

FAR BEYOND THE RAINBOW. THE CONSTITUTION OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES BETWEEN CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE STATE

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Abstract

The present work focuses on the constitution of collective identities around the Parade for LGBT Gay Pride “Belô” (Belo Horizonte – MG). Transforming processes, which involves the foundation of alternative policies that aim for the equivalence of civil rights and the fulfillment of the principles of citizenship for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender, had been analyzed. We discussed the specificity of these experiences in the city of Belo Horizonte, trying to apprehend them first and foremost in the movement that goes from the civil society to the political institutional spaces, without losing sight of the other way round. From a historical retrospective of the tenth first editions of the event and of the local activist actions in this period, one can observe the construction of a feeling of injustice and the awareness of social rights, besides the formation of political boundaries in the context of an emergent LGBT community. From an analysis of the political opportunities and of the collective identities’ construction, we investigated the strategies for facing, which are structured in this political scenery, the diversity of actors with whom this movements establish a dialogue as wells as the contradictions and conflicts that derive from it. Various qualitative methodologies were used, as interviews (individual and collective) participant observation (minutes and field notes) and documentary research. The results indicate an assimilation of the social movements by the institutional logics and spaces.

Keywords: Political Psychology; Social Movements; Collective Identities; LGBT Movement, LGBT Parade.

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Translated by Julia de Vasconcelos Magalhães Pinto

I. Introduction

This work analyzes the constitution of collective identities of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT groups) in Belo Horizonte. The research that led to this article focused on the production process of the LGBT Parade in Belo Horizonte¹ and it analyzed the consolidation of collective identities in the different groups that organize it. We shall present some elements that characterize the strategies and political conceptions that contribute to the polarization of political activism in the city. This collective act will be considered since its inception, in 1998, to its tenth edition in 2007. We have identified some psycho-political aspects that mark the actions of the LGBT movement in the city, but that also reveal contemporary tendencies. It is important to note that we do not take the Parade as an end-in-itself. Far beyond from its importance as a mass political event, we consider the Parade as an important element that marks the relationships of the people who are part of it. This collective action is continuously developed in the daily lives of the groups and political figures who organize it, participate in it or even antagonize it. We were particularly interested in the network of relationships that use the Parade as an instrument of mobilization and politicization (Machado, 2007).

As actors on a globalized political scenery, we identify some moments when the LGBT Parade, the movements that organize it and its interlocutors have accessed narratives that are linked with a hegemonic discourse of values and political actions, being influenced by national and global movements. Their actions and identities are entwined with structures of political opportunities that influence them, since they put together actors of several levels and conflicting interests. However, although we recognize the importance of global aspects, they will be left in the background. Our focus is on some specific political influences considered altogether with the emergency of social antagonisms and the changes in the political opportunities' structure related to the LGBT citizenship in Belo Horizonte. In fact, the specificities of the context will be taken into consideration as well as how they are hierarchically related to the political opportunities' structure, offering elements to consider the LGBT citizenship and the politicization of sexuality in a broader context.

It is important to note that the Parade has an intrinsic relationship with the formation

¹ To access the complete results see Machado (2007). This research was a development of a previous research (Machado & Prado, 2005). Partial results were published in Machado & Prado (2007). In Prado, Machado & Carmona (2009) there are complementary notes to this text.

and development of the LGBT movement in Belo Horizonte, that reasserts its importance as a collective action and as an object of study for the comprehension of this political field. In the selected period it has been observed that the LGBT Parade of Belo Horizonte was organized by what the activists called Command of the Parade: an entity forum that gathered groups with not only different, but usually antagonist actions and guidelines. We aim to clarify the constitutive processes of collective identities of these groups. We analyzed how they negotiate their differences through the production of equivalences and antagonisms and how, in this context, the sexuality was politicized as well as the actors who participated in these processes.

This work is based on a qualitative methodology, with semi-structured interviews (26 altogether) as its main resource, with activists, public managers and legislators. Documents, minutes, websites and other materials, which were produced by the groups, were also analyzed. In order to get closer to the inter and intragroup relationships, between 2004 and 2007, we resort to a participant methodology such as field diary and participant observation in meetings, virtual lists, seminars and other events. It is worth highlighting that the historical retrospective, which is used to address the alliances and the political conflicts, is an important aspect of this research. However, for reasons of scope, this work shall be restricted to the events that are relevant for this analysis.

2. Historical Aspects of the LGTB Movement in the City of Belo Horizonte

Since its beginning, in 1988, the LGBT Parade of Belo Horizonte² has been through many changes concerning its alliance networks that were created by the activist groups, mainly with governmental bodies. This development denotes distinct perspectives when considering the negotiation with political institutions and brings decisive implications when we analyze the collective identities that were formed, the strategies that were traced and the political choices made by these movements in the Brazilian LGBT activism scenery. The social-political context of the city offered little room for the incipient LGBT movement, that made it difficult to socialize and to promote a political mobilization. Despite this in 1998 the organized groups break with the city's political scenery, promoting important activities such as the first Lesbian-Gay Pride March.

The First March was planned and organized by a lesbian leader, founder of the Minas' Lesbian Association (ALEM), influenced by the march she participated in Rio de Janeiro, in 1997. At that time, there was a context of mobilization for the formation of a mixed group, the Gays, Lesbians and Friends Association (AMGLS) that united the leaders, who would later form the first groups that affirmed specific identities. After the 1998 Parade,

2 We decided to use the term Parade, as it is common knowledge as well as a widespread term among the activists. However, this event was originally denominated *March* or *Rally*, which already shows a diversity of meaning that this collective action brings for the actors that it puts together. The change from the term Lesbian-Gay to GLBT and later to LGBT also indicates local changes that interweave with national debates and that produce hegemonies. For a more detailed description of the activities developed by these groups and their historical background, see Machado (2007).

