

Gay Men and Lesbians in the Netherlands

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Introducing the Dutch case

In this article on state and gay and lesbian movement¹ in the Netherlands since the sexual revolution we want to answer the questions raised in the introduction: on the relation between the two; how the movement changed because of the changing attitudes regarding homosexuality; how the relation between the state and civil society (the ‘state diversity’) at one hand and Europe at the other hand effected gay emancipation; how other cultural, religious, economic and social factors played a role and how homosexuality and gay activism changed in this period. We will answer these questions in our conclusions based on a historical analysis of gay and lesbian politics in a broad sense.

Since the 1970s the Netherlands can be regarded as one of the most liberal countries with regard to sexual politics. It transformed from a country that was strongly religious and conservative in sexual morals in the 1950s to one that is highly secular and liberal in affairs of sexual morality. Around 1970, the Dutch changed from positions that rejected divorce, pornography, prostitution, homosexuality, contraception, teenage sexuality to more liberal views on all these topics. The change of climate was followed by a change in laws. Divorce was made easier, pornography and prostitution were decriminalized and contraception was made generally available. The criminal law, containing different ages of consent for homosexual and heterosexual sex (21 versus 16 years), was changed in 1971; both were set at 16. Contraceptives were made available to all postpuberal women in the 1970s and became part of medical care provisions. These broader changes in sexual culture already indicate that the gay movement cannot be seen as the major player in this transformation of society.

Amsterdam has known a vibrant gay culture since the 1950s that only grew till the end of the century and made the city a ‘gay capital’. In 1973, gays and lesbians were allowed to

¹ We will use ‘gay’ for ‘gay and lesbian’ in the rest of the article. We realize that this does not recognize the lesbian contribution sufficiently. We also want to add, however, that the gay politics have often concentrated on male homosexuals, and also, amazingly, that most Dutch lesbians seem to prefer the label gay above other labels like lesbian.

serve in the army. The national homosexual rights' movement, the COC, received royal approval in the same year, meaning that its directors were no longer personally responsible in case of bankruptcy. After 16 years of debates, an Equal Rights Law for gender, ethnicity and sexual preference was enacted in 1993. Registered partnerships, a kind of simplified marriage, were legalized in 1997 for both same-sex and other-sex couples. The Netherlands follows the French system with no 'communitarian' rights for special groups, but equal rights for all citizens. Marriage was opened for same-sex couples in 2001, the Netherlands being the first country to do so. Many saw this as the endpoint of gay emancipation, but the legal equality didn't mean social equality. Moreover, gays became a pawn in the debate of ethnic integration.

Backgrounds

Why exactly these liberalizing changes took place in the Netherlands during the sixties and seventies is not entirely clear, but they have had a tremendous impact. We will give some of the explanations being proposed. The liberal sexual culture of the Dutch is partly a result of a political culture that is based on the idea of the separation of state and church. Sexual affairs are viewed as the private business of Dutch citizens and should not be regulated by the state. The Dutch inherited this secular model of political culture from the French in the early nineteenth century. The Christian parties introduced stricter sex laws in 1911 after they came to power in the early nineteenth century, but they did not change the liberal foundation of the Dutch legal system and forbid sexual practices in the private realm.

The sexual revolution of the 1960s had a powerful impact on the Netherlands. In part, this relates to a broader change that occurred in the Netherlands, the so called depillarization of society. Until the 1960s, the Netherlands had a type of social organization in which all citizens were members of a distinct community or 'pillar' - Roman Catholic, Protestant, socialist or liberal (the latter two being largely Humanist). The pillars softened the strict bipolarity of the French model by creating bridges between state and citizen. The Netherlands offered a mix of republicanism and communitarianism. The pillarized structure also promoted coalition politics (none of the four major groups ever had a majority) and the 'poldermodel' of lengthy discussions till a compromise is reached.

The pillars were encompassing for the individual. For example, each had its own schools, church, media, political parties, sport clubs and cultural institutions while most businesses had strong connections to certain pillars. This community-based social order dwindled in the sixties as a result of increased social and spatial mobility, changing scientific views, individualism, creeping secularism, and the rise of national media.

