LGBTQ politics and International Relations: Here? Queer? Used to it?

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Abstract | The politics surrounding Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) claims have received increasing attention in the past few years. LGBTQ advocates pursue their diverse interests at the local, national, regional and global levels, in the course stimulating an interesting discussion about sexual rights in International Relations. The books that have emerged on this topic in the recent past show the promise of a nuanced and lively debate on this topic for years to come.
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Introduction

As the co-editor of a forthcoming volume on Sexual/Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) Politics in International Relations (IR) (Picq and Thiel, 2015), I was astonished to notice not only the immense academic interest, but also the lack of literature on sexual rights and LGBTQ politics in IR.[1] As Kollmann (2010) shows, a successive expansion of publications over the past

two decades dealing with LGBTQ politics in the domestic spheres or on a theoretical level occurred, though much of it in sociology and law.[2] The general dearth can mainly be attributed to the fact that sexuality was once considered a private affair, relegating it outside of the public remit of politics. The first attempt to place sexuality firmly in the public sphere, and to encourage research on its diverse expressions, came from Magnus Hirschfeld, who founded the Scientific Humanitarian Committee in Germany in 1897, which of course came to an end with the rise of fascism (Kollmann and Waites, 2009). Kinsey in the 1950s, the sexual revolution of the 1960s, the gay liberation movements of the 1970s with the founding of the International Gay and Lesbian Association (ILGA), and HIV/Aids in the 1980s all left indelible marks on the historiography of sexual rights.

Following the blazing trail of gender equality claims and policies, the politics surrounding sexuality have received an astonishing degree of public and international attention in recent years. No matter if related to health policies, family support, labor structures or neoliberal consumption patterns, non-traditional sexualities and gender expressions are connected to every public policy imaginable. Many governments now try to provide non-discrimination policies and equality rights domestically while simultaneously attempting to preserve their electoral support. Gender provisions and sexual rights – in particular for LGBTQ individuals – have become points of contention, eliciting domestic culture wars and international diplomatic rows. As a thoroughly competitive battleground of ideas about sexuality and gender expressions, LGBTQ rights are inherently political. In some ways, however, the subject at hand is less about globalized sexual politics *per se* than about transnational advocacy politics, particularly when LGBT movements or civil society groups are involved.

Seventeen countries have legalized same-sex marriage, many more recognize some form of same-sex relationships, and Nepal, Pakistan and India officially acknowledge third gender categories, despite a generally reticent public opinion at home, and, in the Indian case, a recriminalization of homosexuality in 2013. But 76 countries still criminalize homosexuality (a few with the death penalty), and international fora such as the United Nations (UN) and other regional or functional bodies – with the exception of regional human rights courts – have been rather muted on the topic of sexual rights. That changed somewhat in 2008 with the appointment of South African Navy Pillay as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, a vanguard in providing legal-constitutional sexual rights. Yet in the international community, there remains a disconnect not only between more progressive and more conservative as well as religious countries, but also a similar division exists between advocates in these disparate settings over the best strategy to promote LGBTQ rights (inter)nationally. Neela Ghoshal, a senior researcher in the LGBT rights program at Human Rights Watch in Nairobi cautioned in this regard: 'As the US- and Europe-based LGBT movements accomplish a lot of what they've been working for at home, they're discovering the rest of the world and trying to help – and that kind of commitment doesn't necessarily mean they're developing their engagements in the most constructive way.' (IRIN, 2014). The following works all explore how LGBTQ claims have moved to the forefront of (inter)national politics, and investigate the repercussions of those hotly contested rights for LGBTQ individuals, societies, states and the international community.

A terminological clarification is in order: all of the works recognize the centrality of the LGBTQ movements in the struggle for equality rights, but the field lacks a uniform application of what is sometimes colloquially termed 'the alphabet soup'.[3] Some authors prefer to use an extended version including intersex and/or allies that results in LGBTQIA, whereas others limit themselves to gays and lesbians – arguably the most dominant forces in the struggle for sexual rights. This open and ongoing debate in the field reflects not only an implicit yet contested hierarchy in which bisexual and transgender individuals are often rendered invisible, but is also the result of a deeper epistemological discussion about the value of assigning fixed labels (such as gender or sexuality), as opposed to living with the tensions of a fluid personalistic expression of sexual- and gender-identity. It also points to the generally accepted statement that sex and gender are socially constructed, rather than primarily biologically determined (Parker *et al*, 2014). Moreover, LGBT categories are neither universally recognized as many cultures do not subscribe to these Western identitarian concepts, nor do they capture the full range of sexual diversity – 'sexual orientation', for instance, neglects bisexual oscillation in its binary outlook on sexual attraction. Important for politics is that the alphabet soup forces people with different aims into one broad group – think of sexual rights claims of gays and lesbians (for example, marriage equality) versus gender identity issues (health care, legal recognition) of transgender individuals. Thus 'the relationship between essentialist and/or fixed conceptions of sexual and gender identity and the political discourses and strategies employed by LGBT movements in global human rights struggles is therefore a vital topic of academic and political debate' (Waites, p. 142).

