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**“LGBTI-people in Lithuania: creating connections within and outside community” / “Personas LGBTI en Lituania: creando conexiones en y fuera de su comunidad”**

**TRABAJO FINAL DE GRADO**

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**LGBTI-PEOPLE IN LITHUANIA: CREATING CONNECTIONS WITHIN  
AND OUTSIDE COMMUNITY**

BACHELOR THESIS

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## ABSTRACT

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This thesis is built on the crossing of media studies, gender studies and related to ideas of the human rights. It is about the connections the LGBTI people in Lithuania have established within and outside community, online and offline, in order to know which the supporting groups are or which the groups of pressure are.

The thesis is divided in three chapters. The first one is about the historical background of stereotypical representations around the LGBTI people and how it affects them in building community. The second one is centered on the use of the social media by the LGBTI people in Lithuania in creating community and new spaces of interaction. The third chapter is about artistic practices and events designed in order to challenge the LGBTI phobia in Lithuania.

The main methods of researching information have been eleven interviews either to experts in LGBTI issues in Lithuania, as artists or activists; and a questionnaire filled-in by 65 people. In the annexes there are the interview guide, the interview transcriptions as well as the empty questionnaire.

***Division of the thesis by words:*** Thesis (18,530) + [Interview guide (2,260) + Interview transcriptions (20,580) + Questionnaire (1,200) + list of *Facebook* pages (320)] = 43,657 words

***Keywords:*** Lithuania, LGBTI-community, homophobia, homosexuality, identity politics, public sphere, representations, discourse, offline communication, new-social media

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis analyzes LGBTI issues contextualized in the contemporary Lithuanian society of nowadays. The main research question is to find how the LGBTI people in Lithuania are related each other and with the rest of the society in building community. This project is innovative in the way that I will study the reasons why they are more connected in one way and not another, from both sides: their offline communication, and their communication online through the social media<sup>1</sup>, especially in *Facebook*. I think that on the one hand, Lithuania has an influential historical background. That is why the LGBTI people are to be analyzed by how they are represented in the society. I will use the approach of Foucault theories discussed by Stuart Hall<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, I find very important to look at the new media tools since they have influenced the way people associate and create new public spaces of interaction, according to theorists as Poster or Stone<sup>3</sup>. I will also underline some artistic practices and events in Lithuania related with building identity politics in the sense of challenging the bipolar gender system, following the example of Tzedek or Steve Seidman<sup>4</sup>.

The objectives of this project are:

- Studying the trend of the LGBTI people in Lithuania: are they connected or dissociated?
- Analyzing whether LGBTI people dissociate themselves from the Lithuanian society. Are they hidden?
- Analyzing the reasons why LGBTI people in general are discriminated in the Lithuanian society nowadays.
- Historical context of stereotypical representations and discourse.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: Before you continue reading, it is necessary to explain that along this text, offline communication includes 'real' face-to-face comm. and traditional Media (TV, radio, newspapers). Then, online communication is the same as new/social media.

<sup>2</sup> Hall, Stuart The work of representation, Hall S. (Ed.) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* Glasgow: The Open University, 2003 (pp. 1-15, 41-51)

<sup>3</sup> Lister, Martin; Dovey, Jon; Giddings, Seth; Grant, Iain; Kelly, Kieran *New Media. A critical Introduction*, Second Edition. Abingdon: Routledge, 2009. Chapter 3. (pp. 209-220)

<sup>4</sup> Tzedek, Elliott Femynye Bat Rights and wrongs of identity politics and sexual identities. Ed. Baca Zinn, Maxine; Hondagneu-Sotelo, Pierrette; Messner, Michael *Gender through the Prism of Difference*, Third Edition. USA: Oxford University Press, 2005 (pp. 252-254)  
Seidman, Steven. Identity and Politics in a 'Postmodern' Gay Culture: Some historical and Conceptual notes; Warner, Michael (Ed.) *Fear of a Queer Planet. Queer politics and social theory*. USA: University of Minnesota Press, 2007. (pp. 105-142)

- Comparing the LGBTI offline and online communication in Lithuania. In which ways both help in building community? In which ways both help in challenging the LGBTI phobia in Lithuania?
- Analyzing artistic practices and events in order to challenge the LGBTI phobia in Lithuanian.

Through this project I am joining those people who are already working hard in order to challenge the LGBTI phobia that exists in Lithuania, from different spheres as for example the associations *Lithuanian Gay League*, the *Tolerant Youth Association*, the artists Romas Zabarauskas or Gabrielė Labanauskaitė, the politician Marija Aušrinė Pavilionienė, the academics Laima Kreivytė or Artūras Tereškinas, the psychologist Paulius Skrubis or the psychiatrist Danius Pūras. In a way, this project is an appreciation towards them.

The project will provide the Lithuanian society, politicians, associations, and in general to those who support human and LGBTI rights, an interesting analysis and compilation of researches that could be helpful for them in order to achieve more visibility of the LGBTI people in Lithuania and expand the connections of this minority in the context of an integrative society. The project can be also useful as a starting point for future researches or studies based on the information and methods I present here. I hope this project to be appealing not only for Lithuanians, but also for people from different countries that would like to understand the situation of the LGBTI people in an ex-Soviet state as a way to become involved in this issue and give more ideas about its solution. Furthermore, I think there is a lack of information in English about the topic of the LGBTI in Lithuania. This project is presented as an option, taking as advantage that English is one of the most spoken languages in the world<sup>5</sup>.

- **Content**

This thesis is divided in three chapters:

In the first chapter I will study the connections the LGBTI people have been establishing among them as well as among the rest of the Lithuanian society, in the context of an offline communication. I will explain why some sectors of the Lithuanian society are discriminating them based on the representations of the historical background, and the reasons why some LGBTI people hide themselves from the public sphere.

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<sup>5</sup> Ethnologue, *Most spoken languages in the world* [online] <<http://www.ethnologue.com/statistics/size>>

In the second chapter I will try to find what LGBTI people in Lithuania use the social media for, which kind of connections they establish with the others and which are the differences or similarities between their online and face-to-face communication. I will underline some actions developed on the social media, especially groups and pages created in *Facebook* that are dedicated to those issues in the country.

In the third chapter I will put in value the creative and innovative practices and activism nowadays in Lithuania in order to integrate the LGBTI citizenship and the rest of the society. I center the analysis in the first LGBTI film in Lithuania *Porno Melodrama*; the photo exhibition *Living Together*; the music group *AVaspo*; the theatrical play *Red Laces* and the *Baltic Pride 2013*: promotional videos and *LGBTI Cinema Festival*.

- **Empirical Data and Methods of Analysis**

There is not enough information about the LGBTI issues in Lithuania in books; it is usually in Lithuanian language and very dissociated in articles. That is because I needed to find more powerful sources where from to get valuable facts. This way I decided to create my own database of information, through interviews and a questionnaire. I have also used my own observations. The facts I found have been contrasted later with other sources in order to verify them. Everything is further explained in the paragraphs below.

The interviews have been very useful in the process of collecting information. Through the interviews I have gathered qualitative information. From the possible people, finally have participated a number of eleven interviewees; their answers have been valuable enough according to the topic and objectives of the thesis. The age of the interviewees is between 20 and 40. They are either experts in the LGBTI issues in Lithuania as well as artists and / or activists. They are not necessarily LGBTI. I decided to choose as much variety of people and age as possible in order to get as much points of view and perspectives about the topic.

The main technique of interviewing has been face-to-face because this way the communication is more fluent and new questions can come to the mind according to the answers of the interviewee. Eight of the respondents were interviewed this way. The method was to record their voice with a special tool for self-phones called *Tape-a-Talk*, aimed for journalists; all the interviews have been transcribed<sup>6</sup>. Then, one interview has been done by *Skype*, and the

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<sup>6</sup> The entire *Transcription of Interviews* can be found in the Annex 2



other three totally by e-mailing. If I have found any misunderstanding I have asked the interviewees back by e-mailing.

I designed the questions in an *Interview Guide*<sup>7</sup> organized around subtopics. I asked the interviewees about different categories: LGBTI people themselves, LGBTI associations, other minorities, heterosexual people, public people, public or private spheres, profession or career, age, religion, political ideologies, education, history, demography, traditional media, or online communication. The questions in the interview guide are designed at the same time in order to know the strategies the groups of pressure use in linking or disassociating the LGBTI people.

Once I collected all the information, the next step was to analyze it. I used an interview analysis focused on meaning, by comparing the information provided by each interviewee according to a pattern. Then I evaluated it with the theory and other information sources. There are subtopics not included initially in the *Interview Guide*, but such relevant that have been consequently included in the context of the analysis.

The other researching method I used has been a questionnaire. This source has provided quantitative information according to the objectives of the thesis. The main purpose of this survey is to study the behaviors the LGBTI people have in Lithuania when communicating through the social media. This survey includes questions which give us the opportunity to understand their face-to-face communication as well.

The questionnaire consisted of nineteen questions: fifteen multiple-choice questions and four open questions. The questionnaire was translated in Lithuanian and placed online on the digital platform *Poll Mill*<sup>8</sup>; then it was shared in *Facebook* in Lithuanian LGBTI groups or by private messages.

The target group which has been selected to fill-in the survey are LGBTI people from Lithuania (living or not in their country), and foreigners who live regularly in Lithuania. The opinion of the Lithuanian natives is more interesting according to the objectives of the project.

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<sup>7</sup> For checking the *Interview Guide*, go to the Annex 1

<sup>8</sup> Here is the link to the *Questionnaire* [online] <<http://pollmill.com/f/LGBTIII-asmenu-elgesys-lietuvoje-socialiniuose-tinkluose-behaviours-of-the-lgb-yveeue5/answers/new.fullpage>>; the version on paper format can be found in the Annex 3

This goal have been accomplished because the 92, 3% of the respondents are Lithuanians. The results of the survey are a sample of sixty five replies.

Once I compiled the results, the survey analysis consisted in explaining them by their meaning into the theory. For example, there are theories that discuss about the fact that the new media provides new public spheres of interaction, and new ways of creating community and being represented<sup>9</sup>. I have interpreted each result separately, and then all the results together in order to get an overall idea about the use of the social media by the LGBTI people in Lithuania. Indivisibly, I have compared this with their communication offline.

My own observations have been very important in order to understand the issue of the LGBTI people in Lithuania as well as to look for my interviewees. That is why I decided to be surrounded as much time as possible by native LGBTI people and experts from the country, as well as attending different events or watching different audiovisual pieces. I attended to a forum about LGBTI and other minorities the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 2013, in Vilnius. The title was "Įvairovė tarp mūsų: suvienijusi daugialypes tapatybes" (Diversity among us: multiple identities united). I was in the audience in two TV debates about LGBTI issues (*Tautos Aikste* and *Valanda su Ruta*). I went to the theatrical play *Red Laces* the 27<sup>th</sup> of March 2013 and to watch the documentary *Beyond the Pink Curtain* (17<sup>th</sup> of May 2013). I have watched too the short film *Porno Melodrama*. Those are the events I considered more relevant according to my time-staying in Lithuania. Furthermore, I have been aware of the social media activity, in the *Facebook* LGBTI pages and groups as for example *LGL* or *Queer Youth LT*, or the profile of my LGBTI friends, in order to get more information.

In the thesis are made explicit some of my observations, for example about *Facebook* groups and pages created for LGBT issues in Lithuania. Then I have studied the artistic panorama and events in the country concerning the LGBTI issues, highlighting the most relevant of them. I have analyzed in more detail each event or artistic piece in order to know how the LGBTI people represent themselves, and the way those challenge the LGBTI phobia and deal with the groups of pressure.

I have used other sources of information as for example online articles or other researches and analysis in order to:

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<sup>9</sup> Lister, Martin; Dovey, Jon; Giddings, Seth; Grant, Iain; Kelly, Kieran *New Media. A critical Introduction*, Second Edition. Abingdon: Routledge, 2009. Chapter 3. (pp. 209-220)

- Look for more facts and contextualize the topic.
- Get more information about my interviewees to design more appropriate and personalized questions.
- Contrast and extend the information obtained in the interviews and the questionnaire.

As examples, in this project I have had use of the study elaborated every year by ILGA-Europe<sup>10</sup> about the LGBTI-phobia in Europe; a survey about religious minorities directed by the dr.Milda Ališauskienė titled “*Tylos zona*” *Religinė Diskriminacija šiuolaikinėje Lietuvoje* (Silence Zone. Religious Discrimination in Modern Lithuania); or an article written by Artūras Tereškinas: “*Not Private enough?*” *Homophobic and Injurious speech in the Lithuanian Media*.

It is important to say that I have been involved in the LGBTI issues in Lithuania approximately for six months. It implies that my interpretations maybe will not be as accurate as a Lithuanian native would. My previous experiences in my native country (Spain) present different historical context and behaviors. The thing I find that both Spain and Lithuania have very ingrained is the Catholic culture and traditionalism, and the pressure this creates towards the LGBTI people. The difference is that in Lithuania the discrimination is more obvious and hurtful<sup>11</sup>. Meanwhile in Spain the opposition actions are less mediatic, less evident, but they do exist. I would like to remark that in this thesis I do not take position myself from anyone, but I show the reality the way I understood it according to the data and the theory.

The language has become a big frontier. I do not know Lithuanian and some information I have found is only in this language. Even though, in some events I have had the possibility to use translator or subtitles in English, fortunately. This possibility is more difficult when examining the social media interactions; the online translators do not offer the optimum results. That is why I took the decision to ask Lithuanians through interviews and the questionnaire, in order to get information in English from them. Even the English is neither my native language, it has been the best possibility of communication I had between me, my interviewees, my supervisor and my advisor. Maybe there could be some misunderstandings when interpreting the information I have received from others or others have received from me. Over all this, I have made a personal effort to solve that problem.

- **Theoretical readings**

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<sup>10</sup> Webpage of ILGA-Europe <<http://www.ilga-europe.org/>>

<sup>11</sup> “Ruslanas victim of an homophobic attack” [YouTube video] <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-qHNzsHAho>>

The theoretical books in this thesis have been very important in order to contextualize the topic and integrate the theory together with the empirical researches. This way, I use the concept of representation of Stuart Hall, but in his discussion about Foucault theories, “concerned with the *effects* and *consequences* of representation – its ‘politics’. It examines not only how language produces meaning, but how the knowledge which a particular discourse produces connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented (...)”<sup>12</sup> These theories have been useful in order to find out the most influential groups of pressure in Lithuania and their strategies in order to dissociate the LGBTI people, as well as the historical stereotypical representations those have generated. Consequently, I have reached the connections the LGBTI people have established with and within community. I have read books about recent discussions by different theorists as Poster in the topic of the new media, related to the ways on how social minorities can find useful tools in representing themselves, the way they generate community and the public sphere<sup>13</sup>. Finally, I use the term identity politics, discussed in several ways, but in the way of challenging the gender binary system that exists nowadays by debunking stereotypical representations and looking for a more pluralistic and respectful society<sup>14</sup>.

One thing needed to be considered is that in this project the LGBTI people have been generalized all together in the same group. I will explain why. On one hand, the main objective of this project is not to analyze the way other people represent lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, asexual, etc. separately. This analysis is valid in the way that LGBTI is used as a symbol or word in reference to those people who should share the same values and goals which are fighting for a free sexual orientation and free gender identity frontiers. Even though, along this text you can find sometimes more information addressed to some specific identities than others. The reason is that along the Lithuanian history, as well as in the most influential cultural tendencies in the world, the roles of both man and woman have been concretely defined in the society. This situation has provoked other identities to be disregarded and even not represented in these societies. Some orientations have been represented, as for

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<sup>12</sup> Hall, Stuart (Editor) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* Glasgow: The Open University, 2003 (p. 6)

<sup>13</sup> Lister, Martin; Dovey, Jon; Giddings, Seth; Grant, Iain; Kelly, Kieran *New Media. A critical Introduction*, Second Edition. Abingdon: Routledge, 2009. Chapter 3. (pp. 209-220)

<sup>14</sup> Seidman, Steven. Identity and Politics in a ‘Postmodern’ Gay Culture: Some historical and Conceptual notes; Warner, Michael (Ed.) *Fear of a Queer Planet. Queer politics and social theory*. USA: University of Minnesota Press, 2007. (pp. 105-142)

example homosexuals in the Soviet Union. But others such as transgender have not specific references<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>15</sup> Davydova, Darja; Rukšėnaitė, Sigita; Sužiedėlis, Darius *Changing faces: First March for LGBTI Equality in Lithuania*, Vilnius: LGL, 2012, (p. 36)

## 1st Chapter) LGBTI-PEOPLE IN LITHUANIA: CREATING CONNECTIONS IN AN OFFLINE COMMUNICATION

Gramsci said: “Turn your face violently towards things as they exist now”. Not as you’d like them to be, not as you think they were ten years ago, not as they’re written about in the sacred texts, but as they really are: the contradictory, stony ground of the present conjecture. (Stuart Hall 1989: 151)

### Context-Background

Lithuania is a young democratic state in Eastern Europe that reestablished its independence the 11th of March of 1990, just 23 years ago, from the Soviet Union. The country entered the European Union in the spring of 2004. Through its history, in and around the region of Lithuania have been cohabitating different cultures and ethnic groups for centuries<sup>16</sup>. Sometimes the region has been even repressed by ideologies coming from other nations which have caused a big impact in their society. I need to consider that from its last independence from the Soviet Union, in a very short period of time, this country have had to face deep transformations on its social and cultural lives. Not just different political systems, but also the technological advances are changing their society so much, creating this way deep gap between generations. Lithuania is a complex compendium of different ideologies and ways of life.

Nowadays, the 61% of the LGBTI population in Lithuania feel discriminated<sup>17</sup>. Lithuania is one of the most overdue states in terms of regulation about LGBTI issues in Europe according to several studies elaborated by ILGA-Europe (part of the International LGBTI association) the recent years<sup>18</sup>. Actually, the country has not specific legislation about this issue. At least antidiscrimination laws have been established recently; in July 2009, the article 170 was introduced in the Criminal Code<sup>19</sup>: “is prohibited incitement against a group of residents or against a specific person, on account of his or her sex, sexual orientation, race, nationality, language, ethnicity, social status, faith, religion or beliefs. Such incitement shall be punished with a fine, detention or imprisonment”.

<sup>16</sup> Different nationalities in Lithuania during its history < <http://vilnews.com/?p=886> >

<sup>17</sup> European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights *EU LGBT survey*, Belgium: FRA, 2013 (p. 15)

<sup>18</sup> *ILGA-Europe Rainbow Map*, May 2011-2012-2013; *ILGA-Europe Rainbow Index*, May 2011-2012-2013.

<sup>19</sup> *ERIC report on Lithuania*, September 2011, (p. 15, 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph)

LGBTI associations as the Lithuanian Gay League<sup>20</sup> or the Lithuanian Youth Association<sup>21</sup> have been formed in Lithuania since its independence, in order to change this panorama and fight for their rights. Also NGOs as Amnesty International<sup>22</sup> have been established in Lithuania. Other countries' embassies, intellectuals and artists<sup>23</sup> are also supporting the LGBTI rights in the country. The idea to celebrate a *Baltic Pride* came; the first organized in Lithuania was in 2010 under a big polemic and a strong police protection. The next *Baltic Pride* will take place this year 2013<sup>24</sup>. Each year the *Baltic Pride* takes turns between Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia.

Lithuania, as a signer of the European Convention on Human Rights treaty, has the promise to secure fundamental civil and political rights, not only to their own citizens but also to everyone within their jurisdiction. The article 14 of the ECHR States says<sup>25</sup>: “The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, color, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status”. Despite of all that, there are voices in the European Parliament which complain about that the fight against LGBTI phobia is being hindered in Lithuania<sup>26</sup>. This year Lithuania will hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2013<sup>27</sup>. The whole society in this context will have to prove their tolerance towards the human rights and the minorities represented in Lithuania.

### Historical discourse of representations

This chapter has been structured through the voices of the interviewees and contrasted with theory and other sources of information. Here I will analyze the LGBTI people in Lithuania

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<sup>20</sup> Lithuanian Gay League; LGBTI association in Lithuania; Organizers of the *Baltic Pride* 2013. LGL Facebook page <<https://www.facebook.com/lgl.lt>>

<sup>21</sup> Facebook page of TJA: <https://www.facebook.com/tolerantiskas.draugas?fref=ts> ; Projects of TJA, enter this link: <<http://gayline.lt/Paskirk-LGBTI-bendruomeninei-veiklai-pl%C4%97toti.d?sid=6405>>

<sup>22</sup> Amnesty International *Annual Report, Lithuania, 2013* <<http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/lithuania/report-2013#page>>

<sup>23</sup> *Lithuanian celebrities come out in support of LGBT rights*, 15.min.lt, 22/05/2013, [online article] <<http://www.15min.lt/en/article/culture-society/lithuanian-celebrities-come-out-in-support-of-lgbt-rights-if-you-wanted-to-remain-in-the-middle-ages-you-shouldn-t-have-joined-the-eu-528-337880#ixzz2U3UarUOA>>

<sup>24</sup> *Baltic Pride 2013* official Facebook page: <<https://www.facebook.com/BalticPride?fref=ts>>

<sup>25</sup> The European Convention on Human Rights and its Five Protocols [online .pdf] <<http://www.hri.org/docs/ECHR50.html>>

<sup>26</sup> Kolyako, Nina *Latvia and Lithuania mentioned in European Parliament resolution against homophobia*, The Baltic Course, 24/05/2012 [online article] <[http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/baltic\\_states/?doc=57761](http://www.baltic-course.com/eng/baltic_states/?doc=57761)>

<sup>27</sup> Presidencies of the Council of the EU <<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/council/presidency-websites.aspx>>; <<http://www.eu2013.lt/en/lietuvos-pirmininkavimas-es-tarybai>>

from their connections in building community in an offline communication. Consequently, it is necessary to look for the groups of pressure towards the LGBTI people in Lithuania and the strategies they use in order to dissociate them. This way, is convenient to appeal to Foucault theories; in this case I make use of the discussions in the writings of Stuart Hall. As Foucault said, it is needed to look for the “relations of power, not relations of meaning”<sup>28</sup>. He studied the production of knowledge (rather than just meaning), through what he called discourse (rather than just language). Discourse, Foucault argued, constructs the topic. It defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. It governs the way that a topic can be talked about and reasoned about. It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others. All political and social forms of thought, he believed, were inevitably caught up in the interplay of knowledge and power. Knowledge does not operate in an empty space. It is put to work, through certain technologies and strategies of application, in specific situations, historical contexts and institutional regimes. The emphasis is about the historical specificity of a particular form or ‘regime’ of representations: not on ‘language’ as a general concern, but on specific languages or meaning, and the way representational practices operate in concrete historical situation, in actual practice.<sup>29</sup>

Historically, there are two factors that produce the major part of the Lithuanian discourse is in order to dissociate the LGBTI people: the Catholic Church narrowly connected with the conservative policies<sup>30</sup>. It is necessary to appoint the following historical events to get an accurate idea of the power and influence of the Church and the conservative policies in regulating the creation of knowledge in Lithuania:

- The Church has been the dominating religion since the Christianization of Lithuania at the end of the 14th century. In the Soviet Union period, when the religion was forgotten, the Catholic Church survived. The Catholic people were keeping religious traditions in secret<sup>31</sup>. The religion was used as a defense against the regime; it played an important role in the transition towards independence<sup>32</sup>. Furthermore, sometimes the Church and the regime were even connected. Some priests passed an exam of the KGB, and then they could be priests at

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<sup>28</sup> Hall, Stuart (Ed.) Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices Glasgow: The Open University, 2003 (pp. 41-51)

<sup>29</sup> The same book and pages as in the reference 27

<sup>30</sup> Annex 2, transcription of the Interview 1, lines 95-106; A2.I3, lines 461-462; A2.I5, lines 727-728 [From now till the end of this document the nomenclature will be A2.I1, A2.I2, A2.I3...]

<sup>31</sup> A2.I1, lines 75-82

<sup>32</sup> A2.I5, lines 726-727



the same time as agents for the KGB<sup>33</sup>. When Lithuania recovered the independence in 1990, the Church reestablished the power it has before.

- In relation to the politics and laws, the serfdom was not abolished in Lithuania till 1861. On the contrary, in Spain and England it was abolished in XV century, and in most Western countries under Napoleon's conquests. Between the independence from the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, there was a nationalist dictatorship in Lithuania by Antanas Smetona (1926-1940). The military law was not abolished, just during one year in the interwar period<sup>34</sup>.

It is clear that the Catholic culture is very arranged in Lithuania. Nowadays, the 77, 3 % of the population says that they belong to the Roman Catholics in front of the 6, 1 % who do not belong to any religious group and a 10 % who do not want to answer, according to the survey developed by Milda Ališauskienė, professor of sociology at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas<sup>35</sup>. Even though, just the 20 % of the population are practicing and believes the dogmas. It means that the Catholicism in Lithuania is something more cultural, but which influence all the spheres of the Lithuanian society<sup>36</sup>. The traditional values and representations of the man and the woman are strongly accepted, and the homosexuality is seen as an abomination. Even though, in comments on the newspaper *Delfi* online, people tend to disagree with celibate or they support the right of abortion<sup>37</sup>. Moreover, the half of the Lithuanian society accepts other type of families as single parents or a couple without children, according to the last survey carried out by Milda; she says that “if you look at the population you can find variety, but some of our politicians want normative, definition of family”<sup>38</sup>. Politicians want to simplify the varied representations of family in the society in order to control it better. This idea is connected with Foucault; according to him: “dialectic is a way of evading the always open and hazardous reality of conflict by reducing it to Hegelian skeleton” (Foucault, 1980, pp.114-5)

About politics, nowadays homophobic statements by Lithuanian politicians as Petras Gražulis are one of the major contributions to a climate of intolerance towards LGBTI people, which include the comparison of homosexuality to necrophilia and pedophilia<sup>39</sup>. Some of these

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<sup>33</sup> A2.II, lines 85-88

<sup>34</sup> A2.I5, lines 778-782

<sup>35</sup> Ališauskienė, M., Glodenis, D. (forthcoming). *Iššūkiai religinei įvairovei Lietuvoje: religinių mažumų perspektyva*. Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto leidykla

<sup>36</sup> A2.II, lines 95-106; A2.I3, lines 450-457

<sup>37</sup> A2.I3, lines 452-455

<sup>38</sup> A2.II, lines 65-72

<sup>39</sup> *Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People in Europe*, ILGA-Europe, 2013 (pp. 141-143)

homophobic representations are under discussion into possible amendments to the Constitution: banning ‘propagation of homosexual relations’, imposing fines for ‘public denigration on the family foundations listed in the Constitution, organizing events that go against public morals’<sup>40</sup>, and equating family with marriage and parenthood. Although some politicians are not against of the LGBTI rights, they do not consider this topic important; they play with this in order to get more votes and power<sup>41</sup>. According to the poet, playwright and singer Gabrielė Labanauskaitė, “the politicians are manipulating the majority wishes because they know what the majority want. (...) They (the politicians) play according to the music (...) because they know that they can get more votes during the elections”<sup>42</sup>. Those statements mean that not only the institutions are conservative, but the majority of the society as well.

For another way, in Lithuania there is a pessimistic feeling. According to Milda, “(...) historically we (Lithuanian society) have had too little experience as an own state, as an own community. We have been years under occupation. All the time we were no responsible for ourselves. If you are like this so many generations, this comes through the collective memory. You do not need any responsibility, because you are occupied. Someone is doing something for you. If you are trying to be responsible you are persecuted or even shoot. (...) You are not independent, and so you cannot change anything”<sup>43</sup>. The last democracy in the 15<sup>th</sup> century lasted just for eleven years<sup>44</sup>. According to Mindaugas kluonis, board member of the TJA, during the Soviet Times it was said that “if you would be silent, you will not be sorry”. That is why people do not like to express their opinion; it was the atmosphere that you could be persecuted for what you said<sup>45</sup>.

