



Research update: “La Diversidad Sexual en Movimiento”

Since June 2009 Hivos, through its Civil Society Knowledge Building Program, is involved in a yearlong research project on the Peruvian LTGB Movement. The research is being carried out under the responsibility of the Peruvian NGO *Programa de Democracia y Transformacion Global (PDTG)* with academic guidance from the International Institute of Social Studies.

The research uses the methodology of participatory-action-research. Among others, this approach implies viewing the people who are the subjects in this study, the LGBT activists, as active agents of their own life and consequently as specialists in their own contexts. Therefore the emphasis of the research project is generating knowledge from the perspective of the LGBT activists, rather than from the perspective of the researchers. This implies that those who are subject of study are being involved in the different research phases: in defining the research questions and methodology, in realizing the data gathering, in analyzing the data and discussing the results and its implications for the movement.

One of the ways in which this specific research project wants to give practical meaning to this participative-action-methodology is by organizing workshops in several phases of the research. In these workshops LGBT activists give their input on the objectives and central research questions, on the analysis and preliminary results and on the final conclusions and implications for the movement. Through these workshops the activists actually guide the research process. By applying this research method we want to achieve that the final research results will be as useful as possible for the activists and can serve as tools in the strengthening of their movement.

The first workshop was organized on the 18th and 19th of October 2009 in Lima. The objective was to discuss and define the main research questions of the research project, and to discuss on how the different LGBT organizations can be part of the project. To make sure the workshop reflected the diversity that exists in the LTGB movement we tried to find a balance of participants on several levels: regarding the different sexual orientations and gender identities that exist in the movement: gay-, lesbian-, trans- and bi-sexual activists; regarding the different forms of activism being practiced (direct action groups, academics, artists, etc); we also tried to reach a balance between representatives for organizations and activist groups of different regions of the country and from different cultural backgrounds; and finally we sought a balance in activists from different age groups. Finally 32 activists participated in the workshop of which 16 participants came from Lima and 16 from other regions of Peru (Arequipa, Ayacucho, Bagua, Cajamarca, Chachapoyas, Chiclayo, Huancayo, Ica, Iquitos, Piura and Tacna); all with their own specific and relevant experiences with LGBT activism in the movement.

One of the first activities in the workshop was to participate in a demonstration at the Ministry of Health, which refused to support a television spot on the sexual rights for transgendered people and sex- workers. The experience in the demonstration was used to generate more general reflections on the functioning of the LGBT movement.

The second activity was the elaboration of the Tree of the LGBT Movement. Collectively we elaborated a large drawing of a tree in which we analyzed the roots of the movement which represented the actions and activities that have made the movement grow in the last few years. Subsequently we discussed the different ‘fruits’ of the movement which we divided in successes (ripe fruits), activities in progress (green fruits), and failures (rotten fruits). Finally also several external threats to the Movements were identified (represented by bugs and plagues).

After this dynamic the next activity consisted of formulating questions based on an analysis of the

Movement Tree. Individually the activists wrote down on small colored cards which questions emerged after analyzing the roots, the threats and the different fruits of the Movement. Additionally the participants were asked to formulate in what way the answers to these questions will help them in their activism, in strengthening the struggle for sexual rights. The questions were again discussed collectively and categorized according to themes. The workshop ended with a discussion on how the different LGBT organizations in the movement can be involved in the research. All present stated to be willing to collaborate by sharing information and experience, invite the researchers to the activities they organize and collaborate in the coming period of fieldwork by opening the doors of their organizations and collectives.



The questions formulated in the process of the workshop have afterwards been processed into central research themes and questions, which again were presented and discussed with the participants. Since the workshop, the two main researchers have begun the period of fieldwork, collecting data, to be able to formulate answers to the questions formulated in the workshop. The results and analyses will be discussed in the two remaining workshops.

Also in this period of data collection the methodology of participative-action-research is applied. The researchers, each with their own activist background in the Peruvian LGBT movement, actively participate in the different activities being organized by the various social movement organizations: demonstrations, action-meetings, discussion events, etc. Additionally qualitative in-depth interviews are held with the LGBT activists. Until now the focus has been on the LGBT movement in Lima, where the majority of the LGBT organizations are active. Here more than 40 in-depth interviews were held and the researchers participated in the organization and realization of 12 different actions. Since the last week of November the fieldwork has extended to the several regions outside Lima. Although the Peruvian LGBT movement is heavily centralized in the capital, the last few years has seen an extensive growth of small organizations and collectives in the countryside. Already 30 cities and villages with active LGBT groups have been identified. Giving voice to these often marginalized activist groups in the countryside will definitely be one of the mayor contributions of this research project.



Researcher Giancarlo Cornejo and Marten van den Berge in demonstrations of the LTGB movement