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TogEthered at LiQa'

Experiences and Sociality of Queer of Colour Asylum Seekers in Malmö

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ABSTRACT

The rise of homophobia and violence related to it across the postcolonial world has incited many LGBT persons to migrate to Western Europe and North America. One of the possible ways includes seeking asylum on the ground of sexual orientation and gendered identity. In most cases they migrate alone and are compelled to negotiate their sexuality in paradoxical and contradictory ways. Fleeing from homophobia in their home countries, they inevitably face a set of other obstacles and social exclusions on their way to freedom which orient them towards identification with impossible images.

This work is concerned with experiences and process of forming socialities of what I call queer of colour asylum seekers through Project LiQa'. Drawing on one-month fieldwork and interviews with queer of colour asylum seekers and activists, I argue that homophobia is linked to wider political upheavals, globalisation, cultural imperialism and neo-colonialism. I do not take sexual identities and sexual orientation to be pre-given, but rather I connect them with a series of disruptive moments instigated by misrecognition which shape sexualities of queer of colour asylum seeker. I explore the ways of thinking differently about forming sociality based on impossible positions queer of colour asylum seekers have to negotiate.

Key words: homophobia, queer, asylum, globalisation, migration

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The escalation of homophobia around the postcolonial world in the recent decades has led many LGBTQs to migrate to West Europe and North America. The visibility and formation of LGBTQs as a specific social group has made possible for gender and sexuality to be constitutive of larger migratory processes around the globe in a way that was unimaginable until recently. Namely, it becomes separated from political violence, war and economic turmoil around the globe. Surely gender and sexuality have potentially been inseparable part of migration. However, migration specifically due to claiming LGBT identities sheds is a recent phenomenon. LGBTQs in the postcolonial world find different ways out of their homophobic and transphobic environments. Some of them find partners or pursue higher education, while others resort to claiming asylum on the ground of sexual orientation and gendered identity (SOGI)¹.

Legal recognition of SOGI as a ground for asylum seeking due to fear of persecution gives SOGI asylum seekers a particular orientation and a sense of being-in-the-world. While it may be said that gender and sexuality are now observable ‘variables’ within the overall so-called migration crisis, it can simultaneously be argued that the possibility of being recognised as SOGI asylum seeker by virtue of one’s claiming SOGI asylum partakes in the constitution of gender identity and sexual orientation, and extendedly, the migration crisis. The very possibility of potentially or actually being bestowed the name ‘SOGI asylum seeker’ opens up the access to language describing conditions prior to or leading to claiming SOGI asylum. Indeed, it will hopefully become clear, the difference between conditions *prior to* and *leading to* is in fact the difference between perspectives from which SOGI asylum is looked upon, narrated and experienced. Complementary to the different perspectives are also orientation and movement

¹ The term ‘SOGI’ is often used in legislation, human rights and refugee policies, and it refers to a range of non-normative sexual and gender identities. I use the term “queer” as an umbrella term for gay, bisexual or sexually questioning men in my research, and more specifically “queer of colour” to indicate the power relations attached to racialized queer sexuality, or to problematize dominant readings of certain bodies as identities (although this requires further contextualisation; black Caribbean male body is not read in the same way as Arab Muslim male body, for example).

(course) of action. Neither of the perspectives is true *per se* for they are taken provisionally and in relation to power that shapes experience of confinement and agency of SOGI asylum seekers. The incommensurability intrinsic to the access to and the production of language describing these conditions, and to the im/possibility of taking alternative perspectives enables and confines which kind of orientation one has available in relation to one's im/mobility in pursuing asylum. What is considered prior to (as orientation towards the past) and leading to (as orientation toward future) is a matter of positionality and power relations in language. Both perspectives coexist, but it is crucial to examine the authority given to them. A migration officer in determination process will take both perspectives (what has happened in the past, what has led one to behave in a certain way, what happened subsequently etc.). They are used to reconstruct a series of events with the aim of verifying and authentication of the SOGI asylum seeker's narrative. But when both perspectives are taken and claimed by a SOGI asylum seeker, we get a more fragmented picture precisely due to the difference in power relating to whose and which language counts as real, authentic, understandable and recognisable.

This thesis deals with the world of incommensurability looked through the lens of subaltern and postcolonial sexualities within the context of queer of colour asylum seekers in Malmö. The point of entry into this world is the *Project LiQa'*, a support network for those who seek SOGI asylum and other LGBTQ migrants in Sweden, and more specifically, in the region of Skåne. The inspiration for the name comes from the similarity in pronouncement of the Arabic word *LiQa'* meaning 'meeting', and the word Swedish word *lika* meaning 'equal'. The obvious capitalisation of the 'Q' in the name is a particular symbolic queer intervention into the language available for describing the conditions of those who seek (SOGI) asylum in Sweden. It marks the move from different states of being-in-the-world— from (SOGI) asylum seeker to what I call 'queer of colour asylum seeker'. By designating the field of recognition of queers in the Arabic word *LiQa'*, Arabic (and extendedly postcolonial and subaltern) exiled sexualities *are met* at the point of Swedish (and extendedly white European) *lika* where equal rights are exercised. From the perspective of *prior to*, *LiQa'* exists only within the conditions of misrecognition of the specific social situation which queer of colour asylum seekers are in. It is oriented toward the past and the movement is reverse from this perspective. If unfolded further, we can follow SOGI asylum exists in relation to homophobia in homelands, while homophobia exists in relation to inequalities in the postcolonial world intensified by military interventions, spread of capitalism,

globalisation and cultural imperialism. From the perspective of *leading to*, LiQa' creates conditions leading to recognition of the specific social situation of queer asylum seekers and other migrants, and it is oriented towards the future of possibilities of liveability or being-in-the-world.

The troubling thing is that both perspectives do not carry the same weight and intensity as we 'descend deeper down' the subjectivities of queer of colour asylum seekers. With every 'layer' deeper the perspectives are more fractured and more dimmed, while adequate words are torn and escape language. The two perspectives among queer of colour asylum seekers are blurred, turned upon themselves and fragmented. Building on Donna Haraway's critique of objectivity, the queer of colour asylum seeker's perspective is not only a matter of partial vision, but also of shattered sight. It is the phantasy that one can maintain the same intensity and weight of language while plunged into the depth of subjectivities of queer of colour asylum seekers what this thesis problematizes. Capitalisation of 'Q' in LiQa' is capitalisation (exploitation) of language of rights equality in Swedish *lika* by means of the Arabic *LiQa'*. LiQa' exploits, occupies and feeds on the Swedish language. By the same token, capitalisation is not extended to capitulation of capitalism. LiQa' is a project of a consortium of four non-governmental organisations (NGOs) whose language and actions are couched in discourses of capitalism. Consider a part of the impressum on LiQa's page in social media:

Project LiQa' is funded by Verdandi Malmö, and coordinated between Noaks Ark Syd, RFSL Malmö New Comers Group and Swedish LGBT Initiative South (SQI Syd), and brings in these 4 organizations' networks, knowledge and resource bases together to join forces in addressing the needs of the LGBTQ migrants, asylum seekers and undocumented people through social, cultural and informative meetings every 3rd Friday of every month to build a solidarity network and fund.

Project LiQa' is multicultural in its essence and respects diversity, acknowledges intersectionality, and understands sensitivity surrounding LGBTQ issues in different societies and cultures. Its target group is LGBTQ migrants themselves. Project LiQa' evaluates and addresses the hardships of migration process of LGBTQ people in the Swedish context before, during, and after the establishment of them in Sweden and shares these questions to form a platform for transferring information and experience within the group and social circles around it.

LiQa' inherently creates a world within a world and is turned upon itself by making itself visible in relation to the general public as its addressee. This world is not cut off from the 'the rest of the world', but rather it attempts to stand on the equal footing with it by means of mimicking the rest of the world. In the blurb above LiQa', while aiming to raise the issue of the specificities surrounding queer migration, it necessarily calls upon the language of human rights organizations and organizational principles of capitalism. LiQa' declares to be *multicultural in its essence*; it is *coordinated by* four organizations which discuss *funds*. The *joined forces* in LiQa' are rendered possible within the context of institutionalisation of (sexual) politics. I consider this to be another 'layer' at which queer of colour subjectivities are further fractured and at which adequate orientation and course of action is taken. After all, LiQa', as its name indicates, is a project and not a strategy, so the subversive Arabic 'Q(ueer)' is somewhat encapsulated by the capitalist 'Project'.

Following the pattern of capitalisation, my title too makes a symbolic intervention of its own. It draws on the English verb *to gather* (to unite, to congregate) and the adjective *together* as the basis for the derivative noun *togetherness* which I use a concept in this thesis.

1.2 Aim of study and research question

This thesis aims to shed a different light on queer migration by drawing on different experiences and multiple identities of queer asylum seekers in Malmö. Departing from homosexuality's evil twin, namely homophobia, this study explores the ways in which sexual and gender identities in the postcolonial world are intrinsically linked with and shaped by the processes brought about by globalisation, political interventions and cultural imperialism of the West. It aims to show that SOGI asylum is in fact an effect of greater restructuring of the postcolonial world, and that it necessarily creates a perception of privilege which is internalised and lived out by the asylum seekers. In this thesis asylum is treated as a spatiotemporal category which connects queer of colour migrants and shapes their being-in-the-world. When looked from their perspective, asylum becomes an incoherent and fractured narrative which inherently carries a series of dis-identifications along the lines of sexuality, gender, ethnicity and race. These identifications intersect at level of their families, countries, asylum process and at the level of Swedish society. This

work explores the possibilities and constraints of social organisation by means of the multiple and intersecting dis-identifications. My final aim is to argue that the SOGI asylum inherently distract us from seeing queer as being part of queer migration waves brought about by globalisation, cultural imperialism, and the inability of postcolonial world to participate in commensurable way.

