LGBT rights in Vietnam
– A ‘private’ issue in the public sphere?

A Minor Field Study of the Vietnamese LGBT movement

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Abstract

In recent years the Vietnamese LGBT movement have been able to improve the respect of LGBT rights while not provoking an antagonized action from the authoritarian state. This study seeks understanding on how this success was made possible by uncovering the movement’s representation of the political problem of disrespected LGBT rights. The theoretical framework combines Nancy Fraser’s theory on ‘multiple public spheres’ with the concept on public/private from radical feminism. The study includes the own voices of the movement as the empirical material consists of nine interviews with five civil society organisations based in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. The analysis shows on a problem representation where disrespected LGBT rights is constructed both as of ‘concern’ of the few and the many, yet with an approach towards the state that is ‘approving’ and not ‘counteractive’. This suggests a representation of a ‘private’ problem – one that could be considered to have enabled the success of the LGBT movement and the increased recognition of LGBT rights within the Vietnamese society.

Keywords

LGBT, movement, authoritarian rule, public/private, problem representation
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1. Introduction

Vietnam is a communist one-party state with a political rule which is internationally described as one of Asia’s most authoritarian. The state apparatus carries out a monopoly of political power at the national, provincial and local level involving the judicial system which for long has maintained it to be illegal for citizens to oppose the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) as well as the political system. Civil liberties such as the rights of association and assembly face severe restrictions as open confluences and protests are surveyed and delimited. (Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2013/2014) The numerical ratings on political rights and civil liberties, carried out by Freedom House (2015) within a range from 1–7 with 1 representing the ‘most free’ and 7 the ‘least free’, describes Vietnam with the figures of 7 and 5, stating it to be a ‘not free’ society. Despite this, there is a growing number of civil society organisations (CSOs) understood as successful in having an influence on the political agenda. The joint feature of these organisations is said to be “a focus on issues that are perceived as less controversial, such as women’s rights and LGBT issues”. (Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2013/2014, 11)

Lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders (LGBT) face both direct discrimination and stigmatization in Vietnam (Sida 2013-02-06). Nevertheless, the situation for this group has been perceived as improving in the last approximate five years. The knowledge of LGBT has increased and attitudes towards LGBT have become more open-minded (Sida 2013-11-26). This development situates the LGBT rights¹ as a case of exception in Vietnam where no fundamental improvements of other human rights have been seen (Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2013/2014). The development can be linked to the relative success of the Vietnamese CSOs constituting the Vietnamese LGBT movement who have worked to shift the negative portrayal of LGBT in the state-owned media into a more positive depiction, conducted extensive lobbying foregoing to the two policy reforms on LGBT², gathered and strengthened the LGBT community and increased the visibility of LGBT by, for instance, arranging annual and by every year growing Viet Pride festivals (Sida 2013-11-26, Sida 2013-02-06).

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¹ LGBT rights is in this study defined as all human being’s equal rights and possibilities regardless to sexual orientation or gender identity (Regeringens webbplats för mänskliga rättigheter 2016)

² The former regulation that prohibited same sex marriage was abolished in January 2015, after the voting by the National Assembly (NA) in June 2013. Even though the dropped ban does not equal a legalisation of same sex marriage the policy change was considered a prominent victory for LGBT rights in Vietnam (LGBTQ Nation 2015-01-10). In November 2015 the NA voted in favour of acknowledging transgenders right to change their gender mark in the national papers. This policy change might also open up for legalizing gender reassignment surgery within the country, though the official law coming into effect in January 2017 is yet to be processed. (iSEE 2015-11-24, The Guardian 2015-11-24)
1.1. Purpose
The Vietnamese LGBT movement can be seen as seizing – limited, but yet – political power within authoritarian rule. The way in which the disrespect of LGBT rights have been represented as a political issue, by the movement itself, might give an understanding on how the LGBT movement have been able to successfully grasp political ground in the Vietnamese society. More specific, the portray of political issues as ‘public’ vis-à-vis ‘private’ can be seen to construct them as legitimate vis-à-vis illegitimate topics for public discussion and law making, why this dichotomy could be found beneficial for the understanding of the success of the LGBT movement. Further on, the uncovering of the problem representation in terms of public/private could enable an understanding on the present situation for civil society activity in Vietnam at large. This could shed light on whether the Vietnamese LGBT movement can be interpreted as in fact opening up towards a greater political transformation of democratization in Vietnam.

1.1.1. Research question
The research question following from the purpose of the study is:

• How does the Vietnamese LGBT movement represent the ‘problem’ of disrespected LGBT rights in terms of public/private?

1.2. Limitations
The empirical material of this study consists of nine interviews with five CSOs of the Vietnamese LGBT movement. In the mapping of which type of CSOs which foremost constitutes the movement, the researcher has taken guidance from the LGBT community itself and the Human Rights Program Manager at United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Vietnam. The LGBT movement was hereby understood to foremost consist of organisations describing their work to focus on either connecting LGBT people, empowerment the LGBT community or policy advocacy on LGBT issues. The CSOs studied in this research are such, yet with the delimitation of only including organisations being active in between 2007–2015 and this also is the delimitation in time for this study. The start of the LGBT movement can be dated to 2007 as this was the year for the first face-to-face meeting with the administrators of the then Internet-based LGBT communities. From this meeting the LGBT community in Vietnam began to develop into what it can be seen as today. It should though be clear that the Vietnamese LGBT movement can be considered to include an additional type of CSOs, active previous to 2007, which are not included in this study. The sampling of the study will be discussed more in depth in section 3.3.2.
2. Previous research and theoretical framework

This chapter will start of with an exposition on previous research considered of relevance for this study. Thereafter the theoretical framework, including the concept on public/private, will be presented.

