Are liberal and market-based citizenship attires suited for lesbian feminist bodies?
And: is there a need for new outfits?

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1. Introduction – … gathering in front of the ‘citizenship clothes store’

Before we enter the ‘citizenship clothes store’ and begin to speak, discuss and perhaps also imagine (new) suitable citizenship attires for lesbian feminist bodies, I want to say a few words about what compelled me to question contemporary and historical ‘fashionable corsets of citizenship’ from a certain point of view. The following quote by Sandra Harding pointedly describes my impetus and point of departure for examining the question of lesbian citizenship1.

In the concluding sentence of her article “After objectivism vs. relativism” she writes: “Our methodological and epistemological choices are always also ethical and political choices.” (Harding 2003: 130) Thus, my own decision to address the subject lesbian citizenship and endeavor to reconsider the epistemological assumptions implicit in the triad gender–citizenship–sexuality is not only based on the notion that of a desideratum for research on the issue. It was also a political and ethical decision that is deeply rooted in my experiences as an activist and protagonist in different feminist, lesbian and queer projects and movements. The research for my PhD project “Lesbian citizenship: The intelligibility of a lesbian political body, mechanisms of exclusion and transformative perspectives” forms the academic basis for this presentation. Additionally, there is a variety of experiential knowledge2 that has also shaped the framework of my academic thought and continues to push me to ask the questions that I have risen in my dissertation. Following those feminist and postcolonial approaches intending to integrate theory and practice, I would like to see my work as "emancipatory" and as “situated knowledge” (Mohanty 2003, Harding 1991), which refuses (an always fictive) ‘objectivity’ and accepts its own shifting positionality.

What is this paper about? Firstly, I will inquire about the indicators for a gap in the research of feminist and queer citizenship studies and why we should reconsider the triad of gender-citizenship-sexuality with regard to the category (!)3 of lesbian women. Presenting some of

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1 The term lesbian citizenship is used to describe and specify the gendered and sexualized status and possibilities of a lesbian (political) body within the framework of citizenship, a patriarchal and heteronormative concept. See also Richardson 2000b, Richardson 2005

2 Currently, I am working in a lesbian counselling centre, located in the Rosa Lila Villa, a unique project, which was originally squatted by gays and lesbians in the 1980s. Next to our engagement as counsellors we are involved in a wide range of anti-racist, lesbian-feminist and queer political activism. In my work as a counsellor and activist I experience heteronormativity and lesbophobia not only as a theoretical problem but as an immediate form of violence strongly affecting me, my colleagues and our clients in daily life. See http://www.villa.at/lilatip/

3 I reject an essential or ontological understanding of lesbianism and lesbian identities; the category “lesbian” is historically and socially constructed and was created at the end of the 19th century, following other labellings and former “sapphic anatomies” (Lanser 2001, 253) like ‘the hermaphrodite’ or the ‘tribade’, whose ‘appearance’ can be regarded as “significant consequences for the shaping of modernity and particularly for women’s emergence as political subjects” (Lanser 2007, 157). Thus, the ‘systematization’ of lesbian desire can not be interpreted as an isolated historical phenomenon affecting a small minority group, but one of the most significant expressions of the shifts in gender relations marking modernity (Hacker 1987, 13).
my analyses on the issue of *lesbian citizenship* at a colloquium called *Gender and Citizenship: New and Old Dilemmas, Between Equality and Difference* also demands that I position my research project within this context: What new perspectives are necessary if we intend to analyze the relationship between gender and citizenship with a focus on the citizen status of lesbian bodies? For this reason, I will *secondly* propose some answers to this question by exhibiting the distinct location of female and male homosexuality within the metaphorical and symbolical dichotomy of the private/the political that are providing the constitutive structure of modern citizenship. While working on my dissertation I have *re-read* classical texts on state and contract theory (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant) and analyzed the frequently neglected sexual dimension and heteronormative implications of these formative frameworks regarding the constitution of the modern state apparatus and citizenship concepts. Based on these analyses I would like to demonstrate that lesbian and gay bodies pose different threats to the trope of the white, male and heterosexual citizen and are provided with different resources to perform some of the criteria to become intelligible citizens.

Re-considering the private/political dichotomy of modern citizenship concepts then offers the analytical basis for evaluating the contemporary difficulties of LGB\(^4\) citizenship policies and their effects on lesbian bodies. Thus, I *thirdly* seek to deconstruct contemporary LGB citizenship discourse that deals with the questions of identity and equal rights policies and ask what those claims mean in terms of the inclusion of the lesbian political subject. Furthermore, I will examine the problematic interconnections between inclusionary strategies, integration approaches based on the attainment of rights and market-based understandings of citizenship as the ‘right to consume’.