Changes in the moral visions of the two social groups (pillars) that had been most in favor of a strict sexual morality, the Catholics and the orthodox Reformed Calvinists, played a major role. Influenced by psychiatrists and social workers they reconsidered their sexual beliefs and values. The catholic psychiatrist Cees Trimbos discussed homosexuality in 1951 in terms of shit, and 10 years later he praised gay relations. In the mean time he and his colleagues had come to know gay men and lesbian women, which changed their views on homosexuality radically. While he and others compared gay sex before with prostitution, in the 1960s they would compare gay friendship with marriage. As Trimbos was in the early 1960s one of the first specialists to discuss sex issues on national radio, his opinions mattered beyond the catholic pillar. In the course of the sixties, these religious orthodox groups relaxed their ideas of sexual morality thanks to Trimbos and his allies that included a bishop, priests,

clergymen, social workers. Both catholic and orthodox protestants published books full of understanding for 'homophiles' as persons while homosex remained by and large a sin. This change of opinion among the more orthodox groups, also on other sexual issues, made it easier for the majority of the population to support a more liberal sexual morality.

In 1969, psychiatrist Wijnand Sengers, himself a gay man, declared that homosexuality was not a pathological problem, but that homosexuals nevertheless could have psychological problems just like heterosexuals. His research concluded that he could not find one convincing case of a homosexual whose sexual orientation had been changed to heterosexual. It would be better to help homosexuals to adapt to their preferences and social situation, which included referring them to gay organizations. He was not the first to declare that homosexuality was not a disease, but this time his profession accepted this position. He set out to help those homosexuals who had problems with their coming out or sexual orientation, and indicated that he needed much less sessions for this adaption therapy than others needed to try to change a homosexual's orientation.

The legal change was introduced by a committee that had to ascertain whether young people could become homosexual by seduction, the argument for the higher age of consent in the criminal law for homosexual relations. In the late fifties, a Calvinist psychiatrist had already denied so, and the committee affirmed his conclusion. This psychiatric view paved the way for the law change of 1971. This change coincided with a differentiation of homosexuals who looked for adult partners and pedophiles who looked for youngsters and started to organize separately since the late fifties in Holland. We have seen how the mainstream churches changed their position in the 1960s but it has to be added that the Catholic Church returned to its conservative tenets in the 1970s after Rome had appointed more traditional bishops. They were, however, not able to turn the progressive trend in the Dutch church province. Until the sixties homosexuality was generally considered to be a sin, crime, and disease and now, within 10 years, it was none of these things for most Dutch. This was an essential change for gay emancipation.

These changes ran parallel to a reconceptualization of homosexual relations from situational and sexual, as in prostitution, to long-term and loving, as in marriages. Gay men started to see themselves in the same period as masculine instead of feminine, and engaged in relations with each other instead of with the 'normal' (straight) men of the past, such as sailors, soldiers and other working-class young men. The butch dykes of the earlier generation lost out on more feminine lesbians. This, again, was a result of a broader change in which sexual desire was no longer seen in terms of inequality (husband-wife; butch-femme, queer-trade; man-boy; client-prostitute), but of equality. This radical change, not typical only for the Netherlands, made equal gay and lesbian relations intelligible and acceptable, anticipating the idea of 'gay marriage', while other unequal sexual practices became more and more unintelligible such as pedophilia, bestiality, prostitution and also traditional heterosexual relations.

The sixties also witnessed the rise of youth, student and feminist movements that supported individualism, sexual choice and variation. Because of a late demographic transition due to the conservative morality of the Dutch, there were simply more young people in Holland on this pivotal sexual turn of the sixties. The relative strength of the sexual reform movement and the lack of resistance by religious and political authorities resulted in a rather easy transition from a highly restrictive to a rather liberal sexual culture. These new social movements promoted the secularism of Dutch society (nowadays 50% of the

population are self-declared non-believers and 20% regular visitors of religious services) while the religious pillars and parties lost their predominant position. A fundamental value change occurred, and since the 1980s the Dutch are among the most 'post-materialist', liberal people of the world. A new, moral majority of a clear progressive signature supplanted the traditional Christian majority of the past that also modernized its sexual views.

Sometimes the gay community has been regarded as one more pillar, not unlike the Muslims, but the main difference is that it misses all the social institutions the other pillars have: no schools, hospitals, trade unions, few media. It consisted apart from the movement mainly of subcultural venues, and more recently of an array of gay caucuses in other social bodies. There is nearly no gay and lesbian middle field that produces a managerial class or social influence through its diverse tentacles. Very few gays and lesbians occupy representative places on the basis of belonging to the homosexual community. The one and a half gay person in the national bureaucracy is a pity example of this situation.