During the Soviet Union, male homosexuality was criminalized<sup>46</sup>. This law was abolished in 1993, when 17 men were delisted from prison<sup>47</sup>. Again, there was a traditional dualization of man and woman, where men were very important and make decisions, and women were somewhere aside. The representations of gay males as a disease have been stigmatized through

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<sup>40</sup> *The Seimas is planning law against LGBT adoption*, The Lithuania Tribune, 22/05/2013, [online article] <<http://www.lithuaniatribune.com/38686/the-seimas-is-planning-law-against-lgbt-adoption-201338686/>>

<sup>41</sup> A2.I3, lines 432-433

<sup>42</sup> A2.I2, lines 345-352

<sup>43</sup> A2.I1, lines 21-27

<sup>44</sup> A2.I5, line 770

<sup>45</sup> A2.I5, lines 770-773; A2.I2, lines 298-300

<sup>46</sup> A2.I2, lines 251-252; A2.I1, lines

<sup>47</sup> A2.I5, lines 732-733

generations. The lesbian were given a special treat; it was thought that a woman had sex with a woman because they had some conditions that oriented them to do this<sup>48</sup>.

According to Foucault, statements like ‘madness’, punishment’ or ‘sexuality’ only exist meaningfully within the discourse about them. It is necessary to underline that there is not a single or correct representation about an idea since there is no law which guarantee that things will have one, true meaning, or that this meaning will not change over time<sup>49</sup>.

The strategies the groups of pressure use in order to defeat the LGBTI people in Lithuania, according to Milda, are “divide and rule”<sup>50</sup>. According to Romas Zabarauskas, young Lithuanian film director, the LGBTI community might learn from the Church that “they talk with their community” and “bring enthusiasm”<sup>51</sup>. Augustas Čičelis, member of the Centre for Equality Advancement of Lithuania, says that “in things people feel afraid and unsafe is where they try to find the guilty in LGBTI people”. This way, the groups of pressure use “the easiest card to play” in things related to traditional values, as for example family and children<sup>52</sup>, that are very arranged in the society. “They are usually playing more with emotions and we have to play back with arguments and good ways of persuasion”<sup>53</sup>.

### **Creating connections**

In reference to the previous analysis, nowadays in general the Lithuanian society is for one way based on stereotypical representations, and for another way it is reserved and silent. Those behaviors are based on their historical background. Consequently, when creating connections with other people, they act in a concrete way. According to Milda, the Lithuanian society is “not individual, it is something in between. They are not working in associations, but they are linked in networks more based on relatives, people who you know. They are not creating associations for defending some ideas. They are kind of traditional society more based on some blood links: this is my family, these are my friends. (...)”<sup>54</sup>. If I compare this with the behavior of the LGBTI people in Lithuania, they have created associations. They are active, but not enough visible. They are working hard for its community in which concerns fighting for civil

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<sup>48</sup> A2.I1, lines 37-44; A2.I5, lines 729-730

<sup>49</sup> Hall, Stuart (Ed.) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* Glasgow: The Open University, 2003 (pp. 41-51)

<sup>50</sup> A2.I1, line 141

<sup>51</sup> A2.I3, lines 457-458

<sup>52</sup> A2.I5, line 853

<sup>53</sup> A2.I4, lines 664-681

<sup>54</sup> A2.I1, lines 14-19

rights. They also organize activities and events as the *Baltic Pride* 2013, but not always inclusive or opened for the rest of the society<sup>55</sup>. Their acts are not integrative sometimes.

According to Mindaugas, the main obstacle for heterosexuals to support LGBTI people is the fear to be aligned with them and lose your social status<sup>56</sup>. On the other hand, this incites the LGBTI people to be hidden and not active enough. The LGBTI people itself have prejudices because of the historical stigma. According to Mindaugas, they are afraid to be ostracized, to lose their jobs or status<sup>57</sup>. According to Augustas “it is probably natural instinct: they try to cut the ties with the offenders or who they feel afraid of”<sup>58</sup>. Here is convenient to define the concept of comfort zone. According to Gabrielė, “Now I feel more apathetic energy from the community itself. They are accommodated. (...) They keep the way of living safe, as far as it is comfortable for them”<sup>59</sup>. They are afraid to the unknown, to the reaction of the rest of the society. In my opinion, this way LGBTI people become themselves weak and unprotected, while the majority remains in power.

Depending on their age, young people are supposedly more open-minded than the older ones nowadays in Lithuania. Even though, the younger generations cohabitate in the same society where the majorities still spread their anti LGBTI thoughts everywhere. As Augustas says, “when you have parents who are homophobic, it is very difficult to deal with that. The generations are not dying, they do not dye and the next generation will be a new one. Similar ideas and behaviors are continuing from one generation to another. Of course, probably now young people learn more about it from various sources, but there are many homophobic youth as well”<sup>60</sup>. According to Mindaugas, “(...) the gap between generations is not very big in Lithuania. I was lecturer at the university and I noticed that the people is still afraid, even those who are supporting LGBTI rights, to speak about it. I was giving a topic for a girl who I knew that belongs to the New Left movement and she is very supportive, but she did not want to talk about LGBTI rights in public. She was worried about what their colleagues could think. She was 19 years old then, two years ago”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> A2.I2, lines 229-232; A2.I3, lines 418-423; A2.I4, lines 558-566

<sup>56</sup> A2.I5, line 735

<sup>57</sup> A2.I5, lines 749-755

<sup>58</sup> A2.I4, lines 629-630

<sup>59</sup> A2.I2, lines 297-314

<sup>60</sup> A2.I4, lines 620-624

<sup>61</sup> A2. I5, lines 784-789

In the questionnaire, the majority of the respondents say that they are out of the closet more towards their LGBTI friends (38, 3%). This result is followed by the heterosexual friends (30, 8%). Only the 15, 8% are opened towards their families, and the 12, 5% are opened towards the whole society in Lithuania. If we consider that they are young (the majority of the respondents of the survey were young people), the conclusion is that the young people in Lithuania are more tolerant towards LGBTI people.

Ar jūs atviras kaip LGBT? (Daugialypis pasirinkimas) / Are you openly LGBT? (Multiple choice)

Answer options	Count	Ratio
Taip, visiems / Yes, towards everybody	15	12.5%
Savo LGBT draugams / Towards my LGBT friends	46	38.3%
Savo heteroseksualiems draugams / Towards my heterosexual friends	37	30.8%
Savo šeimai / Towards my family	19	15.0%
Dar nenusprendžiau / I'm not decided yet.	3	2.5%

Graph 0

The other minorities in Lithuania not always support LGBTI rights because they have ingrained the same beliefs as the majority<sup>62</sup>; they are part of the whole society. In the interview to Artūras, he says that: “I remember an accident when disable people disagreed to rent an office for LGBTI people.”<sup>63</sup> There are minorities sometimes related to the power that are even very aggressive towards the LGBTI people<sup>64</sup>. I am referring to the *skinheads* and Lithuanian ultranationalists. Every year, in the Independence Day of Lithuania from the Soviet Union, they organize a demonstration in *Gedimino Prospektas*, the main avenue of Vilnius. Their claims are ‘Lithuania for Lithuanians’, in repression to other minorities, including LGBTI people. This year 2013, the number of participants was three thousand; some people from other minorities were brave enough to make them front. For example, the gay film director Romas Zabarauskas was saying ‘Lithuania for everyone’ (Lietuva visiems!)<sup>65</sup>. In the interview to Augustas, he told me that “(...) the president of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė tried to be neutral and said: Do you call them Nazis? I call them country lovers. She was not critical towards their actions”. On the other hand, the LGL is still in debate with the municipality if the March for Equality as an event of the *Baltic Pride 2013* could take place in the main avenue of Vilnius. The municipality has not decided yet due to ‘security concerns’<sup>66</sup>. In Lithuania, the public space is priority for those who

<sup>62</sup> A2.I1, lines 130-135; A2.I4, lines 653-660; A.2.I5, lines 839-840

<sup>63</sup> A2.I5, lines 840-841

<sup>64</sup> Pammer, Sebastian *Neo-Nazis March in Central Vilnius on Lithuania's Independence Day (with government permission and police escorts)*, Defending History, 11-03-2011 [online article] <<http://defendinghistory.com/sebastian-pammer-reports-on-neo-nazi-parade-vilnius-11-march-2011/13404>>

<sup>65</sup> Shepherd, Anna *3,000 Participate in “Unauthorized” Neo-Nazi March in Central Vilnius on 2013 Independence Day*, Defending History, 11-03-2013 <<http://defendinghistory.com/3000-participate-in-unauthorized-neo-nazi-march-in-central-vilnius-on-2013-independence-day/50796>>

<sup>66</sup> LGL *Pleads the Supreme Administrative Court to Deal with the Baltic Pride Case under Accelerated Procedure*, atviri.lt, 10-05-2013 <[http://www.atviri.lt/index.php/news/lgl\\_pleads\\_the\\_supreme\\_administrative\\_court\\_to\\_deal\\_with\\_the\\_baltic\\_pride\\_case\\_under\\_accelerated\\_procedure/7311](http://www.atviri.lt/index.php/news/lgl_pleads_the_supreme_administrative_court_to_deal_with_the_baltic_pride_case_under_accelerated_procedure/7311)>

support the majorities. Even the *skinheads* are a minority, they share more similarities with the power than the LGBTI people do.

Lithuania is a small country with a population of three and a half million inhabitants approximately that are concentrated in big urban areas as cities or towns. Even the urban population has slightly decreased over the last few years, it still represents the 67% of the population in Lithuania<sup>67</sup>. In terms of demography, Lithuania is more urban than rural. This factor creates the LGBTI people who live in rural areas to be more vulnerable and not linked in the same way with the rest of the society<sup>68</sup>. In big cities you have more opportunities. In Vilnius for example, you can find the headquarters of the two most important organizations (LGL, TJA) and the most popular LGBTI clubs and friendly bars.

Depending on their career or occupation, there is no a clear tendency, but I think it seems easier for the LGBTI people in Lithuania to come out in the artistic sphere. During the Soviet Union, was happening something very curious. According to Frédéric “the only field the gay were forgiven was in the esthetics, the arts. For example the ballet dancers, but they had to marry a woman anyway”<sup>69</sup>. This case is interesting to be analyzed, because it is an exception. We can appreciate here another representation: a gay male, who is professional dancer. They cannot exclude him from the society because he is giving a good service to them; they prefer to keep him, even in silent. At the same time, that person was included in the same power claws, because he could not be himself, he had to pretend that he was following the standards, the ‘normal’ representations.

Nowadays there is a list of artists who are openly gay in Lithuania. For example Ruslanas is a gay singer who is one of the most popular celebrities in Lithuania. He is particular in the way that he gives concerts in rural areas, and that is important in the way to open the minds of the people living there. Even though, he has not been exempt of problems: one day somebody trough him an egg<sup>70</sup>. There are also the feminist Lina Žigelytė, who make public performances, or the

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*Baltic Pride must go ahead without hindrance*, atviri.lt, 18-02-2013

<[http://www.atviri.lt/index.php/news/baltic\\_pride\\_must\\_go\\_ahead\\_without\\_hindrance/7269](http://www.atviri.lt/index.php/news/baltic_pride_must_go_ahead_without_hindrance/7269) >

<sup>67</sup> World Bank report, *Urban population in Lithuania in 2010, 2012* [Online information]

<<http://www.tradingeconomics.com/lithuania/urban-population-wb-data.html> >

<sup>68</sup> A2.I3, line 491; A2.I5, lines 753-752

<sup>69</sup> A2.I7, lines 1151-1152

<sup>70</sup> A2.I3, lines 474-478; A2.I5, lines 835-836

academic Laima Kreivytė, who is writing homo-erotic poetry<sup>71</sup>. There is the film director Romas Zabarauskas who has come out recently.

The air and new ideas from outside Lithuania give the natives more power to know their rights and to understand that there are proud LGBTI people out there. For example, the embassy of France and the French Institute are very involved in claiming for the LGBTI rights in Lithuania. This year they are financing the promotional video of the *Baltic Pride* 2013, that I will analyze in the chapter three.

Also, the students who come to the country with an exchange program from different parts of the world bring new ideas and new ways of thinking (representations). They establish relations with the LGBTI people from Lithuania, encouraging them to watch the things from different perspectives. I say this based on my own experiences. The year 2012, in Lithuania were 3,700 students, in comparison of the past 4 years, when they were 2,800<sup>72</sup>.

LGBTI people have also the possibility to emigrate from Lithuania in order to bring new ideas and representations about themselves into their society. Actually, the migration is a problem nowadays in the country. In Lithuania, 615,000 people have left the country since 1990. Lithuania is one of the few EU 'sending countries' with an average of 30,000 people leaving the country every year. The year 2010, the number of declared departures increased almost 4 times in comparison to 2009. The most important factors explaining emigration trends in Lithuania are comparatively low wages and high rate of unemployment. However, a survey carried out by IOM Vilnius demonstrated that other socio-economic factors need also to be considered, such as the feeling of social insecurity, lack of justice, unsatisfactory treatment of employees by employers and better career opportunities abroad.<sup>73</sup> The LGBTI people are even more vulnerable in front of those factors<sup>74</sup>.

### **LGBTI spaces: opened or restricted?**

In this section I am going to analyze the spaces for representation by the LGBTI people. To start with, it is important to highlight the *Baltic Pride* 2013 Equality March that will take place at the streets of Vilnius. This event is important because it will take place in a public space

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<sup>71</sup> A2.I2, lines 331-332

<sup>72</sup> International Organization for Migration, European Migration Network, *International Students in Lithuania, 2012* [pdf online] <<http://emn.intrasoft-intl.com/Downloads/download.do;jsessionid=039F08EBD159D802391920DE6CEA3F67?fileID=3752>>

<sup>73</sup> International Organization for Migration Mission, *Migration profile: Lithuania, 2011* [Online booklet .pdf] <[http://www.iom.lt/documents/Migration\\_profile\\_EN.pdf](http://www.iom.lt/documents/Migration_profile_EN.pdf)>

<sup>74</sup> A2.I1, lines 125-128

and it is an opportunity for the whole society to discuss openly about this topic. At the same time it is a crucial event that plays an important role for the LGBTI people in creating representations by themselves instead of the rest of the society. Artūras, board member of TJA says that “in Lithuania there is a lack of demonstrations, the use of your democratic power. (...) For example in Spain or France, they are going to the streets and protesting. Here in Lithuania, even in topics not related with LGBTI rights, people still do not protest at the streets”<sup>75</sup>.

Although some LGBTI people in Lithuania have seen themselves obligated to remain in the closet due to the beliefs of the society, they find the way to escape in order to find their equals. Now I would like to analyze other places which offer a more relaxed atmosphere; I am referring to the LGBTI clubs. It is interesting to analyze those spaces in Lithuania. In Vilnius there are two LGBTI bars. In words of Gabrielè, “there are clubs, but not everybody can get in. You have to press a bell. It is very symbolic, you know? The doors are kind of metaphor of the general situation because that clubs are for very private society and their friends. I think this is wrong.”<sup>76</sup> A common space is a very important place where the feelings of community increase, but if this space is not opened enough, it can induce the formation of a ‘ghetto’. In those places the ambient is respectful and liberal; but at the same time, the LGBTI people close themselves towards the rest of the society.

There is a very interesting initiative the recent years in Vilnius that appeals for a less defined heterosexual or LGBTI spaces, if more places for them to interact and feel together in the same ‘community’. This is a strategy of integration which I applaud, and a way to offer new spaces for the LGBTI people than previously were ‘forbidden’ for them. The initiative was carried out by Romas Zabarauskas and is called *LGBT Friendly Vilnius*<sup>77</sup>.

### **Creating identity politics in order to encourage diversity**

The expression ‘identity politics’ has been discussed several times. In this thesis I am going to use it in the sense to generate new ways of identity representation rather than the bipolar gender system, and encourage this way a pluralistic and respectful society<sup>78</sup>. An initiative in order to debunk stereotypes is giving information, educating, and generating knowledge. There are some people that are LGBTI phobic only because they have not enough information about

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<sup>75</sup> A2.I5, lines 764-768

<sup>76</sup> A2.I2, lines 236-238

<sup>77</sup> *LGBT Friendly* guide in Vilnius <<http://www.inyourpocket.com/lithuania/vilnius/nightlife/LGBTI>>

<sup>78</sup> Seidman, Steven. Identity and Politics in a ‘Postmodern’ Gay Culture: Some historical and Conceptual notes; Warner, Michael (Ed.) *Fear of a Queer Planet. Queer politics and social theory*. USA: University of Minnesota Press, 2007. (pp. 105-142)



those issues. The historical background has not prepared any space for the minorities to create their own representations. Frédéric Bellido, director of the French Institute in Lithuania says that: “We organize film screenings, and sometimes the LGBTI topic is introduced among other topics. The young people got interested in the topic, but they do not know anything about this. Especially there are girls who say: yes, this is ok, but in Lithuania there are not homosexuals. This is something really new for them.”<sup>79</sup> The Lithuanian society thinks that they don’t exist<sup>80</sup>, because they are rarely represented.

Elena Dapkūnaitė, board member of LGL, is involved in a project called ‘The Living Library’ (*Givoji Biblioteka*)<sup>81</sup>, organized by the Lithuanian National Social Integration Institute, which tries to unite the whole society around the same values, and not to divide. According to Elena, “we collect stereotypes which are present in our society”, “It is very important because, even people have no so many prejudices, they still do not know about the topic itself. (...) In the project are participating volunteers who belong to social groups which are stigmatized: ex-prisoners, lesbians, gays, roma people, addicted people to alcohol and drugs, Jewish people, etc. Sometimes we are invited to schools or public events, music festivals, etc. People can come and talk to us and ask us questions. They have some stereotypes so they can erase them from their mind. For example, they think that all lesbians hate man. So they come and ask me. I reply: No, I like man. I mean, I am friend of them. They do not know, they simply do not know. So I help them to know more”<sup>82</sup>.

Artūras and Mindaugas, board members of TJA, implemented a project at Schools for the integration of racial minorities in Lithuania<sup>83</sup>. But they had lots of troubles because the anti-LGBTI groups wrote complains about it. According to Mindaugas, “the Schools received letters from public persecutors asking for information about the project, and we were not informed about it”, “They said we were spreading LGBTI propaganda at Schools. Then, the politicians from conservative parties complained to the ministry and asked for information too”, “Some Schools did not want to participate in the project after that, because they were afraid”.

It is necessary to underline that in Lithuania the NGOs do not get funding from the government. According to Mindaugas, “we (Lithuania) have religion, we have money and power. LGBTI people lack all of this. Any human rights organization or any NGO in Lithuania

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<sup>79</sup> A2.I7, lines 1157-1161

<sup>80</sup> A2.I9, lines 1312-1313

<sup>81</sup> Webpage *The Living Library (Givoji Biblioteka)* <<http://gyvojibiblioteka.lt/en>>

<sup>82</sup> A2.I6, lines 985-998

<sup>83</sup> A2.I5, lines 860-862

is not supported by the government. In words of the former Prime Minister Mr. Brazauskas, 'NGO is just three people's opinion'. The NGO should write their projects, usually in order to get financing. It is a very big democracy machine which consumes all your time'<sup>84</sup>.

In the way of educating, providing information and debunking stereotypes, there is a very important support by psychologists as Paulius Skrubis who have created the *Jaunimo Linija*<sup>85</sup> (*Youth Line*), which is an emotional support by telephone and letters service staffed by volunteer counselors. The psychiatrist Danius Pūras spreads a supportive discourse towards the LGBTI people too<sup>86</sup>. As well as people with intellectual or medical authority are supporting the LGBTI issues, this is crucial for them in order to get integrated into the society.

### **Traditional media (television, radio, newspapers) and the LGBTI representations in Lithuania**

The media is the representation of the society in which is integrated. That is why the contemporary Lithuanian media is determined by the discourse of the groups of pressure: conservative politicians and the Church<sup>87</sup>. According to Foucault, the power comes when some people have more authority to speak about some subject than others. Milda says that "it is obvious that our media supports them (politicians and Church) by inviting priests and asking them to comment some issues like laws. Laws which are important for other religious minorities, but they are the only who comment. How a priest can comment a law which also covers issues of other religious minorities? They always speak in their own side but they are not thinking about how it will affect others."<sup>88</sup> In other words, the groups of pressure use the Media to implement their beliefs. This way, the majority of the society gets what they want; they feel more identified and linked to the media than a LGBTI person does.

The Lithuanian media is funded by private resources in general. According to Artūras Rudomanskis, "the Lithuanian media is divided in two sectors: the groups which get lot of money for their programming and the ones which not. They do not go deep into the topics and that is why media is quite homophobic." The ones who are less popular try to look for scandals in the LGBTI people in order to get more audience<sup>89</sup>.

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<sup>84</sup> A2.I5, lines 854-858

<sup>85</sup> *Jaunimo Linija* webpage <<http://www.jaunimolinija.lt/>>

<sup>86</sup> A2.I4, lines 585-590

<sup>87</sup> A2. I3, lines 431-432

<sup>88</sup> A2.I1, lines 150-154

<sup>89</sup> A2, I5, lines 798-801

The research that Artūras Tereškinas<sup>90</sup> carried out in 2006-2007, shows that the LGBTI is not well standing at the Lithuanian media. He concluded that the most common representations are:

- News on LGBT as unimportant and often irrelevant
- Homosexuality as a disease and an unnatural deviant practice
- Homosexuality as something exotic and strange
- Homosexuality as linked to criminality
- Conspiracy theories. homosexuals not as victims but as oppressors
- Homosexuality, family and the nation. the issue of family as central to the reproduction of society and social order features in debates about homosexuality and the regulation of gay, lesbian, and transgender practices and representations. It is alleged that LGBTI people want to destroy the “normal” family and the nation.
- Homosexuality and the issues of privacy and openness: the Lithuanian press often describes homosexuality not as an issue of human rights and citizenship but as an issue of “private matters of what one does in bed”.

Nowadays 2013, there have been some advances in favor of the LGBTI issues on the Lithuanian media. From the first *Baltic Pride* in 2010, the LGBTI community became more visible in the Lithuanian media. There is a complete analysis of this in the book *Changing Faces*<sup>91</sup>. According to the interviewee Mindaugas Kluonis, around 5 or 7 years ago, the news about LGBTI people came at the end of the publications. Now they are among the serious news, at the beginning. It happens especially in *Lietuvos Rytas* or *Delfi* and those media who want to be rigorous. In the online diary *Delfi*, I have found two opinion articles supporting the LGBTI rights in Lithuania, appealing to the feelings of these people<sup>92</sup>. Some other media as the group of *Respublika*, use even hate speech towards LGBTI people<sup>93</sup>.

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<sup>90</sup> Tereškinas, Artūras “*Not private enough?*”: *Homophobic and injurious speech in the Lithuanian Media*, Vilnius: Lithuanian Gay League, 2007

<sup>91</sup> Davydova, Darja; Rukšėnaitė, Sigita; Sužiedėlis, Darius *Changing faces: First March for LGBTI Equality in Lithuania*, Lithuania: LGL, 2012

<sup>92</sup> Paslauskas, Dovydas *Orientacija žmogaus nekeičia!* Delfi Pilietis 22-05-2013 [online article]

<<http://pilietis.delfi.lt/voxpathuli/nuomone-orientacija-zmogaus-nekeicia.d?id=61443793> >

Niedvaraitė, Margarita *Neabejingos pilietės laiškas ponui Petriui Gražuliui* Delfi Pilietis, 24-05-2013

[online article] <[http://pilietis.delfi.lt/voxpathuli/neabejingos-pilietes-laiskas-ponui-petriui-grazuliui.d?id=61443789&fb\\_action\\_ids=10152886430560235&fb\\_action\\_types=og.likes&fb\\_source=ot](http://pilietis.delfi.lt/voxpathuli/neabejingos-pilietes-laiskas-ponui-petriui-grazuliui.d?id=61443789&fb_action_ids=10152886430560235&fb_action_types=og.likes&fb_source=ot)

When the TV shows a movie, especially TV3, they use the word “fag” instead of “gay”. In words of Mindaugas: “I do not know why, but you can clearly hear the person saying ‘I am gay’ and they translate it into ‘I am fag’”<sup>94</sup>. There are different translations of this word into Lithuanian language. If you would translate “fag” directly, that would be ‘iškrypėlis’. Also other definitions are ‘žydras’ (it is old soviet slang used in USSR) and ‘pedikas’ (from russian ‘pedik’ which is short form for ‘pederast’). They never say gay or homosexual, they use other words with derogatory connotations.

This year, there have been two national debates about equal LGBTI rights, which are *Tautos Aikste*<sup>95</sup> (2013-02-07) and *Valanda su Ruta*<sup>96</sup> (2013-02-28). In both programs people were asked to call or send an SMS in order to vote Yes or No to a question. In *Tautos Aikste*, to the question ‘Ar homoseksualams reikia suteikti tokias pat teises?’ (Whether homosexuals should be given the same rights?), the answer was No (1879) in front of Yes (310). In *Valanda su Ruta*, to the question “Ar leisti homoseksualams tuoktis ir isivaikinti?” (Are to allow homosexuals to marry and adopt children?), the answer was NO (6169) in front of Yes (345). The numbers are given according to the persons voting. There has been also a program about transgender issues in Lithuania: *Diagnoze*<sup>97</sup> (2013-04-10).

According to Gabrielė Labanauskaitė, at TV “from LGBTI, there are just few people who are representing all this; (...) we see always the same faces. They (LGBTI defenders) are not so well prepared to speak on TV as politicians are. In my personal opinion, the rhetoric they use is too emotional or intellectual sometimes. Some people wouldn’t understand them. It is not easy, but I think LGBTI people should have in mind that they need to invite more community, like simple people to go and talk on TV. Of course it is exciting, people get nervous and they do not say everything what they want to say properly, but I think this would be useful. Also people who have good rhetoric and who could convince other people”<sup>98</sup>.

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<sup>93</sup> A2.I5, line 805

<sup>94</sup> A2.I5, lines 813-817

<sup>95</sup> Entire TV program [video online]

[http://www.lrt.lt/mediateka/laidos/T/1609/tautos\\_aikste\\_nacionaliniai\\_debatai](http://www.lrt.lt/mediateka/laidos/T/1609/tautos_aikste_nacionaliniai_debatai)

<sup>96</sup> Entire TV program [video online] [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buN\\_4JqHpHE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buN_4JqHpHE) >

<sup>97</sup> Entire TV program [video online] <http://lnk.lt/video-perziura/5113/diagnoze-valdzia-2013-04-10>

<sup>98</sup> A2.I2, lines 551-359

With all this media analysis and the most recent news, I can say that the LGBTI issues are more criticized than supported. Even though, this topic is on the mouths of the Lithuanian society nowadays; it is not a taboo at all. But still there are a lot of stereotypical representations shown on there. The media is not equal towards all the citizens in Lithuania.

## 2nd Chapter) LGBTI-PEOPLE IN LITHUANIA: CREATING CONNECTIONS THROUGH THE SOCIAL MEDIA

“The salient characteristic of Internet community is the diminution in prevailing hierarchies of race, class, age, status and especially gender” (Mark Poster 1997: 224)

### Context-background

Internet and other information and communication devices may play an important role in strengthening and furthering the enjoyment of minority rights. The setting up of web sites, social media and virtual conferences enables members of minority groups spread through a country or a region, or across borders, to stay in contact and thereby actively maintain and develop their specific identity and culture. Moreover, it creates a basis for a new perspective on structuring a pluralistic society that acknowledges the right of minorities to live in accordance with their own norms and traditions within their ethnic or religious group or community.<sup>99</sup>

Nowadays there are treaties that cover the rights of the people in this new panorama. For example, the article 19.2 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights says that: “Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice”.<sup>100</sup> Lithuania signed the ICCPR the 20<sup>th</sup> of November, 1991.