*Finally*, I will provide some impulses toward developing ideas of how *lesbian citizenship* could be conceptualized beyond the dominant ‘equal right’ approach. By re-reading feminist theories of democracy and participation in connection with radical lesbian-feminist approaches I will attempt to discuss the key transformations necessary in undoing the ‘corset’ of andocentric and androcratic citizenship. Because I am also a feminist science fiction and utopian novel enthusiast, I will close with a brief discussion of the insights I have gained by studying (lesbian-) feminist utopian narratives, in particular Marge Piercy’s novel *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976).

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\(^4\) *Abbr.* for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual
2. Lesbian citizenship as research desideratum.... quickly flipping through the pages of ‘citizenship attire magazines’

In recent years, citizenship has not only re-emerged as a key concept in social and political theory, feminist scholars have also published a wide range of works. Particularly relevant examples here are those that focus on the relationship between concepts of citizenship and gender, which—regardless of their (theoretical) claims to universality—emphasize how the ‘normal citizen’ and political subject has been/is still encoded as (white) male (Appelt 1999; Kreisky 1995, 1997; Lister 1995, 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, Pateman 1988, 1989; Sauer 2001, Phillips 1991, 1993). Feminist scholars have explored why the modern concept of citizenship in its theory, practice and status can be considered androcentric and androcratic. This has been illustrated in various fields (political philosophy/state theory, welfare models, political participation and representation etc.) and by different kinds of case studies.

A further challenge to understanding the complex constitution of modern citizenship is the emergence of a relatively new body of work concerned with the interconnection of sexuality and citizenship. Diane Richardson identifies three main strands all currently dealing with the interconnection of sexuality and gender, but also all drawing on different epistemological concerns (Richardson 2005): (1) One strand is concerned with the “sexualized nature of concepts of citizenship”, arguing that “heterosexuality is constructed as necessary if not sufficient basis for full citizenship” (ibid. 65, see also Richardson 2000a, Phelan 2001). (2) A second strand implies those approaches, which are seeking to “theorize a new version of citizenship” (ibid. 66) that they call “sexual” or “intimate citizenship” and include a certain range of sexual rights or bring the erotic and embodied dimension into the discussions of citizenship (Bell/Binnie 2002, Weeks 1999). (3) The third strand deals with claims of different lesbian, gay and transgender communities and the “principles and models of citizenship upon which such claims are founded” (Richardson 2005, 64).

Despite a variety of outstanding theoretical frameworks that have been developed to address gendered and heteronormative assumptions on citizenship, there is still a gap in the research of critical reconsiderations of modern citizenship. On the one hand, gender-differentiating feminist theories that criticize the andocentric and androcratic dimensions of citizenship often disregard the specific effects this has on lesbian bodies. Certainly, (female) sexuality has played an important part in feminist analyses, as they address the heterosexual implications

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5 “Androcentric” means that the (constructed) male citizen body is placed at the centre of the constitution of citizenship concepts. In turn, these citizenship concepts become dominated by (constructed) masculine interests and/or a masculine point of view.

6 “Androcratic” emphasizes, to a greater extent, the aspect of power and domination/hierarchy.
of the private/public dichotomy (for instance, Carole Pateman's famous "sexual contract") as well as critique the occupation of the female body for the purpose of male sexual satisfaction and reproduction. But even those analyses concerned with the importance of the right for women to sexual self-determination (including the right to abortion, to control one's own body and protection against violence) fail to consider the particular effect that heterosexist structures have on the category of lesbian women. Additionally, a lot of studies dealing with questions of social citizenship, welfare models and caring labor, take for granted that all women are potentially heterosexual and have/or seek to have a male partner. Especially definitions of ‘the family’ and ‘the household’ are often following a heteronormative matrix of interpretation. Although ‘race’ has (rightly) been adopted as significant social category within feminist citizenship studies, which now also plays a prominent role in contemporary debates on multiculturalism and citizenship, issues of sexuality and particularly lesbian modes of existence (Existenzweisen) remain marginalized within critical theories that challenge citizenship concepts (Phelan 2000, 431).

