

## LGBT nation and Otaku brotherhood in Cuba.

A study of two communities excluded from the Cuban national culture discourse through their blogs

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«LGBT nation and Otaku brotherhood in Cuba... thought their blogs» 2/17

**Abstract:** Blogs edited by Cubans residents in the island exist since 2005, in free blogs platforms like Blogia, BlogSpot and Word Press. Most of them devoted to politics and news. In September 2013 the blog platform *Reflejos* (<http://cubava.cu>) open to free inscriptions. Being the only space of online self-publication technically accessible from the all country: in less than a year the Cuban blogosphere doubled in size and spread in subjects. Between the groups that take advantage of this were LGBT (lesbian, gays, bisexual or trans) activist and Otakus (Japanese anime and manga fans).

This two groups are marginal subcultures in Cuban society, which is still strongly homophobic, have cultural roots in Africa and Spain, and a strong dependence of USA cultural products.

The study of the Cuban LGBT and Otaku blogs will give evidence based knowledge about the editors profiles, the communities internal dynamics, the strategies they had develop to establish national range networks, the extension of this groups in the Cuban society, and the arguments they use to defend their belonging to the XXI century Cuban national culture.



«LGBT nation and Otaku brotherhood in Cuba... thought their blogs» 3/17

LGBTs and Otakus are marginal subcultures in Cuban society, which is still strongly homophobic, have cultural roots in Africa and Spain, and a strong dependence of USA cultural products. This hegemonic model of the national culture is defended in the state public policies and the discourse of most of the cultural specialist. LGBT and Otaku advocates are annoying because they challenge the model.

While the LGBT groups fight against cultural, legal and social homophobia, Otaku groups argue their right to consume pop Japanese product (anime, manga, videogames, roll games) without been labeled has “childish” or with “proclivity to violent behavior”. Both groups are starting to create independent spaces for documentation, dialogue and action.

This places for interchange are mostly virtual –e-zines, chats, blogs, Facebook groups–, due to the strict state control of the public spaces and the media.



«LGBT nation and Otaku brotherhood in Cuba... thought their blogs» 4/17



The amount of blogs, news webs and e-bouletins had 1) diversified the Cuban society image, that became more complete and complex; 2) give visibility to social groups with socio-political interest not related to the Cuba – USA conflict; 3) destroyed the legend about the necessity of monolithic unity for the effective defense of socialism; and 4) bring back the possibility of make public different opinions.

Since the nature of the WWW is to destroy the thematic and material limits of thought, it opens the access to a larger public participation. Who can discuss, and what can be discussed change. This force the power to find out new and more efficient tools for social control.

«LGBT nation and Otaku brotherhood in Cuba... thought their blogs» 5/17

Contrary to popular belief, the first blogs created from Cuba are dated in 2005. These are mostly from journalists. Although many are inactive now, reflect an interest in opening up to other spaces and change the relationship with the readers that rules the mainstream media. Since 2005 there are also “independent” blogs as *Palabras robadas*, where writer Pulsares uploads homo-erotic stories. On April 2007, the symbolic map of Cuban blogosphere changes with the emergence of Yoanis Sánchez’s *Generación Y*. Part of the academic production on blogs in Cuba written abroad (Calvo Peña 2008, Alba Duarte 2009) tells the story as if, until the spring of 2007 blogs had been a phenomenon of migration. Only with Yoanis the political confrontation within Cuba started through this media.

In September 2013 the blog platform cubava.cu open to free inscriptions. Being the only space of online self-publication technically accessible from the all country, the democratization impact was absolute: in less than a year the Cuban blogosphere doubled in size and spread in subjects.

**May 1st 2015: Reflejos has 5 064 blogs.**



## «LGBT nation and Otaku brotherhood in Cuba... thought their blogs» 6/17

El equipo de Reflejos afirma que el objetivo fue alojar en dominio .cu a “los blogs cubanos que hoy se encuentran en plataformas extranjeras y cubanas, así como los que están por crearse”. De modo que fuera “un espacio accesible donde compartir sus opiniones, intereses y necesidades”. Aspiran a “funcionar como un espejo en el que los cubanos podremos reconocernos en los intereses y anhelos comunes”.