The enjoyment of minority rights, and to move the pluralistic society towards diversity, tolerance and mutual respect, has a positive side effect on monitoring mechanisms. The gathering of information from state organs regarding compliance with international and regional standards is easier since documents, assessments, judicial reviews, and case law in their original form typically are available on the Web sites of state organs. Also it is possible to have national human rights institutions, NGOs, minority groups themselves.<sup>101</sup>

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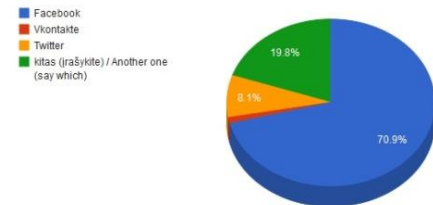
<sup>99</sup> Kofod Olsen, Brigitte. Ensuring Minority Rights in a pluralistic and ‘liquid’ information society; K.Nayar, Pramod (Ed.) *The New Media and cybercultures. Anthology*. Seventh Printing. Singapore: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, (pp. 357-366)

<sup>100</sup>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [online document in .pdf]  
< <http://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%20999/volume-999-I-14668-English.pdf> >

<sup>101</sup> From the same book as reference 97

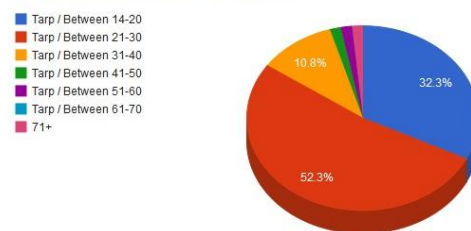
In this chapter I will contextualize the concepts of community or public sphere in the new media and how this concerns the LGBTI people in Lithuania. I will study which kind of connections the LGBTI people in Lithuania establish with the rest of the society and which are the differences or similarities between their online and face-to-face communication. This chapter is structured around the answers of the interviewees and the results of the questionnaire. I will also underline some *Facebook* groups and pages dedicated to the LGBTI issues in this country. I have chosen *Facebook* because it is the online platform which is more used by the LGBTI people in Lithuania, 70, 9% according to their answers. The second option after it is the news portal and contacts *Gayline.lt*. This page is a platform where you can meet new LGBTI friends, and at the same time, it is an on-line magazine with LGBTI news.

Kuriuo socialiniu tinklu dažniausiai naudojate? / Which Social Network do you use more to communicate with the other LGBT people in Lithuania?



To begin with, it is necessary to contextualize who have answered this questionnaire. Consequently we will know who use more the social media. I found that the 52, 3% of the LGBTI people in Lithuania who use social media are between 21 and 30 years old and the 32, 3% are between 14 and 20 years old<sup>102</sup>. Even though, the whole society is already involved in the social media world: in the survey, the 1, 5% of the contestants are more than 71 years old. It means that we will not come back to only traditional communication as we conceived before.

Kokio jūs amžiaus? / How old are you?



All the interviewees agree that the new social media tools help the LGBTI people to reach more people like them in their environment more easily, or even from different parts of the world. On the social media you feel identified with other people by sharing experiences and you fortify the sense of community. At the same time, it is a helpful tool in order to promote events that are going to happen in the public sphere, in the face-to-face communication.

<sup>102</sup> The survey was launched online through the platform <<http://pollmill.com/>>; It was shared through *Facebook*. This is the way to assure the respondents are using social media.

## Creating identity online

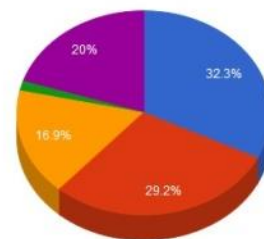
There is the theory that on the online communication, the real presence does not matter; the discourse builds the identity of the person. In the social media, identity is understood as a fluid process in which ‘self’ and environment are constantly interacting. According to the theorist Rosanne Stone “the king guaranteed his signature by a seal carried on his finger; the signature is a token of physical presence. Increasingly however, using McLuhanite argument based in the idea of technology as human extension, we have used technology to communicate our selves over distance”<sup>103</sup>.

On the Internet you can be anonymous, or create your identity according to your ideals, to a pattern; you can play with your identity. According to Danet (1998), “man are curious about what it is like to be a woman or seek the attention that female presenting individuals typically receive. Woman want to avoid being harassed sexually or feel free to be more assertive. As a result, some people are leading double or multiple lives online, even with different gender identities. Others are trying out what it might mean to be gender-free, neither male nor female...”<sup>104</sup>. The Internet plays a role in debunking stereotypes where the roles of gender can be interchanged.

About the LGBTI people in Lithuania, the 32, 3% of them say that they use their real name in *Facebook* when publishing LGBTI matters. The following are the ones who share their information but just with some people (29, 2%); the 16, 9% do it on private groups or messages. The 20% say that they do not publish anything in their profile. Their general attitude is to share the information with their close friends.

Ar viešinate savo Facebook profilyje LGBT informaciją, nuotraukas ir kt.? / Do you publish in your Facebook profile any LGBT information, photos, etc.?

- Taip, naudoju savo tikrą vardą ir man nesvarbu / Yes, I use my real name and I don't mind
- Taip, bet tik su tais, kuriems leidžiua matyti mano informaciją / Yes, but I don't allow some people to see th...
- Taip, bet tik uždarose grupėse ir žinutėse / Yes, but just in private groups or private ma...
- Taip, bet tik anoniminiame profilyje / Yes, but I use a fake profile
- Ne / No



<sup>103</sup> Lister, Martin; Dovey, Jon; Giddings, Seth; Grant, Iain; Kelly, Kieran *New Media. A critical Introduction*. Second Edition. Abingdon (UK): Routledge, 2009, (pp.181 - 209 to 220)

<sup>104</sup> M.Lawsong, Helen; Leck, kira. Dynamics of Internet Dating; K.Nayar, Pramod (Ed.) *The New Media and cybercultures. Anthology*. Seventh Printing. Singapore: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, (pp. 482-498)



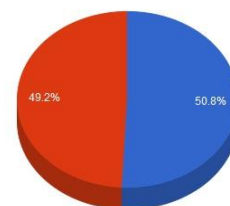
## Creating community online

On the contrary to the theory before, this theory holds that when a community is formed online, people show their gender and ethnicity instead of being anonymous or create a fake profile. They make explicit or implicit references to their gender and ethnicity in their homepages. The community is formed when people share the same interests<sup>105</sup>.

The fact below is very significant. I found that the LGBTI people in Lithuania communicate more or less in the same measure in face-to-face as well as online: there is a narrow difference of 1, 6 % in favor of the online communication. It means that nowadays the social media for the LGBTI Lithuanian people is approximately the half part of their communication with the other LGBTI people. We need to understand the social media as a very important complementary tool to the face-to-face communication.

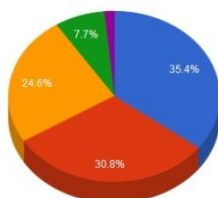
Kaip dažniausiai bendraujate kitais LGBT žmonėmis? / How do you communicate more with the other LGBT people in Lithuania?

■ Socialiniuose tinkluose / Through the Social Media  
■ Gyvai, susitikę / Face to face (physically)



Ar dažnai bendraujate su kitais LGBT žmonėmis socialiniuose tinkluose? / How often do you communicate with other LGBT people in Lithuania through the Social Media?

■ kasdien / Daily  
■ Dažnai / Usually  
■ Kartais / Sometimes  
■ Beveik niekada / Hardly Ever  
■ Niekada / Never



This percentages show that the 35, 4% of the LGBTI people in Lithuania communicate daily with other LGBTI people. The 30, 8% communicate usually, and the 24, 5% do it sometimes. Just the 7, 7% do it hardly ever. It gives the idea that they have a big activity online when connecting with LGBTI friends.

Kur susipažįstate su naujais LGBT draugais? / When you meet a new LGBT friend, where do you find her/him?

	Visada / Always	Dažnai / Usually	Kartais / Sometimes	Beveik niekada / Hardly Ever	Niekada / Never
Darbe- universitete- mokykloje / At the workplace- university- school	1 (1.7%)	8 (13.3%)	22 (36.7%)	16 (26.7%)	13 (21.7%)
Socialiniuose Tinkluose / Through the Social Media	19 (29.7%)	25 (39.1%)	14 (21.9%)	3 (4.7%)	3 (4.7%)
Vakareliuose / At parties	2 (3.3%)	18 (30.0%)	25 (41.7%)	6 (10.0%)	9 (15.0%)
Per draugus / Friend of friends	6 (9.2%)	30 (46.2%)	18 (27.7%)	8 (12.3%)	3 (4.6%)

At work-university-school, they are less communicative [(36, 7%) sometimes, hardly ever (26, 7%), never (21, 7%)].

If I compare the results of the table on the right by grade, I find that the LGBTI people meet a new LGBTI friend mostly through the social media [always (29, 7%), usually (39, 1%), sometimes (21, 9%)], followed by friend of friends [usually (46, 2%), sometimes (27, 7%)]. Then they meet each other at parties [usually (30, 0%), sometimes (41, 7%)].

<sup>105</sup> Lister, Martin; Dovey, Jon; Giddings, Seth; Grant, Iain; Kelly, Kieran *New Media. A critical Introduction*. Second Edition. Abingdon (UK): Routledge, 2009, (pp.181 - 209 to 220)

These results give us the answer that the first option LGBTI people in Lithuania chose when establishing a new relation is the social media.

The 95, 5 % of the people say that the social media is helping them to maintain more active communication and solid connections with the other LGBTI people in Lithuania.

In *Facebook* there can be found two groups online, among others, where from the feeling of community increases:

– *Queer Youth LT*<sup>106</sup>

This is a *Facebook* private group formed by more than 250 members. In this group people share LGBTI news, their opinion, songs they like more, etc. This is an opportunity to most of the LGBTI in Lithuania to express shameless themselves. But on the other hand, it is a private group in which you need to be invited. It is not visible for everybody.

– *Elitiniai vaivorykštės vaikai!*<sup>107</sup> (*Elite Rainbow Kids!*)

Group formed by 120 people. In that group the people speak about everything, not just concerned to LGBTI issues, if culture, music, life, etc. This group concerns people from more age variety, not just young people.

### **Relationship between online and offline experiences**

The civerlives are thoroughly enmeshed in their real lives and vice versa: online experiences are determined by social reality, by material resources, by gender, sexuality and race. In short: by material, economic and political structures. The problematic dichotomy only arises when identity and social reality are assumed to be entirely material as opposed to discursive, and when ‘cyberspace’ is assumed to be entirely discursive rather than material.<sup>108</sup>

Analyzing the LGBTI issues in Lithuania, there are a lot of facts happening offline that have their representation online. For example the LGBTI associations are established offline, but they have representations online and share news and promote events happening offline. In fact, the LGL<sup>109</sup> (Lithuanian Gay League) use exclusively their *Facebook* page in order to

<sup>106</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/groups/211969605578640/?fref=ts> >

<sup>107</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/groups/125615937610324/> >

<sup>108</sup> Lister, Martin; Dovey, Jon; Giddings, Seth; Grant, Iain; Kelly, Kieran *New Media. A critical Introduction*. Second Edition. Abingdon (UK): Routledge, 2009, (pp.181 - 209 to 220)

<sup>109</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/lgl.lt?fref=ts> >

communicate their actions to the people. The activities that are developed by the TJA<sup>110</sup> (Tolerant Youth Association), are also published in their official *Facebook* page.

The interviewee Gabrielė gave the idea that the social media is a way to associate the LGBTI people and the rest of the society. She is playing in a lesbian basketball team which have its online group in *Facebook*; the people who is invited, it does not matter if they are lesbian or heterosexual, all of them are interested. This is the way “to have an object which is not about the gender at all, it is about anything else. (...) Here the main goal is to play sports.”<sup>111</sup>

The interviewee Augustas says that the communication on the social media “(...) for our film festival, we will be using social media. It is the easier way to reach the people and for them to reach this event; you do not have to look for it, it just pops up somewhere. Some people press ‘I like it’, then others find it out and like it also, and the chain continues. (...)”<sup>112</sup>

### **Public sphere**

For Mark Poster (1997), the postmodern public sphere is based on the idea that it is a mediated and mediating space, not a technology. The space of communication flows; is a space in which our subjective cannot remain fixed but both engaged and engaged by the network. The Internet as postmodern communication space, has almost become a “given” of cyberculture studies. One of the ways in which the Internet has become so central to contemporary media is through the way in which its symbiotic relationship with media culture has offered audiences participatory opportunities<sup>113</sup>.

For example, there is a page about the initiative I named in the chapter one about opened bar frontiers for every identity and orientation: *LGBTI Friendly Vilnius*<sup>114</sup>. This is a thing which is happening offline but has its representation online.

The *Baltic Pride 2013* is another event that will take place on the public sphere. That is why on Facebook there are the Baltic Pride<sup>115</sup> page, as well as the Support Baltic Pride 2013<sup>116</sup> page, that is a similar page to the first one, but focused more on an international support. There

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<sup>110</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/tolerantiskas.draugas?fref=ts> >

<sup>111</sup> A2.I2, lines 373-382

<sup>112</sup> A2.I4, lines 681-691

<sup>113</sup> Lister, Martin; Dovey, Jon; Giddings, Seth; Grant, Iain; Kelly, Kieran *New Media. A critical Introduction*. Second Edition. Abingdon (UK): Routledge, 2009, (pp.181 - 209 to 220)

<sup>114</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/lgbtfriendlyvilnius?fref=ts> >

<sup>115</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/BalticPride?fref=ts> >

<sup>116</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/SupportBalticPride2013?fref=ts> >

can be find also pages of the LGBTI night clubs SOHO club<sup>117</sup> and Men's Factory<sup>118</sup>, where they promote their events and parties.

### Content shared online by the LGBTI people in Lithuania

The interviewee Elena says that “(...) in my times I did not have Internet, nobody was talking about it and I had troubles in accepting myself. But now, people can find information and say: “Oh, there are more LGBTI people in this world and they are living normal lives and they are happy, have family”. (...) “When there is Internet, there are more articles and more visibility of everything. It is not that you have to go to the library and find one book between ten million, where you can find only one sentence about homosexuality. You open “Google” and you can find everything. Also negative information, but you can choose”<sup>119</sup>

The 89, 2 % of the people said yes, when they were asked if they agree with the idea that you can find more LGBT information online than on the traditional media.

The 80, 8% said yes, when they were asked if they search or read other LGBTI information from other countries. The online information become this way an opened door for the LGBTI people in Lithuania to understand the situation in other countries, as well as getting ideas for implementing them here in Lithuania.

	kasdien / Daily	Dažnai / Usually	Kartais / Sometimes	Beveik niekada / Hardly Ever	Niekada / Never
Kad išsklaidyčiau kitų žmonių nuomonę apie LGBT / In order to debunk the beliefs some people have about the LGBT matters	1 (1.6%)	9 (14.3%)	23 (36.5%)	16 (25.4%)	14 (22.2%)
Sukelti diskusijas apie LGBT reikalus Lietuvoje / In order to generate debate around the LGBT issues in Lithuania	3 (4.8%)	6 (9.5%)	20 (31.7%)	22 (34.9%)	12 (19.0%)
Kad išreikščiau savo nuomonę dėl savo teisių Lietuvoje / In order to claim for my rights in Lithuania	4 (6.5%)	14 (22.6%)	21 (33.9%)	9 (14.5%)	14 (22.6%)
Noriu susipažinti su kitais LGBT žmonėmis, nes kitu būdu negaliu / Because I want to meet new LGBT people than otherwise I couldn't	5 (7.8%)	17 (26.6%)	18 (28.1%)	15 (23.4%)	9 (14.1%)

The table on the left gives us information of the kind of use the LGBTI people have about the social media. In general, they use it sometimes in order to debunk beliefs (36, 5%), to generate debate (31, 7%) or claim for their rights (33, 9%). The percentage increase a lot when they are asked about meeting other LGBTI people: they say usually (26, 6%) and sometimes (28, 1%). From another point, the negative percentages are also very remarkable: in order to debunk beliefs (25, 4% hardly ever and 22, 2% never), in order to generate debate (34, 9% hardly ever and 19, 0% never). The conclusion is that

<sup>117</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/sohoclub.lt?fref=ts>>

<sup>118</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/clubmensfactory?fref=ts>>

<sup>119</sup> A2.I6, lines 1095-1100

the LGBTI people in Lithuania use the social media sometimes in claiming for equality in Lithuania, but there is a strong part that does not do it. They prefer using social media for meeting new LGBTI friends.

I asked them if they use the social media for something else. In general they have answered that they use it for maintaining communication with their LGBTI friends, and for reading or sharing news or being attentive at LGBTI events in Lithuania. I have selected below some interesting answers:

- For public coming out.
- Raising awareness (posting articles, etc.), sharing events (like LGBTI film screenings).
- Activism, gathering for events, co-organizing.

Kuo dalijatės? / What kind of things do you share?

	kasdien / Daily	Dažnai / Usually	Kartais / Sometimes	Beveik niekada / Hardly Ever	Niekada / Never
LGBT informacija / LGBT news-information	2 (3.2%)	22 (34.9%)	21 (33.3%)	6 (9.5%)	12 (19.0%)
Viešinu savo asmeninius dalykus apie LGBT / I publish my own LGBT life	2 (3.3%)	5 (8.2%)	14 (23.0%)	19 (31.1%)	21 (34.4%)
LGBT nuotraukomis / LGBT photos	0 (0.0%)	11 (17.5%)	24 (38.1%)	13 (20.6%)	15 (23.8%)
LGBT video-filmas / LGBT videos-films	0 (0.0%)	8 (12.5%)	23 (35.9%)	16 (25.0%)	17 (26.6%)

When they are asked for the kind of things they share, the majority answer news-information (34, 9% usually and 33, 3% sometimes). Those dates agree to the previous question. They share photos or videos and their own lives sometimes: 38, 1%, 35, 9% and 23, 0% respectively. But as in the previous table, there is a strong part which is against sharing those things: photos (31, 1 % hardly ever and 34, 4% never), videos-films (25, 0 % hardly ever and 26, 6 % never), their lives (31, 1% hardly ever and 34, 4% never). Even is understandable that the people do not want to share their personal lives, the tendency we can appreciate in this table is that the LGBTI people in Lithuania are unwilling to share LGBTI visual things. They prefer to share news.

Then, I asked them if they share more things different from photos, videos or news. The majority of them answered that they use *Facebook* for sharing events. In conclusion, the planning and sharing events or news is the main activity the LGBTI people develop in Lithuania. This question confirms the result of the two other questions before.

In order of preference, and according to the answers of the respondents in the questionnaire, the LGBTI people in Lithuania use the social media for:

- Tool for meeting new LGBTI people and communicate with them, feeding up the friendship.
- Tool for promoting offline activities and events.

- Tool for sharing LGBTI news and information.
- Tool for LGBTI activism and protest.

The problem with all this arises when identity and social reality are assumed to be entirely material as opposed to discursive, and when “cyberspace” is assumed to be entirely discursive rather than material.

The social media, as related in some ways to the traditional media, also provides entertainment. In this case related to the Lithuanian LGBTI online community, they have a *Facebook* page which is Kinas be popcorn<sup>120</sup>. This page provides a wide variety about LGBTI themed movies with subtitles into Lithuanian. They do not have opportunities to watch LGBTI themed movies in cinema theatres and nobody releases DVD. The only way for them to watch those movies is through the Internet. But not everyone knows perfect English. That is the reason why the subtitles are very helpful for them. This initiative is developed by Vaidas, a common person in Lithuania that make the job of the translation, becoming an activist this way.

### **Social media as a way of freedom and liberation**

“Democracy involves democratic participation and debate as well as voting. In the Big Media Age, most people were kept out of democratic discussion and were rendered by broadcasts technologies passive consumers of infotainment. Access to media was controlled by big corporations and limited range of voices and views were allowed to circulate. In the Internet Age, everyone with access to a computer, modem, and Internet service can participate in discussion and debate, empowering large numbers of individuals and groups kept out of the democratic dialogue during the Big Media Age”<sup>121</sup>. (Kellner 2001:6)

Thee 89, 2 % of the people said yes when they were asked if they feel more free when expressing themselves through the social media rather than at other public spheres or the traditional media.

The 90, 8% of the respondents said that the social media is helping LGBTI people to be more visible in Lithuania.

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<sup>120</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/Kinas.be.popcorn?fref=ts>>

<sup>121</sup> Kofod Olsen, Brigitte. Ensuring Minority Rights in a pluralistic and ‘liquid’ information society; K.Nayar, Pramod (Ed.) *The New Media and cybercultures. Anthology*. Seventh Printing. Singapore: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010, (pp. 357-366)

When the LGBTI were asked if the social media can help in challenging LGBTI phobia in Lithuania, they show more prudent, even the majority says yes (65, 2 %).

According to Augustas, the communication on the social media “(...) does not have to be serious, and when being activist it is very important not to be serious.”<sup>122</sup> (...) Milda says that “it is a way to show your opinion without pressure”<sup>123</sup> This is connected with the ideas of Romas, who says that “(...) what you can find on social media is acceptance and people from different cities very quickly. (...) It helps you to feel normal and to feel supported. (...) About me, my profile in *Facebook* is public, so everybody who wants can add me and read or comment. (...) It is good because you can find a mix, like a group for young people, or another for old people who share their experiences about the Soviet Union”.<sup>124</sup>

*Zmones, kuriu nebuvo*<sup>125</sup> (People who were not) is a *Facebook* page about the Soviet Union that collects gay stories that happened in Lithuania before the independence, in the Soviet Union period. There is reminiscence of people, who have lived in that period. There are interviews, but it is difficult to persuade them to open a conversation about their personal life. Even though, those people remain anonymous. Besides interviews with people there are old pictures, articles from newspapers about gays in 90s or some clips from movies about very close relationships between same-sex people. Here are some fragments from an interview:

Saulius, 51 years old: “From the 7th year at School, kids had permission in school dances. I did not understand why everyone had that desire. Maybe I would go there... if I could dance with my school mate. I did not understand that this was my homosexuality. I was waiting with fear the day when I had to marry a woman. I thought that I would be very happy if I could be living all my life with my school bench mate”. “Once, when I was middle age, in summer in a beach I saw couple of very handsome guys. They were playing like kittens, running into the water, building the word “gay” from pineal. I understood that they were ‘those’. They were not perverts, just common guys, like me, like I desired to be in younger age. I cried for three days”<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> A2, I4, lines 686-687

<sup>123</sup> A2.I1, lines 167-179

<sup>124</sup> A2.I3, lines 507-515

<sup>125</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/zmoneskuriunebuvo>>

<sup>126</sup> A2.I11, lines 1390-1497

A very interesting thing I found is that online there are discussions and discourses generated about topics that are unthinkable to take place offline in the public sphere or on the traditional media. Those topics are:

Diversity of families, including same-sex families. There is a *Facebook* page called *Ivairi šeima*<sup>127</sup> (Family diversity) about this issue. There is also a webpage called "Ivairoves namai"<sup>128</sup> (Homes for Diversity). There was an event shared in *Facebook*<sup>129</sup> addressed to non-traditional families in Lithuania about a meeting in Vingio Park the Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2013 in order to celebrate the International Family Equality Day. That day, families attended the meeting.

There are pages that give ironical treat to LGBTI issues in Lithuania related to politicians. For example there is the pages *Ta diena, kai Petras Gražulis pagaliau viešai ištars: Taip, aš gėjus*<sup>130</sup> (That day when Petras Gražulis will say: Yes, I am gay). Petras Gražulis is one of the most homophobic members of the parliament, who generated a big scandal in the march of the *Baltic Pride* in 2010. He started to scream against LGBTI people in the parade. He is always asking for amendments to the constitution in order to limit the LGBTI rights. That *Facebook* page is about him. Many people say that he is very homophobic because he is gay himself; his surname means "beautiful". There is another *Facebook* page called *TAIP homoseksualų eitynėms Lietuvos miestų gatvėse*<sup>131</sup> that claims the Equality March in the *Baltic Pride* 2013 to be on the main streets of the city center of Vilnius, and not outside the city.

Another *Facebook* page is *Duoki ranką man*<sup>132</sup> (Give me your hand). I decided to underline this page because is an initiative of visibility of the LGBTI people in Lithuania by showing that they do exist and that they are loving. In this page, the LGBTI couples place pictures with holding hands; this is a great idea in my opinion considering that many couples are still afraid to show their face in Lithuania.



<sup>127</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/IvairiSeima>>

<sup>128</sup> <<http://ivairovesnamai.lt/>>

<sup>129</sup> *Facebook* event meeting for family diversities  
<<https://www.facebook.com/events/451213211626389/>>

<sup>130</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/grazulio.prisipazinimo.diena>>

<sup>131</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/pages/TAIP-homoseksual%C5%B3-eityn%C4%97ms-Lietuvos-miest%C5%B3-gatv%C4%97se/403881989697653?fref=ts>>

<sup>132</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/Duoki.ranka.man>>



### 3rd Chapter) ARTISTIC PRACTICES AND EVENTS IN ORDER TO CHALLENGE THE LGBTI PHOBIA IN LITHUANIA

In the first chapter I have analyzed the historical reasons why the LGBTI people are represented in one way by the majority of the Lithuanian society. In this chapter I am going to underline the integrative practices which deal with all those stereotypical representations as a way to build a pluralistic and tolerant society. This term can be defined as identity politics used for example by the theorist Steven Seidman<sup>133</sup>, in the sense of a gender revolution; the struggle against a sex-role system that views masculinity and femininity as mutually exclusive categories of gender identity. Those practices are searching for arousing the curiosity of the society through provoking them to wonder about their truth, and show them that there are other realities further than the traditionally established ones.

The recent years in Lithuania, I have appreciated a tendency in generating LGBTI artistic representations and public events. Here are the most interesting examples I found in order to normalize those practices, challenging this way the LGBTI phobia in Lithuania:

- ***Porno Melodrama*, 2012. Romas Zabarauskas**

This is the first LGBTI thematic film made in Lithuania<sup>134</sup>. The director is Romas Zabarauskas. This film has different readings. For what concerns this project, one of the main purposes of the film is to normalize the LGBTI image in Lithuania, to give out stories that are already happening even if the society does not realize it. He does it through a triangular love story between a heterosexual girl that was together in the past with a boy who now has a male couple. The film is about the ‘dangers of love’. He wants to show that love is developed between people, not between genders or sexual orientations. As Milda said in her interview, “one of the worst things about our society is that everybody is thinking about sexual relations. They are not thinking about physiology or about love, for example”<sup>135</sup>. This way, Romas represents the LGBTI people from points of view that the majority of the Lithuanian society has not imagined yet. The fact that the story is situated in Lithuania, also induce the Lithuanian people to feel identified through the images: specific landscapes, buildings, etc. This identification is also given because the language of the film is the Lithuanian.

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<sup>133</sup> Seidman, Steven Identity and Politics in a ‘Postmodern’ Gay Culture: Some historical and Conceptual notes; Warner, Michael (Ed.) *Fear of a Queer Planet. Queer politics and social theory*, USA: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

<sup>134</sup> Zabarauskas, Romas. *Porno Melodrama*, 2012 [short film online] [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9-T4DuDs8&has\\_verified=1](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f9-T4DuDs8&has_verified=1)

<sup>135</sup> A2.II, lines 42-44

The film is at the same time representing the ‘reality’ of the Lithuanian society nowadays as a way to criticize it. Romas reflects the pressure of the Church by a priest as a very influential figure of repression. The priest says to one of the main characters of the film in the funeral of his brother that it was a punishment to him because he does not



Image 1

believe in God. In the film is also reflected the cold relation that some LGBTI youth have with their families; they prefer to hide their identity or sexual orientation for fear of reprisals. In words of the director, the film “is a representation of today's homophobic society, though of course the ending goes over the top of that. It is also highly symbolic film, not that simplistic, realist representation”.