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the AMGLS was split into three groups: ALEM, the *Guri* Group of Consciousness and Homosexual Emancipation (later called AGM- Minas' Gay Association) and the Association of Minas Gerais' Transgender group (ASSTRAV). Other activists claimed to be the parade protagonists, but it was ALEM that actually organized the event and signed to the financing projects from the Health Ministry until the year of 2005.

It is important to emphasize that the Parade of Belo Horizonte was the first one to be led by lesbians in Brazil. It is also worth mentioning that the ALEM was associated to leftist groups, such as trade unions and the Unified Workers Socialist Party (PSTU). Some activists brought their previous experiences in political struggle and party activism. The founder of ALEM (herself a Lesbian) has even run for Senator in 2002, for the PSTU. These bonds defined the group's collective identity and were important for the Parade early development, not only influencing both discourses and action modes, but also providing resources.

2.2. Between Economy and Culture: Social Class and the Production of Antagonisms

Marsiaj argues that the notion of social class is crucial for us to understand the various LGTB socio-political phenomena, including the formation and the actions of activist groups. According to the author, "the majority of the gay and lesbian movement in Brazil tends to be composed by low or middle social class and many of the leaders come from the middle class" (Marsiaj, 2003:144). As Green (2003) discusses, the relationship between the LGTB demands and the leftists in Latin America is not simple. Although these agents of political claims have mutual contributions in the process, they greatly disagreed on the establishment of political priorities. Marsiaj (2003) raises the hypothesis that "the historical link between the gay movement and the left may be a source to counter a strategy based on an exaggerated consumerism" (p.145). On the other hand, MacRae (1990) reveals the importance of the market for the constitution of less marginalized homosexual identities. MacRae (1990) also points out that many LGTB activists, as well as Afro-Brazilians and feminists, migrated to groups which had identity-related causes, either because they were discriminated or because their demands were not met in the Marxist groups.

The relationships established between the symbolic and structural aspects are proved to be relevant for understanding social inequalities. As many authors have already showed (Souza, 1995; Marsiaj, 2003; Castro, 1992), the inequalities as well as the social injustices are structured from the intersection of multiple elements. However, we must stress the split produced in the discussions of class, race, gender, sexual orientation and the other forms of social oppression in the sense that it has privileged an increasingly specific discourse regarding the social inequalities. It is important that debates about the different social hierarchy processes are proposed although these dilemmas could be criticized for its lack of an economics notion when dealing with social classes, or even considering that recognition and redistribution must be taken together.

The discussion about social classes in Brazil has begun to incorporate the social movements debates since the 70^s, when the notion of a revolutionary takeover was substituted by

a conception of political action that focuses on the social change through gradual changes in daily lives (Scherer-Warren, 1993). In this context, the NGO phenomenon (non-governmental organizations) was reinforced as a model of political organization supposedly capable of going beyond the insufficiency of an homogenizing discourse that comes from the political parties, syndicates and traditional social movements³ as well as the inflexibility and bureaucracies of governmental institutions (Ortiz, 2006; Parker, 2002; Anjos, 2002).

By analyzing the LGTB movement in Brazil we come to the conclusion that the AIDS epidemic had contributed to dismantling of policies of recognition and equality and the remaining groups had no option but to develop activism practices that were dependent on the STDs (Sexually Transmitted Disease) prevention policies, mainly in the 80^s (Câmara, 2002). However, we cannot ignore that the epidemic has also contributed to the reorganization of the groups as well as to the formation of new ones with an activism based on a more assistance model, especially in the 90^s (Parker, 2002). This association of the LGBT with the prevention policies emphasizes not only the groups' actions, but also the way they emerge from civil society and interact with the State (Facchini, 2005). The LGBT groups of the 80^s and 90^s, in Brazil, come from the health policies, and are structured on an NGO format. Even the groups that did not come from the health policies eventually had to approach them for support and/or social recognition (Parker, 2002). This way of approaching the State, associated with an individualist conception of social integration through the market, raises obstacles which prevent the articulation of a social criticism that would escape from the specificities of the activist groups themselves and reach social hierarchies through political perspectives that include the capitalism system and the market logics. These aspects of Brazilian history and LGBT movement actions are determinant for the comprehension of the groups that we proposed to study.

2.3 Events and Disruptions in the LGTB movements in Belo Horizonte

In Belo Horizonte one can identify antagonist policy experiences that emerge from different contexts and demands, but that had dealt with their differences in the Parade organization. The most notable example can be found in the comparison between the ALEM and the Rainbow Service Club (CRS) (Machado & Prado, 2005). The ALEM comes from a more institutionalized context, establishing relationships with political parties, syndicates and social movements. The scope of its actions, based on a political aim, is broadened in order to attend homosexual population assistance activities⁴, but with a view to keeping a criticism of the “right-wing neoliberal politics”. On the other hand, the CRS emerges in 2000 motivated by two couples (one of gays and one of lesbians) who felt the need to form a group that would compensate for the lack of services offered for homosexuals. The CRS has extended its action from a market perspective, which aims to “attend”, but

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3 Ortiz (2006) points out that the NGOs, as they resemble a company in their versatility and mobility in actions and institutional positions, stand for a kind of politicization that is adapted to a radically globalized model of society.

4 For a discussion concerning the relationship between represent and attend see Anjos (2002).

that actually enlarges the LGBT representation with the inclusion of social demands in the scope of its activities.

The ALEM formation was based on the reinterpretation of experiences such as the political-party syndical struggle, from the feminism of the national Lesbian groups. The activism of this group was deeply influenced by the leftist notion of political struggles, and, many times, its radicalism made it difficult for them to access political-governmental spaces, establish partnerships with companies or with the diversity of LGBT activist groups. On the other hand, this stance favoured partnerships with grassroots' movements as well as made their activities noticeable for international feminist groups which would start to finance them.

