



LUND UNIVERSITY

# The “Special” Minority

*- Western aid and LGBTI-activism in Kisumu, Kenya.*

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TKAM02 - Spring 2015

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## I. Abstract

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The “Special” Minority: Western aid and LGBTI activism in Kisumu, Kenya.

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This thesis uses reflexive ethnographic methods to problematise the relationship between Western aid, the Kenyan societal context and LGBTI-rights organisations. It takes a queer theoretical intersectional approach to the themes aid and aid conditionality, human rights, and cultural relativism in order to understand how aid from Western institutions such as NGOs and governments affects the work of LGBTI-rights activists in Kisumu, Kenya.

By viewing aid through the theory of the gift by Marcel Mauss, it suggests that aid always comes with conditions in varying degrees. Consequently, this puts Western aid institutions in a power position above local activists in terms of ownership of valuing results, prioritising of resources and methods for LGBTI-related discourse. To single out LGBTI-organisations specifically for funding creates a suspicion towards these organisations from the surrounding society; nourishing views of LGBTI as an elitist group which seeks for special rights compared to the rest of the Kenyan population. Economical resources specifically directed to these organisations could create a climate of competition among similar parties where the daily issues of LGBTI-persons become the commodity in a ‘race for funds’ between organisations.

It is suggested that the focus should be on creating collaborations with other development institutions and in this way connect LGBTI-issues more closely to other human rights causes, minimising suspicion and exclusion towards LGBTI.

Keywords: human rights; reflexive ethnography; Western aid; cultural relativism; queer theory; African LGBTI-activism; non governmental organisations; MACA

## II. Abstract

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The “Special” Minority: Western aid and LGBTI activism in Kisumu, Kenya.

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I denna uppsats används reflexiva etnografiska metoder för att problematisera relationen mellan bidrag från Väst, den Kenyanska samhällliga kontexten och HBTQ-organisationer. Ett queerteoretisk, intersektionellt perspektiv används för att undersöka ämnen som bidrag, bidragskrav, mänskliga rättigheter och kulturrelativism för att förstå hur bidrag från Västerländska institutioner som NGOs och myndigheter påverkar arbetet som görs av HBTQ-rättsaktivister i Kisumu, Kenya.

Genom att se på bidrag utifrån Marcel Mauss teori om gåvan föreslås att bidrag alltid ges med olika variationer av krav. Detta placerar Västerländska bidragsinstitutioner i en maktposition över lokala aktivister i termer av äganderätt över resultatvärdering, prioritet av resurser och metoder för förmedling av HBTQ-relaterad information. Att specifikt rikta bidrag till HBTQ-organisationer skapar misstro mot organisationerna samt göder uppfattningar om HBTQ som en elitisk grupp sökandes speciella rättigheter jämfört med resten av Kenyas befolkning. Specifikt riktade resurser kan även skapa ett klimat som bidrar till konkurrens mellan organisationer där svårigheter Kenyanska HBTQ-personer möter varje dag blir inslag i en ’tävling om bidrag’ mellan organisationer.

I resultatdiskussionen föreslås att fokus bör ligga på att skapa relationer med övriga institutioner för utvecklingsarbete och på så sätt koppla HBTQ-rättigheter närmare andra mänskliga rättighetsrörelser. Detta kan bidra till minskad misstro och exkludering mot HBTQ.

Nyckelord: mänskliga rättigheter; reflexiv etnografi; bidrag; kulturrelativism; queerteori; Afrikansk HBTQ-aktivism; NGOs, MACA

### III. Acknowledgments

Many people have been part of making this thesis happen and I want to take the opportunity to express my gratitude. First to my supervisor Gabriella for being so engaged and interested in my work – for pushing when things went slow, for making me want to work harder and taking time to answer any kind of question. This thesis has been a long process and I owe a lot of analytical ideas and theoretical angles to you.

To all informants, activists and friends in Kisumu who have shared their information, stories and wise words with me. I would like to thank them for their time and trust, as without them this thesis would not exist.

Betty, you have given me not just great possibilities during my time in Kisumu, but also generously shared all your knowledge, put me back on track when I was heading the wrong way, gave me many insights into a complex subject, help whenever I have asked for it and a friendship I value highly. It is truly inspiring to be around a person so caring and engaged in the work for human rights as you are and I am very grateful for the opportunity to get to know you.

Emma, just a thank you does not feel nearly good enough for everything you have done. Encouraging me to take the step and go to Kenya, reading, sharing your experiences and knowledge but most of all just always being there in times of doubt for all kinds of questions. It really means a lot and I could not have done this as well as I did without you.

My dear friend Sam, who despite always being busy, has helped me in organising an internship possibility that became much better than I ever could have imagined.

Oscar, Annelie, Anna, Fredrik, Sara and everyone else who has helped with input, editing and reading, supported with encouraging words or just by being there during panic, stress and hopelessness. Sorry for being a doubtful wreck at times and thank you for still being there in those times.

Gab, thank you for being the best writing partner one can imagine and for valuable help in exploring Malmö’s range of coffee shops with cheap coffee, warm food, sleepable sofas, Wi-Fi and good study environment (in that order).

Last but not least a big thank you to my family who have always supported my spontaneous ideas, projects and travels.

Malmö, Sweden 2015-05-24

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## 1. Introduction

“Why are you mzungos (Swahili for white people) coming here in numbers to stand with homosexuals!?”

- Pastor Maele

The following text will address the complexity of the relationship between aid from Western countries directed to LGBTI<sup>1</sup>-rights organisations (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex) in Africa<sup>2</sup> and the society where the aid is received. The study was conducted in Kisumu, the third largest city in Kenya. Quoted above is Ugandan Pastor Maele, a known advocator for ‘anti-gay’ laws, as he in the documentary *Call me Kuchu* (Zouhali-Worrall, 2012) questions white members of the film team. A question illuminating one of the main issues in this thesis.

The work with this thesis started in August 2014 when I travelled from Sweden for an internship with a civil rights organisation in Kisumu. I stayed there for five months and got two main tasks during my time there; overviewing the opinions of people concerned by a housing upgrading project in the largest informal settlement in Kisumu; and to participate in the work with a local LGBTI-organisation in order to understand the public perception and attitudes towards sexual minorities. The second task turned out to be the largest as well as the most challenging one. In many African countries, Kenya included, LGBTI (more specifically homosexuality) is not commonly considered to be part of the national values (Epprecht & Nyeck, 2013; KTN, 2014; Tamale, 2014). I came to Kisumu with a background as an activist for LGBTI-rights through Amnesty International. The challenge for me as a Western LGBTI-activist coming to Kenya turned out to be how I should position myself as a researcher aiming to problematise a phenomenon I was now part of myself. Another challenge consisted of different perspectives of what human rights are - how to relate to them and to what extent they should determine national laws as well as the way people live and act in their daily lives. To what extent should the right to religious interpretations, certain local traditions, norms and values be respected above sexual rights? Who sets the order and decides what should be prioritised?

Somewhere half way through my internship in Kisumu I was doing fieldwork for the housing upgrading project I was part of. I followed a group of social work students and their supervisor to see a chief (head of the community) about an issue they wanted to discuss. In the chief’s office we were told to sit down by the assistant and wait for him to show up. The

assistant looked at me and asked where I was from and I answered Sweden. ”Oh, Sweden”, he said, ”that’s the country where you love homosexuals right?” I was a bit perplexed by the question at first, it was unexpected as I had not come there to discuss LGBTI-rights at all. I explained to him the views on homosexuality and LGBTI in Sweden and we ended up in a long discussion about whether it should be accepted or not. Similar discussions happened many times, however a common theme was the question, “Why are they so special?” aiming at the belief that the LGBTI-community would consider themselves in need of special rights and advantages. Properly understanding the reasoning behind this question means considering the relation between international human rights, Western aid and LGBTI-activism in Kenya. These three actors meet in a situation that includes the controversy of colonial power relations, LGBTI in the Kenyan society and a dependency of support and aid, all which creates tensions.

The following chapters will explore these relations and tensions further, starting with the aim and research questions. This will be followed by a background of international human rights and aid in relation to LGBTI and sexuality in Africa, which in turn is followed by a closer look at Kenya and Kisumu. After this background, previous research, methods and material used, as well as the theoretical framework for the thesis will be presented and discussed. The analysis then follows which is split into four chapters following two themes. The two chapters *Conversing LGBTI* and *‘African Culture’ & Post-colonial Sexuality* gives a view on how LGBTI is understood and accepted in the Kenyan context, this is followed by *Culture Relativism vs. Human Rights* and *Giver and Receiver* where Western aid and its effect on the Kenyan LGBTI-debate is problematised. The thesis will then finish with a conclusion that brings the two views together and present findings, applicability of the study as well as suggestions for future research.

## 2. Aim and Research Questions

Part of the criticism against Western reactions on homophobia in Africa has been that aid conditionality to governments and funding directed specifically to LGBTI organisations is done without knowledge of the context, which creates alienation and a we/them situation (Tamale, 2013b). The aim of this thesis is therefore to understand how Western aid affects the societal perception of LGBTI in Kenya and Kisumu. This is done through qualitative methods that give insights into the context that local activists work in including views from both the LGBTI-community and the heterosexual<sup>3</sup> society. By doing so the hopes are to reach a better

understanding of how to discuss LGBTI-rights in Africa, coming from a Western perspective. Consequently aiming for a contribution to the discussion of how to work for rights and acceptance of LGBTI around the world where homo- and transphobia is an issue and local LGBTI-organisations struggle with little resources to cover the cost for their work.

The following research questions has worked as tools to reach a conclusion:

- How is sexuality and LGBTI conversed in the meeting between the LGBTI-community and the heterosexual society in Kisumu?
- Which role does the history of European colonialism play in forming conversations and beliefs around sexuality and LGBTI in Kenya?
- To what extent could beliefs about national culture and religion be considered in the work for human rights?
- How can aid from Western countries be understood in relation to LGBTI-activism in Kenya?



### 3. Background

At their website the United Nations office for human rights asks the question “What are human rights?” The question is in turn answered on the same site with the following reply:

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible. (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2015)

This is an answer that states an aim of human rights laws as standing above national or local cultures and traditions, and that should be the same wherever in the world one lives.

In September of 2014 the human rights council adopted a resolution on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity. It was based on a vote by the member countries with 25 in favour, 14 against and seven abstentions. The resolution was based on the “grave concern expressed because of violence and discrimination against LGBTI across the world and aimed at sharing ways to overcome this” (Human Rights Council, 2014). Among the 14 countries that voted against the resolution was Saudi Arabia, speaking for the six states in the Gulf Cooperation Council. Those that opposed the resolution argued that it is a necessity to respect cultural specificities in certain countries and not let other countries promote their own culture through human rights. Instead of the resolution that was adopted they preferred one with a wording that did not specify sexual orientation and gender identity as a group deserving equal rights, but instead just ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ (Human Rights Council, 2014). A change like that means the paragraph could be read to include LGBTI, but could as well just refer to an aim of equal rights between men and women. This wording is also used in the Kenyan Constitution and has been criticised by Amnesty International for not being specific enough (Amnesty International, 2013). Kenya was one of the countries voting against the resolution of the UN council in September 2014.

In cultural anthropology and the study of culture there has been, and still is to some extent, a tradition of cultural relativism. It means that what is right and wrong, good or bad, justifiable or not, depends on the culture in which it occur (O’Connell, 2015). UN human rights on the other hand, aims to protect the individual regardless of the content (Wilson, 2007). With the core of the UN definition of what human rights stand for; inherent to all human beings, interrelated, interdependent and indivisible, it consequently conflicts with

cultural relativism that aim at the group or a whole society. However, the term cultural relativism is key to understanding why sanctions and pressure for LGBTI rights from the West to African countries might be an issue. It is the opinion of leaders in countries where LGBTI is believed not to be part of the national culture or religion that state sovereignty should be respected, as seen in the example with Saudi Arabia above.

In 2014 the Ugandan ‘Kill the gays bill’ was passed as a law that would sentence those who committed the crime of ‘aggravated homosexuality’ to lifetime in prison and not death penalty as first suggested when it was presented four years earlier (Parliament of the Republic of Uganda, 2014). The law was overturned again the same year due to an improper parliament procedure in the passing of the bill, much due to pressure from LGBTI-activists in the country. Both the bill and later the law was condemned by Western countries and put homo- and transphobia in Africa in the limelight (Gettleman, 2014). Other countries in sub-Saharan Africa that also passed tougher anti-gay laws recently are Nigeria and Gambia, all in all homosexuality is illegal in 36 African countries. South-Africa however stand as an example of a more tolerant country allowing same sex marriage (Itaborahy & Zhu, 2013).

The reaction on this from the World Bank and Western countries, such as the Netherlands, Norway and Denmark has been to threaten either cutting or putting conditions on the aid given to governments if the laws are not changed. In the case of Sweden, The Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) reallocated some aid not to go to the Ugandan government but to local human rights organisations instead (Sida, 2014). The aid conditionality has been criticised among LGBTI- and human rights activists because it tends to turn the governments against the LGBTI-communities in the respective countries, blaming them for causing the loss of aid. It as well strengthens the belief that homosexuality is something that has been imported from, and is now being advocated by the West. Instead it is advised that activists and organisations on the ground should be supported and listened to in order to find out the best way to work for better acceptance and rights for the LGBTI-communities (Dunne, 2012; Ireland, 2013; Sarpong, 2012).