El directorio se divide en ocho categorías: Política, Tecnología, Cultura y Sociedad, Deporte, Fotografía, Historia y Tradición, Temas Generales y Otros temas. Los blogs pueden tener más de un tema, de modo que se repiten los nombres de una categoría a otra. Entre los blogs hay títulos interesantes sobre temas casi invisibles: “Diseño y Animación 3D”, “Si de videojuegos se trata”, “Aeromodelismo” o “El bonsái cubano”. En realidad las mayores limitaciones son de acceso: hay que tener una dirección de correo nacional, y acceso a la intranet cubana para su administración.

Las bitácoras cubanas al fin salen del escaso 16% de la población con acceso a la red de redes. Es por eso que se hacen visibles comunidad que se distancian del modelo hegemónico de la cultura nacional y defendida en las políticas públicas, como las dedicadas al manga y anime japonés, o de personas y colectivos LGBT.

Buscar traducción de “Los Joven Club ofrecen un espacio para el Reflejo de Cuba” en HT



«LGBT nation and Otaku brotherhood in Cuba... thought their blogs» 7/17



LGBT Cuban blogs had been around since 2006. maybe the elders are *Negra Cubana tenía que ser* (*It must be black and Cuban*) and *Palabras robadas* (*Stolen words*). With the growing up popularization of internet access, many LGBT activist started independent blogging adventures. In 2009 starts Havana Times. It includes a “Personal Journals” section, were the writers spoke about the every day live. Some of them are gays or lesbians out of the closet. Until 2013, the LGBT Cuban blogs were mostly from La Habana, and the authors were strongly related to the National Center for Sexual Education (CENESEX) frame of work. For this research we study seventeen active LGBT Cuban blogs (we hope will see more in the near future), half of them are writhed from outside La Habana.



«LGBT nation and Otaku brotherhood in Cuba... thought their blogs» 8/17



1. <http://afromodernidades.wordpress.com> Alberto Abreu Arcia, Matanzas
2. <http://aroqueg.blogspot.com/> Alberto Roque, La Habana
3. <http://genealogiadelnictalope.blogspot.com/> Maykel González Vivero, Villa Clara
4. <http://jovenxlavida.cubava.cu/> Red Jóvenes por la Vida, Santiago de Cuba
5. <http://k1000g.blogspot.com/> Camilo García, La Habana
6. <http://lrpcuba.blogspot.com/> Luis Rondón Paz, La Habana
7. <http://multimania.cubava.cu/> Sensacional Mega Magazine
8. <http://negracubanateniaqueser.com/> Negra Cubana, Alemania

9. <http://paquitoeldecuba.com/> Paquito el de Cuba, La Habana
10. <http://proyectoarcoiris.cubava.cu/> Proyecto Arcoiris, La Habana
11. <http://vihnews.cubava.cu/> VIH NEWS, Santiago de Cuba
12. <http://www.havanatimes.org/sp/?cat=35> Isbel Diaz Torres, La Habana
13. <http://www.havanatimes.org/sp/?cat=358> Warhol P, La Habana
14. <http://www.havanatimes.org/sp/?cat=359> Jimmy Roque, La Habana
15. <http://www.havanatimes.org/sp/?cat=45> Dariela Aquique, Santiago de Cuba
16. <http://yasminsilvia.blogspot.com/> Yasmín S. Portales Machado, La Habana
17. <http://yusnabi.com> Yusnabi, España



«LGBT nation and Otaku brotherhood in Cuba... thought their blogs» 9/17



Since 2008 born in Cuba different otaku projects like “Anime no kenkyuu”, “Konoha no Fansub” society, “Habana Cosplay”, and “Hikari Guild”. All of them from La Habana. In other provinces Otakus had organized groups like “Tsunami Todoketai” (Santa Clara), and the Santi Spiritus’s, Camaguey’s, and Matanzas’s “Club Otaku”.

This societies made many activities with the support of the local authorities. They receive help for promotion and places to made the meetings, conferences, cosplays and parties. They used email fanzines, but after the *Reflejos* opening, most of them migrated to the use of blogs. For this research we study sixteen Otaku Cuban blogs.



