correct” was used to summarise the perceived discrepancy between ideology and action in IGLYO. It must be noted that the colloquial and media usage of this term differs from the way it is used by those sympathising with progressive politics. In the first sense “political correctness” is a conservative outcry about the restraint of public expression, which is essentially a strategy of dismissing and trivialising any debate about injustices (Banning, 2004, p. 198). However, in leftist circles the term is rather self-critical, as explained by Ohmann (1995), *“We object to PC because it is often a self-indulgent substitute for politics, a holier-than-thou moralism of the good, a politics of surface and gestures“* (Ohmann, 1995, p. 15). This reflects very much the essence of representatives’ critique against IGLYO’s faultless speech acts that are not accompanied by real action, as can be seen below.

Within the field of LGBTQIA IGLYO sounds very politically correct. However, when the push comes to the shove... [---] All the documents are there, they are perfectly fine. But you know... even some of the Board members still struggle practising what they are preaching.” (Y)

Dealing with privileges in words or action

According to Cohen (1997) queer political work should start from the recognition of multiple systems of oppressions instead of privileging sexuality as the defining source of access to resources and privilege. As will be seen below, such analysis of power and privilege is not very prominent in IGLYO, at the same time that there is a rather widespread awareness of a lack of diversity within the organisation.

Indeed, both Board members and regular member representatives pointed to several ways that both the Board as well as the wider organisation is lacking in diversity. Some referred to a North/South divide, with people from Scandinavia and the UK speaking at length at the GA, some pointed particularly to the overrepresentation of UK/NI within the Board. Difficulties reaching ethnic minorities and trans* people were recognised as a central problem by many, while lack of people with disabilities was mentioned less frequently. But most often these issues were framed as problems of numerical representation rather than problems of structure and culture. Moreover, the aim to secure a balance was partly a reaction to outward

institutional pressure. In the world of NGO bureaucracy, increased diversity is often asked for in funding applications and reporting forms and thus “*counting and justifying various forms of diversity has become a necessary practice*” (Ward, 2008, p. 96).

„We are always talking about that geographical balance. And it has come up, we’ve got an external evaluator who helps us to evaluate the network and our work and stuff. And it constantly comes up, something that we constantly have to be thinking about to make sure that there is a really good balance [---] when we are selecting people“ (C)

Nevertheless, there were some exceptions to the focus on numerical balance. Male dominance was mentioned as endemic, not just in terms of cisgendered-men being overrepresented on the Board but also in terms of them taking up space at events and lacking awareness of patriarchy. Class background was identified to affect possibilities to participate in IGLYO’s events, as being able to afford a passport or plane tickets (before reimbursement) were thought to be possible for a mainly middle-class population. A single 16-year old participant triggered debates about age diversity and the possibility of catering to underage people. All the above-mentioned examples made participants extremely critical of inflating the list of grounds of discrimination that IGLYO strives to fight against, if the real consequences of such promises are not taken into consideration. The criticism gave way to a more general call for greater responsibility for the inclusion/diversity rhetoric, which tends to make invisible differences in power and privilege.

*“They should figure out amongst the Board or at the GA. How do we deal with these obvious clashes of power struggles within the LGBTQIA community that we are (*ironically) supposedly so aware of but still, you know, stuff that happens all the time. [---] What do we actually do when there is discrimination? Right here, right now, at this supposedly so diverse and inclusive fucking environment. (*laughter)” (Y)*

In the course of 2014, IGLYO is planning to develop a diversity policy that is supposed to focus on tackling underrepresentation as well as on identifying barriers to participating in events. Perhaps in that process the less obvious power relations will be considered and subsequently tackled. But for the time being there were several occasions at the GA where participants experienced some form of exclusion or discrimination. In the following I will give some examples that are more directly related to IGLYO failing to (be) queer.

As outlined in the theoretical reflections in the Chapter 4, deconstructing the dichotomous conceptualisation of gender and sexuality is one of the cornerstones of Queer theory, best explained by Butler (1990). But their understanding of both gender and sex as political constructions come into stark contrast with an IGLYO member representative’s spontaneous utterances about gender – recounted by another participant.

*“And then just starting with gendering people...It was a very confusing situation because after going through all this (*ironically) how it is so important to have the gender diversity in the Board and how it would be important to have trans* people on the Board, queer people in the Board. But then (*ironically cheerfully) “But women are like that, OK, come on girls!”” (X)*

Firstly, they attributed certain essential qualities to women – “*women are like that*”, when addressing the lack of female candidates for the Board election. And in the very same sentence, they assumed their fellow participants’ gender identity, referring to them as “*girls*”, while in fact one of them did not identify as female. Expecting a coherence of body and gender presentation and naturalising a rigid understanding of women as certain type of people is truly in conflict with queer ideas. Certainly, a single comment is not supposed to represent the whole politics of IGLYO but it nevertheless reveals traces of underlying essentialism beneath the layer of queer-informed organisation-talk.

Moreover, the binary division of genders did not happen on the level of discourse only but sometimes resulted in spatial gender segregation during free time activities, to the great distress of gender-non-conforming participants. So no matter the official discourse, a binary understanding of gender can still prevail in practice.

“I also felt that I understood why it happened but the social events tended to divide into men/women. As someone who’s genderqueer I found it quite difficult” (B)

Not very surprisingly, considering my own cisgender-privilege, I personally did not become aware of such gender segregation in the course of my participant observation. Certainly, a researcher’s background and biases always mediate the collection and interpretation of data (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011), but the observer impact becomes especially relevant in participant observation (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011). Therefore, the multi-method design of my case study was advantageous, as it evidently yielded a richer understanding through additional interpretations from various sources (see also Stake 1995, Denzin 2012).

All in all, in this section I have discussed the ways IGLYO is perceived to fail in their attempts towards radical, non-normative or queer politics. This portrayal will be followed with a discussion about the aspects that IGLYO finds problematic in a queer approach.

6.2.2 IGLYO’s problems with queer

„What I do know about queer is what I don’t know about queer“

As the title of this subsection reveals, awareness and understanding about what queer entails is not particularly high even within the LGBT community. Many mentioned that the concept was confusing, complex and vague, which certainly mirrors the general critiques of the

inaccessibility of Queer theory's jargon and analysis (see theory section above, Jagose 1996, Sullivan 2003). But the lack of knowledge about queer within the community was also referred to as a major hinder to translating queer ideas into the practices of the organisation.