On the other hand, reconsiderations of citizenship in queer/lesbian and gay studies, which mainly consider notions of “sexual citizenship” or “intimate citizenship” are lacking a gender-differentiating analysis. Diane Richardson aptly describes this lacuna in sexual citizenship studies in the following: “[T]he dominant trend has meant that lesbians have either been ignored altogether or made invisible, to varying extents, through being subsumed under a universal notion of the ‘sexual citizen’ or a sexually differentiated but not gender-specific category such as ‘queer citizens’ or ‘lesbian and gay citizens’.“ (Richardson 2000b, 263)

With regard to these research gaps in gender and queer studies I find it important to address the interconnection of citizenship, gender and sexuality in more detail, while paying particularly close attention to the effects of heteropatriarchal notions of citizenship on the category of the lesbian woman.

3. En-gendering homosexual threats to the trope of the ideal citizen as a prerequisite for theorizing lesbian citizenship

Despite the lack of sexually differentiating analyses in feminist citizenship studies, feminist critiques of classical state theory and especially critiques on the constitution of the private/public dichotomy can offer a productive basis for en-gendering homosexual threats to the trope of the ideal citizen.

What does “En-gendering homosexual threats to the trope of the ideal citizen” mean from a methodological and epistemological perspective? While working on my dissertation I have re-
read classical texts on state and contract theory (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel) and analyzed the frequently neglected sexual dimension and heteronormative implications of these formative frameworks regarding the constitution of the modern state apparatus and citizenship concepts. I have analyzed how modern ideas of gender, freedom, identity, rationality, and productivity are systematically interlinked with heteronormative conceptions of sexuality and how heteronormative and gendered body metaphors are structuring and producing vice versa a trope of the white, male, heterosexual, morally-good, productive, disciplined and healthy citizen. “The trope of the body structures concerns for [...] integration, boundaries, power, autonomy, freedom, and order. Thus the idea of the body works both to delineate who shall be a member of the polity and to prescribe the nature of the polity itself. (Phelan 2001, 39f).

The creation of a deviant female homosexual body was an important part of the construction of modern ‘political anatomy’, even though its systematization was only ultimately implemented at the end of the 19th century (Traub 2003 [1994], Woodward 1993). As Lanser points out, „if difference came to distinguish men from women, difference ceased to distinguish ordinary female bodies from tribadic ones. The causes of homo-eroticism became less determinate, and separating ‘tribades’ from ‘real’ women emerged as a new sort of conundrum. (…) One effect of this new heterosexual order will be the demarcation of the sapphist as a category of identity marked less by the tribadic clitoris than by more visible signifiers of masculinity” (Lanser 2001, 253). Regarding to Butler and Lanser, homosexuality may not simply be the ‘dialectical antitheses’ of heterosexuality, but the “very thesis from which heterosexuality must be constituted as antithesis” (Lanser 2001, 262; Butler 1996).

For instance, when re-reading Thomas Hobbes’ famous *Leviathan* based on a “queer reading” approach (Sedgwick 1990), a relevant landmark within his contract theory could be the aspect of institutionalizing a controlled form of heterosexuality, which surpasses the gender-confused and sexually deviant “state of nature” and eliminates the sexual competition between men (Hobbes 1984 [1651]). Thus, the creation of a phallogocentric system of signification, allowing a differentiation between female and male bodies, the subordination of all women and the formation of families becomes the “historic movement to ,civilization’” (Pateman 1988, 109). *Leviathan*, as a metaphor for the civil state, established on the basis of a contract between the new *pater familias*, guarantees a controlled form of sexual activity and gendered behavior within the constitution of two clearly defined spheres – the political sphere and the private sphere. The later works of Locke, Rousseau and Kan have further contributed to the process of *de-sexualizing the state apparatus, de-politicizing sexuality* and creating a modern type of the moral, rational, productive, male and heterosexual, penetrating
citizen, which ‘deposits’ their bodies and sexual lust in the private sphere, enabling them to enter the political sphere as rational beings.

I agree with Foucault’s assumption that the conception of modern sexuality and its essential ‘deviant forms’ (homosexuality, masturbation and hysteria) are products of the 18th and 19th century and also stands in relation to the nation-building process during this era (Foucault 1983 [1977]). Nonetheless its philosophical roots can be traced back to the point when sexuality and gender were inscribed in the metaphorical and discursive notion of ‘the modern citizen’ (see also Traub 2003 [1994]). Thus, the modern anatomy of the political body was heteronormative from the very beginning. According to my previous thesis, homoerotic desire and sexuality, operating as grounding threat from which heterosexuality was constituted as antitheses, has always been part of the imaginary of body metaphors. Hence, heterosexuality can be seen as a very constitutive moment of modern citizenship concepts.

