

VALUES REFLECTED IN STYLE IN
A LESBIAN COMMUNITY IN BUDAPEST

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“We create a sense of identity by dressing or behaving after a particular fashion or style” (Finkelstein 1991, 1). A recent survey in Hungary found that 71% of respondents wanted to express something with their appearance, which was either their own personality or (for 26%) belonging to a certain (real or imaginary) community (Kende 2002, 73).¹ The identity expressed by style includes the acceptance or rejection of certain values and attitudes, especially in minority groups where members consider it extremely important to protect their shared value system. This paper introduces the style and values of such a community.

My study is based on research in a lesbian community formed around Labrisz Evenings. These monthly meetings started in the fall of 1997, on the initiative of a small activist group who were publishing a lesbian newsletter at the time under the title “Labrisz”. Labrisz Evenings were the first organized lesbian meetings in the country that attracted a high number of people (up to 50–60 on each occasion) from all over the country, from both activist and non-activist backgrounds. The first Hungarian lesbian organization, Labrisz, also grew out of this community. Labrisz Evenings are open to every woman, and are advertised in the Labrisz Newsletter, via the Meleg Háttér gay and lesbian telephone helpline, in the gay magazine *Mások* and on various gay and lesbian Internet sites. Due to their openness, some people come more and some less regularly. Therefore, we cannot speak of a close community; however, there is a sense of belonging, especially in the more regular visitors.

As the lesbian scene became more varied towards the turn of the millennium, the regular visitors of Labrisz Evenings started to come from a relatively similar background. They are mostly young, middle-class intellectuals, which might be due to the fact that the organizers and so the topics they choose represent this layer (e.g. lesbian rights over the world, esoteric knowledge, “what would you include in a women’s cultural centre?”). As the meetings take place in Budapest, it is understandable that fewer participants come from the countryside. Whereas in the first years

¹ A non-representative survey including 135 people.

there were no other women-only forums for lesbians to find friends and partners, later several parties were organized regularly and the first women's bar opened, not to speak of the numerous internet forums and home pages. Therefore, Labrisz Evenings became less a place to find relationships than an opportunity for discussion, and this also restricts the range of people visiting them.

I conducted anthropological research in this community from 1999 to 2002. Apart from participant observation and informal conversations, I conducted semi-structured, tape-recorded interviews with twenty-three women, and with ten of them I also conducted a second interview. The choice to make a second interview depended on several factors; I made a second interview when the first one was too short or did not touch upon some important issues, or when significant changes had taken place in the life of the interviewee since the first one (e.g. Gerda finished university and started working). The interviews lasted from half an hour to two and a half hours, most of them being around an hour and a half. The women I interviewed (whom I prefer to call "collaborators" rather than "informants" in order to reflect a less hierarchical relationship) shall be referred to by pseudonyms chosen by themselves.

The women I have interviewed all have (or had at the time of the interview) some ties to the Labrisz community. Only one of them, Anna, was over fifty, and two, Dia and Martin, under twenty; the rest of them were in their twenties (12) or thirties (8).² Eleven of them had college or university degrees, eight had secondary education, and the youngest, Martin, was still at high school.³ Six were university students, some of them on a post-graduate level or studying to get their second degree. Only three of my interviewees lived permanently outside Budapest, but two of them (Anna and Turquoise Flannel) close enough to Budapest to come here regularly.⁴ However, nine other women had left their native town or village (Gerda between the first and second interviews) to live in Budapest; most of them did so partly or wholly in order to participate in gay and/or lesbian life. Thirteen of my interviewees were members of a lesbian and/or gay and lesbian mixed organization at the time of the interviews, eleven of these (also) of Labrisz Association itself. This selection, though certainly not representative of the Hungarian lesbian scene, was quite representative of Labrisz Evenings at the time. Although the research

² As often several years elapsed between the two interviews with the same person, I shall not indicate exact ages.

³ One woman's educational background is unknown.

⁴ I have translated the "telling" names into English, but not the others.

was finished four years ago, I use the present tense in writing about it for simplicity's sake.

The focus of my research was the connection between lesbian style and identity. However, it soon became obvious that style also represents various community values. This paper, therefore, is the "side-product" of a larger research on style. Style is, according to the *Garland Encyclopedia of Lesbian Histories and Cultures*, a "mode of self-representation in which individuals embrace gestures, symbols, hairstyle and clothing to convey a particular sense of self. Individuals use elements of style to claim membership in lesbian communities. Collectively, lesbian style is a form of self-expression and resistance" (Stein 2000, 739).

