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**the matter of right-wing populism in
Polish LGBT-free zones;**

towards a with–standing xenourbanism?

EKA **Urban Studies**

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Abstract

Almost a third of Poland had been declared an 'LGBT-free zone' in 2020, stigmatizing the LGBTIQP+ community as a threat to Polish identity; this labeling remains a reality for many Polish towns. In this thesis, I am turning towards the concept of the 'LGBT-free zones' as a case to investigate the material reality of right-wing populism. I seek to develop a third position to a historical or new materialist understanding in order to investigate such material reality. By that, the ways values find physical expression and thus possibly mobilize oppressive attitudes into ever new futures ahead are traced. It becomes quite evident that the way structures of oppression are advanced and maintained within the public realm exists quite dominantly in everyday narratives. In a bottom-up manner, right-wing populism is advanced on the street; yet, it is by far not perceived by everyone. This marks the entry point for sketching out a possible approach to how the discipline of urbanism could position itself in social struggles. Drawing on Helen Hester's Xenofeminism, the thesis introduces the concept of xenourbanism describing urbanism based on the conceptual notion of solidarity without sameness. I argue that the notion of xeno- as a prefix attached to urbanism focuses on an inherent transformational potential within the current, rendering a perceived unarming reality into a weapon of contestation and by that suggesting trajectories away from paralyzing no-alternative narratives.

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I am a white, middle-european, heterosexual, young woman as parts of my identity. I acknowledge to be vested with built-in, rebounding privileges. Some of them I may be more aware of than others. Some of them I might like to make use of. Still, there are things that concern and affect me, that I feel deep grief about even though they are not present in my individual experience. Things I care about, but not dare to touch upon for the fear of having my words misunderstood. It is my otherness to you, not your otherness to me, that makes me feel diffidence. It is how I feel to lack insight towards you, how I feel I cannot put myself in your position, I should not put myself in your position. That I have no right to do so. I have no right to comment on your reality. I strike with awe. It is shy silence I employ to shield you, to shield me. My muted words draw the face of my own fears – fear of disrespect, fear of iniquity, fear of disapproval. All fears that rob ourselves of ourselves and each other.

(written for the work "inscribed into me as of forcibly engraved into wood", 2021)

It is how you land

> "This is the story of a man who falls from a fifty-floor building. As he falls, he repeats to constantly reassure himself: 'So far so good. .. So far so good. .. So far so good.' How you fall doesn't matter. It is how you land."[1]
> [free translated from the original in French]

Originally from Mathieu Kassovitz' movie 'La Haine', this quote can be found cited in many different contexts today. While it insists that things may be ok now, yet that does not mean that they will be in a few moments; there is always the harsh pavement waiting, no matter how many floors to still count on the way down. This saying appears to be optimistic as well as pessimistic at once: optimistic in the sense that it concentrates on the 'not yet lost', it directs confidence towards the persistent. Nonetheless, it conveys the pessimistic attitude that everything will be eventually gone. The story I am concerned with does not apply to precisely one single man, falling from a building – it rather portrays a whole society in free fall, a simmering mass of incidents that is merely waiting to boil over.

In 2020, one third of Poland's territory had been marked as LGBT-free zones. The respondent local governments had adopted resolutions against what is named to be a "LGBT-ideology" as a climax of a progressively increasing homophobic and racist discourse fueled by the governing party PiS[2] (Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, Law and Justice). The anti-LGBT[3] sentiment gathered pace after Warsaw's mayor Rafał Trzaskowski, member of the largest opposition party PO (Platforma Obywatelska, Civic Platform), signed an "LGBT+ Charter" in March 2019 securing protection for more vulnerable societal groups.[4] Since this triggering happening, public debate became increasingly heated, and Poland today appears to be polarized. At the sharp end of this is as already indicated, the ruling party PiS, which currently constitutes the government and holds the majority in the Parliament, together with the Catholic Church. Both these stakeholders make their position explicit. For instance the current President Andrzej Duda said at an election campaign in 2020: "They try to convince us that they are people, but this is just an ideology.", claiming that LGBT-ideology is worse than communism.[5] Or the Archbishop of Krakow Marek Jędraszewski asserted at a Sermon in 2019: "Our land is no longer affected by the red plague, which does not mean that there is no new one that

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1   *La Haine*, directed by Mathieu Kassovitz (1995, Paris: Canal+), 0:00:47.
2   *I will use the short form 'PiS' throughout the thesis when referring to the Polish 'Party Prawo i Sprawiedliwość'.*
3   *Within Poland the term LGBT is mainly used when referring to sexual identities other than heterosexual orientations. It is used by political representatives as well as by people who identify along one of the including identifications. While the umbrella term nowadays consists of extensions such as LGBTIQP+ to also recognize for instance intersex, asexual, or pansexual orientations, I will adopt the short form of LGBT within the frame of this thesis as it is widely used like this within Poland; however whenever not cited I will add a plus to indicate the wider extensions of the term.*
4   Claudia Ciobanu, „A Third of Poland Declared 'LGBT-Free Zone," *Balkan Insight*, 25th February 2020, https://balkaninsight.com/2020/02/25/a-third-of-poland-declared-lgbt-free-zone/ (accessed 5th Feb 2022).
5   Shaun Walker, "Polish president issues campaign pledge to fight 'LGBT ideology'," *The Guardian*, 12th June 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jun/12/polish-president-issues-campaign-pledge-to-fight-lgbt-ideology (accessed 18th Dec 2021).

wants to control our souls, hearts and minds". The new plague is "not Marxist, Bolshevik, but born of the same spirit, neo-Marxist. Not red, but rainbow."[6]
By far, this is not only a tendency feasible within the Polish context. The celebration of masculinity, racial supremacy, nationalism, and a disaffirmation of sexual minorities, people of color, or refugees is shared by many around the globe.[7] Due to a growing rejection of politics as usual, a systemwide crisis has found political expression, one that Nancy Fraser calls a "crisis of hegemony".[8] What facilitates these unprecedented developments? This thesis focuses on the material reality of right-wing populism to explore how values reproduce through physical space.

In Poland's case, a number of Voivodeships, which equals a region or a county, resigned from the first declared "LGBT-free zone" status while under threat of loss from EU funding. Still, the persistence of the oppressive discourse around LGBT+ rights and their spatial formulation into LGBT-free zones remains vivid. The fall off the building may have stagnated a bit in recent times, however, the pathway next to the building is still paved and the asphalt looks rather hard.

[9]*I think it increased *especially aaaah since like 2018 19 I think when   actually when they were starting to do the zones* and_   there was also this fucking :oh my god: in Białystok
the city that you want to go there was a first :gay pride: in 2019 and it was like just like a riot   it was horrible   I went there and I   I don't know   I just   I think I spent maybe 10 minutes at this pride and I just went back to this place that was safe because it was so_ scary there were like people yeah people were throwing stuff_ aaahm people got beaten   I don't know   it was just like a fucking war.
--- - Julia*

6   Marcin Goclowski and Anna Wlodarczak-Semczuk, "Liberals dear unrest as Poland Catholic Church doubles down in anti-gay rhetoric," *Reuters*, 2nd August 2019, https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-poland-lgbt-bishop-idUKKCN1US1EZ (accessed 7th Feb 2022).
7   Nina Power, „Negative Internationalism and Shame as Strategy," *Para-Platforms: On the Spatial Politics of Right-Wing Populism,* ed. by Marlus Miessen and Zoë Ritts (SternbergPress, 2018), 155pp.
8   Nancy Fraser, *The old is dying and the new cannot be born: From progressive neoliberalism to Trump and beyond* (Verso Books, 2019), 9.
9   *Many different voices make this thesis. Throughout the text there will be literal quotes like this one, taking part in the discussion. They stem from the fieldwork and belong to different people that I have met as respondents.*

Also the same year   in Lublin   aah   yeah I think there was also the first gay pride and   it's not really ah I think people did not discuss it for some reason but   ah the police has stopped a couple that has come there with a _bomb_ and people just   *ignored it somehow in media it wasn't aaah   ahem yeah it wasn't like this kind of breaking news but people came with a _bomb_ :like people like parents of a child: they came to this parade they wanted to   make an explosion but   they were *stopped and it was kind of   I don't know   there was a time where this kind if things weren't even shocking to people, because there was so much shit going on, so much homophobia that aah yeah people coming with a bomb to a gay pride were kind of not a shock to anyone.*
––– – Julia

With this thesis, I am turning toward the material reality of right-wing populism as well as engaging into a discussion about the role of the discipline of urbanism in public spheres which are coined by oppression. It acts on the premise that societal values and their political embeddedness as an immaterial dimension at once materialize in public space. I argue that right populistic values not only exist in concepts and words but that they exist as well in spatial configurations. Hence, this constitutes a fused character of hegemonic values with what forms the material worlds we live within.
This investigation is grounded in the case of Poland and the existing LGBT-free

zones, introduced by local governments in 2019. The chapter *Poland as LGBT-free* presents a zoom in on Poland's political landscape and how the instrumentalization of political homophobia led to the 'LGBT-free zones', which shortly after their appearance have been renamed the 'Charter of the Rights for the Family'. This presents a narrative shift from an anti-sentiment to a pro-attitude. Both these declarations first and foremost work as a discursive construct that poses a moral framework for Polish citizens. What these declarations really mean spatially, apart from a moral expression, is difficult to uncover.

The way certain values manifest and pertain into new futures ahead is viewed through the theoretical lens of hegemony, formulated by Antonio Gramsci in his famous Prison Notebooks in the first half of the 20th century.[10] Coupled with an elaboration on tools employed by populist politics, the chapter *Populism and Power* works towards developing an understanding of how articulated values materialize. Subsumed in what Mahmoud Keshavarz proposes to term Material Articulations, which views politics as getting materialized through spatial disciplines.[11] This highlights the transgression of a material and immaterial opposition, as values that manifest in the system of thought not only produce knowledge but matter as well. The following chapter *Matter and Manner* takes a brief tour through the history of theories on materialism, which serves the development of a material understanding for the thesis. The discussion is by far not thorough and all-encompassing, however, it aims to unpack the manner in which matter can be understood as situated within social contexts. Here I strive to develop a third position to a historical materialist and a new materialist understanding. Matter as such poses the primary material for the practical research that is part of this thesis. Thus, stemming from the discussion on materialism, the material assessed as evidence; the matter of facts; constitutes the object that is explored in order to investigate the spatiality of oppression.

Nevertheless, the thesis strongly turns to lived realities, incorporating the voices of people met as respondents during the fieldwork in Poland as a crucial extension of the methodological approach, conceptualized as 'speaking with another's voice'. Tying in with elaborations on contemporary Poland the Chapter *from the streets* draws out the experiences made and heard during the research in Poland. Many different voices make this thesis and help to consolidate the theoretical underpinnings together with practical research to an interpretation of materialized structures of oppression. What stands out is that the material reality of right-wing populism in the Polish context is coined by everyday narratives and advanced as a kind of bottom-up oppression in the public realm. Matter is employed as a surface upon which effects of power are imposed. It carries, reproduces, and emits an oppressive ambiance into its environment. This ambiance, however, is

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10   Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks Volume 2*, Vol. 2 (Columbia University Press, 2011).
11   Mahmoud Keshavarz, "Sketch out a Theory of Design Politics," *Para-Platforms: On the Spatial Politics of Right-Wing Populism*, ed. by Marlus Miessen and Zoë Ritts (SternbergPress, 2018), 12.

not perceived as similar or perceived even at all by everyone. This gives reason to enter sketching out possible ways forward. In the chapter *xeno- to the urban* I intend to trigger a rethinking of the position of urbanism as a discipline in oppressive environments. I claim that the LGBT-free zones in Poland are not the end, but they insist on a transformation that everyone who takes a stance against oppression of minorities needs to make individually. Oppression is hence rendered as not only a depressing unarming reality but a potential for contestation and emancipation. For this endeavor, I propose a xeno-way of being, to move toward solidarity without sameness as a central claim of what I term xenourbanism. This implies a struggling out of the existing instead of an abolishing from the outset, as well as an appropriation of such struggles for one's own cause. It is by far not a complete formulation of a theoretical assessment of a possible xenourbanism; rather a dive into sketching out first conditions for thinking the urban along the notion of xeno-.

This at once points to the limitation of this thesis. The approaches discussed are very closely emanating from political discourse on heteronormativity and as well, must be viewed and situated within the Polish context, as this constitutes the main milieu assessed. It is also limited in defining distinct evidence that is evaluated. I imagine that there can be many more fertile conclusions made when shifting the focus to other kinds of material understandings. However, and here I see a research gap that I seek to approach, the LGBT-free zones in Poland appear to be widely discussed as a political tool[12], but their spatial contestation falls short. This might be explained by their inexistent legal incorporation; yet, viewing a political tool such as the LGBT-free zones in Poland as detached from the lived realities in public spaces poses a risk of dismissing the wider implications of oppression they are stemming from. Hence, I aim to not only draw attention to but as well think about possible strategies how to combat such currents. Within the following text, I am doing this from the perspective of urbanism, because I believe it offers a realm to attend to topics of oppression as it is positioned at the intersection of space and society. Just as well, the scope of the theoretical elaborations of xenourbanism reaches as far as being tangent to first thoughts. This is not a theory of xenourbanism, it is a start into giving voice and defining space through what's mute. This thesis is about ways of becoming visible; it is about how we can be visible to each other as well as to ourselves, and how we can become allies without needing to be the same.

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One more crucial limitation poses my own subject positionality within the text. I am writing this thesis from my subject position, which I do not want to and much more cannot deny. *I am a white, middle-european, heterosexual, young*

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12   *See for instance* Piotr Żuk, Przemysław Pluciński, and Paweł Żuk. "The Dialectic of Neoliberal Exploitation and Cultural-Sexual Exclusion: From Special Economic Zones to LGBT-Free Zones in Poland." *Antipode* 53, no. 5 (2021): 1571-1595. Or Korolczuk, Elżbieta. "Poland's LGBT-Free Zones and Global Anti-Gender Campaigns." *ZOiS Spotlight* 14 (2020). Or various contributions of Agnieszka Graff.

woman as parts of my identity. However, I am not writing about myself, but I am aiming to write from a "subject position that is located in between identification and counter-identification".[13] This means that there are certain attributes shared while simultaneously these same attributes pose a difference. Same applies to the voices that make this thesis with me. I don't want us all to be the same, I don't want to start from and end at a place of "only one identity-political category"[14] because our "diversity will always be excluded by the unifying signifier".[15] I want to disidentify with the comfort of heteronormativity; and I want to facilitate a cross-cutting positionality. I aim to give voice to the muted to produce negotiation of difference by disidentifying[16]. Because maintaining silence *robs ourselves of ourselves and each other.*

13   Nina Lykke, "2 Passionate Disidentification as an Intersectional Writing Strategy," *Writing Academic Texts Differently*, ed. Nina Lykke (Routledge, 2014), 31.
14   Lykke, "Passionate Disidentification," 30.
15   Ibid., 33.
16   Ibid., 34.

2   Poland as LGBT-free

Poland's political landscape and the 'LGBT-free zones'
As already reported, in 2020 almost one hundred Polish municipalities had declared themselves free of LGBT-ideology, this corresponded to one-third of Poland's total territory or the size of Hungary.[17] The declarations were issued by the respective local governments as a non-binding resolution – they pose an ideological framework without legal incorporation.

If you have that frame about LGBT-free zone the mmh the city government, city council said that LGBT person cannot do *so many things, especially in the education of the youngest. Because :this is a, this is a: free zone so there shouldn't be any topic about that. We are in a country that if you don't speak about a problem, the problem is not existing.
––– – Ida

Echoed by the Church, government-friendly media, and Polish nationalist groups, the ruling party PiS drew an image of the LGBT+ community as a foreign threat wanting to undermine Polish identity.[18] The stirred antipathy towards the LGBT+ community was eventually formulated into a zone, which is defined as "an area, esp. one that has different characteristics from the ones around"[19]. Due to the global unprecedented existence of the LGBT-free zones in Poland and their nowadays slight decreasing amount as a consequence of strong resistance from international and national activists, human rights watchers, but most effectively the European Union, leading to a jacked appearance within Poland, the definition of a zone is applicable. However, it remains in question how far these beliefs are spread in reality and if these sentiments may be carried as well by areas that have not declared themselves as LGBT-free. Secondly, what is also up for discussion is how strongly Polish politics respond to sentiments that the Polish society carries with the creation of these zones, or up to which extent they constitute a cynical tool to win elections by identifying an enemy.

The current situation can be viewed on the Atlas nienawiści[20], in English the Atlas of Hate, an interactive online map that follows the developments of the LGBT-free zones. Polish LGBT+ activists founded the Atlas in 2019 with the aim to summarize the situation and by that alert public opinion about the gravity of the situation. It

17   Ciobanu, „A Third of Poland Declared 'LGBT-Free Zone".
18   Rick Noack, "Polish towns advocate 'LGBT-free' zones while the ruling party cheers them on," *Washington Post*, 21st July 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/polands-right-wing-ruling-party-has-found-a-new-targetlgbt-ideology/2019/07/19/775f25c6-a4ad-11e9-a767-d7ab84aef3e9_story.html (accessed 13th Feb 2022).
19   Cambridge Dictionary, "zone," https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/zone (accessed 13th Feb 2022).
20   Jakubowi Gawronowi, Paulinie Pająka nd Pawłowi Prenecie, "Atlas nienawiści (Atlas of Hate)," https://atlasnienawisci.pl (accessed 15th Feb 2022).

shows the areas which have adopted implied resolutions in red, areas with strong lobbying activities for declarations in yellow, and ones that have rejected them in green. The zones are present on different governmental levels; voivodeships, counties, or municipalities; which also can be tracked on the Atlas of Hate.[21] Thus, the zones in the Polish context can be understood as spatial dimensions as they are tied to region, city, or town boundaries. However, their physical consequences appear to be not obvious: their prime physical existence is the declaration paper itself. Apart from that, the LGBT-free zones are predominantly formulated as an ideological frame. This means that they are not restricting sexual orientations apart from heterosexuality, since they are not legally incorporated, but they operate by setting out a moral framework.

For instance, in the "resolution against 'LGBT ideology'" of the county Lublin enacted on the 31st of May 2019 it is written that the county will not allow being imposed by "exaggerated problems and artificial conflicts" coming along the "LGBT ideology" and for that reason, they will not incorporate the standards for sexual education from the WHO and will not allow administrative pressure of what they call homopropaganda.[22] As another example the Rycki county states on the 30th of April 2019 a "resolution against 'LGBT ideology'": "In connection with aggressive homosexual propaganda, promoted and conducted as part of an ideological war by left-liberal political circles and 'LGBT' organizations, threatening our fundamental principles and values of social life" the county is adopting the declaration as a means to defend children, families, the Polish identity, and Christian morality. Therefore, they position themselves against education on homosexuality in schools, against "homoterror" in professional environments, or against associating methods of anti-discrimination with freedom.[23] The defense of children acts as a most dominantly mobilized reason for adopting the declaration. This leads to the assumption that the declarations could be perceived as a means of resistance and self-defense from the side of the political representatives. On another note, it becomes apparent that they traffic with feelings of fear. They hence operate primarily not as a spatial construct but much more as a mental and ideological one. However, this also discharges in the public realm, which I will address in more detail in the chapter *from the streets*.