2.1. Previous research

Previous research has within civil society theories investigated the correlations between civil society and the process of democratization. A vital civil society is often considered to nurture a democratic power balance by acting as a counterweight towards the state power whether the political rule is democratic, semi- or fully authoritarian. While recognising the many and ambiguous interpretations of a civil society, one often accepted definition is the one of a sphere of social groups situated in between the family and the state\(^3\) (White 1994, 377). Additional to this, it’s by theorists alike Lise Rakner argued that these groups must interact with the state while other theorists alike Jean-François Bayart argue these groups must act against the state\(^4\) (ibid.). Even though the dichotomy between civil society and the state is kept central within theories on civil society and democratisation the “clear-cut boundaries” between these two are better understood as an ideal type, rather the empirical cases (Wischermann 2010, 6). The difficulty of defining such boundaries can further on be seen as emphasized when within the empirical context of authoritarian rule. This can be seen in Vietnam as CSOs there are required to register with a “relevant government body, a professional or umbrella organization, a ministry, or local government entity” (Taylor et al 2012, 11), whereby the operation of a CSO can be seen to partly depend on approval from such government body. Once a CSO is approved, the registration relationship between the state and the organisations function to keep the latter one under close observation. (ibid.) Moreover, this study could be understood to stress this complexity of the state-civil society relationship further. This, as it seeks to investigate how a number of CSOs have influenced the politics of the state without being a part of the state and simultaneously without being silenced by the authoritarian state. The possible space in between these two could be considered either minimal or non-existing, yet, or rather because of that, it is considered of value to investigate when understanding the complex and at times paradox relationships between state, civil society and democratization within empirical cases. This kind of understanding is the foremost kind of which this study carries hope on contributing to.

\(^3\) By applying this definition, the organisations within the LGBT movement are within this study denoted as civil society organisations.

\(^4\) The features of the civil society as a separated sphere and as opposing the state are features which can be considered shared by Jürgen Habermas concept on ‘the public sphere’, to be presented further in the theoretical framework (2.2.).
2.2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework of this study consists of Nancy Fraser’s theory on ‘multiple public spheres’ and of the concept on public/private from radical feminism. By highlighting the two concepts on a ‘dual character’ and on ‘concern’ from Fraser’s theory the understanding of what is in fact interpreted as ‘public’ vis-à-vis ‘private’ in this study is defined.

2.2.1. The public sphere

Fraser’s theory derives from Jürgen Habermas work on ‘the public sphere’. This concept is an ideal without contemporary precedents where private individuals gather to discuss public matters, participation is equal even when social inequalities exist and access is granted to all (Calhoun 1992, 12). The public sphere is not included in the sphere of the state, rather it is a counterpart to it as the affairs of the state here are to be scrutinized and criticized (Dahlgren 1995, 7-8). The concept is recognised within social and political science to be valuable for understanding the constructive challenges of collective deliberation that can be aimed towards the state power, why it further more can be used as an instrument for increased political equality and democracy in a society.

2.2.2. Multiple publics

The political scientist, feminist theorist and Habermas expert Nancy Fraser developed the singular public sphere of Habermas further, into a concept on multiple public spheres. These publics are either dominant, larger publics or ‘subaltern counterpublics’, alike other social stratification. (Fraser 1990, 61) The counterpublics are to be understood as “parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (Fraser 1990, 67).

2.2.2.1. The ‘dual character’

While being their own space for deliberation, the counterpublics can simultaneously contest larger, dominant publics. This is the ‘dual character’ of counterpublics; of both functioning as “spaces of withdrawal and regroupment” and simultaneously as “bases and training groups for agitational activities directed toward wider publics” (ibid., 68). The relationship between the dominant and subaltern publics is thus not of static inequality, but of constant dynamic and conflict, decided by uninterrupted discursive struggle. When the contestation of a counterpublic is aimed towards an exclusion within a dominant public, the counterpublics’ action pushes the boundaries of the discursive space. The counterpublic introduces the dominant public with issues that were previously excluded, re-situating them as natural within the dominant public. (Fraser 1990, 67)
If the multiple public spheres of Fraser, alike the singular public sphere of Habermas, is to be understood as a counterpart to the state, it is likely that the dominant publics, rather than the subaltern, have a stronger position to act counteractive towards the state. The agency of the second feature of the ‘dual character’ – the agitational discursive action – is thus not only a possibility of extension of a subaltern discourse into to a dominant, but from there the contestation could be further aimed towards the state. This idea is of particular interest as the Vietnamese LGBT movement have influenced both the public opinion and the political agenda in ways not seen done by others subordinated groups in the society. The agency within the second feature of a counterpublic can be understood coherent with Habermas concept, as a counterpart, which aims critique towards the state. The agency of the first feature of the dual character – the more passive regroupment and withdrawal – can instead be understood as the subaltern counterpublics’ way of establishing and welding the dominant discourse of and within the counterpublic, an agency which is not counteractive towards the state.

If searching for a dominant public discourse in the Vietnamese context where political rights including the freedom of opinion and expression are highly limited, one could extinguish the discourse of the Communist Party of Vietnam. This discourse could be seen as constituting a dominant public sphere in the Vietnamese society, an area allowing public and political deliberation as long as such is in line with the politics of the CPV. In this understanding the potential contestation of a subaltern counterpublic towards the dominant public in Vietnam, can be understood as a contestation of state directly.

2.2.2. The ‘concern’

The discursive contestation between subaltern and dominant publics is critical concerning the very boundaries of the latter, that is, what is to be included and accepted within this sphere. In Habermas idea the public sphere is a place in which private persons gather to discuss public matters (Fraser 1990, 70). Yet, the matter that is considered a ‘public’ matter, or a matter of common ‘concern’, is to be seen as utterly decided by discourse. Thereby subaltern counterpublic can challenge the dominant discourse by initiating a question of concern for and by a subordinated group as a question of common ‘concern’. Fraser illustrates by showing on how feminists in the 1980’s was able to change the perception on domestic violence through discursive contestation, altering the majority’s opinion of this from being a ‘private’ issue to a matter of common ‘concern’ and thereby “a legitimate topic of public discussion” (ibid., 71).

The common ‘concern’ can be understood as a dimension in which the nature of the counterpublic sphere is in fact ‘public’. In this ‘public’ sense lies a possibility of an opposed ‘private’ sense. The ‘private’ sense could be defined as the political issue being of the concern of the few, that is, foremost including the subordinated group. Regarding the issue of domestic violence, this was understood a
‘private’ matter as it solely included “what was assumed to be a fairly small number of of heterosexual couples (and perhaps the social and legal professionals who were supposed to deal with them)” (ibid., 71). It is possible that the similar delimitation of ‘concern’ is ascribed to the subordinated group of LGBT, such as solely an issue for the people of non-normative sexual orientations and gender identities, and perhaps a few involved professionals. That different political issues can be socially constructed as legitimate issues for public discussion and law making while others are not, simply by constructing them as a ‘common concern’ vis-à-vis a ‘concern of the few’, is the analogue idea to the feminist critique towards the dichotomy between ‘public’ and ‘private’.