The Rise of a Gay Movement

From 1912 to the German occupation in 1940 a homosexual rights movement, the *Dutch Scientific-Humanitarian Committee* (NWHK), had lobbied for change of the criminal law and the social situation of intolerance. After the Second World War, the COC (*Center for Recreation and Culture*; established in 1946 as *Shakespeare Club*) followed in its steps and added subcultural activities to the program for its members. Generally, the movement favored the aim of equal rights and social acceptance, and after 1970 integration. The COC had its great successes in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 1964, it became the *Dutch Society for Homophiles COC* and in 1971 *Dutch Society for Integration of Homosexuality COC*. But its victories were strongly dependent on changes taking place in the fields of psychiatry, religion and politics.

The COC became in the 1960s a serious cultural and political movement that attracted general attention. At that time, it was still a rather timid oppositional force of social contestation in Dutch society because the majority of politicians and population rejected homosexuality although times were fast changing. The support of the gay cultural elite strongly favored the visibility of homosexuality in the media. Benno Premsele, son of a sexologist and well-known person in the Dutch art and design world, became the COC's chairman in 1962 and Gerard Reve who would become Holland's most famous writer, was for a short time co-editor of its journal *Dialog* and regularly made it to the front pages of newspapers as a controversial but popular homosexual. The COC cooperated in those days closely with the *Dutch Society for Sexual Reform* (NVSH) that was the major proponent of sexual liberalization in those days. In 1967, together they established with financial support of the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work the *Schorer Foundation* to provide psychological care for homosexuals.

The COC's aim of integration remained not uncontested. The *Federation of Student Working Groups on Homosexuality* (FSWH) of the late 1960s, the lesbian groups *Purple September* and *Lesbian Nation* and the male group *Red Faggots* of the late 1970s criticized integration as the chief goal of the movement because they feared integration would mean assimilation. Local *FSWH* groups organized demonstrations, dance actions (meaning gay and lesbian couples went dancing in straight discos) and parties where all sexual preferences were welcome and *Lesbian Nation* in 1977 the first gay parade in Amsterdam. These more radical groups advocated that society, and not the homosexual individual, be changed as to create

greater visibility and acceptance of sexual and gender variation. The issue of whether gays and lesbians should seek assimilation or social change remains a point of debate to this day. These groups continued to exist until the early eighties and were more or less the last radical queer groups in The Netherlands. Since, there was no queer movement apart from some minor efforts. At the same time, the major gay and lesbian movement and its leading journal, the *Gay Krant*, became close associates of the government.

Before the AIDS crisis in the 1980s, the movement had succeeded in becoming a part of society and a point of reference for the government. Gay and lesbian groups were established around 1980 in political parties, trade unions, universities, army, police, medical care, and churches. Gay and lesbians started their march through the institutions. With the AIDS crisis, and its rippling effects throughout society, the government, medical authorities and representatives of the gay movement met and set up a committee that would prepare medical care, prevention activities and counseling. Gays and lesbians were becoming part of local and national government institutions. The first openly gay politicians were elected and the agenda of gay rights was now on the agenda of the state. In 1982, the Pacifist-socialist Amsterdam city council member Bob van Schijndel came with the first local 'homonota' and in 1986 the first report from the national government was published. Many of the local themes are more or less the same as today: care for elderly gays and lesbians, more visibility for lesbians, more attention to gay (history) education, questions of police, gay cruising and antigay violence, medical care and STD's to name the most important. The national report, signed by a Christian-democrat minister, provided for a civil servant responsible for issues of gay and lesbian emancipation, offered grants for gay and lesbian activities and promised equality in the fields of housing, labor, education and legacies. It promised to create relationship rights for homosexual couples, relevant for gay men in the aids-crisis and for lesbian women who cared for children. Asylum seekers who were victims of antigay discrimination would receive special attention. Most of these proposals that are more of a legal than social nature, have been realized. Earlier, it had been decided that the police should do more to protect gay and lesbians, in particular in cruising areas. The idea was that they offered a possibility for closeted men to get access to gay spaces. This policy which is followed to this day has always remained controversial, and irregularly, the police nonetheless raids such areas and fines gay men for various reasons, such as 'public indecency'. The cruising places changed also from inner-city public toilets to highway stops while city parks kept their gay function.