Table 1

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIVATE SPHERE</th>
<th>POLITICAL SPHERE</th>
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<tr>
<td>* males ‘deposit’ their ‘bodies’ and ‘sexual lust’ *females/female bodies are always ‘private’ and can’t be imagined without the penetrator *sphere of the passive penetrated ones</td>
<td>*Homosocial space, but free of lust and sexual desire *Space of ratio and not of the body *Space of the active phallic penetrators on a metaphorical level</td>
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<tr>
<td>Male homosexuality</td>
<td>*Brings the ‘body’, lust, sex into this sphere! *Threat of a penetrated body in this sphere! *Threat of a Re-sexualization of the political sphere</td>
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Following the table, the alienation and “othering” of lesbian women and gay men are still very specific processes, as both these “groups” challenge the trope of the ideal citizen in very different ways. Moreover, gay men challenge the trope of the ideal citizen on the basis of their ‘sameness’, performing some criteria (e.g. maleness, productivity) of an intelligible citizen, while lesbian women are losing their right to become intelligible in a mediated way:

As gender deviants, refusing to fit into the complementary and hierarchical schema of gender
relations, they are no longer seen to be able to act as an appendix of the male citizen, but to function as a threat to the male position itself.

This is noticeable in the gender-differentiated process of ‘othering’ as demonstrated in the explanations that modern medicine and psychology used to pathologize (and construct) ‘homosexual’ women at the end of the 19th century (Hacker 1987). The possibility of a woman actively penetrating another woman was not only conceived as a form of pathological deviance from gender norms, but it was also considered a political threat to the rational space of active citizens.

4. Analyzing contemporary LGB politics of citizenship … in the store

Although, as I mentioned before, there is an androcentric and heteronormative core to modern citizenship concepts (including its effects on the life of women/lesbians), the concept of citizenship is still far from static; it is a highly ambitious way of conceptualizing integration, the practices and politics of which have also greatly changed over time; also, various groups have since voiced their demands for inclusion, some rather successfully, (for example, men without property) or at least partial inclusion (women). Citizenship is highly significant concept within modern society, and as such, it has also asserted itself as a powerful narrative of universal equality and infrastructure of democracy in 21st century lesbian and gay politics. Regardless of their theoretical background and political affiliation, most gay/lesbian/queer/feminist scholars and activists will agree that lesbians and gay men are not currently full citizens in a political sense.

Demands for integration, equal rights and full inclusion in modern concepts of citizenship have, therefore, been high on the agenda for (the majority of) the lesbian and gay movements (in the western world). Such contemporary politics of citizenship place a strong emphasis on compliance, being an ‘upstanding’ citizen and a productive member of the labor force, that is, a person who seeks inclusion and access to the same rights and responsibilities as heterosexual citizens (for instance, marriage). Moreover, assertions of ‘normality’ and ‘sameness’ justify and form the basis for demands of integration and inclusion (Bell/Binnie 2002; Hark/Genschel 2003; Hark 2000; Phelan1994; Phelan 2001; Rahman 2000).

The universality of the notion of liberal citizenship is employed as a powerful narrative behind these demands, which therefore leads to highly problematic requirements/prerequisites
(corsets!) in demanding inclusion (This bears a certain resemblance to the discussion on multiculturalism and the citizenship rights for foreigners/migrants):

*Claims to citizenship have to be formulated on the basis of stable identities*

There have already been several queer scholars who have criticized the cementation of an essentialist understanding of homosexuality within a liberal discourse on citizenship (Phelan 2001, Richardson 2000a Hark/Genschel 2003). They have argued that demands for inclusion within citizenship rights must be formulated on the basis of a stable affiliation to the homosexual ‘identity group’. Democratic politics of citizenship are therefore based on the assumption that political identity is, to a large extent, a reflection of an ontological ‘truth’—a sense of being. Institutional politics within democratic systems presuppose a collective character or identity, both as basis for political action and for targeting public policies: the use of affiliations or quasi-ethnic identities thus becomes a political prerequisite for formulating legitimate demands for inclusion although it does indeed also reinforce essentialist understandings of (homo-)sexuality (Rahman 2000). But as I mentioned before, even the construction of a “stable identity” is a modern concept, which deeply roots in heteronormative and patriarchal assumptions about gender relations. Demands for a “right of privacy” are often linked to these modern and gendered notions of the inner-self as the sexual self, which finds its space in the private sphere.