“Only one percent understands what Queer is. People keep asking me what is queer. Why you need to explain to majority of your constituents when you work with this community, what queer is. Come on, you can't say that you are doing queer work.” (A)

Moreover, queer is even less well known within the institutional culture of European institutions that IGLYO operates in. Many participants expressed their frustration at the impossibility of invoking queer in the context of European institutions, which are said to only speak the language of LGBT. What can or cannot be spoken of is certainly best understood through Foucault's concept of discourse, which refers to *“a group of statements which provide a language for talking about [...] a particular topic at a particular historical moment”* (S. Hall, 1997, p. 43). If the current intelligible way to speak about same-sex relations within European institutions is through categories of LGBT then by definition, this particular discourse restricts other ways of constructing knowledge about the topic. The strategies IGLYO uses for coping with this dilemma will be discussed further in Chapter 6.3.

„The Commission, European Commission for example doesn't talk about queer youth. So it is kind of... I really understand but how do we translate and make sure that other people have that understanding as well.“ (C)

Clarifying the concept of queer in order to make it understandable was offered as a solution to the widespread confusion about queer within and outside of the LGBT community. However, striving for clarity can not necessarily be combined with queer ideas. Following Halperin (1997) one of the main contributions of queer is that it is in a constant state of becoming; it does not refer to an already existing form of life. According to them, if queer politics is to remain queer, it should preserve its resistant relation to whatever constitutes the norm and thus not be consolidated into something fixed (Halperin, 1997, p. 113). Therefore it seems that establishing a clear definition of queer for educational/communicational purposes is in conflict with the queer reluctance for drawing boundaries.

*“If IGLYO wants to work with it (*queer) on a policy level and lobby politicians on a European level, to say this is important and we need to start talking more about this. If it is indeed fairly vague and something that people within the community don't understand very well then that's an issue that has to be addressed first. First you have to know exactly what you are talking about. You have to be short to the point, concise and make it clear and do it in an understandable way so that people can know what you are talking about” (F)*

But apart from a call for clarity, the suggestion included an “incitement to discourse”, borrowing Foucault’s (1978) expression. The requirement to speak about queer in order to establish it as normal in the sphere of European politics is not entirely dissimilar to Foucault’s reflections about institutional agitation to excessive talk about sex (on the contrary to the “repressive hypothesis” that assumes societal suppression of sexuality in the Western world from 17th to the mid-20th century) (Foucault, 1978). A difference, however, lies in the fact that the incitement to the discourse about sex (and the ensuing social control) was initiated by various state institutions, while the call to speak about queer comes from a marginalised group. IGLYO’s call for proliferation of queer would produce something that Foucault refers to as an alternative or “reverse” discourse. A reverse discourse is not opposite to or outside of the field of power. Vice versa – its resistance is grounded in the same categories by which it is constituted and is thus operating in the same field of force relations as the dominant discourse to which it is supposed to be an alternative of (Foucault, 1978, pp. 101-102). The paradox of intending to demand legitimacy for queer through the same mechanisms that disqualify it is visible in the next reflection by a member representative:

“Remember how medicalisation of homosexuality and de-medicalisation really helped. I think it is something similar. [---] Research about... For example when departments of statistics start using the term and they are included on the questionnaires and it’s part of the education system. Then I think it will get reflected in the laws and in the public thinking. [---] It’s not a mainstream. And needs to become one” (A)

The suggestion to establish queer as a mainstream category through the same mechanism that was at work in the construction of the modern homosexual requires further attention. As part of the general multiplication of discourses concerning sex, the psycho-medical category of the homosexual was constituted in the end of 19th century, when it was used to refer to fundamental aspects of a particular type of person instead of forbidden sexual practice (Foucault, 1978, p. 43). The creation of this new “species” made homosexuality visible as a pathology that could be managed and controlled by the medical establishment, among others (Drazenovich, 2012, p. 268). First in 1973, homosexuality was removed from the widely used Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) and no longer counted as a psychopathology (Conrad & Angell, 2004, p. 33). Understandably, this was celebrated as a great success of the Gay liberation (Seidman, 2004), while the logic of binary categories and the power of experts to define and categorise same-sex relations was still retained.

Making sexuality the subject of expert scrutiny is just one example of the larger workings of biopower - “*the modern political procedure of regulating human life by means of*

expert techniques (statistics, demographics, eugenics, sterilization) etc) – techniques that make possible a strategic alliance between specialised knowledge and institutionalised power in the state’s management of life” (Halperin, 1997, p. 41). As pointed out by some of the participants, it is these techniques that queer would need to be subjected to in order to start the journey from pathologisation to the sphere of the “normal”. Queer will need to be constrained and classified in order to become a part of the system of knowledge and become normalised through institutional use. All in all, circulating an alternative discourse and/or incorporating queer into the mainstream discourse could be a way to reach wider audiences and recognition, but whether queer would maintain its radical critique in the process is another matter, as was evident in the empirical material.

A question of priorities

Prioritising and compromising is always part of the political process – something that was very evident in discussions around the feasibility of queer politics in IGLYO. Choosing not to act upon queer ideas was often framed as a tactical decision – the question was not whether queer politics would be desirable in the best of all worlds, but whether some other politics was considered more urgent at a given moment.

Firstly, in an organisation with members from such diverse geographical locations, spatial as well as temporal dimensions play a significant role in imagining political approaches. In comparisons between “progressive” Northern/Western European countries, the “conservative” newer democracies in Europe were expected to dismiss queer politics and focus on seeking civil rights based on identities. This conviction was shared by people from the old democracies as well as by people from Southern or Eastern parts of wider Europe.

“Ukraine or Romania or places like that. There they don’t get to work on the luxury problems. Or like the identification problems. They are working for basic civil rights. And I think it’s easier for them to talk about identities. For other people to understand and to have a clear direction of what you are doing.” (H)

Moreover, as pointed out by one of the member representatives, invoking queer in hostile political contexts was not only too early a step in the political process but could be directly harmful.