The Center the Free Sexual Orientation Struggle (CELLOS) emerges with a similar profile, interweaving members who were PSTU activists, from grassroots students' movement or ecological movements, among others. The CELLOS have been supported by the ALEM⁵ since its first meeting, reinforcing the importance of the ALEM for the development of the LGBT movement in the city and its link with political parties. As most of the participants, on both groups, came from lower social classes, the discussion about socio-economical inequality and the association with other social movements were part of its political culture. For instance, the ALEM have developed some activities in suburbs and in the countryside of Minas Gerais, always with a class split oriented actions.

When we take the social and political context from which the activist groups were formed, we notice two important disruptions. The first one happened when the CRS joined the Command of the Parade⁶, leading it to form strong political oppositions and bringing new actors who were interested in the event growth. The CRS presence and its aim to promote an event with a more cultural than political appeal heightened opposite conceptions. This assimilative perspective has contributed for the construction of a new set of relations, such as partnerships with commercial places and access to political opportunities offered by governmental instances.⁷ This period, around 2001-2005, is followed by the relationship's diversification between the groups, concerning the event organization. The second disruption comes about when the CELLOS takes over the Parade direction and the ALEM starts to lead the Lesbian's March. At that moment, which starts in 2005, the Parade production and the groups became more professional, mainly the CELLOS. By more professional we mean the optimization of the actions and organizational processes (for instance, the divi-

5 Although both groups had approached the prevention policies in order to raise funds and achieve an institutional insertion, the ALEM and the CELLOS separate the Human Rights struggle from the STD/AIDS activism.

6 Obviously, this rupture has to be understood in a wider perspective that includes political and cultural changes in various degrees. We have to bear in mind that, in this period, the São Paulo Parade began to take on large proportions, the ABGLT were consolidating and some LGBT achievements in the legislative and judiciary framework started to appear, among other aspects (Facchini, 2005).

7 The CRS had an essential part in making the Assistant Municipal Department for Citizenship Rights (SMADC) provided the space for the installation of the Center of Reference on Sexual Diversity (CRDS), which hosted the ASSTRAV when it lost its head office and CELLOS-MG, which used to have its meetings in rented sites. Later on, this space was used to hold the meeting of the Command of the Parade. Getting closer to the SMADC was essential to the legitimacy and the growth of the Parade in Belo Horizonte.

sion and specialization of functions, the setting of hierarchies etc.), which culminated in a lower emphasis on collective deliberations.

At this moment, the development of a stronger and more formalized network of political alliances starts outside the LGBT movement, what is related to a substantial increase in the groups' capacity to access institutional spaces. Alliances with politicians— such as city councilors, congressmen, and municipal secretaries, among others—were established. The appointment of the ASSTRAV president as director of the Reference Center for Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals and Transgender Human Rights and Citizenship of the State of Minas Gerais (CRGLBTTT), as she was the first transgender person appointed for a public office in Minas Gerais, has also brought visibility and new forms of dialogue with the State.

The CELLOS, which had hitherto limited political alliances, due to its criticism to the standpoints of most of the LGBT groups, started to establish a closer relationship with the LGBT Brazilian Association (ABGLT). CELLOS president at that time joined the national directory of ABGLT, in 2006. The Parade, then, started to follow the ABGLT agenda, which not only defined the theme of the event (see themes in 2005 and 2006 in the table below) but also influenced procedures and discourses. In this period, the CELLOS' president was hired for the Coordination of Human Rights (CMDH) to work with the LGBT theme. This work culminated in the approval of a project, in the realm of the Program for Brazil Without Homophobia, which institutionalized and allocated federal governmental funding for hiring professionals for the Center of Reference on Sexual Diversity (CRDS), which was then called Reference Center for Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals and Transgender Human Rights and Citizenship of the State of Minas Gerais (CRGLBT).⁸

The interest of universities in the LGBT discussion also increased in this period. Researchers began to study the social movements and related themes. The transit of activists who go to universities and of researchers who go to politics increased. In the years of 2005 and 2006, the Center for Political Psychology of the Federal University of Minas Gerais (NPP/UFMG) held a survey with the participants of the Parade (Prado, Rodrigues & Machado, 2006). In December 2006, the Center for Human Rights and LGBT Citizenship of UFMG (NUH) was formed.

This whole process has influenced the constitution of collective identities and their forms of interaction. This process involves landmarks that altered the political opportunities' structure culminating in new standpoints of the LGBT groups in the city, mainly in relation to the State, as we will present later in this paper. Although this new setting keeps some aspects of the old political ideals, the political and collective identities, which articulate themselves within the Parade, significantly altered the paths by which their actions sought to achieve results (Prado, Machado & Carmona, 2009). In the table below we systematized the historical and political events in order to visualize the transformations in the social movements, the organization of the Parade and the established networks.

8 It is remarkable in the transition of the names, the focus in the specificity of identities, as the name CRGLBT emphasizes settled identity-related categories, by refusing the term sexual diversity. For a wider discussion concerning the Program for Brazil Without Homophobia and of CRLGBT see Machado, Fonseca & Nascimento (2007).