2.2.3. Public/private

This critique is a critical insight within the theory of radical feminism where it is seen as an ideological and social construction used to subordinate women (Thompson 2001, 7–8). While radical feminism argues ‘private’ constructions help to uphold patriarchy (ibid.) one could, when applying the concept to the group of LGBT instead of women, argue that ‘private’ constructions can be understood to uphold the normative structures of heterosexuality and gender identity. According to radical feminism, the discrimination against women as ‘private’ issues includes sexual oppression (Gemzöe 20313, 45) and it can therefore be considered of relevance to apply the concept to non-normative gender identities and sexual orientations as this group share the experience of structural sexual oppression.

Further on and more dramatically, if applying the concept to the authoritarian state of Vietnam where the political freedom is harshly restricted, the very function of the concept can be shifted – from understanding the refusal of equal rights when an issue is represented as ‘private’, into understanding the recognition of the same. Perhaps, a ‘private’ representation can be understood to help recognition of an issue in an authoritarian context where ‘public’ representations might be considered too politically sensitive. The understanding of the concept is then only shifted in the cases of authoritarian rule, as the conditions for the dichotomy then can be seen different than in the cases of democracy. This is the understanding of the public/private concept developed and applied in this study.

2.2.3.1. Two dimensions of public/private

When considering the concept on public/private in the lens of Fraser’s concept on multiple publics, it can be understood to contain two critical dimensions which can be understood as either public/private. These two dimensions is this study’s way of specifying the meaning of an issue being represented as ‘public’ vis-à-vis ‘private’. The first dimension is of the ‘dual character’, the withdrawal and the contestation, applied with a focus on the approach towards the state. The ‘private’ sense of a public sphere’s approach towards the state is here a non-confrontational, non-scrutinizing approach, alike a
silent approver or supporter. The ‘public’ sense is the opposing and criticising approach, alike a counterpart towards the state. The second dimension is the extent of ‘concern’. The ‘public’ sense is the issue being made a common concern, a concern of the many, meaning it involves a greater number of individuals than which constitutes the group in direct favour of the issue being recognised. Opposed to this, the ‘private’ sense is where the issue is made solely a concern of the few, involving a less extensive number of individuals in the direct favour of the issue being recognised.

In this study the revised public/private concept and these two dimensions are used in order to understand how the movement have discursively made the issue of disrespect of LGBT rights into “a legitimate topic for public discussion” (Fraser 1990, 71) in the authoritarian context. This aims to shed light on how the success of the movement has been made possible. Hereby, the purpose of the study is encountered by investigating weather the issue of LGBT rights in Vietnam have been made a ‘concern of a the few’ or a ‘common concern’ and if the approach towards the state is made ‘approving’ or ‘counteractive’ by the movements own discursive practice.

3. Methods

In this chapter the method for analysing the empirical material – the analytic framework – and the method for collection the empirical material will be presented. Yet at first, a few words on the underlying scientific assumptions of this study will be given.

The study contains an underlying assumption of social constructivism which argue the world as dependent on its observer. Hence, the observer’s own constructions are the main area of interest (Bergström & Boréus 2012, 26-29). The ‘observers’ in this research are the representatives of the CSOs working for LGBT rights in Vietnam. The assumption is a natural following of the purpose and the research question which seek to uncover the representation made by the movement itself. The social constructivist assumption is a shared feature of the applied theoretical concepts as well as the analytic framework’s use of What’s the problem? approach, which is presented next.

3.1. Analytic framework

The analytic framework of this study combines the two dimensions of the concept on public/private – the ‘dual character’ and the ‘concern’ – together with the What’s the problem? approach. Hereby two instrumental questions are formulated.

3.1.1. What’s the problem?

The What’s the problem? approach by Carol Lee Bacchi (2008) enables understanding of how a political problem can be constructed in different ways concluding in different ‘solutions’, which is
outcomes perceived possible or desirable. The focus on construction involves a focus on discourse, which to be understood as “the language, concepts and categories employed to frame an issue” (ibid., 2). Bacchi’s discourse can be seen as derived from Foucault’s genealogy, as they both reveals the possibilities stipulated by a certain discourse (ibid., 2, 40, Bergström & Boréus 2012, 360). Discourse analysis can be applied as both method and theoretical framework or solely as a method for analysing the empirical material. The use of discourse in this study is as a method.

The respect for the human rights for LGBT in Vietnam is considered higher today than in the last approximate five years ago. In Bacchi’s terminology these rights would be described more possible or desirable. By uncovering the problem representation of disrespected LGBT rights one can gain understanding of how the ‘solution’ of increased respect for these rights, have been made more possible or desirable. This representation is uncovered as articulated by the CSOs constituting the LGBT movement as the movement is considered critical for the increased rights to come about.

When a political issue is articulated as a defined problem, other articulations of this same issues problem is made invisible (ibid., 7). Bacchi herself study policy proposals where she reveals what is made invisible by looking at the visible problem representation. This study is instead built on interviews where the problem representation of the movement is to be uncovered directly. It will be assumed that the representation found in this material is the dominant, visible one and in relation to the purpose of the study this is the one of prior interest. It is though possible for the study to also uncover invisible representations. Because of this, the material will be analysed with consideration to the number of respondents expressing a certain representation. This is also to be clarified in the presentation of the results in order to ease the reader’s evaluation and improve the credibility of the results interpreted by the researcher. The fact that the study could uncover both visible and invisible representations could though contribute to a deeper understanding of the movement and its representation of disrespected LGBT rights.

Moreover, Bacchi promotes an open-minded discursive eye (ibid., 12-13) but as this thesis applies the approach as a method and not a theory, the combination with the chosen theoretical framework does involve a narrower spectrum of possible problem representations to be uncovered. The choice to partly relinquish from the approach in is made by the wish of further theoretical foundation beyond pure discourse analysis and by the belief that the chosen theoretical concepts and modifications of the approach can provide it with a more distinctive function. This application is thus to be considered as a further elaboration of the approach.
3.1.1.1. Instrumental questions

The representation of a political problem is in Bacchi’s approach uncovered by the researcher asking a certain set of instrumental questions towards the empirical material (ibid.). This study applies two of these pre-formulated questions with the foremost re-formulation of extending them with the theoretical concepts;

a) What’s the problem represented to be in terms of common ‘concern’ or ‘concern’ of the few?

b) What subjects are constituted by the representation in terms of a ‘counteractive’ or ‘approving’ approach towards the state?