My overall research question is: *How do differences of race, culture, ethnicity, nationality, and class intersect with sexuality to shape experiences and sociality of queer of colour asylum seekers gathered around the Project LiQa' in Malmö?*

My sub-question is: *In what ways does greater demand for visibility and institutionalization of sexual politics affect Project LiQa's engagement to address the needs of queer of colour asylum seekers?*

1.3 Outline of the thesis

The thesis is divided into five chapters. In **Previous Research** I outline what I find to be three major moments in scholarship which have shaped my interest in queer of colour asylum seekers. This chapter follows anthropological research in studying non-normative or same-sex sexual practices with the aim to highlight the shift in perspectives in theories and conceptualisation of homosexuality. The chapter continues with adding migration perspective to sexuality perspective, which has marked the move toward queer migration studies. Here I discuss the possible understanding of queer migration and activist work concerning it. This part of the chapter is informed by research which has been mainly concerned with queer diaspora in Euro-American contexts. This work signals the shift toward intersectionality and argues that race, ethnicity and religion are important differences to be taken into account. In light of this, queer migration studies are concerned with creation of their own voices and representation since due to the lack of representation in largely white middle-class LGBT movement in the United States. The chapter is finalised with the section focusing specifically on global sexualities. Unlike the previous section, migration and globalisation is here discussed in terms of formation and dissemination of LGBT identities worldwide. The accent is a set of political, economic, social and cultural processes that have led many worldwide to appropriate and translate LGBT identities into their local vernaculars. Arguing against the notion that globalisation

necessarily means Westernisation, I highlight that translations are never a priori secured and sealed down. Translations depend on political and social contexts in which it takes place.

In **Theoretical Perspectives** I draw on intersectionality, queer and postcolonial critique in order to situate the complex dynamic of violence and discrimination experienced of queer of colour asylum seekers in Malmö and how this vulnerability shape and organise the processes of community building. First, I elaborate on the usefulness of intersectionality as theory or theoretical approach by arguing that identities must be carefully situated within specific historical, cultural and political contexts. Then, I problematize homophobia as a universal concept with regard to postcolonial critique and situate it within the context of changing political modernity brought about by globalisation. I emphasise homophobia, and not sexual orientation and/or gender identity, as a specific form of knowledge that shapes queer of colour asylum seekers' experiences. Finally I introduce queer as intersectionality (Rahman 2010) and look for links between the two on the premise they both share the motivation to deconstruct identity as fixed and stable concept. I argue that queer intersections allow more vocal articulation of agency. In this section I use Judith Butler's theory of performativity of gender (identity) and her contention that dis-identification (and not only identification) plays an important part in subjectification. I continue with El-Tayeb's analysis of peer-based queer communes which dis-identify with dominant white middle-class gays and lesbians to work through the sociality of queer of colour asylum seekers. I theorise the challenges in reference to community building among queer of colour asylum seekers gathered around LiQa'. More specifically, I look how neoliberal politics and institutionalisation of (sexual) politics by means of NGOs and human rights focus is affect the experiences and community-building of queer of colour asylum seekers.

In **Methodology** I discuss participant observation and active interview as methods used in this study. Particular attention is given to the place of queer in ethnographic writing. I argue against the notion that queer theory is only applicalable to textual and discursive analysis usually found in literary theories and humanities, and that it cannot (or rather should not) be explored anthropologically. The **Analysis of Collected Data** chapter I present the themes: "The 'layers' of homophobia", "Togetherness as a form of sociality in

queer of colour asylum seekers” and “(Skeletons) coming out of the closet: experiencing intimacy and sexuality, and creation of public gay image by queer of colour asylum seekers”. In **Conclusion** I offer concluding remarks, recommendations for further research and limitations of the study.

2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

2.1. Research orientations of same-sex practices and homosexuality in anthropology

Same-sex sexual practices in different parts of the world and homosexuality in Western societies have for long time been part of the anthropological inquiry. However, the interest in how same-sex behaviour and sexual cultures are tied to migratory processes, whether by being the reason for migration or by creating diasporic cultures, is a fairly new body of work in anthropology. Part of the explanation for the lack of ethnographic accounts of migrants’ sexualities and sexual cultures is certainly related to the fact that these cultures are a relatively newly recognised phenomenon. Their visibility in urban areas across Western Europe and United States coupled with the rise of global LGBT and queer politics certainly defined the field and made it more accessible to anthropologists to study them. Still this does not mean that we should overlook the epistemological grounds that shaped production of knowledge on what is today is known as LGBT and queer migrant cultures.

In doing preparations for this research I clustered three orientations of studying same-sex sexual behaviour outside the Western context. The first orientation deals with studying urban sexual subcultures in large metropolises across United States and Western Europe. Rubin reports that first book-length studies of homosexuality in United States can be found ethnographies in the late sixties of the last century (2002:44). She particularly highlights Sonenschein’s anthology *Sexual Deviance* and Newton’s *Mother Camp* on female impersonators in America. Rubin declares them to have set up the scene for studying “many forms of contemporary erotic diversity” (45). Thus, it was a turning point both in sociological and anthropological thought which enabled to document gay lives in gay communities in contrast to the previous accounts of homosexuals as population of patients.

The second orientation is concerned with comparative examination of same-sex sexual practices in different cultural contexts. Among these are *Many Faces of Homosexuality:*

Anthropological Approaches to Homosexual Behaviour (Blackwood, 1986), *Guardians of the Flute: Idioms of Masculinity* (Herdt, 1981), *Ritualized Homosexuality in Melanesia* (Herdt, 1984). While all of these ethnographies tried to understand different social arrangements of homosexual behaviour and were sensitive to cultural meanings attached to them, they rarely went beyond stressing the importance of cultural diversity. In these studies cultures were more or less conceptualised as static and bounded entities, and their analyses did not engage so much with social change and how homosexual behaviour was influenced by the expansion of colonisation or capitalism.

The third orientation relies on gathering historiographic data and material artefacts. So it is not ethnographic per se, but it rather reconstructs the making of the anthropological Other through the early descriptions of ‘insidious’ and ‘bestial’ sexual practices made during the European colonial expansions. One of the thorough cross-cultural analyses is Rudi C. Bleys’s *The Geography of Perversion: Male-to-male Sexual Behaviour Outside the West and the Ethnographic Imagination 1750-1918* (1996). By moving through various regions of Americas, Oceania, Asia and Africa, Bleys gathers ethnographic material, missionaries’ accounts, tales and representations of ‘perverted’ and ‘bestial’ same-sex sexual behaviour practiced among the natives. Based on historic analysis of the available ethnographic and historiographic material, Bleys argues that the understandings surrounding this issue marked the paradigm shifts from pre-Enlightenment informed by Christian values, to Enlightenment ideas and the rise of scientific paradigm, to anthropological debates of the early twentieth century about universality and cultural relativism.

2.2 Bringing together migration and sexuality: introducing queer migration

Although the three orientations mentioned above foreground the emergence of ethnographic accounts on sexuality in different ways, they are also incomplete in the sense they omit the importance of how migration processes shape sexual cultures worldwide. Rubin demonstrated that gay communities existed prior to the shift in anthropology of the sixties of the twentieth century. In a similar vein I would like to argue that same-sex practicing migrants have been part of migration waves after former European colonies gained independence. They were there, but were not studied because they occupied a blind spot in research. On the one hand, research focusing on sexual cultures was based on sexual identity and excluded other factors such as race,

ethnicity, and religion. On the other hand, the research focusing on migration and diaspora is largely heteronormative, meaning heterosexuality was instilled in the regulatory framework for understanding sexual and kinship relations as self-evident and uncontested. (Chavez, 2012).

Today there is a growing scholarship which brings together migration studies and sexuality studies. It was born out of the necessity for re-examination of the conceptual hierarchies inherent in the traditional understanding of what constitutes nation, state and diaspora of migrants with non-normative sexual identity and/or gender expressions. This scholarship largely operates under the sign of 'queer migration' which aims to deconstruct the model of adding the category 'sexual minority' to another category 'migrants'.

At this point it is necessary to introduce a register of possible understandings and uses of 'queer'. Chavez (ibid.) distinguishes three uses of queer. The first one refers to the umbrella term for LGBTTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual and intersexual) or anyone whose identity or sexual practices are stigmatized or rendered socially dangerous (like prostitutes, HIV positive people or people living with AIDS). The second use refers only gay and lesbian as predominantly recognised categories, but with emphasis on anti-normative political meanings. The third use may simply refer to *politics* of challenging and resisting heteronormativity regardless of one's identity. The emphasis is thus on critical engagements with one's subject position. This politics rejects the liberal model of representation and tolerance of sexual minorities as its aim is not mere recognition and affirmation by the state institutions supported by capitalist logic of accumulation of cultural capital. In Lubhéid's words:

The definition also underscores that transformation needs to occur across a wide range of regimes and institutions, not just the sexual—but not without addressing the sexual, either. Therefore, "queer" must be calibrated to account for the social antagonisms of nation, race, gender, and class as well as sexuality [...] "Queer" is used to mark the fact that many standard sexuality categories were historically formed through specific epistemologies and social relations that upheld colonialist, xenophobic, racist, and sexist regimes. (2005: X-XI)

Queer (subjectivities and politics) in this way works from within the discourses of both formal and informal institutions to pinpoint the ideologies involved in the production of difference, inequality and misrecognition as natural and unavoidable. It opens alternative spaces and opportunities for intervention by exposing the fractures of the system upholding

inequality and discrimination along gender, racial, ethnic and sexual lines. Queer theory, as politically engaged theory, sets out to “highlight alternative frameworks and demonstrate that the contested boundaries between gender and sexuality” (Manalansan IV, 2006:225). I understand this process not as strictly oppositional to hierarches, but rather as questioning and searching for ways of establishing social relations freed of violence and discrimination and which are not based on the abstract universal category of citizen.