*“When you are in political context where even the L and the G, let alone T [...] to a large extent is often taboo then talking about (*queer) may to an extent... if you are not clear yourself what you are talking about, it might hinder your own cause.”* (F)

Another domain where identity politics has a certain appeal over queer politics is legislation. The ethnic model strategy (introduced earlier), which has been prevalent in the LGBT

movement since the 70s has culminated in several legal protection measures such as The EU Equal Treatment Directives - Employment Framework Directive 2000/78¹⁵ and the Equal Treatment Directives 2006/54¹⁶ and 2004/113. But those laws are framed in a way that consolidates sexual identity categories, as rights can be claimed and granted on the ground of membership to a particular identity group – such as homosexual identity (Morgan 2000 in Zanghellini 2009, p 2). Therefore, as the deconstructive project of queer was perceived to dismantle even these modest means of legal protection, some participants expressed a certain reluctance to embrace queer politics. But some participants in the focus group discussion countered that claim with the argument that the current identity-focus of the anti-discrimination laws makes their scope extremely limited. The laws do not manage to reach the actual core of discrimination – transgression of norms relating to gender and sexuality, which is the central focus of queer politics, according to them.

“In a way the whole discrimination system is based on going against the gender norms. Somebody who does not fit in the gender norms, whether it is a guy walking, holding hands with another guy - it is going against the gender norms or if it is a feminine straight guy going - it is going against the gender norms. The discrimination is not really based on the identity... In that sense you can just use queer I think” (X)

As has become apparent in the current and the previous chapter - various conflicting understandings about the concept and practice of queer circulate in the organisation. In the next chapter I will therefore explore how IGLYO manages the tensions between those different impulses. To (be) queer or not to (be) queer, that is (certainly at least one of) the question(s).

6.3 Strategic Balancing Acts

As briefly introduced in the previous chapter, political work in IGLYO involves a high level of compromising. In this chapter I will more closely examine IGLYO's efforts to balance between different political impulses. Firstly I will discuss IGLYO's attempts to combine LGBT and Queer politics and the reasoning around those efforts. Thereafter I will turn my attention to the institutional environment and discuss the possibilities of doing queer within the cultural and financial constraints that the context of European institutions entails.

¹⁵ Employment Framework Directive 2000/78 protects people against discrimination based on sexual orientation – as well as age, disability, religion and belief – in the area of employment (ILGA-Europe, 2006)

¹⁶ Equal Treatment Directives 2006/54 and 2004/113 prohibit sex discrimination in employment and in access to goods and services (ibid)

6.3.1 Combining LGBT and Q

There are various approaches to the initiative of uniting queer and LGBT perspectives. Among the less common approaches among research participants was the conviction that those two perspectives are irreconcilable. The basis for such belief was either the widespread understanding of queer as an umbrella term that should replace the ever-increasing alphabet soup of identity categories (Sullivan, 2003) or the recognition that if queer is about disestablishing identity categories, then adding it to the list of the very same identity categories is incompatible with the core of queer politics (Jagose, 1996).

“So this notion of queerness is more like playing wit the idea than really doing because if you take it seriously, queer is everything that is supposed to replace... queer is supposed to replace LGBTQI whatever this stupid number... collection of letters.. So it’s either straight or queer. There is no LGBT and queer together. It really makes no sense philosophically.” (A)

Another possible way of relating to the potential inconsistency of these perspectives was gliding over the problem altogether. Instead of choosing a particular standpoint on the usefulness of either LGBT or queer politics, one participant in particular chose to raise the level of abstraction by preferring to use the terms that are used in the international human rights discourse. Avoiding particular identifications and instead speaking about sexual orientation, gender identity (SOGI for short) with the less frequent addition of “expression” (SOGIE) has become popular in human rights discourse after “SOGI” was endorsed by the Yogyakarta Principles¹⁷ (Waites, 2009).

“IGLYO tries to incorporate all these issues into their work but rather than for example numbering or enumerating those diverse identities in its work, it appeals to more formal language where identities are understood under for example sexual orientation, gender identity and expression. When you use this kind of words, it’s easier to incorporate all those identities into these words because they are very-very broad and general.” (G)

Abandoning the culturally specific categories of LGBT and replacing them with more general terms has been considered as a step forward in the otherwise Western-oriented human rights discourse (Waites, 2009, p. 143). However, Waites also writes that the concept of sexual orientation remains related to biomedical theories of fixed characteristics of a person, defined by desire towards a particular sex (ibid, p. 145) as much as the concept of gender identity refers to a coherent and unitary identity (ibid, p. 147). In short, seemingly general concepts like sexual orientation and gender identity are nevertheless informed by particular binary models. Moreover, if concepts like SOGIE are used strategically as a way of overcoming the

¹⁷ Yogyakarta Principles – Principles on the Application of International Human Rights Law in relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, developed by a group of international human rights experts in Yogyakarta, Indonesia in 2006 (ICJ, 2007)

critical questions that queer poses to identity politics, it can have the side-effect of silencing any critique that queer could potentially offer.

Compatible and complementary?

The most common reaction to my enquiries about LGBT/Q in IGLYO was that queer and LGBT perspectives are compatible and should be used simultaneously in IGLYO's work.

The most obvious and at the same time the most prosaic motivation for combining these perspectives was the need to retain representativeness. IGLYO is an umbrella organisation and their 83 member organisations (IGLYO, n.d-d) mobilise around different politics. As some of IGLYO's member organisations are informed by lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans* politics (or any combination of them), while others strive to be queer, then IGLYO feels the need to cater to all of their member organisations rather than choosing a particular perspective.

“Considering that IGLYO is working for LGBTQ and has so many different kinds of member organisations. We sort of have to use both ways of thinking and both ways of speaking. Because it's also a question of providing something for all of our members and also empowering all our members. Like, we need to talk about lesbian women and the challenges they face and we also need to talk about gender non-conforming, like genderqueer, androgynous, whatever... and from more like, transgender perspective.” (D)

Apart from concerns about representativeness there were also other strategic motivations behind uniting the queer and LGBT perspectives in IGLYO. Depending on which of the approaches was seen as the primary goal of IGLYO's politics, the secondary form of politics was considered not only compatible with the primary but also complementary or even indispensable. For example, the avid advocates of queer politics recognised the need for identity politics as an addition to the ever-present norm-critical approach. On the other hand, if identity politics was prioritised as the default mode of politics, it was still deemed to be insufficient and was expected to be complemented with a queer approach.

An argument that found much resonance among participants was that it is necessary to combine identity politics and queer politics because they fulfil different functions. Despite the deconstructive work that queer undertakes, the focus on norms is perceived to do little to counter the actual material inequalities that are present here and now. This reflects the position of many sociologists who point to the dangers of privileging textual analysis over critical scrutiny of institutional dynamics that affect the everyday material experiences of non-heterosexual people (Seidman, 2004; Stein & Plummer, 1996). As was pointed out by several participants, it is impossible to disregard that the world we currently live in does divide

people into hierarchised binary categories and that the position in those hierarchies has concrete effects on people's lives. Referring to identity categories was thus believed to facilitate the analysis of inequalities and privileges.