Queer individuals, in contrast, subscribe to queer theory, which is a diverse body of literature and research opposing normative and binary notions of sexuality (hetero/homo), gender (male/female), class (rich/poor), race (white/non-white) and so on. Queers opt for alternative views and practices that are critical of mainstream society, including but not limited to many socio-political institutions such as mainstream liberalism, neoliberal capitalism, regulatory citizenship and so on. Queer movements are

thus less apt to exploit political opportunity structures and, consequently, play a less prominent role in (inter)national LGBT advocacy politics. Though they can be influential on the local level, some analysts have even attributed the success of LGBT politics to the 'de-queering' of homosexuality for political purposes (Hekma and Duyvendak, in: Tremblay, Patternotte and Johnson, 2011, p. 103). 'The anti-assimilationist character of queer activism and its breaking down of pre-existing categories would present a perhaps insurmountable challenge to human rights discourse, which requires stable categories and, given opposition to anything perceived as a claim for "special rights", an emphasis on the similarities between people regardless of their sexuality and the "normality" of LGBT people' (Sheill, 2009, p. 56). This inherent tension is one that makes for an interesting analytical comparison, particularly when applied to IR and its theories (Picq and Thiel, 2015). In the following discussion, however, I avoid identitaerian reasoning (refusing to cite the ever-present Foucault or Butler) in this field and concentrate instead on what the literature states about the linkage between politicized sexualities and trans/international governance.

Theorizing LGBT Politics: How Non-Traditional Sexuality and Gender Morphed into 'Human Rights'

Kollman & Waites' edited special issue of *Contemporary Politics* in 2009 is a 'must' for the reader who wants to more closely examine the impact of LGBTQ Politics in IR. Not only because it was one of the first major research productions focusing on the international repercussions of sexual politics in an interdisciplinary manner, but also because of the comprehensive and balanced way in which this admittedly broad umbrella-topic is approached. They also make clear that in the case of LGBT politics both, political will and action in the shape of sexual equality laws and judgments, and activism from LGBTQ individuals and groups is required. Without support from the state institutions and international organizations, demands by activists will not be heard or implemented, whereas without claim-making by advocacy groups, political stakeholders do not have the awareness or the pressure to rectify existing policies or create new equality statutes. Historically, Scandinavian countries have led in the creation of LGBTQ rights policies: 'Without the pioneering legal developments of the Nordic and Benelux countries in Europe, for example, it probably would not have been possible for either the EU (European Union) or the ECtHR (European Court of Human Rights, added) to incorporate sexual orientation protections into their treaties and/or decisions. These decisions have in turn helped shape the human rights practices of the rest of continental Europe' (p. 6). The Scandinavian countries remain the frontrunners in international LGBT advocacy, to an extent that more recently has unnerved culturally conservative states in the UN and also led to fissures among activists about the appropriate strategy to advance 'LGBTQ human rights'. While there is increasing recognition at the UN institutional level, as well as among the Human Rights Council and working groups, that sexual orientation needs to be on a firmer footing in international human rights law, 'unequivocal and broad support at the intergovernmental level is still far away' (Swiebel, 2009, p. 27). Differences in rights attainment in the various international organizations is explained through variances in the capacity of mobilizing structures, issue framing and in regards to the receptiveness of the political opportunity structures (inter)nationally.

With regards to the linkage of LGBTQ claims to human rights, the editors of this special journal issue posit that the broad international consensus on the pursuit of such rights is stronger in countries that came out of authoritarianism (Spain, Argentina, South Africa are notable examples). Yet such an association is also wound up with a lack of specificity, a Eurocentric outlook on the universality of liberal–democratic rights policies, and an increasing interventionism in the name of LGBTQ human rights. Feminism, they make clear, initially raised most of these issues with regards to gendered power relations already. In an effort to further theorize the emergence of LGBTQ politics in the international system, the editors note that the end of the Cold War together with the rise of transnational activism led to the emergence of constructivist-inspired human rights research (such as the boomerang pattern or the norm cascade), which similarly applies to transnational LGBT advocacy politics.