The other part of the syntagma ‘queer migrant’ deserves equal problematization. Lubhéid suggests that making distinctions between different types of migrants– legal, refugee, asylum seeker or undocumented– is unproductive and misleading. These categories often obfuscate migrants’ actual experiences of denial, disempowerment and dispossession in everyday life (2002, XI). Of course, as migrants move between different migrant types and statues conferred by the state authorities, they are granted or denied different rights and opportunities stemming from those rights. But this, Lubhéid suggests, tells us more about the types of technologies of discipline, normalisation and surveillance migrants are subjected to by the state than about achieving justice or creating an infrastructure for equal opportunities.

This project can certainly benefit from such a broad definition of migration because it allows me to register a wide range of experiences of my participants who shift between different migrant statuses, and not necessarily along the progressive line. In my fieldwork I encountered migrants who moved to Sweden as students (relatively privileged position) but later switched to the asylum-seeker status (a relegated position). Another example would be migrants who were granted protection but whose mobility and opportunities were more limited in comparison to those who were still in the asylum application procedure. The latter would partly received support financial support from abroad and could afford relatively comfortable life. It also gives this research greater flexibility to move beyond different conceptualisations of queer community as prescribed by Fortier. According to her, queer diasporic communities emerge on two levels: “creation of queer spaces within ethnically defined diasporas” and/or “the transnational and multicultural network of connection of queer cultures and ‘communities’” (Fortier, 2002:183). I find this divide instructive in orientation of research but somewhat incomplete. Diaspora is useful in thinking about the networks that migrants establish through LiQa’ Project. It emphasises the importance of

organisation of people on the move. Diaspora also aims to preserve the cultural practices and ideas of migrants bring from their homelands and nations. Thinking about the relationships between sexuality, movement and national/cultural belonging, it becomes relevant to look into the implications of each of the units. Queer sexuality is associated with transgression and with the motivation for migration. Diaspora, on the other hand, implies the preservation of cultural traits and national practices through a relative stable social organisation of people who reside in a certain place. It accentuates the importance of continuous residing in one place in order to leave the mark on social and cultural landscape, and it draws the line between those with long-term migrant status and those whose migrant status is questionable. Queer of colour migrants introduce a set of meanings and preconceptions about sexuality. LiQa' aims to establish connections with similar organisations in the neighbouring countries and to include queer of colour asylum seekers into the social life of queer diasporic communities in Sweden and broaden the understanding of diaspora.

However, national duties and identification of queer migrants are suspended in transnational and multicultural spaces by default. Gender/sexual transgression of queers is conflated with mobility across national/cultural borders of transnational movements (Wesling, 2008:31). This way migration we risk reifying 'migrant ontologies' where migration represents a transgressive existence by and of itself (Ahmed cited in Wesling, 2008:33). Wesling also suggests we consider the political work of communities and bodies which are immobile. Queer asylum seekers, as a temporary socially immobile group, occupy a blind spot in Fortier's proposition inasmuch their active participation is rendered invisible and placed outside the diasporic life of 'other really' queer migrants in Malmö. It is thus necessary to establish a conceptual framework which tracks the complexities and paradoxes of mobility and immobility of queer migrants.

2.3 Thinking queer sexualities globally

Queer visibility is intrinsically linked to the global circulation of people, ideas images and commodities. What kind of possibilities, challenges and restrictions globalisation has brought about in relation to proliferation of queer politics and social organisation of sexual cultures around the globe is a subject matter of several contemporary anthologies. In *Speaking in Queer Tongues* (Boellstroff and Leap, 2004) globalisation is not understood as an abstract mechanism

which homogenises and flattens out our social realities. Rather it pertains to a myriad of social, political, economic and cultural processes that are informed by the rise of new technologies and their intensification. “It is predicated on qualitative changes in technology and social relations that fundamentally change the relationship between space and subjectivity”. Contemporary globalizing processes open new “homoscopes” [...] that rework the relationship between same-sex desire and constututions of the local”. (Leap and Boellstorff, 2004:5). These homoscopes and local artuculatons of queer communities are in a constant process of negotiation in the face of global chages and not all of them are insidious. In so doing, globalisation shloud not be mistaken for ‘Westernisation’, nor does it necessarily stand against ‘authentic’ traditions (ibid. 6-7).

Yet others are more careful about the transformative potential of queer sexualities in the global context and warn against the dangers of neoliberal impositions couched in cultural imperialism and neo-colonialism. In *Queer Globalizations* (Cruz-Malavé and Manalansan, 2002) queer sexualities are split between embracing globalisation as empowering for it provides transnational alliances and institutions, and the danger of succumbing to conformity of identity politics while neglecting the cultural specificities of the local. On the one hand queer sexualities depend on the “transformation in the organization of capitalism from Fordist mass production [...] to ‘flexible specialization’, which promotes niches markets [...] heterogeneity and diversity.” On the other hand, “newly liberated heterogeneity is managed, organized and normalized though multiple rhetorical operations” (ibid, 2002: 4-5).

These rhetorical operations are organised around analogy, development and modernization. Joseph (2002b:80-82) questions the use of analogy to other communities such as nation-state and family among queer cultures. This means LGBTs find much political leverage in employing the discourse of community and replicating the norm by conforming to the hegemonic social organisation. Analogy provides social recognition, but simultaneously forecloses the possibilities for alliance across different categories such as race or ethnicity because it requires the internal spatiotemporal continuity of the subject. In the process of production of internally coherent subject the value attached to the labour needed for its production is hidden.

But analogy not only replicates the hierarchies through capitalist logic, it reinstates the dichotomies of insider/outsider across many axes: homeland/diaspora, white/non-white, citizen/foreigner authentic/inauthentic etc. ‘Gayness’ has the tendency to operate globally as a

social and cultural capital necessary for transition to modernity and cultural emancipation. Yet several studies report that translation from 'gay' into locally situated knowledge does not come straightforwardly for many queers of colour (Altman 1997, King 2002). The translation itself is cut across class/nationality/race and is mediated through different cultural forms, places and vernaculars that bypass binary dichotomies and the normative script of coming-out narrative. For instance, Altman informs us that greater appropriation of gayness in several Asian countries has led some young men to abandon their homes and come under patronage of older white European men. On the other hand, some groups will still find the necessary support and peace with their sexual difference in religious traditions or accommodate (even 'queer up') gayness to the local gender expressions or sexual practices (423). So there are several intertwined processes involved at the same time around the construction of 'gayness'. First, there is an increased awareness of homosexuality as a political project (through NGOs and human rights and medical discourses). Second, building social institutions of gay and lesbian communities based on the Euro-American liberal model depends on the availability of commodities and subcultural hallmarks such as gay scene and coming-out. Third, the discursive use or (re)invention of vernaculars articulates local or regional ethnic/racial/ identities. Finally, these processes mirror the political resistance to the global diffusion of gay and lesbian identities associated with cultural imperialism and neo-colonialism (ibid. 424-426).

For those queers who are compelled to migrate and/or seek protection in Western secular countries translation becomes a matter of survival and it has to be negotiated on several levels simultaneously. Queer asylum seekers and refugees are burdened with the process of learning to "become a becoming LGBT refugee" (Murray 2011:129) which means that they need to present and prove their sexual and gender identities in ways that migration authorities can recognise as authentic. Personal narratives of queer refugees in Canada reveal they are often construed within the migration-to-liberation format which allocates a set of racialized and gendered meanings to old home and new home. "'Old' and 'new' homes are constructed in ways that reinscribe racialized colonial tropes emphasizing the binary opposition of the civilized, socio-sexually inclusive, White, Canadian nation-state versus the uncivilized, homophobic, non-Western, coloured nation-state." (Murray 2014:134). But not only are they required to narrate convincing stories of persecution to the migration authorities, they also need to translate the sense of home and belonging to themselves and the community. Expectedly, this translation is imbued with

contradictions, ambiguities and paradoxes, often resulting in “creating home in and through movements, from roots to routes” (ibid. 136).

3. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

3.1 Intersectionality

Intersectionality is heavily indebted to black feminist and postcolonial feminist scholarship which is organised around the idea to bring together several strands of oppression, discrimination and violence and look into differences within social groups. Its inception is usually associated with Kimberly W. Crenshaw’s essay (1991) where she introduced the term, but the question of multiple identities and sources of oppression was first raised in the 1970s by several US-based lesbian and black women activist groups proclaiming that race, gender and sexuality constituted legitimate parts of any analysis of domination (Davis 2008:73). Nonetheless, the power of Crenshaw’s work lies in the fact that it gave rise to intersectionality as an extremely useful tool to address with more precision and nuance the vulnerability of marginalised social groups. Intersectionality seeks ways for empowerment while it is adaptable enough to speak to social theorists from a wide range of traditions which aim to do away with the essentialist understanding of identity (ibid. 71). Among these traditions are Marxist, Foucauldian, postcolonial, and queer.

Admittedly, it is not always quite clear what intersectionality is supposed to be about. It is wide enough to deal with crossroads of social categories, axes of power in and between social

divisions, and power dynamics within social processes. Yuval-Davis (2006) argues that intersectionality should deal axes of power and social divisions. In contrast to the additive model of intersectionality which implies that singular identities are separate and then simply added to one another in order to constitute multiple discrimination, she warns that social divisions are formative of one another within discourses of naturalisation which “tend to homogenize social categories and [...] treat all who belong to a particular social category as sharing equally the particular natural attributes (positive or negative) specific to it” (Yuval-Davis, 2006:199). Her model encompasses four levels of operation of social divisions: organisational (or institutional), intersubjective, experiential and the level of representation. The macro level is concerned how social divisions operate in state institutions, law and organisations. The intersubjective and experiential levels are preoccupied with how social divisions shape and organise people’s everyday lives in terms of inclusion and exclusion, how they positions themselves and to others, and how these are personally experienced. On the level of representation social divisions are present in images, texts, media and symbols. Importantly, all these levels coexist and inform and shape one another, and they are not reducible to one another (ibid. 200).