An example of how this is done is the US Department of State aid program, the Global Equality Fund, that give budgetary aid to grass root organisations that advocates for LGBTI-rights around the world (US Department of state, 2011). Sida is as well working with the same aim, supporting LGBTI activist on the ground through monetary aid and support of pride festivals and journalist advocating for LGBTI rights (Sida, 2014). As an example Sida, together with The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights, RFSL, has conducted a program for LGBTI rights in southern Asia. The first part of the

program was reviewed in 2013 and it aimed at strengthening local civil rights organisations through capacity building in order to advocate for LGBTI rights (Balogun, Hildenwall, & Chakrapani, 2013).

The report concludes that because of the need to provide tangible results, a lot of focus was put on health issues and men who have sex with men (MSM), as this would show that change had been achieved. Further conclusions showed that one major challenge for the organisations in the program had been to cover for core costs because a large part of the available funding was used for MSM service provision and health issues. Possible issues that objectives of proving results to the donor might create will be problematised later in the text.

### 3.1. Kenya & Kisumu

Compared to the neighbour Uganda, Kenya has not had any serious recent proposals of tougher ‘anti-gay’ laws. In the Kenyan penal code it is however stated that a man who have or attempts to have, ‘gross indecency’ with another man in private or public can be punished with up to 5 years in prison. Women are not mentioned explicitly but the law can be interpreted to include lesbians as well as it further says that any ‘carnal knowledge’ against the order of nature done by any person of any person can lead to imprisonment for 14 years (§165; §162). The Kenyan constitution that was rewritten in 2010 however says that no person should be directly or indirectly discriminated by the state or any other person on any grounds (§27).

Criminalisation of homosexuality in the penal code is a remnant from the colonial times when Kenya was a British colony. Similar laws can be found in other former British colonies as it was part of a legal code used all over the British empire, including Asian countries such as India and Pakistan as well as the Kenyan neighbours Somalia, Sudan (now South Sudan), Tanzania and Uganda (Gupta, 2008; Han & O'Mahoney, 2014; Purkayastha, 2014)<sup>4</sup>. There are on-going discussions on whether same sex practises has been accepted in the area that now is Kenya before it was colonised. It is an area with numerous different tribes and traditional practises. However the arguments are that even though it was not uttered as an identity, as the Western term LGBTI is, it was in most cases not condemned or criticised as it is today. Ugandan scholar Sylvia Tamale argues African history is replete with examples of both erotic and non-erotic same-sex relationships (Tamale, 2014).

In 2013 a debated report came out saying that the number of MSM had been rising in the Nyanza region (Kisumu included) and was now the highest in Kenya (Orengo, 2013). Even though the numbers were not recognised by some authorities it gave the people in

Kisumu more proof to a general feeling that LGBTI had increased in numbers within the last couple of years. The city of Kisumu was, from the opinion of the LGBTI-community living there, perceived to be relatively open and safe compared to other cities such as Nairobi and Mombasa. This is a perception confirmed in a report from the Kenyan Human Rights Commission *The Outlawed Among Us* that has looked into the situation for LGBTI in Kenya (2011, p. 32). The rate of cases of violence and abuse is however still relatively high and these numbers will arguably not include all actual reported cases as violence often comes from the police, leading to mistrust and lack of confidence in pressing charges (Kenyan Human Rights Commission, 2011, p. 32).

The active LGBTI-community in Kenya is young and there are many groups advocating for LGBTI-rights, working with partners mostly outside of Kenya. It is a group that is well aware of their rights and stand up for them. Since the new constitution was promulgated in 2010 and should give them the same opportunities as any other citizen (Dearham, 2013). Homophobic voices are despite the new constitution however still heard from different directions in Kenya, examples such as a Member of Parliament, Aden Duale, comparing homosexuality to terrorism (Reuters, 2014), proposals of bills that suggests tougher laws (Morgan, 2014) and pastors that go as far as suggesting imprisonment for life for Kenyan homosexuals and stoning for any foreigner that commits an 'aggravated' homosexual act, arguing that homosexuality is an influence from other countries (Spectrum Magazine, 2014). Even though there is homophobia among the highest political and religious leaders in Kenya, and the paragraph in the penal code forbidding same sex sexual activities still being in place, the LGBTI movement in Kenya is nonetheless both vibrant and active.

In 2012 the first political candidate in Kenya to be openly gay, David Kuria, ran for the senate but had to withdraw due to security reasons and lack of funds. Kuria met both strong opposition from fellow politicians and threats from the public but also got a lot of support and hence said in an interview that considering all the support he got from the people in numerous ways, he did not have the view of Kenya as a homophobic country (Smith, 2012). In 2014 the Kenyan transgender activist Audrey Mbugua won a court case that will let her change the name on her school certificate, she has also won a case that allows her to register her organisation for transgender rights (Rwenji, 2014).

## 4. Previous Research

In this chapter previous research within the fields of aid, sexuality and the impact of aid in the receiving society that has inspired and been important in the work with this thesis will be presented.

Research on effects of aid from Western countries to developing areas of the world, including Africa, is large in fields such as development studies and human geography. In Sweden Sida is an important actor for sponsoring both aid programs and assessment of the results of these through reports and research within development and aid. An example is the report referred to above on capacity building for LGBTI-organisations in Southern Asia together with RFSL (Balogun et al., 2013). RFSL has also produced a handbook called *LGBTI in Development – a handbook on LGBTI perspectives in development cooperation* (Lenke & Piehl, 2009). This handbook gives a brief overview of LGBTI-rights in the world and lists challenges and points to consider for institutions that aim to support LGBTI-organisations in their funding and development programs. Even though the handbook lists many valid points it does not problematise or give a satisfactory background on why they need to be considered. As said earlier Sida aims to support grass root activists but there is a gap in the research done from their part one how this affect the way the society perceives the organisations that receive the aid.

Research done on the effects of aid conditionality to African countries do criticise conditionality on governments and advice aid institutions to focus on empowering local activists and programs, both when it comes to LGBTI-rights and other human rights issues. The works used in this thesis referring to these arguments are done in the fields of economy, political science and development studies; they give an overview of the issues that comes with aid (de Vylder, 2007; Dunne, 2012; Ireland, 2013; Sarpong, 2012; Sjöstedt, 2013). This macro level perspective is important in order to understand large impacts of relations between institutions and countries. It also shows the greater historical impact that aid and aid conditionality has had on the receiving countries up until present time. The view they present together however lacks the deeper view of the relation between the LGBTI-organisations and the societal context on micro level that the activists work in. The works cited above also lacks a queer, intersectional analysis of the prioritisations in aid.

Three anthologies coming from African publishers are important in the field of research on sexuality and LGBTI-rights in Africa and they complement the macro analysis on aid with a view coming from another perspective. *African Sexualities* edited by professor in

law, Sylvia Tamale (2011a), *Reclaiming Afrikan* edited by Zetu Matabeni researcher in queer theory, sexuality and African film (2014) as well as *Queer African Reader* edited by Sokari Ekine and Hakima Abbas, political scientists and activists (2013b). They are all collections of articles, stories and views from LGBTI persons across Africa, aiming to move away from the view of Africa as the homophobic continent and instead give a voice to a vibrant queer society that provide an African perspective on how to deal with issues concerning sexuality and LGBTI. In the anthology *Queer African Reader* especially two researchers has been influential for this text. Kenyan researcher in gender studies Awino Okech who have studied how to ‘queer’ African feminist spaces and inclusion of LGBTI-rights (2013) and Canadian sociologist Kaitlin Dearham’s study on LGBTI NGO’s in Nairobi, Kenya (2013). Worth mentioning is also the editor of *African Sexualities*, Sylvia Tamale who is a large contributor in research about sexuality and LGBTI in Africa with publications such as *Gendered bodies, sexualities and negotiating power* in Uganda (2005) and the article *Confronting the Politics of Nonconforming Sexualities in Africa* (2013a) where she discusses political dimensions on LGBTI in Africa and problematises statements such as “homosexuality is un-African”. Together with the three anthologies mentioned, Marc Epprecht, Canadian professor in global development studies, with the book *Sexual Diversity in Africa* (2013) and the anthology *Sexuality and Social Justice in Africa* (2013), edited together with political scientist S. N. Nyeck, complement the research on LGBTI in Africa, aid and aid conditionality from a European perspective.

In the field of cultural studies from a Western perspective, aid in relation to sexuality and LGBTI has not been widely researched. An inspiration for the work with this thesis has however been another master thesis by a Swedish student of applied cultural analysis, Emma Eleonorasdotter (2014), who has studied the life of a group of lesbian women in Malawi. Her thesis explores the impact Western aid has on the situation of the lesbian community in the capital of Malawi. The study focuses on the differences in the Western view of LGBTI-rights and ‘coming out’ in the relation to the lived experiences of lesbian women in Malawi and the consequences of this difference.

Another study worth mentioning in relation to aid and its effects in the society to which is been given, is a study called the *Zimbabwe Bush Pump* done by sociologists Marianne de Laet and Annemarie Mol. The study focuses on what makes ‘appropriate technology’ through the instalment of water pumps in villages in Zimbabwe. They describe appropriate as something that “doesn’t impose itself but tries to serve, that is adaptable, flexible and responsive – in short, a fluid object – may well prove to be stronger than one

which is firm” (2000). This is relatable to aid as well and what could be seen as appropriate aid or not depending to how well it works and can adapt to the society into which it is been given. It is in this context I aim to position this thesis, as a study of the impact of aid as well as what could be appropriate aid and not.

## 5. Methods and Material

### 5.1. A European Researcher in Kenya

In Kisumu it was obvious that I as a white foreigner was different, judging by the way people in general spoke to me as someone who deserved special treatment. A friend told me one day, “it’s so much fun to walk around the city with you, everyone is talking and noticing us”. In different social situations I was noticed, spoken to, presented to people and invited to happenings in a way I noticed was different from how my Kenyan friends were treated. On many occasions I was as well perceived as coming from a context of aid institutions even though I had not mentioned it. In these situations I was referred to as the ‘mzungo’ as if it was something that gave me, and those around me, status.

The construction of whiteness as status and power is an important factor to recognise for the subject of this thesis, especially in relation to my fieldwork in Kenya and my position as a researcher. In the meeting with people in those occasions it became obvious that socially constructed expectations on race, previous experiences of aid and power relations connected to a post-colonial system was in play and intertwined in my interaction with people. It affected the way people perceived me and perhaps as well my own unconscious actions. A post-colonial classification system that “since colonial times has affected all kinds of material and inter-subjective social domination” (Lugones, 2011, p. 205). This led up to a point when I had to ask myself, what am I doing here? Was my reason for travelling from Europe to Kenya, doing research on the behalf of human rights and my ‘Western values’, more legitimate than those who had done the same earlier that I aimed to problematise? Was I just another European thinking I was superior in knowledge about sexual rights, going along with, and enhancing existing systems of power? Could I give any new views on LGBTI-activism in Kenya that a local activist could not?

In an article on methods for doing research on social justice, the author Vivienne Bozalek argues: “although insiders in research are best placed in terms of understanding cultural norms, they do not always have access to positions of criticality in relation to these norms” (Bozalek, 2011). I could not be an insider in Kisumu and therefore I had to find ways to use my role as a foreigner and by that make my research legitimate. To find where I could take the position as the norm-critical outsider and turn it into something that would be usable for both the context I was in and where I was coming from.

In the previous mentioned study of the lesbian community in the capital of Malawi master student Eleonorasdotter (2014) experienced similar issues. A tool she found usable in



her fieldwork was to use her identity as a foreigner to ask uncomfortable questions. She discovered that discussing homosexuality and homophobia with people who were not conforming to the LGBTI-community was easier and safer for her than it would have been for someone from Malawi. Glenn Adams writes in the article *Decolonizing methods: African studies and qualitative research* (2014) that one way of overcoming what he calls the ‘coloniality of knowledge’ that dominates Western mainstream research, is to use qualitative methods to understand and illuminate these power structures. To use the fact that I was different and reflect on this was therefore eventually how I decided to tackle my outsider role and found a way to do something that would legitimate the research.

I started to use the situations where I was noticed and people were interested in talking to me by mentioning that I was doing research about sexual minorities (this was a term many used and therefore understandable). When I did this, no one that I spoke to hesitated to discuss it with me, even though they could tell me they were not used to do so. In the example with the assistant chief in the introduction I used the situation to question some of the quite homophobic views he expressed and he explained the thoughts behind these views. This way I found many reasons to why people in Kisumu personally disliked or even feared the LGBTI-community and I could try out what happened when I challenged their beliefs and views. This would have been hard for a local activist to do both because of the security risk but as well because of the assumption that, this is a person with no knowledge of the local ways, would not be there. It has to be said though that the situation with me as an outsider being able to discuss sensitive subjects with people in Kisumu does not automatically imply I would get a truth that an insider could not get, what I did get though was another perspective.