The idea of style as self-expression is rather common in the lesbian community, and several of my collaborators feel that this is actually the only community where their "true self" can be shown. "What I enjoy among lesbians is that I don't have to make up any stories, I'm just Kinga and that's it" (Kinga), "[with heterosexuals] it's not such a deep friendship, you don't tell them this part of your life. Which is quite a big part, because—and you always have to pretend" (Kriszta). More commonly, however, the requirements of the community sometimes conflict with one's individual needs or views. The emphasis on sameness silences voices that would point out inner contradictions or exercise self-criticism, often accusing them of "giv[ing] ammunition to the enemy" (Bersani 1995, 53). Krieger (1983) describes the individual's attitude to the community as an inner conflict between the desire for being accepted as unique and the wish to be similar to others and stresses that in spite of all its benefits, community membership often constitutes a threat to personal boundaries and individuality. Some of my collaborators expressed such feelings, for different reasons. Nardis, a singer, feels excluded due to her feminine style:

What makes me a hot woman say for a guy, will not make me a hot woman for a certain kind of woman. . . . I'm not interesting, I'm not sexy, I'm not dunno what, I'm a woman who shows what she has and because of this I'm automatically not to be categorized into the hell-of-an-intellectual part of the movement.

I still feel that the gay community is not a home for me. I can't feel completely relaxed in it. I really enjoy frequenting parts of it, and I do get something from the gay community, but I wouldn't like to belong there (Nardis).

Nardis has another reason to feel excluded: she is one of the two self-confessed bisexuals I interviewed. Lesbian and gay communities often feel rather antagonistic to bisexuals. At best they assume that so-called bisexuals are either curious heterosexuals or homosexuals who do not

dare to come out as such (Takács 2002, 198). Others think that bisexuals cannot live without a partner of both sexes at the same time. Zoe, an attractive *femme*,⁵ gave a classic example of the confused ideas concerning bisexuality in the community. She stated that “deep down everyone is bisexual.” I told her I was relieved to hear this, as I had encountered a lot of prejudice against bisexuals. Zoe’s passionate answer was: “Yes, because I wouldn’t date a bisexual woman. Because they’re promiscuous, they’ll cheat on you and leave you for a guy.”

Another common criticism is that bisexuals do not experience so much discrimination. Nardis herself admits “if there’s real danger, I can always chicken out, back into my socially accepted category.” This in spite of the fact that she is openly out and would even walk the streets hand in hand with her girlfriend, a thing many “proud” lesbians dare not do. Stereotypes about bisexuals are deeply rooted, and although the community claims to welcome bisexuals, the idea that they are “not one of us” is present, often unconsciously. Ilona, a member of Labriz Association and self-professed feminist, faced this in her own life.

And then it was an incredibly great experience that my sister was a lesbian. And I was proper happy about this. And time was passing, and it turned out that she was bisexual. And then I was very disappointed. So it [biphobia] is in me, too. But I think it’s already something that you know you’ve said the wrong thing (Ilona).

The rejection of bisexuality may also originate from the second wave of feminism,⁶ which had a strong impact on the style and attitude of the Labriz community, even from a distance of over twenty years. The radical feminist movement of the 1970s considered lesbianism as essential to the challenge of patriarchy. “If you cannot find it in yourself to love another woman, and that includes physical love, how can you say you truly care about women’s liberation?” (Brown 1975, 70). At the time for many women feminism was the first step towards lesbianism. In the Labriz community this usually happens in the opposite direction: several of my collaborators became interested in feminism after coming out. In fact,

⁵ The classification of lesbians into *butch* (masculine) and *femme* (feminine) is not widespread in this community, but some individuals and couples are involved in role-playing. Although the interpretation of these roles is slightly different from their “classic” American content (e.g. most of my collaborators agreed that it does not coincide with sexual roles) and might vary among individuals, I shall use these terms, as my collaborators tend to use the English words themselves.