"We have to work on different levels. We cannot just ignore what is actually happening. Because most of the world is thinking into this male-female and women are being discriminated in many ways and we cannot just say that we should stop understanding discrimination as for example discrimination against women, when people are actually... when those categories are important for people. But at the same time we need to work on a political level in order to change the understanding of gender in a way." (E)

Whenever identity categories become important, the crucial question is whether the categories are believed to have an essential quality to them or whether they are conceptualised as temporary fixations that are called into being for strategic purposes. It is exactly such strategic deployment of identity categories that informs the discussions in the next section.

Strategic essentialism for political organising

A commonly used argument that speaks for identity politics is that the construction of identities is politically enabling (Seidman, 2004). Political mobilisation around a coherent identity can be preferred because it is consistent with the self-perception among the LGBT community and with the dominant political culture (Smith & Windes, 1999, p. 31). If identity is the current way to inspire people to join a political struggle and the way to be intelligible as a group in the political culture, then this is (part of) the strategy that should be followed, seemed to be the message conveyed by many IGLYO's member representatives. Some of them were highly reflective and aware of the theoretical underpinnings of this position, as becomes obvious from the following quote:

"We call it strategic essentialism. [---] Until you have your rights you kind of have to form groups of people to be able to see what the oppression is and how to work against it. Or people to be able to organise I think you should be able to talk about identities as well." (H)

Strategic essentialism, a political tactic for which the term was coined by Gayatri Spivak, refers to "*strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest*" (Spivak, 1988, p. 13). More specifically, the act of strategically adhering to essentialist understandings of identity involves acting as if a particular political identity had a stable essence, while in fact being aware of the contingency of identities. What reveals that essentialising is a strategy rather than a serious conviction, is that it is employed in order to meet certain short term objectives – such as "*until you have your rights*" above. Because as soon as the subject positions are considered "*an inalienable and final truth of things*" (Spivak,

1988, p. 16) it stops being a strategy. In that case one would simply uncritically be reproducing the current discourse or in Spivak's words - "*be caught in the game of knowledge as power*" (ibid, p 16). However, many critical voices have asked what difference strategic essentialism would make, if it still engages in a performative reiteration of norms that achieves the false effect of a (common) essence (Stone, 2004). As silences are just as telling as any vocalisations of politics, it is necessary to state that I did not encounter such critical voices about strategic essentialism in my interviews with IGLYO's member representatives. Instead, it was celebrated as a suitable solution that allows them to have "the best of both worlds".

Moreover, an additional political move in the framework of strategic essentialism is downplaying differences between and among the oppressed community (Stone, 2004, p. 143). Indeed, some participants believed that individuals who in reality are multiply constituted can and should be united under a rainbow flag of various non-heterosexual identities. All the while an image of consistency is presented, multiple differences and inequalities simmer underneath the coherent common identity, but they are deemed less significant than the construction of monolithic oppositional power. The conscious political decision of presenting a united front makes it also understandable why intersectionality was perceived to be such a threat by some in IGLYO (see 6.1.2).

"And I think it is actually very very very important issue but also what is found in IGLYO, is that there are always tensions and misunderstandings among the LGBTQ community that is sort of united by this acronym but sometimes they don't have that much in common. [---] There is transphobia within the community, within the larger LGBTQ... There is queerphobia, there is lesbophobia and sexism in general. [---] There is also racism among LGBTQ communities. [---] The identities are united because they have a lot of stuff in common, at least to fight for their own rights and recognition. But at the same time they are different and they treat each other not with due respect" (G)

The discussions about the strategic construction of essential and coherent identity can eventually be boiled down to the lingering debate about whether political organising is possible without basing it on steady identity categories. As Gamson (1995) has noted, identity categories serve as both the basis for repression and the source of resistance, which makes both the stabilisation and de-stabilisation of collective identity categories a reasonable impulse (Gamson, 1995). IGLYO's approach seems to constitute a careful balancing act in between those impulses. On the one hand, the participants recognised the political utility of stable collective identities for short-term political gains (such as securing rights). On the other hand there was awareness of the continued damage that the proliferation of essential

categories creates. Therefore a wider social change was perceived to be necessary; one where collective identities would be deconstructed and thus not the basis for political mobilisation.

The twofold political strategies can be considered a reaction to the “*simultaneity of cultural sources of oppression (which make loosening categories a smart strategy) and institutional sources of oppression (which make tightening categories a smart strategy)*” (ibid, p. 403). Naturally, it is impossible to completely separate those two mutually influential spheres, which is also why IGLYO’s politics is not clean-cut but rather messy and contradictory. But it seems that IGLYO shifts between and combines different strategies depending on which of those sources of oppression it intends to counter at a particular moment.

6.3.2 Institutional environment

As IGLYO engages in European-level lobbying and advocacy, then European institutions (comprising EU institutions¹⁸ and the Council of Europe¹⁹) make up most of the institutional environment they work in. Therefore I will now turn my attention to the challenge of being/doing queer within the framework of these institutions.

Queer in European institutions

Similarly to the strategic move of trying to portray the sheer act of embracing identity politics as queer in itself (see 6.1.2) there was an attempt to construct the mere participation in European structures as norm-breaking and thus queer. This is a liberal interpretation of certain formulations of queer, à la Halperin’s “*queer is by definition whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant*” (Halperin, 1997, p. 62). It would thus seem that no matter what IGLYO would be advocating within the European institutions, their mere presence in the structures would grant them queer credits. But on the other hand, the participants were quick to point out the other possible interpretation of lobbying for change within the European institutional framework – that it is the opposite of queer. There are critics who dismiss such attempts as complicit in legitimising the already corrupt and heteronormative system and only achieving incremental changes for privileged few (Edelman, 2004; Judith Halberstam, 2011). This is a great example of how the contradictory accounts of queer in theoretical reflections become no less paradoxical when taken into practice.