But what does this imply for *lesbian citizenship*? First of all, essentialist models of (homo-)sexuality seek to leave behind the heteronormative, patriarchal constitutions of modern politics and the gendering effects of the private/public dichotomy. This construction means that heterosexuality is presented as the normal desire/orientation of a majority, which simultaneously means there is also a small minority with a different/other sexual orientation. Within this framework, discrimination will cease when the ‘minority’ is officially recognized and afforded equal rights (comparable to the heterosexual majority) (Hark 2000). As a consequence, these quasi-ethnic models anticipate a gender-differentiated perspective that is contingent on the political positioning of male and female homosexuality within society and *lesbian citizenship* is again made subordinate to a male-dominated notion of the sexual citizen, which appears to be a gender-neutral concept.

In addition, identity politics are linked to the ‘problem’ of representation and the question of resources needed for democratic input. Analyses of contemporary gay and lesbian movements have clearly shown that—according to feminist theories of participation—most of the “successful” and publicly recognized organizations, enabled to transform their demands into democratic input, are dominated by white gay middle-class males, who fit into the model
of interest/lobbying policies and do not attack political structures as a whole (as e.g. radical lesbian-feminists do) (Phelan 1994, Phelan 2001; Jeffreys, 2003). Within this process of representation, feminist/lesbian and queer interrogations are frequently disregarded, as white male activists often refrain from presenting themselves as situated within hierarchically structured collectives in whom one person has been elected to speak for the whole ‘identity group’. Further investigation is needed, when concerned with the question of what resources and democratic structures are required or have to be created to enforce the development of ‘powerful’ lesbian political groups? Which demands from which groups are recognized as eligible demands in a democratic process and a public space? Birgit Sauer calls this democratic process of interest building “withinput”, arguing that questions of resources, access and the handling of different political demands must be an integral part of policy analyses (Sauer 1999).

* Claims to citizenship are mostly based on the demand for (equal) rights or human rights for a clearly defined identity group:

The equal rights approach is a point of disputation within feminist, queer and postcolonial debates: Equal rights and human rights have their own (exclusionary) European and American history within the French and American Revolution and in political modernism: White men not holding property, women, slaves, Jews, migrants and Africans/African Americans were completely or partially excluded from those rights. Although women have been officially included into those rights during the 20th century, equal/human rights have never been guaranteed equal treatment or the right of participation. Moreover, equal rights have not changed the androcentric and androcratic core of citizenship, rather in the contrary they are including patriarchal (western) family norms, capitalist assumptions and are based on a distinct private/public dichotomy (Gerhard 1990).

Equal rights are also based on existing assumptions of which rights a citizen should have and what a citizen should look like, how s/he should behave and should live. Concerning the contemporary LGB citizenship discourse, this ‘ideal’ or ‘trope’ of a citizen, who is demanding equal rights, grows to be highly important. Being ‘sexually normal’ and non-gender-transgressing are becoming important criteria for legitimate demands for equal rights: According to Seidman (2002), the normal gay person therefore is “associated with specific social behaviors. For example, the normal gay is expected to be gender conventional, link sex to love and a marriage-like relationship, defend family values, personify economic individualism, and display national pride” (Seidman 2002: 133).
* LGB politics of citizenship are interlinked with a market-based understanding of citizenship and a neoliberal fetishization of individualism and self-fulfillment through the creation of needs.

Because citizenship has always had somewhat of a market dimension and has been linked to modern capitalist societies (Marshall (1964 [1949]), Evans 1993), I would suggest—in accord with other queer theorists—that in post-Fordist neoliberal societies a form of market-based citizenship also largely going to overshadow/replace forms of democratic/political citizenship, and become the key instrument for determining social integration. According to Zygmunt Bauman, in a neoliberal post-Fordist society, social integration primarily functions through enabling individuals to consume, provide resources and be constructed as consumers (Bauman 1995). This does not imply that citizens necessarily include an understanding of being socially and politically enabled. In this context, the creation of needs becomes the central element of discourse regarding how citizens are produced and, parallel to this, regarding how these needs can be fulfilled via the market. Those individuals become citizens who can be constituted within the framework of the needs that have been created. Here, exclusion from citizenship not only takes place via ‘traditional’ modern citizenship rights, but is even more frequently regulated by the mechanisms of the market. Therefore, those who do not see or construct themselves as consumers or workers, or do not wish to do so, are effectively excluded.