⁶ “Women who practice bisexuality today are simply leading highly privileged lives that do not challenge male power and that, in fact, undermine the feminist struggle” (Ulmschneider 1975, 88).

the founders of Labrisz Association were at the time mostly either active in the women's movement or interested in feminist theory and gender studies. This is reflected in the profile of the organization as well as its programs. Feminist issues have been in the focus of several Labrisz Evenings dealing with feminism itself, violence against women or politics. This brings up the question whether the values of this community come from "below" or are imposed by the organizers of the evenings. Talking about values, Judit, a core member of Labrisz who often moderates Labrisz Evenings, puts it the following way: "what are the community values which I have found important that we should transmit through Labrisz Evenings." Barbara, a university student and feminist, explains:

Well, I think it's simple kinda consciousness-raising, which doesn't do any harm to anyone, I think. And those who reject it very much either have bad experiences, [or] it must be based on false ideas, because there are quite a few people who give quite a bad image of feminism (Barbara).

In short, the assumption is that all lesbians are feminists, but some do not yet know. This idea might be reinforced by the fact that even women who do not claim to be feminists dress in a style approved by those with feminist principles: the majority of the people in this community prefer trousers to skirts and dresses, have short hair and avoid elements of style expected from "feminine" women in Hungary such as make-up, plastic nails or high heels. In some cases, the reason is clearly feminist: "I think there's this feminist politics in underwear, so like if you're a feminist, you don't wear this butt-cutting stuff, what do you call it, thongs or what the heck," says Judit. In her case, association with lesbian feminists during her stay in the USA changed her style enormously: "then I thought that I can't be a lesbian like this, and I let go of part of my femininity with this, so I kind of thought that you should be much more butch." Zsófi's androgynous style is influenced by her studies in gender and queer theory: "we could suppress a little this man/woman dimension into the background and express one's personality in another way." Often, however, behind "feminist" style one finds reasons that are not political.

Firstly, the image people have of "feminist attire" might be a stereotype. Many people think that feminists have always preferred trousers to skirts, but Wilson (1985, 240) points out that it is not so: in the 1960s, feminist style adopted the then fashionable long skirt-long hair combination. The symbolic meaning of wearing trousers is also ambiguous. While often celebrated as a symbol of emancipation, several authors disagree with this view, saying that as skirts have not entered men's (mainstream) fashion, women's trousers suggest progress on male terms, keeping the

masculine as the norm (Wilson 1985, 165). Short women's hair is also associated with emancipation: the flapper of the 1920s or the Second Wave of the Women's Movement. Popular imagination is again faulty here: the flapper's emancipation is questionable, as by abandoning confining underclothes she also became a more available sexual object for men (Wilson 1985, 106); 1960s feminists, on the other hand, wore long hair and long skirts, and therefore feminist style seems to follow the "naturalist" wave in the mainstream rather than be completely independent from it (Wilson 1985, 240). At the time of my study, in the Labrisz community there was strong pressure on people towards wearing trousers and cutting their hair (I myself heard the comment "once we'll cut your hair while you're asleep" several times). Only towards the end of this period did things start to change: "several girls have turned up who do not distort themselves" and "can accept themselves having nice long hair and being feminine," observed Zoe, who had previously been almost the only long-haired person in the community. The pressure is still strong, however: Judit, who has recently started growing her hair, sees it as symbolically breaking out from the role the subculture used to force on her.

Secondly, wearing trousers rather than skirts might represent a general tendency in society. Emma recalls the 1980s: "when I came to Hungary as an outside observer when I lived abroad, what I saw was that Hungarian girls wear skirts." She points out that within the Labrisz community, it is the older generation (in their 30s and above) who can be seen in skirts: "I'm not saying that everyone who's older, but that in that generation skirts might be more widespread." When asked about lesbian style, several of my collaborators mentioned elements like piercings or boots, adding that this might also signal of belonging to other subcultures.

The style women adopt in the Labrisz community might also be a consequence of the characteristics of lesbian space. It is again Emma who points out the background of casual style:

So the lesbians who are there, let's say, at the Labrisz [Evenings] or at the party or wherever, are mostly students. So they don't have to dress up nicely for the workplace. And if she only goes to party at Eklektika [a bar which organized women-only parties at the time], of course she won't dress up prettily. So where we meet in a lesbian environment, it very much focuses on partying and relaxing (Emma).