The necessity of police protection had become clear in 1982. In the early eighties, the annual gay parade had moved from Amsterdam to other towns, following the logic that such a demonstration of gay and lesbian visibility was more important for people in the provinces. When it was held that year in Amersfoort, centrally located on the Dutch Bible Belt, local youth attacked gays and lesbians and unprecedented violence broke out. It created uproar in Dutch media and politics and led to the enactment of gay and lesbian anti-discrimination policies on a local and on a national level as mentioned before. Since those days the gay movement changed from a movement of opposition and contestation to one that became complicit with and dependent on the government.

In many respects, AIDS proved a turning point. Cooperation between the gay movement and local and national authorities began. This collaboration followed the Dutch model of co-opting representatives of 'minority' groups into governmental bodies. In this case, gays and lesbians were appointed to take shared responsibility for political decisions

regarding AIDS and gay rights. The system worked generally well, but erased dissenting voices.

In 1977, the independent MP Coos Huijsen was the first openly gay man in parliament and many more gays and lesbians would follow, among them in 1998 Laurette Spoelman who had been chairperson of the COC. The gay and lesbian movement became a possible starting point for political careers. Eleven of the 150 Dutch Members of Parliament in 2000 were openly gay or lesbian, not counting the closeted cases. So they were slightly overrepresented compared to their number in the population of about 5%. The question remains though what this type of political representation means for establishing real equality and acceptance. An interesting incident happened before the elections of 2002 when the most visible gay Labor MP Peter Rehwinkel tumbled 10 places on his party's list and decided not to be a candidate any longer. He attributed his decision to the party's lack of interest in gay issues. Leading journalists made fun of him, one saying there was no need any more for gay politics since everything was fine in Holland, and another presumed he himself was a goat-fucker and also wanted a place on the Labor list. Rehwinkel himself retracted his criticism the next day, most probably under pressure of his party, and continued his career honorably as mayor and senator for his party.

Next to the subculture that developed since the 1950s a strong parallel culture –more for gays than for lesbians – came into being since the early 1980s: gay sport clubs for instance that got a strong stimulus from the Gay Games that were held in Amsterdam in 1998. In general, it was non-political groups that flourished, such as organizations for ethnic minority people, youngsters, the elderly, hikers, traditional dancers, lovers of old timers, book readers, kinky and fetish clubbers and so on. The movement grew but it was more its social and cultural than political wing.

Equal rights and same-sex marriage

Since the co-optation of gays and lesbians in social and political institutions in the 1980s, two major controversial gay and lesbian issues continued to divide Dutch society: an equal rights law and relationship rights, colloquially called gay marriage. The second issue even divided gays and lesbians.

It took 16 years to establish an Equal Rights Law including gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation because of opposition of orthodox-Christians who feared they would be forced to accept gay and lesbian teachers in their schools. Christians sent thousands of letters to parliament in their fight against this law because of this point. The government being in those years a coalition of Christian-democrats with either Liberals or Social-democrats, it proved difficult to arrive at a solution because the first party feared its not so gay-positive voters. In the end, Labor Minister of Interior Ien Dales, a closeted lesbian but a formidable dyke, found a solution. Gays and lesbians could not be discriminated against for the single fact of being homosexual. The problem of the single fact construction continues to this day, and in 2009 the European Union criticized the Dutch government to continue discrimination in this way. It has never been clear whether this single fact also covered freedom to speak about one's homosexuality, to introduce lovers, or to discuss homosexuality in class. The jurisprudence indicates that all these facts are not included, meaning (educational) institutions and in particular schools with a religious basis, can continue to discriminate against gay teachers and students. Although Christians and their organizations have long seen this bill as a defeat, it rather has proven to be a victory because schools have been able to continue to reject

openly gay people. The topic reemerged in 2009 when a teacher of a Dutch Bible Belt school was discharged because of his sexual orientation. The Equal Rights Law was accompanied by a Committee Equal Treatment that could judge relevant cases, but not impose sanctions. The committee has been proven totally unhelpful for gay and lesbian issues that were rarely presented, but it dealt more successfully with ethnic and gender issues. Recently, questions of religion, age and physical ability were added to the list of equal right topics.