Zoë Gross writes in an article in *Critical Race and Whiteness Studies* about white women, coming for international development work to the East African context of Kenya and Tanzania and the creation of the white woman as ‘the other’. She argues white Western women are socially constructed as ‘Others’ with access to non-normative avenues and therefore seen as a ‘source’ to wealth, mobility, and the status of an idealised Western lifestyle. This access, both real and perceived, she means confirms a transnational social and economic power of whiteness (2015). What Gross writes align very well with my own experiences and it made me realise I also had to take the way I was perceived in Kisumu into account in the analysis of my material and ask if it had effected the answers I got.

In the book *Reflexive Ethnography* Charlotte Aull Davis writes that to some extent the researcher will always be connected to some part of their research, “depending on the extent and nature of these connections, questions arise as to whether the results of research are

artefacts of the researcher’s presence and inevitable influence on the research process” (Davies, 1999, p. 2). Me as a foreigner, discussing a subject by some seen as an import from the West had been influencing both the fieldwork and arguably as the way in which I would analyse my material. The complex situation I found myself in in Kisumu led to the methods of autoethnography and some of the interviews presented below.

## 5.2. Falling into Autoethnography

Autoethnography means to use the researcher’s personal experiences to describe and critique cultural beliefs, practices and experiences. It acknowledges and values the researcher’s relationships, uses self-reflexion through exploring the intersections between self and society and shows the process of research and the meaning of different struggles (T. E. Adams, Holman Jones, & Ellis, 2015).

This was not a technique I had planned to use but that came to me as a necessary thing to do in order to understand the situation I found myself in during the internship. Dwayne Custer (2014) describes it in an article in *The Quality Report* as “falling into autoethnography” when trying to understand life events and experiences. This was precisely what happened as a natural consequence of the struggle as I was trying to understand where I should position myself as a researcher in the field I wanted to study. In the situations mentioned above people occasionally saw me as an expert on all aspects of LGBTI because I was Swedish and wanted answers on questions concerning everything from biology and the ‘cause of homosexuality’ to complex existential thoughts on religion and the bible. Sometimes things I said were interpreted as proof that the LGBTI-movement actually was a fraud and homosexuality in fact a sin that should continue to be illegal, when my intention had been the opposite. I did not expect these meetings to be as intense as they sometimes were and did not know how to handle it. My identity as an LGBTI-activist and as a researcher had a tendency to become blurred, letting my own emotions take overhand in the fieldwork. Through analysing the relation between these two roles, and in turn my relation to the society I was in, I could better understand the situation. My whole research became a way of understanding my own position in the LGBTI and human rights debate. Carolyn Ellis writes in the *Handbook of Autoethnography*:

Autoethnography requires that we observe ourselves observing, that we interrogate what we think and believe, and that we challenge our own assumptions, asking over

and over if we have penetrated as many layers of our own defences, fears, and insecurities as our project requires. (Holman Jones, Linn, Adams, & Ellis, 2013, p. 10)

The material gathered from this method is valuable to this thesis as it gives a view of the difficulties of coming as a European activist and work with LGBTI-rights in Kenya. Of trying to do the ‘right thing’ by following the path set out by the local activists but struggling to do so. It shows the importance of challenging what you see as a researcher and why you understand it the way you do. It is essential to have this perspective for the thesis to work as an insight in the relationship between Western aid and LGBTI-activism in Kenya.

During the whole internship I kept a field diary where I wrote down experiences, emotions, happenings and thoughts that came up during my time in Kisumu, both in the fieldwork and in situations where I was not acting as a researcher. The field notes has then worked as material together with the interviews, observations and monitoring of media.

### 5.3. Structuring Interviews

For this thesis semi-structured and un-structured interviews have been done as defined by Charlotte Aull Davis (1999). The difference between the two being that the semi-structured version is structured in a way that the setting is planned and the interviewer has prepared questions as guidelines for the conversation. Un-structured refers to conversations that happens unplanned but take a direction where the researcher has topics or questions related to the research topic in mind. I chose not to use the structured interview format where questions and answers are prepared in a more static way (1999, p. 94f). The reason for this was that it does not allow as much freedom in the conversation as the semi-structured format. The topic of sexuality is a private thing and could be sensitive. Therefore I wanted to sense how the informant reacted to me as an interviewer and to the questions in order to know what direction the conversation could take.

When I started with the fieldwork I planned to do semi-structured interviews both with members of the LGBTI-organisations as well as heterosexual non-members in Kisumu. Interviews would provide personal stories and individual experiences of LGBTI-activists in order to get their opinions on the environment they were working in. With heterosexual informants I planned to get views and opinions on LGBTI. In Kisumu I started with the semi-structured interviews with members of the LGBTI-organisations and all in all 14 semi-structured interviews with those informants were conducted from August 2014 until end of October the same year. These informants were all in their twenties, identifying within the

LGBTI spectra and active in the one of the organisations in Kisumu in different ways. To start with I met the members when I joined different happenings organised by the LGBTI-community. After a while however I became close friends with some of them and in this way got introduced to others who wanted to participate in an interview. Finding informants was not a problem, in fact many wanted to tell me their story and were proud of the work they did as activists. Perhaps this was as well an effect of me as a white person drawing attention to myself.

As time went by I found that due to reasons explained above, interviewing heterosexual informants through the same semi-structured method as I had done with the LGBTI-persons would not be the most interesting. Instead the unstructured interviews and conversations came as a natural result of the autoethnography and the situations where I found myself in numerous discussions on the topic. The informants here were more diverse; including people I knew well, strangers, human rights workers and from other professions. The age bracket was also larger spanning from early twenties to middle aged. I also had some of these unstructured interviews with LGBTI-persons.

In January two more interviews with people I had worked with in Kisumu were made through Skype. By then I had defined the research topic and wanted to ask some specific questions that was not covered in the material collected in Kisumu. These interviews was set up as semi-structured where I had prepared a few questions I let the informant discuss.

The interviews and discussions done in Kisumu (and the two Skype interviews done from Sweden) are, together with my own field diary, the core of the material that has laid the foundation for the thesis. The interviews were conducted in many different settings and situations. For the semi-structured I sat down with the informant for about an hour. The unstructured were conversations more spontaneously turned into an interview situation where experiences and opinions were shared. It was also conversations that occurred from situations where the topic of LGBTI came up. These conversations could be with just me and another person or me and a group. I sometimes initiated these spontaneous conversations and on other occasions it was the other way around, most of the times however it started with the person or group asking what I did in Kenya and the conversation started with me telling about my involvement with the LGBTI-organisations.

#### **5.4. Participant Observations**

In order to further understand how the LGBTI-organisations in Kisumu worked and their relations with the surrounding society I took part in meetings and trainings conducted by the

organisations. These were both closed meetings for the members only and a few public trainings. To be around people and participating in their daily lives in order to gain as complete an understanding as possible of the cultural meanings and social structures of the group and how these are interrelated is the core of participant observations (Davies, 1999, p. 67). Even though the whole stay in Kenya provided important understanding of social structures and meanings especially two occasions became significant for the outcome of this thesis and they will be presented below.

I got invited to a public training organised by the security committee of one of the LGBTI-organisations in Kisumu. Similar trainings were organised in all the districts in Western Kenya. The participants were police, nightclub bouncers, boda-boda drivers (bicycle or motorcycle taxi, the most common mode of transport around the city), health workers and religious leaders. They had all been invited to the meeting to discuss health issues among youth. However the organiser’s goal was to be able to introduce the subject of LGBTI issues, security and rights. The participants had been chosen from professions where the most issues including violence, for LGBTI were discovered (Field Notes September 6-7, 2014). I used it as an opportunity to observe the interaction between the LGBTI-activists and the public. I wrote in my field diary the whole time but did not interact myself, as my intention was to observe and not steer any conversation into a specific direction. The training was conducted over a weekend with different groups of participants each day and was located in one of the hotels in the city I was told was ‘gay-friendly’ and secure, as some members of the organisation in charge would participate as well. Even though the invite said nothing about LGBTI I learned later that some of the participants knew the person who had invited them was active within the organisation.

In the middle of the internship I decided to conduct a lecture on LGBTI for the employees in the office of the human rights organisation I was based at in Kisumu. The people here were coming from different backgrounds, different parts of the city and worked within different fields such as urban planning, women’s rights, victims of violence and media/journalism to name a few. This was not an organisation specialised on LGBTI even though they had partners who were. They all had a variation of personal opinions about LGBTI-rights and wanted to learn more. I decided to take that opportunity. All in all the participators for this lecture were six people, both men and women, all working in the office and knew me well by that time. I knew from earlier discussions in the office that the basic knowledge about what it means to be LGBTI was relatively low and I therefore made a presentation about what I considered being the basics. Topics were the meaning of all the

letters of LGBTI, the main issues in the daily life and the current discussion on rights, both in Kenya and Sweden as these were the countries I knew most about at that time and felt comfortable talking about. After a suggestion from the team-leader in the office I started the presentation by handing out post-it notes and pens to everyone where they were told to write down the first thought that came to their mind when they heard LGBTI (all they had been told was what the letters are short for). I then let them comment on their thoughts before and after the presentation. This resulted in a lengthy discussion in the end where I posted questions and statements they had to consider. What started as just a lecture in order to answer some of all the questions I was asked about LGBTI in the office turned out to be a very usable method where all the participators in the room could vent their questions, beliefs and opinions they had about LGBTI. I took notes during the whole discussion and it became a mix between a participatory observation and an unstructured interview where I would partake in the discussions with personal opinions, ask planned and spontaneous questions, answer questions or just listen to the conversation.

What I call participant observations here was as explained above a complement to the other methods and as well connected to them, making the fieldwork into a continuum between these three methods. The amount of participation varied between being mostly observing happenings to being one of the participants in a meeting, even leading the discussion. As an contribution to the journal *Ethnologia Europea*, Swedish ethnologists Tom O’Dell and Robert Willim describes ethnography as a composition, ”ethnography involves a series of competencies, methods, and theoretically anchored stances whose composition shift as they are moved from one context to another” (O’Dell & Willim, 2011). It was the composition of different methods that together formed the material used for this text rather than them working separately.

## 5.5. Media

Apart from the fieldwork located in Kisumu articles from magazines, newspapers and to some extent blogs have been used in order to get a picture of the current situation, recent happenings and the way LGBTI was being described and discussed in different countries and situations. It has been the main source for the material that reflects recent opinions of African leaders on LGBTI and human rights.

## 5.6. Ethical Reflexions

As sexual practise always include some degree of privacy (Gune & Manuel, 2011) and sexual orientations and gender identity even more so and in a country where it homosexuality is illegal, the anonymity of informants for the thesis has been treated with thought. All informants cited have given their consent, even though the source has been unstructured interviews, and all have known that the material they have been part of creating will contribute to this thesis. The informants cited and mentioned in the text have been given pseudonyms. English names have been used no matter the name of the informant and the pseudonym has been randomly chosen meaning it does not always reflect the person’s gender if it does not have a significant importance for the content. Detail that does not play an important role in the context has been left unmentioned, the same when the text refers to the different organisations in Kisumu. The choice of using pseudonyms has been done because of the request from some informants to not mention their name, which has been respected in order to keep identities anonymous. According to Davis pseudonyms and the changing of small details about the informants is the most efficient way of keeping the anonymity, however it can never completely hinder informants or people close to them from recognising the informants way of speaking (1999, p. 52). Therefore the quotes used in this text have been carefully chosen not to be too detailed or to be in the risk of interfering with the privacy of the informants.

## 6. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework presented here will work as a tool for unwrapping the analysis in order to reach an answer to the research questions of the thesis. Three topics will be theorised: discussions on intersectionality and queerness as well as a post-colonial perspective on sexuality, the notion of culture and cultural relativism in relation to the human rights debate and finally the complexity of aid in the giver/receiver relation. Queer theory and an intersectional analysis help to understand in what way power relations work in relation to post-colonial inequalities of ethnicity, sexuality, gender and social class. Cultural relativism means to understand the notion of culture as something static that should follow accepted, constructed paths and does not recognise those that do not follow these paths - what is queer. Through the view of aid as a gift and the problematisation of the power relations connected to it discussions opens up on how and why aid is and can become a sensitive issue.

### 6.1. Queer Failure and Intersectionality

In this section a queer, intersectional approach to human rights will be theorised. I will use the term queer in the meaning of non-conforming sexuality and gender identity, but also in the larger understanding of queer as something or someone that does not follow the norm. Intersectionality is in turn an analysis that looks at how different socially and culturally constructed categories interact, causing complex levels of inequalities between race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation and age (Okech, 2013, p. 24).

Sara Ahmed, British researcher on feminist-, queer theory, critical race studies and post-colonialism, argues in *Queer Phenomenology* that “social relations are arranged spatially and queerness disrupts and reorders these relations by not following the accepted paths” (2006). Together with this definition by Ahmed of queer as something that does not follow the constructed line of thought, anthropologist Mary Douglas and her theory about taboo in *Purity and Danger* (2002), first published in 1966, will add a theoretical tool to further understand how sexuality and LGBTI is being discussed and not discussed. Douglas asks for the reason behind why some things are seen as dirt or taboo in one setting while in another it is not. She argues this has to do with the space surrounding the subject is considered dirt or taboo, to again speak through Ahmed, which decides if it fits the acceptable path or not.