Thus intersectionality is applicable to analyses of both individual and collective identities. Which social divisions and axes of power are ought to be considered highly depends on the context of our research. Nonetheless, there are social divisions that shape the majority of people’s lives globally such as gender, age, class, nationality, and ethnicity. Disability or the status of indigenous and refugee people, according to Yuval-Davis, affect fewer people and those social divisions “are crucial and necessitate struggle to render them visible. This is, therefore, a case where recognition – *of social power axes, not of social identities* – is of crucial political importance” (ibid. 203, emphasis added).

This is a very neat model and I use it in the sense that I am interested in the intersections of my participants’ identities prior to becoming a SOGI asylum seeker. I also use it when I look at the subjective and intersubjective levels of the participants’ lived experiences. Intersectional analysis hinges upon accounting for people’s lives and the conditions they live in from the subjugated standpoints because “the positionings of the subjugated are not “innocent” positions. [*H*]ow to see from below is a problem requiring at least as much skill with bodies and language, with meditations of vision, as the “highest” technoscientific visualizations” (Haraway, 1988:584, emphasis in original). Yuval-Davis may prioritise certain social divisions, and certainly they are important in many respects. Some of my participants are ethnic minorities in their home

countries; while others some come mixed-religion marriages. Yet they are ‘sexual minorities’ too and this puts them in a specific position in relation to ‘prioritised’ social divisions. Moreover, as asylum seeker they experience displacement and fracture in their social identities. My contention is that queer of colour asylum seekers occupy several contradictory and impossible positions as queer, Muslim, black, holders of asylum seeker status. Consequently, they suffer by trying to reconcile and negotiate them.

In addition to different social divisions and different kind of differences, Yuval-Davis (ibid, 199) says there ‘mere differences’. These pertain to cultural meanings or knowledge acquired in culture and they are not necessarily a cause of oppression. It is noteworthy, however, that in certain politicised discourses certain behaviours and characteristics become attributed exclusively to cultural differences. For instance, in Western multicultural societies debates about veil of Muslim women and Muslim and black African men being homophobic and violent are often framed as problems of cultural differences and clash of civilizations. This view suggests that the dominant understanding of culture assume they are governed by their own internal logic. It severely undermines the possibility for human action to be motivated outside ruling relations of the culture one is born in (Baumann 1999, Phillips 2007). While violence and discriminatory language/actions can be enacted by white European people, we would most likely not think of them as problems of white American/French/Swedish culture. Culture is today used an explanation for virtually everything they [individuals] say or do” (Huntington and Okin cited in Rahman, 2010:950).

3.2 Rethinking homophobia

Homophobic violence and discrimination queer of colour asylum seekers endure is often presented in hegemonic narratives of media and migration authorities as cultural property of the asylum seekers’ countries of origin (Murray, 2014b: 452), reifying the migration-to-liberation model. Not only does this model fortify the notion that Western countries hold supremacy over the ‘developing world’ supported by individual rights intrinsic to liberal democracy, it also denies the history of European colonialism and the reshaping of social relations, including sexual and gender relations (Boellstroff 2004; Kulick 2009, Massad 2007).

Constructed against the backdrop of its object of hate and disgust, emergence of homophobia in modern liberal Western democracies coincides with emergence of homosexuality as identity. Homophobia encompasses a broad register of actions, beliefs and attitudes from physical

violence, to indifference to pain and even relative embrace of homosexuality (for example, “hate the sin not the sinner”) (Murray, 2009:2). While anthropologists’ experiences of homophobia in the field have been much discussed (Lewin and Leap, 1996), investigation of homophobia cross-culturally is a fairly recent phenomenon. Under the wing of recent anthropological scholarship homophobia is today studied as “socially produced form of discrimination within relations of inequality” (Murray, 2009:3). This approach shifts the attention from seeing homophobia as individual psychological reality and accordingly enacted social behaviour to homophobic violence and discrimination produced within social relations underpinned by intersections of class, gender, race, nation and religion and other social divisions. This does not mean treating homophobia as mere socially constructed abstractedness and denying the materiality of actual inflictions of violence. Quite the opposite, it seeks to read into the nuances of the spectrum of violence and its mobilisation carefully historicised and situated within global/local dynamics and socio-political change (Boellstorff, 2004).

The outbursts of homophobia across the postcolonial world are certainly informed by the European colonial expansion which brought about many cultural changes, as well as those regarding legal systems, religion, politics and the organisation of the social enterprise. Globalisation is another important factor that should be taken into consideration. As discussed in the previous chapter, globalisation enabled a flow of representations, commodities and practices concerning homosexuality. However, these are predominantly organised and informed by knowledge of what gay is supposed to be in Euro-American contexts. The circulation of images of homosexuality and the availability of digital technologies play an important part in normalisation certain sexual identities and how one positions oneself towards sexuality. Additionally, international LGBT rights organisations which have provided greater global visibility of non-normative sexualities shape our knowledge of homosexuality and homophobia (Massad 2007, chapter 3; Thoreson, 2011, 2014). War and peace highly contribute to production and attribution of characteristic to sexual identities (Puar 2005).

Bearing this in mind, reading violence and discrimination queer of colour face in the postcolonial world as an expression of homophobic behaviour can be misleading and problematic, especially if we seek for remedies for this problem. Homophobia is a value-laden concept and its universal applicability need be problematized in the sense how it has become a global phenomenon. It is by now well recognised in the ethnographic literature that many cultures until recently lacked any kind of system of institutionalised punishment or policing of

(male) same-sex practices and behaviour (Kulick, 2009:24). In fact, such behaviour was considered to be a regular practice in some form or at some stages or over the course of a one's sexual life (Williams, 1992:257).

With regard to the rise of overt physical violence against self-identified gay men in Indonesia, Boellstroff (2004) suggests that homophobia is a recent phenomenon in Indonesia that coincides with increasing public visibility of gay men in gay social spaces and in the civil sector. Despite the idea of Muslims being stereotypically associated with homophobia, Boellstroff points out that historically sex between Indonesian Muslim men has not been a subject of social condemnation. So Boellstroff relates emergence of homophobia with the rise of nationalism and social anxieties surrounding political modernity. In his analysis he makes important distinctions between *political homophobia* and *heterosexism*.

Political homophobia highlights how postcolonial heterosexuality is shaped by the state, but in ways specific to particular colonial legacies and national visions, and which therefore vary over time as well as space. [...] Political homophobia is the name I give to an emergent cultural logic linking emotion, sexuality, and political violence. It brings together the direct object of nonnormative Indonesian men with the indirect object of contemporary Indonesian public culture, making enraged violence against *gay* men intelligible and socially efficacious. (469-470, emphasis in original)

In this way the enacted violence against self-identified gay men is not reduced to the populist conception of Islam as intrinsically homophobic, but it is contextualised with the larger political shift in political modernity. Moreover, Boellstorff highlights that the newly developed nationalist discourses are constructed around the heterosexual masculinity. Conversely, although also under attack, Indonesian traditional 'tolerance' of effeminacy and transgenderism is still largely present in everyday life inasmuch as they are embedded in the belief that inner states should follow the self-presentations and be properly embodied. The figure 'gay' within nationalist discourse is in direct opposition with the nationalist projects because "*gay* men have a different kind of desire than normative men (they 'desire the same'), but this inner deviation is not exteriorized; some are effeminate, but most are indistinguishable from *normal* men" (479, emphasis in original).

While men are typically expected to eventually enter heterosexual marriage, same-sex practices do not necessarily cease nor do these men claim necessarily gay identity. As long as

they abide by the normative expectation of reproductive heterosexuality, their same-sex practices become of secondary importance. In Boellstroff's words:

Heterosexism refers to the belief that heterosexuality is the only natural or moral sexuality. It does not imply the gut level response that homophobia does; for instance, a bureaucratic structure may be heterosexist but it cannot be homophobic. It operates at the level of generalized belief and social sanction, rather than on an emotive plane. (p.471)

In a similar fashion Kulick (2009:23) too makes distinctions two between homophobia one the one hand, and heterosexism and racism on the other. The first distinction concerns the direction of prejudice. In homophobia the prejudice is always one-directional because, unlike racism and heterosexism, homophobic perpetrators cannot claim to be victims of the same prejudice or violence. In a formal sense, men and white people can claim to be victims of heterosexism and/or racism. The second distinction is concerned with the location and mobilisation of homophobic prejudice. While heterosexism and racism are structural problems, homophobia is located in an individual psyche and as such, it is accompanied by affective investments whether inwards as internalised homophobia or outwards as directed towards the other. Kulick wants to problematize these relations and advocates for 'anthropology of homophobia' which would draw on insights made by cultural studies scholars. Anthropology of homophobia would necessarily imply work on affective investments and how these are mobilised by larger structural inequalities. As contemporary societies are increasingly being structured around hate and fear along gender, ethnic, racial and national lines, such accounts in anthropology of homophobia would necessarily break away from the anthropological tradition underpinned by Enlightenment ideas (ibid. 30).

3.3 Queer as intersectionality

[H]istorically, anxiety to be included is far stronger than the need to stress the difference. The traditional narcissism of dominant white culture— that is, the culture's ability to recognize man in its own image and its refusal to recognize the *substantial validity of any alterity*— puts enormous pressure on Blacks and other

minorities to recreate themselves and their culture as approximate versions of the Western humanist tradition, as images that [white] “humanism” will recognize and understand. (Abdul J. JanMohamed cited in Massad, 2007:16, emphasis added).

I take inspiration from Rahman (2010) to use queer theory as intersectional analysis. As I mentioned before, queer of colour asylum seekers struggle to negotiate ‘impossible’ positions. What is ‘impossible’ is their being a kind of racialized sexual alterity in the need of protection in another country which recognises them on the SOGI ground within the framework of human rights. Queer theory is devoted to investigate ‘impossible’ identities and embodiments and how queer subjects work through this impossibility to make their lives liveable. In its political and theoretical endeavours queer theory “seeks to place the question of sexuality at the centre of concern, and through which other social, political and cultural phenomena are to be understood” (Edgar and Sedgwick, 1999:321).