It is to note, that there has more recently been another declaration in the form of the 'Charter of the Rights for the Family' – I will come to this in the following. The Atlas of Hate continues to be updated and shows both areas that declared themselves as LGBT-free as well as have adopted the Charter in red. This is, as one of the Atlas' founding members Jakub whom I interviewed explains, because even though employing different wording, their inherent values are the same. I want to point out that I will conform to this handling in the following.

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21   Let's Go By Talking, "LGBTQ activists have developed the Atlas of Hate in Poland," https://www. letsgobytalking.eu/lgbtq-activists-have-developed-the-atlas-of-hate-in-poland (accessed 23th Feb 2022).

22   Declaration of Lublin, Online PDF: https://splublin.bip.lubelskie.pl/upload/pliki/0Stanowisko_LGBT. pdf (accessed 8th Mar 2022) [translated from Polish]

23   Declaration of Rycki, Online PDF: https://spryki.bip.lubelskie.pl/upload/pliki//uchwala_x_40_19.pdf (accessed 8th Mar 2022) [translated from Polish]

What is clearly visible is a tight correlation between the emergence of the LGBT-free zones and the PiS-favored areas. As the Atlas of Hate shows, most of the still valid declared zones are located in the southeast of Poland. Looking at the presidential election results from 2019[24], today's zone-areas are almost identical to the ones where PiS got the majority of their votes. And this is no accident: the party was founded in 2001 by the twins Lech and Jarosław Kaczyński as a Christian democratic, centrist party and slowly developed into a right-wing one over the years.[25] This process was activated predominantly by Lech Kaczyński, who served as Poland's president from 2005 until he died in a plane crash in 2010. One of his main advisors was the Polish philosopher Marek Cichocki, who shares a great interest in conservative politics and therefore translated the writings of the Nazi Party's theorist Carl Schmitt into Polish.[26] It seems that the party's ideology is well informed by right-populistic grasps. Regarding the LGBT-free zones, there is a strong interconnectedness between the rise of the party and the usage of an anti-gender campaign in Poland. Graff and Korolczuk demonstrate in their book 'Anti-Gender Politics in the Populist Moment' how the anti-gender rhetoric of PiS appears to be "synchronized with the political calendar".[27] The evolutionary history of the LGBT-free zones is hence tightly linked to PiS' rise in Poland's political landscape, but it roots precisely also in the interests of the Church that functions as a dominant second power within Poland.

The relationship between the Church and PiS appears to be quite strong as both seem to have crossovers in distinct fields of interest. This is exemplified through the focus on the heteronormative family as the fundament of community. Both protagonists openly advocate for the nuclear family as the linchpin of social equilibrium and in turn present alternative lifestyles to threaten this balance.[28] The protection of the traditional family unit has been pivotal to an emerging and gradual unfolding anti-gender campaign that led to the LGBT-free zones being

24 Tomasz Grzegorz Grosse, "Poland's 2019 Parliamentary Election," *Warsaw Institute*, 5th November 2019, https://warsawinstitute.org/polands-2019-parliamentary-election/ (accessed 13th Feb 2022).

25 Alena Löhlein, "Biopolitical Conservatism: Identity-Making Projects in Poland and Russia vis-à-vis gender and sexuality" (Master Thesis, Aalborg University, 2020), 5.

26 Ewa Majewska and Kuba Szreder, "So Far, So Good: Contemporary Fascism, Weak Resistance, and Postartistic Practices in Today's Poland," *e-flux* #76 (2016), 3.

27 Agnieszka Graff and Elżbieta Korolczuk, *Anti-Gender Politics in the Populist Moment* (Taylor & Francis, 2022), 65.

28 Tim Bale and Aleks Szczerbiak, "Why is there no Christian democracy in Poland- And so why should we care?," *Party Politics* 14.4 (2008), 5.

established in 2019. It can be traced back to 2006 when Polish right-wing actors cocooned an image of Poland as the last Christian bastion in Europe.[29]

However, the constructed image of the heteronormative family that must be sheltered might be the strongest Christian democratic aspect remaining of PiS. From the party's beginning, there has never been explicit support of the Catholic Church. This may be justified by a progressive withdrawal of the Church from political affairs after the public discourse became heated around a discussion of a clerical-secular divide in the 1990s. The Church had been a crucial figure during the round table talks in 1989 which led to the fall of Communism in Poland – and from there on started to be active in Polish politics. However, it failed to establish an electoral base since it was unwilling to put its high prestige behind one single pro-clerical party and was confronted with a growing bad public image due to its frequent intervention in electoral politics in the years before.[30]

In fact, there has never been a Christian democratic Party established in Poland's history since 1989. Even though PiS favored doing so in its early years, it very quickly took a turn towards the right political spectrum. One decisive incident to name here is the joining of the sovereignist 'Union for a Europe of Nations' in the European Parliament instead of the 'Christian Democratic European People's Party' when it entered the European Union in 2004.[31] This could also be named as one of the clearest demarcations of PiS from the Church: Christian sentiment puts a strong focus on trans-nationality. It thus stands for overcoming nationalism and supports the view of a world-community in which humankind can fulfill itself.[32] This is not at all in conformity with PiS' ideas, which are committed to the Polish state and its interest as the primary ones.[33] The emphasis on Poland, and Poland only, gets quite clear in PiS' electoral campaigns since its existence. For the 2005 elections, PiS promised a "moral revolution", framing itself as the protector of the Polish people by challenging the dominant liberal hegemony of the elites. This stood in close connection to Poland's EU entry in 2004, which led PiS to draw an image of repeating domination from the West.

Similar feelings of threat emerged in 2012 when PiS strongly opposed the joining of the Istanbul Convention which is concerned with combating violence against women. In this case, the treaty was accused by the at that time Minister of Justice Jarosław Gowin of being a "carrier for gender ideology" which united nationalists, the Church, and conservatists behind a common enemy.[34] Here, the activation of the gender debate is obvious. By matching the Convention with the already built up narrative of gender as a source of demoralization, it was rendered into an "ideological Trojan Horse" that brought about a masked agenda of wanting to undermine the traditional family. This was consequently coupled with another

29 Graff and Korolczuk, *Anti-Gender Politics in the Populist Moment*, 68.
30 Bale and Szczerbiak, "Why is there no Christian democracy in Poland," 27p.
31 Ibid., 12.
32 Ibid., 6.
33 Ibid., 12.
34 Maria Löwdin, "The Puzzling Resonance Of Political Homophobia: A case study exploring the relationship between framing and institutions involved in the elite driven anti-LGBTQ campaign in today's Poland" (Master Thesis, University of Uppsala, 2021), 15pp.

aspect of the anti-gender discourse: namely sex education aimed at sexualizing children. The overarching constructed image of the traditional family in danger hence was even enhanced by portraying the child in danger. These two threats were commonly associated with a looming import of gender-ideology from the West. For Poland specifically, the "progressive interventions in the realm of the family and children's education were routinely compared to communists' attempts to gain full control over people's private and family life", as Graff and Korolczuk highlight.[35] The mobilization of socialism in order to delegitimize whatever is opposed, in this case a gender variety, has already been disclosed in the quote of the Archbishop of Krakow Jędraszewski denoting the LGBT+ community as a new plague not being red but rainbow, quoted in the introduction. This analogy is hence also used by the political elites to buttress their claims.

After a short phase of governmental opposition from 2008, precisely the opposition to the Istanbul Convention helped PiS to regain power in 2015. This was accompanied by framing the Syrian refugee movement as a joint enemy.[36] In the following year, the focus on the gender debate indurated with the formulation of the Stop Abortion Bill, which entered into the parliamentary debate after a campaign under the wings of the ultra-conservatism union Ordo Iuris started to gather signatures in favor of banning abortion completely.[37] The law did not pass; however, a second Abortion Bill had been discussed in 2021, as well as a Stop Pedophilia Bill in 2020.[38]

The reason why the Abortion Bill had been introduced a second time can be traced back to the use of the anti-LGBT+ narrative as the dominant campaigning theme for the party PiS in the parliamentary elections 2019 and the presidential elections 2020. This included to widely replace the already well-known 'gender ideology' with the "foreign-sounding 'LGBT ideology'", and by that even more persuasively steering the public discourse towards an antipathy of homosexuality. On the evening before the election day, the public TV channel 'TVP Info' broadcasted a documentary titled 'Invasion', telling the story about Polish Catholics being oppressed by the LGBT community.[39] The political use of public media is hard to miss here.

PiS won the elections and only a few months later, the weekly newspaper Gazeta Polska distributed a sticker as an inlay to their June issue in 2019.[40] The sticker shows the rainbow colors in a circle, crossed out by a black X. Surrounding this circle is written "STREFNA WOLNA OD LGBT ▪ STREFNA WOLNA OD LGBT", which translates into "LGBT-free zone ▪ LGBT-free zone", by that it provided the source for the specific wording of the subsequent declared 'LGBT-free zones'.[41]

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35   Graff and Korolczuk, *Anti-Gender Politics in the Populist Moment*, 72.
36   Löwdin, "The Puzzling Resonance Of Political Homophobia," 15pp.
37   Graff and Korolczuk, *Anti-Gender Politics in the Populist Moment*, 78.
38   Löwdin, "The Puzzling Resonance Of Political Homophobia," 15pp.
39   Graff and Korolczuk, *Anti-Gender Politics in the Populist Moment*, 80.
40   Rob Picheta, "Magazine to give out 'LGBT-free zone' stickers to readers," *CNN online*, 19th July 2019, https://edition.cnn.com/2019/07/19/europe/gazeta-polska-anti-lgbt-stickers-scli-intl/index.html (accessed 25th Feb 2022).
41   Gazeta Polska (@GPtygodnik), *Twitter post*, 17th July 2019, https://twitter.com/GPtygodnik/status/1151541211930513409 (accessed 25th Feb 2022).

The first equality march was :very scary: and then the second one was a lot better and I think that it changed for better but _then_ something happened, I think it was the PiS party taking the ah power in Parliament then, :maybe not on March:, but I felt it on the street that people are not so mmh the streets weren't that safe that they *were. I feel so. Because of the PiS party allowing aaah by their voice in the *parliament for :hateful things against LGBTQ people: so_ that has changed for worse definitely.
––– – Miklaz*

Eventually, the built-up threat of a "gender ideology" culminated in the LGBT-free zones and arrived at the local level. In March 2019 the southeastern town Świdnik was the first to self-declare as an LGBT-free zone. In a wave of affirmation, almost 100 local governments[42] made use of this predominant rhetorical expression coined by the newspaper Gazeta Polska. By that, the terminology transgressed a mere existence as a rhetorical tool, that seemed to have been consciously employed by the political elites as well as the Church reaching back to 2006, as indicated before. The 'LGBT-free zones' as a declaration hence have not been introduced by the national government. They constitute a framework conceived by local authorities, yet they speak to actively propagated political sentiments from the national political agenda.

from the zones to the 'Charter for the Rights of the Family'
As already mentioned, the zones stirred an unprecedented public debate about LGBT-rights in Poland in 2019. This led to severe disputes with the European Union which threatened to withdraw funds from the declared regions. And this is where the ultra-catholic organization Ordo Iuris started to actively support the anti-LGBT+ agenda and its persistence.

The first resolutions authored by Ordo Iuris were already passed in April and May

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42   Ciobanu, „A Third of Poland Declared 'LGBT-Free Zone".

They are mainly in charge of formulating the 'Charter of the Rights of the Family' which can be adopted by local governments. Its communicated target is "to stand for the values stipulated in the Constitution of the Republic of Poland" which includes the "identity of marriage as a relationship between a women and a man, family and parenthood (Article 18), the right to protection of family life (Article 47), the right of parents to raise their children in accordance with their own convictions (Article 48 section 1) and the right of a child to protection against demoralization (Article 72 section 1)."[43] By adopting this Charter in a local government these beliefs start to become manifested in the sense that they define a scope of preferred action. As Jakub stresses, these Charters are not binding and hence not incorporated into law. They are incorporated into local governance as a guiding principle.

No, they're non-binding acts. They are normative only on language level, but not legal. These resolutions are "only" statements, but they suggest local government employees what they should to do in situations when LGBT organizations will ask them

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43   Ordo Iuris, "Local government Charter of the Rights of the Family," 29th March 2019, https://en.ordoiuris.pl/family-and-mar.riage/local-government-charter-rights-family (accessed 28th Feb 2022).

This means that they not only constitute the ideological frame a municipality would understand itself within, but that for instance sex education containing same-sex intercourse would legitimise imprisoning someone who teaches that in schools. As Ordo Iuris puts it, the Charter acts to "join the defence [sic!] of these values, striving to ensure that they are complied with by means of issuing legal acts".[44] The Charter thus became substantive for the LGBT-free zone.

This is crucial to view within the light of hegemonic beliefs: Who has the prerogative to decide what kind of protection a child needs against demoralization? And respectively also, what exactly is understood to contribute to such demoralization in the first place?

In order to establish a certain belief system, the respective hegemonic group presents such beliefs to be the normal and natural ones. Ideas divergent from that are rendered to be artificial and atypical. This is also how the Charter of the Rights of the Family portrays any partnerships which are not "a relationship between a man and a woman" as "undermining the constitutional foundations of the family law or prejudicing the rights of citizens".[45] By presenting non-heteronormative relationships as not being in conformation with the Constitution, points to the fact that it is also not understood to be part of the underlying natural principles of a society. Gender inequalities are hence naturalized and seemingly removed from the realm of debate. As the Charter puts forward, and also the Church conforms, heterosexual orientations are rendered as the natural, even God-given, undebatable ones. Thus, the heteronormative family constitutes common sense within Poland. The ones openly advocating for that understanding are the political elite together with the Church. They take a hegemonic position in Poland, actively shaping and guiding the public discourse around their societal agenda.

The shift from the 'LGBT-free zones' to the 'Charter of the Rights of the Family' clearly marks a change of narrative. While zones openly communicate an anti-LGBT+ sentiment, the term 'LGBT' is not even mentioned anymore in the Charter. Instead, it is framed as "pro-family, pro-health and pro-social attitudes".[46] This not only leads to a shift in the public discourse targeting to rather protect a common set of values instead of rejecting selected ones. The reformulation is thus a positive one, and as Ekström et al. argue, part of an "identity performance"[47] which is aimed at winning votes. Hence, the authors go on to claim that populist politics present narratives as a part of "an ongoing dynamic process of styling, rather than a static production".[48] To put it differently, populist rhetoric employs linguistic tools

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44   Ordo Iuris, "Local government Charter of the Rights of the Family".

45   Pawel Kwaśniak, "Local Government Charter of the Rights of the Family," (2020), 6. Online PDF: https://v.fastcdn.co/u/ff8eca37/50262470-0-SKPR-commune-ENG.pdf.

46   Ordo Iuris, "Local government Charter of the Rights of the Family".

47   Mats Ekström, Marianna Patrona, and Joanna Thornborrow, "Right-wing populism and the dynamics of style: a discourse-analytic perspective on mediated political performances," *Palgrave Communications* 4.1 (2018), 10.

48   Ekström, Patrona and Thornborrow, "Right-wing populism and the dynamics of style," 3.

in order to appeal to certain kinds of voters whose support they pursue. This also links to right-wing populists frequently self-proclaiming as being the voice of the people, which I will discuss in the following as a populist tool. And this is precisely where the narrative shift within Poland has its origin. The anti-LGBT+ sentiment received substantial international resistance and it was in its tone rather harsh and negatively connotated. This may have deterred potential voters. The pro-family attitude, however, has lost on rhetorical acidity and hence, may have directed more liberal Poles towards the politics of PiS, resulting in the party managing to address a broader societal share.

Secondly, this reformulation also makes the aims legally less contestable. Thus, no municipality has been yet dragged to court for adopting the Charter, while multiple ones were faced with lawsuits while being declared LGBT-free. This implies that the installed hegemonic discourse still circles around the same ideas, but that it has shifted its target.

I think many people who would consider LGBT-free zones are *bad they *wouldn't mind 'oh it's pro-family zones so that's fine' they are not *against anyone they just want the family to be better and stuff - so yeah it's it's :very dangerous of course: especially now when there is the propaganda in the media, in ah the Polish national television* is controlled by government, so ah so there you can only watch things that are government pro-government pro-PiS party so__ they wouldn't say *anything about LGBT-free zones. I think they made some aah mmmmh aaaa I am lacking words. Ok they made this thing that the LGBT zones are something *made up* by one of the LGBT activist Bart Staszewski so I think many people *believe it because

the instrumentalization of political homophobia

PiS's dominance in Poland was quite obviously achieved by employing populist strategies, such as the friend-enemy divide for instance, as I will discuss in the chapter *Populism and Power*. The declaration papers clearly express this by rendering the LGBT+ community as an ideology and portraying them as threatening the identity of Poland. In particular, the last few years show a "politicization of homophobia", as Agnieszka Graff puts it. She identifies an increased gay-bashing by public authorities, having the political function of Poland's self-definition after joining the European Union in 2004.[49] This instrumentalization stands in close touch with a general mistrust of the EU, which is perceived as an external force threatening Polish values. Within the European Union, gender equality is somewhat established as a hegemonic discourse. More so, it has become a "boundary drawer", as Graff denotes it, within the European states, meaning that homophobia is presumed as not conforming with European values. This simultaneously provides a benchmark for Poland's self-definition, and thus the "lack of acceptance for sexual minorities was constructed as Poland's distinctive national feature in Europe".[50] The formulation of the zone declarations precisely picks up on openness toward sexual orientations portraying it as undermining Christian values and thus Polish identity. This speaks to a narrow understanding of national identity constructed in divergence from the other. It is employed to formulate a common enemy and thus, to generate feelings of being under threat. In that way, the declarations also work as clearly setting out what it means to be Polish and what not.

Löwdin proposes to see these acts through the theoretical lens of hegemonic masculinities, formulated by Raewyn Connell. This grasp draws on Gramsci's concept of hegemony, which I will also discuss in more detail in the following Chapter *Populism and Power,* and speaks more precisely about how especially

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49 Agnieszka Graff, "Looking at pictures of gay men: Political uses of homophobia in contemporary Poland," *Public Culture* 22.3, (2010), 582p.

50 Graff, "Looking at pictures of gay men," 585.

men can uphold their societal position and power. To put it simply, it is argued that if privileged men perceive themselves as intimidated, they for one tend to self-depict as marginalized and for another counter this perception by exploiting and harassing marginalized groups.[51] A tendency to delineate oneself as marginalized can be seen for instance in the self-formulated resolution of the county Białystok where it is stated that the county generally supports anti-discrimination, but just if it also applies to every social group. „In the name of religious freedom and freedom of speech, the right to proclaim Christian views and practice customs based on the Christian moral system should also be respected. Parents' voice regarding the upbringing of their children should be respected - unfortunately, the voice is completely ignored.", they state.[52] This points to rendering oneself as unheard and overruled, and thus as marginalized. As another example, regarding Poland's political national scale, the exploitation of marginalized groups can clearly be seen in the way the PiS-rulers picked their enemies: first refugees, then women, and now the LGBT+ community – all marginalized groups used to consolidate state power.