It is probably no coincidence that LGBTQ persons have found entrance into citizenship in an historical era in which social and participatory dimensions of citizenship are gradually disappearing within Europe. The process of dismantling the welfare states has also led to a greater demand for individual responsibility and achievement. In accordance with Foucault, I would also speak of new neoliberal forms of “governementality”, as a discourse of individual responsibility and “care of the self” (Foucault 2000 [1986]). Governementality implies that ‘governing’ and ‘being governed’ are inseparable, because—in terms of the Foucauldian “technologies of the self”—subjects have become the products of discourse yet still act as agencies of power against themselves (Foucault 1987 [1983]). But what is significant within context of sexual governementality is that by locating the requirements for subjectification in the self sexuality becomes the ‘private’ and ‘personal’; hence, notions of gender and sexual ‘identities’ are more frequently transformed into ‘personal’ and ‘private’ products, achievements and outcomes, all of which are read in terms one’s success and individual economic power. This implies that we are all consumers or unique individuals with needs, identities and lifestyles, which we express by purchasing the proper commodities. “The pursuit of the commodified self is the pursuit of the sexual self;
individual, private, innermost, accomplished through the acquisition and conspicuous manifestations of style” (Evans 1993, 45). Hence, the market’s pecuniary egotism is inherently sexual. This ultimate fetishization of the individual as a unique being brings together both market and sexual values. At the same time, sexuality appears to be both the least commodifiable aspect of social life, or even ‘natural’, ‘personal’ and ‘private’ and, for these very reasons, sexuality is also the aspect that holds the greatest potential of being commodified. We must consume to find and express our natural unique selves and we are obliged to do so. Sexuality, then, serves as personal lifestyle or becomes an exploitable ‘difference’ (for example within ‘diversity management’).

At this point it proves to be very interesting to look at some new approaches in feminist economic theory, which theorize the connections between heteronormativity and macroeconomics. For instance S. Charusheela points out that “consumption spending is performative, since we engage in acts of consumption as part of our efforts to meet an ‘ideal’ imagination of what it means to be a good provisioner, a good mother or father, a properly raised child (…)” (Charusheela 2007, 9f) or, what can be added here, a proper gay man or lesbian women. According to Charusheela macroeconomics is not only structured by heteronormativity, it can be conceptualized as a “bearer of gender” and specific identities, which are constituted and reproduced through the consumption of appropriate commodities. Thus, the stability of consumption in advanced industrial societies must be conceptualized as an effect of the stabilization of heteronormative gender performances (ibid.). – Now lesbians and gays are more and more forced to be part of this consumption performance, in order to help stabilize the consumption function and present themselves as “good consumers”.

As a result, discrimination is more often discursively construed as personal “bad luck” rather than as an outcome of social structural asymmetries. This results in a call to create one’s own identity and to compensate for social disadvantages through one’s own strength. This paradigm of individualization is economically constructed and shaped in terms of individual self- fulfillment. This implies that sexual regimes are currently disappearing; regardless, these regimes are still reproduced in a profitable and commodifying order. There should only be a limited number of sexual lifestyles, which could be expressed in a marketable or market-integrated way. Being a lesbian wouldn’t be a problem within this frame of discourse as long as they didn’t transgress gender borders and seek to undermine the sex/gender system. For example, Shane Phelan has pointed out that butch lesbians are closeted, because their visibility transcends the commodity-based ideals of women/men (Phelan 2001).
Regardless of the problematic nature of citizenship’s transformation process into a more market-oriented institution of inclusion, we must recognize the dialectical impact it has on lesbians. The social paradigm of post-Fordist flexibility—in conjunction with privatization and the dismantling of welfare states—has indeed created new spaces for lesbian life. As “traditional” family structures erode, new spaces for a multitude of forms of family live are emerging. Although critical discussions of neoliberal strategies are often accompanied by a kind of ‘nostalgia’ for the welfare state, we must not forget that the welfare state has also been criticized in its function as a patriarchal and disciplinary institution that has consistently privileged (and therefore produced) the heteronormative nuclear family.

As more and more women become visible actors in public life and are incorporated into civil, political and social rights, women have also become ‘liberated’ in a sense that they are now able to engage in complex formal and informal relations with the state and on the market. Although this is now the case, women have still not been permitted to leave the realm of the family, neither structurally nor ideologically, and they are also still not regarded as the same kind of sexually responsible citizens that men are. In fact, quite the opposite is the case: the fetishization of the family along with the state’s ‘liberalization’ of family law and regulations regarding sex crimes, gender and sexual difference have been more reconstituted rather than questioned.