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Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Groups involved in the organization	ALEM/ AMGLS (Pink Triangle Association)	ALEM / GURI	ALEM/GURI/ ASSTRAV	ALEM/GURI/ASSTRAV/CRS/ MGM/MHM-Betim	ALEM/GURI/ ASSTRAV/CRS/ CELLOS
Theme/Motto/ Cause	-	-	-	-	-
N. of Participant	50	150	800	3,000 – 5,000	10,000 – 15,000
Access to Governmental Institutions	No access.	Councilors' support.	Access to Governmental Institutions only through councilors. Approval of Municipal Law 8.176	BELOTUR support; SMADC; PBH's DST/AIDS program.	In addition to support obtained in previous years, groups start to use the Sexual Diversity Reference Center and SMADC facilities
Political Allies	PSTU / Trade Unions / Councilor	PSTU / Trade Unions / Councilors		PSTU and Trade Unions / Councilors /Congressmen / some governmental bodies slowly start to cooperate (BELOTUR, SMADC, PBH's DST/AIDS program)	PSTU and Trade Unions / Councilors /Congressmen / SMADC / Bars and Nightclubs
Main source of funding	Support from Allies and activists' private resources			Support from Allies, donations from GLBT's commerce and activists' private resources	Support from Allies, donations from GLBT's commerce and activists' private resources
Organization's internal dynamics	Ill-defined roles, organizational conflicts little ideological and more personalized. Segmentation of specificities into separate groups. Beginning of a tradition of collective actions organized by the groups (Command of the Parade).			Ideological clash between ALEM and CRS. Democratic approach in group decisions.	Ideological clash between ALEM and CRS, disagreements and break up relations.
Problems / Adversaries / Landmarks	GURI group is registered AMGLS splits	ALEM and ASSTRAV are registered	CRS is registered. Approval of Municipal Law 8.176*	ALEM obtains their its facilities	Approval of State Law 14.170*.

* Laws that increase LGBT rights. Law 8.176, municipal-wide, sets a fine for any establishment that discriminates people on the basis of sexual orientation in Belo Horizonte. Law 14.170, state-wide, determines sanctions against legal persons for discriminatory act practiced against people on the basis of their sexual orientation, in the entire state of Minas Gerais. In addition to the determined penalties, these laws pave the way for the creation of municipal (CRLGBT) and state (CRLGBTTI) reference centers.

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Groups involved in the organization	ALEM/ASSTRAV/CELLOS/GGBH/ATTITUDE-MG/MHM-Betim	ALEM/ASSTRAV/GAPA-MG/CELLOS/GURI/CRS/BEAGAY	CELLOS-MG/ALEM/ASSTRAV/GAPA-MG	CELLOS/ALEM/ASSTRAV	CELLOS/ALEM/ASSTRAV
Theme/Motto/Cause	-	Excuse us, we are in for the fight!	Joining feelings, Toppling prejudice, Civil Partnership Now!!!	A landslide of goals against prejudice: homophobia is a crime.	For a world free from Racism, Machismo and Homophobia.
Nº. of Participants	12.000 – 25.000	5.000 – 50.000	100.000	15.000 – 170.000	60.000 – 100.000
Access to Institutional Politics	Parade starts to be funded by Health Ministry	SMADC support and activists eagerly committed to licensing. Strong opposition by Center-South regional administration, leading to license being denied.	Parade manages to be licensed by city hall for the first time, widely supported by politicians and meetings with COMOVEEC	Human Rights Secretary personally meets other authorities in order to make licensing easier.	CRGLBT is institutionalized
Political Allies	PSTU and Trade Unions / Councilors / Congressmen / SMADC / Health Ministry (Financial support since this year)	Trade Unions / Councilors / Congressmen / PSTU / SMADC	CRP / ABGLT / SMADC / BELOTUR / PSTU / Trade Unions / NPP (UFMG)	CRP / ABGLT / SMADC / BELOTUR/ NPP (UFMG) / Trade Unions	ABGLT / CRP / CRGLBT / SMADC and governmental institutions / Councilors
Main source of funding	Health Ministry	Health Ministry	Health Ministry / Culture Fostering Law	Health Ministry / Culture Fostering Law	Health Ministry / Culture Fostering Law / CRP
Organization's internal dynamics	Broad democratic negotiation and resort to bases in carrying out activities	Little debate without participation in the Command (democratism) Disorganization	At the end of the organizational process, main decisions start to be made by the board.	Greater segmentation of tasks and definition of roles.	Greater segmentation of tasks and definition of roles.
Landmarks / Problems / Adversaries / Achievements etc.	Rivalry with CRS causes the veto to the name of its president in favor of an ASSTRAV leader for administrative position at CRGLBT	Strong opposition on the part of an employee at the Center-South administration. 2 Bands on a float of the activism could not take part as they lacked documents.	CELLOS take over direction of Parade and ALEM organize 1st Lesbian Walk. Public conflicts with activist from Libertos/ BEAGAY group. CELLOS join ABGLT.	CELLOS president is elected ABGLT's southeast president Appearance of NUH	Conflicts with regional administration and firefighters make it hard for the Parade to begin. Appearance of CRGLBT.

KEY: **ALEM** – Minas' Lesbian Association | **CELLOS** – Center for the Free Sexual Orientation Struggle | **ASSTRAV** – Association of Minas Gerais' Transgender. **AMGLS** – Gays, Lesbians and Friends Association (Pink Triangle Association) | **MGM** – Minas' Gay Movement (Juiz de Fora) | **CRS** – Rainbow Service Club | **MHM** – Minas' Homosexual Movement | **GGBH** – Belo Horizonte Gay Group | **SMADC** – Assistant Municipal Department for Citizenship Rights | **CRP** – Psychology Federal Council | **PSTU** – Unified Workers Socialist Party | **ABGLT** – LGBT Brazilian Association | **NPP (UFMG)** – Center for Political Psychology of the Federal University of Minas Gerais | **CRGLBT** – Reference Center for Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals, and Transgender Human Rights and Citizenship | **CRGLBT** - Reference Center for Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals and Transgender Human Rights and Citizenship of the State of Minas Gerais | **GAPA-MG** – Group for Support and Prevention against AIDS | **COMOVEEC** – Committee for Monitoring Violence in Sport and Cultural events | **BELOTUR** – Belo Horizonte Municipal Tourism Company | **NUH** – **UFMG** Research Center in LGBT Human Rights and Citizenship.