This whole like LGBT thing in Poland is just like a political tool to_ manipulate people's opinion like to get votes; cause they were all the time they were doing something mmh like more propaganda it was just before the elections_ or kind of to achieve something or to get people aah to sort of show them the enemy.
––– – Julia

With a special glimpse at the anti-LGBT+ sentiment in recent years, the logic of hegemonic masculinity portrays a broader understanding of gender as a "destabilization of natural gender roles" and links it to "anxieties about depopulation with grim visions of the end of patriarchy and men's power".[53] This clearly points to the link between a disaffirmation of gender variety to a constructed threat about the family and consequently a presented subversion of the patriarchal dominant position of men. It feeds on anxieties and nostalgia for traditional ways of living.

*With the right wing twist it's_ yeah it just got like mmh easier to :stigmatise: I think queer people; somehow it just makes sense to cause you *I think the government doesn't have*

51   Löwdin, "The Puzzling Resonance Of Political Homophobia," 11.

52   Declaration of Białystok, Online ODF: http://bip.st.bialystok.wrotapodlasia.pl/Rada_Pow/ Rp_UchwalyR/uchwayradypowiaturok2019/uchway_podjte_na_iu_28_kwietnia_2019_r/uchwala-nr-ix842019-rady-powiatu-bialostockiego-z-dnia-25-kwietnia-2019-r-w-sprawie-karty-lgbt-i-wychowania-seksualnego-w-duchu-ideologii-gender.html (accessed 8th Mar 2022) [translated from Polish].

53   Agnieszka Graff and Elżbieta Korolczuk, "Gender as 'Ebola from Brussels': The Anticolonial Frame and the Rise of Illiberal Populism," *Journal of Women in Culture and Science* 48.4 (2018), 803.

to do a lot   like invest :a lot of energy: to_   rise the level of hate cause it's just easy for them;   and people are already, even without this propaganda they   they are homophobic.
––– – *Julia*

It appears that the conservative elites such as PiS and the Catholic Church in Poland have managed to enhance resonance by hawking anti-LGBT+ ideas and framing them as an ideology that stands in dispute with heteronormative norms such as the nuclear family. Homophobia has been instrumentalized for political purposes in order to gain electoral support, which points toward an "intrinsically opportunistic strategy with strong ties to populist politics."[54] However, it is crucial to highlight that a rejection of gender diversity is for one not new, and for another not only a phenomenon in Poland.

Graff and Korolczuk identify a shift in the right-wings' resistance formulated towards gender egalitarianism where it is not merely about conservative antifeminism with a focus on sexual rights anymore, but the resistance is anchored in a much broader ideological frame. This frame consists of critiquing liberal values such as gender equality or individuality while combining it with opposing global capitalism and thus on equal terms with the Western elites. This points to the fact that the gender debate has always been one discussed by the political right, however it more recently has taken on the form of a "new universalism, an illiberal one, that replaces individual rights with rights of the family as a basic societal unit".[55] A clear link to the Church remains obvious in that claim, as well as it is pointing to the stance of gender-resistance as a "symbolic glue"[56], as Graff and Korolzcuk put it, for conservative and far-right parties. Secondly, it again underlines the demonization of Western liberal elites which are framed as carrying and promoting the exact ideas that right-wing parties oppose: gender equality, gender diversity, and sexual rights. In the specific case of Poland, the Western elite is namely the European Union which is positioned as a colonizer and framed as threatening the healthy state and natural order of Poland.[57]

The instrumentalization of homophobia appears to play out as a discursive instrument that draws from an anti-colonial strategy. The resulting LGBT-free zones in Poland are characterized by a strong rhetorical and pictorial manner. This becomes apparent in the vocabulary politicians use, but also in incidents such as the free newspaper inlay of an anti-LGBT+ sticker in Gazeta Polska[58], or spread

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54 Löwdin, "The Puzzling Resonance of Political Homophobia," 12.
55 Graff and Korolczuk, "Gender as 'Ebola from Brussels'," 798.
56 Ibid., 799.
57 Ibid., 811.
58 Gazeta Polska (@GPtygodnik), *Twitter post*, 17th July 2019, https://twitter.com/GPtygodnik/status/1151541211930513409 (accessed 25th Feb 2022).

pictograms by PiS showing a stereotypical family under a PiS-branded umbrella protected from a running down rainbow[59]. And yet, as Majewska and Szreder point out, connected to this is also the take-over of the state apparatus, the subsuming of the judiciary, and the eradication of the public sphere which entails a sudden appearance of "muscular, bold, masculine bodies of those promoting racism in the streets".[60]

59   Stanisław Karczewski (@StKarczewski), *Twitter post*, 10th March 2019, https://twitter.com/StKarczewski/status/1104621361601921024 (accessed 15th Jan 2022).

60   Majewska and Szreder, "So Far, So Good," 3.

a miniature on xenourban thought

The discussion on the LGBT-free zones in Poland distinctively discloses how the oppression of minorities is for one, facilitated as a political tool and how for another, a sense of othering is deeply inscribed to construct and maintain an identity throughout different societal levels. Yet, I strongly believe this is not something to simply condone, but it is precisely what gives reason for the contestation of such oppressive environments. Hence, I am working towards a stance on oppression where it is not an unarming reality but the grounds for emancipation. This is what I will discuss through proposing the concept of xenourbanism and what I feel is important to already highlight now, in order to set a frame for the following.

What if each other's difference does not serve to help understand ourselves but rather defines solidarity and unfolds trajectories of support? We don't all need to be the same; difference is what braids us together, not sameness. This shift of focus could lead to clearly perceiving space by what it fails to embrace and represent, rather than by what it does. Such a space is hence precisely also defined by what is oppressed, yet this gives ground to transform it. Committing to difference also means recognizing the discomfort of others as a base of one's own comfort. Could such a commitment bring us closer to carefully monitoring the effects of our actions? If we are aware of the relatedness of living together then we also cannot lose sight of the inherent consequences of such. This builds-in a consistent assessment and awareness about the values reproduced.

3 Populism and Power

tools of populistic politics

A global drift towards the right political spectrum seems to be taking place, and it is not just a contemporary tendency. Even already in 1979, Stuart Hall writes of a well-installed "swing to the Right", from the 1960s on.[61] Today, the alleged most prominent example of such may be the election of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States in 2016. But also, Viktor Orbán and his party Fidesz in Hungary ruling since 2010 could be mentioned as an example of the growing dominance of right-wing politics, as well as Rodrigo Roa Duterte as Philippines' president since 2016, Jair Messias Bolsonaro who took over the presidential chair in Brazil in 2019, the prime minister of India Narendra Modi since 2014, Boris Johnson since 2019, Vladimir Putin, Alexander Grigoryevich Lukashenko, Andrzej Sebastian Duda. This list could be extended further.

While the listed populistic movements have different specificities, they mostly share a nationalist, anti-globalization, and anti-elite sentiment.[62] A common narrative that is drawn in order to gather supporters is one that opposes the will of the people to the overruling one of the elites, producing an image of unequal power distribution and leadership from above. Coupled with a focus on, and a narrow understanding of national identity, this pertains "to a belief that a national group deserves a special treatment, its true value is not recognized by others, and group members need to fight for their group's recognition as the world will be a better place when their group has a more important say in it."[63] This points towards a perception of a clear societal hierarchy where the respectively "traditionally privileged group", as de Zavala et al. put it, feels to lose influence and develops a sense of being under threat regarding its societal position.[64] Thus, the clearly carved out group is firmly defined, and perceives itself to be oppressed. This provocation of emotions such as fear, uncertainty, or injustice could be pinpointed as a strategic approach of populist movements to define their purposes and deliver on their goals. As Benjamin H. Bratton claims the "friend/enemy divide" is a frequently employed tool to animate supporters. It results oftentimes in a communicated necessity of war or self-defense against the perceived threatening opposite side.[65]

Concerning Poland, the formulation of the LGBT-free zones quite directly reveals the portrayed enemy. What is significant is also the analogy between the LGBT+ community and Marxism, as Marek Jędraszewski characterized the "new plague" as "Not red, but rainbow", cited in the intro. This hints at the fact that the image of a perceived enemy is legitimized by tying it to already more broadly established ideas of national enemies. Maroš Krivý problematizes precisely how a simplified

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61   Stuart Hall, "The great moving right show," *Marxism today* 23.1 (1979), 14.
62   Löhlein, "Biopolitical Conservatism," 4.
63   Agnieszka Golec de Zavala, Dorottya Lantos, and Oliver Keenan, "6: Collective Narcissism and the Motivational Underpinnings of the Populist Backlash," *The Psychology of Populism: The tribal challenge to liberal democracy*, 105-122 (2021), 105pp.
64   de Zavala et al., "Collective Narcissism and the Motivational Underpinnings of the Populist Backlash," 111.
65   Benjamin H. Bratton, "So Heavy Grasshoppers: Allochthonous Notes on Populism," *Para-Platforms: On the Spatial Politics of Right-Wing Populism*, ed. Markus Miessen and Zoë Ritts (SternbergPress, 2018), 43.

image of socialism has been employed for demarcation, how socialism has become a weapon against whatever is opposed, and in turn how the idea of post-socialism stems from neoliberal thought to dismiss socialism as belonging to the past and naturalize right-wing populism.[66]

As already hinted at, populist politicians present themselves "as new voices of the people, vocalizing their grievances and articulating new national pride".[67] As Majewska and Szreder go on to argue, this serves the profiling of a bottom-up movement that is informed by everyday life and thus close to the real struggles of the people, it is a "fascism-from-below" as they put it.[68] The emphasis on acting as the voice of the people very clearly points to making a stand against the established elites which are portrayed as merely acting in their own interests. This employment of ideas such as the local, the authentic, the real people is a consistent transnational strategy of populism as Korolczuk and Graff assert.[69]

Nativism, protectionism, a "for the people"-attitude, anti-establishment, anti-elitism, nationalism et cetera count as values held up high especially by right-wing populism as many scholars argue.[70] A theoretical frame through which to discuss the supremacy of these mentioned values is the concept of hegemony, originally formulated by Antonio Gramsci. It describes the predominance of certain values on which social reality depends and by that offers explanations about social control structures.[71] It puts forward that these values stem from a certain belief system that a social group in hegemonic position carries, but which only enters into force when a respective subordinate group accepts it as a particular way of seeing the world.[72] Thus, hegemony builds on the creation of common sense that shapes and guides choices as well as actions. In this regard, Matthew Rachar speaks about aiming for "'consent' rather than 'force'"[73], while Alex Loftus defines it as an "appropriate balance between consent and coercion"[74] through which leadership is exercised. An established hegemonic position then implies some kind of order within a society that is grounded in and legitimized by the establishment of common sense. As Michel Foucault underlines, order constitutes a form of validity for classifications with certainty.[75]

It is crucial to note that hegemony is thus not predominantly concerned with, for instance, physical violence to pull through a certain worldview. It is rather about installing a decisive belief system as common sense, as naturally dominating

66   Maroš Krivý, "Reclaiming Socialist Space, Caricaturing Socialism? Urban Interventions and the Cleansing of Political Content in State-Socialist Public Housing After 2008," *Antipode* 54.2 (2022), 504p.
67   Majewska and Szreder, "So Far, So Good," 3.
68   Ibid., 5.
69   Graff and Korolczuk, "Gender as 'Ebola from Brussels'," 802.
70   As listed by Löhlein, de Zavala et al., Bratton amongst others
71   Matthew Rachar, "Power, hegemony, and social reality in Gramsci and Searle," *Journal of Political Power* 9.2 (2016), 227.
72   Rachar, "Power, hegemony, and social reality in Gramsci and Searle," 237.
73   Ibid., 238.
74   Alex Loftus, "7: A time for Gramsci," *The International Handbook of Political Ecology*, ed. by Raymond L. Bryant, (Edward Elger Publishing, 2015), 91.
75   Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things* (Routledge, 2005).

through moral and intellectual means. This is a significant point: the absence of violence does in turn not entail an absence of conflict. It is precisely such ongoing conflict that feeds hegemony, and which makes it a political strategy. Chantal Mouffee and Ernesto Laclau have successfully articulated the relationship between hegemony and socialist strategy, they highlighted that hegemony enables contestation of the state as a possessor of truths.[76] This is because an established hegemonic position is always partial, it is "a relatively stable system of difference", that confronts other hegemonic claims.[77] Hence, the conflict as an inherent dimension of hegemony points to a key characteristic of the concept: it is at once a tool to assess and critique a prevailing system while simultaneously one to shape such a system. Hence, hegemony is not inherently negative.

Following this, hegemony within the frame of this thesis is understood as a process grounded and resulting in common sense which at once gives order. This establishes a kind of taken-for-granted knowledge that is rarely contested as it constitutes the foundation for social facts; however, in democracies, it is a tool accessible to different groups voicing hegemonic claims which thus can also always deconcentrate and reorient power into new directions.

hegemony in crisis
And here we are now: Putin, Orbán, Duterte, Duda. "It is as if masses of people throughout the world had stopped believing in the reigning common sense that has underpinned political domination for the last several decades. It is as if they had lost confidence in the bona fides of the elites and were searching for new ideologies, organizations, and leadership," Nancy Fraser observes.[78] Parts of the liberal left, and here Nancy Fraser as a representative, render precisely the drift to the political right spectrum as a hegemonic crisis. This of course could be contested as, following Stuart Hall, right-wing populism has already established itself since the 1960s and thus could already be identified as the new hegemony. Additionally, the political right frequently self-positions as fighting a new hegemony, this can be seen in how PiS is framing the LGBT+ movement as a threat from the West. This tug-of-war is revealing: for one it discloses the way hegemony can be employed as a tool to critique the existent order as well as one to guide it. For another, it accurately emphasizes that a crisis, as Gramsci defines it, in fact, constitutes the contemporary condition as there are different groups; for instance PiS, the LGBT+ movement, the Church; struggling for a new order.

It seems urgent to unpack this supposed condition of a crisis as it discloses the circumstances the LGBT-free zones in Poland emerged from, exist and keep on struggling within. What is significant to state is that a crisis is not a singular, suddenly

76   Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and socialist strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics* Vol. 8 (Verso Books, 2014), 188.

77   Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and socialist strategy*, 143.

78   Fraser, *The old is dying and the new cannot be born*, 8.

occurring event; rather it is a long-term, processual period. Milan Babic situates the current hegemonic crisis as one which is challenging the liberal international order originating from the financial crisis in 2008. He suggests viewing the respective crisis not as a transition phase between two established and thus stable stages, but in a Gramscian sense as a perceptible period informed by uncertainty.[79] To tie back to the basic understanding of hegemony, a hegemonic crisis hence marks a time where an established common sense begins to totter and consequently, an established order within society is also challenged. This hints at the fact that a hegemonic crisis does not exclusively concern political affairs, but it reaches far into the social and cultural dimensions of a state. In this regard, Rune Stahl and Babic similarly argue that a crisis cannot precisely be seen as a transition, as something that exists between two, but it needs to be perceived much more as a time of its own because of the far-reaching disruptions that it causes.[80] Gramsci describes such a period as one where "the old is dying and the new cannot be born".[81] That is to say, a crisis must already be embedded within a perceived and well-functioning order, whereof different groups struggle to establish a new hegemony. The election of populists, the concision of rights, or the LGBT-free zones only present a climax of a crisis, they are not the crisis themselves. The not-dead-and-yet-not-alive constitutes fertile soil for upheaval.

Closely linked to this, Gramsci describes the happening of a crisis either as conjunctural or as organic as Babic amplifies. While a conjunctural crisis rather concerns daily political life and is believed to not set forces free for a global-wide change, an organic crisis works to precisely "challenge the very fundamentals on which social orders are built". This leads to an alienation between the current representatives and the represented, opening up an "ideological void".[82] It points to the fact that an organic crisis in Gramsci's understanding is a long-lasting, subtle change that results in "uncurable structural contradictions".[83] As Stuart Hall highlights if such changes are at work, a mere defense cannot preserve the existent any longer. An organic crisis leads to formative changes in social, political, and structural landscapes.[84] While the term 'organic' might act to naturalize the notion of a crisis, thereby, risking delegitimizing the contestation of such times, I propose to still stick to the term with a focus on its creeping implications. To put it differently, I believe that there is nothing organic to a hegemonic crisis in the sense that it can be discounted as a natural course of life, but that its consequences may at present feel organic and only disclose retrospectively.

That stated, to stick to Gramsci's term of an organic crisis with the characteristic of impacting the global political economy, let's turn to its contemporary attribute in relation to the rise of the political right. As Babic puts forward, two decisive aspects fuel the global crisis from a societal level. In Gramscian terminology, these

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79   Milan Babic, "Let's talk about the interregnum: Gramsci and the crisis of the liberal world order" *International Affairs* 96.3 (2020), 769p.

80   Rune Møller Stahl, "Ruling the interregnum: Politics and ideology in nonhegemonic times," *Politics & Society* 47.3 (2019), 338.

81   Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the prison notebooks* (New York: International Publishers), 276.

82   Babic, „Let's talk about the interregnum", 772.

83   Gramsci, *Selections from the prison notebooks*, 179.

84   Hall, "The great moving right show", 15.

aspects are framed as "morbid symptoms" which undermine an old order from within.[85] At the heart of the old order, the liberal international order, is the embrace of capitalism as the main factor for societal interaction. As widely discussed, from that stemmed the neoliberal globalization that alienated the working classes from elites who were in favour of open markets. "The instabilities and uncertainties of neo-liberal globalization produced 'experiences of injustice and disregard' and disenchantment."[86] As a first aspect, the contemporary organic crisis is thus marked by the crumbling of the perceived universal capitalist stability. And this is the entry point for the global occurring rise of right-wing populism, presenting itself as an alternative and a liberation from the unjust consequences of globalization, as discussed before. As Nina Power succinctly puts it: "Neoliberal individualism has morphed into a terrifying collective suspicion".[87] She goes on to claim that "Today pride is sneaked away ever-more by right - pride in 'one's country,' in 'one's race', in 'one's sex' - masculinity (and misogyny), nationalism and racial supremacy walk hand in hand."[88] This simultaneously guides towards the second aspect of morbid societal symptoms feeding the global hegemonic crisis. It speaks to the usage of "everyday narratives" as an ideational factor. What can be identified, and this has also already been discussed before, is a resurgence of nationalistic rhetoric to oppose the old existing order. It shows a "double nature of nationalist discourse as legitimizing both national renaissance and international re-ordering"[89] that is active on different levels. The recoining of public discourses lies at the heart of the hegemonic crisis and not only gathers support at home but also serves to lobby abroad.

What marks the hegemonic crisis in Poland then: the persistent rise of the political right has already been discussed bringing along different morbid symptoms. The Anti-Abortion Bill of 2021[90] could for instance be named as one, but simultaneously the growing number of government-friendly media actively promoting the right-wing politics of PiS indicates a slowly growing surveillance of the media sector. On another note, the way the West or Europe is framed as an enemy threatening national identities also links Poland to a broader global network of struggling for a new hegemony. And most obviously within this text, the publicity of intolerance to a sexual minority through the formulation of LGBT-free zones or pro-family Charters most certainly counts as a morbid symptom.