The first instrumental question (a) contains the concept on ‘concern’. Recalling that the counterpublics are dependent on their discursive contestation and that the creation of common ‘concerns’ is utterly a result from such discursive battles, the concept can be argued suitable for combination with Bacchi’s approach uncovering discourse representations.

The second instrumental question (b) contains the concept on the counterpublics ‘dual character’. In the ‘dual character’ one finds the possibility of ‘counteractive’ and ‘approving’ approaches towards the state. To uncover the features and subjects constituted by discourse is to investigate what actions are made possible and impossible to people, whom in this case are the people within the movement. This aims to uncover the agency enabled for the movement.

3.2. Semi-structured interviews

The underlying assumption of social constructivism seeks a deeper, more detailed understanding, which makes it suitable together with the use of semi-structured interviews as qualitative, rather than a quantitative method for collecting the empirical data (Morris 2009, 211). Interviews are also an interactive method which enable respondents to give their direct voice to the research (ibid.), a crucial component as the research purpose is to uncovering the representations as made by the movement itself.

A number of nine interviews have been conducted, individually and in person in between November and December 2015. Two interviews were conducted in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) and seven in Hanoi. The interviews were about 35-70 minutes with the majority being about 50 minutes. The commonly recognized four principals of research ethics – the requirements of approval of participation, confidentiality, information about the purpose and usage of the study – were presented to each respondent in the beginning of each interview (Kvale 2007, 25-30). All interviews were recorded and later transcribed verbatim with the interviewer being referred to as number one and the
respondent as number two. Names, titles and names of organisations have been replaced with the symbol [*] to ensure anonymity of the respondents.

3.2.1. Interview guide
Semi-structured interviews are conducted with a pre-prepared interview-guide stressing the very purpose of the research combined with a freedom to let each interview respondent elaborate their answers and the researcher to elaborate the given question, if so needed (Kvale 2007, 51). This aims to keep the conversation close to the subject of the research purpose while being open for important aspects that might have been missed in the prepared guide and that respondents might shed light on. Furthermore, to conduct interviews within a partly discursive framework differs from conventional interviewing as it requires the interviewer to, in a larger extent, act as a contributor rather than a reader of pre-formulated questions (Kvale 2007, 74). When taking on this approach in the conducted interviews, the interviewer was attentive to be perhaps even more open-minded to the issues brought up by the respondent and to situate the questions in the context of the conversation. The interviewer’s control of the focus could so on be considered less by taking on this approach. In the researcher’s retrospective this is likely to have contributed to the outcome of the focus of the interviews becoming rather different. This can be seen as a disadvantage of this type of method, as the interviews constituting the material could be produced to be skewed by the uneven focus in the interviews. Further on the increased presence of the interviewer can be seen to compromise the degree of reliability of the study, as the findings become less reproducible for another researcher in another time (Campbell et al. 2013).

The interview guide (Appendix 1) was developed by combining the instrumental questions above (a and b) with four elements considered of importance for the LGBT movement, namely the two policy changes, Viet Pride and the attitude of the general public. This aimed to give the respondents the possibility to discuss the work of its organisation and the success of the movement freely, while keeping focus on the representations in terms of the theoretical concepts. The interview guide’s repeated questions on “For who is this important?” , “What do you think made it possible?” and “How was it problematic?” are designed to expose public/private representations, in ways relating to ‘concern’ (a) and the ‘dual character’ (b). This aims at connecting the theoretical framework with the empirical material.

3.2.2. Sampling
The sampling strategy has been made through purposive sampling, meaning that the researcher chooses the respondents who are likely to be best suited for the study. This requires both knowledge about the population of possible respondents and motivation for the sampling made. It is a non-generalizable strategy, which rather gives a deeper knowledge about the sample in question rather than
a representative picture of the larger population. (Tansley 2007, 770) The sampling in this study is done out of the researcher’s choice to interview the most suitable actors, deriving from the wish to interview some of the most active LGBT organisations in HCMC and Hanoi and to meet with some of the most prominent figures within these. As the research seeks to understand the relatively large success made by the LGBT movement, the organisations considered related to this success needs to be studied. This aims at providing the study with sufficient validity, that is, using methods with enables to measure what is intended (Kuzmanic 2009).

The LGBT movement is described with a first and second ‘generation of LGBT activism’. First/second ‘generation’ organisations are generally outlined as the are respectively older/younger than 4 years and as they consist of more/less than 5 core members and as their members are born in the 1980s/1990s. Both of these generations are included in the sample, with seven from the first and two respondents from the second generation. The dominance of the former is motivated as these organisations have a larger number of members, a longer involvement and therefore possibilities to cover the history of the movement and thereby closer tied to the movement’s success. It is though considered important to not exclude the second generation since it represents the activism in more recent time.

The sample includes five organisations in Hanoi and one in HCMC. This choice should not be understood as hoping to give representation of the LGBT movement in both the southern and northern parts of the country, but rather as the movement is based in both cities, yet with clear domination in Hanoi. The organisations in these cities collaborate with smaller CSOs around the country but the most prominent LGBT action is understood being carried out in the two largest cities HCMC and Hanoi. Again, the choice of organisation does not represent the wider LGBT movement since it does not include the local LGBT communities existing in many provinces, but aims at reflecting the most prominent voices of the movement.

Within each organisation, respondents have been chosen by the criteria of “having or having had a certain role of higher position within the organisation and being comfortable to conduct the interview in English”. The requirement of a higher position aimed to reach the most prominent figures of the movement. The language requirement could involve a limitation of missing persons which could be important, but within the organisations of interest this have not been comprehended as being a problem.

All interviews were perceived as successful in the sense that they all contributed to collecting material which could be analysed in terms of the instrumental questions. Yet, one should recognize that the interviews have been conducted in a language which not is the mother tongue of neither the researcher
nor the respondents, which could affect the study negatively since the study’s discursive focus involves greater importance of precise articulations. In relation to the study’s validity it is considered important that the empirical material is the direct voices of the CSOs and to not include an interpreter.

4. Results

This chapter will present the results of the empirical material, whereby the results will be analysed in the next chapter to follow. The presentation of the results is structured by two themes. These are by the researcher defined to the most remarking themes in the overall empirical material, that is, the answers of all respondents. The two themes were discussed by nine respectively by eight out of nine respondents. The answers within the themes are more or less direct answers to versions of the questions on “What (do you think) made it possible?” and “How was it problematic?” from the interview guide. The two themes are by the researcher denoted to ‘values’ and ‘visibility’.