¹⁸ European Parliament, European Commission, European Council, Council of the European Union, Court of Justice of the European Union etc (Europa, n-d)

¹⁹ The Council of Europe is not an EU body but an international organisation with 47 countries as its members, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights (CoE, n-d)

*“I guess it’s again a question of what you define as queer. For some people queer can be anything that sort of goes against the norm. And from that perspective just by working for LGBTQ rights within political institution can itself be considered queer. While from another perspective having anything at all to do with those kinds of institutions might [---] label you as non-queer because then you are working within the institutions (*sighs)“ (D)*

Some IGLYO member representatives believed that taking a queer approach within the framework of European institutions is both possible and desirable; as they pointed to advocating for non-binary gender options as one potential field where IGLYO could do queer work. However, as a result of their general disillusionment with IGLYO’s implementation of queer ideas, they assumed that despite the potential, IGLYO prioritises more conventional forms of politics. Others pointed to expanding the concept of family or disrupting the monogamous ideal of relationships as potential areas for queer politics within European institutions. They were also quick to dismiss these ideas as even more difficult to lobby for than the recognition of non-binary gender due to religious and conservative contexts in many European countries.

So regardless of whether the prospect of queer politics within the European institutional framework was perceived desirable or not, it was assumed to be a controversial and difficult step to take. Since the European institutions were perceived to be too rigid and conservative for using outright queer politics, then once again a more strategic approach was shared by the participants. Using the established language of LGBT youth and identity politics in general was the prevailing tactic, while any queer notions were “sneaked in through the backdoor”. Drawing attention to and questioning the (hetero)norm was often identified as “The” queer tactic that could accompany (but never replace) identity politics

“Are we able to go to the Parliament, go to the Commission and lobby directly for queer youth? Probably not [---] Where we probably are at the moment is about step by step... almost that bit of awareness-raising. Yeah, here are some of the issues that we are concerned about for LGBT [---] But actually what underpins this is maybe some of those issues that arise from having such a strong sense of norms. [---] So that’s the way of starting to have those conversations and bringing in those ideas around not fitting into binaries.” (C)

In order to gain legitimacy and support within the European institutional environment, SMOs face pressures to use language that is socially acceptable. Radical SMOs often need to restrain their criticism and use a discourse that is credible and reasonable, as they need to stay within the boundaries defined by the hegemonic discourse (Cox 2006 in Freeman, 2009, p. 274). This exact pressure was identified by most IGLYO member representatives, as they were convinced that if they did not use the language of identity categories, they would be marginalised within the European institutions.

*“But it is difficult to do that. Having to use the language the policy makers use but also trying to get our kind of ideologies in.... Criticising, looking at those norms and having more of a queer approach. But of course we have to use the language that they are using otherwise (*laughs) those doors wouldn’t be open” (C)*

Without a doubt, negotiating such constraints makes challenging the status quo very difficult or even impossible. However, Gamson (1996) warns against resorting to institutional determinism, which would characterize the act of appealing to the logic and language of institutional sectors as inevitable. They state that *“organisational actors [---] work with strong commitments to particular cultural tools, which set limits on how far within an organisational field they are willing to move“* (Gamson, 1996, p. 258). Gamson’s argument can be applied to IGLYO, as in the end it is still IGLYO negotiating the line between organisational success and radical cultural criticism. How well they balance this line or whether they end up on either side of it depends also on their own political priorities. All in all, it is clear that even within the institutional constraints, IGLYO has agency to make decisions about the level of opposition they are willing to engage in and to choose the strategies they seem fit for the purpose.

Resource dependency

A very concrete form of institutional pressure is certainly funding. As was already discussed above, in order to be intelligible (and consequently fundable) within the framework of European institutions, IGLYO feels the need to resort to identity politics and downplay the queer impulse to destabilise identity categories. But queer critique involves more than deconstruction of identity categories. Among others, it emerged as a reaction to the depoliticisation of middle-class gay community and their commodified subculture/lifestyle (Duggan, 1992; Seidman, 2004). But no matter whether IGLYO identifies with queer critique of capitalism (as some member representatives actively do), it was considered impossible to express such critique openly. Thus, in order to have access to resources, they once more resort to eliminating the queer critique and frame their politics in a palatable manner.

*“Our funders are a lot more LGBT than LGBTQ, which means that if we are actually going to get funding, we have to use a specific kind of language in our funding applications and in our communication to them. [---] If we would say that, OK, but capitalism is part of global oppression of everyone including LGBTQ people, so IGLYO would want to work with bringing down global capitalism and introduce a more fair system of economics. We wouldn’t get funded (*laughs)” (D)*

Reflecting over the need to constrain their political approach due to financial dependency towards the European institutions brought up another important aspect – that of visibility and

representation. One participant posed a rhetorical question that once a system of representation like the EU exists, then wouldn't IGLYO's non-participation in this system entail a complete lack of non-heterosexual voices. The material gathered through interviews and participant observation suggests that this is not an easy question to answer.

But to this question one can add other critical ones such as who can become the subject of European (financial) support? What kind of visibility will they have to strive for in order to achieve such subject status? The need to present themselves according to clear norms of intelligibility within the European institutions in order to secure funding and representation resembles the individual compulsion to subscribe to prescribed identities in order to have access to rights and be able to organise politically. Patton (2004) points out the twofold outcome of such identity construction – it does lead to visibility and representation but to a rather narrow and stereotyped version of it (C. Patton, 2004, p. 175). There is reason to believe that a somewhat limited visibility would be achieved also in the framework of European institutions, leaving IGLYO to be the voice of a very particular constituency, while many others would remain marginalised and invisible.

On a more hopeful note, even the strictest of constraints allow some room for agency. This whole chapter has been discussing various strategies that IGLYO deploys in order to “make the best of both worlds”. Making meaning through their action does not only mean adapting to the institutional environment and thus reproducing the mainstream discourse. Adding a minor spin to the compromise can alter the result in slight but perhaps not entirely insignificant ways. So in the case of restraints imposed on IGLYO by funding agencies, one way of balancing out the conservative expectations was using general and non-controversial topics in their funding applications. The wide yet mainstream topics could then serve as a disguise for more subversive ways of implementing the work plan that they received funding for. As Hensby et al (2012) remind us, a constant interplay between the (often external) bureaucratic demands and the DIY-impulses result in inventive ways of tailoring an organisation's action to particular conditions (Hensby et al., 2012, p. 812).

“And also the things that we decide to focus on within the limits of what we can get funded for. Like for instance the fact that we have a thematic areas starting now in 2014 that are social inclusion and intersectionality, which are quite broad themes, which gives a lot of leeway. [---] And within that we can work with more queer issues” (D)

But there is certainly reason to be concerned about the non-profit sector's general tendency towards commodification of identities for the sake of financial support. On a search for queer resistance to the problem of resource dependency Ward (2008) suggests that “*the challenge*

for queer intersectional politics lies in how to take what is desired and needed [---] while still creating ideological distance from – or critically interrogating – the logics that are used to distribute these resources” (ibid, p. 147). It is a fine line to straddle – one amongst many where also IGLYO is trying to negotiate a balance. Establishing critical distance from normativity and positioning strategically within liberal institutional frameworks seems to be a generally important way for IGLYO to negotiate queer.