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In this table we gradually observe the activism profiles consolidated after both mentioned disruptions. Among other things, we identify the increasing number of people who join the Parade and the alignment of the event's organization with governmental institutions. Simultaneously, we observe that when an important leader of ALEM leaves PSTU, this party stops supporting the event and, then, the syndicates' support gives way to agencies, such as the Psychology Federal Council (CRP), the BELOTUR and the NPP. The City Hall, through its departments (mainly the SMADC and the Department of Health), begins to support the event and the Ministry of Health starts to contribute both politically and financially. In 2005, the Ministry of Culture opened a call for funding the Parades, followed by a diversification of the funding sources for the LGBT movements in the country.

We cannot lose sight that the described path in this table occurs in a context of growth of the LGTB movement in the country, which led ABGLT to strengthen its network of influence and cooperation.⁹ In 2004, the LGBT movement extended its legitimacy by formulating the Brazil Without Homophobia Program (PSSH) (Brasil, 2004). Apart from offering tools and political support for operation and mobilization, the PSSH formalizes guidelines, urging the local governmental power to apply its principles for public policies. The election of Luís Inácio Lula da Silva for president, in 2002, opened important gaps in the political opportunities' structure for the incidence of social movements. The publishing of the Principles of Yogyakarta must be mentioned for it presents basic principles that orient the State in the realization of human rights for the LGBT community (ONU, 2006).

In the last years analyzed by this research, the LGBT demands reached the Human Rights' debates. The LGBT movements conquered political legitimacy before other civil society actors. In this context, the ALEM and the CELLOS have grown in terms of members and resources access. The other groups were extinguished or continued with less mobilization and visibility. At the same time, other groups from nearby cities were formed and started to join the local activism scenery and hold parades in other cities of Minas Gerais' state.

The historical description of the studied groups was oriented to identify aspects of the constitution of the collective identities, such as the feeling of belonging, social practice of the groups (political culture), values, beliefs and shared interests, establishment of social networks, intra relations among the groups (Prado, 2002). In order to study the collective identities, either in the small groups or in the link between them when promoting alliances and collective actions, we guide ourselves by Melucci's perspective (1996), who argues that the collective identity must be explained through conflicts which underlie the precarious social formation that manifested itself as a unit. The emergency and the overcoming of the Parade organization's conflicts informed us the path from which the collective identities negotiated the visibility of their demands in the organization of this collective action. Moreover, this path indicates a hegemonic activism profile in Belo Horizonte, which, despite its specificities, reproduces patterns that transcend the local context and indicate new conflicts that organize political action.

⁹ It is important to emphasize that the ABGLT is not the whole of the LGBT national movement; on the contrary, its dissidences with the Lesbian Brazilian League (LBL) and the Gay Brazilian Group (ARTGAY) indicate conflicts that question the ABGLT hegemony, either because of their identity-related hierarchies, their political strategies or the way it operates.

The importance of what we called “leftist discourse” must be emphasized in order to comprehend how the Parade and some groups that organize it were established in the city, seeking to politicize sexuality in the production of social antagonisms. The profile of the established activists’ groups and their engagement with “leftist compromises”, the refusal to turn the Parade into a merchandise, among other aspects, have led the organized groups to approach the State and the Public Policies for developing their actions. These institutional linkages partly brought new possibilities of politicization and activism visibility, mostly within the realm of the State. However, the organized groups were assimilated and their capacity of interpellation was diminished—as these spaces are controlled by rules, institutional proceedings and bureaucratic mechanisms that limited the possibility of confrontation—mainly concerning the leaders who were directly involved with governmental agencies. Furthermore, the discourse about social inequalities, which enriched the debates about hierarchies and sexual inequalities, lost strength to a translation of the discourse of oppression into a defense of the Human Rights focused on the LGBT specificity. These transformations left doubts on the capacity of these movements to produce new antagonisms that would point out to new counter-hegemonic actions in the spaces they started to occupy.

It must be emphasized that this happens in a moment when the social movements’ relationship with the State is marked by an ever-growing assimilation, mostly motivated by the actions of the federal government and the activist discourses that advocate the adherence to a popular hegemonic discourse which tends to neutralize divergences. We notice that the policies that promote identity recognition encourage the production and the institutionalization of identities. The participation following the arrangements and schedules proposed by the government contributes to this process (Machado, 2013). Although the deriving political consequences are yet to be understood, we will try to analyze some of its implications for the constitution of collective identities in the context of the city of Belo Horizonte.

3. Identities, Collective and Political Strategies: Production of (Counter-)hegemony ?

By studying collective practices on a canvas, we identified in the groups’ public discourse the formation of momentary political unities, the means by which the recognition of social equivalences, the formation of political boundaries and discourses about injustice condition emerge as well as the awareness of social rights, which enabled the mobilization and the political activation of social networks in the growing LGTB community, by the end of 1990’s. By combining these elements, according to Prado (2002) we have an analytical framework capable of comprising the constitution of collective identities.

This topic will discuss the constitution of collective identities through the formation of political boundaries. We took the formation of political boundaries and its identity elements as a gateway for understanding this process, as they had a central role in the relations with the political opportunities’ structure in the analyzed context. Among other things, the formation of political frontiers involves the feeling of belonging to the group, the activation of social networks, values as well as individual and collective interests, having a direct impact on the action system revealed in the definition of group practices.

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In a previous research (Machado & Prado, 2005), we identify a variety of political experiences that questioned traditional theoretical standpoints in a social space that we call “between economy and culture”. We discuss the difficulties of referring to the LGBT movement in a singular form, as there is a plurality of activist experiences. However, the historical reconstruction undertaken reveals, at the same time, a gradual diversification of actors related to these themes and a relative homogenization of discourses and practices of activist groups. This is directly related to the lowering number of activist groups in Belo Horizonte and the crystallization of certain forms of political action and power positions.