Two of the articles in this issue explicitly apply queer theory, but most contributors notably refrain from considering queer theory as a main lens of analysis. This is not surprising given the rather narrow disciplinary and disciplining focus of political science outlets, and points to the fact that political science/IR discovered the relevance of LGBTQ politics rather late, comparatively speaking. And there is even less of an understanding for queer international theory in parochial mainstream IR (Weber, 2014). While the contributors acknowledge the relevance of queer approaches in deconstructing essentialist understandings of gender and sexuality, they recognize that in practice 'law, policy and states appear to need identifiable categories to combat discrimination' (p. 13) – a fundamental tension between the theory and practice of LGBT advocacy. The article contributions run the gamut from policy-tracing analysis of, for instance, the EU's recognition of same-sex unions (Kollmann), the establishment of the aspirational 'Montreal Declaration' on LGBT Human Rights or the adoption of the largely normative 'Yogyakarta Principles on the Application of International Human Rights Law in Relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity' to more critical examinations of the impact of politicization and regulation of sexual rights as an international human

rights. These critical approaches are nicely concretized in, for example, the problematization of intersectional (that is, cross-cutting) international lesbian rights, transgender issues and the forcing of the politics of recognition for people outside LGBT identifications in the non-Western world (Sheill, 2009). These issues, the contributors highlight, are always connected to the societal stratifications of class, gender and race in which sexual rights are advanced. Overall, this special issue is highly recommended as a primer on the theoretical as well as practical-political issues associated with the promotion of LGBT rights as international human rights. Given that this collection of articles appeared relatively early, there are few suggestions contained about how to move forward in a manner reconciling political needs and critical, or even queer, considerations in the analysis of LGBTQ rights.

LGBTQ Individuals, LGT Advocacy Politics and the 'Straight State'

While the LGBTQ label subsumes a number of diverging and differently represented sexual minorities, in practice one can only recognize LGT politics (with a just-emerging focus on transgender rights). These subgroups often have different opinions on objectives from heteronormative 'normalization', including same-sex marriage advocacy, to a more radical-queer contestation of assimilationist patterns of societal integration and neoliberal consumption. Even though they seem to have little in common, they all face the 'straight state', that is, heteronormative socio-political environments and a political system that is tendentiously cautious when faced with such a potentially contentious issue. The work most closely examining the central venues in which these interactions play out in national politics is edited by Tremblay, Paternotte and Johnson (2011). In it, the contributors whose backgrounds stem mostly from political science or sociology, tackle the central question of how gay and lesbian advocacy groups relate to the state and its institutions. Thirteen chapters from all over the world (from Australia to the United States) investigate in local, national and international contexts questions of federalism, inter-institutional competition, and most importantly, civil society–state relations. This volume necessarily emphasizes the individual state level, albeit with a reference to the international movement (the 'Gay International', as Massad (2007) calls it) or intergovernmental levels throughout. Being firmly embedded in the domain of political science, most contributors apply a historical institutionalist analysis, detailing how the gay and lesbian movements of the countries under observation claimed and gained rights in exchange with sympathetic elites, domestically allied parties, civil society groups, governmental branches or international organizations. The notion of the 'straight state' somewhat oversimplifies, however, the way in which LGBT groups relate to the state, as the post-authoritarian (Poland, Argentina) or developmental (Brazil, India) state examples show. Some interesting comparative findings are contained that defy simplistic expectations regarding those mutual interactions between stakeholders: leftist parties do not always support gay/lesbian rights as the case of Australia shows, nor did the emergence of HIV/Aids result in the problematization of the LGBTQ movement, as it had the opposite effect in Brazil and the Netherlands. Moreover, the growth of civil society in general does not always foster LGBT rights, as Christian groups (in Poland) or Muslim-based ones (in Indonesia) often counter sexual rights advances in newly democratized countries.

One of the recurring themes of the chapters in this volume is that, particularly in the case of sexual rights, political culture plays a significant role in how political stakeholders respond to the claims of LGBT groups. The ways in which states continue to consolidate their (deomcratic?) governance or economies and treat social and ethnic factionalization and socio-cultural diversity, has led to the development of a distinct set of norms and practices that mirror the recognizable dominant political culture in each state. LGBT advocates have to respond to those if they want to be successful. Moreover, the state is often portrayed as a 'permeable' one, in which multiple channels of exchanges between political stakeholders exist. The resulting organizational diversity of LGBT civil society groups and legal statutes provides for many political opportunity structures, (but also makes for a strenuous read at times when trying to keep the central arguments in mind). The centrality of the state institutions in providing rights to LGBTQ individuals and groups based on the initial decriminalization of homosexuality leads governments to treat their divergent claims in a similar manner, despite the different needs (from access to health care to same-sex marriage equality). Thus the book presents well-composed, coherent contributions about the necessary balance of movement strengths and political opportunity structures at the state level that are succinctly synthesized in the conclusion.