Emma's theory is reinforced by several women who said that they go to work in elegant clothes, but they change into "more lesbian" attire as soon as they leave their workplace. Formality is seen as constraining; the only exception is Vera, a businesswoman in her thirties, who admits that she likes to look elegant. Both she and the others are aware that she

differs from the majority of the community in this: talking about certain clothes, Emma sometimes commented that “they’re already this Vera-style.” For most women in the community, a division between work and free time is expressed by formal versus casual clothing. This contradicts Kalocsai’s theory that politically conscious lesbians regard Labrisz Evenings as part of the public sphere, and suggests that it is rather associated with the private sphere, and can be regarded as public only to the extent that all spheres of a lesbian’s life are politicized (Kalocsai 1999, 103).

Casual style also transmits the illusion of abolishing hierarchies which is part of the mythology of this community (as well as other feminist/lesbian ones) (Wilson 1985, 243). Some elements of lesbian style, such as suspender trousers or boots, are associated with the working-class, so the woman wearing them rebels against gender and class boundaries. My collaborators like to stress that Labrisz Evenings bring together women from different layers of society; we shall return to this emphasis on diversity later.

Lastly, many people do not see the avoidance of traditional femininity as a choice. “I couldn’t imagine myself as feminine. Say Dia, who has perhaps a bit of an inclination towards it. She can do it, I can’t,” says Martin, a teenage butch, who tellingly chose a male pseudonym. Other women, who do not identify themselves as butch, also claim that, for example, wearing a skirt is alien from their nature: “it wasn’t me, you see what I mean, you look into the mirror and see the skirt on you and it’s not you” (Dia). “[In a skirt] I look like a very clumsy drag queen,” says Stella, who gives an interesting argument to “prove” that masculine lesbians do not choose their style:

The twist in the thing is that the majority of lesbian women say that they prefer feminine women. And preferably heterosexual and feminine women. So it is downright disadvantageous for a lesbian to look masculine and dress in a macho way. She worsens her chances, almost. But she can’t help it (Stella).

Whereas masculinity is often seen as innate, femininity is considered a choice, and there is a rather negative attitude towards “traditionally feminine” women. “Then you kind of blend and don’t come out as a lesbian, and it’s easy to be a lesbian like this. And you see, then how much are you one at all?” Judit describes the attitude she has met in the USA. Stella goes even further and considers feminine women somewhat non-lesbian: “if somebody can stay feminine . . . because she can wear feminine clothes and stuff, what makes her a lesbian and how does she know she’s a lesbian?” She herself experienced implicit pressure to dress in

a more masculine way. She and her girlfriend, living in isolation in a small village, for some time wore “more feminine” clothes like skirts or scarves, but then met some women from the city who followed this “more masculine, extravagant style” and then “this seemed more authentic what they were doing, and we managed to quickly get out [of femininity].” As a consequence of this pressure, femmes are in a difficult position and they tend to remain “moderately feminine.” Zoe and Nardis both express disdain towards make-up or high heels, and Judit, who—as we have seen—gave up her more feminine style because of her (American) community’s expectation, is having a hard time coming out as a femme. True, she has grown her hair and at the time of our second interview was considering buying lacy underwear, but an outsider would not categorize her as a feminine woman; when she told her straight friend that she was attracted to butches, the friend’s answer was: “but they are not so much different from you.”

One reason for the rejection of femininity might be that feminine clothes are usually associated with heterosexuality or the pseudo-lesbianism of “lesbian shows” in striptease bars. Red Shawl, a feminist and Marlene Dietrich-fan, says about thongs: “for me that’s very heterosexual stuff, like it was invented for the sake of blokes.” It is a general assumption that women who follow the heterosexual norms in clothes are not really lesbian. When some such women turned up at a lesbian party, the community immediately dubbed them “tank-top girls” and their reaction was uniformly negative. Anna, my oldest collaborator and a feminist for over a decade, says: “I can’t imagine that they’re lesbians. I repeat, I can imagine that for the sake of men they lay together, the two of them start so that men would take pleasure in it, but I can’t imagine, their whole appearance.” Judit, relating the discussion about these women, concludes: “what came down from it is that these girls are not feminists, not even really lesbians, who are they?” Even Zoe, herself a *femme*, thinks that these women are “rather bisexual.” Barbara thinks these women are “very close to those girls who at a busy trendy night club get on the stage, two of them, also in these tank tops, and they start kissing and smooching, but in fact the whole thing has nothing to do with their sexual belonging. Rather the opposite.”