7. Conclusion

The project set out to explore how IGLYO negotiates the concept and practice of queer. The study is grounded on theoretical underpinnings provided by Queer theory and social movement theories. IGLYO’s negotiations have been explored from the perspective of IGLYO member organisation representatives and through my observations at the General Assembly. I sought to address the research problem through the following research questions: How is queer manifested in the ideas and practice of the organisation? What kinds of challenges, tensions and complications emerge from a queer approach? What kinds of strategies are used to address these concerns? I will summarise some of the main findings in relation to each of these questions before providing some general concluding remarks.

Firstly, there were various contradictory understandings about manifestations of queer in IGLYO. On the ideological level, queer was often portrayed as an additional element of diversity in the organisation, thus fixing queer as one among many identities. On the other hand queer was assumed to some extent disrupt identity politics and question the (hetero)norm, often through engaging with matters like homonormativity and intersectionality. In the practice of the organisation, queer manifested often in IGLYO’s events. IGLYO created a safe space for non-normative genders and sexualities while also transgressing the norms of conventional conference proceedings in various ways. Moreover, IGLYO did strive for less hierarchical forms of organising through alternative education methods, through maintaining a connection to grassroot volunteer base and through continuous collective re-negotiation of meanings.

The queer approach is by no means without contestations, whether in theoretical discussions or on a practical level. The many discrepancies between IGLYO’s official stance and their actual practice made some of the member representatives dismiss IGLYO’s adoption of queer as a trend or as a sign of political correctness. Moreover, addressing diversity in terms of numerical balance while leaving deeper workings of power and privilege

unchallenged was also mentioned as a failure to live up to queer ideas. But distancing from queer was also suggested to be a conscious choice. Queer ideas were considered to be too complicated and unclear for use, or not sufficiently established in the mainstream discourse that circulates in the key institutions for change. Furthermore, identity politics was considered superior to queer politics in various contexts, such as in legislation or when advocating for rights in newer democracies.

The overarching strategic solution to the different impulses within IGLYO was “doing it all”. Combining identity politics with queer politics was achieved through either working on different levels or shifting the emphasis between the different forms of politics. A culmination of this strategy was the conscious essentialising of identities for the purpose of achieving rights. Negotiations about queer were further complicated by the need to adapt to the institutional environment of European institutions in order to have access to the field of advocacy and to secure funding. IGLYO used the discourse of LGBT in their communication with the European institutions while hoping to introduce an alternative discourse of queer. Adhering to a legitimate form of subjectivity was another strategic compromise that was believed to achieve visibility and representation within the European institutions.

So IGLYO “straddling the line between being professional and radical” was a paradox that intrigued both the participants and me. There were points where such straddling resulted in “opposing the normative”, while at other points they were working within the normative structures or reproducing the norms with little challenge. Considering the interplay of such discontinuities is more informative in a search for queer in practice than striving for solidified images. The conflicting reactions to the concept and practice of queer make evident that there is no singular collective identity in IGLYO. Instead, various political impulses compete with each other within the organisation. IGLYO partly subscribes to the ethnic model of identity construction, when it is strategically beneficial, often when posing as a credible actor in the mainstream channels of politics. But similarly, when deemed appropriate and possible, collective identities are criticised and destabilised, thus displaying a more confrontational and radical face of the organisation. This is not meant to be a final answer to the question of whether collective identities are indispensable for political mobilisation and action. Instead, I have tried to provide a reflection on how a very particular organisation handles the complex dilemmas that queer ideas and practice pose.

Besides, trying to establish whether the use of queer notions in IGLYO is purely expressive or merely instrumental would reproduce an essentialist understanding of social movement organisations. The goals and strategies of an organisation are a result of a messy

negotiation process with their members, other organisations, the political and institutional structures etc (Bernstein, 1997). There is a complicated mix of different motives that also alter in the process of implementation. An initially strategic move can become the basis of later political action or vice versa – an originally radical idea may be co-opted and neutralised when carried into practice. Moreover, the constant process of reconfiguring politics at different events refutes the naturalised conception of the organisation and allows space for change. As Butler (1990) reminds us, limited acts of subversion can surface in case of a slight shift in the repetition of norms.

While I did not have the goal of evaluating to which extent IGLYO can be perceived to (be) queer, some participants did believe that IGLYO's strategic compromises annul the possibility of IGLYO being/doing queer in an authentic manner. But perhaps this search for authenticity, the dream of a genuinely queer organisation is unreachable, as there will always be constraints that need to be negotiated. Or perhaps queer serves best as an ideal to be striven towards, following Halperin's (1997) conceptualisation of queer as something indeterminate that can never be entirely embodied. For social movement organisations like IGLYO it would mean maintaining a continuously (self)-critical approach towards norms, power and privileges, while knowing that full liberation from all oppressions, whether internal or external, is unconceivable.

When studying the queer dimension in IGLYO's politics, various other important threads emerged that would need to be followed up in future research projects. Most importantly, IGLYO's extensive diversity rhetoric needs to be scrutinised in more detail. This is highly topical considering IGLYO's this year's thematic focus on intersectionality. Such research would continue the investigation of queer in practice, because intersectionality can be conceived of in an anti-essentialist manner, deconstructing the seemingly natural categories of difference or it can be conceptualised as an additive model of multiple essential identities. Further investigation into matters of diversity and intersectionality would also address the possibilities of queer coalition-building as proposed by Cohen (1997). Moreover, the format of a multinational umbrella organisation raises justified questions about the workings of IGLYO's internal democracy and the relationships between centre and periphery. These topics would also deserve some closer attention, especially because they are related to IGLYO's efforts towards non-hierarchical ways of organising.

As mentioned in the introduction I myself have been rather torn about the concept and practice of queer. The starting point of being enthusiastic as well as critical about queer has made me consider my own position as a researcher with great care. The partial insights that I

have reached through my choice of methods and theory can hopefully guide other scholars in their future research and provide an important source of reflections for IGLYO's members. Now that they are celebrating 30 years of activism and will be both considering the past and envisioning the future, my examination of their politics can be especially valuable. But I would like to suggest that considering the case of IGLYO can also be of value to people outside of the organisation – to anyone who is interested in the attempts of putting queer ideas into practice.