The editors succeed at bringing together the main points raised in the different chapters, providing a comprehensive yet nuanced picture of the complex state-lesbian/gay movement interactions through time and space. They establish that (i) states respond differently depending on its spatial (federal-unitary) configuration, (ii) states change their LGBT policies with political transformations that can be gradual or abrupt, (iii) states consist of a wide array of potentially helpful institutions and actors, (iv) while they are the most important, they are not the only important institution involved in the regulation of sexuality. Lastly, that they cannot be viewed as closed and hermetic entities, but as actors that exchange with and are exposed to other countries, transnational actors and intergovernmental influences. It is notable that no unidirectional relation between the state and

lesbian/gay movements is posited, but instead an interactive model is proposed that allows for the reconfiguration of the state and its policies through continuous pressure from below, by lesbian and gay advocates. In conclusion, the ongoing debate over diverging interests by the LGBTQ communities is problematized both domestically and internationally: 'challenging the exclusion of lesbians and gays from the same rights and entitlements that heterosexual couples enjoy has recently been seen by the Western gay and lesbian movement as the most fundamental form of heteronormativity to be challenged' (p. 223) – an approach that scholars of the queer persuasion, or non-Western scholars, would regard cautiously because of the implicit heteronormativity in 'trying to keep up with the straight Joneses'. The referencing of international human rights standards in the domestic arena by LGBT advocates is a recurring motive as well, highlighting the considerable level of intermestics in such low-politics issues today.

Sexual Rights as International Human Rights?

An element that has become central to LGBT advocacy politics is the strategic linkage of sexual rights claims to notions of globalized human rights. A solid human rights regime has been firmly established in the international system in the wake of the Second World War with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and as such, an association with such a successful concept is politically promising as it creates symbolic capital. It also engenders discussions surrounding citizenship, however, making LGBT rights claims more urgent and 'natural'.

Amy Lind's carefully edited volume is particularly relevant, as today's LGBTQ politics play out in seemingly different ways in the Global North, where pluralist interest groups are strongly represented, as opposed to the more volatile Global South. There, a two-fold dynamic makes social justice for these individuals much harder, as on the one hand LGBTQ individuals experience a higher degree of either invisibility (transgender, lesbian individuals) or harassment (gays), and on the other hand, developmental policies originating in the North can sometimes have a detrimental impact. Lind's book precisely problematizes these issues and foregrounds the problematic neoliberal, heteronormative 'narratives, policies and practices' (p. 2) in transnational development work under the auspices of global governance institutions. Aside from these more policy-relevant issues, the book also pursues the ambitious goal of offering a tentative queer theory of development (or at a minimum, aims to queer conventional development prescriptions stemming from traditional, patriarchal or neocolonial origins). Just as queer approaches at times do not easily align with traditionally advocated prescriptions in development policy, so too feminist, gay and alternative views on best practices often have contradictory objectives and outcomes. The contributors, with expertise in various disciplines, and often with a practitioner background, 'query development, globalization and global governance through a range of approaches and on various scales' (p. 4). Such a mix should be welcomed for the plurality of views expressed to avoid an overly normative vantage point, but it also poses the familiar challenge of coherence of themes and approaches. Yet the subdivision in three parts provides for a sequential logic that complements the theoretical progression of arguments made. The first, theoretical part offers a critical reconceptualization of a number of basic assumptions underlying sexual politics and development – from the invisibility of certain sexual minorities to a mischaracterization of sexual and gender roles. The second part focuses on individuals in development agencies and organizations, and on how they mediate and represent the objectives of these institutions. The last part looks to the future and asks how alternative views can be integrated into existing hetero/homo-normative or other binary or hegemonic neoliberal development policies.

Some parts tackle the topics of the volume more closely, that is, the queering of development. The second part in particular focuses on the LGBTQ constituency in international development institutions and organizations such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs). The link between human resources policies, employees' 'homosociality' (p. 87) and the advocacy of development professionals and the discourses and policies of their employers cannot easily be traced, and the characterization of the proliferation of such sites in broadening the transnational space for more sexual rights seems obvious. As such, this part appears somewhat weaker compared with the theoretical challenges and practical implications raised in the other parts. Yet the project is to be commended for its two-fold attempt to not only problematize heteronormativity in development approaches, but also to empirically provide evidence how 'multilateral development institutions are important policy agents involved in the reformulation of normative forms of heterosexuality' (p. 110).