Barbara also criticizes the sexual openness and promiscuity of these women: “during the evening I can see them pushing with each other in various configurations. I can’t even follow who’s with whom.” Sexuality in general is downplayed in the community, and it is assumed to have a secondary role in lesbian relationships. Anna is shocked at pictures of half-naked women at an Internet lesbian website, and she finds them

a proof of “how much they don’t have any information about gayness and all; that is, they show the same stereotype, that gayness is about sex. And that this is what lesbian women need, too.” Conscious activists try to break down the stereotype that homosexuality is only about sex. With this, however, they deny tendencies that do exist in the community. After Zoe went to a Labrisz Evening in a miniskirt, she decided never to do it again, because “it was worse than going to some men’s bar in a skirt . . . and then I said that it had been a very stupid idea.” Nardis has similar experiences at lesbian parties. Macho, a transvestite butch, had a traditionally feminine woman tattooed on her breast. It seems that several lesbians have adopted the “male gaze,” this way turning *femmes* and feminine women into sex objects, which might have added to the general negative attitude towards them.

As opposed to “femininity,” masculine style is highly valued in the community, although very few of my collaborators identify as *butch*. Several people mentioned that they would like to wear less feminine clothes, and butches are respected, not the least because they are considered to be the most “out” in public spaces, and thus they experience more homophobia than others: “I think they have courage” (Stella), “what one gets from the straight world if one’s so butch is really tough” (Judith). At the same time, some of my collaborators still feel uncomfortable about butches, either because they consider butch/femme relationships hierarchical (Anna) or because they associate butchness with masculine characteristics and aggressiveness: “I’d probably think she’ll give me a few clips round the ear at home” (Red Shawl). Others dislike the fact that for the broader society the butch has become the stereotypical lesbian. “The relation of any stigmatized group to the figure that functions as its symbol and stereotype is necessarily ambiguous” (Newton 1984, 560), and this is especially true for a group that has been almost completely invisible until recently. When Labrisz Association had to be represented at a public event, someone suggested that the representative should not be bald so as not to reinforce the stereotypes.

Baldness is seen as a symbol not only of butchness but also of being out: people in this community assume that a bald woman is immediately “read” both by gay and straight observers as a lesbian “it’s like shouting everywhere that I’m queer” (Anna). Therefore, shaving their hair—although almost everyone says she would like to do it—remains a distant plan for most: Hella, a hairdresser in her 30s, thinks she might do it at a time when she does not have to go to work or meet many people. Worries about losing one’s job because of baldness may be well-founded: Gerda, a secondary school teacher, was given a choice either to grow her hair



at least two centimetres or leave the job. She chose the latter, because “I’m not the type who would look into the mirror afterwards for years thinking ‘uh-huh, this wasn’t my doing.’” This explains why, although bald women are admired in the community, not many people dare to take this radical step.

When Anna—after long consideration—shaved her head, she bought a wig which resembles her previous haircut to put on when she does not feel like exposing her baldness. Thus, unlike Gerda, she has left herself a way back into the closet. “And it’s the same as with symbols, that I can always decide when to wear what.” Symbols expressing one’s lesbianism (pink triangles, labrys axes, the rainbow flag or the double female astrological sign) are popular in the community: several women—including Anna and Kinga—collect them, and after a visit abroad, Red Shawl distributed a large number of gay buttons at a Labrisz Evening. However, these symbols are usually only worn at gay and lesbian events, if at all. Turquoise Flannel, who lives in a village, carries her gay buttons around in her pocket for reassurance, but never puts them on. Kinga usually hides her labrys under her clothes and only takes it out at the Labrisz Evening, even though experience shows that this symbol is not well-known to outsiders. She also keeps her rainbow-coloured objects in her home, just like Nardis, who never wears her pride T-shirt in the street. Zoe realized her own limits in wearing an earring in the shape of the double female sign, when in the street she accidentally met her mother, who does not know she is a lesbian.

And I tore it [the earring] from my ear in a panic and so it broke. And then I thought I wouldn’t buy another one, because the point would be exactly that I shouldn’t have to tear it from my ear, but once I have made up my mind to put it there, then I shouldn’t have to take it out. Or if I can’t wear it all the time, why should I wear it (Zoe)?