Judith Butler, with who queer theory is largely associated, has received much criticism on various bases. First, one line of criticism concerns queer theory as being focused excessively on symbolic politics of subversion and neglect the material conditions of life (Nussbaum, 1999). Secondly, it fails to acknowledge it is produced by the postmodern shift of late capitalism (Kirsch, 2006). Thirdly, it overgeneralises the ways in which identities are gendered without reading into specific cultural meanings of gender (Herstein, 2010). Some of these criticisms are valid to an extent, and I take them into consideration inasmuch as queer theory has changed and proliferated across many contexts since its beginnings in the 1990s. Nonetheless, I believe it can say volumes about the experiences of queer of colour asylum seekers given that queer theory departs from ontological insecurities of identities. Also, it is focused on strategies and not on projects, and it shares with intersectionality the deconstructionist orientation. “Queer intersectionality is simply the necessary tautology: intersectionality is inevitably disruptively queer, and queer must be analytically intersectional (Rahman, 2010:956).

Within the conditions of their precarious liveability queer of colour asylum seekers are a reminder of the hardship caused by “mundane sort of violence” (Butler, 1994:6) intrinsic to politics of inclusion as described in JanMohamed’s quote from the beginning of this section. Their personal narratives and lives are political in the sense they challenge the very ideology on which gender equality and sexual minorities rights are predicated as belonging to a particular time and place. As these have become key vehicles through which the discourses of secular

modernity and Western civilisation consolidate supremacy, they inevitably produce certain 'Others' as their binary oppositions (Rahman, 2010:955). Accordingly, black violent men, religious Muslim men, closeted Muslim gay men, veiled Muslim women— and to this I would add SOGI asylum seekers from the 'Third World'— are common representations necessary for the modern discourses of modern secularism to gain validity and credibility for their political projects (El-Tayeb, 2011; 2012).

Through discourses the process of 'othering' establishes the boundaries of the field of cultural intelligibility. Butler's theory of performativity (1990, 1993) is particularly instructive since it aims to redefine the field of cultural intelligibility by looking into how the ways in which subject's unconscious complicity with its own subjugation also produces 'spatial residues' for resisting the social norms. Butler refutes any understanding of essentially conceived identity because it denies a possibility to use difference (unlike substance of identity) as a point of departure. In her view, the social construction of gender (identity) is enabled by all-encompassing schema of cultural signs which is reproduced with and through the body: "Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (1990:43). The body is an active agent in the (re)production of the very structures which fixate it along the gender lines. This gender signification is simultaneously followed by the ascription of meanings onto the body. But gender discourses not only divide subjects in two binary oppositions. They also produce compulsory heterosexuality on the assumption that the two genders are 'naturally' attracted to one another. Thus, gender discourses naturalise the fiction of binary categories of gender, proclaiming that one's gender inevitably renders them a sexed type of person with desire for the opposite sex.

There are several important points to be taken for the inquiry on queer of colour asylum seekers and their agency. First, (gender) identity is an unstable process is inseparable from the body as form knowledge. As McNay's comments on Butler: "As point of overlap between the physical, the symbolic and the sociological, the body is a dynamic, mutable frontier [...] The body is neither pure object, since it is the place of one's engagement with the world; nor is it pure subject, in that there is always a material residue that resists incorporation into dominant symbolic schema" (2000: 32-33). Second, social construction of identity is a reiterated process which "not only takes place in time, but is itself a temporal process which operates through the reiteration of norms." (1993:10). Third, all identities are incomplete processes and, following

this, agency is envisioned as subversion of social norms. Subversion refers to strategies which subjects take up in order to mimic the norm by performing acts in ways that reveal the fictitious character of identities. All subjects, both normative and non-normative, fail to properly embody the norm. But only the former are recognised as worthy of the status ‘human subject’ by which ‘failure’ is disguised. Contrary to politics of recognition which aims to expand the field of intelligibility of ‘human subject’ as to include O/other subjects, subversion is envisioned as politics of destabilisation of identity boundaries. So Butler is not just interested in the ways subject are constructed through identification, but also she puts emphases on processes of *dis-identification*. And it is through dis-identification, disruption, reorganisation and reassembling of (gender and body) practices that queer subjects make their lives meaningful.

The extent to which Butler’s (among other deconstructionists) contentions on queer disruption can be lived out is explored by El-Tayeb in her account of queer and feminist of colour diasporic youth diaspora in Europe. El-Tayeb re-reads the meanings and uses of hip hop among Afro-German diasporic youth as a way of addressing Europe’s denial to actively engage with its colonial history and the “structural silencing in mainstream debates” (2011:7). She challenges the binary between home and diaspora as oppositional and suggests we understand diaspora in dialectical terms. Instead of insisting on the discourse of “roots and origins”, she proposes a “memory discourse” which replaces the language of authenticity with politics of hybridisation and cultural fusion (ibid. 43). Turning to the question of multiculturalism’s violence of inclusion, El-Tayeb continues with locating the practices, subjectivities, embodiments among feminists of colour and racialized queer activists who actively claim the position of failure (of proper assimilation) in order to expose the myth of secularism as freed of Christian values and neutral meanings of whiteness. To this end, she cites the work of several self-organised activist groups in Europe which have managed to invent an ‘alternative’ form of horizontal sociality based on the principle of self-help and peer support, traversing the differences in cultural backgrounds, national belonging, sexuality and gender.

Queers of colour in Europe negotiate a rather complicated terrain of different kinds of inclusions and exclusions, making it increasingly demanding and tiresome to invent novel forms of resistance in the face of spatial reconfigurations in neoliberal consumerist cities. These ‘gays who cannot be properly gay’, as El-Tayeb sardonically calls them, are juxtaposed against the depoliticised middle-class white gays and are repeatedly excluded from the cultural life of creative, cosmopolitan city (2012). Consequently, queers of colour are not just social outcasts

from cultural intelligibility as failed embodiments of proper white subjectivities, but also they are rendered an increasingly economically disenfranchised class of people.

Indeed, it has proved particularly important to analyse intersecting discourses of ethnicity, race, gender and sexuality, but at same time it has become difficult to discuss class. The extent to which we engage in discourses of ‘gendered nation’ or ‘racialized sexuality’, we need to be equally attentive to positionings within class as a social division. Such class and social differentiations among queers of colour are secured through deployment of homonormativity among middle-class white gays and lesbians, and the presumed heteronormativity among ethnic/religious minorities. In El-Tayeb’s words:

Operating through interpellation as much as exclusion, the creative city makes use of what Lisa Duggan termed homonormativity (Duggan, 2002): a mainstreamed gay discourse that attempts to expand rather than dismantle heteronormativity by internalizing a conceptualization of LGBT identity that constructs legitimacy and rights along established lines, challenging neither the exclusion of those who do not or cannot play by the rules nor a system whose very existence depends on such exclusions. In turn, homonormative queers are offered protection through an Islamophobic consensus that frames the policing of poor, racialized communities as a protection of human rights. As a result, despite the stated openness of the creative city, white, middle-class and male once again seems to constitute the unquestioned norm and certain groups occupy similar marginal positions in hetero- and homonormative discourses, among them the Muslim community – including queer Muslims – which provides color, exotic food and sexual objects, but also stands for restrictive morality, crime and poverty. (ibid.85)

Lastly, in light of the restructuring of social life within the neoliberal logic and expansion of global capitalism queer subjectivities and communities are challenged. Neoliberal capitalism rearranges social relations in a way that it places responsibility for political action on individuals or a group of individuals. It reduces the need for political action to the matter of personal choice and it orients the social groups toward the market economy and the public sphere. So LiQa’s participation is possible by the accumulation of the initial capital necessary for its recognition and struggle in the NGO market on a competitive basis. Consequently, it intensifies the tension between the need for institutionalisation of

sexual politics on the one hand, and the proliferation and multiplication of sexual and cultural discourses on the other hand. The imagined open-endedness of queer as a concept which is constantly in the process of re-signification is increasingly hampered in the face of NGOs which have become the dominant generator of organisation of queer communities. NGOs operate under the human rights framework and are funded by state and international agencies which cement the recognition of 'queer' (or rather 'LGBT' as a mainstream umbrella term) as a social issue in need of addressing. In light of this change, it is necessary to think about the implications these have for queer communities and politics of subversion. This is rather paradoxical position that many queer of colour asylum seekers, along with activists, negotiate, subjugate to or contest on the experiential level.

NGOs whose work is oriented towards building queer communities and their visibility are compelled to embrace the human rights framework in Sweden and worldwide, privileging the principle of universality and the rule of law (Thoreson 2011). The signifiers 'queer' 'community' and 'culture' are indeed inventions of the West embedded in overlapping discourses of Western rationalisation and individualism which gave rise to spread of capitalism. Graham (2009) warns that LGBT human rights policies in Europe are predominantly generated by the ethical standards found in social Catholicism and politics of diffusionism, emphasising the spread communitarian values and 'common good'. In this sense, LGBT human rights become attached to the struggle for European values. Joseph explores the interdependence between the circulation of capital and the formation of community as a main vehicle of social transformation. Her contention is that communities "generate and legitimate necessary particularities and social hierarchies (of gender, race, nation, sexuality) implicitly required, but disavowed, by capitalism, a discourse of abstraction and equivalence...[This would] mean to shift focus from the question of sameness and difference to the question of social processes" (2002b: xxxii). By emphasising the performative character of capitalism and communities, Joseph shows that both parts of the equation are fictitious and supplementary of one another. In turn, seeing them as social processes and social relations opens space for translatability of practices and subjectivities. In a similar vein, Thoreson analyses the problem of translatability of LGBT human rights as a basis for community formation into the Global South, and argues that "LGBT rights projects in any context are neither inherently queer not inherently

hegemonic- their effects are necessarily multiple and kaleidoscopic, and subvert some normative understandings at the same time that they affirm others” (2011:19).