It also, importantly, broadens the notion of sexual rights from sexual minorities best known as LGBT individuals to other alternative family models – be they single-mother households or MSM/WSM (men who have sex with men/women who have sex with women, but do not necessarily identify as gay or lesbian). Hence the contributors critique heteronormative – in some cases, consumption-oriented, non-political homonormative – models of development with regards to land rights, access to family assistance and so on. In this regard, one of the most insightful chapters (Chapter 8) argues that 'organizing strategies and development interventions around sexual orientation and gender expression need to shift away from common categories of identity toward a broader context of struggle' (p. 132), aiming to achieve a human right to expression of sexuality,

however varyingly defined. Such change of paradigm, which moves away from identity-based categorizations, also stimulates a wider discussion of related areas such as human security, global governance and social justice. This entails repercussions in the field of education, health and justice, to name a few.

The third part of the book provides more or less concrete suggestions as to how a more inclusive, but also a more critical interaction of development organizations and local populations as well as culture can occur. Issues of particular local, religious and cultural contexts make it necessary to strengthen local coalitions with other civil society actors and/or politicians while at the same time being linked to international sexual rights organizations. With regards to the latter, it seems from the examples in the book that the support from largely Northern-based human rights NGOs is necessary to a certain extent, no matter its application to the Middle Eastern or African context. This, however, relativizes the autonomous-radical theoretical approach of the book decrying the Eurocentric and/or neocolonial intervention in local Global-South contexts on several occasions. The reality of a queer development approach probably lies somewhere in the middle, as acknowledged when stated that 'local groups "indigenize" or hybridize Northern knowledge and mechanisms' (p. 165). This makes it difficult to prescribe concrete measures as each case is different, and it is also the affirmed anti-normative goal of this volume to not fall prey to generalizing presumptions that resemble well-known anti-colonial or feminist positions. At the same time, the book raises a number of important questions (how to integrate non-traditional sexual and gender expressions without exposing them further; how to counter neoliberal and Eurocentric policy prescriptions that further sideline the already marginalized; how to conceive of queer development studies), which are implicitly evaluated at various points in the volume. A conclusion would have probably aided in better synthesizing the many useful contributions to this important yet broad debate.

This book, as well as the others, highlights the issue of the 'private' and the 'public' spheres that sexual and gender expressions invariably connect. Some sexual rights and expressions may be protected precisely because they are relegated to the private realm (be it through the non-intervention at home or the invisibility existing in this area), but it is also there where oppression, marginalization and disempowerment is prevalent. In this context, the assumed universalist desire for visibility may not always be a possible or legitimate form of activism in non-Western contexts (Offord, in: Tremblay *et al*, 2011). And sexuality as a social marker of humanity is always to a certain degree public, even with attempts to hide non-traditional sexual or gender expression. The question of how to best address this private-public balance in achieving sexual rights publicly, as well as on an individual level in terms of the personal 'deployment' of sexuality, is one that ought to be carefully calibrated in each particular group- or cultural context.

Lost in Translation: From the 'West' to the Rest?

'De-centering Western Sexualities' is not so much a critique of Eurocentric 'Western' sexual rights advocacy in the global sense, as it is an interrogation of standard heteronormative assumptions and, interestingly, a critique of Western queer theory dealing with sexual expression in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). In addition to aiming for a de-centering of Western mainstream progressive and queer theories, they 'take up the question of relations between post-colonial and post-communist studies, showing how the cross-contamination of theories is one of the best queer studies practices' (p. 13). In this context, this volume also posits that the Western/Eastern-binary is problematic – a somewhat precarious undertaking given its title. The ten contributions in this volume are provided by a diverse group of social theorists, ranging from human geographers to women's studies scholars. Yet they all have similar experiences: the rapid implosion of socialism and its authoritarian economic, social, cultural and political structures in 1989 suddenly confronted LGBTQ movements in CEE with sexual rights promotion policies of the West developed over decades. Depending on the progress of socio-economic transformation and democratic stabilization, individual countries in the region responded differently to the varying claims made by LGBTQ communities without adopting a linear, progressive stance on both ends. Simultaneously, CEE countries were 'othered' by labeling them a post-communist 'contemporary periphery' contrasted with the idealized metropolitan/liberal/supposedly pro-gay West (in the more narrow EU or wider hemispheric sense). They remind us of the stereotyping we all engage in when communicating with others, or even when conducting and publicizing research.

While being more eclectic than the other books in its application of differently sourced queer theories, as opposed to political science/IR ones, certain political influences emerge strongly in the CEE context. One repeatedly occurring theme consists of the ambivalent influence of the EU, while pressing for the adoption of supranational anti-discrimination legislation in the process of accession to the bloc, simultaneously creating, rather than diminishing, nationalist and anti-gay pushback reactions by state and social institutions. Paradoxically, by doing so the EU several times appears as an immoral intrusive force (Eurosodomy) against which the nationally pure, heterosexual nation has to fight. This confrontation, as many of the chapters show, is as much domestically directed against the emerging LGBTQ communities, as it is internationally trying to evade EU non-discrimination treaty obligations. In this difficult terrain, LGBT groups in those countries often re-appropriate their connection to either the home country or the international

human rights regime by holding pride marches on either a national holiday or on the UN's International Human Rights Day.