8. Literature

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9. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Additional information about IGLYO

(Based on IGLYO website, IGLYO Statutes and Strategic Plan 2011-2013)

Mission

Insofar as IGLYO is a joint platform for political organisations in various countries and aims to collectively represent them in the wider European policy debates then IGLYO's is aiming to act as a bridge between policy-making and grass root activism (IGLYO, 2011b, p. 1). More specifically, IGLYO identifies their mission as:

- *“To be the leading organisation representing the voices of LGBTQ youth and students to international bodies, institutions and organisations.*
- *To support and empower the work of our Members by strengthening the capacity of local, regional and national organisations working for LGBTQ youth and student human rights.*
- *To work in partnership with our Members, recognising and valuing their contribution to the fight for equality.*
- *To promote the rights of LGBTQ youth and students by advocating, lobbying and informing in partnership with policy makers and key decision makers” (IGLYO, 2011b, pp. 4-5)*

Membership benefits

IGLYO membership gives the right to decide the priority issues in the lobbying and advocacy efforts (IGLYO, n.d-a). Networking opportunities with other LGBTQ activists at IGLYO's events and conferences are considered an advantage of belonging to the network. Moreover, there is an IGLYO members' discussion group for exchanging information with other LGBTQ youth organisations in Europe (ibid). IGLYO members will also receive annual publications and other material, as well as have access to an online library relating to LGBTQ issues (ibid).

Members of IGLYO are encouraged to contribute to the network by sharing good practices, providing news stories to the IGLYO newsletter, hosting an IGLYO conference, holding a workshop on a particular area of expertise etc (ibid).

Activities

As outlined in the Strategic plan 2011-2013 IGLYO has the following strategic objectives:

1. *“To develop and lead platforms for the exchange of information and experience, to disseminate best practice and inform Members of International policy developments;*

2. *To be recognised as the leading voice representing LGBTQ youth and students, contributing to progressive policy making;*
3. *To challenge attitudes towards and increase the visibility of LGBTQ youth in all its diversity by coordinating actions with Member Organisations;*
4. *To have a sustainable internal infrastructure, with staff and board members, well resourced and able to build the capacity of Member Organisations and explore IGLYO's place within a wider international field;*
5. *To be a key network establishing dialogue between LGBTQ youth, other youth and the wider society, with a priority to listen to the needs of LGBTQ youth in geographical areas where they are under-represented” (IGLYO, 2011b, p. 7).*

According to IGLYO's website, some of IGLYO's main undertakings since 2006 have been breaking Council of Europe's resistance to the inclusion of discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation and gender identity in their 2006 campaign “All Different All Equal”, criticizing European Commission's gender mainstreaming tool “Roadmap to Gender Equality” for excluding gender identity, lobbying for the horizontal EU Anti-discrimination Directive etc (ibid). Since 2007 IGLYO has also been publishing a quarterly thematic magazine “*IGLYO on...*”, addressing issues such as bullying, gender, sports, trans, pride, health, best practices, global activism, intergenerational dialogue, human rights, mental health etc (IGLYO, n.d-b)

As a result of the working groups, IGLYO has adopted position papers on Education (in 2009), Intercultural and Inter-Religious Dialogue (in 2011), Human Rights and Education (both in 2012) (IGLYO, n.d-c). A position paper on Social Inclusion was discussed on the 2013 General Assembly. However, the paper was not adopted and there will be an Extraordinary General Assembly where the paper will be discussed further and voted upon.

Strategic partnerships

IGLYO holds strategic partnerships with actors in the pan-European human rights field. Those partnerships are supposed to facilitate cooperation in advocacy activities as well as encourage knowledge transfer among the partners. Some key partners include ESU (European Students' Union), OBESSU (Organising Bureau for European Student Unions, ILGA-Europe (The European branch of the International Lesbian and Gay Association), Intergroup of LGBTQ rights in the European Parliament. Other strategic partners include ENAR (European Network Against Racism), FRP (Fundamental Rights Platform) and various other Human Rights organisations and conferences (IGLYO, n.d-c).

Appendix 2 – Information and approval request letter to IGLYO’s Executive Board

Dear IGLYO Executive Board,

As a student of Gender Studies in Lund University, I would be honoured to write my MA thesis about IGLYO – treating it as a case study of a queer organisation.

Research topic

IGLYO’s goal of acting as a bridge between grass root activism and European policy-making system appears to constitute an act that has caught my curiosity. IGLYO is a multinational umbrella organisation, that carries out its activities within the European (and international) legal and policy framework but as the letter Q in IGLYO’s name potentially refers to, it is also to some degree informed by anti-anti-normative and radical ideas. This is a tension that I would plan to study in my research project. While acknowledging the organisation’s background and context, the project would especially look into the queer dimension of IGLYO’s politics and seek to understand how IGLYO’s collective political identity is formed within the given constraints.

Research question

The overarching research question is *how does IGLYO as an umbrella organisation make sense of itself as a queer organisation and what does queer mean in the practice of the organisation?*

Proposed methods

- Conducting focus group interview(s) with representatives of IGLYO member organisations before/during/after the IGLYO General Assembly 2013 (*if possible*).
- Conducting follow-up interviews via Skype with individual representatives, using the semi-structured interview design.
- Engaging in direct observation at the General Assembly
- Analysing IGLYO position papers and other relevant documents

Call for help with:

Focus group interviews

For the purposes of my research it would be highly important to capture the interactive discussions among different representatives of IGLYO member organisations on the topic of IGLYO as a queer organisation. These interactions would provide me with rich and many-layered information that could not be reproduced in individual interviews.

I realise that the busy schedule of GA does not have any space for any such activity. But perhaps some representatives have made arrangements to arrive earlier or depart later and would be willing to participate in a focus group during that time. If you think it would be feasible, maybe you (with the help of Secretariat) could circulate a call for focus group interviews among the registered participants. It would be ideal to have at least 2 focus group interviews with 4-6 participants.

Observation

Allowing me to participate in the GA through observing would be extremely beneficial to my research. However, I understand if I would be denied access to some sessions. Please let me know if this is the case and enlist the sessions that I would not be able to partake in.

Interviews via Skype

I am asking your permission to hand out „flyers“ at the General Assembly. The flyers include a short introduction to the project and an invitation to contact me for Skype interviews. Please find the flyer for your approval on the next page

Key informants

Having an insider view of the organisation allows you to identify some key informants who could add some important insights into the practices and politics of the organisation. Perhaps you could point towards those people and help me get in contact with them for informal talks or Skype interviews, if applicable.