85   Babic, "Let's talk about the interregnum", 773.
86   Ibid., 783.
87   Power, "Negative Internationalism and Shame as Strategy", 155.
88   Ibid., 156.
89   Babic, "Let's talk about the interregnum", 780.
90   Anti Abortion Bill 2021, Online PDF: https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU19930170078/U/D19930078Lj.pdf

4 Matter and Manner

As discussed so far, populist movements carry certain values that unify them and that characterize a specific belief system that appears to be established as a hegemonic discourse in some kind of "only-truth-manner" within their own ranks. This belief system mostly centers around certain convictions, around values that are primarily immaterial. In other words, stressing the immateriality of values as a prime character emphasizes a mental, social, or moral aspect of materiality which yet has no physical material component. Raymond Williams draws out the complexity of the term 'materiality' pointing to these various understandings which refer to either matter as a physical substance, to the mentioned mental aspects, or the production of things.[91] All of this can be discussed under the term materiality, which will be explored more thoroughly in the following. For now, it is crucial to note that values understood as immaterial may as well be associated with the term material, they are material in the sense of setting out mental conditions, but they are immaterial in the way that they do not yet consist of physical substance. I have discussed the LGBT-free zones as non-binding resolutions formulated by local authorities as primarily such a moral frame and consequently rhetorical tool, separate from their paper-existence.

In the following, I strive to work towards a third position in between the dominant ways of either understanding a material solely as matter to shape history, as in Historical Materialism, or to see the conception of materiality extended by attributing life to matter, as frequently iterated in New Materialism. This third position builds on an understanding of a synergy that needs to be established between the material worlds and the surrounding that is shaping it. It rearticulates the relation between the two dimensions immaterial and material as braided ones, in which interaction plays a decisive role in how to make sense of the spaces that are shaped by us and that at once come to shape us. Hence, matter is discussed as a *matter of facts* – as a holder of information that the matter itself cannot articulate. It needs an alliance between a speaker and a material object to understand matter as evidence under which social configurations develop and manifest. This material understanding then simultaneously serves to underpin the methodological approach of *speaking with another's voice*. I will come to unpack this in the following, in order to arrive at an understanding of matter that can be used to investigate the material reality of right-wing populism.

how values manifest
Judith Revel offers the reading that Foucault's theory on the 'Production of Knowledge' transgresses a mere immaterial discussion. She argues that as much as certain values, and respective belief systems, are manifested in the system of thought, they not only produce knowledge but matter as well.[92] This indicates that values, as I propose to understand them first and foremost as immaterial, also

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91 Raymond Williams, *Keywords* (Duke University Press, 2007), 146.
92 Judith Revel, "The materiality of the immaterial: Foucault, against the return of idealisms and new vitalisms: Dossier: Art and Immaterial Labour," *Radical Philosophy* 149, 33-38 (2008).

materialize over time and hence are augmented by a physical component. In the way that power becomes matter, Revel argues that the "metaphysical opposition" of material and immaterial can get deconstructed.[93] Immateriality is thought of as creation, as production of value that still over-determines the matter of the world yet simultaneously is intrinsic to it. This lays out a mutuality of the material as well as the immaterial and rearticulates the opposition of these two categories, instead of claiming inseparability. This can also be ascertained with respect to right-wing populism. Bratton argues that common right-wing populist ideas such as nationalism or nativist racism are translated into spatial programs that can be both speculative as well as realized.[94] This speaks to a here formulated grasp of a fused character of hegemonic values with what makes up the material worlds.

The reader 'Para-Platforms' brings together people working around similar thoughts regarding the material reality of right-wing populism and provides a bulk of inspiration for this thesis. It has been initiated by Zoë Ritts and Markus Miessen, who put forward the aim of the book is to "outline territory from which we can work toward new social realities that resists the malignant politics of right-wing populism."[95] They caution that it is crucial to be attentive not only to the way in which political maneuvers are constructed as social frameworks as hegemony suggests but more than that, how they are spatially imagined and physically built.[96] Thus, Para-Platforms attempt to uncover how certain spatial formations further facilitate certain kinds of politics. What appears to be especially helpful from the scope of the Para-Platforms project is the concept of Material Articulations formulated by Mahmoud Keshavarz. He argues that politics are "beyond a form of police-politics", they take part in "formulating an understanding of design [...] and modes of acting that manipulate the materiality of the world".[97] Thus, he puts forward the claim that designing is an act of articulating politics, and hence, certain politics get materialized through spatial disciplines.

As addressed, populistic movements gather around a shared set of immaterial values. However, these values find material expressions; they are not just rhetorically articulated but may as well manifest as a material configuration. To put it differently, within this thesis I argue that right populistic values not only exist in concepts and words but that they exist as well in spatial configurations. In that regard, Keshavarz puts forward that design is not to be understood as something external, but it is the very practice "that constitutes conditions for certain politics to happen", thus it generates reception beyond a single entity.[98] This speaks to the hypothesis taken on here that spatial configurations represent certain kinds of politics, of ideologies, of worldviews. More than that, they also constitute the very condition for certain ideas to pertain. Consequently, a spatial layout does not only consist of its physical materiality. The concept of Material Articulations implies that matter also has an immaterial dimension inscribed, one that results from hegemonic politics, which may bring us to reproduce corresponding values.

93   Revel, "The materiality of the immaterial," 33.
94   Bratton, "So heavy Grasshoppers," 43.
95   Markus Miessen, Zoë Ritts et al., *Para-Platforms: On the Spatial Politics of Right-Wing Populism* (SternbergPress, 2018), 10.
96   Miessen et al., *Para-Platforms*, 7.
97   Mahmoud Keshavarz, "Design-Politics Nexus: material articulations and modes of acting," *Nordes* 1.6 (2015), 12.
98   Keshavarz, "Sketch out a Theory of Design Politics", 12.

Borrowing from Mahmoud Keshavarz and following his strings of thoughts concerning the idea of Material Articulations I argue that similar claims apply to the discipline of urbanism. In the same way that design articulates hegemonic worldviews, urbanism as a spatial practice works alongside dominant ideologies. This might not always find immediate expression in a designed spatial form; however, it contributes to such by guiding discourse, shaping knowledge, and thus, reproducing values. The challenge that arises for the discipline from this is to actively stay attentive to such processes, in order to not work as a passive conformer. I will come to navigate the discipline of urbanism in such a direction in the chapter *xeno- to the urban.*

For now, I would like to remind again that a belief system does not only produce knowledge but also matter, as argued by Revel and Foucault amongst others.[99] This grasp is shared for instance also by authors of the reader 'Feminist Futures of Spatial Practices': "Architecture, the arts, and other spatial practices have never been neutral in social struggles" in the sense that "political hegemonies and social injustice has been resisted and reconstructed through spatial practices".[100] Hence, Material Articulations depict a crossover between the many times mentioned articulated, immaterial values and their material fixation. The discipline of urbanism is herewith positioned as at times reproducing these articulations both in an immaterial as well as a material way. But more than that, the lens of Material Articulations allows for staying within hope. The quote from the book Feminist Futures of Spatial Practices already hints at this as well: the reproduction of values can also be resisted. Associating objects of matter with articulations, a concept originally deriving from a linguistic discussion, offers the possibility to attribute materials with linguistic qualities. To spin this thought further, this possibility seemingly softens what may be conceived as hardness and durability of matter as such. It suggests the possibility of reconsidering, of taking things back; such as words can be taken back as well. Keshavarz denounces this quality as the "artifice of things". This means that because certain objects and things are made, *produced* if to think of Foucault, they can as well be unmade - change is the only possible condition for artifices.[101]

How can then this 'artifice of things' be appropriated in an emancipatory way? Quite obviously, it might also suggest that the LGBT-free zone initiators could potentially take back their declaration and with that claim that they belong to the past and have no present significance anymore. I believe, however, that this is not what the artifice speaks to. It is not about eradicating articulations but about an implicit awareness of ever-feasible change. I strongly argue that this is a significant dimension to incorporate in order to step off the treadmill of passive reproduction. In that sense, the LGBT-free zones are a harsh and at times disillusioning reality; but because they are here, they can be gone – they are not the end. I will come to write about this in more detail in the chapter *xeno- to the urban.* For now, the shared values that dominant groups gather around cannot be perceived as divorced from physical configuration and consequently from spatial disciplines, this is what the concept of Material Articulations clearly highlights. But simultaneously, they as well cannot be perceived as a given condition that determines.

99   *See:* Judith Revel, "The materiality of the immaterial: Foucault, against the return of idealisms and new vitalisms: Dossier: Art and Immaterial Labour," *Radical Philosophy* 149, 33-38 (2008).

100 Meike Schalk, Thérèse Kristiansson, and Ramia Mazé, *Feminist futures of spatial practice: Materialisms, activisms, dialogues, pedagogies, projections* (AADR/Spurbuchverlag, 2017), 13p.

101 Keshavarz, "Sketch out a Theory of Design Politics", 15.

a discussion on materialisms

If to look at matter not merely as a passive physical substance, as hinted at in the previous thoughts on Material Articulations, but to understand it as a "materialized structure of perception"[102] calls for an engagement with theories on materialism. An inevitably occurring question to engage with concerns how to understand a material. I seek to develop a third position between an understanding of passive or vibrant matter – meaning between Historical Materialism and New Materialism. The basic understanding of matter that I am taking on here is very close to Cultural Materialism. Cultural Materialism after Williams claims that the cultural practice is a material practice as discussed before. In that sense, every human activity is understood as a cultural practice that produces conditions for societal settings. What is crucial is that it is not only about the intended form of a material object but about the modifications, alterations, destruction, or removal of a material object. This does not indicate a complete rejection of new materialists' understanding as I value the contribution of taking in the significance of the other-than-human[103] world; however, I do not aim to open up a space where matter could be used as an excuse, where matter acts autonomously.

Williams has already been cited pointing to the different understandings of the term materiality, and as laid out in the previous viewing matter as inscribed with an immaterial dimension asks for an extension of the understanding of the term material from its most elementary definition as a physical substance[104]. As Raymond Williams highlights, the 18th century marks the beginning of the application of the term materialism which, to put it simply, accepts the basic physical explanation but adds human activity as a primary force. This is evident in what Karl Marx coins as Historical Materialism, where "men acting in physical environment" is seen closely linked to the production and acquisition of things and money.[105] As Susanne Lettow indicates, this kind of materialism exercises epistemological attempts to conceive the totality of being by giving matter an immutable and passive, and in that sense inaccessible, position.[106] Materiality in that regard is formulated as a representationalism where matter as a physical component is closely tied to the economic dimensions such as money. Thus, Historical Materialism is predominantly engaged with means of producing subsistence within a historically situated context, transforming the world through labor and thus shaping history. It keeps close to a common Marxist grasp where reproduction functions as the base for oppression which consequently produces social difference.[107] The material produced thus is one that objectively links all people of a society, but because of a decisive unequal ability of parts of that society to possess such material, it establishes structural difference.

An understanding that developed close to Marxist social and political theory is Cultural Materialism, coined by Raymond Williams in the early 1980s. It is not to be confused with the same termed Cultural Materialism formulated by Marvin Harris about 10 years earlier, which also very tightly stems from a Marxist tradition

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102   Keshavarz, "Design-Political Nexus", 4.

103   *A term coined by Donna J. Haraway.*

104   Williams, *Keywords*, 146.

105   Ibid., 149.

106   Susanne Lettow, "Turning the turn: New materialism, historical materialism and critical theory", *Thesis Eleven* 140.1 (2017), 110.

107   Rosemary Hennessy and Chrys Ingraham, *Materialist Feminism. A reader in Class, Difference, and Women's Lives* (Routledge, 1997), 4.

but focused much more on the structural features of infrastructural production and their influence on the ideological superstructure and cultural structure of a society.[108] Williams' Cultural Materialism, however, emanates from the critique that culture captured an inferior position within Historical Materialism. The at that time broadly established understanding of an economic base that would determine an ideological superstructure rendered cultural practices mere mirrors of the economy. This provoked a frustration amongst many intellectuals; Adorno, Gramsci, Horkheimer could be mentioned as examples; that led to a renewed grasp of culture as such, namely as an "everyday experiences".[109] This brought about the consequence that, contrasting to Historical Materialism, materialism was not merely understood as tied to economic activities and confined to a material as a physical dimension, it was located within life as a process and thus could adopt forms apart from physical substance.[110] Here, an extension of the understanding of materialism becomes evident: it is not only about produced goods that indicate for instance social order, it is everything that develops while humans are active in their social and material environment. This points to the fact that also formed relationships, public engagement, or modified settings came to be understood as a material practice.

While Cultural Materialism in Williams' formulation is closely linked to the critical review of predominantly texts and their political importance embedded in a specific moment in time, this is an important crossover to note for the aim of this thesis. Hence, dominant cultural practices are regarded as political ones and not merely as a matter of taste. They are understood as taking part in hegemonic discourses and thus are inscribed with certain values. As Helms points out: "It is through such notion [sic!] of hegemony that cultural materialism regards dominance as an active process – and one which extends far beyond traditional notions of politics into the fabric of the society, its traditions, institutions, and cultural formations".[111] This coupling of the extended understanding of the material world to a hegemonic discourse is significant for how material objects are understood within the frame of this thesis: if culture is political then also the material of such culture has political meaningfulness and can be employed as a tool to validate and inscribe certain values.

Around the same time, as well closely descending from a Marxist material understanding, Materialist Feminism has been developed in the late 1970s'. As two of its founding thinkers Rosemary Hennessy and Chrys Ingraham put forward Material Feminism works especially against abandoning connections that bind together gender, sexuality, race, and nationality with labor. It predominantly emphasizes the socially produced difference that comes along with the material reality that emanates from capitalism as a class system.[112] As Jennifer Wicke, another crucial voice in the movement, puts it cited by Gimenez: it is "a feminism that insists on examining the material conditions under which social arrangements, including those of gender hierarchy, develop [...] materialist feminism avoids

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108   Catherine Buzney and Jon Marcoux, "Cultural Materialism," *University of Alabama* online https://anthropology.ua.edu/theory/cultural-materialism/ (accessed 14th Apr 2022).

109   Gesa Helms, "Philosophy: Cultural materialism," *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (Elsevier: London, 2009), 428.

110   Helms, "Cultural materialism", 426.

111   Ibid., 427.

112   Hennessy and Ingraham, *Materialist Feminism*, 2p.

seeing this [gender hierarchy] as the effect of a singular [...] patriarchy and instead gauges the web of social and psychic relations that make up a material, historical moment".[113] But it is also Gimenez who draws attention to the oftentimes unclear understanding of what Materialist Feminist actually is, which comes from an equally broad and diverse comprehension within the movement. However, as a binding characteristic Materialist Feminism attends to inequality which is produced due to an imbalance of power between "those who own, and those who labor"[114] as a prime aspect of capitalism. The thus established class system could be interpreted as the material result of oppression, which simultaneously is bound to material wealth. Here, the formulation ties in with a Marxist understanding of Materialism. At the same time, this points to the critique that Gimenez expresses. In her words: "all other forms of inequality besides class, and its corresponding ideologies, are equally 'material', meaning they are not only equally real and important but also equal in their causal powers".[115] With that, she hints toward a non-causal understanding of oppressive powers that puts them on an equal level of influence. This poses a limitation of the theory of Materialist Feminism, as it is an obvious fact, and as the trimmed rights of the LGBT+ community in Poland show, that minorities have much weaker agency and heard voice and that is – I would argue – how oppression becomes entrenched and constitutes a hegemonic power. Nonetheless, the value Materialist Feminism brings forward is that materiality produces, reproduces, and maintains conditions for oppression as well as freedom.

In recent years, a material turn has been taking place in theoretical discussions, a new approach that is widely known as New Materialism. It is marked by a shift of agency to matter itself in order to overcome the neglect of a nonhuman world, as predominant in Historical Materialism, and to develop a broader understanding of agency that accounts for activity of humans equally as of non-humans.[116] However, this bears its problems as Lettow points out since it can develop a posthumanism in which "agency is transformed to anonymous, meta-historical forces" that leaves no room to contextualize structural differences.[117] This attribution of agency to the other-than-human opens up a valuable trajectory to challenge human exceptionalism in regard to which actions are ascribed with importance; however, if it reaches as far as relinquishing responsibility from human subjects as proposed by some advocates of New Materialism, as Alf Hornborg cautions, it disassociates the objects from their wider embeddedness that makes them possible.[118] Yet simultaneously, New Materialism offers approaches on how to oppose a condition of political depression by mobilizing new modalities of political agency, Brigitte Bargetz argues.[119] Bargetz introduces in that regard especially the potential of the inconceivable, the notion of imagination, and posthuman intervention as a new materialist approach. This hints toward perceiving objects as political themselves, as acting with willful agency. This mode of political agency precisely relinquishes the human from responsibility. Rather, and here I agree with

113   Martha E. Gimenez, "What's material about materialist feminism? A Marxist Feminist critique" *Radical Philosophy* 101 (2000), 19.

114   Hennessy and Ingraham, *Materialist Feminism*, 3.

115   Gimenez, "What's material about materialist feminism?," 21.

116   Lettow, "Turning the turn", 107.

117   Ibid., 108.

118   Alf Hornborg, "Objects Don't Have Desires: Toward an Anthropology of Technology beyond Anthropomorphism. American Anthropologist," *American Anthropologist* 123.4 (2021), 760.

119   Brigitte Bargetz, "Longing for agency: New materialisms' wrestling with despair," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 26.2 (2019), 184.

how Hornborg articulates this relationship: "For an artifact to signify something to somebody is not to communicate but to serve as a *vehicle* for communication between agents".[120]

It is thus important to note that physical objects are here not perceived to be vibrant and alive themselves, as suggested by new material scholars such as Jane Bennett[121]. I would rather put it that matter as such acts as a mediator between the spoken and the prevailing. What appears to be helpful here is what Mathew Gandy coins as Evidentiary Materialism.[122] He identifies the forensic turn as a crucial alternative to neo-vitalism and New Materialism. Evidentiary Materialism presents a conceptual synthesis with an emphasis on collaborative forms of knowledge, which is closely linked to the field of Forensic Architecture.[123] Gandy predominantly writes about this from the perspective of urban political ecology. Thus, the conceptual synthesis takes place between organisms and forensic work. Investigating the material reality of right-wing populism informed by the lens of Material Articulations, I propose to construct this synthesis between material objects in their physical substance and organism with means of articulation.

Hence, matter is understood as a material condition under which social arrangements develop and manifest. It is predominantly investigated in its physical existence but can only speak if a person speaks for it. I don't aspire a mere reliance on pure matter as a representationalism, as dominant in Historical Materialism, nor a solely grasp of matter as themselves vibrant protagonists in social life, as proposed in New Materialism. Rather, the way in which Cultural Materialism presents matter as something originating from and carrying of dominant political structures constitutes the ground for which to assess its existence in an "evidentiary" manner.

towards the *matter of facts*

Matter understood as Evidentiary Materialism with political significance offers to employ ideas of Forensic Architecture to develop a methodological approach to investigate the material reality of right-wing populism in Poland's LGBT-free zones. Forensic Architecture in this regard helps to understand the relation of human values and physical space as evidence to deduce specific happenings. Within its frame, material objects are regarded as "sensors of the environment outside themselves". They are situated within the context they are built which makes them respondents to adjoining happenings and renders them holders of information in their formal mutations.[124]

> *Let me describe an incident to illustrate. During the Equality March in Łódź in June 2021 someone threw a stone. The stone flies in Piotrkowska Street and for one or another reason ends up in the window of the entrance door to an abandoned pizza place. The window did not shatter but it cracked; a firm circle in its core from which hundreds of thousands*

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120   Hornborg, "Objects Don't Have Desires," 760.
121   Jane Bennet, *Vibrant Matter* (Duke University Press, 2010).
122   Matthew Gandy, "Urban political ecology: a critical reconfiguration," *Progress in Human Geography 46.1, (2022).*
123   Gandy, "Urban political ecology", 33.
124   Eyal Weizman, *Forensic architecture: Violence at the threshold of detectability* (Princeton University Press, 2017), 52p.

of splinters radiate. ---- I look at these hundreds of thousands of splinters on the 22 February 2022 almost three-quarters of a year later and it is still there. The window partially turned into cracks, the cracks turned into testimonies. The window with its crack turned into a medium.