The importance of discussing queer and taboo in relation to human rights movements and Western aid is theorised by Judith Halberstam who is an American critical feminist and queer theoretician. In *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011), she problematises from a post-colonial perspective how Western feminism lacks an intersectional, queer agenda, consequently acting



as superior in judgement: “Intellectuals construct an otherness to “save” in order to fortify a sovereign notion of self. ...Feminism is complicit in the project of constructing the subaltern subject it wants to represent and then heroically casting itself as the subaltern’s salvation” (2011, p. 128). This creates a power relation where a hetero-normative Western movement adopts the right to define other beings and bodies, turning what does not follow the ideological norm into failure and denies those who are oppressed a voice.

The pervasive model of women’s studies as a mother-daughter dynamic ironically resembles patriarchal systems in that it casts the mother as the place of history, tradition, and memory and the daughter as the inheritor of a static system which she must either accept without changing or reject completely. (Halberstam, 2011, p. 125)

What Halberstam here explains as a static patriarchal system - the expectation of normative gender roles in society - that is reflected in the mother-daughter dynamic of the Western women’s movement could be related to a static imagined national culture, which will be theorised below. Both intertwined belief systems built to exclude those that do not ‘accept’ the norms, those who in the hetero-normative society fail by not conforming. Halberstam argues for embracing ‘failure’ and to find other solutions instead of ‘doing or dying’, the idea of the necessity of direct action or nothing at all.

Following the arguments by Halberstam, Kenyan researcher in critical gender studies Awino Okech, has studied how to ‘queer’ African feminist spaces in order to include and position the LGBTI-rights into a larger context. This would in turn challenge gender and sexuality norms within the feminist space. Building on an intersectional approach, she argues that solidarity in movements should not be seen as a pre-given phenomenon but constituted through practise and working together. Getting people to interact and analyse their situation together instead of following trusted leaders and experts would enable the human rights movement to be more diversified (Okech, 2013).

## **6.2. Cultural Relativism and Culture as Distinction**

Following the previous section on intersectionality the notion of culture as it is used in the human rights debate will be problematised in this section in order to later in the analysis understand how it includes and excludes in relation to norms.

Distinction between ‘cultures’ is being used to criticise that human rights ideally should apply equally to all human beings regardless on where one lives, as cited from the United Nation above. Meanwhile cultural relativism is used to argue for national sovereignty

and respect for local values and ‘national culture’. Criticising human rights from a cultural relativistic approach is however nothing new, in 1947 the American Anthropology Association wrote a statement where they questioned the declaration of human rights as being written from an American and Western European perspective. The statement read that human beings do not function outside of the societies of which they form a part and it is therefore important to form a statement on human rights that do more than just phrase respect for the individual as an individual. It should also take into account that the individual is a member of the social group which shapes behaviours and of which s/he therefore is inextricably bound (American Anthropologist 1947). Anthropologists today are however to a larger extent recognising the issue with cultural relativism and are problematising the use of the concept (Wilson, 2007). A more recent example of how cultural relativism is being used is the Dutch organisational anthropologist Geert Jan Hofstede who here gives his definition of cultural relativism and argues for the importance of recognising it in the meeting between people from different groups or societies.

Cultural relativism does not imply a lack of norms for oneself, nor for one’s society. It does call for suspending judgment when dealing with groups or societies different from one’s own. One should think twice before applying the norms of one person, group, or society to another. Information about the nature of the cultural differences between societies, their roots, and their consequences should precede judgment and action. Even after having been informed, the foreign observer is still likely to deplore certain ways of the other society. (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p. 25f)

What Hofstede suggests is that one always has to consider the differences between societies and groups before applying norms from one society on another, and even when doing so a foreigner might still not be able to fully understand or accept the ways of that society. He argues the importance of being aware that these norms and values are not consistent all over the world and hence knowledge about cultural differences should *precede* judgement and action. The view that Hofstede puts forwards here is however problematic, looking at the discussion on LGBTI-rights, because it implies an essentialist view on culture. Meaning something static that can be applied on a whole group or society. Even though Hofstede might be right about the importance of knowledge on differences in norms and values, one has to ask what culture that is being compared? The imagined national culture put forward by

populist African politicians where homosexuality does not have a space? Or the one lived by the LGBTI-community in Kenya?

The term ‘culture’, can, and needs to be approached from many different angles. In the book *Kultur* (Culture) ethnologist Kirsten Hastrup explores different approaches to the concept of culture. The view of culture as order, she explains, tells how the society works as a collective through a set of rules where the role of the individual is less important than the group (2010, p. 56f). This approach to culture, she argues, has developed into to the nationalistic view of culture as distinction - the idea of the sovereign nation state that collects a group of individuals and parts them from others by national differences. Hastrup continues with arguing that when relativism, that is always latent in the concept of culture, becomes too prominent it can turn into fundamentalism that focuses solely on the differences between cultures rather than similarities and changes (2010, p. 81).

Hastrup draws on the idea of the nation as imagined by political scientist Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* (1993). He problematises the idea that a nation state has a collective culture by explaining the belief systems and structures that makes a nation. Talking with the words of Anderson, the definition of the imagination that makes a nation is the same as for a sociological organism “a fixed community that moves continuously through history”. The common knowledge about this continuum is part of what creates the feeling of belonging to a nation even though most individuals within it might never meet (1993, p. 36f). Anderson also speaks about other attributes that create a community, such as language, a common history and traditions. It is this, as Hastrup argues, that enables a distinction from other nations and cultures.

Problematising it further is however needed as this still implies an understanding of culture as entities that can be compared, imagined or not. Polish sociologist Zygmunt Bauman view on comparison and distinction between cultures is quoted below:

The term ‘cultures’, if understood hierarchically, can hardly be used in plural. The concept makes sense only if denoted straightforward as *the culture*; there is an ideal nature of the human being, and the culture means the conscious, strenuous and prolonged effort to attain this ideal, to bring the actual life-process into line with the highest potential of the human vocation. (Bauman, 1999, p. 7)

Bauman argues that positioning cultures against each other is not possible as by doing so it only positions values in a hierarchical order under a singular version, *the culture*.

To be able to contextualise the discussion on the notion of culture Tamale and her research on non-confirmative sexualities in Africa and the meaning of the usage of ‘un-African’ and ‘African culture’, will be used (Tamale, 2011b, 2013a, 2013b).

### 6.3. The Gift

Connecting to the aim of this thesis it is important to understand the concept of aid and how power relations connected to it can be understood in relation to the theoretical discussions presented above.

Marcel Mauss was a French anthropologist working in the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He studied concepts and their meanings leading to the book *The Gift* (1967) first published in 1925. In this work he describes and conceptualise the ‘gift economy’ in primitive societies and shows how a gift always has obligations connected to it, both for the giver and the receiver. Mauss explains how the giver can feel obliged to give the gift because of the situation the two persons are in and the receiver equally obliged to not refuse the gift and to give something in return. To put the gift-economy in a contemporary context, Mauss argues the modern credit system origins from the gift economy – a gift cannot always be returned immediately but is anticipated to be when a suitable situation occurs, leaving pressure on the receiver. There is also prestige and honour connected to the gift and by giving away a wealthy gift one can achieve a high personal status (Mauss, 1967, p. 34ff).

Mauss discussion on the meanings and consequences of a gift will here work as an illustration of the complexities and power relations that come with aid given from Western institutions to African countries. All of these meanings and commitments connected to a gift will help theorising the reason why aid can be problematic and cause disturbance depending on how it is being given and with which intention.

## 7. Conversing LGBTI

This chapter will be the starting point of the analysis and will focus on the understanding of the tactics used to create conversations around LGBTI in Kisumu. This will enable comprehension of how this affects the relation between LGBTI-organisations and the heterosexual society in order to move on into further problematisation of Western aid.

### 7.1. The Security Training

The first day of the training that I used for observations was a Saturday. It started in the morning with a group discussion where four different themes were given out for the groups to discuss – HIV/Aids, use of alcohol and drugs, violence/sexual abuse and insecurity/unemployment. I was also put in one group each day and the first day I choose to be part of the violence/sexual abuse group. Even though the theme was sexual abuse the group discussion did not touch sexuality, the view of women or gender roles but mainly centred on influence of drugs, alcohol and lack of activities for youth. Another argument for increasing violence and sexual abuse was also the influence of Western values from media and Internet. After the group discussion we all went back to the main conference room to listen to what the other groups had discussed. To me it was surprising when I learned that not even the HIV/Aids groups had mentioned anything about sexual education but had similar topics for causes and solutions as my group.

The day continued with a screening of a short film clip. The clip was a part of a newscast where a new report was presented saying Western Kenya had the highest numbers of HIV/Aids cases and new infections. It also mentioned the importance in recognising the rise of HIV/Aids among gay men and MSM. This was the first time in the day that the subject of sexuality and gender came up at all. After the clip the room went quite for a moment, which made the moderator ask for comments. After a few long discussions on the topic of HIV/Aids prevention the discussion got into the topic of discrimination against LGBTI that had been the organisers aim for the training. A police officer was asked to explain what happens if they get a case with a homosexual man and he said, “We have to serve all citizens and acknowledge that it is happening but that does not mean that we accept it”.

During the whole meeting I sensed an avoidance to mention sexuality and when it finally was mentioned in relation to HIV and Aids the atmosphere in the room got slightly more tensed. People would watch their words carefully when they mentioned homosexuality and, as the policeman quoted above, make sure to add that it is not something they personally accepted. To me it seemed as though the way of handling issues on sexuality and gender in

the society of Kisumu were prevalent in that room, the almost obliviousness to the topic, the tension when it was mentioned, the people who were there to speak for the behalf of the LGBTI-community but the only way they could do it was to connect it with a subject that concerns the whole community – HIV/Aids.

The second day of the training a new group came, they all had the same professions as the previous day with one exception – a transgender man had invited his mother. He had told me on an earlier occasion that he had trouble at home with his “extremely homo- and transphobic mother”, she had no knowledge about LGBTI and gender identities and used to call him a lesbian and ‘kuchu’ (homosexual). It had gone as far as the mother telling him she wished he would be raped as a way of curing the homosexuality. My friend told me he had decided to bring her to the training to get some information and he was expecting a lot from it.

This second day turned out to be quite different even though it started in almost exactly the same manner with the groups discussing the themes in similar ways. After the news clip the discussion was still going in the same direction, away from the LGBTI topic. As a consequence the transgender man raised his hand and asked for more information on transgender issues. The facilitator then started a projector showing slides with information on intersex and transgender, including illustrations of intersex person’s genitals. This started a discussion on a completely different level from the day before and solutions on how to include LGBTI better in the society were deliberated.

The mood by then was much more open than the day before, however some expressed fear of especially homosexual men. One man said; “I would not approve, but not care that much either, if my daughter said she was a lesbian. But I would be scared if my son told me he was gay, because of the way they have sex”. This comment led to another person of whom I knew to be part of one of the LGBTI-organisations to react. I sat close to her and could see that the comment had annoyed her. Just when the meeting was about to finish she stood up and said, “I need to clarify some things with a person in here”. She then explained how it was nothing wrong with having sex in “un-traditional ways” and that this was not something exclusive for LGBTI. The atmosphere that had been quite calm and allowing I now felt became a bit tenser again. The moderator tried a few times to interrupt and finish the discussion when it got into details about what positions that were considered ok and not.

This day the training took another direction because of the frustration of two of the participating activists. The mood did sometimes get tense in the way that some people would become quiet or start laughing, but the training did reach the goal of discussing LGBTI-

issues. In the opening paragraph of her contribution to the reader *African Sexualities* Mansah Prah quotes a South African student in a gender and sexuality-class of hers who says that “Our culture does not permit us to talk openly about sex” (Prah, 2011, p. 589). Prah writes about methods on how to teach about sexuality in an African context. She argues that even though culture and religion do influence largely how you can talk about sexuality there are many other factors in play such as group dynamics and frame of mind and world-view of both teacher and students (2011, p. 589).

A while after the training I spoke to the moderator of the discussions who told me they were always very careful when they had invited the public in case someone very homo- and transphobic would be there. Postures, reactions and comments in the group had to decide which direction the conversation could take. They often started with transgender and intersex as “you can’t just go full blast on homosexuality; transgender and intersex can be explained by nature and is easier to accept” (Field Notes, October 17, 2014). The group dynamic, which Prah argues is a factor that much easier can be influenced than culture and religion (2011, p. 590), did play a large role during this training. The moderator told me the goal was to invite leaders of churches, police and so on and therefore they have to accept that sometimes the climate for discussion is more difficult.

Drawing from this, to what extent does one have to consider cultural and religious values in the conversation between LGBTI-activists and the heterosexual society in a context such as Kisumu? How well does a group dynamic that creates a discussion on the edge of what is considered culturally tolerated work? I feared that illustrations of genitals and conversations about different styles of having sex would be a bit too much when I was in the training as it was such a radical change from the day before. I decided to speak to the mother of the transgender activist after the training was finished and ask her how she felt about it and I sat down to eat with the mother and a friend of hers who was a pastor. The pastor had been quite outspoken during training and he told me he was happy with the outcome as it was an important topic to talk about. He argued that Western influence through media was a cause to what he perceived as an increase in homosexuality. He however believed that not talking about it and not helping youth through issues connected to LGBTI would just mean an increase in fear of speaking about it, which he said might even lead to committing suicide. The comment from the mother was that she thought the training was good but indeed a bit too much. I then feared she had been discouraged and that the training had crossed the line of what she thought was acceptable.