If in the previous topics we focused on discussing these phenomena’s diachronic dimension, in this topic we will outline a theoretical map that informs us about their synchronous dimension. Our analysis reveals that, apart from occasional moments, the tendency is to focus on the strengthening of collective identities in small groups, meaning the NGOs¹⁰, is clear. In joint actions, some identity stability was achieved when some groups accessed the media and acted collectively. Nevertheless, those fragile identity stabilities did not last long and, after the Parade of 2002, the divergences became intractable, until the CRS abandoned the Parade’s organization. The Group for Support and Prevention against AIDS (GAPA) was also no longer directly involved in the event organization in 2006.

The CRS’ isolation in the realm of the local activism is related to disputes for institutional spaces, pointing out to one of the effects of the social movement’s approach to the State. The existent conflicts between the CRS and other groups in the city have grown after the name of one of its leaders was not accepted to manage the Reference Center of the State of Minas Gerais (CRLGBTTT). This group closed down, among other reasons, because it did not adapt to the local policies and was not capable of maintaining neither its political legitimacy networks nor the mobilization processes. The market bias has also proved not to be sustainable and the CRS’ attempts to approach the State did not succeed, mostly because of the conflicts with other activist groups. ALEM and CELLOS distrusted the political intentions of the CRS and the *Libertos* Communication (LC), which were associated with the companies. A wit targeted at one of these groups, which has to do with its little ability in mobilizing activists and empowering leaders, is worth mentioning. Instead of being called NGO (ONG in Portuguese), they were blemished “ING”, “Non-Governmental Individuals”. It must be emphasized that the ALEM and the CELLOS, in spite of mobilizing new activists, were also not capable of launching new and expressive leaders.

The recognition of social equivalences (Mouffe, 1988) unleashed by the feeling of social injustice and social rights awareness, was differently processed by each group. This has engendered a wide range of possible connections, producing conflicting political boundaries. Although the conflicts underlying the relationship among the groups had been linked, many times, to personal disputes or individual interests related to a funding dispute, one can notice that the political culture, beliefs or ideologies as well as the network creation were also crucial for the constitution and maintenance of the collective identities.

10 An illustrative fact of this use of the NGO category in the action of the groups happened when a activist was prevented from participating in the Parade Command because his/her activism form was driven by the internet, having no official records (CNPJ).

For instance, first ALEM and CELLOS gathered social networks linked to other kinds of activism, such as the grassroots students', feminists', environmental and Afro-Brazilian's movements. However, in the last events analyzed, the connections focused on agencies and people related to the government. The groups related to political leftist actors developed discourses and practices with a broader aspect for change, but they gradually emphasized the LGBT specificities, based on human rights discourse and were, then, assimilated by institutional logics.

The CELLOS came to be the main body responsible for the LGBT Parade and the ALEM started to devote itself to the Lesbians' March, though still participating in the Parade. We must highlight that, when ALEM announces the march, a controversy is settled around the criticism that the lesbian's movement would be isolating itself and encouraging LGBT fragmentation in the city. This controversy reinforces the identity-related perspective of the CRS and LC groups to not distinguish, but rather integrate the LGBT struggle in a unifying and homogenizing discourse. However, it shall be emphasized that these groups, unlike ALEM and CELLOS, did not include other inequalities in their discourses.

This diversity of political contemporary behaviors leads us to conceive it in a complex way (Sandoval, 1997). It helps us understand the political actions developed in the internet by the LC president and founder of the virtual list BEAGAY, and the way they seek to politicize discussions and reach more people, although engaged on a narrower perspective of mobilization. These forms of activism searched visibility and people's awareness—through websites, discussion lists, and mailings—by exchanging information and promoting joint actions, such as petitions and virtual networks, which are individual forms of participation in spaces of non-formalized political participation. Nevertheless, these forms of activism can surpass virtual spaces and even reach the public sphere. The G.R.E.S. Rainbow United, an LGBT *samba* school, organized by the LC leaders, is an example of how a cultural event can take on political proportions—with a worldwide impact—without having to access the institutional spaces of political participation.

In a general perspective, the groups tend to prioritize, in their performance, public or private spaces, more or less formalized, as well as activism forms characterized by a wider or narrower mobilization power. As noticed in our analysis, sexuality politicization alone did not guarantee the formation of a collective identity interlinked with the several organized groups. For instance, by participating together in the LGBT Parade organization (a political, collective event, in the public, little formalized space), among other actions, did not contribute to gather the groups to strengthen CRS main leader's campaign for congress. The choice of spaces and action forms indicates different political conceptions that, in this context, did not take on a complementary, but rather an excluding and dissident nature.

At first, the activism at CRS, though not individual, was not so engaged in mobilizing and occupied private and non-formalized participation spaces. By coming into a wider interlinked network, the CRS began to search for prevention projects' public funding and, after the groups' disruption, the relationship with councilors and congressmen led its main leader to work for and join the Green Party's cabinet. This may reveal that the movement's

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roots, its corporate character and the political alliances it was capable to establish soon set a not intense mobilizing form of agency, away from its bases and guided by governmental policies. The CRS assimilative stance produced a rather unquestioning conception of activism, for example, when it took the Parade visibility as an end-in-itself. This has raised strong criticism from other groups and was a key factor for the CRS withdrawn from the Parade organization.

Since the beginning, the CELLOS as well as the ALEM have developed collective forms of activism, which aim to build actions in the public space. However, unlike the ALEM, the CELLOS was more skillful in getting into the formalized spaces of participation, such as the public policies, the governmental spaces, the ABGLT etc. This influenced the alliances' networks and led to different positions of identity. It is noted that the CELLOS was more assimilated into governmental logics than the ALEM. Coming closer to the State brought many benefits to the LGBT movements in terms of their mobilization and agency, mainly in the LGBT Parade's production. However, it has plastered some stances and limited the group's criticism or questioning power.