This film was openly presented in the Vilnius Spring Film Festival 2013, at the same time as his director came out, and there were any problems, despite of the sudden surprise. The film was made as a reaction of the state’s homophobia. This is how the director of the film explains it: “On that year (2012) was a protection on minors’ law that our parliament tried to correct. The first correction was really explicitly homophobic. It said that no promotion of homosexual, bisexual and polygamous relationships should be allowed for minors. That cost a huge reaction, both in Lithuania and also the European Parliament made a resolution against it, and our president, actually both of our presidents because they changed by that time, they vetted it. After a huge international pressure, the Lithuanian Parliament made another correction and now it is more ambiguous, but it still says that no different families from those that are described in our Civil Code should be allowed. In our Civil Code for now we have no gay partnership allowed. (...) When I presented the film, I said: Ok this is an openly gay film, so if this law works then you should ban this film”. They did not banned it and the organizers of the festival decided to rate the film from 16 years old. It was kind of accessible for minors. It was my provocation and trial; I used the film to criticize this law and homophobia in general.”<sup>136</sup>

Some constructive critics as Augustas Čičelis, say that this film “as a representation of LGBTI people and the situation, it is rather banal, a bit dramatized. But in the way it is good that

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<sup>136</sup> A2.I3, lines 400-413

something is happening; that it is something produced here. There is a serious lack of LGBTI representations and movies in post-Soviet countries.”

- **Gabrielė Labanauskaitė**
  - **Music group *AVaspo***

The music is a symbol of freedom and liberation. The Baltic States know this very well when they carried out the spontaneous historical movement known as the *Singing Revolution*, in order to free themselves from decades of Soviet occupation<sup>137</sup>.

The group *AVaspo* means “Audio-Visual Asp of Poetry” and is very characteristic because they combine different styles of music and instruments, poetical lyrics, and audiovisual spectacle. The group is an example of social integration of the LGBTI minority through their songs in Lithuanian language. The power of the musical language and poetry is used as a tool of liberation and integration. The LGBTI topic is introduced as a natural thing in our lives that is already here and there is no need to hide it.

In words of Gabrielė, the lyric writer and singer of *AVaspo*, the group is “mirroring, I would not say criticizing, but more mirroring the contemporary society, especially female as a desire object representation. For example, there is one song which is called ‘The death of the vocalist’, where I am singing with a man’s voice; altered a lot. I was with covered head, so nobody could see my face. It is dealing with the issues that most of the audience wants the singers to be just beautiful bodies or appearance with a nice voice. But first of all, this is a kind of social object; that is why the song is called ‘The death of the vocalist’, because it is not the vocalist I am or the one I believe to be. We do this kind of things from a feminist point of view, as well as about tolerant issues. For example, in the song *I niekur*<sup>138</sup> (*Into Nowhere*), there are metaphors and words like ‘vaikinas bučiuoja vaikiną’ (a boy is kissing a boy). It is very interesting to see how the audience is reacting, even though our audience is very intellectual and most of them are somehow artistically educated or interested in arts. But still they react in a very diverse way, and sometimes when somebody from the audience hears ‘a boy is kissing a boy’, they are not sure if they have heard correctly. Another song which is called *Aš jus visus*<sup>139</sup> (*I love you all*) has a refrain that says ‘I have a mood which is flowing in the French way, French soul,

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<sup>137</sup> Trailer of the documentary film *The Singing Revolution* with original images:  
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DA9PmZo-2jo>>

<sup>138</sup> Song *Into Nowhere* [online song] <<http://avaspo.bandcamp.com/track/niekur-into-nowhere>>

<sup>139</sup> Song *I love you all* [Video clip online] <<http://avaspo.bandcamp.com/track/a-jus-visus-i-love-you-all>>

and it does not matter if you are boy or a girl, come closer, come closer my beloved. I love you all, I love you all, I love you all”<sup>140</sup>.

From her voice accompanied by music, she is building a new discourse about the LGBTI people in Lithuania. At the same time she uses the Lithuanian language which symbols are shared in its corresponding society. Even the audience of this group is more intellectual, those initiatives are very important in including the LGBTI people in the society.

○ **Theatrical play *Red Laces (Raudoni Batraiščiai)***

This theatrical play was the winner of the Lithuanian National Drama Contest in 2012. Juozas and Jonas are brothers: the first one is gay and the other is *skinhead*. This theatrical play is presented as a deep psychological problem between two brothers, where envy, hate and love is conflicting with each other from childhood. Political notes, poetical and ironic chorus songs, philosophical attitude towards relationship and personality makes *Red laces* a humanity research, rising and leaving opened many gender, stereotypes, nationality and other questions, focused in the Lithuanian society.

For what concerns this project, *Red laces* shows the power of one of the most dangerous groups towards the LGBTI people in Lithuania: it has the meaning of cruel symbol of *skinhead* subculture in the country. Even they are a minority group, they maintain close similarities with the majority when representing the LGBTI people.



Image 2

The title is very significant; the red laces are a symbol of indivisible unity, a linkage that maintain the skinheads together and make them feel that belong to a group. You get the red laces only after spilling the blood of some human - homosexual, foreigner or any other minority in the country. It means that the skinheads give extremely importance to the relation among them; they are able to do whatever possible in order to enter the group.

If I analyze more carefully the screenplay, there are shown critical and ironical quotations, sometimes based in real facts, towards the beliefs the majority and groups as the *skinheads* or the ultranationalists have in Lithuania. The theatrical representation is playing all

<sup>140</sup> A2.I2, lines 183-198

the time from real conflicts in the Lithuanian society to the fictional story in a very artistically way. At the same time, this theatrical play.

At the beginning of the theatrical play there is a simulation of a TV talk show where a *skinhead* is interviewed. There is reflected very well the historical discourse that the groups of pressure use in general in order to debunk the other minorities in Lithuania and to implement their ideals:

- (...)
- HOST. According to preliminary data, during the first ever march for homosexual rights in Lithuania, at least 25 people were victims of nationalist attacks.
- ADAS. And why not 50? You realize that throughout history our nation was often attacked by foreigners, by all sorts of degenerates. Can we condemn this view? I repeat: we must listen to the voice of the nation.
- HOST. But the government imparts in its rhetoric a certain nationalistic bent, so that they could collect more votes.
- ADAS. Oh, and this is where the demagoguery begins.
- HOST. This is how people are manipulated, without regard to either homosexual or heterosexual human rights.
- ADAS. So, we're all being manipulated. For ages, they coveted our land and our language. All who were able – Jews, Russians, Poles. So we, we are the victims, not them. Understand?
- (...)

There is for example a song about the non-sense and empty-content arguments the groups of pressure use in order to discriminate other minorities, based on stereotypes:

<i>Kids, pick up a stick and kill that little Jew</i>	<i>He lives in my home.</i>
<i>But what did he do?</i>	<i>But what did he do?</i>
<i>He climbed up a ladder.</i>	<i>Nothing yet, but I don't want to be alone. (...)</i>
<i>But what did he do?</i>	<i>Kids, pick up a stick and kill that little gypsy.</i>
<i>And we all scattered. (...)</i>	<i>But what did he do?</i>
<i>Kids, pick up a stick and kill that little faggot.</i>	<i>He lives in a slum.</i>
<i>But what did he do?</i>	<i>But what did he do?</i>
	<i>Goes on a drug run.</i>
	<i>Do you have proof?</i>
	<i>That's what all the papers say (...)</i>

At the same time, this theatrical play is showing the contemporary situation of a common homosexual teenager. Juozas speaks usually with his ‘friend’ Kajus through the *Skype*, using this technology as a powerful tool of communication. His friend is Lithuanian but lives in San Francisco; he empowers Jonas to leave the country and go with him. Here is again shown the power of the new media and technologies in order to escape from the existing discrimination in some countries as Lithuania.

This theatrical play is helpful for the Lithuanian society in general to understand through real examples happened in their country, how dangerous the *skinhead* minority can be. The presentation of the topic in a distended way (theater, music) drives the audience deeper into it. Maybe in the theatrical play the representation of the *skinheads* is too extreme, but at the same time is a way to arouse the debate and draw new representations in the society.

- ***Baltic Pride 2013***

The first *Baltic Pride* and the March for the Equality was celebrated in Lithuania in 2010. “It revealed the absurdity of the claim that LGBT rights are somehow being ‘imposed’ from the outside, that gays and lesbians are not truly an integral part of the country<sup>141</sup>.” It was something new and unexpected for the society of this country; something totally new for Lithuania. It induced very hard opposition as well as clear support. Nevertheless, it was something which aroused the debate; that showed very clearly that LGBTI people do exist in Lithuania. It was a way to finally represent themselves instead of the majority.

The *Baltic Pride* this year will be celebrated the last week of July 2013. In order to establish stronger connections with and within community, I will highlight those aspects that the *Baltic Pride* this year offers:

- ***Baltic Pride 2013 promotional videos***

Those videos have been devised by the Lithuanian Gay League and produced by the French Institute and the Embassy of France in Lithuania for the promotion of the *Baltic Pride* 2013. There are two videos: one for equality in general, and another more centered in the LGBTI issues. Each video have different treatment, but both are clearly addressed to the whole Lithuanian society as way of an integration activism. In my opinion, and rephrasing Foucault, a specific country with specific historical context needs to be treated according to those

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<sup>141</sup> Davydova, Darja; Rukšėnaitė, Sigita; Sužiedėlis, Darius *Changing faces: First March for LGBTI Equality in Lithuania*, Lithuania: LGL, 2012, p. 6, paragraph 3

characteristics. That is what the LGL association and the director of the videos Françoise Message have achieved.

The video about tolerant issues is very emotional and emphatic<sup>142</sup>. The video starts with a voice-over addressed directly to the Lithuanians: “This is us, Lithuanians”. This video shows the varied Lithuanian society, highlighting the minorities as disabled people, LGBTI people or elderly. The voice describes that all of them are equal in the way that they had to overcome lots of problems; they had to face and get up in front of every setback - in reference of the historical background. The idea could be: ‘all the Lithuanian society becomes equal in front of their oppressors’. This is an important reminder to the majorities of pressure towards the minorities, because now they have the power, but they do not remember that in other times, they were in the group of the oppressed. In a way, the video is also instilling encouragement to the whole Lithuanian society, which is actually quite pessimistic despite what the video shows. The voice of the video says these sentences:

- We are curious, **diverse**, open, and not afraid of challenges.
- We are persistent, strong, optimistic, energetic, and not giving up.
- We are wise, experienced, youthful, but mature. We have seen both cold and hot.
- We are brave, unique, but simple and responsible.
- We are not alone, we are **rich**, because we are loving.
- “Diversity is a benefit for society, not a disadvantage” (Įvairovė yra visuomenės turtas, o ne trūkumas)

The second video is about LGBTI issues and appealing to the whole Lithuanian society<sup>143</sup>. They try to change the prejudices that the Lithuanian society has about LGBTI people. In order to show the social variety, the people who appear in the video are mixed: LGBTI people, heterosexual people, old and young people. In this way, the video follows the parameters of the first one, because both underline the diversity in the Lithuanian society. Instead of a voice-over, in this video the people are who give their testimony as a compelling reason. They say meaningful sentences in order to debunk the main stereotypical representations in Lithuania about LGBTI people or sensitive sentences attaching to their feelings. These are the most representative sentences:

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<sup>142</sup> [YouTube video] < [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=wCaGtQEYY0w](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=wCaGtQEYY0w) >

<sup>143</sup> [YouTube video] < [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=8rDP\\_t2Qcml](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=8rDP_t2Qcml) >



Image 3

A lesbian say: “My hair is short not because I want to look like a man”.



Image 5

A heterosexual girl say that: “It is not true that those people do not exist in Lithuania”.

A gay boy says: “We do not claim for special rights”.



Image 4

It is necessary to say that both videos were supposed to be broadcasted on the national television channel, but it is not decided yet. Both videos have been promoted online through the social networks: *YouTube* and *Facebook*. As the director Françoise Message says “They will be on Internet of course, but they will cause less impact, because on the Internet the people chose if to watch or not to watch it. On the television you watch and that is all. On the Internet I am not sure that the people who are against will watch it. LGBTI people will promote the video on the Internet but just for those who are concerned about it”<sup>144</sup>. The fact that those videos have been already released through the social media and shared in online diaries as *15min.lt*<sup>145</sup> and not on the Lithuanian national television, confirms that the Internet is a very powerful platform where the LGBTI people can represent themselves with no restrictions. Even if the videos will not be finally broadcasted on the TV, to spread them online is a great advantage.

<sup>144</sup> A2.I8, lines 1290-1293

<sup>145</sup> *Lithuanian Gay League rolls out Baltic Pride promotional videos*, 15min.lt, 16-05-2013 [article online] < <http://www.15min.lt/en/article/culture-society/lithuanian-gay-league-rolls-out-baltic-pride-promotional-videos-528-336019> >



- **LGBTI Cinema Festival *Kitoks Kinas***

This year 2013 is the second time when the ‘Kitoks Kinas’ Film Festival takes place in Lithuania; the first one was in August 2011. This year it will be included as one of the events of the Baltic Pride. It will take place in the Vilnius cinema center *Skalvia* during a week, from the 25<sup>th</sup> to the 31<sup>st</sup> of July.

In words of Augustas, on behalf of the Center for Equal Advancement which is one of the main organizers of the festival, “(...) we are trying to have as many new films as possible. There are LGBTI films which are non-documentaries, so feature movies. The initial idea was to have less activist movies, but to have more personal, touchy stories, so that people could associate with them. Since we want to make it for free, we need to look for funding in embassies and different centers. (...) Some embassies or cultural centers for example, supported particular movies. (...) We did not take all the movies which were suggested, but there are lots of compromises, so we moved a bit from the initial idea. There are some activist movies too, so I think it is good in general. (...)”<sup>146</sup>

For one way, the organization of this festival is very interesting insofar as a common public space which is a theater is taken to represent the LGBTI reality. Anybody who would like to, can go there; whether heterosexuals or LGBTI people. The idea of choosing personal stories I think is very important in order to show, as well as for example the film *Porno Melodrama*, the feelings of the LGBTI people, for the LGBTI people to be identified in a community, and for the heterosexuals to understand and be more aware about those issues.

- **Photo exhibition *Living Together***

“Photography is a reality so subtle that it becomes more real than reality”, Alfred Stieglitz-photographer.

This project carried out by the Lithuanian photographer Ugnius Gelguda was about contemporary families in Lithuania, in comparison to the traditional family values. The year of this exhibition was the 2006, in Juodkrantė, Lithuania. The photographer explained me that: “for the project I took pictures of homosexual families only in Latvia; Lithuanians are too shy or they are scared of the hostile situation in Lithuania. They (families) opened a door of their house and I spend some days/hours with every family. I received contacts of homosexual couples from

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<sup>146</sup> A2.I4, lines 525-533

Lithuanian Gay League. It was a local scandal, which has gone so far that Lithuanian parliament even considered of changing some of the regulations (laws)”.

An image or a photo is a powerful representation. The photos of this project are representing a truth for the photographer that maybe is not possible for other people. This is connected with the idea of truth of Foucault. According to him “truth is not outside power... truth is a thing of this world; it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of limitations. (...) the status of those who are charged with saying what count as true” (Foucault, 1980, p. 131)<sup>147</sup>. The images of this project are showing another reality in the way that are representing an idea of ‘couple’ and ‘family’ very different in comparison to the fixed and irreplaceable one build around a man and woman with children, that was historically represented in Lithuania, influenced by the Catholic Church and the traditionalistic politics.

Here there is one sample of photo of the exhibition. I decided to choose this one because for me it is alive; this photo shows a sporadic and common action of a couple that are loving each other, because of the pose of the girls and their hands. In my opinion, the photo is showing the reality of a situation that is happening in Lithuania but is hidden.



Image 6

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<sup>147</sup> Hall, Stuart (Ed.) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* Glasgow: The Open University, 2003 (pp. 41-51)

## CONCLUSIONS

In the conclusion, I solve the questions I posed as objectives of the thesis. What I found through analyzing the empirical data, comparing it with the theoretical readings and my own experiences, is that the LGBTI people in Lithuania nowadays are connected themselves in some ways very strongly, but separated in other ways. Some LGBTI-people are united in associations. If I look deeper into who really works and organize events, they are few well-known and recognized people, but they are always the same. For example, as a politician, Marija Aušrinė Pavilionienė always appears at the TV, interviews, etc., using a positive discourse in defending the LGBTI rights in Lithuania. There is the need to show more faces and from different ages and sectors. If I make reference to spaces, the LGBTI people meet in private spaces as clubs, where they feel free and in community. But when they go out from there, they continue hidden from the rest of the society. In my opinion the LGBTI people need to generate more public spaces for them to be represented in Lithuania. There is a very good initiative in order to do that which is the guide of *LGBTI Friendly* bars. This way, they will build stronger connections with the rest of the society, showing that this reality exists in Lithuania.

In Lithuania there is a big influence of the Catholic culture and the conservative politics in all the spheres of the life in the society. The people who are in power and the major part of the society walk in the same direction, based on the same historical beliefs. The majority tries to create conflict between minorities in order to get more power and make the minorities feel alone and disconnected. There are minorities as the *skinheads* that share beliefs with the majority and are very radical towards the LGBTI people. In front of this situation, the LGBTI people need to fight against the historical stereotypical representations challenging the binary gender system. For sure the LGBTI people need to fight for their rights to be recognized in the constitution, but at the same time inside the society, by educating and giving information, by involving them in the LGBTI issues. The practices need to be always inclusive, and never exclusive. I think there is very good job in this way. For example, the promotional videos of the *Baltic Pride 2013* are very inclusive. The different minorities need to fight together in the same direction: by defending that each human being has different feelings, opinions, etc., and there is an objective together, to be respected. It is needed to implement the feeling that there no exists a homogeneous thought, if lots of different ones that can be integrated in a same-society-place and interact each other with no discrimination.

In this project I have noticed the importance of the social media in uniting minorities and creating spaces for them to feel identified. The social media means a way to escape to the conservative policies by providing more freedom of expression. More than the half per cent of the LGBTI people say that they communicate with their LGBTI friends by the social media. In my opinion, from now the online and offline communication need to go hand in hand. They cannot be excluded one from another anymore. It is needed to use the advantages of both, combined together. The greatest example is by promoting offline events. This is a powerful tool in order to reach more easily the people, and the people to be aware of those events. According to the LGBTI people and associations in Lithuania, they use this tool for that purpose. If I think about the recent historical revolution as the *Arabic Spring* or the movement *Occupy Wall Street*, I find that the social media has played a crucial role in organizing the groups and people who participated on them.

A very positive thing I have found is that there is a rich variety of events and artistic practices and activism in Lithuania nowadays in order to challenge the LGBTI phobia: cinema, theater, photography, events as the *Baltic Pride 2013*, etc. This is the attitude they need to keep developing, combined with the helpful tool of the social media. As a coming theatrical play, I can say that in October 2013 there will be premiered *Invisible Monsters* from Gabrielė Labanauskaitė about transgender people, as an adaptation of the novel by Chuck Palahniuk. This topic is rarely represented in the Lithuanian society and it will help to make it more visible. Françoise Message, the director of the promotional videos for the *Baltic Pride 2013*, will make a documentary about this event in July, through crowd-funding; I have already participated economically in the project. Also, the coming film *We will Riot: Streikas* from Romas Zabarauskas connects the LGTBI matters in Lithuania with a wider topic. The young Lithuanian photographer *Deimantas Rojus* is preparing a portraiture project for next year in order to communicate his personal perspective on LGBTI rights in Lithuania. This project it is currently in the very early stages. It will be about increasing visibility of middle aged and older LGBTI people who lived in the soviet era, because according to some people, they did not even exist. The project will be hopefully exhibited in Lithuania.<sup>148</sup>

As there can be appreciated, there are lot of new projects about LGBTI issues coming soon to Lithuania. It means that in the recent years these practices have been increasing positively. There is a tendency of new ideas coming from young people that will be reflected in

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<sup>148</sup> A2.I9, lines 1309-1313

the Lithuanian society very soon. This is extremely important. Despite of some projects in the past have had troubles and have been very polemic, for example the *Baltic Pride* 2010 or the photo project *Living Together*, at the end they have overcome positively in the way of making visible the LGBTI people in Lithuania. Some projects have been really successful as for example the theatrical play *Red Laces* that was recognized with the first place in the National Drama Theater Contest. What I want to say with all of this is that despite of the setbacks, this is the correct way the LGBTI people in Lithuania need to follow. Maybe in the nearest future someone will write another thesis in order to explain how the LGBTI people in Lithuania have seen completed all their claims.

I have explained that the social media is very important nowadays for the LGBTI people in Lithuania. In the case of my thesis, I think it has been extremely useful in order to achieve my objectives. For one way, I have worked a lot by e-mailing with my supervisor, as well as with my interviewees. Also the questionnaire was promoted on *Facebook*.

I would like to add to all of this that the topic of this project have provided me a deepen knowledge in the fields of gender studies and media studies. Moreover, I have improved my language skills in specific terminology, I have taught more about the history of Lithuania and the situation of the LGBTI people in this country. I have also improved the use of methods for researching information and analysis of the data.

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## ANNEX 1. INTERVIEW GUIDE

The order I have chosen when designing this interview guide is the next: from more personal questions, based in the experience of the interviewee, to more conceptual/ theoretical or specific questions, centered in understanding the connections of the LGBTI people in Lithuania. This interview guide has been used as a basis applicable to all the interviewees. There are some specific questions added, depending on the characteristics of the interviewee (field of knowledge, profession, etc.). Furthermore, some questions arose extemporaneously according to the answers of each interviewee, in order to get more specific or interesting information.

### GENERAL QUESTIONS

- Have you ever joined any event to support the LGBTI people or are you part of any organization? Are you enrolled in any project/ action now or in the future, focused in the support of the LGBTI people in Lithuania? Which one? What is it about? Is it important for you to be activist in this matter? Which way do you feel you are contributing to build a stronger network among the LGBTI people? Have you ever been banned for your initiatives?
- Do you know any other person who is activist in or towards the LGBTI people in Lithuania (now or before)? Can you highlight one? Who? Why? Where is/was she/he enrolled with? Is there a lack of these kinds of activities here in Lithuania? Why?
- Do you think that the LGBTI citizens in Lithuania are an established-representative-known-influential group nowadays? In which way you think the LGBTI associations can help in building a stronger network among LGBTI people?
- Even not belonging to any LGBTI association itself, do you think is necessary that the LGBTI individuals would establish strong links among them in order to claim for their rights?
- Even not being identified as LGTB people, do you think is necessary that the heterosexual people to contribute into the generation of durable/solid links among LGBTI people and the rest of the Lithuanian society? How can the LGBTI citizens influence the behavior of the heterosexual people to feel the need to build positive and strong links with them? Is this situation happening now in Lithuania somehow?



- According to their age, do you think that young heterosexual citizens in Lithuania are more receptive and tolerant towards the LGBTI issues? Do they establish more and stronger links with them? Or they avoid their company?
- Do you think young LGBTI people are more united and active in claiming for their rights than the oldest LGBTI people? Why? Is it good or bad?
- Do you think some LGTB citizens in Lithuania are still disconnected and refuse being linked with the rest of the LGBTI people? Do you think some people exclude themselves from the network rather than the rest of the society do? Why? Do you find any connection from these behaviors to the historical and religious background of Lithuania? Do you think is related to if they live in cities or villages?
- According to their career or ideological group, which individuals do you think are more opened to show their homo/bi/trans-sexuality nowadays in Lithuania? Why? Which career or ideological groups are supporting them? Why?
- In your opinion, which other groups or individuals are creating and maintaining positive links with the LGBTI people in Lithuania nowadays? Why? Maybe the other minorities such disable people or immigrants?
- Does the Media in Lithuania (TV, radio, newspapers) maintain and generate positive links with the LGBTI citizens? Do the politicians do? Etc.
- According to your researches and experience, which do you think is nowadays the principal influential group of pressure against the Lithuanian LGBTI people? Why? Which kind of links have traditionally existed between the influential groups and the LGBTI people? Have these groups been changing along the history? Which way do you think these groups are making pressure and hindering the establishments of links among LGBTI people and/or the society? Which are/were their beliefs (representations) and behaviors? Have they made pressure towards other social minorities?
- According to your researches and experiences; which is the success of the groups of pressure? Do you think the key is the strong link network existing among them? Which is the interest of

the individuals to participate in these influential groups and not change their links into the support to the LGBTI people?

- Why do you think that LGBTI people do not have such success? Maybe because they are a social minority? Do you believe that even being social minorities, if they link their citizens more and more to build a strong network, they will challenge LGBTI phobia? Do you feel the importance of as well as linking themselves, to establish strong links with the other social minorities and the rest of the society as well?
- For ending the interview, you know that nowadays we are living in the “Information Age”, defined this way by the Spanish philosopher Manuel Castells. It means that we are interconnected all over the world through digital networks. This is changing our behaviors, ways of communication and interchange of information. For the first time in history, technology has reached a point where everyone has a voice – where content is everything and everything is content, and where the conversation is everywhere. You can become more visible towards others. How true do you think is all this? Do you feel freer when expressing yourself through the social media than in personal? Do you feel any changes in your everydayness because of the social media? In which way the social media is helping you personally to find new links to spread your ideas and creations? What platforms do you use? Do you think the Social Media nowadays is helping the Lithuanian LGBTI people and other minorities to become more visible towards the rest of the society at the same time to establish stronger links among them? Which way you think it can be an opportunity in the nearest future to challenge LGBTI phobia? Can you give me any example of Social Media platform used by the LGBTI people in Lithuania for these purposes? Do you think the social networks can be an alternative point of information rather than the traditional media as it is not paid, you do not debt money to anyone and you have the freedom to express yourself as you are, without any pressure?

## LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

This is the definitive list of people who finally accepted to participate in the project. The information I provide about them below as well as along the whole thesis, have been agreed previously with the interviewees before its publication. The list is the result of a selection of possible people that could provide me with valuable information, according to the topic and

objectives of the thesis. The people who have participated are either experts in the LGBTI issues in Lithuania as well as artists or activists. They are not necessarily LGBTI. The age of the interviewees is between 20 and 40. I decided to choose as much variety of people and age as possible in order to get a wider idea about the topic of the thesis.

**\*NOTE:** The information I provide about the interviewees below as well as along the whole thesis, have been agreed previously with them before its publication.

**\*NOTE:** Following this list, there is the Annex 2: Transcriptions. The lines of each interview have been coded in order to make easier the access to a specific interview. The number of lines can be checked in this list in brackets.

**Interview 1. DR. MILDA ALIŠAUSKIENĖ** (lines 1 to 169) > Director of the Department of Sociology at *Vytautas Magnus University* (Kaunas).

– **Specific Questions:**

- Do the people tend to be associated in Lithuania?
- According to the survey about religious minorities you developed in Lithuania, why the majority of the respondents are young people?
- Is the traditional family an important symbol in Lithuania?

**Interview 2. GABRIELĖ LABANAUSKAITĖ**<sup>149</sup> (lines 170 to 382) > Poet, singer at *AVaspo*<sup>150</sup> band, prose writer, playwright and book critic. Her songs (or poems) contain social messages from feminist point of view and LGBTI tolerance. She has written *Red Laces*<sup>151</sup>, a theatrical play about the situation of the LGBTI and other minorities in Lithuania nowadays. It was the winner of the Lithuanian National Drama Contest last year.

– **Specific Questions:**

- What does *AVaspo* mean? Can you tell us a little bit more about your group, why did you decided to establish it and when?
- I know you have songs about LGBTI thematic. Which ones?
- Can you explain me more about the theatrical play *Red Laces*?

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<sup>149</sup> For more information about Gabrielė, enter her bio <http://www.galdrama.lt/index.php/bio-en.html>

<sup>150</sup> For more information about *AVaspo*, enter their website: <http://en.avaspo.lt/interview-5-years-of-avaspo/>

<sup>151</sup> For more information about *Red Laces*, enter this website: <http://yanaross.com/?p=396>

**Interview 3. ROMAS ZABARAUSKAS** (lines 385 to 514) > Young film director who made the first Lithuanian film using the LGBTI topic in 2010, titled “*Porno Melodrama*”. His coming film is named *We will Riot (Streikas)*<sup>152</sup>. It will be premiered in September this year 2013.