What makes the object to evidence is precisely its material mutation. This is how information gets inscribed into form and material and can be assessed. However, not only is a certain material object an inscription site for incidents, but it is also a cornerstone for possibility or unfeasibility of action as it has an effect on its surroundings.

> *Here the research project about the Walter-Benjamin-Platz in Berlin made by Stephan Trüby and Studio Miessen for the Rechte Räume Symposium, in English 'Right Spaces', exemplifies these claims. In a published article in ARCH+ in 2019, Verena Hartbaum puts forward that the architect Hans Kollhoff affiliates nationalistic ideas with the design of this public space. This, she argues, becomes evident not only in the way fascist architecture is cited in the design of the adjoining buildings with symmetric repetition and colonnades.[125] In fact, it is not only about the architectural design, rather it is a quote engraved into one of the flagstones of the public spaces' floor covering. Written there is: "Bei Usura hat keiner ein Haus von gutem Werkstein / die Quadern wohlbehauen, fugenrecht / dass die Stirnfläche sich zum Muster gliedert." [originally in English: „With usura hath no man a house of good stone / each block cut smooth and well fitting / that design might cover their face."[126]], a part of Ezra Pound poem 'With Usura' from 1936. Pound himself is a controversial figure as he is presumed to be an advocate of Mussolini and has been imprisoned charged with promoting antisemitic propaganda. As the author notes, it is thus quite odd that precisely a quote from Ezra Pound is applied to the Walter-Benjamin-Platz, who is well known for his stances against Fascist Politics and his death while escaping from the Nazis. She argues that by choosing this quote the architect conducts clear political programming.[127]*

The research on the Walter-Benjamin Platz draws out that architectural design is far from neutral and carries ideological stances. Subsequently, a certain atmosphere is transported that may make individuals either feel empowered or unwelcomed.

*I still don't feel comfortable holding my boyfriends hand, I have I never did I mean maybe one or two times when I was surrounded by queer people _ok_, but I am just *terrified of doing that, I am terrified_ and I know a lot of other polish queers are just terrified of it. ––– – Kuba*

125   Verena Hartbaum, "Rechts in der Mitte. Hans Kollhoffs CasaPound" *ARCH+* 235 (2019), 222.

126   *The whole poem can be read here*: https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/54319/canto-xlv

127   Harbaum, "Rechts in der Mitte," 223.

This brings us back to the discussion on materialism and the question of what position matter takes in an incident. Forensic Architecture as a methodology does not attain to either a new materialist understanding nor a mere historical one. Even though the founding head behind its formulation Eyal Weizman indicates that the way in which Forensic Architecture is concerned with the structural history of a building poses a close link to the conceptual term Historical Materialism, the main objective is to produce evidence.[128] Thus, objects are viewed as material evidence, as witnesses without political subjectivity in order to make an argument with legal accountability.[129] The focus on buildings as a historical document shows parallels to Historical Materialism but extends it by attributing effect and interaction emanating from materials to their surroundings, as exemplified in a fear of holding hands publicly because the public space belongs to someone else. However, Forensic Architecture as well challenges human exceptionalism to the extent that physical objects can also 'know' something, especially in their formal mutations, as the many splinters in the window suggest, but without dismissing the role of humans as the initiators.

What also plays a constituting role is the question of time and for which period a contestation has been going on. A sticker for instance can be pasted to a lamppost without soft-pedaling daily. The materials assessed hence indicate an up-to-date temporality. This is probably explained by the topicality of the LGBT-free zones in Poland. Like this, matter can be understood as evidence of happenings. And like this, matter becomes to be a *matter of facts*. The material produced within human activity is evidently an expression of a certain hegemonic belief system. It is a matter of facts to uncover these materialized values.

methodological implication: *speaking with another's voice*
To develop the methodology applied for this thesis further, one more link to the practice of Forensic Architecture needs to be established. The hundreds of thousands of splinters in the window on Piotrkowska Street cannot speak really. As evidence, they can speak as far as testifying that a stone has been thrown. But they cannot tell if that stone that let the window now hold these hundreds of thousands of splinters was thrown by protesters of the Equality March or by people not conforming to this protest taking place. They cannot identify the thrower; they cannot shed light upon the reason for the stone throw. But what they can do is to make unmistakably clear that a stone has been thrown, "they speak softly but they never forget, and they never lie"[130].

The thousands of hundreds of splinters need an alliance, as much as the researcher needs one. And this is precisely what Forensic Architecture employs as a tool and what Evidentiary Materialisms describes as a synthesis. The Latin word 'forensis' introduces the practice of making an argument by using an object. Thus, the

128   Weizman, Forensic architecture, 54.
129   Eyal Weizman, "Forensic architecture. Only the criminal can solve the crime," *Radical Philosophy* 164 (2010), 10p.
130   Weizman, "Forensic architecture. Only the criminal can solve the crime," 12.

object, or here referred to as matter of fact, speaks through someone which ties a close bond between the object and the speaker as a testimonial unit.[131] Hence, it is about lending one's voice to the object while the object lends its mute ken to oneself. It is an alliance that is formed which renders both participants mediators of each other. I argue that this puts the speaker as well as the object on an equal level where synergies are created, to refer to Evidentiary Materialism. An alliance is formed. This can also be anchored in the theoretical lens of Material Articulations. In that sense, the matter is a materialized muted articulation. It speaks without words. It needs someone to speak for it so that someone can speak with it.

methodological application: a voice of many
Before traveling to Poland in FEB/MAR 2022 I read news- and scientific articles, blog posts, postings, etc. about the LGBT-free zones. While doing that, I started to contact people I already know from Poland, but also Polish politicians, local activists, associations who have in one or another way a relation to Poland or a connection to the happenings around the LGBT-free zones. I wanted to establish some relations beforehand as my predominant aim of the trip was to gain a better understanding of lived realities in places that declared themselves as LGBT-free. This seemed far out of reach based on written records. The people that are part of this research identify along various characteristics. I believe it is not important to highlight precisely which characteristics these are but much more to state there is more to them than a binary two-gender model or a possible one-dimensional understanding of the term queer signaling merely a gender orientation. This runs the risk of presenting unifying signifiers that deny each and everyone their own intersectional subject position, as Nina Lykke stresses.[132] It is hence not only about incorporating voices that are targeted under the LGBT+ term, as topics of oppression cut through class, race, ethnicity, and other categories.

My first destination in Poland was the voivodeship Łódź, where I stayed in the correspondent capital and traveled to the suburban town Zkierz as well as the city Skierniewice. In the second half of my fieldwork period, I went to Warsaw where I made a day trip to Kobyłka which is a town within Warsaw's metropolitan area. All these places, except for Warsaw, are marked as an LGBT-free zone in the Atlas Nienawiści (Atlas of Hate), the interactive online map compiled by Polish activists drawing out the declaration status of each municipality in Poland.[133] It is important to stress once more that the atlas indicates places as LGBT-free zones also if they have adopted the Charter of the Rights for the Family. Thus, some of these places may negate the status of an LGBT-free zone. Besides walking through the areas on my own to get a feeling for these places, I primarily meet different people with whom I talk and take little walks together.

I meet *Kuba* in Łódź and Zgierz where we walk and talk a lot. He just recently started to voice and show his identity out in the public.

131 Weizman, "Forensic architecture. Only the criminal can solve the crime," 11.
132 Lykke, "Passionate Disidentification," 33.
133 Gawronowi, Pająka and Prenecie, "Atlas nienawiści (Atlas of Hate)," https://atlasnienawisci.pl (accessed 29th Jan 2022).

I speak with *Ida* online and she tells a lot about her experiences over the years. She also explains about her work at the Fabryka Równoźci.

I sit with *Miklaz* in Pop'n'Art. It is one of the only openly declared queer spaces in Łódź. He founded it with two friends in 2017.

I walk with *Julia* while she speaks about the recent developments from her perspective and her lived experience.

I get together with *Piotr* in Warsaw where he is working as an artistic researcher and lecturer. We speak a lot about Polish Politics and Political Homophobia.

I meet *Anette* from the Estonian LGBT Association to hear about Estonia's and more generally the outsides' perspective on the happenings in Poland.

I hold a chat-talk with *Jakub*, he is one of the three founders of the Atlas of Hate. He sheds light upon the zones as a political tool and helps me to understand their implications.

I talk with *Revox* about their personal experiences and motivations to hold against the oppression. They frequently perform as a dragqueen in different places in Poland.

I hear from *Bartek* about the stigmatizations as a queer shop-owner and the emancipatory potential that comes from taking one's fate into one's own hands.

The talks were held in the form of semi-structured interviews. I decided to conduct the mutual talks in that manner because it felt important to remain flexible within the conversation and not aim for certain answers to be given to me from the beginning. As my dialog partners share to some extent very intimate and personal stories with me, a comfortable, open-ended, and sensitive format for our get-together appeared to be crucial. This is precisely what the method of semi-structured interviews offers: "The dialogue can meander around the topics on the agenda–rather than adhering slavishly to verbatim questions as in a standardized survey–and may delve into totally unforeseen issues."[134] , as this method is described.

The common walks are guided by questions about areas that seemingly have changed in the individual perception of my counterpart, spots where incidents have happened experienced by the person I am with, or anything more that people would like to share. I take pictures of signs, objects, and places people show me on site. For the practice of the shared walks, I am rather loosely drawing from tools of Forensic Architecture. Forensic Architecture developed a methodology called "Situated Testimony", which is applied as an interviewing technique within their practice. A 3D architectural model is employed to bring the interviewee back to a bygone happening. By that, scenes can be reconstructed as well as the

134   William C. Adams, "Conducting Semi-Structured Interviews," *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation* 4th edition (2015), 493.

witness's memory may be activated.[135] In the case of mutual walks during the fieldwork in Poland, the revisiting of a site, in reality, takes on a similar function as an aid to reconstruct and remember. But more than that, and this ties back to the beforehand described methodology of speaking with another's voice, the people I met are the voices of the muted material objects. They speak about what I alone cannot see: they are the ones that engage in synthesis with the matter as such.

All the talks have been recorded with permission from the particular respondent. This helped to engage more actively in the conversation as I did not need to note the discussion down and thus the dialogue could happen more fluently. To incorporate the voices of the people I met more strongly, I have transcribed them in their original form. That means that they are put into writing as they have been spoken out; every break, every mmh, all aahs, possible grammatical mistakes, each filler word are incorporated. By that, I hope to give their individual voices the necessary space to remain theirs and to unfold into a materialized figure of speech. I don't want to clean out what has been said and how it has been expressed. I would like this thesis to be a voice of many and not only of my own.

During the fieldwork, I made a clear decision to focus mainly on how individuals perceive the places and their spatial qualities that currently are declared as an LGBT-free zone out of their own lived reality instead of more universal records. This means that before being in Poland I also imagined taking a closer look at city development plans, monuments, and new designs in the places where I spent time. Hence, this marks a more direct approach towards the supposed indented formulation into physical form from the political elites. This would work in conformity with the work of Stephan Trüby and others in the already mentioned project "Rechte Räume", where especially architecture is assessed as a way of programming politics in material form. While this serves as an inspiration for my thesis, I felt that the approach I could take to contribute to an analog topic may differ a bit. Meeting many different people and engaging with their stories and lived experiences opened up a space of possibility to draw from their assessments and perception. Here, it was especially about tracing material signs that affect the respondent. This 'grounded knowledge' appears to fit the assessed case study of the LGBT-free zones in Poland better in the way that it accesses much more immediate expressions. I argue that this is crucial not only because it directly emanates from aggrieved parties, but because it speaks to the relatively short persistence of these zones. I believe that because of their time-actuality there is a certain limit to assessing their impact on development plans and suchlike. That said, the focus on signifiers of support as well as of oppression in public spaces manifests as depicting the matter of facts. On another note, it became evident that the matter of right-wing populism in public spaces is predominantly advanced by political supporters instead of the ruling party itself. Hence, the matter assessed needed to be matched accordingly. As already mentioned, during common walks I took images of precisely such signifiers denoted by the respective conversational partner. To continue this investigation, the people that I am appointed with and I decided together to continue this depiction and keep on taking images. These images will provide the base for the discussion around the material reality of right-wing populism in Poland in the following.

135   Forensic Architecture, „Situated Testimony," https://forensic-architecture.org/methodology/situated-testimony (accessed 11th Mar 2022).
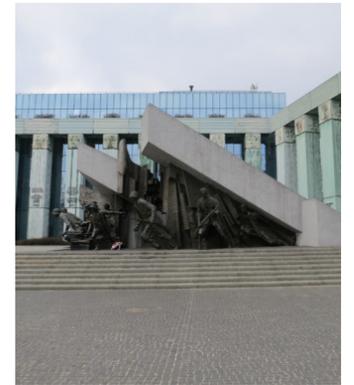
a
landscape

of material

signs 2022

compiled

with shared
images of
Julia

Tyszka,
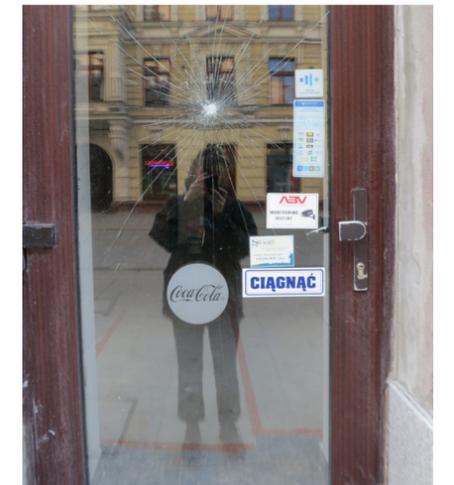Jakub   Gałązka,
Revox, and
Mira
Samonig.

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accompanying the thesis "the matter of right-wing populism
in Poland's

LGBT-free
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part 1

23

5   from the streets

What happens on the streets? This question comes from what Majewska and Szreder have termed as an appearance of bold, masculine bodies advancing oppression in the streets, in the public realm, as quoted above. It becomes apparent that Polish politics, first and foremost the party PiS, actively promote a distinct conservatism with a narrow frame of national identity, in which many alternative interpretations of society do not fit. This morbid symptom, as discussed before, should be researched on the ground, as Babic claims, since this constitutes the realm where societal change is forging ahead the morbid changes of international politics. As Babic puts it: "A political economy of everyday narratives and subaltern politics offers empirical entry points".[136] To aim at such a political economy of everyday narratives, and to arrive now at the overarching interest worked around in this thesis, namely the material reality of right-wing politics, it is crucial again to raise the discussion on materialism. This is because material evidence could possibly be discussed in many different ways, and it is not in my scope of ability to define the only one reasonable. However, to come closer to the matter of this thesis, I have proposed to focus on the *matter* of facts. In the following, I will draw from the shared experiences and narrations, matching them with possible interpretations of the material reality of the anti-LGBT+ politics in Poland. Some of this evidence might appear to be quite mundane – but I argue that this is precisely its power. The materialization of values is not an apparent endeavor. It creeps in niches, it hides, it may be invisible; it does not inhabit every skin, it does not take shape in front of every pair of eyes. We need to be attentive to the subliminal.

*

The better part of the fieldwork I spent in Łódź, the third biggest city in the country. Łódź is the only city as an urban category left to be covered by a LGBT-free zone due to the fact that the correspondent Voivodeship Łódź has still enacted the Charter of the Rights for the Family since the 28th January 2020. Since 2019, five out of fourteen provinces have declared themselves as LGBT-free zones; however, up to today, the Voivodeship Łódź is the only one out of that five that has not resigned from the status. This can clearly be tracked when looking at the many times mentioned Atlas of Hate.[137] The reason why all other four Voivodeships had already declined in 2021 was the dread of threatened funding-loss from the European Union.[138] The voivodeship Łódź however, sidestepped this by crossing out the term 'ideology' and 'LGBT' from their Local Government Charter of Family Rights, as well as adding a preamble to the introduction claiming that the aim of the Charter is to "emphasize the importance and role of each family as the foundation of the social order and basic social community, which constitutes the optimal environment for human development". It is also stated that it is in no way "an attempt to violate the rights and freedoms of any people or to discriminate against them", as the Polish News reports.[139]

136   Babic, "Let's talk about the interregnum," 784.

137   Gawronowi, Pająka and Prenecie, "Atlas nienawiści (Atlas of Hate)," https://atlasnienawisci.pl.

138   Grzegorz Ksel, "Świętokrzyskie nie jest już strefą wolną od LGBT. Sejmik uchylił uchwałę, kolejne to rozważą?" *noizz*, 23th September 2021, https://noizz.pl/lgbt/swietokrzyskie-sejmik-wojewodz-ki-uchylil-uchwale-anty-lgbt/cxc7373 (accessed 12th Apr 2022).

139   "Łódź voivodeship. The Seymik introduced changes to the Local Government Charter of Family Rights. The word 'ideology' was deleted," *Polish News* online, 28th September 2021, https://polish-news.co.uk/lodz-voivodeship-the-seymik-introduced-changes-to-the-local-government-charter-of-family-rights-the-word-ideology-was-deleted/ (accessed 1st Mar 2022).

Same applies to Skierz, which is situated on the periphery of the city Łódź and consequently also part of the Voivodeship. The municipality Skierniewice possesses a self-formulated declaration since 27th September 2019 problematizing the Equality Marches as interfering with the "rooted upbringing in the Christian spirit" and violating the feelings of Polish people.[140] The municipality of Kobyłka mandates a Local Charter of the Family Rights since the 21st October 2019.[141]

Same as implied on a national political scale predominantly Łódź, but also the other municipalities, changed the narrative about the way the discussion is conducted when it comes to sexual minorities. It is now not anymore about a clearly labeled disaffirmation; it has begun to take the form of an endorsement. This is a clear traceable rhetorical shift that has material consequences in the public space, on the streets as I frame it in this chapter, and which appears to be not evident at first glance.

sticky claims

But one thing that stands out almost immediately is the many different stickers with political messages that can be found almost everywhere in and around Łódź. Most communicate pro-LGBT+ stances and advocate for the liberation of sexual rights. What is notable is that there is just a very small portion of produced stickers that carry an opposing opinion, meaning anti-LGBT+ sentiments. The operative point here might be the 'produced'. While there might be not many anti-LGBT+ stickers, it is in sharp distinction how much graffiti there is. Sprayed Paroles against gender diversity, crossed through rainbow-flags, amongst others – the anti-LGBT+ sentiment finds much more application in this form of expression. However, this way of voicing and manifesting an opinion publicly does not entail a production process. Hence, the group behind graffiti as a way of expression might possibly have a different form of organization.