All these arguments need to be taken into account in analysing how queer of colour asylum seekers’ experiences and how they exercise agency individually or collectively. Often they are victims of violence and discrimination at their home countries, but at the same time they also have to negotiate sexuality in front of the migration authorities and new communities. Queer as intersectionality offers a valuable insight into lives of queer of colour asylum seekers.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Participant observation

Participant observation is one of the most demanding research techniques a researcher can undertake (May, 2001:153). It involves several stages: building background knowledge, preparations, defining the field, getting access and establishing the rapport with participants, immersing into the group, and finally leaving the field (O'Reilly, 2009). Normally participant observation should be carried out over longer periods of time so that a researcher can account for the complexities and dynamic of a particular group. However, for the purpose of doing short-term projects or a master thesis a researcher can do a form of micro-ethnography which focuses on one or two aspects of the broader field (Bryman, 2012:293). Still, I went through all the stages of fieldwork despite the fact I carried it out for only four weeks from July to early August 2014.

I was introduced to the Project LiQa' through a flyer which informed me of an event with the aim to promote the project and raise the public awareness about the problems and concerns LGBT asylum-seeker faced. I went there still not knowing if the I was going to carry out a study about them. I had an opportunity to have brief informal conversation with the project leader. This event was important in terms of getting access because when I contacted him later, he was already familiar with me. I booked an appointment through an email, and this was my chance to fully show my interest with the topic. It was helpful that he used to be student at Lund University, so this created a sense of closeness and understanding for my thesis.

I gained access much more easily than I had expected, but this did not mean it was complete. I had to think of the ongoing access (Bryman, 2012:299), meaning every time I met someone new I had to reaffirm my role as a researcher. The project leader invited me to join to the social gatherings organised in Malmö every Friday, so in this situation introducing myself as a researcher was straightforward. Also this was a great opportunity for me to recruit people for my interviews. Conversely, in situations when I attended rather large social events, like political discussion and debates, it was impossible to tell every single person I talked to I was doing research.

In terms of my role in the fieldwork I shifted from complete observer (for instance in debate where I focused on what was being said on the stage) to participant-as-observer (the regular Friday gatherings), to observer-as-participant (interviews) to complete participant (for instance in moments when I was invited to join the group at the Malmö Pride parade) (ibid. 301). Thus I practiced an overt type of participant observation with occasional exceptions when I found myself in large public spaces where not everyone knew I was doing fieldwork. That said, a word of caution comes from O'Reilly who argues that participant observation is an oxymoron. Anthropologists and other fieldworkers find themselves can never simply fully participate or fully observe. They deal with social settings where interactions with people are frequent, so anthropologists participate while they observe. In moments when they actively participate, they also have to reflect, observe or pause to take fieldnotes (2009:157-162).

4.2 Interviews

Contemporary world is saturated with information produced by the practice of interviewing across different fields and disciplines from science, psychotherapy, journalism, and the civil sector. Ever since interview “reached the public consciousness” (Skinner, 2012:11), it became more difficult to make distinctions between interview as a distinguished method in sociology and social anthropology from interview techniques carried out in other disciplines. Not only is it important to contextualise the knowledge produced by this technique, but it has become important to examine the uses of interview throughout the process of conducting an interview and writing in anthropology. In the “interview society” the researcher needs to be wary of “the uncritical and undertheorised adoption of the interview” and treating “interview text as a stable [...] self-representation” (ibid. 11-12).

I opted for interviews as they are one of the most common and effective methods of data collection. However, they should be conducted in conjunction with other research methods, theoretical approaches, and other information that might influence the interpretation of data (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002:10; O'Reilly, 2009:17). Bearing this in mind, this allowed me to contextualise the interviews together with the participant observation, current political moment in which the interviews were done, as well as with my own personal experiences and subjectivity.

4.2.1 Active interviews

My main approach was the active interview as suggested by Holstein and Gubrium (2003). The authors suggest that social constructionism typical of postmodern, poststructuralist and feminist epistemologies has become limited by excessively focusing on the “hows” of the social processes and meaning-making, while neglecting the “whats” of lived experiences (2003:69). An active interview should be understood as conversation which “transforms the subject behind the respondent from a repository of opinions and reason or a wellspring of emotions into a *productive source of knowledge*” (ibid.74, emphasis in original). An active interview is thus always semi-structured in nature as it involves “a developing plot” and certain degree of freedom to improvise and build on the references used in the conversation (75). It does not mean that interviews are not structured by themes and topics, but rather that the researcher is allowed to induce, build and move the narrative back and forth by focusing on certain parts of speech while simultaneously taking into account the positionality of the chosen references in relation to the main topic.

As with any interview marked by postmodernist epistemology, the depth and the scope largely depends on the trust established between the parties involved: “The relationship must be respectful of each other, as equal as possible, ethical and sensitive” (O’Reilly, 2009: 128). I did not have so much time to build enough trust to elaborate on all the things that I found worthy of further discussion in the process, but the two communicative contingences of, namely of “whats” and “hows” allowed me to observe the multiple layers of my participants’ experiences. Following Holstein and Gubrium’s claim (2003:74-78), I was focusing on the substantive “whats” in the interview which allowed me to pay attention to the emerging data in the process as a resource for analysing both the subjects and their responses. At the same time, by focusing on the “hows”, I could follow the standpoint from which the statements were offered.

4.2.2 Participant selection and conducting interviews

I met all the participants through the access in the field enabled by the gate-keeper. According to O’Reilly gatekeepers are people “who smooth access to the group” (O’Reilly 2009: 132). Gate-keepers do not necessarily have to have official power, but they may be a respectable and trustworthy person within a social group with enough power to persuade or encourage others to

participate in research. Thus it is crucial to keep relations with the gate-keeper. In my case, my gate-keeper was the person responsible for the project and he introduced me to other participants.

When conducting interviews it is also important to bear in mind the criteria according to which one selects the participants who might be able to address the researcher's topic. (Bryman, 2012:418). Originally my plan was only to interview people who were in the process of acquiring asylum, but I soon realised that many the asylum seekers lived in far-off places with limited access and opportunities to meet me. As Russell argues, circumstances in the field can change unexpectedly, and the researcher must change the content and/or research design (Russell, 2006:213). At the time of my fieldwork the project LiQa' had just begun and it gathered a relatively small group of people. So my criterion for the participant selection was self-identified gay or queer men who had gone through the experience of asylum-seeking process and were contributing to community and support groups building. This meant I had to contextualise their experiences broadly as the migration status can considerably shape them in different ways.

In July 2014 I carried out eight interviews altogether, of which six with self-identified gay or queer men who were recently granted asylum or were in the asylum-seeking process at the time of the interview. Most of them applied for SOGI asylum, but this was of secondary importance for me since I was interested in their experiences of homophobia-related migration. Additionally, I interviewed two self-identified gay or queer male activists who were engaged in facilitating the asylum-seeking process through organising support networks and social events for the asylum seekers, migrants and others who were interested in the supporting the cause. The number of interview participants is important but not necessarily determinative of the quality of research (Bryman, 2012:425). I met all the participants on several occasions prior and after the interview, so the relatively small number of participants can be counterbalanced with participant observation, including the informal conversations. Finally, all the interviews were conducted in English and were voice-recorded with a prior explicit consent of the participants to use the device.

4.2.3 Analysis of interviews

The first stage of the analysis started with the transcription of the interviews. The interviews were archived on a voice recorder. I transcribed not only all the spoken words, but I also tried to include the pauses in the participants' speech, the mutters, laughter or any other sign

communicated with the body, specific intonation or sounds. Bearing in mind the abovementioned Skinner's input that interview text is not an accurate self-representation, I knew that the interview transcription would be a construction in itself.

Secondly, in postmodern interviews there is a danger to relegate the subject to discourse. A line of critique similar to Holstein and Gubrium is found in Potter's view of social construction of facts in discourse and textual (including interview texts) on pragmatic grounds (1996:98). Potter highlights that an informed analysis should be treated as an "account offered in a situation" (ibid.100), meaning that language is not only constructive of the meaning, but also that language is a social practice performed by the subject who actively uses it. This way, the interviewer should be attuned to both how the meaning-making is constructed and, also equally important, to who conveys the meaning and by which statements, facts and references.

Thirdly, Potter warns that researchers often resort to interpreting data from the point of interest group in question, which is necessary if one uses standpoint theory. However, the way I understand Potter's insight is that standpoint does not exclude "dilemma of stake". The difficulty is that *people treat each other in this way*. They treat reports and descriptions *as if* they come from groups and individuals with interests, desires, ambitions and stake in some versions of what the world is like" (1996:110, emphasis in original).

Finally, I conducted coding of the interview transcripts. Gubrium and Holstein inform us that in active interview the phase of coding is already implicit during the interview process and not just beforehand and afterwards. (1995:53). It is possible to use codes in order to induce the narrative during an interview but later they might be challenged, misunderstood or supplemented with other codes. Of course, I had some preconceptions about the topic which were underpinned by previous research and theoretical perspectives which helped to code questions according to themes I was interested in. This means that I first sorted had to locate the quotes relating to sexuality, refugeehood and asylum, race, nationality and religion. From this I drew another set of codes pertaining to home, family, and childhood, instances of violence as these appeared in almost all the interviews. Then I would compare and contrast these two lists in order to figure out the ways in which the links between the main codes and sub-codes.

4.3 Epistemological orientation: queer place in ethnography

Turning to the question of writing ethnography, it is necessary to assess the value and contribution of queer studies to the corpus of anthropological knowledge. This is a relatively recent approach in social anthropology, but the re-evaluation of the discipline's epistemological/methodological grounds has a long tradition that is communicated via feminist and lesbian/gay anthropology. Indeed, feminist and lesbian/gay as particular subdisciplines anthropology play part in what is known as the overall crisis of anthropology (Lewin and Leap, 1996:10). Anthropology traditionally relies on empirical data collection and tends by and large to capture the absolute subject in the form of an abstract— namely, culture (Clifford 1983: 127). On the other hand, feminist and lesbian/gay anthropology were born out of greater public visibility and the political movements concerning the rights women and sexual minorities in the West. Ethnographic accounts describing the social lives of these groups respectively challenged the holistic view of anthropology. As such they appear through the partiality of certain societal groups and we need to address the issues of representation, politics of citation and writing ethnographies, positionality. Equally important is the issue of utility of such knowledge under the larger schema of pragmatism in social sciences (Lewin and Leap, 2009:11).