«LGBT nation and Otaku brotherhood in Cuba... thought their blogs» 10/17

1. <http://adrian01.cubava.cu/> DEAD

2. <http://anime.cubava.cu/> DEAD

3. <http://athena01.cubava.cu/> ACTIVE

4. <http://hikari.cubava.cu/> ACTIVE

5. <http://htzanima3d.cubava.cu/> DEAD

6. <http://manga.cubava.cu/> DEAD

7. <http://manganosukaima.cubava.cu/> ACTIVE

8. <http://musicaanime.cubava.cu/> DEAD

9. <http://otakunoshintetsu.cubava.cu/> ACTIVE

10. <http://princeroyce1.cubava.cu/> DEAD

11. <http://sasousuke.cubava.cu/> ACTIVE

12. <http://tghacki.cubava.cu/> DEAD

13. <http://trunks07.cubava.cu/> ACTIVE

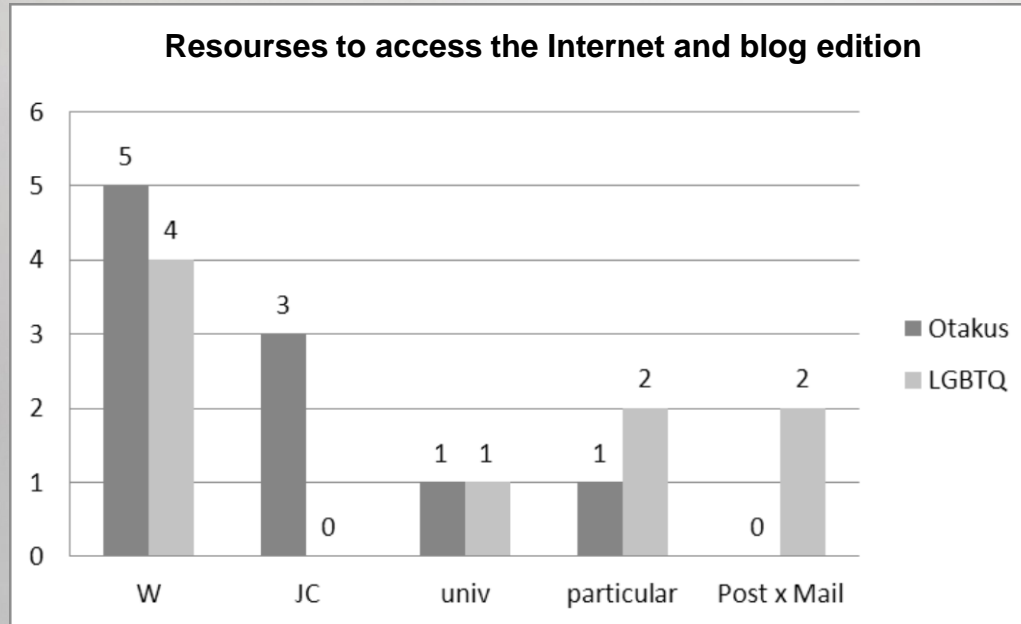
14. <http://variado.cubava.cu/> DEAD

15. <http://zeref.cubava.cu/> DEAD