The second part of the volume presents empirical chapters that explore the meanings and contexts of LGBTQ individuals and movements in a mostly qualitative ethnographic manner. These are stimulating because they display how, despite the forced association with 'the West', these people seem to be quite confronted with domestic homophobia, in the course almost internalizing feelings of invisibility, inferiority and heteronormative orientations. One contributor called this constant renegotiation of public acceptance 'the transparent closet' – a process in which individuals come out but are, once known, pushed back into invisibility and non-acknowledgement to reduce society's discomfort (p. 151). This becomes particularly apparent when legal and political instruments are changed for the better (ranging from the introduction of anti-discrimination legislation to same-sex relationship recognition), for instance in preparation for EU accession, but the social and cultural homophobic traditions still produce negative consequences. The acquisition of 'intimate or sexual citizenship' is thus one in which LGBTQ individuals have to weigh how much of their transgressive sexuality they want to articulate, and how far they want to, in an effort to gain respect, silence those expressions and follow heteronormative models and regulations.

One of the major contributions of this volume is to sensitize the reader as to the distinctiveness of LGBTQ communities and advocacy politics in national contexts. Many examples evidence the forceful, sometimes conditional introduction of Western (often, EU) models of minority rights in a way that do not resonate with preexisting histories, cultures and socio-economic conditions. The idiosyncratic timeliness of policy adoption and socio-cultural change contingent upon 'post-socialist' transformation processes is, unlike Tremblay, Patternotte and Johnson's more linearly conceived volume, problematized in a manner that highlights the unique problematic legacies of the CEE countries in a powerful way. At the same time, I wonder if this uniqueness, and the resulting contrast to Western experiences, is at times over-emphasized? Many chapters use the imported LGBT and Queer terminology and chronicle the emergence of public visibility and inter-identitarian tensions, with the familiar invisibility of bisexuals and transgender individuals that we know from 'the West'. The critique of standard queer theories is also noted, for example, in Poland where the 'modern closet' refers to the counterintuitive assumption that 'undermining the notion of a strict and coherent gender and sexual identity theory weakens the Polish LGBT movement' (p. 97). Yet at the same time, the book provides a critical assessment of hegemonic Western norms, discourses, practices and policies from a distinct vantage point. On the border between being European insiders and outsiders, the contributors apply post-colonial and queer theories to the socio-political conditions as they exist in this particular European area. While doing so, they do not criticize Western queer theories inasmuch they construct a non-normative basis for the creation of cross-pollinated new queer approaches from the CEE countries. Again, a conclusion would have provided for an even better overview of the commonalities and differences among the countries observed.

Global Homophobia – Preexisting Condition, Anticipatory Counter-Movement or Reactive State Tool?

Meredith Weiss and Michael Bosia's (2013) edited volume 'Global Homophobia' articulates the point that resentments against LGBTQ individuals have to do not only with pre-existing cultural, heteronormative orientations, but are also in essence politically charged: 'We consider political homophobia as purposeful, especially as practiced by state actors; as embedded in the scapegoating of an "other" that drives processes of state building and retrenchment; as the product of transnational influence peddling and alliances; and as integrated into questions of collective identity and the complicated legacies of colonialism' (p. 2). In this vein, they view homophobia as an elite/state strategy of differentiation against a minority, to construct a national image in an Andersonian sense and to extract political support from the supposed 'majority' *à la* Tilly. They compare various theoretical approaches in their introduction, highlighting how the study of homo- and to a lesser extent, transphobia is often either neglected in hopes of its overcoming through modernizing progress, or is politically instrumentalized (often by LGBT advocates themselves) so as to mutually and falsely reinforce assumptions of LGBT rights with (homo)nationalism and Islamophobia (p. 10). Homophobia is thus explicitly transnational and modular, applied varyingly across the globe with similar objectives in mind: 'Central to this project is the maintenance of a particular order entangled with sexuality and gender […] always readied for battle against mythical foreign dangers known as "LGBT activists", who stand as surrogates for the financial capital and international institutions that have compelled social transformation and limited the regulatory capacity of the state' (p. 21).