– **Specific Questions:**

- Ask him for the short film *Porno Melodrama*.
- Ask him for the “Gay Friendly” places in Vilnius project.
- Romas is openly gay to everybody in Lithuania. Was it easy? Do you encourage other people to do it? Why?

**Interview 4. AUGUSTAS ČIČELIS** (lines 515 to 704) > He is involved in the organization of a LGBTI Film Festival as an event placed in the Baltic Pride 2013, and he works for the Centre for Equality Advancement of Lithuania.

– **Specific Questions:**

- Explain me what the LGBTI Film Festival is about and which kind of films you are going to screen.

**Interview 5. ARTŪRAS RUDOMANSKIS and MINDAUGAS KLUONIS** (lines 705 to 979) > They are both board members of the Tolerantiško Jaunimo Asociacija (Tolerant Youth Association), one of the main LGBTI associations in Lithuania. From there, they develop lots of projects and initiatives for LGBTI people in Lithuania.

– **Specific Questions:**

- Explain me more about the Tolerant Youth Association. What are the objectives of the association? Which projects are you involved in?

**Interview 6. ELENA DAPKŪNAITĖ** (lines 980 to 1111) > Board member of the *Lithuanian Gay League* and volunteer at the project the *Living Library*<sup>153</sup>.

– **Specific Questions:**

- Ask her for the Baltic Pride 2010 and 2013.
- Ask her about the reaction of the court about the Baltic Pride 2013 demonstration (11-04-2013)<sup>154</sup>.

<sup>152</sup> For more information about *We Will Riot*, enter this link:

<http://www.kickstarter.com/projects/romaszabarauskas/we-will-riot>

<sup>153</sup> For more information about the *Living Library* project, click here:

<<http://gyvojibiblioteka.lt/en/tapk/>>

- Ask her for the promotional spots in LRT (Lithuanian Radio and Television).
- Ask her for the photo exhibition *Living Together*.

**Interview 7. FRÉDÉRIC BELLIDO** (lines 1112 to 1226) > He is Counselor for Cooperation and Cultural Action, and director of the French Institute of Lithuania. They have financed the promotional video for the *Baltic Pride* 2013.

– **Specific Questions:**

- Which way do you think other countries need to help LGBTI people in Lithuania?
- Tell me about the promotional videos for the *Baltic Pride* 2013.

**Interview 8. FRANÇOIS MESSAGE**<sup>155</sup> (lines 1315 to 1389)> French film director who recorded the promotional video for the *Baltic Pride* 2013 as an idea of the Lithuanian Gay League and financed by the Embassy of France in Lithuania. After audiovisual and cinema studies in Lyon (France), he was cinematographer on many short films and director / cameraman on several reportages, short documentaries and corporate movies.

– **Specific Questions:**

- As far as I understood, you came to Lithuania because of an initiative of the French Embassy in Vilnius. They are collaborating with the LGL in order to make a spot to promote the Baltic Pride 2013 in the national TV channel LRT.

**Interview 9. DEIMANTAS ROJOUS** (lines 1298 to 1344) > He's a Lithuanian young photographer living in London nowadays, who is preparing a project about Lithuania gay men portrays. He is the administrator of the *Facebook* page *Queer Youth LT*.

– **Specific Questions:**

- I know you have made a photo session to gay men in Lithuania. Does it have a title? What is the main purpose why you made it? Can we find information about it somewhere?
- What about the Facebook page *Queer Youth LT*?

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<sup>154</sup> Article at *Delfi* (11-04-2013) <<http://en.delfi.lt/33970/baltic-pride-march-may-be-allowed-on-vilnius-central-street-201333970/>> - Article at *Lrytas* (11-04-2013) <<http://www.lrytas.lt/lietuvos-diena/aktualijos/lietuvos-gejai-atgavo-vilti-zygiuoti-gedimino-prospektu.htm>>

<sup>155</sup> For more information, enter to his website: <[www.francois-message.com](http://www.francois-message.com)>

**Interview 10. UGNIUS GELGUDA**<sup>156</sup> (lines 1345 to 1368) > Born in 1977 in Vilnius. In 2010 has become Licentiate of Arts at Department of photo and media art, Vilnius Art Academy. Lector at Vilnius Academy of Fine Art and Vilnius College of Design. He's the author of the photo project *Living Together*. It is a collection of photos with couples (heterosexual, gay, old, young, with and without children).

– **Specific Questions:**

- Could you tell me more about the project *Living Together*? Which year was the exhibition? Why did you decided to create it? What is it about? Were you supported by any organization? Did you have any troubles? What happened? Do you know if I can find those images somewhere now?

**Interview 11. VAIDAS** (lines 1369 to 1426) > this respondent prefers not to reveal his surname as well as specific information about him, because he is not openly gay to everybody. He is volunteering at the Tolerant Youth Association. He is very active on *Facebook* about LGBTI issues in Lithuania, and he is the administrator of pages as for example “Duoki ranką man” or “Žmonės, kurių nebuvo”.

– **Specific Questions:**

- Explain me all your projects about LGBTI issues you have in *Facebook*.
- Why do you use *Facebook*?
- Why do you use a fake profile?

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<sup>156</sup> *Ugnius Gelguda* biography < <http://www.ugniusgelguda.lt/index.php?/project/ugnius-gelguda/> >

## ANNEX 2. TRANSCRIPTION OF THR INTERVIEWS

### Interview 1. MILDA ALIŠAUSKIENĖ

– Type: face-to-face interview.

5 **-Andrés: Have you ever joined any event to support the LGBTI people or are you part of any organization?**

10 **-Milda:** Not directly, but I am doing kind of public sociology and I am working in a NGO which is called New Religions Research and Information Center. Together with the Lithuanian Gay League, we are in one common network in the sense that we are working on diversity issues in our society. Diversity means in all aspects: religions, gender, disable people, etc. In our network we have representations of all types of people. For example: youth organizations, old people organizations, woman organizations, etc.

**-A: Do you think that the Lithuanian society tends to be associated, or they are more individual?**

15 **-M:** I think they are not individual, it is something in between. They are not working in associations, but they are linked in networks more based on relatives, people who you know. They are not creating associations for defending some ideas, no. They are kind of traditional society more based on some blood links: this is my family, these are my friends. They are networking as all societies are in network, but their links are more of blood or relatives: “She is friend of my sister; that is why she is important for me”. This is a problem our society has.

20 **-A: Do you think this behavior is historical?**

25 **-M:** I think historically we have had too little experience as an own state, as an own community. We have been years under some occupation. All the time we were no responsible for ourselves. If you are like this so many generations, this comes through the collective memory. You do not need any responsibility, because you are occupied. Someone is doing something for you. If you are trying to be responsible you are persecuted or even shoot. I think it comes through the collective memory: you are not responsible, you are not independent, and so you cannot change anything.

**-A: Does it mean that they do not care about if they live in Lithuania, the European Union or wherever? Are the Lithuanian people patriotic?**

30           **-M:** I think in general, their experiences of being under occupation for long centuries, gave a feeling which comes through generations that whatever you do, you will not be able to change anything. About patriotism, I think that in early nineties when Lithuania was sinking independence, people were very patriotic and very active, but it was only for a short period. After that, they went again to their ordinary lives. I do not think that they are patriotic.

35           **-A: I know that homosexuality in soviet times was punished, but just in man. Why? Which were the beliefs of the LGBTI people by that time?**

**-M:** I know that some people look differently at LGBTI people, depending on if they are man or woman. Our society is very traditional in the sense that man is someone who is really important, and that man make decisions. But woman is somewhere aside; if she is lesbian, this  
40 means that she had some conditions that oriented her to do this. Everybody thinks that she did it for a while, but she is normal, she is not lesbian. In general, people do not understand the psychology of LGBTI people. One of the worst things about our society is that everybody is thinking about sexual relations. They are not thinking about physiology or about love for example. And this is wrong.

45           **-A: As far as I know, you have carried out a survey about religion in Lithuania. If we check it, we find out that the people who participated are young. What does it mean?**

**-M:** The survey is called “Non-traditional religion minorities in Lithuania”. The survey was conducted among religious minorities; it means that people who participated were especially from religious minorities. We do not know why but the majority of the respondents were much  
50 younger than older people. It does not say that the membership of these groups is younger than the general society. It does not mean neither that they are more religious than older people, do not be confused. But they were simply the age group who participated more in this survey.

**-A: What do you mean by non-traditional religions in Lithuania?**

**-M:** Well, in 1992 the Lithuanian constitution was signed, and there you can see the  
55 division between traditional religions and other religious communities. Then there is a law from 1995 about religious communities, which goes more deeply into this differentiation. Traditional religious communities are nine, among where it is the Roman Catholic Church. This one is the largest, because almost 80% of the Lithuanian population says that they are Roman Catholic. And then I do not know how many non-traditional religions we have in Lithuania, but in our  
60 survey participated seventeen.



**-A: When the Catholic Church came to Lithuania and got established here?**

**-M:** Lithuanians were baptized six hundred years ago, in 1387.

**-A: Do you think that here the traditional family values are arranged?**

**-M:** I am not sure. We did another survey attended to the whole population in October  
65 2012. We asked people what they define as family. Of course the majority said that family is  
father, mother and children. But also more than a half of population said that family can be also  
single mother or single father and children. I cannot provide you with specific data because the  
survey has not been published yet. I think is our politicians who say that Lithuania is supported  
by traditional families. But population in reality has other perceptions of what family is, as can  
70 be single parents or even a couple without children. If you look at the population you can find  
variety, but some of our politicians want normative, definition of family. That is why they ignore  
variety in the population.

**-A: During the occupation of the Soviet Union, which was the most important  
religion in Lithuania? Was any religion forbidden?**

**-M:** What does it means to forbid religion? You can close some churches, but people can  
75 still pray in their houses. What happen with Roman Catholic Church during the Soviet Union  
was that they nationalized some churches and monasteries, but at the same time people where  
still religious. I would be critical towards people who would say: "No, the religion was  
suppressed". In the sense, yes, because some people were not able to go to the Church which was  
80 closer to their home, but if they wanted they could always pray individually or in small families.  
We know that people were keeping religious traditions. They were celebrating Christmas,  
Eastern. Even people who had very high positions they were doing it. During the Soviet Time I  
would say that the ones who were touched hardly were religious minorities like Baptists,  
Pentecostals, Jewish; they were very much suppressed. They were not so easy to control, because  
85 they were too small. You can for instant sent a priest from KGB. In Roman Catholic Church,  
everybody knows that priest were going to a KGB exam, and if they passed it, not everybody,  
but some of them, they were able to be priests. They said ok, you are good enough to be priest;  
then they were working as a priest but also as a KGB agent. But this is just possible when you  
have a very big structure. If you have a little bit structure as the other religion had, no. Roman  
90 Catholic Church survived, also because of this Catholicism culture. People were supporting it

and being indentified with it; in this society it was our. For example, the Hill of Crosses has a big symbolism that was used against the soviets.

**-A: Which group of pressure do you think is the most influent in Lithuania nowadays?**

95           **-M:** I think it is maybe some kind of Catholic culture. If we speak about organizations Catholic Church of course is a powerful organization in Lithuania. But I would like to add that even 80% of the population says that they are Roman Catholic, when you analyze how much they believe in the main dogmas of the Church and practice them, it is around 20 %. This 20 % is a minority, but this minority creates the whole discourse and behaviors. It has relations with  
100 many politicians, and they can make some changes like pushing some laws. Well, in general, I would say that this is not a problem, because in Lithuania the majority of laws do not work; this is not the worst thing. The worst is the public attitude, the stereotypes which are mainly created on Catholicism and traditional behaviors towards society. How it should work, what families are, etc. I think also that politicians are the main agent in the public life. That is why they have this  
105 discourse. They create discourse about what families are, for instance. There are not enough NGOs working here, the society is not enough opened to start discussions.

**-A: Do you mean that the society needs to show more their opinions?**

**-M:** I think the diverse opinions are not reflected enough. What's going on in population, in the society itself? I do not think that what politicians say is what people do. As a sociologist, I  
110 may say that politicians ignore social data.

**-A: Do you think that some LGBTI people discriminate themselves instead of the rest of the society?**

**-M:** I think sometimes people simply do not want to change anything.

**-A: Why is that?**

115           **-M:** I think maybe they are afraid. It may be very natural that people are afraid to talk about something that is painful for them; they feel discriminated. But at the same time, if they are not talking, they are not changing, and they are discriminating in the sense themselves. Maybe they think that this way they can have a more quiet life.

**-A: How much importance do people in Lithuania give to their friends? For example, a heterosexual has a LGBTI friend.**

**-M:** I think it also depends on how LGBTI people want to be opened. On both sites, you see that some of them are ignorant, but also some others aren't opened. They are afraid of other reactions and they are not opened enough.

**-A: What do you think about that LGBTI people are migrating to other countries?**

**-M:** Lot of people is migrating from here. In my family we are six brothers and sisters. Three of us are now abroad; the half of us. It is because of jobs but also because, for example, one of my sisters is very extraordinary, and our society is too narrow-minded for those people like she is, as well as for LGBTI people.

**-A: How you think other minorities in Lithuanian society are supporting LGBTI people?**

**-M:** Minorities in general are people from the same society; they sometimes think as the majority does, in some cases. When you speak to religious minorities, they always say they are suppressed by the Roman Catholic Church, but at the same time they do not want to be in the same network as the Lithuanian Gay League is. This way, they have the same attitude towards LGBTI people as the Church has. If you belong to small and divided groups, as a sociologist I may say that this is much easier to control you. If here is Gay League, and here religious minorities, and you are not united, you do not make a critical mass, you do not approach.

**-A: What do you think is the strategy the Church uses to attract more people and to create divisions among minorities? Do you think the minorities could use some of those strategies in order to reduce the power of the Church?**

**-M:** The strategy that I think is used in Lithuania is "divide and rule". In order to fight that strategy I think the best would be to unite minorities and then they can really be against majority. Whenever minorities unite for a while, they can be stronger.

**-A: On Media, what do you think the behavior or the beliefs they spread about the LGBTI people?**

**-M:** Media in Lithuania is very special case I would say. In one side, they can be very critical, but on the other site they are also silent. And they are silent on thing that they support

some hegemony like Catholics or heterosexuals. Media is also kind of mirror of society and, in Lithuania you can see it very openly. I have not done any research on LGBTI people reflected on Media, but I have done a research on Roman Catholic activities on Media. It is obvious that our Media supports them by inviting priests and asking them to comment some issues like laws. Laws which are important for other religious minorities, but they are the only who comment. How a priest can comment a law which also covers issues of other religious minorities? They will always speak in their own side but they are not thinking how it will affect others. Our Media does not think about it so much. I think that another problem on Media is that in general we have very little criticism and reflection on religions or LGBTI rights, and it is placed on our society. When you start to speak about religion, for example me now, they will always think that I am theologian. So if you speak about religion, the only discourse which is acceptable is theological; then everybody understands. But there are many discourses.

160           **-A: Which way you thing the Social Media can help the LGBTI people to be more visible and opened towards the rest of the society?**

**-M:** I do not know. I am not sure if Social Media really reaches all people. When we speak about newspapers or Internet, I think are minority of people who read it. But TV, radio, they are more popular here.

165           **-A: And what about the Social Media as a tool to build stronger networks among LGBTI people?**

**-M:** Yes, I think it is important for them to have Internet and websites with forms where they can reach each other. It is very important for them. It is also a way to show your opinion without pressure.

170 **Interview 2. GABRIELĖ LABANAUSKAITĖ**

– Type: face-to-face interview.

**-Andrés: I know that you are in a group which name is AVaspo and I would like you to tell me a little bit more about it. When you created it, what kind of music you play, etc.**

**-Gabrielė:** Of course. *AVaspo*<sup>157</sup> means “Audio-Visual Asp of Poetry” and is a group of poetry, music and visuals. We gathered together five years ago. Instead of publishing a book of poetry, I wanted to release it in CD or DVD format. That is how it started. From that time I have released three music CD’s. The first one was *There is no Ocean (Nėra Okeano)*. We had a CD and Video Clips from different artists, and from then on we released music CDs. It is kind of interesting project because I am not a professional singer. I am more concentrated on performance and how to express the text. It has social message itself, I mean, the text.

**-A: What kind of social messages you show?**

**-G:** It is a mirroring; I would not say criticizing, but more mirroring the contemporary society, especially female as a desire object representation. For example, there is one song which is called *Vokalistės mirtis (The death of the vocalist)*<sup>158</sup>, where I am singing with a man’s voice; altered a lot. I was with covered head, so nobody could see my face. It is dealing with the issues that most of the audience wants the singers to be just beautiful bodies or appearance with a nice voice. But first of all, this is a kind of social object; that is why the song is called “The death of the vocalist”, because it is not the vocalist I am or the one I believe to be. We do this kind of things from a feminist point of view, as well as about tolerant issues. For example, in the song *I niekur*<sup>159</sup> (*Into Nowhere*), there are metaphors and words like “vaikinas bučiuoja vaikiną” (a boy is kissing a boy). It is very interesting to see how the audience is reacting, even though our audience is very intellectual and most of them are somehow artistically educated or interested in arts. But still they react in a very diverse way, and sometimes when somebody from the audience hears “a boy is kissing a boy”, they are not sure if they have heard correctly. Another song which is called *Aš jus visus*<sup>160</sup> (*I love you all*) has a refrain that says “I have a mood which is flowing in the French way, French soul, and it does not matter if you are boy or a girl, come closer, come closer my beloved, I love you all, I love you all, I love you all”.

<sup>157</sup> AVaspo Webpage <<http://avaspo.lt/>>

<sup>158</sup> Video clip of *The Death of the Vocalist* [YouTube video] < <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjif1P-Lushs> >

<sup>159</sup> AVaspo song *Into Nowhere* [audio] <<http://avaspo.bandcamp.com/track/niekur-into-nowhere> >

<sup>160</sup> AVaspo song *I love you all* [audio] <<http://avaspo.bandcamp.com/track/a-jus-visus-i-love-you-all> >

**-A: But, do you express the situation of the LGBTI people in Lithuania, or just in general?**

200 **-G:** Yes, yes a lot. I am a playwright as well, so I have written about homosexuality in Lithuania. The last one is called *Raudoni batraiščiai (Red Laces)*<sup>161</sup>. It was premiered in the National Drama Theater last year, and they are still showing it, if you want to go. It is a big conflict between two brothers; one of them is gay and the other is skin head and Lithuanian nationalist. I do not want to tell you the end, because you can see it. The play is called *Red Laces*  
205 because, as far as I know, the laces are very important for the skin heads, and you get the red one when you have killed somebody or you have had somebody blood. It is a kind of medal for them. Now I am preparing with a director a play which is called *Invisible Monsters*<sup>162</sup>, from the novel by *Chuck Palahniuk*. It is about transgender people who are being operated and so on. It is an interesting approach to the topic with other eyes. It will be premiered this autumn. We will have  
210 English subtitles, which is very good for guests from other countries. The director is *Yana Ross*; she has Russian and Latvian blood. Then she was educated in America. And then she came to Lithuania for a while but she get in love with a Lithuanian actor and now she speaks perfectly Lithuanian.

215 **-A: Do you know more people who are in the arts field doing things for LGBTI people in Lithuania?**

**-G:** I would say **Lina Žigelytė**. She is feminist and she studied in the USA but right now she is in Lithuania for one year and she is doing performances which are not directly attaching LGBTI issues, but about lot of gender issues as well, and opening the eyes to wider perspectives. Also **Laima Kreivytė**; She is a poet and she is writing a kind of homo-erotic poetry.

220 **-A: Then, can you say that in Lithuania there are a considerable number of people who do things towards LGBTI?**

**-G:** There are some, yes, but it is not the main stream. The people still do not know them.

225 **-A: Do you think that LGBTI citizens in Lithuania are an established or influential group here in Lithuania? In which way you think your performances can help in building a stronger network among LGBTI people? What about the associations?**

<sup>161</sup> *Red Laces* <[http://www.teatras.lt/lt/spektakliai/gabriele\\_labanauskaite\\_raudoni\\_batraisciai/](http://www.teatras.lt/lt/spektakliai/gabriele_labanauskaite_raudoni_batraisciai/); <http://www.galdrama.lt/index.php/raudoni-batraisciai-2011.html> >

<sup>162</sup> *Invisible Monsters* <<http://chuckpalahniuk.net/books/invisible-monsters>>

-G: I think every movement which we are doing artistically about LGBTI issues, it does not matter if it is focused in the LGBTI community or if it is about LGBTI topics in general, it is important. In my opinion, it is better to touch wider content, not just an organization. I mean, of course LGBTI is an organization, but we are speaking artistically. I think associations are not  
 230 influent in the Lithuanian society because they are doing their job, which is nice, but their mode of activism is already old-fashioned and they are working mostly inside the community. If they want to change something more, I think they need to work more into the society itself. There are nice events on LGBTI, conferences and so on; but it is better to do something like for example a screening of a film in the city or in some cinema theater, somewhere outside their offices.  
 235 Understanding that everything costs money, but still I think that Lithuanian LGBTI society is very closed inside. There are clubs, but not everybody can get in. You have to press a bell. It is very symbolic, you know? The doors are kind of a metaphor of the general situation because that clubs are for very private society and their friends. I think it is wrong. Of course it is difficult to change in one day, things are changing step by step, but the more opened activities they do, or  
 240 the more LGBTI community would not be afraid themselves, by showing their lives, then it would be easier for the rest of the people to understand: ok there are lots of people who live this way. For example, nowadays there are lots of topics in TV shows about if homosexual couples should be allowed to have kids. But it is kind of ridiculous discussing because there are some lesbian who have already kids, you know? The life it is going its own way. The laws are staking  
 245 behind; so when they start discussing these topics it is like: Sorry it is too late to discuss that. It is already happening. Of course it is very important to make it legal, but somehow these things are coming so slowly here. And I am wondering, because we are in the European Union, but I think that in some ways we still think in an old-fashioned way and against any laws.

**-A: Do you think that people have the behavior from other past times?**

250 -G: Yes, like in Soviet Times, where homosexuality was totally hidden. If you were homosexual you went directly to the jail or to a mentally house. That is why nobody wanted to say about himself or herself. Either people created families while had love fears secretly, or they stayed alone, single and not married and had some secret relationships.

255 **-A: Is some people living here still in this way? Are they the ones who discriminate themselves?**

-G: Yes exactly. They have friends who are very active people, openly saying that I am gay or lesbian or bisexual, and helping or working in LGBTI, opened families and so one. I think

That is the way to make the situation better. But they are, yes, discriminating themselves. They are hiding who they are, not talking to others, not participating in any gay activity or event because if they put on *Facebook* “I am attending”, maybe somebody sees them there. Of course somebody can say ok, he or she is gay, but thinking this way it is totally wrong. Lots of them do not want to participate at Pride. They say: “You go, do your stuff and we celebrate it at home”. It is like: “Come on! That is not the goal of Pride!”

**-A: What do you think heterosexual people can do to maintain good links with LGBTI people? Which kind of actions they can do?**

**-G:** I think it is much easier to do it from the music, because it is uniting people. I really like for example the culture in Stockholm, where they have not an official gay club, but people know that. It is opened to everybody and it has so good music, so good atmosphere, that heterosexual people is attending as well because it seems so friendly, so relaxed, and there is a nice environment around it. I think it should be the same here in Lithuania. Of course it is not easy to gain it in one day; but for example the music in gay clubs here it is awful, it is totally a disaster. The people who are gay friendly or those who have good taste for music say: “Oh my god I do not want to go there!” But then they get drunk and of course they go anyway. The music it is kind of poor pop music. It is not easy to attract your friends to go there.

**-A: So you think if LGBTI spaces would be more opened in Lithuania would go more heterosexual people there?**

**-G:** Yes. One example is *AVaspo* concert. When we had our 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we did it last year in December in *Soho Club*, and lot of people who are heterosexual came there. Of course they wanted to see the concert, but at the same time it was interesting for them to think: “Hum... it is a new space where I have never been before. Maybe I will never come back, but now it is the occasion and I want to see this space as well”. It was very nice and friendly atmosphere. This event was organized by us, but I think the more events like this they organize themselves, the more different audience they will attract. The next time nobody would be afraid to go inside. Because some conservative people think that it is some kind of orgy place. But then they come in and say, ok this is a place as a place.

**-A: Maybe the LGBTI people have this attitude because some conservative people are pushing them not to show themselves.**



-G: But we come back again to what it was said before: they are discriminating themselves. In our concert, I did not count it with my fingers, but the most of the public were  
 290 heterosexual. The LGBTI people knew that it was an opened event, That is because they did not go at all. For the owner of the club it was good input because the space was full and people were drinking. But before, when we went to speak to him to arrange a concert there, he said openly: “Ok, but we are afraid to lose our LGBTI audience”. I agree and disagree at the same time. From one point I think yes, but maybe they are spoiled in a way. I mean of course not in their everyday  
 295 life, but in this underground culture. They say: “we want to be save, just twenty of us and That is all”. How do you pretend to be accepted openly in the society if you do not want to let the society to get into your environment? In a way I think that some of them want to live a safe live. The situation now is medium in Lithuania, because in the Soviet Times it was so strict, many things forbidden, you were risking your life, your family life, your career. In that way it was very  
 300 strong. Nowadays I would not say that this is the same, but of course it is neither the same as in Stockholm or Holland. It is not so opened and not easy everything, but is medium situation. I think this is the moment for the people to start coming out and to make differences. Now I feel more apathetic energy from the community itself. They are accommodated. Of course there are some people who lost their jobs when they said that they are gay; but I know these people and I  
 305 think it was not because what they are, if because they have kind of personal difficult character. There are for example intellectuals and lawyers that do not worry about their career anymore. I mean, most of their colleagues know that he or she is gay. There are people who do not want to attract the attention into them. They do not want to go and talk on TV, they do not want to talk on the radio or give interviews because of course that attracts more attention. I will call this  
 310 situation medium because they know that there are activists who fight for their rights. This way they are not risking so much anymore: their career or losing their friends. It is not that time. Well, if somebody is risking losing their friends I think they are not your friends at all. But they keep the way of living safe, as far as it is comfortable for them. They do not want to change the situation, they are like: “Leave me in peace, leave alone!”

315       **-A: According to the age of the people, do you think that the young are more opened nowadays?**

-G: Yes of course. There is the generation that is more than forty that they are still behaving from the Soviet Time. I mean that in the Soviet Union they were around twenty or less so they got used to live in this style. I do not meet people openly gay from this age, just few  
 320 people, but it is not the rule. Then my generation, I am 32. The people around 25 till 34 are the

community I have been speaking about mostly. Some of relatives know, some colleges know, but most of them do not want to be active. Some people are active, but not all of them. And then, the younger generations, the people from 18 till 24, they do not see problems at all. I mean, they do not even want to call themselves as “gay”. Some of them yes, “ok, I am homosexual, I am lesbian”, but most of them are keeping a queer identity: “I do not know who I am and That is it”.

**-A: According to their careers or ideological group, which are coming out here?**

**-G:** Well, maybe artist more. But I would say that artist is more kind of that everybody knows it. I cannot name any artist who has come out officially, but mostly people know that. We have a journalist Rokas Žilinskas who said “I am gay”, and also the cinema director Romas Zabarauskas. But it depends if it is officially coming out, I mean in front of the TV or newspapers, or if it is in your circle. Then it depends, because there are very different professions.

**-A: In your opinion, which are the groups trying to change the image of the LGBTI people in Lithuania?**

**-G:** I think this is more in social studies, students or teachers, and gender studies. These are the people who are mostly educating and making seminars and so on; and then artists. I think these are the main two groups.

**-A: Which groups you think are nowadays making pressure against the LGBTI people in Lithuania? What do you think about the Church?**

**-G:** Yes, maybe the Church and some politicians. There are parties against. But I think they are not influential anymore. I mean, the Church is a very big opposition, but young people are not very religious; so this is maybe affecting older people.