16. <http://kacker89.cubava.cu/> DEAD



«LGBT nation and Otaku brotherhood in Cuba... thought their blogs» 11/17



**Legend:**

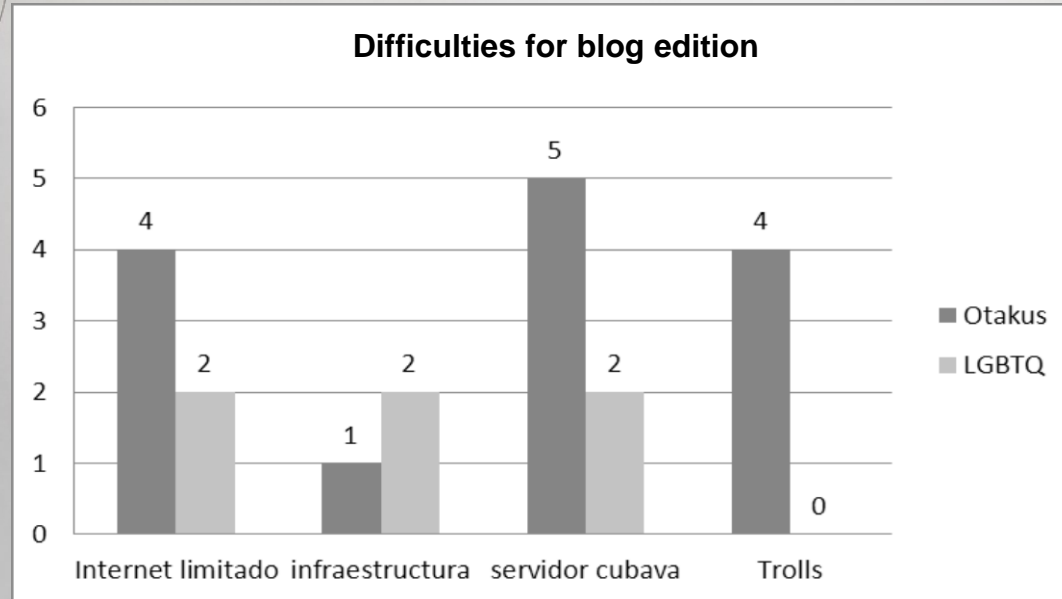
**W** = Use of the (state) workplace connection

**JC** = Use of free Joven Club's Cuba intranet connection

**Particular** = Use of domestic modem based connection provided by the state

**Post x Mail** = Blind Post in a foreign server using email

«LGBT nation and Otaku brotherhood in Cuba... thought their blogs» 12/17



**Legend:**

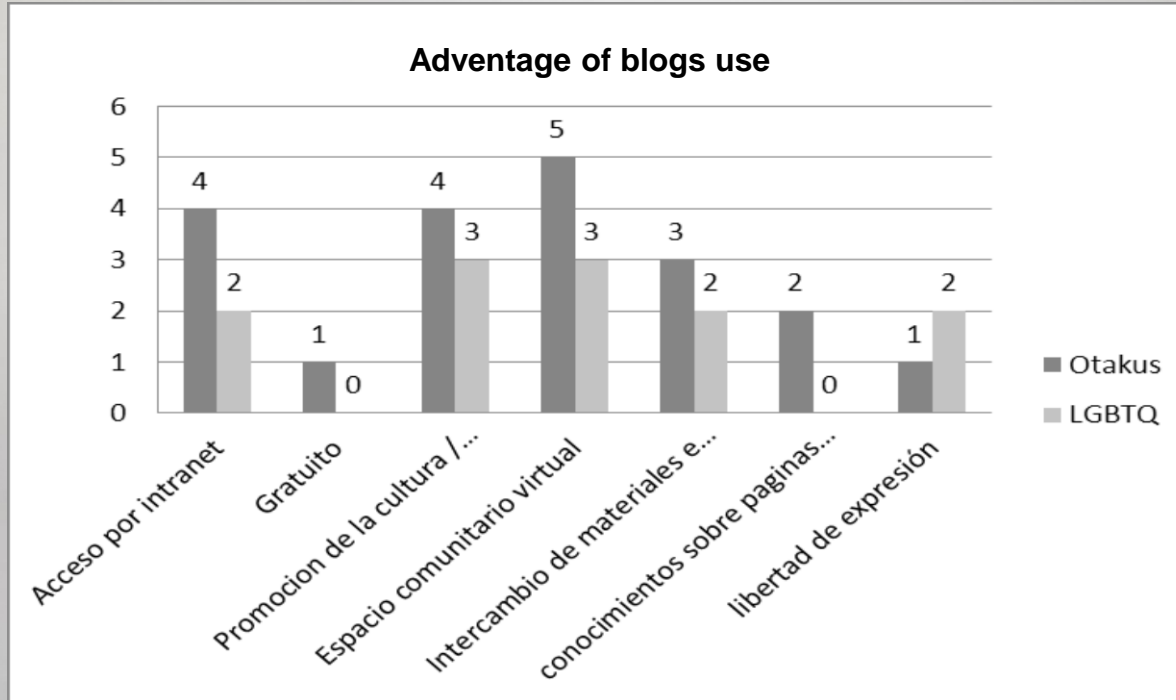
**Internet limitado** = Monthly accounts with limits defined by time or download Mb and restricted access to some URLs: blogs and social networks are not promoted by state webmasters.

