

LBOR INTERNATIONAL

The Effects of Losing Lesbian-Only Spaces in Germany and How to Get Them Back[1]

Whereas, the enshrining of so-called "gender identity" in law has resulted in the erasure of lesbian-only spaces and the demonization of lesbians, who, recognizing that homosexuality is based on sex, refuse dating and sexual relationships with men who say they are lesbians;

Resolved, that lesbians have the right to create and maintain lesbian-only spaces.

-The Lesbian Bill of Rights (LBOR)

I. Losing lesbian-only spaces

Using various means - physical presence, gentle pressure, but also blackmail escalating to physical violence – men claiming a woman identity manage to penetrate spaces that were previously reserved for lesbians and often take important positions in lesbian organizations.[2] At the same time, it can be observed that bars, bookstores, projects, festivals, dating apps, etc., previously run by lesbians have been closing down.[3]

An example of a forced closure is the "Michigan Womyn's Music Festival" (Michfest) in the USA, which was held for the first time in 1976 and was operated by the organizers until 2015. However, it had to close because it was harassed and boycotted by organizations such as Equality Michigan, the Human Rights Campaign, GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation), the National Center for Lesbian Rights, and the LGBTQ Task Force, among others. The organizers of Michfest were thus forced to abandon their "Women-born Womyn Policy." [4]

In Germany it can be observed that lesbian spaces are increasingly opened to men claiming a woman identity.

This shows how diverse the methods are for forcing lesbian spaces to be open to men. In the foreground is state financial support, but the influence of gender identity ideology from which lesbians are also not immune plays a role as well:

- The organizing committee of "Lesbenwoche" Berlin 1997 has also been admitting men larping as (or claiming to be) lesbians without previous public announcement, causing an uproar among the participants and stallholders.[5]
- "Spinnboden Lesbenarchiv und Bibliothek Berlin e.V." [Spinnboden Lesbian Archive and Library Berlin e.V.], founded in 1983[6], which holds archive materials of the women's group of the Homosexuelle Aktion West-Berlin (HAW) and its successor organization Lesbisches Aktionszentrum (LAZ) West-Berlin from the years 1973-

1982, now boasts it is a "lesbian-queer" archive with its alleged 50th anniversary of foundation (All Genders welcome!)[7]:

- Lesbian counseling Berlin e.V. LesMigraS[8], which is primarily counseling people who call themselves 'trans', but was originally founded for lesbians of LAZ in 1974[9];
- After its founding in 1982, Lesbenring [Lesbian Circle], an umbrella organization of lesbian organizations, was an 'organized pledge against patriarchy'; it made 'politics out of lust and love' and 'the good thing about it was the lesbians in it'; fundamental decisions were discussed long and wide between the board, advisory council and fellow women.

However, new board women have changed the association policy since 2019. At the meeting for members in 2021, the new statutes effectively abolished lesbian politics. In §1 it now says: "*In these bylaws, the word lesbian is used as a general term, including lesbians who identify as trans, non-binary, intersex, bisexual, and/or queer.*" And the homepage reads: "*In order to make the diversity of lesbian life forms visible, the Lesbenring uses the spelling 'lesbians*'; this also includes bi- and pansexual cis- and trans*women, as well as nonbinaries and queers*".[10]

- In 2019, members of the lesbian project "RuT - Rad und Tat - Offene Initiative Lesbischer Frauen e.V." [wheel and deed - open initiative of lesbian women][11] in Berlin have been confronted without preparation[12], discussion or their agreement with a questionnaire that has the word "lesbian" with a gender asterisk in the title, indicating inclusion of men claiming a woman identity. The questionnaire belongs to a project (*Lesbisch*.Sichtbar.Berlin*) [Lesbian*.Visible.Berlin], founded by 'queer' feminist Stefanie Kuhnen and funded by the former LGBT department of the Green Senate Department for Justice, Consumer Protection and Anti-Discrimination, which aims to "*network L* communities and lesbians**"[13]. It can be assumed that Green circles have played a decisive role in the appointment of the project manager. The lesbian housing project planned by RuT is now financially supported by the Senate of the State of Berlin and advertises itself as "Europe's first center for lesbian and queer women!" - thus also for men who claim to be women.[14]
- The 2019 Lesbenfrühlingstreffen [Lesbian Spring Event] (L*FT) in Cologne, an annual event that goes back to 1973 (originally Lesbenpflingstreffen -Lesbian Whitsun Event-), had invited so-called "lesbians*", i.e., anyone, without debate.[15] In addition, they had changed the gender critical announcement text initially posted on their website for a workshop by girls' educators Silvia Rathi and Trude Schmitz entitled "*Are Lesbians (Made) Invisible?*", taken down because "*some people feel discriminated against by the workshop text, including trans women who love women, i.e., those who have been explicitly invited to this L*FT.*"[16]
- The 2021 Lesbenfrühlingstreffen [Lesbian Spring Event] (LFT) in Bremen had some gender critical events in its program and had not been explicitly "trans inclusive". For these reasons, the Senator for Health, Women and Consumer Protection of Bremen has withdrawn her patronage and financial support[17], and Magnus Hirschfeld

Stiftung [Foundation], financed by the Federal Ministry of Justice, has distanced itself from the Event.[18]

- BEGINE – Treffpunkt und Kultur für Frauen e.V. [BEGINE - Meeting Place and Culture for Women e.V.][19] has been the last financially supported pub and event space for lesbians/women in Berlin/Germany. For quite a while and in an insidious way, however, the management – exclusively lesbians – have been changing the so-called “door policy” from “women only” to “trans inclusive”.