'Gay marriage' has a long history in The Netherlands. When the issue of homosexuality and marriage first hit the Dutch media in 1968, it was estimated that about 90.000 homosexuals were in straight marriages. Although doctors had often advised homosexuals to marry to get rid of their homosexual desires, this strategy was seen as wrong from the late 1960s on. Marriage would not change sexual orientation and married homosexuals made their partners, children and themselves unhappy. At that time, a *Homofielenpartij* proposed same-sex marriage. The mainstream of the gay movement however considered marriage as an oppressive institution that seemed unattractive to most gay and lesbian activists. They joined feminists who opposed marriage as a sexist institution that it would remain into the 1990s when rape in marriage finally became a crime in 1991. Before that time, the idea was that the wife was bound to the pledge of marriage and had to offer sex to her husband. The gay movement pleaded in the 1970s and 1980s for individualization of social benefits, and opposed putting the focus on the couple.

Through AIDS and the urgent medical and social problems it created, gay men learned the importance of legal recognition for issues such as housing, social security, hospital visits, pensions, and inheritance for themselves and their intimate partners. Although some social institutions and businesses offered something like domestic partnership benefits, these did not exist on the national level. At the same time, lesbians were interested in such rights for their 'families of choice', in particular to legalize the children that were born or adopted in their relations, or that they brought in from earlier heterosexual partnerships. In the late 1980s, some gay men, especially from the conservative-liberal *Gay Krant*, started to campaign for gay marriage. The COC only joined the fight for same-sex marriage in the early 1990s, after long hesitations. The marriage agenda was deemed conservative. The opposition against same-sex marriage largely came from Christians and some conservative liberals while most media heartily endorsed it. After several years of steady social and political pressure, 'registered partnerships' were established for both same-sex and other-sex couples in 1997 by the 'purple' government (the first coalition cabinet since the early twentieth century that did not include Christian-democrats in its ranks). That these partnerships were available to both homo- and heterocouples, was a consequence of the Dutch belief in equal citizenship rights. They did not want to follow the model of Denmark that gave in 1989 partnership rights that were specific to gay and lesbian couples. Giving full marital rights was a step too far for the liberal-socialist government at that time. They were mainly afraid of foreign reactions to such a step – but were thinking mainly of their diplomatic partners, not of all those queer people all over the world who were looking forward to such marriages. The responsible underminister for justice was at that moment a lesbian Social-democrat, Elisabeth Schmitz.

Three years later the second purple cabinet decided to open up marriage for same-sex couples giving them nearly the same rights as other-sex couples. The first marriages of gays and lesbians were celebrated in Amsterdam on April 1, 2001. It created at that point in time more media interest from international than from national media. The Dutch were that weekend more obsessed with the engagement of the crown-prince with a very popular Latina.

The change of marriage from an, in this case royal, family arrangement to a love affair, so visible that weekend and so incomprehensible to the Dutch who think of marriage as eternally the same institution, contributed strongly to the acknowledgement of gay marriage – a name that was in fact rejected by its first proponents because there would be no difference between straight and gay marriage. In fact, there were however three differences between the two. Not so remarkably, the reigning king or queen was excluded from being married homosexually because royal marriages are traditional institutions to guarantee biological reproduction and bonds between larger groups.² The second exception was adoption of children from foreign countries that opposed to adoption by homosexual couples. The most fundamental was the exclusion of the ‘biological fiction’ in same-sex families. This means that in straight marriages children born in wedlock are considered the biological offspring of the father, but this was not extended to gays and lesbians. This exception created a legal problem for homosexual couples, because it means they have always to deal with a third party, the ‘biological’ father or mother of their child. Both last exceptions have now been removed from the law, although the second one only for lesbian adoption while the royal exception still stands.

The large majority of the population, about 82% of all Dutch, now supports same-sex marriage. The support for adoption in gay and lesbian couples is significantly lower at 65%. Ethnic minorities object still stronger to such rights with 55% of the Turkish Dutch rejecting same-sex marriage (Keuzenkamp 2006: 40-41; 48). Even the Christian-democratic party, which initially opposed the law, now generally accepts it and has a lesbian cabinet minister and a gay MP who are married to a person of the same sex. The main recent question has become whether the officials who solemnize marriage are allowed to refuse service for same-sex couples. Although civil servants are obliged to perform all duties that come their way without making differences, the recent Christian-socialist government (2007-2010) decided to allow those with problems of conscience regarding homosexuality to refuse to register same-sex marriages. Most people would indeed argue that civil servants who have problems of conscience doing their task, better look for another position elsewhere instead of continuing official discrimination, but the government allows an exception they would never permit in cases of interethnic or interreligious marriages.