**-A: What makes the groups of pressure to be more visible than the LGBTI people? Which ways to act do you think LGBTI people can take from the groups of pressure?**

**-G:** The politicians are manipulating the majority wishes because they know what the majority wants; especially conservative people which is against equal marriage, having children and so on. They are playing according to the music, I will say. I am not even sure if they are against LGBTI themselves, but they are taking this position because they know that they can get more votes during the elections. This is one thing, and another thing is that they are much safer in the way that they do not need to come out to talk on TV. Of course they have more power

because they are more than LGBTI people. From LGBTI, there are just few people who are representing all this. They invite some people from other fields like a cinema director, but we see always the same faces. And, they are not so well prepared to speak on TV as politicians are. In my personal opinion, the rhetoric they use is too emotional or intellectual sometimes. Some people would not understand them. It is not easy, but I think LGBTI people should have in mind that they need to invite wider community, like simple people to go and talk on TV. Of course it is exciting, people get nervous and they do not say everything what they want to say properly, but I think this would be useful. Also people who have good rhetoric and who could convince other people.

360           **-A: Which way you think the new technologies and the social media can help LGBTI people to be more visible towards the rest of the society? Are these kinds of tools helping you to show, for example your music?**

365           **-G:** It is a good question, but it is difficult to answer. I do not know, because I personally, when I am sharing in my *Facebook* profile information about Pride, for example, it always gets very little likes. In general they like other information, but when I write this kind of things, somehow some of the people keep distance. Of course LGBTI groups are always actively commenting to these posts. In music yes, I use it in order to get the audience more involved, to share my interviews and songs. But as a special strategy for LGBTI people I have no answer, I do not know.

370           **-A: But for them to share opinions, news, and to build a stronger community? Do you think that you can find more information on the Internet than on TV about these issues?**

375           **-G:** Yes of course. It is very important to have groups and social nets, and I think there are. With this question you reminded me that there is for example a LGBTI basketball team which I am attending and playing every Sunday. This is a way of communicating, for example at sports. I invite all my friends to play together, even if they are heterosexual, they like the idea very much. The ones that wanted to attend they did not see any problem that it was a LGBTI team. This is the way as I told before, that uniting people, heterosexual and LGBTI. To have one object which is not about the gender at all, it is about anything else. Like for example good music in the club, it is a reason for people to come and have fun. It does not matter if it is gay or heterosexual or whatever. Here the main goal is to play sports. If you like basketball and you want to play it, you are welcomed.

### Interview 3. ROMAS ZABARAUSKAS

– Type: face-to-face interview.

385           **-Andrés: Can you tell me a little bit about you? Have you ever joined any event to support the LGBTI people or are you part of any organization? Are you enrolled in any project/ action now or in the future, focused in the support of the LGBTI people in Lithuania?**

**-Romas:** I studied in Paris for two years at the *Université Paris 8 Vincennes-Saint-Denis* and I did an exchange program to New York, inter-collage for one year, but I was graduated  
390 from the Paris school. I studied film; it was like general studies. Then I have been director in short films since I was teenager; and two years ago I made my first professional Short Film, *Porno Melodrama*, which was the first Lithuanian gay film. We premiered it at the *Berlinale* film festival, in Panorama section, which was well launched. Then, we had a Lithuanian  
395 premiere at *Kino Pavasaris* Vilnius spring film festival. From this moment I came out as gay and it was kind of huge media scandal and attention.

**-A: I would like to ask you more about *Porno Melodrama*. In the description you say that you created this film as a reaction of the state’s homophobia in Lithuania.**

**-R:** Yes, because on that year was a protection on minors law that our parliament tried to  
400 correct. The first correction was really explicitly homophobic. It said that no promotion of homosexual, bisexual and polygamous relationships should be allowed for minors. That cost a huge reaction, both in Lithuania and also the European Parliament made a resolution against it, and our president, actually both of our presidents because they changed by that time, they vetted it. After a huge international pressure, the Lithuanian Parliament made another correction and  
405 now it is more ambiguous, but it still says that no different families from those that are described in our Civil Code should be allowed. In our Civil Code for now we have no gay partnership allowed. At the end I think that law has any power, it was very populous and it does not really work. We have disinformation; gays are not forbidden in Lithuania, but still they tried to push this law to be accepted. When I presented the film I said: “Ok this is an openly gay film, so if  
410 this law works then you should ban this film”. They did not banned it and the organizers of the festival decided to rate the film from 16 years old. It was kind of accessible for minors. It was my provocation and trial; I used the film to criticize this law and homophobia in general.

**-A: What is the project *LGBTI Friendly* places in Vilnius about? You are one of the promoters, right?**

415 **-R:** Yes, check for more information on the *Facebook* page or the website<sup>163</sup>.

**-A: Do you think there is a lack of LGBTI activities here in Lithuania?**

**-R:** Yes, I think there is. There is a lack of more public actions and coming outs. Even the few LGBTI organizations that we have, the main are Lithuanian Gay League and Tolerant Youth Association. They are doing good job but they are not good at communicating what they are  
420 doing. Sometimes they do big projects supported by the European Union, but they do not communicate well for the LGBTI community but also for the rest of the society. I think we need more publicity, but it is coming.

**-A: Why do you think people are afraid to come out?**

**-R:** Well, because they have their careers and personal comfort.

425 **-A: Do you think there are groups of pressure who are provoking this situation?**

**-R:** Yes, the whole society is quite homophobic. If they are hair-dressers, or fashion designers, for example, they are afraid of losing their clans or their jobs.

**-A: Why the society is homophobic in Lithuania?**

**-R:** I think because in the Soviet Union homosexuality was criminalized, and they do not  
430 have access to information. The whole public spheres and Media, and politicians are quite cynical. They consider this subject not very important and even if they are not homophobic themselves, they play with this to get more votes or power. Even though I think even more and more people will stand up for gay rights. As more gays will come out, the sooner it will change.

**-A: Are you feeling that something is changing here?**

435 **-R:** Yes, I am. I mean, I personally do not have a lot of problems because I am gay. I started my career at the same time I came out so I am building everything on being opened. I do not feel that I am risking something or whatever. I am lucky to have a tolerant family and to live

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<sup>163</sup> *Facebook* page *LGBT Friendly* Vilnius

<<https://www.facebook.com/LGBTfriendlyvilnius?ref=ts&fref=ts>>

in a big city. But I understand that is more complicated in smaller towns. I do not say that everybody should be forced to come out and to be opened about it, because of course is a personal decision and it can be very difficult, but I think that this is the most effective way to change the public opinion. Either for public persons to come out or any gay person, it will support change.

**-A: Which way you think heterosexual people can help the LGBTI to come out?**

**-R:** Well, they can be equally involved in, for example, writing articles, participating in LGBTI activism, or just support gay rights in public. It is still very progressive.

**-A: According to one sentence in your film *Porno Melodrama*, gay “It is not coming from God, if it is Satan’s work”. Can you explain me what you pretend to represent?**

**-R:** Yes. The character who says this is a priest and he’s representing the Roman Catholic Church, which has huge influence in Lithuania. Even though, it is difficult to say which is the exact influence, because some people that is associated with the Church, they do not really go there and they do not really believe in the main dogmas. For example on *Delfi*<sup>164</sup>, the most popular website, there is sometimes this “vox populi” and people tend to disagree with celibate or they support the right of abortion. If people do that very quickly, they will be ready to change their opinion about LGBTI rights. But of course that Church contributes, because they have power and resources to push the propaganda against gays. They are very out-spoken, you know? They talk with their community, bring enthusiasm, and That is something which we should learn I think. The job of the priest is to talk, but we should also talk.

**-A: Which do you think is the main group of pressure against LGBTI people in Lithuania?**

**-R:** I do not think there is only one opposing group. Yes, the Church has a lot of influence, but also politicians. It is difficult to say, because it is not that there is a secret plot. It is just that people do not know enough, so when they will learn, they will see that, ok, these people are gay, or someone from my family is gay. Then, they will change their opinion very quickly. They will see that it is just part of life.

**-A: Do you mean there is a lack of education in these issues?**

**-R:** Yes, lack of education, information and publicity.

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<sup>164</sup> *Delfi* online website < <http://www.delfi.lt/> >

**-A: Can you highlight another person who you think is doing good things for LGBTI people in Lithuania?**

**-R:** There are different people who are working in their own ways. For example, 470 *Ruslanas Kirilkinas*<sup>165</sup> is the main celebrity who is openly gay here. He's a singer who six years ago more or less, he got a scandal, because gay pictures of him were published. Then he went to Finland in order to escape the scandal. There he participated in a reality show and he married a Finnish man. He came back to Lithuania and now it is somehow weird, but people love him and he is openly gay. At the beginning, he damaged a bit the LGBTI image because he was always 475 saying that everything was good and that he was not feeling discriminated. But, recently, a few months ago, he started to say that he feels discriminated because it was a case in one village when he had a concert, someone through an egg to him. Now he is starting to be more serious about it and he has huge influence, because it is a very important pop-culture figure. Of course there are the organizations, and I will say that also intellectuals are doing good job, as Nida 480 *Vasiliauskaitė*<sup>166</sup> or *Artūras Tereškinas*<sup>167</sup>, who are writing more serious articles. Maybe they are more influential more in urban people opinion. But it is very important because it mobilizes urban people. It is like; if you are intellectual you have to support gay rights. That is good.

**-A: Do you think that depending on your age, people participate more in LGBTI projects?**

**-R:** Yes, I think that younger generations could be more out-spoken because they are less 485 afraid, but I do not know because there are a lot of older people too who make a lot of work.

**-A: What about if they are living in big cities or small towns?**

**-R:** Yes, for sure. It is easier to do something when you are in a big city. Actually That is 490 why *Ruslanas* is so cool, because his audience is not in big cities, but he is actually doing tours in small villages and That is why it is very important because he reaches entirely totally different audiences than intellectual activists do.

**-A: What is the representation of the LGBTI people on the Media here in Lithuania?**

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<sup>165</sup> *Ruslanas Kirilkinas* - Lithuanian gay singer. Online biography < <http://www.music.lt/lt/grupe/Ruslanas-Kirilkinas/2266/> >

<sup>166</sup> *Nida Vasiliauskaitė*: Lithuanian educator, feminist and publicist < <http://www.delfi.lt/news/ringas/lit/n-vasiliauskaite-atsakymas-p-skrubiui.d?id=61258831> >

<sup>167</sup> *Arturas Tereškinas*. Online biography < <http://www.tereskinas.com/apie> >

495 **-R:** I think the main stream is quite cynical in Lithuania, and they care for commercial success, so probably most of them have any values. This is the public opinion. I think there are lots of possibilities to change. I think lots of journalists are themselves quite intellectual and when you give them something what fits them, they can be for it also. I do not think it is that bad. I think that we simply would need more people who understand how Media works.

**-A: How can be the Social Media helpful for the LGBTI community in Lithuania?**

500 **-R:** Yeah Social Media is good because you can connect with people from different cities at one place very quickly. There are some groups for LGBTI people or feminists and it works very well, because it is also a way to feel okay about your sexuality. It is cheap also and everyone can create a group or a page.

505 **-A: Do you thing that people can find more information about LGTB issues more on the Social Media than on the traditional Media?**

**-R:** You can find information on-line, of course. But I do not know if you can find a lot of information on Media. I think what you can find on Social Media is just acceptance and find people like you from different cities. There are specific groups, for example *Queer Youth LT*. Yes it helps you to feel normal and to feel supported also, if anyone has some problem or something. I do not remember that kind of massive project on Social Media that could be made. And about me, my profile in *Facebook* is public, so everyone who wants can add and read or comment, or even send me some private messages. That can be helpful I guess. It is good because you can find a mix, like a group for young people, another for old people, who share their experiences about Soviet Union. That is really good.



515 **Interview 4. AUGUSTAS ČIČELIS**

– Type: face-to-face interview.

**-Andrés: As far as I know, you are organizing an event for the Baltic Pride 2013. Can you tell me more about it?**

520 **-Augustas:** Yes. I am not in the Baltic Pride as a whole, but I am coordinating one part of it with my friends. We are basically organizing a film festival. Last time this festival happened without the Baltic Pride, but this year it will be together. At the end of July it is a very bad moment to place the festival, because the people are leaving for holidays, but we wanted to make it as event of the Baltic Pride. It will be free entrance.

**-An: Which kind of films are you going to display?**

525 **-Au:** Various films. Well, we are trying to have as many new films as possible. There are LGBTI films which are non-documentaries, so feature movies. The initial idea was to have less activist movies, but to have more personal, touchy stories, so that people could associate with them. Since we want to make it for free, we need to look for funding in embassies and different centers. And it wasn't really easy; it was quite difficult. Some embassies for example, or cultural  
530 centers supported particular movies. They said: "you can have this movie or you will not have any movie. You take this, or you do not take anything". We did not take all the movies which were suggested, but there are lots of compromises, so we moved a bit from the initial idea. There are some activist movies too, so I think it is good in general. It will not be a big festival, because we are taking only one cinema center which is called *Skalvia*, but for the whole week; so there  
535 will not be anything else, just us.

**-An: Are you going to show any film from the Soviet times?**

**-Au:** As I told you, we tried to make the festival more personal, less activist. But at the end we got the movies what we got, because we have some compromises. Talking about soviet films, I think it is nothing from this context. The majority of them are western movies. Oh yeah,  
540 it will be one movie from the Czech Republic. But we wanted to have new movies and there are not so many produced in the post-soviet context. Also to have personal stories from that context it is a little bit difficult; you can find some documentaries which have been produced in the post-soviet bloc, but there aren't nice movies, as catchy.

**-An: Why do you think is that?**

545           **-Au:** I think it is also lack of support to filmmakers. There was a movie made in  
Lithuania with LGBTI storyline, about three years ago. That film is called Porno Melodrama,  
from Romas Zabarauskas. There are lots of critics coming from it. As a representation of LGBTI  
people and the situation, it is rather banal, a bit dramatized. But in the way it is good that  
something is happening, that it is something produced here. There is a serious lack of LGBTI  
550 representations and movies in post-soviet countries.

**-An: Which way do you think it is useful for the society to watch those movies?**

**-Au:** It is very important in both sides: for LGBTI people to feel part of the mainstream  
discourse, or in general of the Media discourse. On another side, it is very important for the rest  
of the society to see how LGBTI people feel, how they live, that they are presents in all the  
555 spheres of life. LGBTI people have their rights to be there, to have presence.

**-An: Can you tell me somebody that is doing a good job trying to challenge LGBTI  
phobia in Lithuania?**

**-Au:** It is a difficult question. I think that most of the work that people are doing in  
general, involve LGBTI activisms. I do not see much harm in those who are involved in  
560 activism. For example, LGL are doing quite good work, but they are mostly doing I think legal  
stuff and less with representations as such. They think they are representing LGBTI people, but  
there is just always one guy who is usually everywhere, the chair board probably. Maybe not  
everybody wants to do that, but it is also very narrow representation. In general we always see  
the same faces. Some other people are doing good job but they are not public as well. Talking  
565 about the public discourse, not the one within community, this is more hidden. It is a serious lack  
of people who are available on breaking street.

**-An: How LGBTI people are represented on Media?**

**-Au:** I think it have changed a lot, throughout the last years. The biggest change was  
when the last Baltic Pride happened three years ago. I think the change was really visible,  
570 because before, most people just did not know who LGBTI people are. Still, usually people see  
lot of gay man, less lesbian woman and even less of everyone else. Even though, before LGBTI  
people were imagined as flamboyant characters, just staying out there, showing their asses in  
front of the camera and enjoying that. They have shown images from the western prides, which  
can be more associated with cross-dressing representations, braking gender, breaking the norms.

575 **-An: But, which was the treatment of that on Media?**

**-Au:** It wasn't neutral, everything was very much sexualized. But as I said, from the last Baltic Pride it changed, they show images of cute guys, smiling, and we got those images. But of course, still there are a lot of negative stereotypes.

580 **-An: What do you think heterosexual people can do in order to build strong links among LGBTI people and the whole society?**

**-Au:** I think like general actions saying that it is ok, it is nothing bad, and that they have friends and that they know someone; simple messages, like very routine, which will be like in their everyday life. This is important. But also, not just talking about heterosexual people, but those who have some specific roles in the society such as doctors, psychologists, also politicians, in who people trust a lot. I think some of them are doing really good job. For example, there is a physiological helpful phone called Jaunimo Linija (Youth Line). It is the most important line here and Paulius Skruibis is the responsible. He gives really supportive and positive messages towards LGBTI people. Also Dainius Pūras, who was involved in the United Nations I think. He is psychiatrists and psychotherapist. In his last article he was mentioning that LGBTI are suffering. He referred to bullying as such and how is not dealt properly and so on.

**-An: Who do you think is the most group of pressure against LGBTI people?**

**-Au:** The nationalists, patriots, neo-Nazis groups, who have their prides, their parades. They have no sanctions; nobody is blamed as such for it. They want to break laws and to march wherever they want. Even if it is banned, they will march in the main avenue. I think they have lot of influence, but also some politicians are involved with them. Even the president of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė said "You call them Nazis, I call them country lovers", or something like this. She was not critical towards their actions. She is more neutral, but this is much more radical from people who are in the parliament. One example is Petras Gražulis, some people really believes and support him. There are others who are smarter, like Mantas Adomėnas; he is doctorate at Cambridge University. You can see that he is perceived differently. There are also some psychiatrist and psychologists who have specific status or being professors at universities, who are saying that it is not fine, that it is destroying values and the society as such. So I think there are groups, but they are somehow associated with the neo-Nazis. At the end they all support that movement and these traditional values. Sometimes it is just incredible what groups you can come out with. Some organizations which are getting money from the

government, they are entirely against LGBTI people. Suddenly, a random institution can come out and say something horrible against gays and you think “OMG this institution exists?” What happens is that those nationalists are working everywhere. For example, *Ričardas Čekutis* was working in one organization which is associated with the holocaust.

610           **-An: According to their profession, which LGTB person is coming out more in Lithuania?**

**-Au:** It is very difficult, because public coming out it is done by a public person. Other people can come out, but they are not publicly, they are just regular people. But I think in these softer fields such performers, musicians, artists. It is easier to come out there. Those professions  
615 which are based in a very strict voice networking and business, or politicians, they find more difficult to come out. Also in the professions who are typically male or masculine.

**-An: Do you think that young people in Lithuania are starting to support more LGBTI people?**

**-Au:** It is difficult to say actually. I think probably yes, but it depends who those young  
620 people are. When you have parents who are homophobic, it is very difficult to deal with that. The generations are not dying, they do not dye and the next generation will be a new one. Similar ideas and behaviors are continuing from one generation to another. Of course, probably now young people learn more about it from various sources, but there are many homophobic youth as well. In school I think homophobic acts are quite justified and nobody pay too much  
625 attention to those jokes, and remarks and offenses. Since it is unpunished people think that it is even funny: “cock” and “ass”.

**-An: Do you think some LGBTI people discriminate themselves instead of the rest of the society? Is it related to the history?**

**-Au:** I think it is probably natural instinct, they try to cut the ties with the offenders or  
630 who they feel afraid of. They try to build the community to be safer. But of course they face other problems. Lot of people who are not out say that they do not feel any pressure, but those people have lot of money and they can allow themselves which contact want to choose. On the other side, we have this bubble, where they are living temporary with their LGBTI friends. You create your circle with your gay friends and you do not go anywhere else: you go to gay places,  
635 watch gay movies, etc. They use the online platform “Grinder” where they are locked searching for more gay people, for whatever reasons, sex or others. It can be compulsive at one point. For

you is very save to search for sex; you believe that you want only sex, because That is what gay people do. You do not do any other things and you do not realize that there are many things that could give you the same or even more pleasure than sex. The problem is that whenever you want  
 640 to get out from this circle, you have to face the negative treats of the society, and it is very dangerous. It is also very limiting to cut the ties with the society, because then you do not get access to lot of things and you do not know that the rest of the world exists. It is very narrow at the end. It does not favor them in the way they are not visible to the rest of the society. Even though, you cannot blame people for living their lives. Most people live as it is more comfortable  
 645 for them at that particular moment. People are that creatures who say: “I am safe now. Maybe in 20 years it would be better”. But it may not be better if you do not do anything to change your situation.

**-An: Which do you think are the groups who are more supportive towards the LGBTI people?**

650 **-Au:** I think psychologists become more supportive now. Then, of course general human rights organizations, people working with other vulnerable groups, but not necessarily people from those vulnerable groups.

**-An: What happen to those groups?**

655 **-Au:** They do not really support LGBTI people. For example, national minorities, they would be saying that they are against LGBTI people. Even though some people may have similar feelings or similar experiences, they do not want to be associated with LGBTI people. There are people who have the belief that if you are male, you do not try to be involved in something else. Even you might be male and gay, but you are supposed not to support woman, because you are still male. They are getting what is called the pluses from the society, and they are trying not to  
 660 be with other groups, which are disregarded or disrespected: “We are this and this but there are people who are gay, and this is much worse than us”.

**-An: Which are the strategies the anti LGTB groups use in order to attract the rest of the society to follow them?**

665 **-Au:** I do not think is something original and it is everywhere else. The family values play a very big role. Those values were not created that far ago in the world. They say that “LGBTI people destroy family values and this is referred to the children. LGBTI people try to recluse your children to change them to be gay as well, they are frightening them”. I think it is a

very good way to attract other people, because children are very important for them. Using children is the easier card to play. It is easy also to attribute all of this to sexual things, perversion, pedophilia and so on. They say: “ok let’s try to put everything together”. In things people feel afraid and unsafe is where they try to find the guilty in LGBTI people. Before I would say that is the lack of knowledge of some people, but now it is not only about it I think.

**-An: Which strategies the anti LGBTI groups can be adopted in the LGBTI discourse in order to attract more people?**

675 **-Au:** Well it is difficult because when they say “you are destroying family values”, you cannot reply with them the same statement. Sometimes you can if you have a good argument. They are usually playing more with emotions and we have to play back with arguments. On that side many people can just say “oh it is bad for children”, they do not have to find arguments; it is ok because there are still stereotypes and views. On this side, the pro LGBTI side, we have to find arguments but also good ways of persuasion. The play it is unfair and it is very difficult to play in this side (LGBTI side).

**-An: How do you think the social media can help the LGBTI people in Lithuania to fight for their rights?**

685 **-Au:** I think that Social Media is very accessible for the people, it is very easy to use, it happens constantly and you get notified. You can access almost from everywhere. It is also a very good way to find who is pro and who is against LGBTI people. It is more visual, so it is easier to play with visual information on it, than other media which is more written. It does not have to be serious, and when being activist it is very important not to be serious I think. For example, even for our film festival, we will be using social media. It is the easier way to reach the people and for them to reach this event; you do not have to look for it, it just pops up somewhere. Some people like it, then others find it out and like it also, and the chain continues. Creating groups it is also important I think, because when you see that your friend likes this group or is member of the group, maybe you may consider to be supporter as well. It makes you think: “Ok, my friends support LGBTI people; maybe it is not that bad”.

695 **-An: Do you think that through these groups LGBTI people can be more united?**

**-Au:** Yes I think so. They could be more united, but at the same time it can be a disassociation from the rest of the society as I mentioned before. You have some actions online; then, maybe someone just has sex and then goes home. I think it works in both sides. Social

700 media creates fictional community which you feel part of, but in reality maybe not, because it is only online. Also, the people who have any knowledge about LGBTI, probably for them it is easier to join anti-LGBTI groups. But I think it still works very much. I think it is just another ground where we have to function nowadays. It is not a choice to be there or not. If you have a battle, if you are fighting for something, you are fighting online as well. It is a different perspective. I think somehow there is a relation online and offline.

705 **Interview 5.** ARTŪRAS RUDOMANSKIS; MINDAUGAS KLUONIS

– Type: face-to-face interview.

**-Andrés: Are you involved in any action for LGBTI rights? Which kind of projects are you developing now?**

710 **-Artūras:** We are doing many things, starting for implementing projects or organizing events and also doing political lobby. For example, we have been one of the organizers of the *Baltic Pride*, starting from 2010 till now. We were implementing a project for the elimination of the hate speech from the Media. We are writing complains to public persecutors and informing about laws. We are organizing LGBTI campaigns for the politicians who are supporting LGBTI rights.

715 **-An: Are you referring to the activities you do at the association or as you personally?**

**-Mindaugas:** About the association. Actually, I would like to clarify it a little bit. Tolerant Youth Association, especially at the beginning, was a mean to avoid publicity as a person. If you are doing it in the name of the association, that means that you should not feel, for  
720 example, complaint about hate speech yourself; the association is doing it in your name, and you remain anonymous, except that person from the association who sign it.

**-Ar:** People were afraid to write complains to the public persecutors about hate speech.

**-An: What do you think is the background why the people are now still afraid to express themselves?**

725 **-Ar:** There are many things at the background. First of all Lithuania was a former Soviet Union country. After the independence, the Catholic Church took a very big part into having freedom. The Church had really huge impact for the people and still has in the political life. That is why the country is developing itself too slow. That is why people are homophobic. If we see  
730 into the law, in the Soviet Union you could get the imprisonment for having homosexual relations between two men, except woman. Between women it was allowed. It was an article in the penal code.

**-M:** Actually that law was applied in the Soviet Union and it was abolished in 1993, when 17 men were delisted from prison, who were sentenced for that article.



**-An: Then, which is the maximum group of pressure nowadays?**

735 **-M:** I think that the main obstacle to support LGBTI people is the fear to be aligned with them. In Soviet Union, gay people were in a jail and they were the lowest. That is why the society who has strong influences from the soviet life, are afraid that if they support LGBTI people they will lose their social status. If you lose it, it means that you cannot do your political career; you cannot have better job, etc. Then is like: “ok I will be silent and not speak about  
740 LGBTI rights”. It is also internal for many LGBTI people. For example, I was silent and not speaking until the association was created, and I would never write a complaint by myself until one or two years ago.

**-An: Do you mean that some people discriminate themselves instead of the society itself?**

745 **-Ar:** Yes, That is even a regular thing I would say. There are still a lot of people who are afraid to speak about their homosexuality in front of the society.

**-M:** If there is a guy who is very feminine, some people are afraid to go with him in the street because the people would know that he is homosexual.

**-Ar:** They are afraid of stigmatizing.

750 **-An: Which is the fear about?**

**-M:** Is fear to be ostracized, which means to be put apart.

**-An: Does it really happen, to be gay and not to get a job, for example?**

**-M:** Yes, it really happens. We are living in a small country, the jobs are limited, people know each other; many people are even afraid if the Media would publish something about them.  
755 If you lose your job, you cannot find another one so easily. There are those people who hide their identity; this way they are more save in their work, but if their identity is clear, sometimes they lose their jobs. An example is a former teacher at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, **Arnas Zdanevičius**. He came out in public and the university just fired him.

**-Ar:** This was an interesting story, because he went to the court, and it is the first time  
760 when a gay person goes to the court and wins the case. But more interesting was when Arnas went to a competition to get a new job in another university and for the same reason he did not get the job, even he had better marks. There are similar stories that we still do not know, because

the people do not go to complain in public. In Lithuania there is a lack of demonstrations, the use of your democratic power. For example, in many Western countries of the EU, people are not  
765 afraid to talk about many things, and they are feeling solidarity towards those people who are fighting for their rights. For example Spain, France, they are going to the streets and they are protesting. Here in Lithuania, even in topics not related with LGBTI rights, people still do not protest at the streets.

**-M:** Actually Lithuania have never been a liberal state or have not had liberal politicians  
770 in power. The last democracy in the 15<sup>th</sup> century lasted just for eleven years. During the Soviet Times it was said that “if you would be silent, you will not be sorry”. That is because people do not like to express their opinion; it was the atmosphere that you could be persecuted for what you said. People are thinking: “Ok, maybe is someone who talk, but I prefer to be silent and wait to see what happens. If it is good, it is ok for me”.

**-An: Then, do you think that this behavior comes from Soviet Times?**

**-Ar:** I would not say that this behavior comes only from the Soviet Times, because culturally it mixes signs from even earlier periods.