**Infraestructura** = Few PCs in the Joven Clubs facilities or of line Joven Clubs.

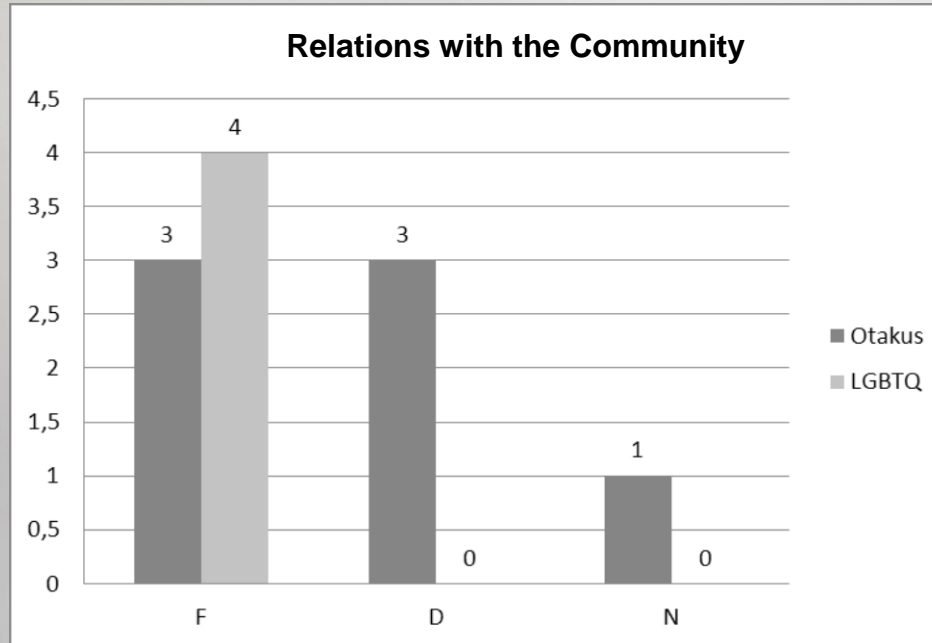
**Servidor cubava** = it is usual find out the Reflejos's admin panel is not working, or that the complete domain is out of service.