In this regard, a market-based notion of integration is problematic for extending citizenship to lesbian women due to the material economic discrepancies between men and women of all sexual affiliations. The commodification of lesbian and gay identities and lifestyles thus reinforces female sexual difference and women’s role as secondary citizens. Thus, existing economic inequalities, the androcentric structure of economics and liberal notions of citizenship must therefore remain concealed. In practice same-sex marriage has very different (economic) effects on gay men and lesbian women.

Generally spoken, a structural critique of economic, social and cultural inequalities and injustices is prevented by a market-based notion of integration. And as Nancy Fraser has pointed out in her *Key Note Lecture*, there exists an “unhappy liaison” between neoliberalism and identity politics. A limited form of economic recognition of lesbian women and gay men (but mainly gay men!) as consumers has been established, but no adequate concepts for economic redistribution and political participation. Recognition runs down to an interpersonal act of recognition not targeting political and democratic structures, but focusing on the personal achievements of a person. On the other hand, representation is confused with a limited form of visibility in the media, like in TV shows such as *The L-word* or *Queer as folk*.
6. Reconsiderations of lesbian citizenship … The necessity for new outfits

Critiquing contemporary LGBTQ citizenship politics with regard to lesbian (feminist) bodies also entails the formulation of alternative concepts of lesbian citizenship. But I do not seek to devise a universal or distinctive model for lesbian citizenship, because this issue is far too complex to be able to address all the interconnected dimensions of gender, race, sexuality and citizenship. For this reason, I find that concepts for en-gendering citizenship as well as analyses dealing with the racist implications of modern citizenship both essential in further investigating the question of lesbian citizenship. Furthermore, discussions on the transformation of citizenship must also include the demands of various social movements voice and embrace the different experiences of many countries – this means that there cannot be one hegemonic “best practice model” of lesbian citizenship.

My examination of lesbian citizenship is based on three approaches dealing with different aspects of reconsidering lesbian citizenship. I want to stress that reconsidering lesbian
citizenship does not imply a stabilization of the category of ‘lesbian’ in any sense, but includes ideas of how the status and social, political and economic possibilities and autonomy of lesbian political bodies could be transgressed by transforming the concept of citizenship itself. Therefore I am intending to articulate a lesbian agenda as part of a radical democratic creed, which is shared across sexualities and other forms of difference. Eventually, the complete subversion and disappearance of the category of lesbian might be seen as future goal following a radical postfeminist or poststructuralist approach.

(1) First of all, (feminist) theories of democracy and feminist contributions to the question of social/political recognition/acknowledgment, representation and redistribution are providing a productive basis for exploring ‘lesbian citizenship’. Emphasizing the participatory aspect of citizenship opens up space for reconceptualizing lesbian citizenship—not on the basis of rights but on the basis of participation and representation in political processes. Social and political recognition is then linked to the “capacity to articulate one’s interest as a matter for public concern” (Phelan 2001, 13). In this sense, lesbians cannot achieve full citizenship by only focusing on “equal rights” and “tolerance” of their sexual orientation, but enabling them to “be an active constructor of one’s public appearance” (ibid., p. 15f) and fully take part in the process of political deliberation. In this context we have to ask which cultural, social and economic resources are needed to enable lesbians to act as visible political subjects or to enhance lesbian groups to take part in democratic processes. As a result, political recognition and participation must be linked to the question of re-distribution and the necessity to re-evaluate the commodified structures of visibility (e.g. TV, magazines).

Established categories or identities (for instance, gay and lesbians as a stable minority) are therefore no longer the prerequisite for making political demands, instead people can construct their ‘own’ political manifestations. This is particularly the case regarding neoliberal transformations of citizenship (‘the right to consume’), as the re-establishment of structures that enable equal participation can is also an integral part of lesbian citizenship.