**-M:** For example, the serfdom was not abolished in Lithuania till 1861. It was abolished in Spain and England in XV century, and in most Western countries under Napoleon's conquests.  
780 After the independence from the Russian Empire, there was a nationalist dictatorship in Lithuania by Antanas Smetona (1926-1940). The military law in Lithuania was not abolished, just during one year in the interwar period.

**-An: Do you think young people are more opened now to say that they are LGBTI?**

**-M:** I think that the gap between generations is not very big in Lithuania. I was lecturer at  
785 the university and I noticed that the people is still afraid, even those who are supporting LGBTI rights, to speak about it. I was giving a topic for a girl who I knew that belongs to the New Left movement and she is very supportive, but she did not want to talk about LGBTI rights in public. She was worried about what their colleagues could think. She was about 19 years old then. It was two years ago.

**-Ar:** When we joined the European Union I think that many things changed much faster  
790 than ever. Before joining the EU, they were setting up all the laws to be adapted to the EU requests. Within the EU, the possibility to emigrate was presented to the people. This made us

stronger as human beings; now we can escape if we are afraid of something. For example, LGBTI people often emigrate; they are more flexible in the way that they are not creating a family here as heterosexual couples do. They usually move to big towns in Europe.

**-An: Speaking about the Media, what do you think is the image they give about the LGBTI people?**

**-Ar:** In Lithuania the Media is divided in two sectors: the groups which get lot of money for their programming and the ones which not. The second group, in order to get more attention and audience, is looking for how to raise the emotions of the people by showing them very simple and easy-understandable things. I could say that the whole Media in Lithuania is more or less based in scandals. They do not go deep into the topics. That is why Media is quite homophobic. Also, some of the owners of the big corporations which monopolize TV, newspapers, etc., use all those mediums to spread homophobia. For example, the group of *Respublika*<sup>168</sup>, they use even hate speech towards LGBTI people. The information can come from the wishes of people from outside the country. It can be the idea from Russia to show that Lithuania does not support human rights.

**-M:** Talking about Media, now there are some changes. For example, around 5 or 7 years ago, the news about LGBTI people came at the end. Now they are coming in the serious news, at the beginning. It happens especially in *Lietuvos Rytas*, *Delfi* and those Media who want to be a serious media. Those who are yellow media, they are still scandalizing LGBTI people. When the TV shows a movie, especially TV3, they use the word “fag” instead of “gay”. I do not know why, but you can clearly hear the person saying “I am gay” and they translate it into “I am fag”.

**-Ar:** Well, there are different translations. In Lithuanian language if you would translate “fag” directly, that would be “iškrypėlis”. Also other definitions are “žydras” (it is old soviet slang used in USSR) and “pedikas” (from russian “pedik” which is short form for “pederast”). They never say “gay”, they use other words.

**-M:** In the News they use the word “homosexualist” instead of homosexual or LGBTI supporter. They put this ending “-ist”, because they pretend to show that this is an ideology, as for example the Marxism, liberalism, communism, so “homosexualism”.

**-An: According to the career or ideological group, which groups do you think decide to go out the closet?**

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<sup>168</sup> Webpage of *Respublika*: <<http://www.respublika.lt/>>

**-Ar:** Well, it is very hard to say actually.

**-M:** Human rights defenders.

825 **-Ar:** If we speak about artists or people from the Media, I would not say that they come out more, because their career depends on those homophobes sometimes.

**-M:** Actually **Ruslanas Kirilkinas** is a singer and he's openly gay. He did not come out by himself; some pictures of him with other guy were published on the Media. It was a scandal. I do not remember any person who has come out in Lithuania in the artistic field himself.

830 **-An: Is that singer now accepted in Lithuania?**

**-Ar:** Well, he is participating at the moment in "The Golden Voice of Lithuania", and he is one of the most popular singers around the country.

**-M:** But in some places he has experienced very big homophobia, especially in small towns.

835 **-Ar:** He was attacked a few months ago. He was singing at a School and in front of the children, a neo-Nazi came somehow into that place and he threw eggs into him<sup>169</sup>.

**-An: In your opinion, which are the groups which are supporting more the LGBTI people?**

840 **-Ar:** If we look at the NGOs, they are human rights defenders; but even inside them there are some who defend other human rights, but not LGBTI rights. For example, I remember an accident when disable people disagreed to rent an office for LGBTI people. There are some liberal politicians. I remember that the Lithuanian Social Democrat Union spread a press release about the support of the LGBTI marriage in 2009. But it was the young generation, so they got a very big warning from the official party: "do not do this anymore". And then the topic was  
845 closed. Also we have the "New Left", which is more an intellectual movement, and anarchists. They are not against LGBTI rights; they are more pro and participate in the *Baltic Pride*.

**-M:** Also musicians as the group *Skamp*, who participated in Eurovision Song Contest in 2001 with the song "You got style" and got the thirteenth place.

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<sup>169</sup> *Ruslanas Kirilkinas victim of a homophobic attack* [YouTube video]  
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d-qHNzsHAho>>

**-An: According to your experiences, what is the tool the LGBTI-phobia groups use to attract and convince the society towards them?**

**-Ar:** I think people do not know enough about LGBTI rights and they are scared about things which they do not know. Those who are against LGBTI people they usually use such speech like “they will come to take your children”, etc.

**-M:** We have religion, we have money and power. LGBTI people lack all of this. Any human rights organizations or any NGO in Lithuania is not supported by the government. In words of the former Prime Minister Mr. Brazauskas: “NGO it is just three people’s opinion”. The NGOs should write their projects, usually in order to get financing. It is a very big democracy machine which consumes all your time.

**-Ar:** And even if you do, sometimes you are persecuted because you are doing something. We (the TJA) developed an Intercultural Learning Project at Schools in Lithuania, which was financed by the European Social Found. The responsible for the implementation was the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science. Even that ministry had lots of complains.

**-M:** It was a really big campaign made by Media, public persecutors and politicians. It means that the anti-LGBTI groups wrote complains that we were developing a project. Then the Schools received letters (we were not informed about it), from the public persecutors, asking information about the project. Some Schools did not want to participate in the project after that, because they were afraid.

**-An: But the project was not about LGBTI rights, if intercultural learning!**

**-Ar:** It was about intercultural learning, but even though, LGBTI people are a part of it.

**-M:** Actually, they said that we were “spreading LGBTI propaganda at Schools”. Then, the politicians from conservative parties complained to the ministry and asked for information. After that, our politicians came asking for documents of the project too.

**-Ar:** Normally, they are supposed to check once for each project, but we were checked three times. At the end we implemented that project, but all the time with kind of persecution. All the time we were thinking more about bureaucratic things instead of how to implement better our project.

**-M:** we are not sure if the Schools would cooperate with us more, because they were also feeling big pressure.

**-An: What was the project about?**

880 **-Ar:** Well, we prepared the Intercultural Learning as seminars for the teachers, and then the teachers had to start creating the methods to implement the intercultural learning in their lessons to the children. The teachers were from different subjects, for example math, geography or history. They implemented those methods, without losing what they were supposed to teach by their program. It was created a book of methodology, explaining also what intercultural  
885 learning is. Now it can be implemented in other Schools, because they have access to such kind of material. We implemented the project in 11 Schools and we had 110 teachers participating. In the project participated also few parents who were from different ethnical minorities. We invited also some NGOs from those regions. We covered all the districts of Lithuania: a school per region. At the end, there was a research covering the entire project, and how it was implemented;  
890 we made some recommendations for the future. The project finished last year 2012, in December.

**-An: How could you know that the teachers were implementing that in their lessons?**

**-Ar:** Because the schools had to sign formal agreements to participate in the project. At the beginning of the project, we purposed to the Schools to be equal partners as we were. They  
895 were also financially responsible. Some schools couldn't break the agreement even they wanted to. At the beginning they thought that the project was about dances, music, gastronomy or languages from different countries. During the project they understood that the topic was much deeper. That was one of the obstacles, because some of the teachers were against. For example, in a seminar about black people, a teacher was drawing a swastika on his paper and said to his  
900 colleague "How long we will tolerate those monkeys?" I would not say that every teacher was like that. There were also very interesting and very nice teachers, but if we would not do a previous research before the implementing of the project, we could think that every teacher is xenophobe or homophobe. Even though, supporters are afraid to talk and express their opinion because maybe they can be persecuted.

905 **-M:** They are afraid if their names appear on the Media. The parents can say: "I do not want this person to teach my children".

**-Ar:** In one village, there was even a pray organized in the Church against this project. I think now it would be very difficult to develop a project with the school from that village, because even they are in favor of human rights, they do not want to be in troubles. They are clearly saying to your eyes sometimes: “I am sorry, but if somebody knows that we are working together... We are afraid about our children”.

**-An: Now I would like to ask you about the Social Media, the new technologies. How you conceive them as a tool to increase the visibility of the LGBTI people in Lithuania?**

**-M:** Actually I think yes, that *Facebook* makes people feel more comfortable in supporting LGBTI rights. When we had the pride here, it was a group who was joined by 20 thousand people who were against LGBTI. But also it was another group joined by two thousand people who were supporting. If you are in *Facebook*, especially with your real name, and you join this group, it means that you are not afraid to express yourself. I do not think that many people would support it in public, but in *Facebook*, yes. There is also the possibility to communicate with more people at one time. When something is in *Facebook*, sometimes we “like” or we come to the event and so on.

**-An: So, do you think that these kinds of tools are helping LGBTI people to be more united and have more communication?**

**-M:** Yes, Internet made a revolution in LGBTI people lives. Twenty years ago, the only way you could find LGBTI people, especially if you were living in a small town, was newspapers. There you could find five or six advertisements, but if they would discover that was for same sex, they were banned at all. When the Internet came, first “Microsoft third” was very popular. After that was more popular *MSN*, now *Gay Romeo* and *Skype*. If you have “Gay Romeo”, you can search on your self-phone other guys around you. Before, at the ads, you could find anyone.

**-Ar:** It is also very important because in those platforms you can talk to people like you, and then feel that being LGBTI is normal. The Social Media gives the possibility to express yourself in your accounts, for example by publishing something in support of LGBTI people. Then you realize after a month or two that nothing bad happened. Of course some people have faced some troubles, but it is not as dangerous as they thought at the beginning. I would add to this the idea of the ‘email groups’. Maybe it is something very classic, but some organizations and people join these groups. There you can find, starting from discussions and ending with

concrete information about some topics. It is quasi anonymous, but it is very important for the people because this way you learn things and you can discuss. Also the Lithuanian LGBTI people have a website which is called *Gayline.lt*<sup>170</sup>, which is the most popular, and this is not only for chatting or meeting other people, because you can create your profile. It attracts more people, but at the same time it is a news portal about LGBTI in Lithuania. People who are working on *gayline* are there for free. They are just few people and if it were not for them, this website would be already dead. Actually many things in Lithuania depends on few people who are working on that. If we look to the political site, we would see that there are few politicians who are supportive and working very hard on this topic. If you see to the organizations, you can also find a few of them...

**-An: And why is that?**

**-Ar:** Maybe because those people who started to work they believe in what they are doing from their hearths. That is the most important thing for me. If you believe what you are doing, that makes you stronger.

**-M:** In Lithuania there is no tradition to join any association. It is like: “ok someone is doing that, let’s wait”.

**-Ar:** There are some people, who decide to do something good for the society, but they are not responsible or patient enough. They want to work a little and get very fast results in very short period of time. I think that many things are related on a long term, and you need to work hard on them. Organizations depend a lot on volunteers.

**-An: Coming back to the social networks, do you think that LGBTI information you can find about Lithuania is more on the Internet than in traditional media?**

**-M:** Actually you can find information about many countries, not just Lithuania. Sometimes people are looking for English-based information. This way, they can compare with the Media made in Lithuania. Another thing is that ten years ago it was very seldom to show your profile picture in any social network, now is totally common.

**-Ar:** I remember how we started to attract more people to our website. We created 30 fake profiles in order to attract them and make them feel that there are nice and beautiful people

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<sup>170</sup> Gayline webpage <[www.gayline.lt](http://www.gayline.lt)>



who is not afraid about showing his/her sexual orientation. Those profiles were erased later, of course.

**-An: So you mean that people is not afraid to show who they are?**

970 **-M:** Social Media is more public, but on the street people would be uncomfortable if they recognize that you are the same as the one in the profile photo. It is the same as if you meet somebody at the club, which is a closed place. Then, they see you at the street and they feel afraid too. Social Media helps to extend different feelings to the society. If somebody shares information about LGBTI issues, the rest can press “like” and so on. But in the public spheres, especially in small towns, still if your neighbors know that you are gay, there is a bad reaction  
975 from them.

**-Ar:** I think that by using Social Media and social networks, you can reach very quickly your target group in order to organize some kind of protest, meeting or activity. But at the same time, the people start to discuss on the Social Media but not in public, and they become lazy to go out at the streets and protest there.

980

**Interview 6. ELENA DAPKŪNAITĖ**

– Type: face-to-face interview.

**-Andrés: Can you tell me a little bit if you have ever participated in any event for LGBTI people or if you are in any association?**

985 **-Elena:** I participate in a project called the *Living Library*. We collect stereotypes which are present in our society. The project is developed by the Lithuanian National Social Integration Institute, where I am as a volunteer.

**-A: Why do you think Lithuania needs these projects?**

990 **-E:** It is very important because, even people have no so many prejudices, they still do not know about the topic itself. They ask stupid things and they come to you and say: “Oh I have no stereotypes but I have never meet a lesbian in my life”. I am like: “Oh I am sure you did”, but we are all kind of hidden so you do not know that. In the project are participating volunteers who belong to social groups which are stigmatized: ex-prisoners, lesbians, gays, roma people, addicted people to alcohol and drugs, Jewish people, etc. Sometimes we are invited to schools or  
995 public events, music festivals, etc. People can come and talk to us and ask us questions. They have some stereotypes so they can erase them from their mind. For example, they think that all lesbians hate man. So they come and ask me. I reply: “No, I like man. I mean, I am friend of them and so on”. They do not know, they simply do not know. So I help them to know more.

**-A: Are you involved in any other projects?**

1000 **-E:** I am in the Lithuanian Gay League. This association is fighting for LGBTI rights since 1993, so it is a long time. I am board member and volunteer. It means that I can make decisions or influent some decisions which are in process. It does not mean that I am responsible of the projects, but I do what it can help.

1005 **-An: In which way you think the LGBTI associations as LGL can help in building a stronger network among LGBTI people in Lithuania?**

**-E:** Working more with the community.

**-A: Which projects are you developing now at LGL?**

1010 **-E:** We have now for example a hate crimes project. There is a platform on-line where people can put information about gay crimes. We do not ask any name we are just collecting to have an image about what is happening.

**-A: Can you explain me something about the photo exhibition *Living together*?**

1015 **-E:** This photo exhibition called "*Gyvenimas kartu*" in Lithuanian, was promoted by Ugnius Gelguda. It is a collection of photos with couples (heterosexual, gay, old, young, with and without children). There was one scandal linked to this exhibition. The exhibition was prohibited in a small town on a sea side of Lithuania (in 2006, I think) because of one photo - two gay men hugging.

**-A: What about the *Baltic Pride*?**

1020 **-E:** This is a very big project. A lot is already done and a lot is still to be done. For example, fighting with municipality for the place where it will take place. We are organizing all kind of events.

**-A: What is the main purpose of the *Baltic Pride*?**

1025 **-E:** I think Lithuania needs *Baltic Pride* because there is still not so much visibility of LGBTI community in Lithuania, and the society thinks there are any gays here and that they are a threat coming from the European Union. The people are afraid to what they do not know.

**-A: Can you give me more info about the promotional video spots that you are making together with the French Embassy? Will they finally be broadcasted in the National Television? What's the problem they find?**

1030

**-E:** The French director came two Vilnius and shot two videos - one advertisement for *Baltic Pride* and one anti-discrimination video (in general). In the *Baltic Pride* video a bunch of people (LGBTI and non-LGBTI) tell on screen why they support/will participate at the *Baltic Pride* and tell one stereotype which bothers them. It is still unclear if it will be shown on the national television - negotiation only started now. But according legislation they cannot say no.

1035

**-A: I have been told that from the last *Baltic Pride* in 2010, the homophobia in Lithuania is less than before.**

1040 **-E:** I think that all the discussions started at that moment. Now is a good thing, because it is not taboo anymore. People started talking, discussing, etc. Especially young people, they are not afraid of this.

**-A: Do you think that young people here in Lithuania is more open-minded?**

1045 **-E:** Yes. They also travel a lot and they get know things; they see that there is nothing bad in being LGBTI. On the other hand, I think that the *Baltic Pride* is a blank for violent people and those who have lot of hate inside. They now feel stronger to say that “those fags need to be killed” and so on. But I do not think there is more homophobia now. I think that we are moving to the right direction.

**-A: Why LGBTI people in Lithuania are still hidden?**

1050 **-E:** They are afraid of reactions of others, violence, losing their jobs, etc. Maybe they still feel ashamed, or they are not feeling good with their sexuality, because everybody is telling them that this is not the right choice.

**-A: Why the majority of the people try to stigmatize LGBTI people?**

1055 **-E:** The majority of people were grown up in the context where it was said that being LGBTI was a disease, and homosexual man were put in prison. It was during the Soviet Union. It was taboo to talk about sex, about sexuality, about everything related to that, so people still think that way. They did not know gay people back then, because of course, the situation was worst than now.

**-A: Do you think that some LGBTI people are leaving the country?**

1060 **-E:** Yes they are leaving, because they do not feel strong enough to live here and they cannot hide it. Well, I can be myself here in this country as well, but Lithuania is really tinny and people are narrow-minded in all areas, not only about LGBTI rights, if in everything. If you think a bit different they will hate you, you will not get a job because you have blue hair and so on. I would not leave this country because I am gay, if because the majority of the people is just narrow-minded.

1065 **-A: What other people you think is doing good things for LGBTI people in Lithuania?**

**-E:** Lot of people is doing good things, like writing articles, going and protesting, fighting against the government, organizing events, lawyers, etc.; not only LGBTI people but those who support them.

1070 **-A: Do you think there is a lack of these kind of actions here in Lithuania?**

**-E:** I think here people are still too passive and apathetic and they do not do enough. But I understand that everybody wants to do that. Anyway, Lithuanians are really passive in all areas, they do not go and protest. It is other mentality. If we go and protest, the people make fun of us like “Bah, you will not get anything anyway. It is a waste of time”. But if you will not do anything, nothing will change. At least you have to try.

1075

**-A: Do you think that LGBTI citizens in Lithuania are an established/influential group?**

**-E:** There are few LGBTI people who are out and proud.

**-A: What the heterosexual people can do in order to LGBTI people?**

1080 **-E:** Not to judge first of all, and not to be afraid to have LGBTI friends. If they think that this is not a bad thing, they shouldn't be afraid and support them.

**-A: Do you think that some LGBTI people discriminate their “equals”?**

**-E:** Yes it happens of course. For example, that homosexual discriminate bisexual or transgender people. Well, LGBTI people are also part of the society in where we live; even we are narrow-minded sometimes. Another thing is that if I am LGBTI it does not mean that I do not judge a roma person, or a prisoner. I can think: “Oh, a transgender person why is doing this or that. It is perverse”. It is not enough to be gay, if to be open-minded.

1085

**-A: Do you think that some LGBTI people discriminate themselves rather the rest of the society?**

1090 **-E:** Yes. At the same time, some people who are not closed, they recognize that they are gay, they are opened, but they do not want to be in community. This is also possible, and I think totally fine.

**-A: How you think the Social Media can help the LGBTI people to be more visible?**

1095 **-E:** First of all, when you can get information for yourself and not to think: “Oh my God I have a disease”. For example in my times I did not have Internet, nobody was talking about it and I had troubles in accepting myself. But now, people can find information and say: “Oh, there are more LGBTI people in this world and they are living normal lives and they are happy, have family”. It helps for yourself, and also for growing strong links among LGBTI people. Of course when there is Internet, there are more articles and more visibility of everything. It is not that you  
1100 have to go to the library and find one book between ten million, where you can find only one sentence about homosexuality. So you open “Google” and you can find everything. Also negative information, but you can choose.

**-A: Do you think that here in Lithuania you can find more information about LGBTI issues more on the Internet than on newspapers or television?**

1105 **-E:** Yes I think on-line there is much more information. I do not have a TV so I am not sure. I watch news on line. You can find it also about other countries, not just Lithuania. Also, Internet is much faster, you can type something and everybody can read it immediately. You have more freedom. You can write anything you want by yourself, for example in a blog, put a YouTube video. There are lots of ways. On newspapers and TV shows, it takes more time. But  
1110 this topic is not hidden in Media. There is lot of news, especially when something is happening like the *Baltic Pride* or discussions about equal marriage.

**Interview 7. FRÉDÉRIC BELLIDO**

– Type: face-to-face interview (translated from Spanish language)

1115           **-Andrés: Have you ever joined any event to support the LGBTI people or are you part of any organization? Are you enrolled in any project/ action now or in the future, focused in the support of the LGBTI people in Lithuania? Which one?**

**-Frédéric:** This year is the second time that we are contributing in the *Baltic Pride*. You know that in Lithuania it takes place each three years. It is Baltic, which means that each year it  
1120 is celebrated in one of the three Baltic States: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuanian. This year is the turn to Lithuania again. The last time was in 2010 and the French Embassy supported it, as well as other European embassies and the American. When Lithuania joined the European Union, the government committed to respect the rights about the LGBTI people, but here there are lots of traditions which are against. The Catholicism here is very archaic, sometimes closer to the  
1125 orthodoxy. These religions interpret the Bible just in a way. I mean, everybody of us knows that there are references to the homosexuality in the evangelical texts. But those texts can be interpreted in other ways. They were written in different periods of time; not everything is coherent. For example, the Bible says that you cannot lie down with a same sex person. But you can find other texts that say that it is better to do that, than being alone. In this country,  
1130 everything it is given a very literal interpretation.

**-A: Why do you think other countries should give support to the Lithuanian LGBTI people?**

**-F:** Because Lithuania is in the European Union. Our work or mission is to help those  
1135 countries to move forwards. I do not mean that the countries from the Western Europe should be a model for Lithuania. For example, in France now, the equal marriage law shows that in our country there is a very big resistance against these ideas. In Spain this law was passed as well, but you were lucky that it happened when you were not in the economical crisis. In France everything has been mixed and there is the general feeling that the government is worrying about  
1140 unnecessary things. They do not understand to take into account a social minority, this is not necessary for the majority. Here in Lithuania for sure we need to help them and maybe even force them to change their opinion. It is very difficult, but they have to respect the European laws. Being in the European Union is a compromise and That is why they need to be respectful towards everything and everybody. Lithuania is not a unique case; Latvia and Estonia are also  
1145 ex-soviet countries, where more than the Church, the print of the Soviet Union was very

significant. In the Soviet Union, the homosexuality was forbidden, there were laws against it. There wasn't any discourse about homosexuality. When there was one, it was very hostile and tough; it had any repercussion. The homosexuality was conceived as a disease which brings disorder into the society. That is why it was an incurable disease. The only thing they conceived  
 1150 was to send homosexuals to prison. But it was a very harsh method. You cannot say that there were not homosexuals in those times. The only field the gay were forgiven was in the esthetics, the arts. For example the ballet dancers, but they had to marry a woman anyway. In other professional fields it was impossible to be gay. All this mentality still remains here. As in every country, it is not considered as a global issue for the society that concerns a minority. In  
 1155 Lithuania is worst because this minority is hidden. That is why the majority of the Lithuanian population thinks there are not homosexuals here. We need to make an effort in order the society would have more information about LGBTI matters. For example, in our French Institute here, we organize film screenings, and sometimes the LGBTI topic is introduced among other topics. Our audience is not less or more LGBTI, it is a general audience. The young people got  
 1160 interested in the topic, but they do not know anything about this. Especially, there are girls who say "yes, this is ok, but in Lithuania there are not homosexuals". This is something really new for them.

**-A: Which were the events the French Embassy joined in the *Baltic Pride 2010*?**

1165 **-F:** The first time we joined the *Baltic Pride* there was a LGBTI cinema festival and the Embassy of France donated some films. We participated in the demonstration, as well as other countries such Germany, Spain, England, the United States, all the Nordic States and Holland.

**-A: What about this year?**

1170 **-F:** This year, the Lithuania Gay League came here asking for help. They presented me all the events programming. This project is very different in comparison of the *Baltic Pride 2010*. They are preparing at least twenty events for this year. For the whole event, the LGL have a budget, and each organization has decided to support one or another event. I found very interesting the idea to make video clips for the promotion of the *Baltic Pride*. We decided to give  
 1175 the funding for the recording of the videos: the crew who came to Lithuania to record, the editing and so on. The first idea was to broadcast those spots in the national television. But I do not know if it is going to be possible or not. We have prepared two videos: the first one about LGBTI people, and another about the tolerance in general. I think the first clip will not be



possible to be shown in the television, but it will be spread through the Internet and all the  
1180 electronic devices.

**-A: What about the distribution of the videos?**

**-F:** The distribution is understood as free. If the national television finally broadcasts the  
videos, it will be by their own conviction. It shouldn't be misunderstood as advertising. Even  
1185 though, I know that here a lot of people is going to understand this as an LGBTI campaign. But  
this is a philanthropic action. It is necessary, as for example a national campaign in France  
against the homophobia in sports. I think in Germany too. In general, the TV channels show  
graphically that this is not a commercial action.

1190 **-A: Which is the purpose of the *Baltic Pride* in Lithuania?**

**-F:** The *Baltic Pride*, as every pride, it is a moment when the LGBTI population can  
show their opinions. It is a moment of pride because it is understood this way. But at the same  
time it is a moment of visibility very important. Here is very necessary. The problem is that the  
homosexuality is hidden in Lithuania. This phenomenon is increasing by the fact that lots of  
1195 young LGBTI people escape from Lithuania. This fact is also being hidden. Nobody speaks  
about it, but this something that homosexuals have well-known. A young homosexual  
understands very quickly that for him/her will be very difficult to live in Lithuania, especially  
those students who go for Erasmus to other European countries that are more open-minded.  
There is a general migration from the country which is a very worrying phenomenon for the  
1200 government. They aren't just losing their population, if their intelligence. The people who leave  
Lithuania are intellectuals in general.

**-A: In order to end this interview, how do you think the new tools, as the social  
media, can help the LGBTI people to be more visible?**

1205 **-F:** I think that Internet is very important for LGBTI people. For example, in the Arabic  
Countries as Iran, the Internet is a salvation for the LGBTI citizens. This way they can feel that  
there are more LGBTI people in the world, that this is not an individual issue, neither from their  
country; that there is a community out there. That is the way I think it helps LGBTI people. In  
addition, Internet plays a specific role for LGBTI people to find more people like them. Here in  
1210 Vilnius there are just one or two gay places to go. This is a small country with very small  
population. There are some young people who are afraid to go to those places. For them Internet  
is more quiet place, and they can also find people from other countries. But in my opinion,

Internet has nothing to do with a social action, the action of visibility. Internet is a very practical tool, very useful. But the public action, the political action is also very necessary, and the  
1215 government here does not worry about it. For example, in March, the United Nations organized different international conferences about LGBTI rights in all countries of the world. In Europe, the conference was taking place in Paris. We, as the Embassy of France, invited the government of Lithuania. It was at the level of ministers; here in Lithuania I think is the Ministry of Labor and Social Security the responsible for that. The minister did not reply at all; she is from the  
1220 Labor Party, which is a very reactionary right-wing party here.

**-A: Do you mean that Lithuania was not represented in the conference?**

**-F:** No. I do not know if Vladimir, the director of LGL, went there. Each country had to have an official representation from the ministry, and also a LGBTI association representation  
1225 from that country. The Internet has nothing to do with this. We are who have to do this, the embassies.

## Interview 8. FRANÇOISE MESSAGE

– Type: *Skype* interview.