The listing below shows a couple of the respondents’ characteristics in order for a better understanding of the answers given. The number of the respondents are given randomly in order to ensure anonymity of the respondents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>‘Generation’ of organisation</th>
<th>Base of respondent and organisation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Hanoi</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>First</td>
<td>Hanoi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Second</td>
<td>Hanoi</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>First</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>First</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Second</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>First</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>First</td>
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4.1. Values

All nine respondents referred to values of love, equality, family, joy, kindness, tolerance of diversity, and being yourself when discussing the success of the movement. Six respondents expressed this as the ‘values of human rights’, a way of talking about the meaning of human rights without using the term. It was considered difficult to talk directly about human rights as this was expressed to be a

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5 (1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9)
sensitive topic in Vietnam, even though two respondents\(^6\) said that it has become easier and that the ‘language of rights’ today can be used by the organisations to some extent. When discussing the movements difficulty to talk explicitly about human rights one respondent said:

> When being asked about human rights, they just say, about same sex marriage, ‘We just want to get married’. (Interview 5)

The same respondent expressed, among others\(^7\), it to be easier to reach out to the general public by using these values in their arguments for increased respect of LGBT rights;

> Vietnamese people, no, people in general, feel easier to talk about laugh, about families. So, we also make it easier to imagine about LGBT. We say ‘Love between two people’. (Interview 5)

The importance of values was in the material correlated to the importance of the attitude of the movement being positive, understanding, constructive and humble, expressed by five of the respondents\(^8\). The importance of this attitude was expressed both in relation to the general public and the state, as both people and politicians was considered in need of learning and understanding about LGBT in order to respect LGBT rights. This humble attitude can be seen demonstrated as about 20 people from the movement went to the building of the National Assembly (NA) with signs saying “Thank you” after the NA passed the law which allows transgenders to change their register gender in national paper, a story which respondent 1, 5 and 9 shared during their interviews.

In relation to this appreciative, humble attitude five respondents\(^9\) denoted the relationship between the movement and the state being friendly, supportive, alike a partnership. This can be seen as one respondent discusses the Ministry of Justice who drafted the law concerning same-sex marriage:

> And we build a relationship, it's not about ‘I advocate you’ but very much like working together. And that’s why all of them support same sex marriage at that time. (Interview 1)

### 4.2. Visibility

Eight respondents\(^10\) expressed that the visibility of LGBT have been and still is crucial in order for LGBT being respected. This visibility was expressed in relation to the importance of communicating a

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\(^6\) (5, 9)  
\(^7\) (1, 2, 6, 8)  
\(^8\) (1, 2, 5, 6, 7)  
\(^9\) (1, 2, 4, 5, 9)  
\(^10\) (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9)
positive image of LGBT towards the public, media and state. By two respondents\textsuperscript{11} this was explicitly expressed in bringing forth the ‘real people, real stories’ of LGBT, or the ‘real community’. The importance of ‘visibility’ was by six respondents\textsuperscript{12} connected to that LGBT individuals started to speak or fight for themselves, and by one respondent to accepting your self;

We have to know how to accept yourself and how to fighting, standing, raise your voice, coming out of the dark so that people can see us. (Interview 8)

One respondent did though express a different view on visibility and its importance for LGBT respect;

Some many LGBT people think that you have a duty to come out and it's just so wrong. I think that coming out is just the decision of each people. It can be very good for some people but for some other it could be very bad. So, it's very wrong to encourage people to make them think they have to come out to have their rights. (Interview 6)

Linked to the importance of visibility was the work of empowerment and strengthening of the community, expressed by six respondents\textsuperscript{13}. This was both about encouraging people to come out, and about increasing the respect of one another within the community. Four respondents\textsuperscript{14} indicated that this was included in the present work or that this was a difficult for the movement today. Two respondents\textsuperscript{15} expressed instead that strengthening of the movement had been important in earlier years, approximate in between 2007–2011 but not as much anymore, that the LGBT community previously was invisible, scattered and unorganised but that it today had grown to be visible, coherent and vibrant. These two respondents did at the same time say that the work of keeping the LGBT community together has been the hardest thing within their work;

In the beginning they disagreed with each other all the time, sometimes it was about to break down. And we needed to bring them together. (Interview 1)

5. Analysis of material

This chapter will present the analysis of the results found in empirical material as presented in chapter four. The analysis answers to the research question by answering to the instrumental questions of the analytic framework. First (5.1) the represented problem is uncovered in the terms of ‘common concern’ or ‘concern of the few’. From there (5.2.) the subjects constituted in

\textsuperscript{11} (1, 5)
\textsuperscript{12} (1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9)
\textsuperscript{13} (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 9).
\textsuperscript{14} (2, 3, 6, 9)
\textsuperscript{15} (1, 5)
the material is uncovered in terms of an ‘approving’ or ‘counteractive’ approach towards the state.

5.1. Problems represented
The researcher has uncovered problem representations both within the theme of ‘values’ and of ‘visibility’. The analysis considers these themes respectively in terms of ‘common concern’ or ‘concern of the few’ with the overall aim to understand the visible representation of disrespected LGBT rights as public/private.

5.1.1. Values – A common ‘concern’
The results showed that the values of love, equality, and joy were expressed as important for the success of the movement. In these expressions the values can be interpreted as of importance for all and as admirable qualities for all Vietnamese people or people in general. The ‘values’ are hereby interpreted as involving all people, which must be considered to be a larger number of individuals. This leads to an interpretation of disrespected LGBT rights as being represented as a problem of common ‘concern’. According to the understanding of the concept on ‘concern’, this would be the representation of a ‘public’ problem.

Five respondents expressed clearly that it was easier to reach out when using the language of ‘values’. These respondents shared no remarking characteristics in the sense of the table presented, whereby the values importance for reaching out, according to this material, can be considered general for the movement. The expressed will of reaching out by referring to these values, can be seen as a will of constructing the issue of disrespect of LGBT as an issue involving everyone, as a common ‘concern’ and a ‘public’ problem.

Since this study understands ‘private’ representations as enabling the recognition of LGBT rights, a ‘public’ representation cannot be considered to explain the increased respect for LGBT rights. A ‘public’ representation is, according to the comprehension of the theoretical concept in this study, to be understood as making the issue more *unable* to reach out, as it would be too contradictory towards the state. As a counterpublic the representation of the issue as a common ‘concern’ would not be understood as helpful for the movement to push the boundaries of its subaltern discourse into the discourse of the dominant public of the Communist Party.