Some time later I met the transgender activist again and asked him about the situation at home. He told me he was so happy now as it had completely changed, his mother had accepted him and now understood what he was. The information given in the meeting was in line with what the moderator told me about intersex and transgender issues being easier to talk about. They were perceived as medical conditions, one on the outside of the body and one on the inside, that could be cured with operations and hormones (something unfortunately few can afford in Kenya). It seemed as this explanation to why her daughter in her eyes acted as a lesbian had made it easier for her to accept her back into the family. Reflecting what I experienced being the common view in Kenya, a social acceptance of LGBTI as a condition that could be cured, and the solutions to it means helping these persons change.

## 7.2. Conversations

Learning from the previous section about the way LGBTI is being presented and talked about we can see how this has the possibility to affect people’s acceptance towards it.

Halberstam argues for conversation as a key to avoid ascribing external standards to a person, in order to understand their identity and way of being. ”Conversation rather than mastery indeed seems to offer one very concrete way of being in relation to another form of being and knowing without seeking to measure that life modality by the standards that are external to it” (2011, p. 12). The mother of the transgender man could not accept that her child did not fit the gender stereotypes she knew; she was measuring him from the standards and norms in the surrounding society. Talking through the words of Halberstam, as a daughter who did not ‘accept’ the static system by failing to confirm to the gender role she was expected to follow (2011). However, after understanding what it meant to identify as transgender, the mother could accept it better. This is one aspect of understanding how the advocates for LGBTI-rights deal with conversations around the subject. Another is the balance of delivering the message to a heterosexual society where even people who agree with LGBTI-rights are advising carefulness, as one human rights worker said: ”They (LGBTI) need to let it take time and not forget that in Europe for example acceptance has been a long process. Sometimes they are a bit too aggressive about it” (Mariah, 2014).

Concerning conversations with the intention of creating acceptance Jane Bennett (2011, p. 78f) argues in her contribution to *African Sexualities*, that to talk about sexual minorities in terms of health often becomes easier in a political context as it is already a legitimate subject, in line with the methods used at the security training. However she also stresses the importance of understanding the links between sexualities, gender and



socioeconomic space and the influence it has on the life of LGBTI. How and where are sexualities being discussed (2011, p. 78f)? If the only space LGBTI can be talked about is in connection to health issues, will it then be possible to see it as something else than a problem or a disease? Again going back to the security training, if the discussion would not have started with the HIV/Aids discussion and the health theme would it have given the participants another understanding of sexual and gender identities and given LGBTI a chance to claim its own space and not be there on the premises of the HIV/Aids issue?

Bennett continues by saying that comparison between African societies and countries in the West are in most cases unhelpful. It is the questions and discussions that emerge from the issues that activists face in their societies that will create the real empowerment, it is these experiences that needs to be highlighted and given key position (2011, p. 78f). The security training is for this reason in many ways an example of why it is important to not impose outside values and methods, but to understand the local conversations around LGBTI and empower activists who knows when to be visible and put pressure on the society to be more accepting and when it is better to take a more laid back approach. Here one informant is giving her view on conversation and claiming space:

”Many understand us and are willing to learn. Even if they don’t understand, they are just human beings like me. You just talk with the person and he or she will understand, it’s not hard. But you don’t talk about the LGBTI; you talk about the human rights issue...When I go out to the village and the rural set-up I put on a dress. I have to go there as a woman talking to women or they would not accept me. I bring it with me, put it on just before I go and take it off when I get back. It is not fun but it is necessary”. (Faith, 2014)

One common stand in the discussion of acceptance of LGBTI, both among the community themselves and human rights workers in other areas, was that one should not present oneself as LGBTI. This was because of the argument that a person is not defined by their sexuality and so to make it obvious and be open about it would make it harder for society to accept the person. “If you are doing something, if you are something, people will not just see you as a lesbian. They will see that this person is a doctor, or a driver” (Hanna, 2014).

To simplify, there are two different approaches to the LGBTI organisations work for acceptance in Kisumu. To discuss LGBTI rights through other channels such as women’s rights or HIV/AIDS prevention or to be more straightforward and norm breaking. Bluntly

said, the first means to follow the heterosexual and patriarchal norms while trying to introduce information about LGBTI-rights. It is an approach that has security as the first priority, where rights can never be forced for the cost of an activist being hurt.

“To deal with the security problems we have to start with ourselves. Because here in Kisumu, and the rest of Kenya, people are still in denial if they should accept us or not accept us. If you go to a club and tell everyone that you are LGBTI you will be beaten, because it is still not legal. So if you start misbehaving obviously you will be beaten”. (Hanna, 2014)

In this quote a hetero-norm is present, misbehaving in this case meant turning away from that norm in an obvious way and to the informant this meant a risk of being beaten. She argues that this risk has to do with the law, but it is not illegal to tell people that you are LGBTI, just the sexual act. Neither is it legal to discriminate anyone on any ground, or beat anyone for that matter, according to the Constitution. It is not the law specifically that is the reason for the obvious beating, but the taboo of deviant sexualities and gender identities that leads to the argument, “security must come from ourselves by not misbehaving”.

This approach is not exclusive to Kenya or Africa but it was different from what I was used to and it provoked me. It resulted in lengthy discussions with both LGBTI and heterosexual persons who argued for being careful, at least for the moment. I saw it as a confirmation to the existing normalisation of homo- and transphobia and I wrote in my field notes:

A big difference is how people are educated to not show openly that they are gay because they will be beaten. “Misbehaving” causes violence and security must start with ourselves is the advise given. This is really provocative to me, why should the person who is beaten be the one to change and not the offender? But as long as you know who you are inside it is ok, as one of the activist told me. Security is the most important issue. (Field Notes, September 2, 2014)

This provocation from my part might have reflected the focus on being able to ‘come-out’ in the Western LGBTI-rights movement. Among most of the LGBTI-informants in Kisumu this was a goal for a far away future and nothing they could afford right now because of security and the level of acceptance in society. In research done in Ghana by Kathleen O’Mara (2013) and in Malawi in the master thesis by Eleonoradotter (2014) it is argued that it is not always

desirable to follow the Western ideal of the necessity of being able to ‘come out’ as LGBTI. I perceived the climate in Kisumu as more tolerant towards LGBTI than what has been described in these two studies from Ghana and Malawi, but among activists in Kisumu the wish to be able to come out was much about accepting yourself. Coming out to the public was desired but not seen as likely in a near future.

There was however also another more open approach. A gay man from one of the largest organisations for MSM and gay, bisexual and transgender men told me that the best way was to let people be exposed to difference and then after some time they would accept it better. He said firmly, ”I am really an activist, I’m out in public and I believe in exposure. You might get beaten, but in the long run it is the only way to get accepted. We can not stay hidden” (Kevin, 2014). This man had in fact got both beaten and sexually abused but was still sure of his position. Going back to the discussion on priorities and the norm for how to behave in order to be seen as respectable in society, there is such a norm even inside the LGBTI-organisations and Kevin was turning away from that norm. Does that mean he in fact was the one truly working for the ‘queering’ of the human rights organisations? As a result of my earlier provocation, I found myself agreeing more with Kevin’s approach than the ‘security must come from ourselves’ statement, even though I personally would have chosen to keep questions of sexuality more quiet. Was this also a matter of a Western discourse on LGBTI-rights, focusing on coming out, that made me agree with an approach that I could not personally relate to? Talking through Halberstam again, perhaps I was ascribing values coming from a kind of Western utopian view on LGBTI-rights to the LGBTI organisations. Values that were external to both me and some of the activists.

Here we have looked into how LGBTI was talked about from activists to the heterosexual society and the different meanings related to these conversations. The next section will follow up with how heterosexual people in Kisumu in turn perceived LGBTI.

### **7.3. Beliefs about LGBTI**

Interaction with people in Kisumu made it clear that the relation with the LGBTI-community and the rights for the same was a quite complex situation. Even though LGBTI in Kisumu might have been tolerated in the way that people knew it was there but did not interfere it was not accepted, LGBTI-persons still faced daily issues because of their sexual or gender identity such as suspicion and threats from family and the community. LGBTI or sexuality in general was not much talked about, meaning information about LGBTI and sexuality was limited. This is of course not a taboo limited to Kenya but a phenomenon around the world, to me in

was however very present in Kisumu. In the interviews made with heterosexual informants, many of the beliefs about homosexuality were originating from churches and pastors preaching against it. As much as people did not generally talk about LGBTI it did not mean that there were no opinions, curiosity or thoughts about it. When people heard that I was doing research on sexual minorities, everyone I spoke to got very interested about knowing more. Curiosity together with lack of knowledge and the need to seek explanations for the unknown meant that the informants had all kinds of opinions and beliefs about homosexuality, such as it being a sin, a choice, a ‘disorder of personality’, just about the sexual act, rape of children and that homosexuals recruit by offering money and wealth.

The lecture I held in the office where I was based in many ways illustrates such opinions and beliefs. The post-its with the first thoughts that came to mind when the participants heard LGBTI were put on the wall. Almost all of them had written ‘sex’ on one of their notes, others had ‘disorder of personality’, ‘sin’, ‘crazy world’, ‘immorality’, ‘two men’ and ‘same-sex engaging in sex’. The focus on sex was prominent and I therefore started the discussion with asking if they believed it was possible to be homosexual and a virgin. Some of them had a hard time accepting this claim, arguing that the definition of homosexuality solely had to do with a sexual act disconnected from emotions and therefore one could not be gay and a virgin. All of this showed that the previous knowledge they had about it and the discourse they were used to when it came to LGBTI had a large focus on the sexual act, denying a homosexual relationship the same emotions as a heterosexual.

The ambiance in the room of the lecture was not as tense as it was in the security training, however I was told that before I came to the office no one used to mention LGBTI at all. My presence lifted the subject and that created a different kind of tension. It was still not an easy subject to discuss but instead it here became a laughing matter and the presentation ended with a discussion that was partly serious but also included many jokes and laughs. The post-its that said ‘sin’ and ‘immorality’ reflected the influence religion had on some of the participants’ personal opinions about LGBTI and when these were discussed the mood got more serious. Even though no one in the room denied LGBTI basic rights, the religious background made it hard for some to accept that being LGBTI was anything else than a sin that could be treated. The LGBTI-organisations in Kisumu were doing a lot to reach out with information, but since religion was an important part of people’s lives the pastors and churches preaching became a large source of information and offered explanations to things happening in society. As one of the participants in the lecture said, “It is a sin and a personality disorder, you can never make me believe anything else”.

The LGBTI-organisations I had contact with in Kisumu got most of their funding from Western institutions and were hence believed to have a lot of money. This consequently would attract some people who pretended to be LGBTI to get some of that money. Diana, an activist here responds to that assertion:

”Yes I have heard about that (”fake” LGBTI), but it is dangerous to assume that someone is not telling the truth. I’m not the one to decide how you want to define your sexuality. Maybe she is bisexual or lesbian but do not dare to be open with it. If they really are lying you will notice. They are not really interested in knowing more and don’t care, if that is the case we just talk to the person. If you are forcing yourself to be something you are not, it will not work”. (Diana, 2014)

Brian, a heterosexual informant, said: ”Some of them have families and children, how can you be gay and have a child? They just pretend to be gay to get into the organisations that gets a lot of funding” (Brian, 2014). These quotes are examples of the perception that the LGBTI-organisations got a lot of funding and could offer job opportunities either from joining one of them or even start up new ones. That these organisations should get more funding than other groups is nothing that has been proven either true or false in this thesis, what is interesting is the perception of them as ‘in it for the money’. No other human rights groups were blamed for the same thing in the interviews. It could be concluded that there is a climate where LGBTI is seen as something deviant and by some a sin, organisations that work solely with LGBTI-rights are being perceived as having a lot of money and using it for demanding special rights and privileges. We will look deeper into this in the next chapter.

## 8. ‘African Culture’ & Post-colonial Sexuality

Having looked at how LGBTI is presented and perceived in Kisumu, this chapter aims to go deeper on the background of how the norms that dictate these conversations are being constructed. This will be done in relation to how a history of colonialisation and control of sexuality is present in the contemporary society in Kisumu and the rest of Africa.

### 8.1. Construction of Norms

Language, discourse and ownership of knowledge play a large part in how norms are created; looking back to colonial times this is the way the European was normalised. A new language and order of sexuality was created where ‘black sexuality’ was alienated and made morally wrong (De los Reyes & Mulinari, 2005; Stoler, 2011). Gender structures and sexual control was part of the colonial ways of creating power relations between the colonisers and the colonised, African sexuality was made ‘primitive’. As an example the believed danger for white women to be raped by black men was referred to as the ‘black danger’ in Kenya and South Rhodesia (today Zimbabwe) in the 1920- and 1930’s as a way to attribute the black African with a dangerous sexual behaviour (Phillips, 2011). Thus when European moral and consequently power structures in the colonies was believed to be threatened, sexuality was regulated in order to ‘remove’ what was seen as deviant praxis in order to retrieve control. The African continent was made respectable from a colonial European view. To speak through the words of Stuart Hall, an act of power that constructed a social identity through differentiating colonial power from the colonised and white from black (Hall, 1996).