In contrast to lesbian/gay anthropology, queer theory was founded by well-established intellectuals— most of them historians, philosophers and literary scholars— who were unsatisfied with mainstream lesbian/gay politics based on the principle which forefronts identity as the main engine of social change whether through the essentialist or social constructionist perspectives (Seidman, 1995:126). As already noted above, queer theory departs from examination of sexuality as regimes of power through discourse which ultimately shapes our social organisation of knowledge and experience of sexuality. Its political aim is not equality and celebration of libertinism. It strives to dispel the homo-hetero binary as the organising principle of sexuality. But queer politics in its commitments to the proliferation of sexual discourses and the rights of individual to define their sexuality rarely takes into account the ethical guidelines under which such a politics should be enacted (ibid. 137). Seidman does not agree with the accusations of queer theory being depoliticised because it is rooted in the academia, but he does point the increasing need to situate knowledge in social conditions in which it is produced. Also Seidman invites queer theory to reconsider its individualistic approach in a move towards “an

institutional social analysis that does not disavow a willingness to spell out its own ethical standpoint” (ibid. 139).

Others too have expressed concern about the practical use of queer theory. Lewin and Leap, for example, argue that queer theory rarely goes beyond the level of representation and that it stays trapped with textual and discourse analyses. In their view queer theory remains largely disengaged from the public sphere and the lived experiences of the studied subjects. (2009:7-9). But attempts to make this ‘awkward alignment’ between queer theory and anthropology have already been made. Inspired by Donna Haraway’s feminist critique of objectivity, Boellstroff (2006) argues that interdisciplinary work between queer studies and anthropology is indeed possible and productive by employing perspectivalism and particularity of situated knowledge. In his reading of three ethnographies dealing with non-normative sexualities across the globe, Boellstroff claims that anthropological interventions into queer theory create the effect of greater accountability in queer theory by enriching it with more context through layers of cultural, political and economic domains. At the same time, anthropology, as both humanistic and social science discipline, is still able to broaden its inquiry into the sexuality and the body by incorporating queer perspectives which are predominately associated with humanities (Boellstroff, 2006:628-629).

On that note, with the aim of avoiding dramatization and larger proportions, it is perhaps useful to remind us of Geertz’s reflection that “‘anthropology’, however conceived, is far from a stable enterprise” (1995:97). Disciplines and ideas about the world have a social life of their own. They grow, change, transform and wane out. “Other fields change of course, some of them more rapidly or fundamentally; but few do so in so hard to locate a way as anthropology” (ibid.).

4.4 Reflexivity and rapport with participants

In light of the criticisms of objectivity and positivism scientific knowledge is always partial. This means that it is impossible to delink the anthropologist’s subjectivity from knowledge production in absolute terms. The anthropologist’s subjectivity thus should be woven into ethnographic writing and the acknowledgment that representations created through this process are social constructs contingent on the bias of the researcher (Clifford and Marcus, 1986). In the context of knowledge production in anthropology, which typically presupposes long periods of

fieldwork and contact with participants, anthropologist is troubled with the imposition to assume the 'native' point of view without going native (Behar, 1996:5).

Vulnerability is an important aspect in both in doing fieldwork and in the writing process and it is a way to fill in the gap implicit in not-going-native. But showing vulnerability should avoid the risk of turning reflexivity into anthropologist's personal story saturated with self-indulgence. Robben (2012) also discusses the importance of vulnerability and empathy when dealing with deeply painful or traumatic experiences of participants. He addresses the problem of side effect that thick description may create in ethnographic writing, leaving the anthropologist in the impression that immersion in the field is completed and does not require further contextualisation. Thick description operates under the guise that we have established a good rapport with our informants (Robben, 2012:178-9). Empathy, on the other hand, acknowledges emotions and exposes the anthropologist's vulnerabilities which may debilitate critical analysis. So Robben suggests a middle way, that is, to acknowledge the public image of participants and allow them disclose their vulnerable parts at will (ibid.). In contrast to Robben, for Madison vulnerability and empathy should create a sense of solidarity and connection. Researchers should be oriented towards creating an affective economy which does not relegate participant objects of exoticisation or pity. Anthropologists and other social scientists can engage politically in social movements. To this end, knowledge produced in critical ethnography is always followed by researcher's political engagement through use of resources available to critical ethnographer (Madison, 2005:5-8).

I understand writing vulnerably as one possible way to express respect and humility towards the people who share their time and personal stories, and to give something back when other solutions towards amelioration of their conditions fall short. This is not an easy task as it may appear, especially if one is dealing with highly vulnerable groups with experiences of violence, dispossession and alienation. I cannot say that my thesis will contribute to lifting up the injustices experienced by the participants in my research, but I can do my share of making the problem of queer of colour asylum seekers more visible at least within the academia. Many ethnographic accounts abound with reporting colonial guilt surrounding the injustices and violence former European colonies have survived. I believe that 'the burden of the white man' has become a somewhat used up position in the sense it has been commodified and almost

patterned through reflexive repetition of naming white middle-class as the hegemonic power position prevailing in academia in the West.

My motivation for this thesis does not come from the colonial guilt. Rather, I am motivated by my political emotions (Hage, 2010) relating to topics of sexuality, migration and education. At times it was difficult to put them aside and step out of my personal views. But I believe I developed sufficient relatedness with my participants which helped me produce a brief account of the main issues that queer of colour asylum seekers experience. Surely there are power relations between me as a researcher and my participants, but I cannot say that they are encumbered by the burden of colonial guilt. My involvement in this study was guided by the idea that I share some insights and experiences of wartime conditions and gender-based violence, and as someone Coming from a former Yugoslav country, I relate to the experiences of the collapse of social enterprise, displacement, disorientation, and as well as to the mixed feelings about my homeland. I have never been an asylum seeker myself; on the contrary, I have had a choice to pursue higher education in Great Britain and Sweden. Still, I am aware of the ruptures in personal narrative migration can cause. My moving between the Balkans and Europe shaped my coming to terms with my own sense of belonging and identity.

Also, I had to think about the ways in which I was perceived by the participants. Most of the participants were in their late twenties and thirties and hold a degree in higher education. As white male on a scholarship in Sweden I experienced some trepidation if I would be perceived as another researcher equipped with a lot of theoretical tools but with no understanding of their conditions. But it turned out most of them showed a genuine interest in my research and were happy to help a student to complete his degree. The fact that I approached them as a master student in gender studies made it made my access even smother, especially among those participants who were activists and were familiar with academic and political debates in feminism and queer politics. In fact, my gender studies degree and my age significantly contributed to the smother access. They saw the academia as a potential ally in fighting for their cause. In terms of language, at times I could not participate as much in conversation when I found myself surrounded with Arabic speaking participants, so occasionally they translated the parts of conversation for me. My Montenegrin nationality was also interesting to them since the country was very small and rarely would they have a chance to meet someone from Montenegro. They wanted to learn a bit about the political situation and LGBT rights in the Balkans. The most

common association about Montenegro was the war in former Yugoslavia, and sometimes I got teased for the similarity between my first name, Miloš, and former Yugoslav president's last name Milošević. This was certainly not the first time it had happened to me when I found myself in company of people who do not come from former Yugoslavia. I would normally find this association somewhat passé, but in this case I tried to turn to my advantage. I often lacked knowledge on concrete references of their own cultures, so the humour eased the mutual unacquaintance with one another.

I am aware that the representations I make in this study will inevitably be coloured by my subjectivity and that the theories and concepts I use run the risk of making conceptual errors. This means that knowledge produced, if not reflected and addressed with sufficient criticism of paradigms used, might lead to false generalisations (Madison, 2005:123-124).

4.5 Ethical considerations

It is important to note that any fieldwork is an intrusion of some sort and the presence of the researcher is always affect the participants no matter how respectful and humble we try to be Crapanzano (2012:549). In addition to the ethical considerations about positionality in fieldwork, representation in writing mentioned throughout this paper, I want to address the issues of consent and anonymity of the participants.

My fieldwork was of overt type and I had asked for consent of my informants in accordance with the Code of Ethics of American Anthropological Association (AAA) (Madison, 2005:114; O'Reilly, 2009:55). I informed my participants several times prior to conducting the interviews that I would use pseudonyms and disguise any personal information that might make reveal their true identity. I made sure to mention my researcher throughout the process to remind the participants of my role. Also the use of a voice recorder for conducting interviews means that the digital material is easily replicable. In the transcriptions I used pseudonyms and I erased the digital records of the conversations after the coding was finished.

5. ANALYSIS OF COLLECTED DATA

5.1 The 'layers' of homophobia

Violence and/or fear of persecution attached to asylum claims were expectedly prominent topic in all the interviews. The LiQa' project leader Onur had warned me in the initial conversation that experience of violence was considered to be one the main factors significantly influencing the final outcome of the asylum-seeking process. One of the problems with homophobic violence is that it usually remains invisible and undocumented, and therefore, difficult to support with concrete physical evidence. Unlike political refugees who claim protection by virtue of being member of persecuted ethnic groups which can be proved with supporting documentation, interpretation of sexuality and gender expression of queer of colour asylum seekers depends on migration officers' understanding and familiarity sexual and gender diversity in different cultural contexts. In the words of one of the activists who help queer asylum seekers:

Ibrahim: It is the non-homogeneity part that makes it so complex for many migration officers. When you live your sexuality from one place to another, you might face the risk that migration officer will judge you on their experience and understanding of sexuality. You might be judged from that perspective so that's why you need to broaden the LGBTQ perspective to non-homogenous points of view in order to make the migration officer aware of that complexity. That's why I say it's good to have experts, but have it always separated from other process on the long term basis. It's to be developed for the people in need of protection.