140   Declaration of Skierniewice, Online PDF: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1RkQalqU680Z2TuL_T8R-jf6vkbb0ATiZH/view

141   Declaration of Kobyłka Online PDF. https://bip-v1-files.idcomjst.pl/sites/46729/wiadomosci/491614/files/129_samorzadowa_kart_praw_rodziny.pdf

For instance, it needs less monetary expenses as well as preparation to write "LGBT? -nie!" on a wall than it does designing and printing a sticker - I would like to record that I am making this argument predominantly about graffiti in the form of tags or similar instead of murals. These material signs raise the assumption that the propagated political stances are actively contested within the society as well. It does not only constitute a topic broached by political elites which acts as a transnational signifier between states. It is a topic well established in societal discourse, which prompts local or private stakeholders to act.

What both acts have in common, however, is that they are quite an immediate and tangible way of using the public realm to address specific topics. That means that a material manifestation of political stances both through stickers as well as graffiti can react in an up-to-date manner and by that reproduces opinions. Here, the already mentioned time significance comes to the fore: the material reality of politics exists in different ways. It is however crucial to take the temporality into account for which period a discussion has been going on. If to think back to the example of the Walter-Benjamin-Platz in Berlin and the accusation that the design is infused with anti-Semitic attitudes, it shows that the alleged populistic beliefs cited in a material manner emanate from a longer gone time. This may open up the scope for a set of materializations that in their manifestation are more time-consuming and stronger infiltrated. I would argue the planning, designing, and building of a public square count as one of them. The LGBT-free zones on the other hand constitute a quite recent political topic. Hence, the way that responses to this manifest in public space differs and takes on ways of more immediate forms of materialization.

The way that Graffiti or other place-marking signs are often designed as gender normative serves to reproduce gender hierarchies in public spaces. Piotr tells me about another incident that happened in Warsaw in 2019, where the word 'gays' with an error to a door was sprayed on one of the city's apartments buildings. It was understood as indicating that people with a homosexual orientation are living in that specific house. The way that attention was shed upon individuals catered for an immediate counteraction of overpainting that material sign. It is a harsh example, drawing out the employment of tagging in order to purposefully expose individuals and stigmatize them. This stigmatization through a material sign inevitably reminds of the ways the Jewish community was marked in Nazi Germany.

articulations as material embodiment

Graffiti is also present especially in the inner urban areas of Łódź in another way. On many house walls, the letters ŁKS colored in white and red like the Polish flag with a black edging are visible. ŁKS corresponds to Łódzki Klub Sportowy, the local football teams' fan club. When speaking to Kuba, he points out this

specific tag as a signifier that makes him feel uncomfortable. As he explains, it is a frequent happening that supporters of this fan club randomly confront people on the street by asking which sports team they are supporting, or how they identify concerning their sexual orientation. Questions like this are taken as a source to reply with verbal or physical violence in case the answer is not in conformation with the respective football club fan's beliefs. This example quite distinctively illustrates the described bold, masculine bodies materializing oppression on the streets. This kind of materialization is twofold: for one it is present in the way territory and hence the confirmation of a defined set of beliefs is marked with the ŁKS-tag. For another, it brings the incorporation and subsequent discharge of a propagated belief system formulated by political elites, embodied by voters or supporters to the fore.

I would say it is about claiming territory. _Cause ahm I don't know how the football culture is in your country* but here it is very violent,   it is very violent and people would just fight over it. You just get asked on the street *randomly which sports team are you ahm cheering, what is your sexual orientation or something. If you give a bad answer they would just beat you up.
––– – Kuba

Embodiment as a form of materialization expands the outset defined understanding of matter. To recall, I have proposed to focus on matter as a physical substance and to primarily draw attention to its mute characteristic. In this case, however, the matter looked at is not mute; it rather exercises its methods through speech. Yet, it still is the matter, the body in its physical substance, that brings effect to the streets. In that sense, embodiment is a materialization that becomes even more telling if it transgresses the private realm and plays out in public spaces. The incorporation of values and their subsequent propagation on the streets in a watchman-manner highlights the embattlement of the public space as a signifier for national political stances. In this case, right-wing populism in Poland appears to reach as far as it is bottom-up not only in self-identifying as *for* the people but in the sense that it is being advanced *by* the people.

This poses the question of where an installed set of beliefs or advocated common sense has its roots. As discussed, the rendering of an enemy can be counted as a populistic strategy to win electoral votes. Hence, the party PiS choosing the LGBT+ community as such an enemy may be interpreted as mainly striving to remain in

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power. In consequence, this would mean that the political elites themselves start to impose a set of beliefs with the motivation to employ it as a tool to gather support. Despite that, the presence of people on the streets actively spurring on the same convictions may also hint towards anti-LGBT+ sentiment settled within the Polish society. I am strongly arguing for such a view, as the discussion around gender is not a new one, not globally and also not in Poland, and a mere political purpose with such radical consequences on the streets appears to be far out of its inciting reach.

Another way that can offer valuable clues to this question is an assessment to whom the discussed material signs can be traced back. In that sense, the already discussed stickers and graffiti clearly emanate from private or organizational entities. All of them have not been placed by governmental institutions or alike. This emphasizes the assumption that anti-LGBT+ stances are carried by a part of Polish society.

the matter of the absent

This points to another important aspect intrinsic to the discussion about material evidence. It is not only about the material that is present, that can be seen and sensed; it is precisely also about the material that is absent. An example to illustrate this is, for instance, the absence of rainbow-flags hanging out of windows in Łódź. Throughout my time and walks there, I have not seen a flag in front of a window or similar, while this occurred much more frequently in Warsaw for instance. Warsaw is the only place I have visited which is not and has never been declared a zone. As the capital of Poland and the location that kicked off the emergence of the zones, I have referred to the mayor Trzaskowski signing a Charter supportive of the rights of the LGBT+ community, it constitutes a more open-minded and supportive environment as many correspondents ascertain. To arrive back to the question of where material signs have their origin, the same can be argued for an absence of materialization on the part of the government, which properly is advancing such sentiments. There is no expansion into the material world from the discursive character of the LGBT-free zones conducted by governmental institutions.

One material sign that is drawing out that paradox is a project of the Polish LGBT+-activist Bartosz Staszewski in 2019 after the huge wave of zone declarations. Staszewski created a sign following the official design manner which reads "STREFNA WOLNA OD LGBT" in four different languages. The specific wording picks up on the sticker that the newspaper Gazeta Polska has been handing out for free. This plate has been signposted underneath all the placename signs of areas that had adopted the resolution and photographed with an LGBT+-identifying person living in the respective area. On his website Staszewski elaborates on his motivation as follows: "I want to show the monster that the politicians are fighting with and that we are not an abstract being, an ideology, but

real flesh and blood people who must live in these places."[142]

With this action, the activist appropriated the materializations as a tool of resistance. He put a tag on and simply only labeled areas with what they claimed to be. This act was met with strong opposition by the local governments and Staszewski is currently confronted with a lawsuit following these actions. This renders the incident an even more highly charged one: local authorities claim to be anti-LGBT+ free and when they are marked as such, they accuse the identifier of defamation. This shows very clearly the force that is inherent to the process of materialization.

materialized controversy

Not only the agitation around the project of Bart Staszewski but also the alteration and modification of materialized signs within the public realm render a particular materialization into a battleground. The ideological conflict is not only present in the sense that both positions, one anti-LGBT+ and another one pro-LGBT+, are expressed in material form in the public realm but as well that the dispute finds materialization in these modifications. A sticker scratched off its surface; a graffiti overdrawn – these material modifications show the different existent positions towards the topic around the LGBT+ discourse in Poland. Moreover, the sticker perceived in combination with scratches from attempting to get it off materializes the resultant fight between two sets of beliefs. It is hence not a juxtaposition of two opinions, it is an opposition and a clashing collide. It draws out the effect of a material sign on its environment urging conflicting stakeholders to act, to remove or alter its appearance.

Another example of this is Julita Wójcik's installation 'Tęcza', which translates to Rainbow, which was first set up in 2012 at Zbawiciela Square in central Warsaw as Julia tells me. The installation was made of an artificial flower rainbow, standing up in an outsized semicircle in the center of the square. It was removed in 2015 after it had been burned down seven times in the time span in between. The rainbow colors were courted with resentment and perceived as an attribute to the LGBT+ community. This led opponents, far-right nationalist groups in Julia's description who was present at one of the vandalizations, to be triggered, and again indicates the power of material signs. It goes as far as wanting to eradicate a certain symbol in the public sphere. What speaks most loudly though, is precisely the burnt rainbow as a materialization of an antipathy-causing symbol.

material's affective properties

As hinted at previously, materials have an effect on their environment. This emanates from the discussion around matter as evidence that not only is a sensor of the environment but at the same time affects the sensing of the environment's users. The change in the publics' response to LGBT-attributed signs since the

142   Bart Staszewski, "First photos of the sign project" *LGBT-free zones in Poland* (blog), https://lgbtfree-zones.pl/cool_timeline/first-photos-of-the-sign-project/ (accessed 22th Mar 2022).

declaration of the zones is a commonly narrated experience. Predominantly, the widely shared feeling is that there is a lower level of acceptability or even indifference on the streets. The reaction that queer-identifying people meet in Poland rather got much more vocal and offensive to an extent that many started to hide certain identifications when on the streets. This very clearly indicates the effect of material signs on the one hand as well as materialized, embodied sets of beliefs on the other hand, and how they change the atmosphere and newly define the scope of action.

We always had a difficult time for LGBT people here in Poland. _Now_ it just, I don't know, maybe even not more oppressive but   I don't know how to tell you, it's it's —- I don't know.
*   Sometimes it was something I was thinking of   and now when I go to street sometimes I am scared. It wasn't my feeling earlier. But after Białystok - this is the equality march when was the main aah   you know that the person was beaten   on that equality march. So after the Białystok I started feeling really *uncomfortable when I have something rainbow on me. And sometimes I am just afraid and hide something even.*
––– – Ida

I even had this situation recently, when I was like not even wearing colourful stuff but I was just looking more like   like a guy I think aaah yeah I was just walking and someone was just starting to abuse me
––– – Julia

Another example of effective influence emanating from a material itself is the vans with anti-LGBT+ messages present in many Polish towns. As part of an anti-pedophilia campaign the Polish organization Fundacja Życie i Rodzina, in English the Foundation for Life and Family, organized the as widely referred to 'homofobus', which is frequently seen driving through the streets. The banner covering the van reads "The LGBT lobby wants to teach children: Four-year-olds: masturbation* Six-year-olds: consenting to sex* Nine-Year-olds: the first sexual experiences and orgasms* *based on The Standards of Sex Education in Europe" translated into English and depicts a crossed through rainbow flag.[143] This, in a sense mobile materialization, emits an oppressive sentiment into the environment it moves through. It very clearly draws out a proclaimed enemy, in this case, the LGBT+ community as well as European Standards, and its presence on the street further fuels intolerance while at the same time emanating oppression.

However, this not only exists as an extrinsic effect. It may also result in a process, where people deprived of their freedom of expression precisely start to exercise these constricted ways of acting themselves. This can be referred to as internalized homophobia, which is defined as the "self-hatred and shame of homosexually oriented individuals that has been incorporated into their belief system".[144] The internalization of dominant oppressive values by the oppressed very clearly illustrates the mechanism of hegemony, as formulated by Gramsci: a set of values only starts to be installed as common sense if the subordinated group accepts it as the dominant belief system. Internalized homophobia speaks precisely to such mechanisms. It may result in trying to conform to hegemonic norms of behavior or appearance by hiding or denying one's properties. It may also result in not accepting oneself because of a feeling to not fit into the established order of things. Internalized homophobia hence points towards another aspect of materialized embodiment. It does not only exist in the way values are incorporated and consequently actively advance in the public, but also to conform to a normative set of beliefs.

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143   Ania Borkusewicz, "Calling out the homofobus," *digit magazine*, February 2021, https://www.diggit-magazine.com/articles/calling-out-homofobus (accessed 25th Mar 2022).

144   Xu et al., "Internalized homophobia, mental health, sexual behaviors, and outness of gay/bisexual men from Southwest China," *International Journal for Equity in Health* (2017), 1. Online PDF: https://equityhealthj.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s12939-017-0530-1.pdf.

*myself how I _look_ maybe I should where this blablabla Outside of Poland I don't think so much about how I *look and when I am here I *do :I just I just: I don't wanna provoke anything like_ by something that I have on; and with yeah with with aah the space :I don't know: I was like really alert after this guy approached me in the_ metro and I was like really scared for some time I think it is just normal normal internalised homophobia that you don't wanna_ cause anything bad because of *what your are *how you look which is ah incredible bad* already but yeah it is a phenomena that we are living within.*
––– – Julia

To draw back to the morbid symptoms mentioned in the beginning as a Gramscian concept, I claim that they are not only present in the rows of the political elites who frame a new national identity, but it is precisely morbid how this national canon is materialized on the streets. What is dying is hence not only present in the rise of supporting extreme political positions but also how this results in political violence in the public realm. The identified material signs of right-wing populism in Polish LGBT-free zones very clearly stem from everyday narratives. With its declarations, it can be ascertained that the materialization of this set of beliefs first and foremost exists as sheets of paper. This indicates the institutional side of material signs in Poland, an action of the elites. But what becomes evidently clear through the assessment of the material reality is that the heteronormative hegemony is most notably reproduced and expressed in public spaces by the public. This consequently makes the space homophobic and renders the material reality of right-wing populism a bottom-up one. The public space is occupied by signs and people who are perceived as advancing anti-LGBT+ sentiments in the public. They constitute the main stakeholders in materializing such values. It is hence not only a political tool in the sense of a cynical use of homophobia to win votes; it is a set of beliefs that is part of Polish society.

The more detailed assessment of material evidence is pointing towards the significance of small, easily overlooked signifiers in public spaces that hold crucial power. They signal affiliation as well as disaffirmation and are characterized

by an immediate way of expressing attitudes in material forms. Their material establishment offers a ground for conflict, which in turn plays out in a subsequent modification of their material existence. By that, the controversy around the topic gets materialized. Secondly, sedimented in material form, these signifiers have an effect on their environment which, however, is not perceived by everyone. Hate transmits through signs, which are very clearly targeted at a specific minority group. It is also important not to underestimate the absence of certain signs, here it is rather about signs of support, which once more enhances oppression in public spaces. It is hence to put on record that there is a material reality of right-wing populism in Poland, but it may remain invisible to most people. This points to the fact that it is not only a matter of facts, but it is a matter of attention and sensibility.

What is evident overall is that the public space provides a venue, especially for a kind of bottom-up right-wing populism that is advanced by the people. Matter is employed as a surface upon which the effects of power are being imposed. It is the space where oppression painfully plays out in discomfort for some. It appears that materiality in that regard has become to be associated with laying claim on, forging irreducible of, or making a set of beliefs "sticky", as Ahmed frames it. Materiality has become "a sign of irreducibility", according to Butler.[145] This stresses the turn towards matter and its situatedness within public spaces as a key responsibility of the discipline of urbanism.

I repeat: And here we are now: Putin, Orbán, Duterte, Duda. "It is as if masses of people throughout the world had stopped believing in the reigning common sense".[146] It is as if fear, danger, and hatred are praised as foundational feelings for making politics. It is as if a fused character of the material worlds with structures of oppression more and more governs public spaces. As Ahmed reminds, this works through "attributing 'others' as the 'source' of our feelings".[147] In this regard, emotions are bound up with the obtaining or establishing of an imagined social hierarchy by associating the other with meaning, and as Ahmed originally argues, by that providing a means of orientation. "Emotions are relational: they involve (re) actions or relations of 'towardness' or 'awayness' in relation to"[148] others, things, or spaces. And from this I come to argue along the string of thoughts of Donna Haraway's kinship[149] as well as Sara Ahmed's impressions[150] stating that oppressive politics can never be a mere political tool because: *you have a feeling about me, and that feeling has me; the feeling you have about me presses you towards or away from me, and this towards or away impresses upon me.* The feelings we have towards each other do not leave us and the other cold. They establish a „relatedness that carries consequences"[151]. This is of central importance for the moment being, for letting sink in what has been read and for making ground for what is to be read. Ursula K. Le Guin puts similar thought in intriguing words which I believe help to establish a way of thinking which is foundational for how to find access points to the current LGBT-free zones in Poland, and more general to a growing drift towards the political right.

145   Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex* (Routledge, 1993), 28.
146   Fraser, *The old is dying and the new cannot be born*, 8.
147   Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, 2nd edition (Routledge, 2013), 1.
148   Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, 8.
149   Donna J. Haraway, *Staying within the Trouble* (Duke University Press, 2016).
150   Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*, 6.
151   Donna Haraway, "Making Kin: An Interview With Donna Haraway" by Steve Paulson *LARB*, 6th September 2019, https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/making-kin-an-interview-with-donna-haraway/ (accessed 27th Apr 2022).

Being taken for Granite; Ursula K. Le Guin

Sometimes I am taken for granite. Everybody is taken for granite sometimes but I am not in a mood for being fair to everybody. I am in a mood for being fair to me. I am taken for granite quite often, and this troubles and distresses me, because I am not granite. I am not sure what I am but I know it isn't granite. I have known some granite types, we all do: characters of stone, upright, immovable, unchangeable, opinions the general size shape and pliability of the Rocky Mountains, you have to quarry five years to chip out one little stony smile. That's fine, that's admirable, but it has nothing to do with me. Upright is fine, but downright is where I am, or downwrong.

I am not granite and should not be taken for it. I am not flint or diamond or any of that great hard stuff. If I am stone, I am some kind of shoddy crumbly stuff like sandstone or serpentine, or maybe schist. Or not even stone but clay, or not even clay but mud. And I wish that those who take me for granite would once in a while treat me like mud.

Being mud is really different from being granite and should be treated differently. Mud lies around being wet and heavy and oozy and generative. Mud is underfoot. People make footprints in mud. As mud I accept feet. I accept weight. I try to be supportive, I like to be obliging. Those who take me for granite say this is not so but they haven't been looking where they put their feet. That's why the house is all dirty and tracked up.

Granite does not accept footprints. It refuses them. Granite makes pinnacles, and then people rope themselves together and put pins on their shoes and climb the pinnacles at great trouble, expense, and risk, and maybe they experience a great thrill, but the granite does not. Nothing whatever results and nothing whatever is changed.

Huge heavy things come and stand on granite and the granite just stays there and doesn't react and doesn't give way and doesn't adapt and doesn't oblige and when the huge heavy things walk away the granite is there just the same as it was before, just exactly the same, admirably. To change granite you have to blow it up.

But when people walk on me you can see exactly where they put their feet, and when huge heavy things come and stand on me I yield and react and respond and give way and adapt and accept. No explosives are called for. No admiration is called for. I have my own nature and am true to it just as much as granite or even diamond is, but it is not a hard nature, or upstanding, or gemlike. You can't chip it. It's deeply

impressionable. It's squashy.