The usage of values of love and equality in order to promote LGBT rights can be found in several nations’ LGBT movements. In the understanding of the public/private concept argued by radical feminism the ‘public’ problem representation of values would be seen as enabling recognition. It
might be that these values, in the representation of a common ‘concern’ and a ‘public’ problem in democratic societies, enables the issue of disrespected LGBT rights to reach out to the many in contexts where these values are the cherished by the many in a society. It is likely that the Vietnamese LGBT movement have developed their representation on values inspired by other movements using values before them. The usage of values is neither to be seen as an isolated Vietnamese feature nor should the Vietnamese LGBT movements’ ‘public’ representation of values be. The reason for why the Vietnamese LGBT movement can take on this ‘public’ representation and yet can be seen successful in an authoritarian context, might be because this representation reaches out to the public with values which the public cannot oppose, simply as they are general and perceived deeply positive. As a common ‘concern’, it could be that the values are actually not considered a concern at all. If the respect of these values is obvious, the problem is rather represented as not being a problem at all, a ‘non-problem’.

The two respondents whom expressed that it had become easier to talk explicitly about human rights were both based in HCMC, which would indicate that this was an experienced change delimited to this part of the country. The differences in representation between northern and southern regions of Vietnam could be considered natural due to the division between the regions historically in the light of the Vietnam War. If considering this history of importance for the contemporary political climate, it could be supposed easier for organisations based in Hanoi, rather than in HCMC, to discuss human rights explicitly. This as raising notice on human rights and its disrespected status closely connects to the critique towards the state – and in extension, the communist political order. It could be considered easier to utter such critique within a region that supported communism during the war, rather than in within one opposing it. Yet, the answers of these two respondents being based in HCMC, indicates that the political climate rather is less sensitive in this region than in Hanoi – at least in the terms of direct human rights denotations. It should though be stated that the empirical material of this study is too delimited to draw a conclusion on this note, since only three respondents from HCMC was included.

5.1.2. Visibility – A ‘concern’ of the few
The visibility of LGBT was in the material expressed to be crucial for the respect of LGBT rights. In these expressions the visibility was related to the LGBT individual to by him- or herself claim his or her rights. The ‘visibility’ can here be interpreted as representing the problem as one ‘concerning the few’, as is can be seen to be the concern of a smaller number of LGBT individuals. As such, the representation can be interpreted to be of a ‘private’ problem.
That one respondent expressed that coming out and standing up for your self for some people could be hurtful, and not always for the best, can instead be interpreted as a different representation of ‘visibility’. It can here be interpreted that the lack of LGBT visibility expressed as correlated to the widespread discrimination and stigmatization on non-normative sexual orientations and gender identities in the Vietnamese society, which keep LGBT people to not openly demonstrate their difference from the norm. This can be interpreted as a ‘public’ representation of visibility as the problem here would be a problem concerning a discriminating majority. This public representation could theoretically also have been expressed with references to the repressive rule, as this in similarity with normative gender and sexuality structures can be perceived to keep people from ‘raising their voices’. Yet, this was not seen in the material.

The ‘public’ representation was though only expressed by one respondent concluding it to be an invisible representation. The dominant, visible representation of ‘visibility’ can instead be interpreted as a ‘private’ problem, a ‘concern of the few’ LGBT individuals. This representation could be seen as enabling the recognition of LGBT rights as the disrespect of these rights here within not are being perceived as a problem that would involve the amount of people that could endanger the stability of the support for the CPV, state or political order. Furthermore, the ‘concern’ of the few could also be seen to enable recognition since the responsibility of the issue of disrespected LGBT right here within is laid on the LGBT individuals themselves, the issue is perceived to not threaten the state as the state is not asked for anything when the responsibility is situated elsewhere. The problem would be seen represented as ‘private’ why the state, which could be seen to control the ‘public’ issues, are not provoked to interfere. In either way, the ‘private’ problem of ‘visibility’ does not represent the disrespect of LGBT right to be of a threatening character. This could be seen to actually enable the movement to reach out to both the general public and the state politicians to alter the respect given to LGBT rights. As a counterpublic, the discourse of the LGBT movement would be understood to be expanded into the discourse of the dominant public of the CPV as increased respect for LGBT rights are taken place also outside the sphere of the counterpublic, that is, the LGBT community. The boundaries of the subaltern discourse if the LGBT movement would in this understanding be seen as of further reach.

5.2. Subjects constituted

The subjects that can be seen constituted in the above representations within ‘values’ and ‘visibility’ is in this section to be presented as interpreted by the researcher. The analysis reflects on the subjects constituted in terms of an ‘approving’ or ‘counteractive’ approach towards the state, again with the overall aim to understand the problem representation of disrespected LGBT rights as public/private. The subjects that are interpreted are the subjects of
the counterpublic, that is, the Vietnamese LGBT movement.

5.2.1. Values – Not a ‘counteractive’ approach
The material within the theme of ‘values’ showed on a difficulty for the respondents to work for increased respect of LGBT rights if not doing so with a humble attitude, both towards the general public and the state. This humble attitude can be interpreted to constitute subjects which are not enabled action of agitational contestation, as such is understood to be of the kind of more opposing struggling. As such, it would be that the subjects constituted are not enabled a ‘counteractive’ approach towards the state. This would indicate an instead ‘approving’ approach towards the state, and the agency enabled is thus to be understood as the agency of a ‘private’ problem representation.

It is at this point necessary to consider the context in which the approach towards the state is studied and analysed. In an authoritarian state marked by history of strict regulations on political freedom and civil liberties, the possibility for an individual to show on an approach of critique and scrutiny to the state should be recognised delimited. It might be that a plausible ‘counteractive’ approach not is considered an option for the movement, if these organisations know of the repression to face them in such case. It could also be that the interview situation did not enable a plausible ‘counteractive’ approach to be expressed, if the respondents were uncertain on the implications it could have for themselves or their organisations or if the interviewer’s questions were not formulated clearly enough concerning the relationship towards the state. Yet, the researcher’s overall impression of the material is that the expressions in the interviews was not of the movement being forced to a non-counteractive approach, but rather that this was the choice of the movement, in where they had the possibility to take on a different more counteractive approach if they so had wished for. But as said, concerning the repressive context, it is difficult to comprehend the actual possibilities of choosing an approach towards the state.