Even though sex and sexuality is a highly private affair it is very political at the same time, as it has been used as a power tool before, during and after colonial times (Epprecht, 2013, p. 147f; Nyanzi, 2011). Politicians and religious leaders in Kenya has on several occasions described homosexuality as a practice that goes against Christian teachings and African culture and has to be fought (Kenyan Human Rights Commission, 2011, p. 5) The Western post-colonial discourse today focuses mostly on the relation between colonial processes and the creation of hierarchical world views where the Western world is presented as the leading civilisation (De los Reyes & Mulinari, 2005, p. 62). Control of sexuality is done in various ways all over the world through religious beliefs, laws and societal norms where of course criminalisation of homosexuality is just one example.

In a meeting with the head of one of the organisations in Kisumu I was given a small leaflet on how to be norm-critical. The leaflet came from a training with RFSL in Sweden that a few of the heads of the organisations had been to recently. It was in a way ironic how

European powers that once were part of creating the societal norms that existed in Kenya were now teaching the countries’ citizens how to be critical against the same norms. The subject of the training and the leaflet was of course in this case to train activists in Kenya how to work for a more open and accepting society and not specifically to alienate African sexualities per-see, however the norms in that society will be critiqued from a Western perspective once again.

In every society or group there are a certain set of values and norms that works as guidance for how to behave in a respectable way. As discussed above it is a respectability that to some extent still is valued through imported colonial ideals but also through traditional religions and cultural practices (Epprecht, 2013). Drawing from the arguments above, sexuality but most of all what is considered being legitimate and respectable sexuality, is largely influenced by those values and norms. Consciously or unconsciously sexualities are constructed through a number of different influences from nature, religion, culture, traditions, history, politics and significant occurrences. In Africa religious beliefs do have a large influence on the society and consequently sexual behaviours (Izugbara, 2011). Kenya is a country where faith and a diversity of religions play an important part of peoples lives and where the constitution states that “We, the people of Kenya - acknowledging the supremacy of the Almighty God of all creation” (The Republic of Kenya, 2010a, p. 12). All of my informants in Kisumu except for two told me they were religious, conforming to different Christian churches and visited their local church regularly. Among the LGBTI-informants all were self-identifying as deeply religious. However they had all come across homophobic pastors during their church visits and they saw interpretations of the Bible as one of the main sources for homophobia in Kenya. One even went as far as saying ”LGBTI-rights is not here because of religion, they say Gomorra was destroyed because of homosexuals” (Diana, 2014).

Norms in the Kenyan context will be influenced by all of the factors mentioned above. The majority, through acceptance, decides what is the norm and not, until the norm becomes what is considered sensible and truthful as argued by Halberstam.

Common sense depends heavily on the production of norms, and so critique of dominant forms of common sense is also, in some sense, a critique of norms. Heteronormative common sense leads to the equation of success with advancement, capital accumulation, family, ethical conduct and hope. (Halberstam, 2011, p. 89)

In turn Sara Ahmed argues that as much as it is in fact not a choice a person can affect, being queer or heterosexual depends on ”the contact we have with others as well as objects, as a contact that shapes our orientations towards the world and gives them their shape” (2006). By that she means that heterosexual or queer is something that you become, that the traditional gender roles for men and women is something that is being constructed by society.

In a conservative society with large dependency on religion and traditional family values as Kenya is, as evidenced by the informants, heterosexuality and the traditional gender roles to a large extent determines how a man and a woman should dress, behave and what gender to be attracted to. Ahmed argues that being heterosexual has values connected to it such as decency, conventionalism, directness and honesty (Ahmed, 2006). Meaning, a relationship between a man and a woman and reproduction that will make sure the family line is being kept is the way to go along a respectable line. In the case of someone who is LGBTI, an example of a situation where sex might have another meaning than being just procreative, the sex will end up outside of the norm and also become the reason for the LGBTI to be first and foremost connected with it and experience stigmatisation. Society’s construction of the heterosexual will try to make those who are not believed to practice the legitimate way of having sex change and push them into the heteronormative line. For those who are LGBTI it creates a situation where a person will be thorn between how the society expects one to behave and the true identity, which could lead to feelings of guilt and failure. To connect back to the informant who had to put on a dress when she went out in the field, these were the norms she had to follow to be respected and listened to.

## **8.2. LGBTI as Taboo**

In discussions with people outside of the LGBTI-community the tone was not always as aggressive and homophobic as media portrays it, however as seen above, it was considered a taboo and was not talked about much. How come homosexuality is such a great taboo in Kenya (and other parts of the world)? What is a taboo and what does it mean? Douglas discuss how fear of disorder and impurity leads to an ordering and classification that results in rejection of inappropriate elements (2002, p. 36) and the following section will explore this through her conclusions.

In Kisumu I interviewed a pastor who was very interested in discussing LGBTI-issues with me as he saw that this group suffered a lot because sexuality was not much spoken about in Kenya. His opinion was that because of media and easy access to Internet, information about homosexuality was available to anyone everywhere meaning young people would be



more influenced from the West than before. On the other hand he did not believe condemnation and criminalisation was the right way to go:

”We (the informant’s church) never condemn on the respect that someone is a gay or a lesbian. What we need to do is to accept their condition, and interrogate them and ask them, when did it start and what influence did he or she get? Counselling therapy is needed, if you can change you should change, if you can’t change then another ways can also be found. If you have practiced for too long it might have become part of yourself and it is forming part of your now, so you can’t get out of it. But if you are taken to deeper therapy you can get out of certain acts or practices”. (Gabriel, 2014)

In this quote homosexuality is explained as a kind of disease or psychological disorder one can be cured of, a common opinion among people I met and talked to in Kisumu. In a society that classifies gender into a traditional system where the male and female is closely connected to certain attributes, the individual that does not have the right attributes will then end up outside of the norm as explained in the previous section.

Douglas describes dirt and pollution as objects that are in the wrong place. For example the man that is considered having female attributes or behaving in a feminine way or the women who dresses in traditional male clothes and does not have a family. They become inappropriate and a disturbance of the order in a societal context drawing on traditional heterosexual norms. “In short, our pollution behaviour is the reaction which condemns any object or idea likely to confuse or contradict cherished classifications” (Douglas, 2002, p. 37). An example of the confusion around LGBTI was the difficulty to accept that someone identifying as a lesbian could have a child and a family: ”she was not really a lesbian, she had a child and a husband, when you talk to them you will realise that a lot of them have a family” (Brian, 2014). After accepting that this person was a lesbian and then classified her as that, she did not anymore have the attributes connected with women, she could not have a family and be a lesbian at the same time.

In this classification of gender even those who are seen as LGBTI get a classification where the people belonging to this groups also get attributes in order to sort them into something more or less along the respectable line. An example is this bisexual man who witness about being stigmatised within his organisation for being bisexual.

”There is a lot of stigma about bisexuality, even within the LGBTI-community. People say that these people just have not decided about their sexuality yet or that we

are pretenders. It is challenging if you are sitting in a group with only lesbians or gay men and they start talking about it not being a real thing” (Michel, 2014).

Michel here concludes this chapter by showing that homosexuality as such could be tolerated by the heterosexual informants in Kisumu. However they were then classified as being outside of the norm and could not keep any of the traditional gender attributes, making it impossible to imagine a lesbian woman with a child. Through knowing how norms and taboos were in play in the society in Kisumu we will go on to the next part of the analysis where the effects of directed aid into this context will be problematised in the next two chapters.

## 9. Cultural Relativism vs. Human Rights

The understanding of the notion of culture plays an important part in the analysis of attitudes towards LGBTI-rights and activism. This chapter will analyse the different tensions around the LGBTI organisations in Kisumu and why they occur through a deeper look into the concept of culture, different angles, definitions and their consequences.

### 9.1. ‘African Culture’ & Heterosexual Space

The notion of culture is used in order to explain behaviours or support arguments in the LGBTI- and human rights debate. Leaders of countries with a homophobic agenda argue that homosexuality is ‘un-African’ and not part of respective national cultures (Nyanzi, 2013; Tamale, 2013a, 2014). In this way they are using culture as a concept to congregate a whole country with its different people, languages, traditions and beliefs into one entity, an entity said to not include homosexuality. Examples are Kenyan members of parliament supporting the Ugandan anti-gay bill in 2014 by using the wording; “it (homosexuality) is not African, not part of the African traditions or religious beliefs” (KTN, 2014). Just like the Kenyan Deputy President, William Ruto saying, “We will stand with religious leaders to defend our faith and beliefs. We will not allow homosexuality in our society as it violates our religious and cultural beliefs” (DPPS, 2015). Ruto’s statement brings forward the question, who decides what “our” religious and cultural beliefs are?

From the perspective of the majority versus minorities in a society where the majority has been given the ‘right’ to decide what should be accepted in their culture and not. In an interview I asked Hanna, a lesbian woman, what African culture means for her and she answered that,

“There is culture but that is just beliefs, people believe it (homosexuality) is a sin. And again, the majority, when you mention to them that you are gay or lesbian all they think is sex. Even if this lesbian person is a lawyer or a doctor the only thing in their mind is sex. That is the first thing they should be thought, they have to know about LGBTI. When they know that I’m a lesbian they say, you sleep with women!?! It’s lack of knowledge, lack of knowledge. In my home area there are so many cultural beliefs, but now we are growing and don’t rely so much on them”. (Hanna, 2014)

For her, the term culture was not something she felt part of. She was even happy that people were, as she saw it, moving away from what culture was for her – old beliefs in the hometown. It had become a way for others to describe and classify her, and by doing so; conclude that she was not part of the norm. By defining culture through the majority, all of those that are deviant from the norm will be discriminated and not given space for rights and expression. The same thing happens when national leaders uses culture as something ideal to define a whole country or a continent. Doing so means denying individuals the possibility to describe themselves and their practices as something cultural.

Using cultural relativism as an argument against the international human rights declaration then becomes a question of who decides what the national (or continental) culture is. Whose sovereignty should be protected? Bauman (1999) talks about the notion of culture as a hierarchy of power and class where there is just the ‘one culture’ and a constant strive for reaching the right values within this one culture, a strive that is also valued in itself. In the case of Hanna, the fact that she was a lesbian meant that she could not reach for the top in the hierarchy in her home village as it was connected with the ‘wrong’ values of sex and homosexuality. She was what Halberstam would call the queer failure.

If ‘African culture’ is being used in order to exclude homosexuality it means to refer to an imagined homogeneous culture imagined being the same across the whole continent. One then has to ask oneself what African culture is? Is there such a thing as a homogeneous culture for a whole continent? Again, who has the right to define what that culture is? Cultural relativism is a theory that holds that each culture is a unique and arbitrary system of thought and behaviour, what is considered to be a reasonable claim in one society is not necessarily thought to be so in another culture (Bunnin & Yu, 2004). To define ‘African’ as a homogenous entity, including religious and cultural beliefs, to distinguish what is African and what is not, as well as to argue that distinguishing an African culture from other cultures in the world would be possible is a cultural relativistic approach. It is an argument that means international human rights needs to respect a countries’ sovereignty, local values and traditions, but most of all, the right of sovereignty for the large group before the individual. This would mean that minorities which are not recognised in a society, such as LGBTI in Kenya, would not be permitted the same right as the majority. They are seen as striving towards the wrong values and the wrong goals.

However, even though cultural relativism is a system of thought that homogenises and excludes, being oblivious to history and context when advocating for human rights can be just as bad. An important part in the understanding of the effects of Western aid to LGBTI in

Kenya is the place of the LGBTI-community within the ‘heterosexual space’ in Kisumu. There was a strong sense of the community as an entity in Kisumu, a community that had its base in belonging in locality and family relations. A value system which is common across Africa is referred to as Ubuntu, a concept that encompasses values such as humaneness, solidarity, interdependence, compassion, respect and dignity (Tamale, 2011b, 2014). What also could be read into the values of Ubuntu is that the collective is seen as important and comes before individual prosperity and comfort (Epprecht & Nyeck, 2013). Relating LGBTI to these values instead of turning it against it is something Tamale argues could be a part in the process of creating a society that is more acceptant towards LGBTI.

Looking back at previous discussion, even though the climate in Kisumu was relatively tolerant towards LGBTI it did not mean that all people could see the contributions these organisations had for the community as homosexuality was seen as a sin and something unwanted. Even those who in fact accepted LGBTI saw it as an ‘elitist’ group. They became groups who were getting money from the West for doing something that was not recognised and this could become an issue when reaching out with information.

People who are LGBTI exist in all categories in the society. In a society that does not accept sexualities and gender identities that does not follow the norm, these people become the deviant. Arguably they consequently become marginalised in all situations and not just when it comes to issues that have to do with sexuality. In the interviews many of the informants have witnessed about being threatened to be, or actually been, abandoned by their families because they have been seen as homosexuals, “When they (the family) realised I was gay they chased me away, I could not even go to school. ...They said being gay was not their blood, that there is no such blood in our family, so they would have to kill me” (Diana, 2014). To not have the security and the protection of a family network provides will create a difficult situation if there is no other social security.