In reference to Nancy Fraser and Shane Phelan I argue that in order to institute an equitable concept of lesbian citizenship, notions of recognition/acknowledgement and redistribution that go beyond “individual self-fulfillment”, “successful identity formation” and commodified forms of inclusion are necessary, particularly when working towards creating a basis for equal “social membership”, participation and a democratization of institutionalized cultural value systems (Phelan 2001, Fraser 2003a, 2003b). Consequently, new models of lesbian citizenship must rely on deliberative concepts of citizenship.
(2) In regard to the participatory aspects of citizenship while keeping all those critiques of identity politics in mind, it is also necessary to critically re-examine what the term ‘lesbian’ within *lesbian citizenship* means/could mean. Is there such as thing as ‘lesbian political interest’? How can *lesbian citizenship* be reformulated without re-essentializing lesbianism? Early lesbian-feminist approaches, which sought to conceptualize lesbian identity as a particular and potentially subversive location/consciousness/experience of a certain group of people who had been put in the category ‘woman’, therefore can provide fruitful grounds for re-thinking *lesbian citizenship*. According to Shane Phelan “this subversive force extends far beyond that of naturalized or essentialized sexual identities, for it might extend into the lives of all members of a society who understand themselves in this way” (Phelan 1994: 41).

Contrary to contemporary interpretations that deem early lesbian-feminist works essentialist, their frameworks did/still pose a challenge to heteropatriarchal society, as ‘lesbian’ is not presented as an identity but a position/location of subversion. That being the case, *dissident* political and theoretical practices and experiences in social and political movements (e.g. non-hierarchical decision making processes in feminist/lesbian movements) therefore also provide a basis for conceptualizing *lesbian citizenship* (Sparks 1997).

*In my endeavor to undo the ‘corset’ of liberal citizenship, I will reference lesbian/feminist utopian narratives that could, if you will, provide an innovative background for developing new models of citizenship. Lesbian/feminist utopian narratives question the ideological assumptions that have sustained the notion of liberal citizenship since the Enlightenment and therefore also undo the “sexual contract” (Pateman 1988) and its binary constraints. None of the current citizenship debates really dissociate the needs of an embodied human being from the patriarchal-capitalist and heteronormative narrative of family and nation and essentialist understandings of gender. While we still depend on such assumptions, lesbian/feminist utopian narratives deconstruct the self-evident logic of ‘natural rights’ and replace traditional structures of the state apparatus/the nation state with social structures based on a different kind of community, economic system and global-ecological awareness (Silbergleid 1997; Schönpfug 2008).

For my research Joanna Russ’s *The female Man* and Marge Piercy’s *Woman on the Edge of Time* both provide particular ways of imagining “lesbian citizenship”. These novels are chiefly antipatriarchal in their pursuit of a sexually egalitarian society and propose societies based on communal ties rather than on nuclear family units; they emphasize ecological well-being more than technological advancement or economic gain; they redistribute care labor regardless of one’s gender; they de-centralize the role of large-scale government and repressive law; and attempt to subvert the sex/gender system by disembroiling sexuality from
reproduction, thus legitimating if not endorsing, a variety of sexual practices. In a certain sense they re-sexualize the “political sphere” and re-politicize the private. While the explicit aim of those lesbian/feminist narratives is the creation of a gender-free (or at least non-patriarchal) society, they also offer an implicit critique of the founding assumptions of liberal citizenship by undermining the interconnected systems of gender, sexuality and the state. These novels therefore also ‘construct’ alternative models of the ‘normal citizen’.

**Conclusion**

I have tried to illustrate how male and female homosexualities are inhibiting different places in the performative narration of modern citizenship concepts. Both are located very distinctively within the private/public sphere and are threatening the trope of the ‘ideal normal’ citizen at different places. By analyzing contemporary gay & lesbian citizenship politics I have demonstrated that they do generally impose very problematic implications but this is particularly the case for the category of lesbians. These politics are cementing hetero-patriarchal structures as well as the public/private dichotomy and do not challenge the metaphorical constitution of the political sphere as phallic. Neither do they encourage lesbian women to break through the border of the private sphere, surpassing their position as the permanently embodied and penetrated ones. Thus, it should have become clear, that one needs to exceed the politics of equality in order to reconceptualize lesbian citizenship on a new foundation. Being far from establishing a universal model of citizenship I hope to have given some impulses to consider lesbian citizenship from different perspectives. I have illustrated how theories of democracy and participation as well as the earlier works of the lesbian-feminist movement and lesbian/feminist narratives can provide a fruitful basis to think about lesbian citizenship concepts without essentializing lesbian identities but rather to discuss those concepts as a position/location of subversion.

Especially in science it is a common trait to accept (some) narratives as governing epistemologies (i.e. state theories are narratives which have been translated into political and social structures), and even more to regard them as the very mode of human consciousness. But then any amount of social change or subversive transformation requires a new narrative structure, a new way of envisioning political and social communities, which might (still) be utopian.
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