1230           **- Andrés: I was told that a French director was coming to Lithuania to make a spot for the promotion of the *Baltic Pride* 2013. I would like to know a little bit more about that.**

**- François:** Yes. Last November someone gave to me an advertisement, in which LGL (Lithuanian Gay League) was asking to make a video for the promotion of the *Baltic Pride*. I have been chosen in order to do that, so I am very glad.

1235           **- A: Was it like a contest where you presented your idea?**

**- F:** Yes, it was like that. They asked us to write scripts for two videos. I was selected because I was the only one who understood that the issue in Lithuania wasn't the gay marriage. It is not absolutely the problem in Lithuania right now.

**- A: So, what is the real problem in Lithuania?**

1240           **-F:** Well, the problems with LGBTI people are quite the same around the world: people do not like them because they do not understand them, because they are frightened by other sexualities, because they have not knowledge, etc. Even in countries where LGBTI people are accepted, there are still problems with what they are. For example, in France we have just voted a law for marriage, but it revealed that a large proportion of the population is homophobic; but  
1245 they did not show it until now. In Lithuania, the main problem is that it is a catholic and conservative nation, and LGBTI people aren't well accepted by religious people. I've been told that anti-homosexual laws do not exist in Lithuania only because they want to be part of the European Union. I am not sure about it, you need to verify it. A good thing is that from the last and first *Baltic Pride* in 2010, the homophobia has decreased in Lithuania.

1250           **-A: How did you investigate the situation of the LGBTI people in Lithuania if you are living in France?**

**- F:** By the Internet actually. When I was asked to write the scripts, I typed out on the Internet to know what was going on in Lithuania because I had any notion of this country before. For what I saw at the beginning, I freaked out. But then I called the embassy of France in  
1255 Lithuania and they told me that the situation was not as bad as it is shown. With the help of Tomas and other LGL members, we rewrote the scripts several times. There is when I stared to

realize which the real problems were. The last version of the scripts has nothing to do with the one I wrote at the beginning.

**- A: What are the videos about?**

1260           **- F:** I was asked to write two commercial spots; TV spots about the *Baltic Pride*. The first one is only about LGBTI people who are explaining in front of the camera why is important for them to have a Pride and how to make people understand that there is not problem to be LGBTI. It was really hard for them to express it on the streets and in front of the camera; but I was really impressed by their attitude. The second spot is about tolerance in general. There is a voice over  
1265 which reads a text about Lithuanian people, and there is music on it while you see images of lot of minorities: LGBTI, disable people, elder people, immigrants, etc. The videos are supposed to happen in summer time, but we recorded them in April, so we were very limited. In Lithuania April was a terrible month of snow. We had to skip the naked trees. But I think the result will be ok.

1270           **-A: Who is supporting this project?**

**-F:** As I told you, the Lithuanian Gay League is who had the idea. Then, the Embassy of France in Lithuania is financing the production of the videos. They are very active in these issues and also the fight for the woman rights, etc.

1275           **- A: Why was you interested in this project? Have you ever worked about a similar topic?**

**- F:** No, I have never worked in a similar topic. But I was interested on this, first of all, because I am bisexual and I have had lots of troubles with that. Secondly, my goal in life is to be a documentary filmmaker. That is because I thought that joining this project would help me to make a documentary later. Actually it did because I am going to return back to Lithuania in July  
1280 to make a documentary about the *Baltic Pride* 2013. We will try to finance it by crowd founding.

**- A: Have you faced any problem in this project?**

**- F:** The problem is that the Lithuanian national television (LRT) does not want to broadcast the videos. Actually That is why we made two spots. The first one was “too gay” for a Lithuanian television. So we made another one more general. We will see.

1285           Furthermore, when I left Lithuania after the shooting, there were around 15 or 20 people in front of the French Embassy saying that France does not have the right to tell other people what to do, “Those French are perverts”, etc.

**- A: If the Lithuanian TV says no, are you thinking in other alternatives where these spots can be shown?**

1290           **- F:** They will be on Internet of course, but they will cause less impact, because on the Internet the people chose if to watch or not to watch it. On the television you watch and That is all. On the Internet I am not sure that the people who are against will watch it. LGBTI people will promote the video on the Internet but just for those who are concerned about it.

**-A: Speaking about Internet, what do you think about it as way to challenge LGBTI phobia in Lithuania?**

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**-F:** I really do not know, because I do not know how Lithuanian people react on the Internet. If it is like in France, it can be as positive as negative. Anyway, it would be interesting to analyze that.

1300 **Interview 9. DEIMANTAS ROJOUS**

– Type: emailing interview.

**- Andrés: Have you ever joined any event to support the LGBTI people or are you part of any organization? Are you enrolled in any project/ action now or in the future, focused in the support of the LGBTI people in Lithuania?**

1305 **- Deimantas:** I have been in the first *Baltic Pride*, many protests in Lithuania and worldwide. I (think I still) am a member of Tolerant Youth Association. Apart from administrating a variety of *Facebook* pages, I am not involved in much Lithuanian activism at the moment. I am active here in London, though. As a photographer I see an opportunity to use my skills to communicate my personal perspective on LGBTI rights in Lithuania. I am starting a  
1310 more serious and in-depth portraiture project next year, which, I hope to exhibit in Lithuania. This project it is currently in the very early stages, but it will be about increasing visibility of middle aged and older LGBTI people who lived in the soviet era - according to some people, they did not even exist.

**-A: Do you know any other person who is activist in or towards the LGBTI people in Lithuania (now or before)?**

**-D:** I know most of the human rights, LGBTIQ, antifascist and anarchist activists in Lithuania and even though there are differences. I am working towards solidarity in as many areas as possible. When different forms of oppression intersect, our fight against it must be intersectionalized as well.

1320 **-A: Does the Media in Lithuania (TV, radio, newspapers) maintain and generate positive links with the LGBTI citizens? Do the politicians do? Etc.**

**-D:** Media cares about two things: money, and brainwashing people to get more money. At the moment it is financially inconvenient for them to be LGBTIQ-positive. Exactly the same is with most politicians.

1325 **-A: Which do you think is nowadays the principal influential group of pressure against the Lithuanian LGBTI people in Lithuania?**

**-D:** Of course, it is the Roman Catholic Church and the conservative party. There are more extremist neo-fascist factions but they do not have as much influence as they would like to think. I believe direct action is the only efficient tactic to make changes.

1330           **-A: Do you think the Social Media nowadays is helping the Lithuanian LGBTI people and other minorities to become more visible towards the rest of the society at the same time to establish stronger links among them? Which way you think it can be an opportunity in the nearest future to challenge LGBTI phobia?**

1335           **-D:** Social media is a useful tool, but it is just a tool. Of course we can use it in so many great and empowering ways to come together, discuss, get to know other people in similar situations like ourselves. Opportunities are around every corner, you just have to be out and ready to defend your views. Fighting the fight.

**-A: What do you think about the migration of Lithuanian people? Why is that happening? For example, why did you decide to live in London?**

1340           **-D:** I am studying in London and intend to come back to Lithuania after graduating. A lot of people move because of higher standards of living and in search for more accepting atmosphere.

**Interview 10. UGNIUS GELGUDA**

1345 – Type: emailing interview.

**-Andrés: I know a couple of years ago you created a photo exhibition called *Living Together*. Could you tell me more about it?**

**-Ugnius:** This project was about contemporary family in Lithuania, traditional family values. For my project I took pictures of homosexual families only in Latvia - Lithuanians are  
 1350 too shy or they are scared of the hostile situation in Lithuania. They (families) opened a door of their house and I spend some days/hours with every family. I received contacts of homosexual couples from Lithuanian Gay League. It was a local scandal, which has gone so far, that Lithuanian parliament even considered of changing some of the regulations (laws). There are  
 1355 some texts about conflict, but everything is in Lithuanian, sorry. You could use the English translator. There was a discussion in Lithuanian Parliament about possible corrections in the law of the equal opportunities. But final decision was never made<sup>171</sup>.

Here is more information about the project<sup>172</sup>: “The series of these photos tends to question the conception of a contemporary family, the integration of non-traditional families into society, the attitudes and the habits of judgment in society itself. Photographies are being  
 1360 supplemented with textual comments by families which took part in the project. The project has been held in Lithuania and Latvia in 2004 and lots of families were involved. The Lithuanian families with non-traditional sexual orientation refused to take part in the project because of the rough manifestations of homophobia and intolerance to the ‘different’ in our country.”

**-A: Which year was the exhibition and where?**

1365 **-U:** The year 2006, in Juodkrantė, Lithuania.

**-A: Do you know if I can find those images somewhere?; -U:** Please use *Google* or the next link<sup>173</sup>.

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<sup>171</sup> News about the scandal [online]: <<http://www.ve.lt/?data=2006-02-24&rub=1065924826&id=1140767675>>; <<http://www.lrytas.lt/-11446762571142588642-g%C4%97j%C5%B3-fotografij%C5%B3-ne%C4%AFsileidusi-juodkrant%C4%97s-menotyrimink%C4%97-pagal-%C4%AFstatymus-teisi.htm>>

<sup>172</sup> Please, *Google* Ugnius Gelguda *Living Together* or *Gyvenimas kartu* or use this link: <<http://nihilsentimentalgia09.wordpress.com/2011/09/07/>>

<sup>173</sup> Images from the project *Living Together*: <<http://www.mmcentras.lt/index.php?id=2&lang=lt&Sid=219>>



**Interview 11. VAIDAS**

1370                   –Type: emailing interview.

**- Andrés: Have you ever joined any event to support the LGBTI people or are you part of any organization? Are you enrolled in any project/ action now or in the future, focused in the support of the LGBTI people in Lithuania? Which one? What is it about?**

1375                   - **Vaidas:** Yes. I am member of the TJA (Tolerant Youth Association). I have created some projects on *Facebook*. The first one I developed is “Kinas be po(pco)rno” (Cinema without popcorn). It is a page about LGBTI themed movies. I am translating subtitles for these movies into Lithuanian. We do not have opportunities to watch LGBTI themed movies in cinema theatres, nobody releases DVD... The only way for us to watch those movies is the Internet. But not everyone knows perfect English, That is the reason why the subtitles are very helpful for  
1380 them. Nowadays we have gay themed movie festival called “Kitoks kinas” in Vilnius, but it is once each two years.

I have created another project which is called “Zmones, kuriu nebuvo” (People who were not). It is a *Facebook* page where I collect gay stories happening in Lithuania before the independence, in the Soviet Union period. There is reminiscence of people, who have lived in  
1385 that period. I interview them, but it is difficult to persuade them to open a conversation about their personal life, even though I do not ask for their real names. Besides interviews with people there are old pictures, articles from newspapers about gays in 90s or some clips from movies about very close relationships between same sex people. Here I give some fragments from an interview:

1390                   Saulius, 51 years old: “From the 7th year at School, kids had permission in school dances. I did not understand why everyone had that desire. Maybe I would go there... if I could dance with my school mate. I did not understand that this was my homosexuality. I was waiting with fear the day when I had to marry a woman. I thought that I would be very happy if I could be living all my life with my school bench mate”. “Once, when I was middle age, in summer in a  
1395 beach I saw couple of very handsome guys. They were playing like kittens, running into the water, building the word “gay” from pineal. I understood that they were ‘those’. They were not perverts, just common guys, like me, like I desired to be in younger age. I cried for three days”.

Another page I have created in *Facebook* is “Duoki ranką man” / “Give me your hand”, where LGBTI couples can place pictures with holding hands. I thought it was a great idea because many people do not want to show their face yet in Lithuania.

I am the administrator of an LGBTI group in *Facebook* which is called “Elitiniai vaivorykštės vaikai!” (Elite Rainbow Kids!). In that group I try the people to speak about everything, not just concerned to LGBTI issues, if culture, music, life, etc.

**-A: Do you know other pages or groups in *Facebook*?**

**-V:** Yes. “**Ta diena, kai Petras Gražulis pagaliau viešai ištars: Taip, aš gėjus**”. Petras Gražulis is member of the parliament and homophobe, who did a big scandal in the march of the last *Baltic Pride* in 2010. He started to scream against LGBTI in the parade. That *Facebook* page is about him, and it is called “That day, when Petras Gražulis will say: Yes, I am gay”. Many people say that he is very homophobic because he is gay himself; his surname means "beautiful".

Another page is “We want *Ellen DeGeneres* on Lithuanian TV” – *Ellen DeGeneres* fan page LT, with intention to watch this show here, because Lithuanian TV transmit Russians talk shows about nothing, with fake heroes and not interesting topics.

**-A: Why do you use *Facebook*? Do you think the Social Media nowadays is helping the Lithuanian LGBTI people as well as other minorities to become more visible towards the rest of the society at the same time to establish stronger links among them? In which way you think *Facebook* is a tool to challenge homophobia in Lithuania in the nearest future?**

**-V:** I use *Facebook* because it is a very good area to communicate with other people, better than blog's or newspapers because there you cannot interact with others. Another advantage is that you can reach a very big audience in *Facebook*. Yes, it helps LGBTI people to become more visible and make relations. LGBTI people in *Facebook* can discuss and show their opinion to heterosexual people or homophobes. You have direct access to the homophobes.

**-A: Are you opened gay? Why do you have a fake name in *Facebook*?**

**-V:** No, I am not opened gay. About me knows just my parents and some heterosexual friends. In *Facebook* I use a fake name in order that homophobes cannot look for information about me on the Internet.

### ANNEX 3. QUESTIONNAIRE

#### LGBTI ASMENŲ ELGESYS LIETUVOJE SOCIALINIULOSE TINKLUOSE

#### LGBTI PEOPLE IN LITHUANIA: BEHAVIOURS WHEN USING THE SOCIAL MEDIA

Link to the online questionnaire: <http://pollmill.com/f/LGBT-asmenu-elgesys-lietuvoje-socialiniuose-tinkluose-behaviours-of-the-lgb-yveeue5/answers/new.fullpage>

**LT:** Brangūs LGBTI draugai, šios apklausos tikslas – išsiaiškinti kaip jūs naudojate socialinius tinklus. Prašau atkreipti dėmesį, kad šie klausimai skirti lietuviams (gyvenantiems Lietuvoje ir užsienyje) ir užsieniečiams, kurie gyvena Lietuvoje. Apklausa sudarė Andrés Albert, Europos Humanitarinio Universiteto studentas Vilniuje. Anketa yra anonimiška ir rezultatai bus naudojami tik akademiniais tikslais. Išrinkite, prašau, visuose klausimuose atsakymą, tiksliausiai atspindintį jūsų nuomonę. Tikiuosi, kad ji jums bus įdomi ir naudinga. Dėkoju už norą padėti!

**EN:** Dear LGBTI friends, the aim of this questionnaire is to find out the way you make use of the Social Media. Please note that this questionnaire is intended for those who are Lithuanian (living or not in Lithuania) and for those foreigners who are living regularly in Lithuania. It is carried out by Andrés Albert who is student of Media and Communication at the European Humanities University in Vilnius. This questionnaire is anonymous and your answers will be used only for academic research. Please, for all questions, choose the answer that describes your opinion in the best way. I hope you to find it interesting and useful. Thank you for your willingness to help!

1. Jūs lietuvis ar iš kitos šalies? / Are you Lithuanian or from another country?
  - Lietuvis / Lithuanian
  - Užsienietis / Foreigner
  
2. Kokio jūs amžiaus? / How old are you?
  - Tarp / Between 14-20
  - Tarp / Between 21-30
  - Tarp / Between 31-40
  - Tarp / Between 41-50
  - Tarp / Between 51-60

- Tarp / Between 61-70
- 71+

3. Ar jūs atviras kaip LGBTI? (Daugialypis pasirinkimas) / Are you openly LGBTI?  
(Multiple choice)

- Taip, visiems / Yes, towards everybody
- Savo LGBTI draugams / Towards my LGBTI friends
- Savo heteroseksualiems draugams / Towards my heterosexual friends
- Savo šeimai / Towards my family
- Dar nenusprendžiau / I am not decided yet.

4. Kur susipažįstate su naujais LGBTI draugais? / When you meet a new LGBTI friend, where do you find her/him?

**Pažymėkite atitinkamą laukelį kryžiu / Mark the appropriate box with a cross**

	<b>Visada/ Always</b>	<b>Dažnai / Usually</b>	<b>Kartais / Sometimes</b>	<b>Beveik niekada / Hardly Ever</b>	<b>Niekada / Never</b>
<b>Darbe-universitete- mokykloje / At the workplace-university- school</b>					
<b>Socialiniuose Tinkluose / Through the Social Media</b>					
<b>Vakarėliuose / At parties</b>					
<b>Per draugus / Friend of friends</b>					

5. Kaip dažniausiai bendraujate kitais LGBTI žmonėmis? / How do you communicate more with the other LGBTI people in Lithuania?

- Socialiniuose tinkluose / Through the Social Media
- Gyvai, susitikę / Face to face (physically)

6. Ar dažnai bendraujate su kitais LGBTI žmonėmis socialiniuose tinkluose? / How often do you communicate with other LGBTI people in Lithuania through the Social Media?

- kasdien / Daily
- Dažnai / Usually
- Kartais / Sometimes
- Beveik niekada / Hardly Ever
- Niekada / Never

7. Kokių tikslų naudojate socialiniams tinklams? / What do you use the Social Media for?

Pažymėkite atitinkamą laukelį kryžiu / Mark the appropriate box with a cross	kasdien / Daily	Dažnai / Usually	Kartais / Sometimes	Beveik niekada / Hardly Ever	Niekada / Never
Kad išsklaidyčiau kitų žmonių nuomonę apie LGBTI / In order to debunk the beliefs some people have about the LGBTI matters					
Sukelti diskusijas apie LGBTI reikalus Lietuvoje / In order to generate debate around the LGBTI issues in Lithuania					
Kad išreiškčiau savo nuomonę dėl savo teisių Lietuvoje / In order to claim for my rights in Lithuania					
Noriu susipažinti su kitais LGBTI					

žmonėmis, nes kitu būdu negaliu / Because I want to meet new LGBTI people than otherwise I couldn't					
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8. Ar naudojate socialinius tinklus kitais LGBTI tikslais? (Išvardinkite juos) / What other purposes in LGBTI matters you use the Social Media for? (List them)

...

9. Kuo dalijatės? / What kind of things do you share?

Pažymėkite atitinkamą laukelį kryžiu / Mark the appropriate box with a cross	kasdien / Daily	Dažnai / Usually	Kartais / Sometimes	Beveik niekada / Hardly Ever	Niekada / Never
LGBTI nuotraukomis / LGBTI photos					
LGBTI video-filmas / LGBTI videos-films					
LGBTI informacija / LGBTI news-information					
Viešinu savo asmeninius dalykus apie LGBTI / I publish my own LGBTI life					

10. Ar jūs dalinatės socialiniuose tinkluose dar kažkuo, susijusiu su LGBTI? (Išvardinkite juos) / Do you share in Social Media any other things related to LGBTI matters? (List them)

...

**11.** Kuriuo socialiniu tinklu dažniausiai naudojats? / Which Social Network do you use more to communicate with the other LGBTI people in Lithuania?

- Facebook
- V Kontakte
- Twitter
- Kitas (įrašykite) / Another one (Say which)

**12.** Ar viešinate savo Facebook profilyje LGBTI informaciją, nuotraukas ir kt.? / Do you publish in your Facebook profile any LGBTI information, photos, etc.?

- Taip, naudoju savo tikrą vardą ir man nesvarbu / Yes, I use my real name and I do not mind
- Taip, bet tik su tais, kuriems leidžia matyti mano informaciją / Yes, but I do not allow some people to see this kind of info
- Taip, bet tik uždaroje grupėse ir žinutėse / Yes, but just in private groups or private messages
- Taip, bet tik anoniminiame profilyje / Yes, but I use a fake profile
- Ne / No

**13.** Ar žinote Facebook'e grupes ar puslapius specialiai skirtus LGBTI Lietuvoje? (Išvardinkite juos) / In Facebook, do you know any group or page dedicated to the LGBTI issues in Lithuania? Which ones? (List them)

- ...

**14.** Ar manote, kad daugiau informacijos apie LGBTI galima rasti internete ir socialiniuose tinkluose, nei spausdintuose leidiniuose ar medijose (TV, radijuje, laikraščiuose)? / Do you think that you can find more information about the Lithuanian LGBTI issues through the Internet and the Social Media than in paper format or in the traditional Media (TV, Radio, Newspapers)?

- Taip / Yes
- Ne / No
- Aš nežinau / I do not know

**15.** Ar skaitote ir ieškote informacijos apie LGBTI kitose šalyse? / Do you read or search LGBTI information about other countries?

- Taip / Yes
- Ne / No

**16.** Ar jaučiate, kad yra laisviau reikšti savo nuomonę apie LGBTI socialiniuose tinkluose, nei tradicinėse medijos priemonėse (TV, radijuje, laikraščiuose) ar kitose viešosiose sferose? / Do you feel more freedom nowadays in Lithuania when you give your opinion about LGBTI through the Social Media than at the traditional Media (TV, Radio, Newspapers) or in any other public spheres?

- Taip / Yes
- Ne / No

**17.** Ar manote, kad socialiniai tinklai padeda LGBTI būti labiau matomiems Lietuvoje? / Do you think that the Social Media is helping LGBTI people to be more visible in Lithuania?

- Taip / Yes
- Ne / No

**18.** Ar manote, kad socialiniai tinklai padeda jums aktyviau komunikuoti ir palaikyti glaudesnius ryšius su kitais LGBTI žmonėmis Lietuvoje? / Do you think that the Social Media is helping you to have more active communication and more solid links with the other LGBTI citizens in Lithuania?

- Taip / Yes
- Ne / No

**19.** Ar socialinius tinklus naudojate kaip priemonę kovoti prieš homofobiją Lietuvoje? / Do you consider the use of the Social Media as an opportunity to challenge the LGBTI phobia in Lithuania?

- Taip / Yes
- Ne / No



#### ANNEX 4. LITHUANIAN LGBTI *FACEBOOK* PAGES AND GROUPS

The groups and pages in this list have been selected according to the answers of the respondents of the questionnaire.

*LGBTI* Facebook groups in Lithuania:

- *Queer Youth LT*<sup>174</sup>
- *Elitiniai vaivorykštės vaikai!*<sup>175</sup> (*Elite Rainbow Kids!*)

There are more groups, like is *PiLeFe* (closed lesbian group)

Pages of the LGBTI associations:

- **LGL**<sup>176</sup> (**Lithuanian Gay League**)
- **TJA**<sup>177</sup> (**Tolerant Youth Association**)

Pages for the support of the Baltic Pride:

- **Baltic Pride**<sup>178</sup>
- **Support Baltic Pride 2013**<sup>179</sup>

Page about homosexuality in the Soviet Times:

- *Zmones, kuriu nebuvo*<sup>180</sup> (People who were not)

Pages about non-traditional families:

- **Ivairi šeima**<sup>181</sup> (Family diversity)
- **"Ivairoves namai"**<sup>182</sup> (Homes for Diversity)

Page about feminism:

<sup>174</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/groups/211969605578640/?fref=ts>>

<sup>175</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/groups/125615937610324/>>

<sup>176</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/lgl.lt?fref=ts>>

<sup>177</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/tolerantiskas.draugas?fref=ts>>

<sup>178</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/BalticPride?fref=ts>>

<sup>179</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/SupportBalticPride2013?fref=ts>>

<sup>180</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/zmoneskuriunebuvo>>

<sup>181</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/IvairiSeima>>

<sup>182</sup> <<http://ivairovesnamai.lt/>>

- **Stiprios ir laisvos moterys**<sup>183</sup>

- ***Duoki ranką man (Give me your hand)***

Another *Facebook* page where LGBTI couples can place pictures with holding hands. It is a great idea because many people are afraid to show their face yet in Lithuania.

Support to the LGBTI rights in Lithuania:

- **LGBT Lietuvoje**<sup>184</sup>
- **Liberalai už LGBT teises**<sup>185</sup>

Pages for human and LGBTI rights:

- **LGBT Balsas 2012**<sup>186</sup> > LGBT voice of the human rights activists produced in 2012 the Parliamentary election campaign.
- ***Už įvairovę Žmogaus teisių institutas***<sup>187</sup> (Human Rights Monitoring Institute)
- ***Liberalai už žmogaus teises Žmogaus teises***<sup>188</sup>. (Liberals for human rights)

Protesting and ironic pages:

- ***Ta diena, kai Petras Gražulis pagaliau viešai ištars: Taip, aš gėjus*** (That day when Petras Gražulis will say: Yes, I am gay)
- ***TAIP homoseksualų eitynėms Lietuvos miestų gatvėse*** (YES Lithuania gay pride march on city street)

Pages of the LGBTI night clubs:

- **SOHO club**<sup>189</sup>
- **Men's Factory**<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/stipriosirlaisvos.moterys>>

<sup>184</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/LgbtLietuvoje?fref=ts>>

<sup>185</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/LiberalaiUzLGBT>>

<sup>186</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/LGBTbalsas2012>>

<sup>187</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/pages/%C5%BDmogaus-teisi%C5%B3-steb%C4%97jimo-institutas/131053915282>>

<sup>188</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/liberalai.uzzmogogausteises>>

<sup>189</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/sohoclub.lt?fref=ts>>

<sup>190</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/clubmensfactory?fref=ts>>

Pages for entertainment:

- **Kinas be popcorn**<sup>191</sup> about LGBTI films translated into Lithuanian
- *LGBTI Friendly Vilnius*<sup>192</sup> about LGBTI friendly places

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<sup>191</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/Kinas.be.popcorn?fref=ts>>

<sup>192</sup> <<https://www.facebook.com/lgbtfriendlyvilnius?fref=ts>>

## SUMMARY

**LGBTI-PEOPLE IN LITHUANIA: CREATING CONNECTIONS WITHIN AND  
OUTSIDE COMMUNITY**

The *main research question* in this project has been to find how the LGBTI people in Lithuania are related each other and with the rest of the society in building community. This project is innovative in the way that I study their offline communication and their communication online through the social media, especially in *Facebook*

In order to collect the empirical data, the research methods I have used are eleven interviews and a questionnaire filled-in by sixty-five people, as well as other sources of information and studies carried out by other people as Milda Ališauskienė or institutions as ILGA-Europe. My own observations and attendance to LGBTI events in Lithuania according to my time-staying in the country have been very useful in understanding the topic.

The theoretical readings I have used in order to contextualize the topic are: the discursive approach of Foucault analyzed in the texts of Stuart Hall; discussions about the social media by theorists as Poster or Stone. I also use the term identity politics in the sense of challenging the bipolar gender system, following the example of Tzedek or Steve Seidman.

In the first chapter I study the connections of the LGBTI people based on the historical stereotypical representations created by the influence of the groups of pressure and their strategies in order to dissociate the LGBTI people from the society. In the second chapter I have studied the connections the LGBTI people have establish with the others online and which are the differences or similarities between this and their face-to-face communication. I have underlined some actions, groups and pages created in *Facebook* in order to challenge the LGBTI phobia, for example a page about the experiences of gay men in the Soviet times. In the third chapter put in value the creative and innovative practices and activism nowadays in Lithuania in order to integrate the LGBTI citizenship and the rest of the society. I center the analysis in the first LGBTI film in Lithuania *Porno Melodrama*; the photo exhibition *Living Together*; the music group *AVaspo*; the theatrical play *Red Laces* and the *Baltic Pride 2013*: promotional videos and *LGBTI Cinema Festival*.

In the conclusion I summarize the main problems I have observed about the connections established nowadays by the LGBTI people in Lithuania according to my analysis. I also give possible solutions to those problems. The conclusion is at the same time a review to the panorama in the nearest future of the LGBTI people in Lithuania.

The aim of this project is to provide an interesting analysis and compilation of researches to those who support human and LGBTI rights in Lithuanian that could be helpful for them in order to achieve more visibility of the LGBTI people in Lithuania and expand the connections of this minority in the context of an integrative society. This project is presented as an option, taking as advantage that English is one of the most spoken languages in the world.