II. Means to get lesbian spaces back

1. Requesting a public debate among lesbians/women on the “door policy” of BEGINE as the last pub and event space for lesbians/women in Berlin and spread the information on the “trans inclusive” door policy of BEGINE among the lesbian community.
2. Rent or purchase a lesbian-only space (pub, disco, event space) by activist women, and spread the information among the lesbian community.
3. Initiation of a discussion on preserving lesbian archival material.
4. Creation of a foundation for the management and utilization of inheritances and donations.

III. Conclusion

This paper examines the loss of lesbian spaces specifically in Germany; but Germany mirrors the situation throughout the Western world and in other areas as well. Gender identity ideology has, by using various means, now succeeded almost completely in erasing lesbian-only spaces.

Lesbians should resist this disastrous development through requesting public debates among lesbians/women on preserving lesbian-only access to autonomous female spaces, acquire lesbian-only spaces with their own resources, and create institutions for preserving lesbian archival material as well as inheritances and donations.

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[1] https://www.laz-reloaded.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/LBOR_deutsch_LAZ_reloaded.pdf

[2] E.g., Sandy Stone, who became sound engineer at Olivia Records, cf. Janice Raymond, *The Transsexual Empire*, 1979, Ch. IV, pp. 101f.; Rita Nowack who became co-spokesperson of the BAG Lesbian Policy of Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, cf. Micha Schulze, "Eine transidente Frau führt die grünen Lesben" [A transgender woman leads the green lesbians]: queer.de, 16 October 2016, p. 1, https://www.queer.de/detail.php?article_id=27297 [last accessed: 20 July 2023].

[3] During the 1920s, and again, the 1970s and 1980s, there have been numerous lesbian bars, discos, etc., in Berlin. Many of them closed due to lack of financial resources and waning interest on the part of lesbians/women in the mid to late 1990s, cf. Sigrid Kneist, *Lesbisches Leben in Schöneberg* [Lesbian life in Schöneberg], 15.07.2023, p. 5, <https://www.tagesspiegel.de/berlin/lesbisches-leben-in-schoneberg-keine-bar-nirgends-10136848.html> [last accessed: 20.07.2023].

[4] Helen Joyce, „Trans. When Ideology Meets Reality“, 2021, Ch. 8, pp. 168f.; Wikipedia, Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michigan_Womyn%27s_Music_Festival [last accessed: 20 July 2023].

[5] <https://taz.de/Lesbenwoche-Lassen-wir-sie-rein!/1379649/> [last access: 31 July 2023].

[6] Spinnboden: [Original-Ausstellungstext](#) [original text of exhibition 2019] [last access: 21 July 2023].

[7] <https://spinnboden.de/angebot/dykes-forever-jubilaumparty-50-jahre-spinnboden/> [last access: 21 July 2023].

[8] LesMigraS (Lesbenberatung Berlin e.V. [Lesbian Counseling Berlin e.V.]), <https://lesmigras.de> [last accessed: 20 July 2023].

[9] <https://www.laz-reloaded.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/7U5A1647.jpg> [last access: 21 July 2023].

[10] <https://lesbenring.de/> [last access: 21 July 2023].

[11] A Project for Older and Disabled Lesbians, <http://rut-berlin.de/> [last accessed: 20 July 2023].

[12] Only the visiting service of the RuT had held a non-public event with a person claiming to be 'trans' in advance.

[13] Cf. Project description, <https://lesbisch-sichtbar.berlin/> [last access: 20 July 2023].

[14] <https://rut-wohnen.de/> [last access: 21 July 2023].

[15] According to witnesses, there had already been men dressed as women at the LFT in Stuttgart 1997.

[16] The workshop still took place, but only because another participant renounced her own workshop and made her room available to the two girls' educators. The workshop text was only published on the

website of the L*FT by resolution of the final plenum, but together with the organizers' reasons for "distancing" themselves from the text.

[17] https://www.laz-reloaded.de/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Stellungnahme_Bremer-Senatorin-Bernhardt_zum-LFT-2021_27_05_2021.pdf [last access: 20 July 2023]

[18] <https://mh-stiftung.de/2021/04/27/statement-bmh-lft2021/> [last access: 20 July 2023].

[19] <https://www.beginne.de> [last access: 20 July 2023].