In order to grasp these consequences we must identify how the relationship between the State and the social movements can influence the constitution of collective identities. By seeking the elements that connect the political opportunities' structure to the formation of collective identities, Bernstein (1997) defines three analytical levels of identity (empowerment as objective and identity as political strategy) and three possible kinds of identity-related strategies (critical identity, educational identity and mixed¹¹). For the author, these identity-related strategies are defined by the groups' organizational structure, their access to institutional politics, their power to mobilize and the presence of an organized opposition.

In the late 1990s, the collective actions undertaken by Belo Horizonte's LGBT activists presented critical identity-related strategies. According to Bernstein (1997), the groups that build critical identity-related strategies are those that—due to their weak organizational structure and limited access to state policies—seek to mobilize a great number of people and tend to form well delimited identity-related boundaries. The LGBT Parade of Belo Horizonte presented, in its early editions, a strong conflicting character stemming from previous activism experiences and developed to face the rigor of the political opportunities' structure. As the city presented few prospects for politicizing sexuality, we understand this strategy for the constitution of political boundaries as being related to a Critical Identity, able to challenge the strict values and practices of a dominant culture. Several participants of the first Parade wore costumes since they did not feel safe enough for a public outing.

In its early editions the LGBT Parade as well as other actions of the group, markedly faced the normative standards, questioned the public power and society as a whole. The hegemonic culture was challenged when the homosexuals occupied the public space to

11 We can define these identity-related strategies as follows: a) Critical identity: faces and questions the beliefs, categories and practices of the dominant culture, emphasizing the dichotomy We vs Them and, consequently, the identity-related distinctions; b) Educational Identity: seeks to transform the perception of the dominant culture in relation to a given minority, suppressing the identity-related distinctions and building political legitimacy through undisputed themes (assimilationism).

express what the anonymity allowed in both private and market contexts. This questioning posture is also revealed in actions, such as the radio program hosted by one of the *Guri* group's leader or in the candidacy for senator by one of the ALEM's leaders. Both leaders reported remarkable moments of persecution. The *Guri*'s group leader reports death threats, having changed the phone number several times. During the campaign for senator, the ALEM activist tells that her electoral committee was attacked with a homemade bomb in retaliation for her candidacy. Another example can be found in the public statement against the mayor Célio de Castro, who had publicly declared that homosexuality was a disease. In this occasion, several groups presented themselves as the Minas' Homosexual Movement (MHM) and mobilized different media, in a way that the mayor had to publicly rectify his own saying. A cross-dressing activist argues that she showed her breasts as a way to enter public agencies. The media impact sought by the groups, through actions like the attempt of a lesbian couple to get married in a registry office, can also be understood in this perspective.

Over the decade of 2000 the Parade gradually loses its critical character, whether because of the stereotype raised by the media—which led the Parade to be seen as exotic or anecdotal—or after its insertion and institutional formalization, which defined, in a steadier way, the political boundaries, focusing on the event's commercial and touristic appeal. They clearly still had to face strong opposition, for instance, from the firefighters who forbade the Parade Float, in 2007, which elicited even more critical discourses.

We realize that the most politicized discussions that included other forms of protest, proposing linkages with other cause, often pushed activists and participants away from these events. The CRS and LC were interested in developing a Parade based on the production of an educational identity, which would emphasize the Parade's festive mood, hence the discomfort with PSTU's banners and the crisscrossed discourses. It is worth noticing that, even after these groups left (CRS and LC), since 2006, the PSTU has no longer been called to support the event. Over the years, the Parade kept growing in the number of participants, and the groups kept being structured. In a way, since the 2005 Parade, the collective identities have been more educational and less critical. The SMADC, that since 2002 has offered the space for meetings, has expanded and diversified its support, with the CMDH. Afterwards, the leader's recruitment for positions in the municipal and state centers of reference also contributes to this process.

We must point out that the SMADC and CMDH support was not disinterested, as, in that moment, the LGBT issue was conquering space in the nationwide debates on human rights and citizenship. Besides, with the creation of specific committees for Afro-Brazilians, women, people with disabilities or other minorities, in the SMADC structure, the CMDH regained visibility with the LGBT issue and, later, with the creation of CRLGBT.

The approach to governmental agents and public policies required a more cordial posture concerning the event's production, such as the place to concentrate and the Parade's route. Many times this approach prevented the groups from associating the multiplicity of the political agency with identity-related issues, losing part of their confrontational capacity, since many conflicts should be dealt with internally. Many actions, mainly the sub-

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mersed, had to adjust to new allies' demands and legitimize the institutional mechanisms that supported them. The rules and norms that had to be followed to occupy the street can be understood as a way to instill the parade in the hegemonic context. The BELOTUR interest and support cannot be ignored in this inclusion either.

Although we cannot uniformly categorize these movements' identity-related production, as the interweaving between the critical and educational strategies led to mixed models in a great number of actions, the identity-related boundaries emphasized the groups' isolation in their daily lives, forging more predictable and bureaucratic political behaviors.

4. Final Remarks:

We investigated the process of constitution of collective and political identities that were and still are produced in order to face the LGBT discrimination. Individual and collective, private and public, cultural and political, symbolic and structural struggles which, despite all their invisibility and contradictions, have been challenging society, triggering transformative processes towards rights equivalence and citizenship principles' realization. We discussed these experiences' specificities in Belo Horizonte, geopolitically locating these struggles. Such contextualization is paramount since, as conflicts of modernity, these struggles follow, to somewhat different extents, the contemporary globalizing logics. In this sense, we argued that Belo Horizonte's semi-peripheral position in the Brazilian political scenery has contributed to the radicalism of dilemmas inherent to the public and political confrontation of these antagonisms. The local activism faces dilemmas related to the historical narratives' hierarchization in Brazil, which limits specific possibilities for questioning oppressive relationship, reproducing hegemonic discourses. In Brazil, the political-economic power was overly centralized in the Rio de Janeiro/São Paulo' axis (Marsiaj, 2003). This position leads to the invisibility of local political experiences that bring important particularities for understanding the LGBT movement phenomenon.