**Trolls** = visitors who try to offend and destroy the dialogue.

«LGBT nation and Otaku brotherhood in Cuba... thought their blogs» 13/17



«LGBT nation and Otaku brotherhood in Cuba... thought their blogs» 14/17



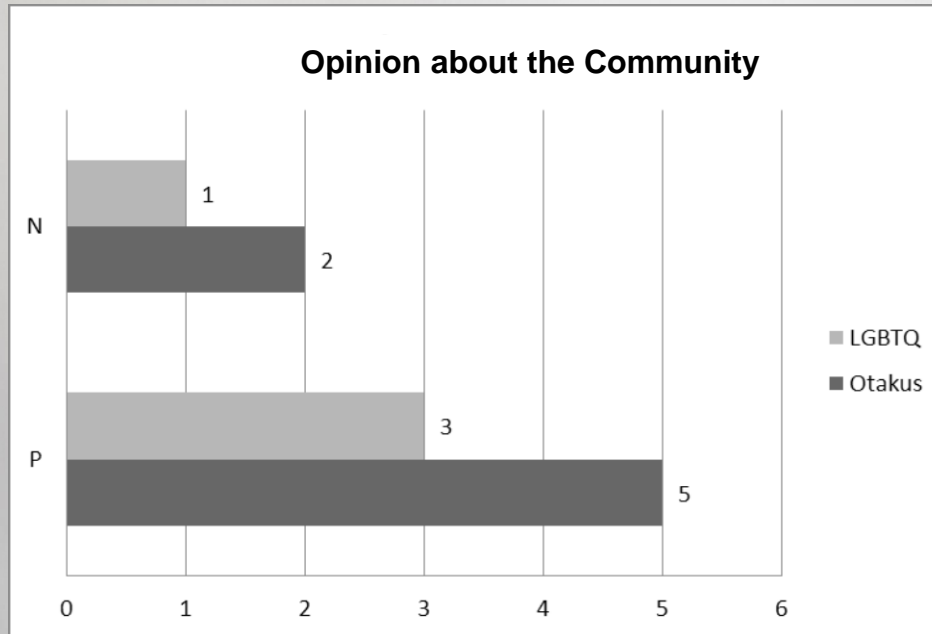
**Legend:**

**F** = Strong bonds with the community (mentions of 4 to 5 participation ways)

**D** = Weak bonds with the community (mentions of 3 to 2 participation ways)

**N** = Null bonds with the community (mentions of 1 to 0 participation ways)

«LGBT nation and Otaku brotherhood in Cuba... thought their blogs» 15/17

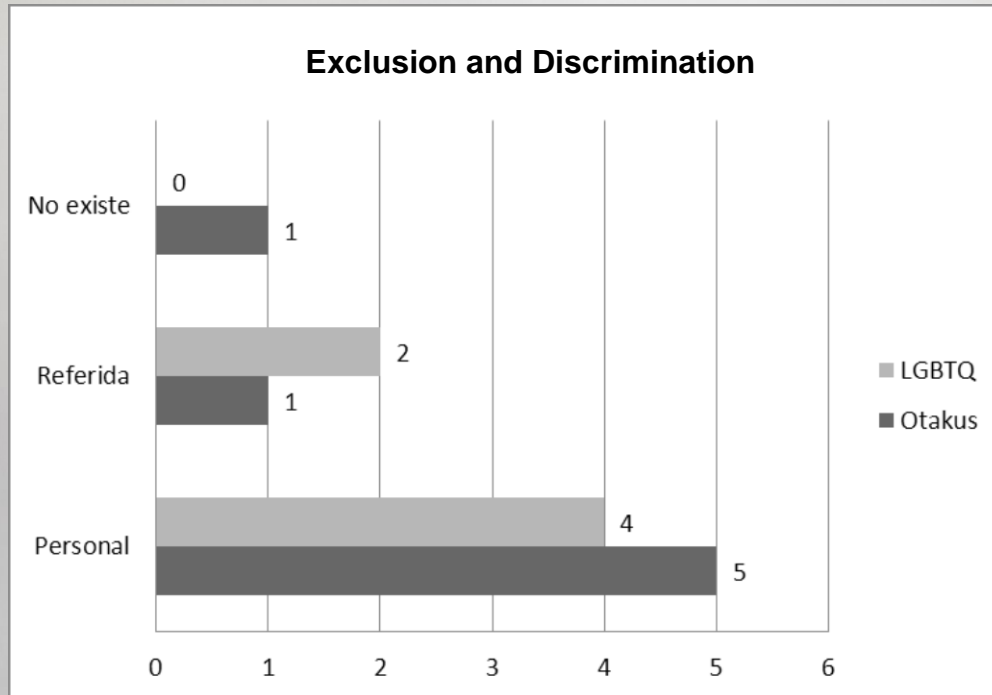


**Legend:**

**N** = Negative opinion about the community

**P** = Positive opinion about the community

«LGBT nation and Otaku brotherhood in Cuba... thought their blogs» 16/17



«LGBT nation and Otaku brotherhood in Cuba... thought their blogs» 17/17



The results we had presented here show strong coincidences between the LGBT nation and Otaku brotherhood from Cuba, a common necessity to establish their own spaces for interchange between equals and defend the collective memory of the culture they share.

The similarity in the issues related to access to internet and the gradual extension of the blogs use outside La Habana show the impact of the unequal, slow and unstoppable joining of Cuba to the Information Society and the Web 2.0. Although for LGTB activist that answers our questions the “Community” is a hard and elusive concept, both groups bet for a systematic relation between the digital space and the collective actions in the material reality they share with other people, no matter if they are on line or of line.

They are together in front of discrimination and have similar dreams of a changed society, one that will accept the differences with joy.