Maybe the people who rope themselves together and the huge heavy things resent such adaptable and uncertain footing because it makes them feel insecure. Maybe they fear they might be sucked in and swallowed. But I am not interested in sucking and am not hungry. I am just mud. I yield. I do try to oblige. And so when the people and the huge heavy things walk away they are not changed, except their feet are muddy, but I am changed. I am still here and still mud, but all full of footprints and deep, deep holes and tracks and traces and changes. I have been changed. You change me. Do not take me for granite.[152]

152   Ursula K. Le Guin, "Being taken for Granite," *The Wave in the Mind: Talks and Essays on the Writer, the Reader, and the Imagination* (Shambhala Publications, 2004), 8-9.

6   xeno- to the urban

building on Xenofeminism

Oppression painfully plays out in discomfort for some – when in reality it concerns us all. As Yolanda Dreyer puts it very aptly: "Homophobia caused by Heteronormativity hurts everyone".[153] I want to shortly come back to this in the following, but firstly start by sketching out possible ways forward. The LGBT-free zones in Poland are not the end! In their hatefulness, they are infused with transformative potential that not only the oppressed, but everyone who takes a stance against the oppression of minorities needs to make their own. I argue that the discipline of urbanism has not only a responsibility but much more the ability to attend to topics of oppression. As claimed in the previous, it is the public space where oppression mostly plays out in an unprecedented manner, where right-wing populism publicly manifests in physical form, which furthermore arrests the freedom of non-heteronormative everyday realities. As Sara Ahmed argues it is the 'failure' to inhabit given norms that render people visible in a denouncing way. And precisely this "visibility has effects on the contours of everyday existence" in that it restricts social and bodily mobility.[154]

Urbanism is concerned with the city, the urban as a constructed milieu. As argued above, it is also always situated within a temporal and geographical context and its concomitant dominant discourse. By that, the discipline itself is knowledge-generative and hence world-shaping. Thus, not only environments but as well subjects are conditioned; urbanism hence not only studies the city, but it also shapes it, it may at times regulate it and at others produce it. Urbanism can therefore never be viewed as apart or self-contained. It is not neutral in social struggles, and it also should not be neutral. In fact, I believe there is a deficiency in maintaining an ongoing challenge of the values that are reproduced, and in the positionality, the discipline of urbanism takes in social struggles. There is a scope for actively incorporating processes that continuously rethink the values performed by the practice. As hinted at, this practice can be a discursive one in the way the urban is studied from within academia; it can as well be a planning one as in urban development; the aspect I am focusing on here is the urbanism practice as a translative one. Arturo Escobar puts it very accurately: "we design our world, and our world designs us back".[155] In other words, dominant worldviews are present in the way urbanism thinks about the urban, this then is translated into text or spatial layout and both settings simultaneously reflect back on these initial thoughts, spinning new ones. Hence, this presents not a one-way interaction of the practice to what then comes to constitute the urban realm, but a translative one in loop. I aim to direct the focus on urbanism's "insideness", of being within a context and part of a translative loop, and the potential that can arise from that.

As I will argue for in the following, I propose to do so by attaching the notion of the prefix 'xeno-' to urbanism. Prior to engaging with possible implications of

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153   Yolanda Dreyer, "Hegemony and the internalisation of homophobia caused by heteronormativity," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 63.1 (2007), 13.

154   Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 154.

155   Aturo Escobar, *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 4.

xenourbanism, I would like to state that xeno- as a prefix can also be productively attached to other disciplines.[156] Xeno- is a route to take, it brings its implications along.

"Xeno-" derives from the Ancient Greek word *xénos* which means *foreign*[157] or *stranger.* It is nowadays frequently used in terms like 'xenolith' which means from a foreign place, or 'xenomorph' as a shape that is from a different place and does not fit, or most commonly as 'xenophobia' denoting the fear of, or prejudice towards foreigners.[158] Xeno- is frequently a synonym understood to be foreign in a negative connotation, hence it is often as well associated with emotions such as fear or hatred, which have been addressed already at length in this thesis. The anti-LGBT+ sentiments in Poland could possibly also be understood as a form of xenophobia, as fear and rejection of the unknown. I am taking on this rather broad understanding of xenophobia, where it is not only grasped as a rejection of foreigners but also a rejection of *the foreign*, which might as well be practiced by locals. This implies a joint understanding that renders homophobia part of xenophobia. How the former could be understood as incorporated into the latter is probably best explained by looking at the attributes of the chemical element Xenon. It is defined as "a gas with no colour or smell" and "it does not react with other elements".[159] Here, already many similarities to the before discussed materialization of anti-LGBT+ sentiments in public spaces arise. The same as Xenon, homophobia in public space is oftentimes not sensible at first sight. For most people, it remains invisible and hardly detectable. On another note, practiced homophobia in Poland is not ready for compromise. It does not mix, and it does not accept anything other, same as the atom Xenon does not react with other atoms. The notion of xeno- can thus be described as a substantial aspect of a right-wing populism that traffics in simplified ideas of the world. But at the same time – and this is its great transformative potential I aim to unpack in the following – it can offer valuable trajectories of how to work against its oppressive powers.

The possible ways how xeno- could antagonize xenophobia are inspired by Xenofeminism, a manifesto formulated by the collective Laboria Cuboniks in 2018. Xenofeminism is invested into dismantling gender and working away from nature as a guarantor for inegalitarian political stances and seeks to position "itself as a project for which the future remains open as a site of radical recomposition".[160] As Helen Hester writes, its most compelling topic is that of social as well as biological reproduction, it aims to strip the future of "neither the prescription nor the proscription"[161] of reproduction. For this, it stresses alienation as a general condition to emancipate oneself from the heteronormative construct of capitalism.[162] This focus on reproductive rights is a significant contribution of Xenofeminism, however, it is for that reason that urbanism cannot only be xenofeminist but needs

156   The research platform *Perhaps It Is High Time for a Xeno-Architecture to Match* or *xenopoetics* by Amy Ireland could be mentioned as exemplary.

157   Merriam-Webster Dictionary, "Xenos," https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Xenos (accessed 24th Mar 2022).

158   Etymologeek, "Xeno- etymology," https://etymologeek.com/eng/xeno-/19667335 (accessed 27th Mar 2022).

159   Cambridge Dictionary, "xenon," https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/xenon (accessed 27th Mar 2022).

160   Helen Hester, *Xenofeminism* (Polity Press, 2018), 1.

161   Hester, *Xenofeminism*, 4.

162   Laboria Cuboniks, "Xenofeminism: A Politics for Alienation", Online Manifesto: https://laboriacuboniks.net/manifesto/xenofeminism-a-politics-for-alienation.

to be extended by xeno-. In other words, the topics Xenofeminism is concerned with pose a limitation for urbanism; it is rather about the way Xenofeminism deconstructs persistent notions of established topics and reformulates them into emancipatory tactics which offer urbanism a needed trajectory.

By appropriating alienation as a primary transformative force, Xenofeminism openly attempts to make sense and use of processes that are inherent to xenophobia. I believe this is precisely what the prefix of xeno- applied to urbanism could bring to the table; it is strictly forward-looking, and thus invested in constructing a future, but this by disputing existing power structures instead of conceiving utopian futures. It views the everyday as a reworkable site, as a fertile ground for possibility. This would render xenourbanism a practice that directly challenges ownership and control and thus seemingly takes up arms against paralyzing no-alternative narratives. As I have proposed to understand the practice of urbanism as a translative one, xeno- builds in a consciousness precisely about this performance of translation, about staying attentive to the values reproduced.

"No more futureless repetition on the treadmill", Laboria Cuboniks proclaims in their xenofeminist manifesto.[163] They caution against framing a possible future reduced to the mere reproduction of a particular established set of ideas. By that, the risk of mobilizing a future as a heteronormative construct into ever new times ahead arises.[164] It becomes evident that Xenofeminism proposes a constant reassessment and challenge of established norms and hegemonic belief systems, something that I aim to assess for the practice of urbanism. However, the question arises, in what way this approach would alter the concept of hegemony accordingly, as it builds on periods of stability coined by accepted common sense. Moreover, it is a bold statement to always want to stay in limbo. While I believe that there is a need for some kind of common sense to underpin social configurations, a passive reproduction is nonsensical and works as denying ourselves our own evolving potential. I argue for a more nuanced reading of what a constant reassessment could mean. It is hence not about neither never settling down nor ever being stuck; the xeno- to the urban asks for consciousness and awareness of inherent transformative potential.

How this potential could be understood has already been hinted at. The artifice of things, as well as the concept of hegemony, render a prevailing discourse to a "preferred combination" of a specific time.[165] A crucial prerequisite is then attached to the things and the world being: because they are here, they also can be gone. This is precisely the inherent potential xeno- carries along: consequently challenging oneselfs' mobilizing of values into the future and not taking the status quo as carved into stone. Because things are established, they need to be the dimension contested. Because a certain order pertains, it constitutes the grounds to struggle within.

163   Laboria Cuboniks, "Xenofeminism: A Politics for Alienation," Online Manifesto.
164   Hester, *Xenofeminism*, 33pp.
165   Keshavarz, "Sketch for a Theory of Design Politics," 14.

Yet, it is crucial to stress, that xeno- is not an antipode to or another kind of queer. While I understand xeno- as emanating precisely from a queer understanding of challenging normalizing processes, queer discourse historically picks gender, sexual identity, and the therefore used terms as its battle for reinvention. As Teresa de Lauretis formulates this: queer theory asks of it "not to adhere to any of the given terms, not to assume their ideological liabilities, but instead to both transgress and transcend them".[166] I argue that this is at once a distinct crossover as well as a demarcation to xeno-. On the one hand, queers' refusal of categorization and the concomitant continuance of remaining critical to its privileged assumptions counts as its biggest strength and poses a paradigm for urbanism, as stressed by Eng et al.[167], on the other hand, xeno- simultaneously does not aim to queer-like transcend but to rework established premises. It is fair to voice criticism claiming that also a reworking may lead to the transcendence of values, and I agree. However, I strongly believe that xeno- gathers transformational pace exactly by not wanting everything at once, by not focusing on the preferred outcome but by aiming to set a contestation of existent struggles in motion. Xeno- does not predominantly imagine *how* it should be different but directs energy towards the *differing*, the period from one to another. Is xeno- thus less radical than queer? It might be. But I claim it is hence more accessible and remains respondent to an open-ended future to come from the outset, a quality which I believe to be crucial when turning to the urban arena. Xenourbanism is feminist, trans, queer, and rational. It is not just a fellow traveler, but a mutual imbricated project to these traditions.

main xeno- characteristics

To make a note: as a primary characteristic, xeno- struggles out of the existent, it positions itself right in the subject-matter it challenges. It hence is rather about unruly behavior within existing power formations urging to reformulate instead of abolishing dominant values. This hints towards the fact that it is not about conceiving utopian futures – which I believe hold potential as a vision- and idea-generating practice – but which simultaneously undermines existent lived realities. I agree with Nina Lykkes' highlighted critique of utopian thought as "universalizing hegemonic, homogenizing and, in the end, exclusionary blueprints for the 'good' life and the 'good' society".[168] The futures to envision should be accessible for all and not downsized into an option for the privileged by repeating differential categorization. Also, Babic reminds that "a redirection of research efforts into understanding the present rather than predicting the future is a promising strategy to produce better insights into the social dynamics that are drastically changing the face of world order and societies around the globe"[169], which appears to be even more urgent in light of an identified current hegemonic crisis. To argue for a starting point that zooms in on struggling out of what is there, instead of urging for what is not, I am lastly turning to Judith Butler. From a gender perspective, she argues that "to 'concede' the undeniability of 'sex' […] is always to concede some

166   Teresa de Lauretis, "Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities," Differences: A Journal of Feminist *Cultural Studies* 3.2 (1991): v.

167   David Eng, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz, "What's Queer About Queer Studies?," *Social Text* 84-85 (Duke University Press, 2005), 3.

168   Nina Lykke, "Anticipating Feminist Futures while playing with Materialism," *Feminist Futures of Spatial Practice*, ed. Schalk, Kristiansson, and Mazé (AADR/Spurbuchverlag, 2017), 29.

169   Babic. "Let's talk about the interregnum," 786.

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version of 'sex'.[170] I read this as pointing to a paradox: when wishing for a radical future by abolishing current realities, one automatically defines a certain image of such currents. This means that there is no getting by of what is there now. Any attempt to completely abolish existent structures of oppression can only take root if they struggle out of the established system, instead of denying its existence.

This precisely points to the appropriation of existent struggles, which I want to discuss as a second characteristic of a xenourban approach. Xeno- against xeno, would hence entail that by being 'othered' or 'aliened', one should make oneself the alien. This kind of appropriation would entail an alienation, something that Laboria Cuboniks strongly argue for. The notion of alienation is celebrated as "an impetus to generate new worlds", by completely engaging with and embracing the unknown, something that would be rejected by xenophobics.[171] I want to focus on this foregoing process of appropriation understood as "hacking into complex (power) structures" in order to confront established values and stop passively reproducing entrenched norms.[172]

This quite directly leads to the norm as an established dimension in political, societal, productional, or architectural fields. I don't aim to steer the discussion towards the concepts' justification or workings, I rather remain to scratch on their surface and denounce their claim for universality. Norms often constitute a condition that determines which is widely accepted as common sense and hardly questioned. One reason for that could be, as Douglas Spencer argues, that they appear as part of the neoliberal truth game. Spencer describes these truths as techniques of power that operate through the constitution of the self and thus find broad legitimation. Hence, norms as part of the neoliberal truth game "maintain operative capacity because they are constructed and accepted as a condition that determines".[173] By conjuring up the stepping of the treadmill and the linguistic properties of matter as laid out before, by 'hacking into the power structures' it is hence precisely such sedimented forms of power, predetermination, and fixation that warrant tackling. As Butler asserts, norms require repetition to be reproduced and materialized. At once, this repetition draws out the instabilities of such norms in the sense that they need to be constantly reiterated to persist, which opens up a "domain in which the force of the regulatory law can be turned against itself to spawn rearticulations that call into question the hegemonic force of that very regulatory law".[174]

Within this thesis, it is heterosexuality that constitutes such a norm. This very evidently links back to a fear that is commonly mobilized by right-wing populists as also the Polish LGBT-free zones have shown, that in its midst is the reproduction of life itself which hence results in specifying the family as the legitimate social unit. From that arises an, what Ahmed terms as, "everydayness of compulsory heterosexuality"[175] that sets a certain frame for how lives should be lived. "In this way, normative culture involves the differentiation between legitimate and

170   Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 10.
171   Laboria Cuboniks, "Xenofeminism: A Politics for Alienation," Online Manifesto.
172   Armen Avanessian et.al., *Perhaps It Is High Time For A Xeno-Architecture To Match* (Sternberg Press, 2018), 10.
173   Douglas Spencer, *The architecture of neoliberalism: How contemporary architecture became an instrument of control and compliance* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016), 2.
174   Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 2.
175   Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 147.

illegitimate ways of living whereby the preservation of what is legitimate ('life as we know it') is assumed to be necessary for the well-being of the next generation."[176] This entails that heteronormativity is reproduced through setting one's own life in relation to others. And here, I want to come back to the previously quoted claim that homophobia hurts everyone. This arises from the fact that homophobia is "formed in the same way that taboos in society are internalized", as Dreyer draws out.[177] Taboos regulate desires and scopes of action and by that restrict simultaneously one's own scope of possibility. Even though oppressions predominantly serve the dominant group and protect its values, it concomitantly sets a rigid and tight frame in which everyone needs to make sense of themselves. One example of that could be for instance the definition of the family as consisting of a father, a mother, and a child. This consequently means that every other family construct – and this does not even have to concern queer families – automatically is delegitimized. For instance, a single-parent family, grandparents caring for children, or even partners without children hence do not fit in this rigid definition, as also Ida hinted towards in our talk.

This simultaneously has an effect on materiality, as I repeatedly address throughout this thesis. Homophobia maintained by heteronormativity does not only play out in the ways spaces are occupied and controlled, but much more also by how they are designed. Gill Valentine speaks in this regard about heterosexual spaces which "physically represent and reinforce the cultural norm of the reproductive monogamous family unit".[178] This plays out by a natural repetition of heterosexual performance in advertisement for instance or also in the natural display of affection between a heterosexual couple in public, which for a homosexual couple most of the time seems out of reach, as described in the talks held.

The heterosexual supremacy is nothing yet unknown. As claimed before, thinking about a possible xenourbanism locates the departure point right in the subject-matter of the struggle and appropriates it. This consequently means that, if to stick to the discussed example of a heterosexual space, it cannot be the unraveling approach to counter such by working for a type of homosexual space. In other words, it is rather about affecting the condition of a norm instead of overturning it. Similar concerns the mobilization of emotions when seeking to struggle for something else. As Nina Power cautions, it is crucial not to "fall into the fascist trap" of identifying an enemy that is to blame for fueling a collective struggle.[179] Hence, it is accordingly also to be attentive about not employing the same oppressive means with the only difference of redirecting its workings when reappropriating and struggling out of the existent.

towards *xenourbanism*
Xenourbanism is not about repressing the oppressors, and it is also not about everyone being the same. It embraces difference but only if precisely such

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176 Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 149.
177 Dreyer, "Hegemony and the internalization of Homophobia through Heteronormativity," 12.
178 Gill Valentine, "(Hetero)sexing space: lesbian perceptions and experiences of everyday spaces," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 11.4 (1993), 397.
179 Power, "Negative Internationalism and Shame as Strategy," 158.

difference renders us visible in front of each other in a solidary way. As stated, it finds a transformative space in making oneself the alien when being aliened; in being different from each other, and differ even more, to stay attentive to structural inequalities. Xenourbanism wants to repeat everyday what Audre Lorde wrote: "You do not have to be me in order for us to fight alongside each other. I do not have to be you to recognize that our wars are the same. What we must do is commit ourselves to some future that can include each other and to work toward that future with the particular strengths of our individual identities. And in order for us to do this, we must allow each other our differences at the same time as we recognize our sameness."[180]

What xenourbanism proposes is in fact rather simple: it urges for "solidarity without sameness".[181] This hints toward not only turning a blind eye and condoning each other but much more allying in difference. As I have claimed in the beginning of this chapter, the oppression of minorities concerns us all. We need to realize, as Judith Butler puts it, "that we are but one population who has been and can be exposed to conditions of precarity and disenfranchisement".[182] But more than that, I strongly believe that it needs new kinds of solidarity that exceed a mere tolerance. Xenourbanism claiming solidarity without sameness attaches a political significance to the discipline, one that puts the spatiality of social struggles into center stage. It poses a challenge to the practice to actively advance such objectives; and as has been discussed before, this may happen in the form of facilitating public discourse, from within academia, as well as on the streets. In that way, xenourbanism openly, and deliberately commits to take part in advocating a new hegemonic set of beliefs. I have outlined that the concept of hegemony is not only one of the elites, and not only one that is meant to critique existing ones. It is also a tool to navigate change. Xenourbanism is not anti-hegemonic, it is not neutral in social struggles.

So, how can the notion of living together in difference become commonsensical? And what implications does this bear for the urban as a spatial category? I argue that xenourbanism needs to transcend a conceptual dimension in order to be spatially effective. The call for solidarity without sameness is a far-reaching one – it can*not* only concern xenourbanism for it to unfold. Everyone who takes a stance against oppression is called to obligate oneself to stand up against the exploitation of difference.