If the market still represented the promising source of funds until the beginning of 2000 decade (Machado & Prado, 2005), recalling that the São Paulo's Parade has even received sizeable funding from the private sector, since the second half of this decade, the State increasingly appears as the main interlocutor. The groups that were more aligned with a "leftist discourse", which came to be the main representatives of the local activism, were, since the beginning, critical to the partnerships with the market and emphasized the importance of establishing the Parade as a political event.

The State and the governmental agents had a major role in the processes of constitution of collective and political identities. Even nationwide, most of the organized groups still rely on the State, either to their actions' funding or because they have to organize their schedule according to the political policies, considering the events (for instance, the conferences of political policies) and the participatory arrangements proposed by the governments. The State recognition has become an important element for the identity-related legitimacy of the LGBT movements. In this context, the contradictions stemming from the dialogues between the social movements and the State suggest that the social dynamics,

which operate inside the State power, had to be better understood. New researches should analyze the processes that influence these political issues. This remark is based on the standpoint that considers that the State is not a homogenous actor and complies with several political forces; hence we must identify the nature of this rapprochement between the political poles, the wider oppositional forces and the conflicts that are legitimated in these spaces. The LGBT issues, more often than not, either become invisible in the complex bureaucratic State or are portrayed as negative and marginalized, counting on the legitimacy of a traditional, religious and conservative culture of Brazilian's society.

Researches following this perspective shall need bold methodological strategies, as once they enter this power space, the production of knowledge will inevitably be part of these political disputes. This issue is significant mainly because the scientific-academic discourse is achieving preeminence in the discussions about the LGBT demands, at the same time that it depends on the political legitimation to be produced and/or recognized in the debate's spaces, as they are no longer confined to the university/ academic *ethos*. This reaffirms the importance of grasping the (counter)hegemonic processes from the political antagonisms produced in-between (but not in) the civil society or the State (Prado et al, 2009).

However, we emphasize that the (in)differentiation among the presented actors—mainly the *continuum* between the State and civil society and the common grounds between activism and academy—should not be understood as an intention to homogenize the political field or suppress the power relations that each social stance must recognize. On the contrary, these (in)differentiations and the common grounds serve for delimiting roles. In this sense, we argue that in order to analyze these political relations it is important to bear in mind the formation of identity boundaries and be cautious not to let ourselves be seduced by the comfort provided by reductionist or Manichean explanations, which radically oppose these actors or argue about their lack of difference.

Sheltering social movements within the State propels their assimilation, which, in turn, leads them to reproduce discourses aligned with institutional and governmental logics. One of the common grounds between the State and social movements is established when some leaders occupy certain power positions within the governmental institutions, which makes it difficult to form critical positions before the government and to maintain the democratic relationship within the groups, as it affects the involvement of other activists who remain away from these places' dynamics without, though, producing new and critical leaders.

Moreover, as these movements face strong opposition from organized groups inside and outside the State, the link between the educational, critical and mixed models of identities is made in a very confusing way¹². For that reason we have identified the strengthening of boundaries among activist groups, increasing the isolation and activism specialization through steady identity-related categories, making the groups' articulation difficult when it

12 Events as this one point out to the insufficiency of the model developed by Bernstein (2007), but this goes beyond this work's scope.

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comes to joint actions. This movement of assimilation by the State can also be identified in its impact on the collective identities' constitution of the organized groups. This occurs when an important leader participates in a space controlled by State logics while still influencing the internal dynamics of his/her own groups. Besides, when a group fits into the rules of funding bids or organizes itself according to participative arrangements, such as the councils and conferences), the action system which underlies the collective identity tends to be subscribed to the hegemonic political guidelines and to the power project led by the government with which it interacts. Financial resources, in an individual context, attach political positions to livelihood and career plans; in the collective context, they constrain political actions to the group organizational maintenance, in addition to often ensuring flexible manpower with low cost, which generate electoral and political benefits.

In the case of Belo Horizonte we identify an important contradiction concerning the political discourse of groups that, despite their continuous support to fairly critical positions, have not been capable of efficiently translating the demands into challenging and creative actions. Besides, the groups known for joining the LGBT theme to class, gender, generation issues etc., started to develop more focused and specialized actions and discourses regarding sexuality. To aggregate wider demands and discourses on social transformation can be interesting, beyond other reasons, to make it evident that the individual and collective LGBT identities are not limited to their sexual dimension, but rather comprise subjects who are agents of social practices, what would enrich the actions of political questioning (Prado, Mountian, Machado & Santos, 2010). On the contrary, the activist discourses, mainly those oriented by the institutional spaces, tend to emphasize fixed, specialized and often essentialized identity-related categories.

Although our data is limited to the period between 1998 and 2007, recent reactions from conservative groups and their endorsement on the part of governmental sectors reinforce our observations and indicate relevant consequences of this phenomenon, intrinsically related to the assimilative process of the social movements by the public power. In this context, it is notable that since 2008, the LGBT themes and demands have been deeply silenced and even suffered a significant regression in the agenda and priorities of Brazil's governments. The political legitimacy and the material-symbolic resources, which the governments destined for the LGBT movements, are currently diminished in quantity and quality. The fragmentation and the demobilization of the LGBT movements, mostly caused by the attachment to institutional policies, can be seen as a strong deterrent for the overcoming of these impasses. Although new possibilities of insertion and development of public policies were opened, these changes crystallized the kinds of political actions and limited one of the main effects of the Parade: the political reinvention of daily life and the expansion of the social experience in public space.

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