

Both feminism and LGBTI activism have been caught between two radicalized options: “identity politics” or “queer politics”. They both have pros and cons.

Identity can be a sound strategic option, the only way for an oppressed group to stand out or even to find a community of protection and safety. Queer, too, can be liberating, a way to break away from the constraints of groups and traditions.

On the other hand, identity can be stifling and it tends to create quasi-ethnic groups; and Queer can, paradoxically, reinforce neo-liberal trends towards individualism, atomized identities, and illusions of self-making through consumption and performance.

“Intersectionality” may represent the middle way – or a way to *overcome* those two options. It holds that no identities are unique or complete; that identities are crossed by other identities; it acknowledges conflict between different sub-groups within a group; it allows for alliance with non-gender, non-sexuality issues; it increases translatability and identification by those outside the movement.

Intersectionality, however, is not just a description of the complexity of social worlds in which any human being lives. It acknowledges and problematizes *power*. The intersectional approach was actually first proposed by Black women involved in the Feminist movement – and taken up also by Lesbians and Hispanic women, acknowledging “race” as a problematizing aspect in the women’s movement. What this means is that there is not simply “diversity” or “difference” but also *inequality*. Certain structures of power, such as “race” or ethnicity, or class, are as determinant of power positions as gender and sexuality are.

If we take the example of gender/sexuality we can see, for instance: how masculinity and patriarchy “survive” in the protagonism of men, for instance, or in male-inspired modes of action and visibility (“white gay men” as protagonists); how heteronormativity easily becomes homonormativity; how cissexuality is taken for granted as “natural”, over transsexuality; how able-bodiedness is taken for granted; how class and status privilege are reproduced in social movements, modes of representation, visibility, etc.; how whiteness and Westernness appear in an un-problematized way as the neutral norm; and even how power in international relations and geopolitics may be reproduced within movements, organizations and identities

(how LGBTI rights “seem” to be a Western thing and how Western LGBTI rights’ agendas are not always adequate for other contexts...)

The last three or four ILGA-Europe conferences seem to show a movement that goes from *complaint/demand* by sub-groups, to *questioning exclusions and addressing diversity*, to (finally) applying the analytical and practical *tool of intersectionality*. That happened within or inside the organization and the conferences, but what about outside, in civil society and in political action? This is related to the politics of *alliance* – finding allies for our cause. But maybe we need also to think about being *allies of*, in a proactive manner.

This is even more important since we are living times of backlash in Europe, a backlash that addresses what have become taken-for-granted beliefs in our activist culture. We believe and think that everyone believes that gender and sexuality are socially constructed, and that the fight for SOGI rights is an obvious part of Human Rights and democracy. Well, it isn’t necessarily so. The nationalistic, extreme-right and religious fundamentalist movements are articulated in novel ways: they directly address our taken-for-granted beliefs, and they say that they are constructed and relative (see the attacks on gender theory or, as they say, gender “ideology”).

We need to address them in novel ways too, mainly by *finding the right allies* and showing our solidarity and our intersectional connections: women/gender, reproductive rights, new forms of family, and also anti-racism and solidarity with refugees/asylum seekers.

One dimension of an intersectional approach – and practice – stands out: the fact that we are international by nature. LGBTI people have always been *migrants and refugees of sorts*. From the small village to the big town, from the small capital to the global metropolis, from the repressive country to the more liberal one. And, as a demographic minority, and one that is not biologically reproductive as such (our children are not necessarily LGBTI...) we have also been historically *cosmopolitan and diasporic*, our cultural references tend to overcome national references (although we are not immune to the imperial, center to periphery effects of unequal globalization...). Our migrant, cosmopolitan nature can be a great asset for becoming *protagonists* in the fight for democracy, human rights in Europe and the world. In *fighting for Europe*, actually.

We are usually the canary in the gold mine. When one of us is attacked, when we are collectively attacked, that is a sign of upcoming wider attacks in society, of its growing reaction to the 20th century’s democratic and human rights. We will always be “good” targets for populist, backlash movements. We will be easily seen as part of the “elites” that they rebel

against. This can and should be countered by paying more attention (again, intersectionally) to socio-economic inequality, class, poverty, exclusion, and how it intersects with LGBTI identities and problems.

In sum, we need to convey a sense of being part of the *people* in the phrase “power to the people”. If I had to sum up the feeling of the Nicosia conference, that would be it. Most discussions, and the general atmosphere, seemed to have overcome both the organizational complaints of the recent past, and the feeling of being overwhelmed by the backlash in many parts of Europe. I believe that it so thanks to the *opening of the worlds* within us, and the *opening to the world* out there.