

## Zrinka Kolaric Report

I participated in the conference presenting the oral history pilot project "*L'egzistencija - Recording the personal stories of lesbian existence in Croatia*" on which I have been working with cinematographer Ana Opalić. When we received confirmation that we were accepted it was at the same time exhilarating and terrifying - it is such a boost of encouragement to get a chance to attend an international conference in Berlin and to present your project. But at the same time, I've never presented at the event of such a large scale so it was also a bit scary.

But from the day one everything was so interesting and well organized it turned out that the most difficult thing during the conference was to decide which panel to attend - there were so many I was interested in and quite often at the same time. I mostly attended panels/lectures related to my topics of interest (*lesbian identity and visibility, lesbian archives, oral history...*). One of the most important panel for me (*which I almost missed because I misunderstood the title in the schedule and thought it was some kind of closed meeting*) was *Networking meeting for small community archives*. I loved this meeting because we had an opportunity to discuss our needs and the common problems that we all faced, in person. I met several people there who are doing similar projects and with whom I hope I will stay in contact and maybe collaborate in the future.

I am really grateful for this opportunity I was given - especially for support in a form of bursaries, without which I wouldn't be able to attend the conference. And to be able to attend meant so much to me on several levels: first, of course, it gave me an opportunity to present our project, to meet and to connect with people who share my interests and who work on similar projects. Second, it enabled me to learn so much about the experiences of LGBTIQ\* people from around the world and to put things in perspective. And third, but not less important, it was the most empowering experience I had in a long time. Being surrounded by so many queer people from around the world, supporting each other, feeling completely normal and accepted... It felt like a kind of an escapist retreat - the one from which you don't go "back to reality" feeling low, but full of ideas, will and enthusiasm! :)