The few people—such as Judit or Anna—who openly wear lesbian symbols are admired, but the majority of people prefer not to look identifiably lesbian in the street. Judith Schuyf’s study categorizes the followers of this style “ordinary people” because they want to show that homosexuals are not basically different from heterosexuals (Schuyf 1992, 60–61). This is similar to Eszter’s motivation: “I’m a human being whose every moment and every word is determined by the fact that I see certain things differently, but they should also see that I’m simply and naturally a human being, we have a lot in common.” Dia thinks that “people don’t really have anything to do with it [her lesbianism], except if they’re like that, too.” For others, however, the reason for not wearing conspicuously lesbian symbols is fear of being “read” as lesbians: “[i]t might be para-



noia, but I assume everyone, a lot of people would know what they mean, and they would then say, oh my god, she's queer, they'd know immediately" (Kriszta). They prefer ambiguous symbols like the pinkie ring: "I used to have one, and I dared to wear it exactly because it was fashionable then" (Vera). Although being out is valued in the community and closeted people even get harsh criticism, most people limit coming out to their immediate environment.

Pinkie rings and GLBT symbols all come from the West. The perception of the "West" among GLBT people in Hungary is that of an ideal place where the life of homosexuals is much better. Judit Takács quotes a study from 1983 in which over 60% of the gay respondents had considered leaving the country (Takács 2002, 180). Although the institutions of gay/lesbian life in Hungary have developed a lot since, the attitude is not lost. When I asked Emma where those lesbians were that she mentioned as looking "extremely" butch, she answered: "they moved to Germany." Judit thinks that what we can call "lesbian style" in Hungary is in fact "impressions of Western lesbian magazines." People usually think that Western lesbians express their identity much more with their appearance but also have a "more uniform" look. The latter is often criticized, though: after a meeting where there were two foreign lesbians, Gerda rather negatively commented: "have you observed, they both had this typical lesbian-image, leather trousers and all." The Hungarian community is seen as more diverse.

When the leading figures of Labrisz are asked about community values, they always emphasize diversity: "[w]ith a lot of people there the only thing that connects us is lesbianism, but it has the interesting consequence that otherwise I would never meet such people, because I move in a different environment" (Zsófi). We have seen, however, that diversity is only tolerated within certain limits, and does not apply for certain groups like "tank-top girls," towards whom even politically correct women have strong prejudices. Also, people respected in the community are not rejected for things other women would be. "Some people don't get scorned off whatever they wear, and some people will always get scorned off, no matter how they try," Emma observes. Red Shawl's following story is a perfect illustration for how leaders of the community may be forgiven for wearing "the wrong" style.

When she [Judit] returned to the community, I didn't even recognize her, because—partly she'd lost so much weight that I didn't recognize her face even, and she had real short hair and she was in this light dress, but what floored me was her shoes. Because she'd put on a, well, I had such plastic sandals when I was a kid. A plastic thing with bars, a sandal with bars all over. And pink! Pink! And then I was staring like who's this



woman at all, and how on earth can she put on such sandals? And then it turned out that it was Judit, and I quickly revised my views: if she puts them on, everything is all right (Red Shawl).

CONCLUSION

We can conclude that community values and their manifestations in style are often contradictory. Although coming out is seen as a value, not many people put it into practice on the level of dressing. Despite the strong emphasis on acceptance and diversity, people differing too much from the norm experience strong community pressure to become less extravagant. Consequently, only highly respected members or people less attached to the community dare to deviate from the norm. "If I'd been a stranger and I'd come in, I'd have said that there were thirty identical women," Emma recalls a Labrisz Evening. Newcomers either adapt or seek another community.

What could be the future for such a community? As the research finished four years ago, we are in the rare position to answer this question. In the past four years the number of virtual and real lesbian spaces in Budapest has grown, and this has brought a variation into the lesbian scene. Lesbians have become more visible and generally more tolerated in Hungarian society, and this might have played a part in several of my collaborators becoming more out. More access to Western models, not the least due to a cable television showing "The L word," has led to a wider acceptance of feminine style. At the same time, the number of women frequenting Labrisz Evenings has fallen dramatically to 10–15 or even fewer a night. The old regulars have mostly disappeared, including many Labrisz Association members. One reason might be that until recently the evenings took place at a new site, where there was no possibility for socializing outside the discussion, and this has downplayed the community-building function of the evenings. At the same time, the ideologically based group norms could also have played a part: a couple who are against lesbian parenting decided not to come again after they got severely scorned because of their views. Is it still possible to speak about the Labrisz community in the present tense? A challenging question, but this should be the topic of a new research.



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