In the case with LGBTI-rights in Kenya it is a marginalised group that is being categorised into a certain definition of culture that is set by someone else. The same can be said with for example Saudi Arabia in the example in the introduction, where it is arguably women and LGBTI that has to stand back in the definition of the national culture that is being used by their countries leaders. Using culture as distinction then means including as well as excluding, leading to prioritisation of rights as those who are accepted within the norms will be the ones who are included in the understanding of whom human rights should be for.

## 9.2. Prioritisation

During a discussion with a group of heterosexual people in Kisumu they questioned me about what was so special about LGBTI:

“We all have problems, we are all oppressed by the government – there are no jobs and people are poor. What do they want that is so different from what everyone else needs? Why do they think they are special? There are no reported crimes against them here in Kisumu, their problems are just stories”. (Field Notes, September 15, 2015)

The question on why LGBTI saw themselves as ‘special’ came again and again during discussions with heterosexual people in Kisumu. At first the question provoked me, in my view the LGBTI were marginalised and discriminated and I did not understand why anyone would think they were making themselves special. Because the subject came up quite a few times I had to analyse my own reaction and understand why it provoked me as much as it did. I argued that LGBTI-rights had to do with more than jobs and poverty, but with sexual rights, the right of expression and your own body. This view reflected the context I came from, I had my own values of how to prioritise rights and what was important. They had theirs and argued that no matter if you are hetero- or homosexual it is not socially accepted to show affection in public – narrowing down the issue to the public space. However, in the end the question came down to who has the right to decide if something should be prioritised and what should not, who talks about LGBTI and in what way, which power relations are in play?

The relation to human rights where the group should be prioritised over the individual is common in Africa because of the colonial history that has forced people to stand up as groups to defend their collective basic rights against an individualistic white colonial force. The individual view on human rights has therefore become something elitist that can not be afforded when the group is suffering (Epprecht & Nyeck, 2013, p. 32). Anne who was a heterosexual human rights worker in Kisumu told me:

“Some countries believe that all human rights should be provided for at once. For people within the poverty bracket it is not working like that, you take one thing at the time. For example first food, then housing, security and so on, in those countries it does not work to start talking about LGBTI rights as the majority who are not LGBTI would not understand or see the importance”. (Anne, 2015)

In relation to the history of human rights in Africa as explained by Epprecht, what Anne says becomes relevant. She is an advocator for LGBTI-rights but argues that in poor societies it cannot be talked about before basic needs are provided. However one then has to ask, who decides what and who should come first? If there are not enough resources does that mean that those who are already considered deviant and not part of the cultural values will have to stand back?

In the discussion after the lecture about LGBTI I had in the office where I was based in Kisumu we discussed which rights these organisations were working for, what do they want? One comment was:

”When it comes to discrimination they (LGBTI) have to stop thinking they are special. We all have problems with different institutions as Africans, if someone else have the same problem but you blame the fact that you are LGBTI, then you are putting yourself above someone else”. (Field Notes, October 5, 2015)

Here we are going back to the question “why are they special?” that kept appearing during discussions about LGBTI-rights in Kisumu. The question aimed either at the assumption that the LGBTI-community considered themselves ‘special’ as in sexual rights being different from rights for other marginalised groups, or an assumption that international agencies were prioritising the LGBTI-organisations and coalitions by singling them out. The LGBTI on the other hand did not talk about their issues as special, but likened them with other marginalised groups, also part of the Kenyan society. LGBTI informant Nelly says that, ”I didn’t choose to be born as an African, God made me who I am. God made me gay just like he made some people blind or lame, they can’t change and neither can I. Gays live in Africa and have always done, so of course we are part of the African culture” (Nelly, 2014). Then to what extent should an international human rights organisation respect local culture if that culture contradicts international human rights laws? Perhaps even more important, whose and which culture should be respected, African culture as explained by members of the parliament, the multifaceted traditional African culture, the African culture in which the bisexual man interviewed above sees his place, or another one?

A coalition of African LGBTI activists, including groups and individuals from Kenya and Kisumu, signed a statement concerning the British aid conditionality to African countries in 2011. The message of the statement was that this kind of aid cut would do more harm than good. The argument behind this was that cutting aid or aid conditionality would affect all

people in the countries concerned and especially those already marginalised, including LGBTI. An international actor and previous colonial power that put pressure on how countries should deal with the LGBTI issue means to undermine the work that is already being done by local organisations, the coalition argues. They further claim that singling out LGBTI rights means that the current divide between the LGBTI and the broader civil society movement will be sustained and also emphasise the idea that LGBTI rights are special and more important than other rights (African Social Justice Activists, 2011).

Going back to the quote by Anne, about taking one thing at the time when it comes to rights, the view of LGBTI-rights as elitism becomes visible again. It is seen as something that cannot be prioritised by communities under the poverty bracket. In the light of the strong community feeling among marginalised and vulnerable groups in Kisumu the issue with prioritisation becomes even more important, as prioritising some groups and not others means that the sense of cohesion gets lost. The LGBTI community might see themselves as one but this community is put together by less socially recognised factors than the place and family relations in for example a village or an area in a city. Therefore the perception of the surrounding society might be a different one. This is an example of why aid to LGBTI-organisations could create tensions as it focuses on issues that there is no knowledge about. Of course this lack of information is in itself a reason why the LGBTI-rights organisations are needed. Yet among LGBTI-people in those countries, being able to define your sexual identity might not be the highest priority if you do not have an income or anywhere to live as one of the activist told me (Hanna, 2014).

Here the discussion on human rights and cultural relativism becomes relevant as the international human rights laws has been set by a consensus in the human rights council. Nonetheless it is a consensus that in the case of gender and sexuality was heavily debated when the last resolution was set in 2014 and Kenya one of the countries voting against it. To the Kenyan newspaper *The Standard*, legislator Alois Lentoimaga has said "Can't we just be brave enough, seeing that we are a sovereign state, and outlaw gayism and lesbianism, the way Uganda has done?" (Reuters, 2014). The quote by Lentoimaga here aims at the international pressure on Uganda, through the aid conditionality, and ‘being brave’ meaning ignoring the international pressure for LGBTI-rights. ‘Anti-gay’ laws is a populist political game, aiming to let the people know that African countries are now independent from the colonial Western powers (Tamale, 2013a). During a discussion with two persons with different professions but both working for human rights this was argued: “Kenya is a sovereign country, we have our laws and our culture that should be respected, some things



just need to be left as they are” (Brian & Chris, 2014). In the discussion with these two human rights workers colonialism came up and they argued that the West has always tried to force its own culture on Africa and at some point Kenya has to be left alone.

In order to be respected in this society with a heterosexual and patriarchal climate, LGBTI-organisations tend to follow the most respectable way as possible to be accepted. This means that there is a hierarchy even within the LGBTI society deciding what is respectable and not, hence there will always be someone who ends up outside of the norm in any society or organisation that aims to control sexuality and gender.

However looking back at the discussion on culture; norms, values, culture and traditions are in a constant flow which means that there are societies and times where different orientations are more or less accepted. Africa has historically been more diverse when it comes to sexual identity and alternative family constructions, but has with the colonisation, the introduction of Christianity and colonial laws adapted a more distancing stand (Kenyan Human Rights Commission, 2011; Tamale, 2013a). With this background acceptance of any minority that does not follow the accepted line needs to be discussed with an understanding of history, recent norms and values in the society. By understanding where, when and why these norms and values exist, one can get better knowledge of how to create a more open society with better acceptance for the things that are considered wrong by the majority.

## 10. Giver and Receiver

The discussions in previous chapters are examples of how knowledge production in European countries has a risk of becoming knowledge about *the Other*, and therefore contribute further to the post-colonial world order where Western knowledge is being valued higher and in turn create suspicion towards LGBTI (De los Reyes, 2011, p. 237).

In the introduction to *Queer African Reader* the editors strongly disapprove of the way the international community has reacted to homophobic statements from African leaders in the recent years. “Flying here with little or no contextual understanding but a firm conviction that they are saving victims of Africa’s brutal barbarianism, (merely) consulting with ‘local groups’ and reprimanding leaders for their failure to embrace liberal ideology and neoliberal economic strangleholds” (Abbas & Ekine, 2013a, p. 2). Understanding what aid is and the complexity of the relation between how the helper’s actions reflects their values, and how that in turn is received is a necessity in order to understand how it in turn will affect the work of the LGBTI-activists in Kisumu.

### 10.1. Aid as a Gift

In an interview in 2015 in relation to a recent criticism against foreign NGO’s in the country the Eritrean president, Isaias Afwerki, states that: “Anyone who takes aid is crippled. Aid is made to cripple people”. In the same article the Gambian president, Yahya Jammeh, is also criticising Western aid and NGO’s working in the country, “Now they have come around to give us lectures about democracy and human rights. ...Who do they think they are that they have to teach Africans democracy when we’ve never colonised anybody? The Western democracy is a fallacy. It doesn’t exist” (Dantò, 2015).

Gambian president Jammeh is one of the African leaders who recently has spoken for harder laws on homosexuality (Itaborahy & Zhu, 2013). The quote from him and president Afwerki above show why Western aid and support directed to LGBTI-organisations in Africa is a complex question and why it must be positioned in a larger perspective. History has through numerous occurrences and situations such as colonialism and exploitation, created the believed necessity of aid and as a consequence meanings, power relations and obligations are created and followed with it. The discussion on aid, if it should be given, by whom and in what way is both large and has a long history; hence it will not be possible to completely cover in this thesis. What needs to be said however is that the two largest givers to Africa are the US and the EU and the guidelines for economical aid has been developed mainly through

the influence of these two actors. In 1944, an international system for aid named the Bretton Woods system that included the creation of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund was put into practise. These two institutions have played a large part in the aid politics over time and therefore also a large part in the politics of the countries receiving aid, especially countries in Africa that has been an still are the largest receivers (de Vylder, 2007, p. 206f). In the 70’s the World Bank and IMF introduced a program where aid was supposed to be given with conditions, such as demands on economic austerity, privatisation, liberalisation and even what salaries that should be given to state employees (de Vylder, 2007). This is a very direct example of aid conditionality, and hence the relation to Mauss theory of the gift can be understood through the expectation of something in return in order to receive aid, here a demand of change of the countries governmental system.

Generally, countries which has been allowed to do things their ‘own way’ has succeeded better than those dependent on aid because of the possibility to form politics from the local context. There are aid projects that has worked well and increased the quality of life in the countries where they have been implemented, however often because the conditions under which the project has been implemented has been in line with the capacity and values of the receiver (de Vylder, 2007, pp. 215-222). Going back to Mauss and the view of aid as a gift, the relation of the giver and receiver where the receiver is expected to give something in return will always be there. In the projects that work well, the return gift in terms of positive results in the eyes of the giver is also seen as positive results in the societal context of the receiver and therefore manageable. Today the large donors are more careful with directly outspoken aid conditionality and instead aim for a more collaborative approach where the receiving countries should have ‘ownership’ over the aid, meaning being responsible for planning, execution and monitoring of activities (de Vylder, 2007, p. 211; Sjöstedt, 2013). However some conditionality is certainly left when it comes to human rights projects, as there is an expectation of a positive result where the positivity is valued by the giver.

Going back to the subject of this thesis, this is the background of aid the organisations and countries that aim to support LGBTI organisations will have to consider. The following quote is from an LGBTI-activist in Kisumu, commenting on the relationship between his country’s leaders and Western values.

”The Western countries try to talk about human rights and LGBTI but the African leaders take it in the wrong way. They say that it is being promoted from the West and

that it is a Western thing. They are forgetting that they are part of the human rights declaration”. (Michel, 2014)

There is a frustration in this quote; the informant believes the human rights declaration is not being followed because of misunderstandings and controversies between the two parts, something that in the end affects him and the LGBTI-community. The rights he is fighting for becomes an international political game. In order to understand this situation and the complexity of support from one actor to another, the situation of aid and support to LGBTI-organisations, Western governments or NGO’s can be seen as the givers and the Kenyan LGBTI-organisations studied in this thesis the direct receivers. However, the society they are located in will function as a secondary receiver as the organisations are not isolated but are influencing the society around them in different ways.

Western aid institutions are in different ways pressured from Western human rights organisations not to support countries that do not follow the human rights declaration. To be an advocator for international LGBTI-rights will therefore contribute to a country’s reputation of being in the forefront of equality and human rights. Giving support to LGBTI-organisations will then also provide for the status connected to giving a wealthy gift (Mauss, 1967, p. 34ff). The receivers are accepting this gift in the form of support with the condition that they are working towards the same goal, a goal that would have to be valued and accepted by the aid institution in question.

## **10.2. The Power of Giving**

The expectation of this gift exchange between Western institutions and African societies became illustrated in meetings with activists or people in the informal settlements where it was assumed that I was there because of a connection to an aid institution. I was expected to have the possibility to either fund projects myself or to be able to connect projects with funders in Sweden. In turn I was on several occasions presented to people in charge of these projects, invited to meetings and shown proceedings of projects that had already started. All of this sometimes within the frames of the projects I was part of through the internship, sometimes far from it. By just being there, even as a student with a budget that would have allowed no excessive costs, I was given the role of the giver and the ones I visited became the receivers.