Another theme that comes up with regard to same-sex marriage is the suggestion by straight people that gay men now they can marry should restrain their sexual exploits. Cruising areas, dark rooms and sauna’s that had become controversial in the high times of AIDS in the 1980s, now become once more so. Similar concerns on prostitution, bestiality, pornography and internet access have led to criminal laws and regulations restricting sexual freedoms, as happened with concerns about terrorism. Few critics find it worrying that a free and democratic society with a liberal reputation is putting so many restrictions on sexual pleasures of various kinds except those of adult monogamy and marital bedroom. It ascertains that gay questions have become questions of sexual culture and mutual respect, with a large majority of the population supporting only sexual relations between equals in monogamous relations confirming the ideology of sexual equality. Opening marriage for gay and lesbian

² Queen Beatrix seems to be a bit homophobic. As an example, together with the prime minister she published in February 2002 a press release in which they stated that one of the queen’s sons was not gay, that this prince felt unhappy that he was rumored to be so, and asked the media to not any longer say so. It was of the many examples that indicate how ambivalent the tolerance for gay people is – because the queen and prime minister would never have delivered such a declaration when the son had been rumored to be straight.

couples is according to some old-day activists part of a strategy to normalize and assimilate homosexuality.

Into a new century

After the opening of marriage for same-sex couples, most gay and straight people had the impression that the days of the gay movement were over. The COC itself proclaimed it was still necessary for small orthodox Christian and Muslim pockets that wouldn't accept homosexuality, and to support gay movements in countries where discrimination still ruled. Not only the COC but also NGO's received large grants to help non-Western movements. The COC depended always less on its members and more on government grants, and also many gays saw less the need to become member of the COC. The movement began to depend on state support to such a degree that it looks more like a governmental body than a social movement. When it comes to gay organizations of ethnic minorities, they are kept afloat by the government because it desperately needs homosexual points of access in these groups. When the COC once voiced criticism of the minister, it was retracted as soon as it hit the front pages of newspapers. The COC couldn't say so being dependent on his support. The integration of homosexuality indeed looks like assimilation.

This aspect of assimilation or normalization is even stronger for young queers. All recent data may show a broad acceptance, but this goes under certain conditions that are stricter for gays than for lesbians. These conditions are that gay men should not be too visible, sexual and unmasculine. They should be 'authentic', meaning like straight guys, weirdly denying gay youngsters all 'authenticity'. Straight youngsters may like queers to remain low-key, this has also become the attitude of many gays themselves. Probably because of social pressure, they will not 'flaunt' their preference in public, except in the gay scene. This 'tolerant' ideology is even shared by perpetrators of antigay violence, who explain their aggression because of presumed seduction by gay men. They are so afraid of being an object of desire that solely the suggestion of being seduced sets off the violence. Most adult gays will say, continuing the silencing of homosexuality, that their sexual identity is only a small part of who they are and that they prefer to keep it low-key. This is even more the case for ethnic minority than white gays. The closet has made a remarkable comeback in Holland.

Although the Dutch say to accept gays and lesbians, this acceptance remains problematic. 95% may say to have no problems with homosexuality, some 45% nonetheless indicates to dislike two men kissing in public (38% for two women; and less than 10% for a straight couple). Insults like queer, gay, homo, sissy are the most common in schoolyards and rarely schools and teachers take such offensive language serious. Much of the acceptance of gays depends on keeping physical distance and creating an absolute dichotomy between gay and straight, for example by relying on theories of biological difference. The acceptance of homosexuals is highly rhetoric and has few concrete consequences. So the government only has very meager programs to counter antigay attitudes that mainly regard gays, and rarely the straight people who don't accept homosexuality.