The contributors' goal is to develop a theory of the 'modular' deployment of (inter)national homophobia, a significant contribution to the rapidly emerging body of literature on comparative sexual politics. They do so with a political science focus, but also seamlessly integrate queer approaches, for instance in the way binaries (state-citizens, Global South–North and so on) are problematized throughout. Bosia affirms state homophobia as an instrument of

nation-building and state governance, in times of war (Bosnia, Iraq) or economic crisis (Malaysia, Zimbabwe), respectively. In the latter case, government leaders attempt to divert attention from domestic issues and/or to implicate the accused in a Western-based plot to undermine sovereignty and identity. Surprisingly, he cautions that courts are often the ones used to legitimize sexual oppression or persecution of individuals, in contrast to Tremblay *et al* who have highlighted the courts as important vanguards in lesbian and gay equality.

The contributions of this volume focus on different geographical and cultural settings (from advanced industrialized countries to post-colonial societies). They highlight the role of states domestically as well as transnationally in fostering homophobia, either through direct export (think of McCarthyism's impact on the United States and even Western international organizations, or neocolonial US evangelicals' influence in Africa), or in the homophobic countermobilization to the encouragement of gay rights within the international human rights framework (think of the United States or European push for international recognition of such rights at the UN's Human Rights Council, for example). Yet the latter seems not to be uniformly applicable – or rather, contains few exceptions. In fact, O'Dwyer's chapter on Poland convincingly shows that the EU has indeed had a positive impact on gay rights there, with little to no significant counter-mobilization. His chapter and Lind's contribution on the way sexual politics were constitutionally framed in Ecuador by homopositive as well as homophobe discourses provides for a nuanced interrogation of the state-led processes that react to international pressures from above as well as domestic pressures from below to calibrate policies on sexual rights that fit the needs of state leaders, not the minority or majority populace. In her chapter on anticipatory homophobic counter-movements in Southeast Asia, Weiss advances this argument by highlighting how governments in the regions have constructed 'prejudices before pride' (p. 149) in anticipation of the larger globalizing processes of diffusion (of LGBTQ rights, of HIV/Aids), but not necessarily because these issues were raised by activists in the local or national context. The implications for the latter are that LGBTQ advocates refrain from more aggressive mobilizing, internalize self-censorship, and are ambiguous about the acceptance of foreign labels and support. Moreover, it results in 'legitimacy on the religious right for what may amount to impressive-looking shadowboxing, a felt need to shape or restrict right claims to reflect what terrain the counter-movement has already claimed or declared to be critical, and pressure on gender-based organizations to confront internalized fears of appearing queer if they speak to sexuality' (p. 167).

Together, the chapters in this book provide a more diverse picture of the transnational diffusion of LGBT rights, as well as of state-supported homophobia: unidirectional or simplistic dichotomous relations (the West impacting on the rest; Non-Western states being inherently homophobe) miss the nuances of mutual engagement and confrontation in establishing a dialog with resulting pro- or anti-LGBTQ stances (p. 190). It is particularly refreshing to see how two concluding chapters respond to the assertions and evidence provided throughout, as they synthesize similarities across space and elucidate further how political homophobia has become a globally used yet domestically calibrated application module to justify and enact pro-or anti-LGBTQ policies. In theorizing purportedly obvious phenomena, such as political homophobia or -philia, this book not only disentangles complex global processes connected to the internationally raised status of sexual rights, but also formulates a way forward for activists and politicians in terms of how to appropriately and effectively situate themselves.

Conclusion: Avenues for the Future?

The works presented above make clear that the call for more rigorous interrogations of the impact of LGBTQ issues in international politics has begun to be successfully answered. In terms of future LGBT politics and research, there are multiple factors to consider: the progress of LGBT advocacy politics is mainly limited to the West, and evokes domestic hetero- and homonormative and international, colonialist contention. Hence many hurdles still exist on the road to sexual justice. Referring to political progress in Western countries, if predominantly gay and lesbian rights such as marriage and adoption equality are achieved while transgender groups are still lacking workplace protection or health-care access, can one speak of true equality? And if the 'normalization' of non-traditional sexualities into privatized and depoliticized constituencies, as well as the resulting co-optation of LGBT advocacy groups leads to a weakening of truly alternative or critical queer models of socio-political coexistence and diversity, what long-term effects does this have on their empowerment?

Similarly, in the international sphere, the advancement of LGBT rights provokes backlashes by countries that feel that a neo- or 'homo'-colonial interference on behalf of those minorities by Western governments and intergovernmental organizations curtails their cultural and political sovereignty. This becomes particularly apparent when transnational NGOs, such as ILGA or IGOs such as the UN, the World Bank and the EU, advocate reforms in reticent countries while not realizing that their explicit LGBTQ support accentuates the politicization of those minorities. To counter this tendency, LGBT advocacy groups have linked their collective identity strongly to the international human rights regime in order to evoke universally valid human rights considerations under difficult domestic circumstances, and to appropriate such considerations for themselves as well. This attempt has been

fostered by the debate surrounding sexual or intimate citizenship that aims to locate the sometimes abstract notion of human rights in the concrete laws for and rights of citizens (with all attendant potential problems of the regulation of sexuality through 'duties', for example, in a heteronormative vision of procreation, or the invisibility of the ones not officially recognized as such).