Aid to African countries has been given with more or less conditionality since the start, following the arguments above, expecting the receiver to give something back in the exchange of the resources given (this of course being said from a western perspective that

does not consider the resources already taken from Africa in colonial times). In the case of the organisations in Kisumu, the expectation was that the plan and objectives set up after the decision to fund a particular organisation was being followed. The gift as Mauss explains it comes to represent exchange in various forms and therefore also economic resources that are being exchanged against the expectation that the organisations follow the objectives and use the resources to advocate for LGBTI-rights.

In an un-structured interview a member of an LGBTI-organisation told me about when donors from a European country had come to visit the office for a week, to assess the work and plan the next years budget and activities. He was upset when he talked about it and said he had lost the trust he had for the organisation. He had been told by the director of the organisation to come and meet the donors and present the work they were doing. After that week the members had been told they would receive their financial contribution for what they had done that month. When the week had gone and the donors had left the members got a message saying there would be no payments for that month, as no money existed any longer. The organisation had also changed the planned program for the coming weeks as the budget plan had been changed in the discussion with the donors. The member who I interviewed did not know why this had happened as there was no one he could reach for information at the time. He said it was not the first time a similar case had occurred. “They drive around in nice cars but can’t pay their members who live simple lives with no money!” he said in the end of the interview (Jack, 2014).

The organisations in Kisumu were reliant on foreign donors because of the difficulty at the time to register as an LGBTI-organisation and apply for funding from national institutions. The LGBTI-organisations in Kisumu are the receivers in this case and so expected to have something to show in return of the funding they are given in terms of positive results, pressuring them to ‘look good’ in front of the donors when they visit. The donors are in turn in power of approving or not as well as of choosing to which cause they want to give money.

Looking back at the current guidelines for international aid as described above, where the receiver should be given ownership over the aid, the question here then is: Who has the ownership of the aid and support given to the LGBTI-organisations in Kisumu? Is it the members and activists, the directors or the foreign donors? In this case the members and activists did not have ownership over the situation and the support, but instead got used as means for winning the funding race.

### 10.3. Binding Effects

To have ownership of one's situation while dependent on aid makes an unlikely combination if looking at it from the perspective of how the gift becomes a binding relationship. Even though a gift received is owned it is at the same time a loan with an expectation that the receiver will give something in return (1967, p. 22). David, a human rights worker in Kisumu told me:

“What people in the Kenyan society believe now about LGBTI, and the aid from America and Europe specifically to those organisations, is that they think LGBTI should not be part of the society. They see it as a Western culture and that this aid is influencing the rise in LGBTI, an activity championed for by the Americans and Europeans. They believe this money is used to mobilise more people to join the organisations”. (David, 2015)

If the expectation is that aid always comes with the intention of receiving a counter performance in return in order to finish the exchange, this expectation will come with funding to LGBTI-organisations as well. Even though the organisation and the donors have a - for them - working relationship, the society's view on that relationship might be different. Especially if we remember that the Kisumu society will be a secondary receiver as the organisations are not isolated entities but have external relations and connections.

This is where the history of colonialism and aid conditionality becomes present. If the reason for giving the gift in the first place is not seen as legitimate by the receiver, or if the giver and receiver have a different view on what the gift is for, it would create a suspicion towards the expected return. Because advocating for LGBTI-rights is not always seen as a legitimate reason for aid it means the money given to LGBTI-organisations could be believed to have the aim of attracting more people to these organisations. Consequently, also a move to force what is seen as Western culture and values onto the Kenyan society. As seen in the quote in the beginning of this chapter this kind of aid is nothing that historically has been positive for African countries.

Research done by Dearham about the work of an LGBTI-organisation in Nairobi showed that arguing for human rights is not always a preferred approach among activists when advocating for their space as it tends to be perceived as imperialistic and ‘donor-driven’. Kenyan LGBTI-participants in the research said that even though the values of human rights such as dignity and respect for other human beings always have existed in Africa, the term is Western and therefore looked upon with suspicion by some. The members of this organisation

were careful not to be too dependent on Western aid as they saw advocating for LGBTI-rights as ‘the flavour of the month’ and they asked what would happen when the trend changes (Dearham, 2013, p. 190ff).

I had a discussion about the situation with Mariah, an informant with a lot of insight in the matter in Kisumu and she said, “To show support for LGBTI-rights in Africa is right now ‘in fashion’ in Western countries. Economical aid is being given to organisations that does not have the capacity to handle it” (Mariah, 2014). Mariah continued by saying that because the Western interest in LGBTI-rights had increased the recent years, the number of organisations focusing on the same objectives had increased as well - leading to a situation where they would grow fast without enough organisational skills. The situation had as well turned into a competition for the funds between the organisations. Western donors could arguably to a large extent control the situation for the LGBTI-community in Kisumu, which resulted in a race for funds and the donors’ approval. LGBTI-activist Diana put it like this,

“We would like to join hands with other organisations and NGO’s, together we can fight to get accepted. We reach out to them through networking. We also focus on straight women and work together with organisations for women's rights. You know someone in an organisation and when you get to know them you will learn if they will work for your rights or not. But you will have to be careful, some just work with you until you get money and then they leave you”. (Diana, 2014)

This chapter has illuminated the complexity and the power relations of aid from Western countries to LGBTI-organisations, specifically in Kenya, through the view of the gift as theorised by Mauss. Understanding these different aspects of aid is a necessary link to the previous knowledge about how LGBTI is conversed about and perceived. Looking at the complexities of aid as a gift and the power relations connected with it much relies on the relationship between the giver and the receiver in order to create a situation where the receiver gets ownership over the situation, if at all possible. The Western regulations through aid conditionality as well as singling out and supporting organisations that follow the agenda of preferred values could be seen as a new way of again making the African continent respectable from a Western view.

## 11. Conclusion

The first part of the analysis in this thesis shows the relation between the LGBTI-organisations and the heterosexual society in Kisumu, how norms and taboos are constructed through a combination of colonial power structures, traditional values and religious beliefs. This in turn dictate how LGBTI can be talked about, how it is perceived and which direction advocacy for better acceptance of LGBTI can take. The second part looks at how the discussion on culture as an entity and the view of human rights as being collectivistic before individual creates issues when talking about LGBTI-rights, especially in relation to the context presented in the two first chapters. Finally the effect of directed aid coming from Western countries and how the giver always will be in power in the relation between the giver and the receiver of aid is problematised, arguing conditionality is hard to get around. Conclusions presented below have been drawn from this that answers the aim of the thesis: to understand how Western aid affects the societal perception of LGBTI in Kenya and Kisumu and to reach a better understanding of how to discuss LGBTI-rights in Africa, coming from a Western perspective.

In all relationships between groups or institutions where an exchange is included there will also be dependence. This dependence creates a power relation where the receiver will have to adapt to the giver. The LGBTI-community becomes a brick in a game much bigger than the issue of sexual rights. Power relations created by a colonial history where Western developed countries has taken a fiduciary role while the leaders of previous colonies are doing their best to show citizens they are now free from the old colonial systems, by all means possible. The quote by a Kenyan member of parliament saying Kenya must be ‘brave enough’ and follow Uganda in the fight against homosexuality is just another interjection in that game.

Western aid institutions seem to act on the view of a homophobic Africa where there is no hope for the LGBTI-community if we do not act now by putting pressure on the governments and supporting the community. By doing so simplifying and undermining the thriving LGBTI-rights movement that exist in Kenya as well as in other African countries. Confirming Halberstam’s argument that Western feminists, in this case Western aid institutions, tend to heroically cast themselves as the constructed subaltern’s salvation. The idea of ‘doing or dying’ and a necessity of direct action or nothing at all (2011). Among African leaders and in media the West is often portrayed as the ‘bad guy’ imposing its values to an imagined African cultural entity, leading to groups such as LGBTI being blamed as Western players and becoming further marginalised.



In this exchange respectability becomes an important brick in a political game, the governments receiving the aid and facing conditionality are expected to present laws that are respectable in the eyes of the Western givers. The grass-root organisations are expected to show results and an agenda that is respectable in the eyes of the donors in terms of priorities, methods and values. It is in this game, created by power relations from a colonial history and the giver/receiver situation, the Western NGO's and institutions that advocates for sexual and gender rights has to position themselves and understand the implications their funding brings with it.

To follow the arguments of Halberstam and Okech, Western aid that either use conditionality to governments or that target LGBTI-organisations specifically could be seen as to a large extent following the heteronormative system. Simply because singling out the LGBTI issue means it will be received as special in contrast to other human rights, playing homo- and transphobic, cultural relativistic, leaders in the hands as it will continue to be seen as something advocated from the West. If the focus is not on including the issues of LGBTI and arguing for the importance of ‘queering’ human rights- and development institutions in general LGBTI rights will continue to be seen as something special and elitist that, if at all, should not be taken into account until everything else is in order. The consequence of this being that those who cannot follow the heterosexual norms will be even further marginalised and hostility against LGBTI-activism risk increasing.

If something does not follow the norm it becomes unwanted, drawing on Douglas, considered ‘dirt’ or taboo. The subject is considered to be wrong or out of place because it is doing the wrong thing in the wrong place according to the general norms. It is arguably therefore not the subject as such that needs to change for it to be accepted, in this case the aim of LGBTI-organisations, but the surrounding society needs to adapt and accept their aim of equality as part of the norm. Because of numerous reasons mentioned in this text, pressure coming from the outside cannot achieve this adaptation. Instead it has to be advocated from within. It is here the importance of collaboration between LGBTI-rights and other human rights/development organisations comes in, just empowering the LGBTI-organisations will not take away the perception of them as ‘special’– they will still not fit in.

Going back to the report by Sida (2013) presented in the introduction, the authors, Balogun, Hildenwall and Chakrapani suggested the when large sums of money is associated with the LGBTI-rights movement the aim for diversity and issues connected to LGBTI becomes commodified. If LGBTI is connected with a possibility to earn money, groups aim to follow the agenda set out by international funders. This results in competition between the

organisations and a ‘race for funds’, turning LGBTI-rights into means for making money and leading to a risk of not seeing what is needed for the members but which issues that will enable funding. Instead it is important to work with a more holistic approach for inclusion with other human rights, to see aid as a knowledge exchange (de Vylder, 2007), instead of a giver/receiver situation.

### 11.1. Applicability and Further Research

Through the use of reflexive cultural analytic tools the complex relations between Western aid and LGBTI-activism in Kisumu has been illuminated. Aid is a complex matter and there is no single or simple answer for how to work for LGBTI-rights and better acceptance, to argue this would be to disrespect the work done by LGBTI-activists all over the world. However, what has been found in this thesis needs to be considered in future work for funding from Western countries to specific causes in other parts of the world. To look into and understand the context of the cause one aims to support and fund, the power-relations in play and how it is perceived can be the difference between causing even further alienation or to achieve inclusion and acceptance. One has to ask, what can we do that a local activist can not? Will funding enhance stereotypical or even dangerous beliefs about this group? How can support be given in order to create sustainable acceptance and inclusion in the receiving society without working as a self-enhancing agenda for the giver? This is arguably true not only for LGBTI-rights, which have been looked into in this thesis, but also for other causes as seen in the example of the project with the water pumps in Zimbabwe that was presented in the chapter *Previous Research*.

In the work with Swedish Amnesty and LGBTI questions in countries where homosexuality is illegal the question “what can I do?” often comes up and this might be something this thesis leaves the reader wondering as well. Giving money and support to local groups and activist is a very direct way of getting the feeling of actually helping people in a difficult situation but as shown here it is not always the most efficient way. This thesis shows the importance of western aid institutions taking a step back and instead of putting money into one specific cause, work from a larger perspective. Further research could be done by looking into specific funding projects with reflexive qualitative methods in order find how they are perceived by the surrounding society and not just looking at results as was done in the project by Sida mentioned above, as positive can be relative. This would generate even further knowledge of how to approach LGBTI-rights.

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- <sup>1</sup> The term LGBTI has been chosen for this thesis as it was how it was used in Kisumu, for further discussion on
- <sup>2</sup> Throughout the thesis the term African will be used in reference to commonalities in the history of colonialisation and views of LGBTI, even though this needs to be problematised it is also important to use a larger perspective, see (Tamale, 2011b) and for further discussion on the terms Western, African, European see (Lugones, 2011; Potter, 2008)
- <sup>3</sup> In this thesis heterosexual refers to people whom in interviews or publicly express their sexual identity as heterosexual, this however does not necessarily mean that it is their true or static identity.
- <sup>4</sup> According to Human Rights Watch, the countries that directly inherited from the British Empire laws that criminalize homosexual conduct include: Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Botswana, Brunei, Fiji, Gambia, Ghana, Hong Kong, India, Kenya, Kiribati, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Myanmar (Burma), Nauru, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Seychelles, Sierra Leone,



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Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Tonga, Tuvalu, Uganda, Western Samoa, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Han & O'Mahoney, 2014).