The main issue these days is the presumed homophobia of ethnic and religious minorities, most often the Muslims. While it is clear that these groups are more negative on gay issues and young – mainly Moroccan - males from these groups are overrepresented in antigay violence, the total opposition that is created between these minorities and gays is certainly exaggerated. There are gay, lesbian and gay-friendly Muslims, and white orthodox Christians reject homosexuality. The right wing that always opposed gay equality, has now

embraced gay men as a way to criticize Muslims for their homophobia. First Pim Fortuyn, and later Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Rita Verdonk and Geert Wilders have used the gays as a stick to beat the Muslims. As the pillars in the sixties competed in acceptance of homosexuals, nowadays left and right compete for being the most supportive of gay men. And while the left will not attribute homophobia only to Muslims, the right will do so and praise an invented Dutch history of tolerance that for gays is only very recent. Most of the support for gay men is rhetoric and political parties may denounce each case of gay discrimination, little concrete and long-term policies are developed to counter it. As indicated, issues of visibility and education are proposed by the gay movement since the 1980s but little progress has been made since. Gays have become pawns in the struggle between white and non-white, Muslim and secular Dutch and that is an unpleasant situation for them and for the Muslims who are often seen collectively as the culprits.

Conclusion

Here we will answer the questions posed at the beginning based on our historical analysis. In the first place, the relation between state and movement has been reversed. Homosexuals are not any longer abject people but are now accepted and serve to test tolerance, in particular for the new immigrants. The oppositional attitudes have been replaced by cooperation and the movement has become dependent more on the government than on its members. One could question to what degree it is still a social movement.

The activists have changed from timid homosexuals in the 1950s to proud homosexuals in the 1970s when they became a victorious minority that only witnessed progress. In 2010, there are no activists anymore but a few gay bureaucrats. Because of the various setbacks for their emancipation, gays have become divided which direction emancipation is going. A third thinks it is going the right direction referring to the legal successes, a third is pessimistic and will point to the lack of social progress or the suggested growing violence against gays and the final third doesn't know – probably as confused on the sexual and political state of the Netherlands as many Dutch are. Not only the activists have changed, but also gays and lesbians themselves – from sissies who like trade and lesbians who love femmes to gays and lesbians who like partners like themselves. Gay men now flaunt their masculinity and lipstick lesbians prefer to remain on the feminine side. They have changed their gender identity and their preferred sexual partners but many straight people see still the sissies in macho men and dykes behind the lipstick.

In the Netherlands, social rather than political processes promoted acceptance of homosexuality. The change from sin, crime and disease to something normal was a religious, legal and scientific development. For the Netherlands, the depillarization was particularly important. But all these transformations were possible because gays and lesbians had changed and become visible in society – as patients, sorrowful Christians, the gay boy next door but also as artists who already came out of their closets before the late sixties. When we look at the role of the state, it was rather religious and medical specialists who started to suggest sexual change in their pillars and professions. It was only later that politicians took the issue. In the new century, they play a major role but their permanent critique of Muslims, and their lack of serious interest in gay issues, have a negative influence on gay emancipation. Civil society doesn't help very much because schools, the place where gay emancipation should begin, are reluctant to discuss the issue. It is exactly what the media may like to do, but the

way they present it leads to few results. Gay emancipation creates a lot of noise from left to right, from Christian to Muslim.

The Netherlands were in the European context a forerunner in gay politics so had no problem with the EU's rather liberal policies, in fact helped to formulate it. Only recently, the country has faced criticism of the EU because of its 'single fact'-construction in the Equal Rights Law. Otherwise, Dutch progressive politicians have been the first to point to discrimination elsewhere in particular in Eastern Europe, as conservatives criticized the Muslims. When it comes to sexual rules and laws, all EU countries will see a growing influence of Europe, and probably a growing consensus in the population.

The major change seems to have been cultural: desire being defined by equality, elevating gays from an abject to a praiseworthy status, even being better capable than straights in realizing equality. But this goes far beyond the Netherlands. In national terms, the middle terrain of civil society, and in particular academic, religious and literary professions have played an important role. The media were important because the best known comedians are gay, but the kind of acceptance they create, only works on a distance. The gay movement has been active to keep the process going, but has not been leading it. The daring gays and lesbians who made homosexuality visible in the past and the present remain essential because they show in real life what remains generally hidden or can only be talked about in whispers.

The role of these courageous queer people has not ended because the major trend has become normalization of queer desires. Homosexuality is accepted but it goes under a series of conditions: gays shouldn't be too sexual, unmasculine and visible and certainly not approach straight men with erotic intent. Homosexuality may have become normal, but male heterosexuality still sets the norm. For gay men who can't be sissies, for lesbians who can't be dykes and for heterosexual women who are not allowed to be sluts. The male straight subject position disallows other people social equality as desiring subjects. Gay and lesbian emancipation still has a long way to go after the legal rights have been achieved. And there is not yet an effective strategy to obtain social equality for queers.

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