Encarnación (2014) in *Gay Rights: Why Democracy Matters* takes a more cautious liberal stance: given the international contention of the sometimes forceful push for LGBT rights, maybe the support of democratizing measures more broadly is a better way to indirectly aid LGBT civil advocacy without inciting the kind of anti-LGBT responses that occurred in the recent past. The literature reviewed here also responds to this discussion, aiming to find more nuanced and truly 'glocal' solutions to the difficult global debate about sexual rights in non-Western countries, often with different priorities than the ones promoted in the West. This could occur through fewer explicit connections with Western LGBTQ identities or expressions, but also through the advocacy of privacy rights, separation of state from religion and the highlighting of democracy, rule of law and human rights (Zeidan, in Weiss and Bosia, p. 204). A similar way forward is proposed by Blasius in the same volume, who posits that 'LGBT movements (are successful when they) shape debate and advocacy about their same-sex loving and gender diversity across cultures through framing their specific cultural traditions within new ways of conceiving and enacting just governance' (Blasius, p. 220). How exactly these novel, localized rights approaches look is yet unclear – mainly because many non-Western states still work through a counter-position to the westernized ideal of LGBTQ rights – but it will certainly provide for more comparative theorization in the years to come. The thorny question that remains is how to promote human rights transnationally and leave LGBTQ groups self-determination and agency when they are repressed and marginalized domestically.

As one can see from the literature presented here, LGBTQ research is a collaborative effort. There are few single-authored works, as a single viewpoint in a field as diverse – some would say, even amorphous – would unnecessarily limit the range of expressions. It would also preclude a healthy debate about the contents and forms of LGBT advocacy politics in IR. The implications of LGBTQ expressions in private and public life are manifold, and the best research seems to evolve from comparative and collaborative work conducted by scholars from related but different disciplines, such as Political Science/IR, Sociology, Anthropology, Sexuality and Gender Studies and so on. If broad categorical concepts such as democracy or security often fail to travel successfully to other states or regions if not comprehensively and sensitively attuned to the conditions and context there, how can a research endeavor in such a complex field such as the international politics of sexual orientation and gender identity be appropriately examined by one disciplinary focus alone? The emerging field of transgender studies, for example, increasingly highlights the comparative intersection of transgenderism and ethnicity resulting in different social and political repercussions (Zabus and Coad, 2014).

All books are marked by chronological (from state and movement evolution to the emergence of responses to LGBTQ rights claims) as well as spatial diversity (of LGBTQ movements, of states and 'cultures' globally). These engender what some analysts called 'a different, uneven geotemporality' from one case to the next (Kulpa & Mizielinska, 2011). However, this does not mean that one cannot compare or better, contrast, these diverging experiences and relate them to the larger institutionalization of an international human rights regime; or what Puar (2013) has critically called 'the human rights industrial complex'. As refreshingly diverse as these books are in their epistemological perspectives and methodologies used, they share an implicit tension in the application of, on the one hand, interest-representing LGBT groups and queer individuals and theorists who challenge established notions of integration. Despite the marked critical and relativizing influence of the latter, most contributors to these publications seem to share a basic liberal paradigm that presupposes equality, sexual and social justice and rights for all independent of sexual orientation, gender expression or belief, but that exists in an often precarious coexistence with anti-gay sociopolitical forces and institutions. This constantly evolving scholarly field increasingly pays attention to the presumed success of international LGBT advocacy politics, as more critical examinations surrounding the construction of modernity (Rahman, 2014) or of Eurocentric liberalism (Ayoub and Paternotte, 2014) remind us of the pitfalls of progressive assumptions and ideologies.

Notes

1 Sexual Politics generally includes also issues of sexual health and well-being, though applied in the narrow rights focus here I concentrate sexual rights to LGBTQ individuals and groups only.

2 Adam *et al* edited a groundbreaking volume on *The Global Emergence of Gay and Lesbian Politics* in 1998, though it focused mainly on sociological theories and movements. Other important works such as Mark Blasius' (2001) *Sexual Identities, Queer Politics* remain wedded to an identitaerian outlook, and Denis Altman's (2001) *Global Sex* primarily theorizes the globalization of sexuality.

3 In the following, I use LGBTQ for movements, communities and rights that encompass, albeit unevenly, all those individuals but reserve LGBT for the political stakeholders involved in advocacy politics.

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