The subjects constituted within the theme of ‘values’ as a not ‘counteractive’ approach, could be seen as enabling the recognition of LGBT rights and the success of the movement. This since, the approach can be seen to signal that the movement does not wish to challenge, to threaten the monopoly of power of the CPV and that the work of the movement for increased respect of LGBT rights thereby can be accepted by the state power.

5.2.2. Visibility – An ‘approving’ approach
The material within the theme of ‘visibility’ showed on previous or present focus for the movement to empower and strengthen its community. This can be understood as the agency of the withdrawal and regroupment, where the subordinated group creates a space for themselves where it becomes possible
to “formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (Fraser 1990, 67). These oppositional interpretations are here understood to be formulated, but not necessarily directed towards wider publics.

This would indicate that the movement becomes a subject with an ‘approving’ approach towards the state. It is important to note that this do not say about weather the movement do or do not approve the state in any way, but simply that the agency enabled within the theme of ‘visibility’ is understood as an agency of withdrawal and regroupment, an agency of an ‘approving’ approach towards the state.

That some respondents stated that the empowerment of the movement had been important earlier, but that the movement then had moved on to convincing others outside of the community can be seen as the movement as a counterpublic have engaged in regroupment for developing and nourishing its own subaltern discourse whereby this discourse later on could be directed towards others publics. This could be interpreted as the agency is represented as first being of withdrawal but later on included the agency of contestation. This would in such case indicate on a later on ‘counteractive’ approach towards the state. One should here recognise that only two respondents expressed the work on empowerment in this way, and that is thereby should be seen as an invisible representation. They both respondents belonged to the first generation of the movement, which could indicate that they had a longer perspective and thereby could tell about the development of the movement in ways not possible for representatives with a less extensive perspective. Of the respondents expressing that the work on empowerment and strengthening still is important today, two of them belonged to the second and two of them to the first generation. Overall, this was the view given by the larger number of respondents and the ‘approving’ approach and ‘private’ representation should thereby be seen to be the dominant, visible one.

The subjects constituted within the theme of ‘visibility’ as an ‘approving’ approach, could so on also be seen as enabling the recognition of LGBT rights and the success of the movement as the withdrawal and re-groupment without contestation can be seen to not challenge or threaten the monopoly of power of the CPV.

5.3 Summary
At large, the analysis has uncovered the issue of disrespected LGBT rights as represented of both being of ‘common concern’ and of ‘concern of the few’. The subjects interpreted to be constituted contains an enabled agency of withdrawal and re-groupment but not of agitational contestation, meaning an ‘approving’ approach towards the state. The material within the theme of ‘values’ showed on a ‘public’ problem representation as the ‘concern’ was interpreted as common, but the agency
enabled within this problem was not of a public kind, not of the ‘counteractive’ approach and hence this problem representation is considered both ‘public’ and ‘private’. Within ‘visibility’, both the concern and the approach were in the understanding of a ‘private’ problem representation. Thereby, the overall problem representation and its enabled features found within the two themes are interpreted to foremost show on a ‘private’ rather than a ‘public’ problem representation. The material showed of few, if any, correlations between certain expressions and certain characteristics of the respondents as presented in the table, whereby the above representations are to be considered general for the movement.

6. Concluding reflections

This study has applied a revised version of the concept on public/private together with the two concepts on ‘concern’ and ‘dual character’ when uncovering the problem representation of disrespected LGBT rights as expressed by the Vietnamese LGBT movement. The analysis has shown of a representation of the issue as both of ‘concern’ of the few and the common, but that the issue has been represented with an approach towards the state that is not ‘counteractive’ but ‘approving’. This concludes in the understanding of a ‘private’ problem representation. Within radical feminism a ‘private’ representation is a demonstration of oppression as it undermines the respect given to the rights of the subordinated group of women. In this study the ‘private’ representation can instead be seen to enable the increased rights of the subordinated group of LGBT in Vietnam, making the issue into “a legitimate topic for public discussion” (Fraser 1990, 71). The ‘private’ representation can be seen to undermine the antagonized action from the authoritarian state towards the LGBT movement, enabling the movement to promote these rights and to grasp certain political space.

When the movement represents the issue with an ‘approving’ and not ‘counteractive’ approach, it can be seen to construct these rights, and the movement’s promoting of these rights, as legitimate in the way they are not seen to challenge the Communist Party of Vietnam and its monopoly of political power. Rather the opposite, the CPV could be considered advantaged by the movement as it is helped to act in ways in which it is likely to gain support from the general public where the support for LGBT equality have been growing stronger. In this understanding of the ‘private’ representation of disrespect of LGBT rights made by the movement, the movement can be understood as accepted certain influence, as being able to grasp certain political ground. That is, political ground within the ‘privately’ represented issue of disrespected LGBT rights. Such political ground can, in Bacchi’s terminology, be understood to be seen possible for the state to allow since it does not interfere with the maintenance of their political and ‘public’ dominant power and it can be understood to be seen desirable for the state to allow since the movement even might benefit the party as its support among the Vietnamese citizens might increase when LGBT rights reach higher recognition.
The material has within the concept on ‘concern’ shown on representations of both common ‘concern’ and ‘concern’ of the few, meaning the issue has been represented in both ‘public’ and ‘private’ terms. This dimension has therefore shown less ability to give an understanding on the relative success of the LGBT movement or on how the issue have been made legitimate for public discussion. On the other hand, one could argue that the concept on ‘concern’ can be seen as better suited for the material as it generated both possible outcomes. Nevertheless, the outcome concluded in difficulty, not to say impossibility, of interpreting the material as represented either ‘public’ or ‘private’. This can thus be seen as a shortcoming of this study as an applied theoretical concept turned out to enable understanding the empirical material, but not an unambiguous understanding in relation to the research question.

The ‘dual character’ did instead show on a stringent ‘private’ representation, which enabled a more definite understanding of the representation as such. Hence, the ‘approving’, not ‘counteractive’ approach is the more valuable finding of this study. But this approach does, on the other hand, raise questions if the application of the concept as such enabled the material to show on different results.