It is therefore that I am frequently referring to a 'we' throughout this chapter that practices solidarity without sameness. This 'we' then consists not only of me or of people active in the field of urbanism but also of you reading this, of people living alongside other people. I claim that the discipline of urbanism can provide for such a platform to take first unfolding steps because of its 'insideness', which I have already been discussing, and its braiding with the material worlds. It is hence xenourbanism's aim to be guided by such a 'we', and to contribute to the

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180   Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Crossing Press, 2007), 142.

181   Patricia Reed, "Solidarity Without Sameness," *Para-Platforms: On the Spatial Politics of Right-Wing Populism*, ed. Markus Miessen and Zoë Ritts (SternbergPress, 2018), 160.

182   Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Harvard University Press, 2015), 66.

self-understanding of people in their difference as a 'we'. For that, it seeks to open up space for dialogue and rupture of negotiating this 'we', and it seeks to provide spatial conditions to practice, fail, and re-attempt a solidary difference.

Solidarity without sameness is in fact a xeno- claim. As stated, xeno- carries its implications along. In order to become commonsensical, it needs to be practiced throughout a wide array of fields, it needs to be thought attached to other traditions; what would a xenoenvironmentalism contribute? How could xenopolitics shape social life? What could a xenoeconomy be? – I strongly believe that expanding the notion of xeno- to various disciplines permits valuable inferences for the notion as such, as well as for xenourban specificities. What the discipline of urbanism can contribute originally to this xeno-claim is essentially from spatial nature. As I have characterized the urban practice as a translative one, it hence then not only provides for a platform to negotiate what a space for difference could be, but as well it translates these ideas into matter. For now, the scope to define and articulate xenourbanism is mapped as initial thoughts to build up from. Xenourbanism needs to arrive at a point where it transcends a conceptual dimension in order to be spatially effective, I propose the following as a starting point for such an endeavor.

Stemming from the two main characteristics of for one being located within and for another reappropriating persistent struggles, I want to discuss three moments evolving for the discipline of urbanism when thought of as xenourbanism.

tapping into the civil space

Firstly, xenourbanism is defined by the consciousness of possible change and transformation. It builds on unruly behavior within established settings. To recall, the artifice of things grounds the possibility for redoing as an elementary part of such matter – because things are made, they can also be unmade – and the required repetition for the persistence of norms opens up gaps for change – because a certain behavior needs to be repeated it can be changed by fragmenting its anticipated outcome. Pascal Gielen and Philipp Dietachmair put it like this: "the ongoing sequence of civil actions that mobilize, stop, transform, repeat and continue, often in an entirely different shape, is what really matters most to them for showing dissent, for disrupting prevailing hegemonies."[183] They stress again the importance of hacking into the established and thus transforming it. To transfer this thought to the urban realm entails a turn toward a space-understanding where action takes center stage. The book 'The Art of Civil Action', edited by Gielen and Dietachmair, proposes the civil space to fulfill such qualities. In their assessment, the public space denotes an environment that comprehends the exchange of thoughts, with equal access to everyone. On the other hand, they define civil space as one which is yet not regulated by the state. Hence, there are still positions to be taken up, and matters to be organized. In that sense, civil space offers room

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183   Philipp Dietachmair and Pascal Gielen, "Introduction. Public, Civil and Civic Spaces," *The Art of Civil Action*, ed. Dietachmair and Gielen (Valiz, 2017), 13.

for a collective struggling-through via action.[184] Nonetheless, and this is also what the authors assert, civil and public space are not an antipode to each other; they feed into each other's subsistence. The public space needs the civil one as the civil space claims place and position for the public space, and vice versa the civil space needs the public one in the sense that it provides ideas, people, and inspiration.[185] This means that the public space as a starting point gets reworked in the civil space and settles down as a public space again until a challenge arises once more. Xenourbanism in that regard points attention toward the civil potential of an existing public space. It highlights its transformative potential, and it stresses the need for action instead of a passive reproduction of the world as we know it. In that sense, it is a *xeno- way of being*, of staying attentive to change and not getting too comfortable in the discomfort of others. As already Butler has red-flagged: "As much as we want our own rights to be recognized, we must oppose the deployment of that public recognition of our rights to deflect from and cover over the massive disenfranchisement of rights for others".[186] A solidarity without sameness cannot be practiced if a true being on a par with each other is denied by holding on to one's comfort that is built on others' discomfort.

This leads to the fact that in a xenourban understanding, a space is defined by what it fails to represent rather than by what it does. This entails a reorientation. It is hence not only about main squares, about registered demonstrations, about vibrant public spaces – it is about the urban locations that do not appear on Tripadvisor, about the unpaved backstreets, the mundane functional spaces, the little flyers promoting discussion rounds in a backyard. In this context, the civil space thus turns to these places and offers the ones that remain invisible a platform. 'Civil' hence in this regard denotes those who are present in those spaces, whose voices oftentimes remain unheard because they speak aside from popular locations. It asks what the Sick Women's Theory is concerned with: "How do you throw a brick through the window of a bank if you can't get out of bed?"[187] So who can even struggle in the public realm? What and who is missing is the struggling dimension that guides the discourse of civil space. This has also been a matter of discussion during the time in Poland.
To come back to the topic of matter, it is hence rather determined by the material that is missing, here the signifiers of support could be mentioned. The civil space characterizes a moment where the public space as a dimension in which people gather simultaneously constitutes the dimension that is disputed.

*I think   for me_ *mostly the thing that's lacking is this like ah *saying* from someone with *power that _hey its bad   and change the language :like we talked: I think it's I _think_ it is *very important statement that some things   cannot*

184   Dietachmair and Gielen, "Introduction. Public, Civil and Civic Spaces," 15pp.
185   Ibid.,17.
186   Butler, *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, 69p.
187   Joahnna Hedva, "Sick woman theory," *Mask Magazine* 19 (2016), 5. Online PDF https://johannahed-va.com/SickWomanTheory_Hedva_2020.pdf (accessed 11th Apr 2022).

happen in a country like aaah some laws should be changed as well for example the_ aaah hm how do you say aaaa the thing in law that they should ah consider such a thing aaah that the crime from hate of LGBTQ people :because there *isn't something like that in Polish law so I think this needs to change to have someone _tell_ everyone and to have this figure saying that its _bad_ and it I would feel _i think_ much safer to know that the people who are ruling this country are not aaah dehumanising* people
--- - Miklaz

knowing that if I have trouble I will have a help from a police man; because now if my friend was beaten on the street and he go to the police station he sat there six hours and police said him you really was beaten? You really want to give us that on the paper? You are not ashamed of that? You are a man and you was beaten
--- - Ida

I have stressed the significance of emotions when it comes to topics of oppression. They establish a relatedness that carries consequence and hence mould a setting for being together and being apart. However, this moulding does not really arrive in the public realm until it starts to be a collective feeling. The way that energy is thus channeled for civil action evolves closely to emotions. Here, I am drawing from what Gielen and Lijster coin the "civil chain", which describes how a singular experience holds potency for civil action. Following their strings of thoughts, emotion is what civil action is born from, but it requires steps in order to set such action into motion. This entails the ability for self-rationalization by articulating and analyzing one's own emotions. The talks conducted within the research for this thesis clearly highlighted the importance to communicate the

individual experienced feelings. Quite directly, the self-rational understanding of feelings is tied to dialogue and communication which eventually leads to a de-privatization of emotions. This is a crucial step. "Civil action is only possible if we take our personal discomfort out of the private sphere, when we 'de-privatize' the subject-matter.", they claim.[188] There are two aspects inherent to this which work along the very same thoughts of xenourbanism. Firstly, the root for action very directly ties in with everyday lived experiences. It stems from individual emotion and thus is positioned right within the subject-matter. Secondly, in the way a de-privatization needs to be performed, the individual experience transgresses the private to the public realm. In this way initial feelings reappropriate their voice in the public sphere, they join forces and by that gain weight. Xenourbanism aims to provide structural settings for these voices.

Here, I'd like to point back to the material reality assessed in Poland's LGBT-free zones. The way anti-LGBT+ sentiments are incorporated and advanced on the street clearly shows a transgression from the private realm to the public one. With the need to de-privatize emotions for proclaimed resistance, the same transgression takes place. It is hence a reappropriation of oppressive forces to transcend one's own suppression. As Johanna Hedva is concerned with also xenourbanism follows their turn to "those who are faced with their vulnerability and unbearable fragility, every day, and so have to fight for their experience to be not only honored, but first made visible."[189] Xenourbanism in that regard attends to the voices that mostly remain unheard.

strong resistance from a perceived weak place

This leads to the second moment xenourbanism entails. Xenourbanism embraces the power of the perceived powerless. Much can be learned here from how Judith Butler conceptualizes vulnerability as a tool that poses an alternative to models that valorize strength. The collective body represents the agency which is supported by infrastructure as a "material condition that enters into the act that it makes possible".[190] Xenourbanism hence, wants to precisely turn to such infrastructures that render action possible. It holds hands tight with what is coined as 'weak resistance' by Power or Majewska amongst others. In this concept, the "political agency of the weak"[191] is targeted to bring about change. It advocates for transformation from a place of fear, which is in conformity with the de-privatization of emotions, instead of power. Hence, agency is assigned to the marginalized 'othered', that have political power in their way of performing „gestures of disobedience" within their everyday.[192] This speaks to hooking into the passive reproduction of norms and attributing force to the lived realities on the ground.

Xenourbanism actively promotes such disobedience by bolstering up the spatial claims of the oppressed and by disassociating with oppressive regulatory forces. The tools of marginalized people may be ordinary or mundane but it is persistence

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188   Pascal Gielen and Thijs Lijster, "The Civil Potency of a Singular Experience. On the Role of Cultural Organizations in Transnational Civil Undertakings," *The Art of Civil Action: Political Space and Cultural Dissent* (Valiz, 2017), 40p.

189   Hedva, "Sick woman theory", 8.

190   Judith Butler. "Rethinking Vulnerability and Resistance" *Vulnerability in Resistance* (Duke University Press, 2016), 14.

191   Majewska and Szreder, "So far, So Good," 7.

192   Ibid., 7.

rather than strength that coins this action. Hence, it is an appropriation of agency not in the sense of turning the wheel around, in othering the other, but initiating transformation alongside difference. I would like to point again to the findings in Poland: oppression was precisely identified in ordinary objects, hence xenourbanism attending to weak resistance re-appropriates such everyday-oppressions and struggles from within. By that, it is a practice of the 'weak', it bolsters up what commonly is perceived as insufficiently important, it builds together with those whom the tools to construct are denied.

moulding as the transformative potential of the everyday

And lastly - this may be one of the last arguments brought forward within this thesis while simultaneously I grasp this as not making a point but putting a comma – I aim to propose mouldability as a third moment emerging from a xenourban understanding. It speaks to matching tactile sensations with a way of being in the world. Hence, in the following, I am taking a first step into unpacking notions of hardness and softness. As Ahmed writes, these notions are widely perceived as gendered in public discourse, where softness speaks to feminine attributes while hardness is matched with masculinity.[193] One quote which illustrates this quite well was made by Poland's President Andrzej Duda in 2019 after signing a defense cooperation with Donald Trump: "I find it very easy and good to cooperate with President Donald Trump. Because he's very down to earth, very concrete. He tells me what he wants; he asks me what he can get from us."[194] Here, he attributes Trump as being concrete, which as a material is "widely perceived as a harsh material with little emotional value", as Ruth Morrot describes.[195] In his concreteness he is thus celebrated for his resolution and fixity of purpose. In a different setting in 2017 Trump celebrated Poland for prevailing "against enemies because of a tough internal spirit"[196]. Similar mechanisms are at work in this ascription: toughness, which can be found as a synonym for rigidity, hardness, or endurance, is praised as a national quality. These two examples, or as well the way self-defense is mobilized against an enemy as employed in populistic politics, hint at the fact that hardness could be understood as an integral quality of right-wing populist workings. As mentioned earlier, softness on the other hand may render a nation to be weak and easily shaped by others, as Ahmed elaborates based on the notion of 'soft touch' as a characteristic of the United Kingdom.[197] I am taking on the stance that populist parties identify along notions of hardness and employ them to emphasize the universality and hegemonic claims of their beliefs. Hence, the materiality that stems from this is also presented as a given, unchangeable, strong fact.

From a xenourbanistic perspective, however, I pledge to take on another thinking. Xenourbanism does not aim to counter such inherent logics with the antipode, with pledging for metaphors of softness. Nina Power has already been cited reminding that it is crucial not to fall into the fascist trap of demonizing. Rather,

193   Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2.

194   PBS NewsHour, "Trump and Poland's president sign defense cooperation declaration" *Youtube*, 23rd September 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Evur1oWvNxE.

195   Ruth Morrow, "Material Witchery: Tactility Factory as a site of emerging ethical practice" *Feminist Futures of Spatial Practice*, ed. Meike Schalk, Thérèse Kristiansson, and Ramia Mazé, (AADR/Spur-buchverlag, 2017), 77.

196   "Remarks by President Trump to the People of Poland," transcribed speech on Krasiński Square in Warsaw, Poland on the 6th July 2017, https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-people-poland/.

197   Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* 2p.

xenourbanism moves an inherent quality of mouldability into the forefront. Mouldability as a third moment emerging from a xenourban approach does not firstly target to be either soft or hard but it puts an exclamation mark before and behind the word transformation. Mouldability does not entail wanting a definite form, but it presents the ability for reconfiguration as an integral part of every day. There is a trap inherent to this claim: mouldability quite easily can result in passivity and adherence. This of course poses a challenge to avoid being a flag in the wind, but simultaneously it constantly asks for sensitivity to realities one might not share. Xenourbanism is thus not heavy-handed, it incorporates a mode of constant challenging its doings by needing to be sensible in order not to be passive.

On a second level, mouldability also speaks to emotions carrying consequences. As beautifully put by Ursula K. Le Guin in the text 'Being Taken for Granite', if someone steps on someone else, this leaves a footprint. If oppressive powers work to denounce an identified other, then this has an impact on precisely that other. And more generally, the way we act in the world has an impact on what's surrounding us. As I have claimed already, we need to be attentive to the subliminal and precisely to these possible impacts created in order to rethink values enacted in spatial practices. Xenourbanism is not concrete, xenourbanism is mud. *Your discomfort is maybe not mine, but your feeling does not leave me cold and unmoved. I don't want to uncomfortably inhabit the comfort stemming from the discomfort of others.*

*

Xenourbanism does not propose a whole new layout for the discipline of urbanism; it rather incites a way of thinking, being, doing, acting, and configuring the spaces in which we meet. I believe that there are many roads to take. What I have proposed here rather aims to contribute to carving out a space for challenging and being aware of the positionality the discipline of urbanism takes. Still, there is much more work to be done. These initial ideas need to be thought further, they need to be thought of as spatial claims and translated into physical matter, they need to be grounded on the streets.

In that sense, xeno- is an imperative to act. Attached to urbanism it is a signifier, a recurring push. Maybe at one point, not only the '-' of xeno- will merge into the term urbanism. Maybe at one point, all the other letters will follow and xeno-'s claim will be incorporated. The term urbanism then will not need to have xeno- spelled out. However, I don't want to start from a point that is urging for what is not there from the outset, I argue for starting from a point that faces up to the struggles that coin the present time. That is why for now xeno- needs to remain attached to urbanism. It gives the 'go-ahead'.

I would say the zones aaahm
they did increase my aahm
like *need to be open. A
lot of people were *really ah
*brought down by them, _and_*
rightful so, fuck, like it's
horrible. There were so many
documentaries about queer
youth and queer spaces after
*the LGBT-free zones _and_*
at first I thought ok maybe I
should go :backintothecloset:
because I was just *barely
crawling out of it   and
then this happened and I was
like   well — maybe not in
this country ah   *but then*
there was like I don't know I
think at least 3 documentaries
came out after this   and I
watched them all and it was
like *very *loud* queer youth
and I really got inspired: and
like that oppression that tried
to bring us down it really
brought the best of us.

During the whole* education
in Poland   you are taught
aaah   *how important it is to*
:rise up: against oppression.
Cause the whole history
of Poland, at least the last
100,200 years of Poland
history is about being
oppressed   repressed   and
rising up_. And you are being
taught that *everywhere
honestly: on history lessons,
on Polish lessons,   on
language lessons - you are
taught to rise up   _and when
they try to bring you down
with propaganda you kind
of remember that you are
being thought to not give in.
So it really *backfired*.   So I
actually feel empowered.
––– – Kuba

it is how

With this thesis, I have discussed two main ideas that I feel are necessary as well as urgent for the discipline of urbanism in order to make a valuable contribution to social inequity. For one, I have proposed a third understanding of materiality – the matter of facts – which especially targets matter as a dimension under which social configurations develop and are maintained. This speaks to the understanding that inequality needs to be contested spatially and not only within political spheres that appear to be dominated by elites. Its formulation is especially informed by Cultural Materialism after Raymond Williams and Evidentiary Materialism after Matthew Gandy. It views matter as a holder of information as well as a constituting dimension for its surroundings, and not only as a passive substance that is used in order to create value such as in Historical Materialism. It understands such matter and precisely its formal mutation as evidence to better understand the broader social and ideological context it is located within. However, and this is where it disagrees with New Materialism, the matter itself is not alive. It is not a vibrant protagonist in social life. It cannot act, and it cannot speak. This is because a material object cannot be perceived as descoupled from the forces they were produced within. The trap that opens otherwise when shifting willful agency to matter itself, is one of the surrender of human responsibility. And here, a close bond between human actants and the material object evolves: to assess the matter of facts as evidence for the time it is situated within, it needs a testimonial unit. This articulates a mutual necessity in order for both to speak.

For another, I have suggested orienting the discipline of urbanism into a direction where it willingly and actively takes part in advocating a common set of hegemonic ideas along the idea of solidarity without sameness. I identify the notion of xeno- as jump-starting such an orientation as it urges to start from a point of struggle rather than wishful thinking. Like this, xenourbanism commits to tackling the spatial consequences of social inequalities as well as provides a platform for negotiating solidarity in difference across organizations, individuals, social groups, or political elites on different scales. The spatial implications for such a project are yet to be investigated. I hope to furthermore contribute to these thoughts, emanating from the conceptual dimensions I have proposed so far.

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During my time in Poland for this research, the war in Ukraine started. Ida, Kuba, and Julia say that now, there are other problems to direct energy to than the LGBT-free zones. Yes, I agree. I agree that the focus must be directed to Ukraine; however, I agree in parts. The LGBT-free zones in Poland cannot be forgotten nor disregarded as a mere glitch. The situation in Ukraine affirms that: the moment I am writing these lines, the war of Russia against Ukraine is in its third month. It appears that the war starts to be normalized, even desensitized. It seems

an unwritten law that initial uprisings against oppression over time get lost in sand. As another recent happening, just last week the American Supreme Court provisionally voted to overturn the constitutional right to abortion. I don't want to draw a dark image, yet I aim to put additional emphasis on adopting trajectories out of passive and paralyzing structures.

As this thesis was opened with: if it does not matter how you fall but rather how you land, then I pledge to stay within the positivistic qualities of the quote. The street is paved, and the asphalt might look rather harsh; however, asphalt can be recycled, and underneath there is mud to remould.

List of figures

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