I am very thankful for all your help and I am looking forward to fruitful cooperation. Please do contact me in case of any questions.

Yours faithfully,
Raili Uibo

Appendix 3 – Information leaflet distributed at IGLYO’s General Assembly

Invitation to participate in a research project on IGLYO

About me

My name is Raili Uibo and I am studying Gender Studies at Lund University, Sweden. Throughout my studies I’ve been mainly concentrating on issues of sexuality and gender as well as their intersections with other forms of oppression. At the same time, I have been involved in running a weekly feminist/queer discussion group in Lund – a safe and open platform for exchanging ideas and experiences. I am currently doing research for my Master thesis about IGLYO and the queer dimension in its politics.

About the research

I am turning to you to ask for help with this research project. Since IGLYO is a sum of its members, it is absolutely crucial to document the voices of its member organisations. I would therefore be thankful if you agreed to an interview with me where you would share your organisation’s experience and understanding of IGLYO and its politics.

Anonymity

The interview will be conducted via Skype and will be recorded for future use. Only I will have access to the interview material and it will not be distributed further. Excerpts from the interview will be quoted in the analysis of my research. Your personal identity will not be disclosed but the name of the organisation will be mentioned, unless you require otherwise.

Contact

In case you are interested in participating in the study, please use the information below for getting into contact with me:

E-mail: raili_uibo@hotmail.com

Skype: railiuibo

Mobile: +46 764 088 722

Please do not hesitate to contact me with further questions.

Note that this invitation may not be fulfilled in case a sufficient number of other participants have already contacted me before you do.

Appendix 4 – Agenda for IGLYO’s General Assembly 2013

	17.10.13	18.10.13	19.10.13	20.10.13	
09:00	BREAKFAST				
09:30					
10:00	ARRIVALS of GA 2013 DELEGATES	Panel 1 Opening of the IGLYO GA2013		DEPARTURES	
10:30		Plenary session 1 Roll-call - membership ratification - appointment of chair, minute taker, tellers - adoption of minutes GA2012 - adoption of agenda for GA2013 - call for nominations to the Board (if need be)			
11:00			Panel 2 Guest Speakers		
11:30		BREAK	BREAK		
12:00			Plenary session 4 Nominations presentations: Board Host GA 2014 Explanation of voting procedures		
12:30		Workshops 1 Position Paper on Social Inclusion			
13:00		LUNCH	LUNCH		
13:30					
14:00					
14:30		Plenary session 2 Discussion and adoption of Position Paper on Social Inclusion	Plenary session 5 Motions from members and Board		
15:00		Registration and Welcoming workshop	BREAK		BREAK
15:30		Workshop on intersectionality			
16:00		part 1 16:00-17:00	Workshops 2 IGLYO Strategic Plan 2014-2018 (parallel work in small groups)		Plenary session 6 Presentation & adoption of IGLYO strategic plan 2014-2018
16:30			BREAK		BREAK
17:00	Break 17:00-17:15				
17:30					
18:00	Workshop on intersectionality	Plenary session 3 Annual & Financial Reports 2013 presentation and adoption; Workplan 2014 presentation and adoption	Workshops 3 - Fundraising strategy - Promotion of health & well-being - Minimum standards to combat homo, trans- phobic bullying		
18:30	part 2 17:15 – 19:00				
19:00	DINNER	DINNER	Election results announcement IGLYO NL GA/Closing of the GA 2013		
19:30					
20:00	REGISTRATION	FREE TIME	FREE TIME		
20:30	Introduction to IGLYO & GA procedures	Project fair/Organisational market	CLOSING RECEPTION		
21:00					
21:30					
22:00	Icebreakers				

Appendix 5 – Focus group interview guide

Warm-up

Which organisation are you from and what is your relationship to IGLYO?

Discussion

If and how does IGLYO's politics differ from other LGBT organisations? What is distinctive about IGLYO?

What does the word „queer“ refer to in your mind?

Why do you think IGLYO included „queer“ in its name in 2005?

What does queer mean in the context of IGLYO?

Can you give examples of something „queer“ that IGLYO has done or something that is queer about IGLYO?

How easy is it to use „queer“ in the European political framework or in your home countries?

How could it be done?

What are the main difficulties?

Appendix 6 – Individual interview guide

Warm-up

How long have you been active in your organisation? What is your position there?

What is your personal relationship to IGLYO? Is this the first time you represented your organization at an IGLYO meeting or have you done this before? When?

How long has your organisation been involved in IGLYO's work?

Organisational identity

What does it mean for your organisation to be a member of IGLYO? Follow-up: responsibilities/advantages, other?

Do you ground discussions/decisions in your organization on IGLYO meetings & how?

How much do the decisions taken at the GA influence the work that your organisation does?

Have you discussed any content from the last General Assembly within your organisation?

Vice versa (does your organisation take up questions, suggestions etc to be discussed at IGLYO meetings.

How much can you/your organization influence the politics of IGLYO?

Is IGLYO's politics formed at the General Assembly? Explain

How would you describe IGLYO's politics?

If and how does IGLYO's politics differ from other organisations?

What is distinctive about IGLYO?

Queer

What does the word „queer“ refer to in your mind?

Why do you think IGLYO included „queer“ in their name in 2005?

What does queer mean in the context of IGLYO?

Can you give examples of something „queer“ that IGLYO has done in the past? Follow-up: in politics, legislation, an activity that IGLYO initiated? Any examples from the General Assembly?

Would you describe IGLYO as a queer organisation?

Do you think IGLYO should become more or less queer in their politics? Explain

(If yes, how could IGLYO become more queer?)

(If they start talking about identity politics)

What is the use of the identity categories such as L, G, B, T, I etc?

Is there way of using both queer and identity politics at the same time? How and when should each be used?

Queer in different contexts

Would you use the word “queer” to describe the organisation in your home country? Why (not)?

What does queer mean in the context of the EU and Europe?

Is it possible to be “queer” in the European political framework? European Commission, Council, Parliament. Is it desirable?

Additional questions to members of the Executive Board

How would you describe your position within IGLYO?

How are decisions made within IGLYO?

Do you feel that you can influence decisions– why/why not?

How much influence does the Board have over the politics of IGLYO? Follow-up: who has the influence if not at the Board
Do you believe that the Board represents the diversity of IGLYO's members?