The approach also highlights the complexity of ‘clear-cut boundaries’ between the understandings of the state and the civil society, and the paradox that arises when these boundaries are softened within the context of authoritarian rule. Can a non-state actor reach political influence within an authoritarian one-party state? Should one understand the rule to then not be fully authoritarian or the actor to not be fully non-state? As noted on previous research this complexity is well known and it cannot be considered unfolded within this study. At most, another contemplation and additional empirical findings will be contributed.

The Vietnamese LGBT movement is by the many likely to be understood as a non-state actor, but has here been found to represent the issue of disrespected LGBT rights with an approach towards the state that is not counteractive, but approving. This approach could be argued likely to have helped enable the issue of disrespected LGBT rights into becoming a legitimate matter for public discussion and law making in Vietnam, and to have helped the LGBT movement to grasp some political ground. Even though the initiative of increased respect for LGBT rights have arisen from a non-state actor, it has been possible for the state to include this issue into its politics, without endanger their control over the political power. The Vietnamese state might consider the LGBT movement to be of non-state character, but certainly not as of anti-state character, and so certain political ground can be understood to be possible to be given the movement.
What does this say about the present situation for civil society activity in Vietnam? Essentially, that counteractive action from CSOs are allowed and can be successful – if represented with a non-counteractive, but approving, approach. This means that some civil society activity is accepted, but that such activity cannot be expressed in direct agitational contestation with the state, whereby the civil society activity must be seen as restricted, yet not fully so. The Vietnamese LGBT movement can, drawing from the analysis in this study, be interpreted as a successful movement which have altered the issue of LGBT into a topic for public discussion and law making – but, as the approach taken on by the movement does not oppose the monopoly of power of the CPV, the movement should not be seen to opening up towards a greater political transformation of democratization in Vietnam. In order words, one could understand that the success of the movement has been possible because of the movement’s approach that does not promote greater political transformation of democratization.

The movement could thus not – through its approach – be seen to influence or deepen a critical thinking towards the current politics, as such it not a part of its represented ‘approving’ approach. On the other hand, the success of the LGBT movement could be seen to – through its existence – alter the situation for civil society activity as it might inspire and encourage others to organise and to act collectively for political issues they find of interest. In Fraser’s terminology, if the ‘approving’ approach can be seen to have enabled the movement to push the boundaries of its subaltern discourse, the action of the movement is in fact counteractive towards the state. The discourse of the LGBT movement can thus be understood as of further reach, as being re-situated as natural in the dominant public of CVP. (Fraser 1990, 67) But, this discourse includes “only” the altered view on LGBT rights, not on human rights in a more general sense including the political rights which are to be understood maintained restricted. Thereby the situation for civil society activity can be seen different concerning ‘private’ issues, and approving approaches not not concerning ‘public’ matters and ‘counteractive’ approaches.

As noted briefly, it is indeed necessary to reflect on how well the applied theoretical concepts the in this study enables an understanding on the Vietnamese LGBT movement and its success, especially concerning the approach towards the state. Drawing from the discussion in the analysis (5.2.1) it might be that this study’s methods for understanding the approach towards the state actually are insufficient. As the study has found that civil society activity is more possible when with an ‘approving’ approach towards the state, the possibility for the respondents to even express another approach within the study must be seen as being delimited. The question of weather the movement has willingly taken on an approving approach or weather it is forced to do so, is a question that this study has difficulties to answer. To do so would take further and more extensive research, which would be considered of value for reaching better understanding on the movement and its success.
One way of gaining deepened understanding of Vietnamese LGBT movement’s approach towards the state could be to closer study the Vietnamese political culture and its traditions on respect and gratitude towards authorities such as the ruling power. The importance of Confucianism in the Vietnamese society, which can be understood to “offer strict rules between different social groups” (Dau 2012, 2) could be found of interest also concerning the political culture, as it has been within for example the gender relations and sexuality in Vietnam (see Rydström 2003, Dau 2012, Horton 2014). As Bacchi points out, to uncover problem representations should be done with a sincere contextual understanding (Bacchi 2008, 7) whereas increased understanding on Confucianism could be considered valuable.

The theoretical usage of Fraser in this study could be questioned, as her multiple publics should be seen situated in a discussion on the “actual existing democracy” of 1990, concerning the then concurrent liberal capitalist democracies (Fraser 1990, 56). Fraser does though, within this concept, aims at contributing to alternative models of democracy (ibid., 57). This highlights another issue, namely the one that many civil society and democratizations theories and concepts are being elaborated by Western theorists whereby then applied onto non-Western contexts (see Shigetomi & Makino 2009). This is so on a weakness of this study, as the researcher as being of Western origin has delimited knowledge about and furthermore applies Western concept to the Vietnamese context.

One should also recognise that the usage of dichotomies between public/private and within the two concepts of ‘concern’ and ‘dual character’, is the usage of quite harsh simplifications of an indeed complex reality. Last but not least, it should be recognised that only two of the in total five pre-formulated questions which Bacchi propose the researcher to ask towards the material have been applied. It is therefore possible that a different, or at least a more nuanced understanding of the representation would have been reached if using all five questions.

From these reflections, one could conclude that the study has given certain, yet limited, understanding about an uncovered ‘private’ problem representation on the issue of disrespected LGBT rights and on how the Vietnamese LGBT movement through an interpreted ‘approving’ approach have been able to grasp certain political ground.
Appendix 1.

Interview guide

1. **Background of the interview responder and organisation**
   - What is your position at the organisation?
   - How many people are connected to the organisation?
   - What is the main purpose of the organisation?

2. **Same-sex marriage law**
   - How did your organisation work with this issue?
   - What do you think made it possible?
   - For who is this law important?
   - How was it problematic?

3. **Transgender rights law**
   - How did your organisation work with this issue?
   - What do you think made it possible?
   - For who is this law important?
   - How was it problematic?

4. **Viet Pride**
   - How did your organisation work with events like Viet Pride?
   - What do you think made it possible?
   - For who is events like Viet Pride important?
   - How is it problematic?

5. **General acceptance**
   - Do you believe that the general acceptance for LGBT changed during the last years?
     If so, what do you think made it possible?
   - For who is the general acceptance for LGBT important?
   - How is it problematic?
   - If we imagine a dream scenario for LGBT rights in Vietnam, how would that look like according to you?
     Is it possible? Why/Why not?

6. **Closure**
   - Is there something else you wish to add?
References

Literature, articles and reports


Horton, Paul (2014). “‘I thought I was the only one’: the misrecognition of LGBT youth in contemporary Vietnam”. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*. 16(8): 960–973.


**Internet**