Following Murray and Boellstroff, at this point I want to shift the focus from sexuality and sexual identities to homophobia as an organisational principle of knowledge and experience. The framework of understanding homophobia has undergone transformation from an individual psychological reality into a political category referring to inequality regimes which coexist with colonial histories and intersect with racial and gender relations. In other words, this change signals the shift in understanding sexuality from individual to collective identity.

There is a paradox evident in the participants' narratives concerning the invisible character of mistreatment of queer men in their home countries as the ground for asylum protection. Institutionalised punishment and hostility against homosexuality in societies from which queer of

colour asylum seekers come is always conditioned by the production of undesirable Others serving to underpin larger nationalist and populist discourses. I did not conduct interviews with migration officers nor did I have access to their archives, but the information I gathered from the activists and the asylum seekers evidence that the migration authorities made estimations on overall political situations in different countries which they used as the guideline for assessment of asylum claims. The migration authorities in Sweden are familiar with countries where the state laws explicitly criminalise homosexuality, so they would ask for proof of a claimant's arrest, detention or harassment by the police. It is more difficult to make estimation of violation of human rights and experienced homophobia in societies where formal criminalisation of homosexuality does not exist or has been lifted, but the inequality regimes and hostility against homosexuality linger. Similarly, making adequate estimation is difficult in countries where there is systematic punishment of homosexuality but it takes place in a clandestine manner which contributes to the invisibility of homophobic violence.

The paradox is that while homophobia universalises specific violence under the sign of collectively shared sexual identity, in doing so it relies on reading homosexuality in relation to creation of public records of sexual misdemeanour and adequate punishment for it. Many of queer of colour asylum seekers are not able to provide such records because the state authorities in their home countries would not issue any documents proving harassment, forced medical treatments and/or imprisonment. I do not claim that queer of colour asylum seekers are not granted asylum without such documents; indeed, some of the participants whom I interviewed received positive decisions prior or during my fieldwork solely on the credibility of their personal stories. However, what I understood from talking with the activists and listening presentations is that asylum is more a matter of lottery rather than of rule.

This paradox is further read through delinking homophobia from the heritage of colonialism and local gender relations and cultures. Political homophobia is particularly useful in explaining that outburst of homophobic violence and persecution of homosexuals. While recognition of homophobia as distinguished form of violence is considered to be a step closer to achieving social justice since it provides a ground for asylum claims, it simultaneously feeds into the discourse of homophobic versus progressive (liberal) cultures. Homophobia forecloses a public inquiry into the concrete conditions which led to production of homophobic violence as the focus is on the concrete experiences of violence, and not on the overall change in the ruling relations

which are mediated through gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity. Azad, a 28-year-old Nubian gay man, in discussing his dissatisfaction with the state of affairs in Egypt pointed to the complexity of his situation:

I was totally disappointed and totally frustrated from almost two to three years of struggling with a lot of things: breaking the social norms, working with ethnic rights. For me as person who belongs to an ethnic minority, one who belongs to a sexual minority, who belongs to leftist ideology and who strives for social justice and more humane living and rights for people in Egypt, and nothing is achieved. Nothing has changed. It's even stricter, harder and worse than before.

As an activist in Egypt, Azad was involved in several civil society support groups for Nubian ethnic minority and social and youth movements. His engagement with LGBTQ issues was, however, more underground. The rule is that one does not publically claim one's sexual identity, so the rights of sexual minorities are usually addressed through the broader context of social and political struggles. Azad was once detained for sexual misdemeanour in the public because he was *making out with his boyfriend*. He informed me that the police never produced evidence of this event because the detention was in fact illegal.

Further, Butler's theory of performative production of gender proclaims that power regimes create an effect of gender through normalisation of compulsive heterosexuality. Following this, violence, stigmatisation and discrimination against sexual minorities is always violation against the expression of non-normative gender articulations and embodiments. Homophobia is thus a gendered system of knowledge since one's transgression through sexual identity is at the same time informed by the position of each gender respectively in the hierarchy of gender regimes. This means that vulnerabilities attached to gay and queer men as a specific subject position have to be understood within the cultural context of gender relations and gender roles. Over the course of my fieldwork I tried to find women who sought asylum on the SOGI ground, but the places I visited predominantly congregated self-identified queer and gay male asylum seekers. The escalation of homophobia across the postcolonial world is connected to the patriarchalization of societies which in turn usually affects men in a specific way since they have more access to public spaces. It also tells us that the asylum process is selective at the outset. This issue came up in when I interviewed a gay couple in their late thirties from Saudi Arabia and Lebanon. When I

naively asked them if they had any knowledge of lesbians in their countries, I was immediately reminded of the strict gender division in their home countries.

Kamal: I've never heard of a woman being punished for this [homosexuality]. First of all, it's very hard to be caught. Women are separated from men in Saudi. Second, if she got caught, they would notify her farther or anyone who is responsible so he would punish her in his own way.

Jabir: We didn't have any connections with lesbians in Saudi. It's not easy to communicate with the girls in Saudi. If they saw you have a girl in the car, they would arrest you. As a Lebanese they might put me in jail for five-six months and then deport me. And that's because she's a friend. What if she comes to my house? There are people who can see and tell.

Kamal: They are more tolerant about lesbians. And Iran it's the same because women don't have intercourse. Do you understand? When it comes to men, then there is a real intercourse. That's why we get first rated. That's how they differentiate between lesbians and gay men. With lesbians they don't see it as real sex.

Women and transgender persons surely can officially apply for asylum on the gender identity ground (as part of SOGI), but in highly patriarchal societies it would be hard to bypass the policing of gender roles, gendered spaces and the restrictions attached to independence and autonomy enabling an asylum application to take place. So what appears to be a lack of visible punishment and persecution of female homosexuality is not a matter of *tolerance of lesbians*. Rather this matter pertains to the conditions enabling lesbians to be recognised as subjects who experience first sexuality, and then homophobia, within a patriarchal system. Further, Kamal and Jabir told me a story about *famous businessmen* who threw cross-dresser parties which sometimes were raided by *the religious police*. Thinking about the relationship between sexuality and gender, I was interested to find out more about heterosexism evident in the gender segregation in Saudi Arabia. Heterosexism establishes the gender division and requires heterosexual marriage. Lesbian women and gay men can presumably benefit from compliance with heterosexual marriage, although inequality related to gender norms and gender roles creates

different kinds of opportunities and restrictions. By virtue of having more access to the public spaces and the value of masculinity, the men can pursue their sexual interests in a specific way.

Kamal: He's [Kamal's friend] very feminine, but he's married to two women. Many homosexuals in Saudi are married and have families. This is their life for the public. And then they have another life underground. They're satisfied with such a lifestyle. For me, I cannot do it.

Effeminacy, as I understand, is of secondary importance as it can be compensated with creation of a fitting public image of normative masculinity. The wealthy men who can afford to support several wives mirror the intersections between social class, gender and sexuality. Middle and upper social classes allow those men to be able to afford the 'luxury' of affording to subvert the norm by means of throwing cross-dresser parties even though they might be caught by the police, while heterosexual marriage provides adherence to a socially respectable institution despite the man's effeminacy. Those who dare break the norm are in more immediate danger. Both Kamal and Jabir are cisgender² men and the potential disclosure of their relationship clashes with heterosexual masculinity. As Boellstroff has argued in his ethnography about Indonesian gay men, it is greater transgression for two men to desire the same and claim this particular sexual identity which might lead to punishment and excommunication enacted by the family and state institutions:

Kamal: I got pressure from my family. They wanted me to get married. They kept referring to Jabir as a friend. But they know very well he's more than a friend. I got a threat. I'm not sure if they see it that way, but I felt threatened. My dad's cousin is a head of the religious police in my city and my mom said: "If you don't move back to our house, and if you don't get married after the summer, we will let this person see what's happening between you two". I took it as a threat.

Jabir: It was a threat!

² Cisgender refers to individuals whose gender identity fits the gender assigned at birth at birth, so there is a match between self-identity, gender and the body.

In saying *For me, I cannot do it* Kamal makes such a claim that separates him from not just his family, but also the state law and the nation, which sets him on the trip to Sweden. Luckily for Kamal, he was able to afford to make enough savings to move to Sweden with Jabir. In the light of what has been argued before about the effects of queer globalisation in the postcolonial world, social class is an important aspect not just in terms of creating material preconditions for leaving one's country on their own will, but also in terms of formation of modern homosexual identities around the globe and one's positioning to them. Consequently, the threat wielded against Kamal by his parents is also a reaction to the possible threat of the collapse of class order which gains validity through compulsive heterosexual marriage and the re-inscription of gender hierarchy in a patriarchal society. With Wesling's remark in mind on the importance of avoiding the risk of reifying the discourse of 'migrant ontologies' as necessarily being transgression, I highlight the relationality of transgression. Kamal and Jabir's intimate relationship, as well as their decision to apply for asylum, is transgression in relation to the dominate gender codes in their homelands. However, their gender representation and sexual identity are in accordance with those ones found in Sweden. Their mobility initiated by their acting on sexual identity is accompanied by the temporary immobility while pending the asylum decision. And this immobility is potentially politically active through their volunteering in LiQa' and raising awareness of queer asylum seekers' issues and offering support for others in the same situation.

5.2 Togetherness as a form of sociality in queer of colour asylum seekers

Turning to the question of social space and social participation of queer of colour asylum seekers, I highlight the social processes mobilised by dis-identification. My goal is to explore El-Tayeb's observations about the fusionist and horizontal character of sociality among queer of colour diasporic youth in Europe and their memory discourse via Butler's appreciation of dis-identification and Joseph's critique of romantic community. Here I link the performativity of capitalism with performativity of community evident in socialites created by NGOs. Although queer of colour asylum seekers and activists are different in terms of national and cultural backgrounds and material resources, they share the same experience of inhabiting the LiQa' space. I am interested in the flexibility of the asylum seekers' positionings while entering, being in, and leaving the social space created by LiQa'. I follow the tacit coexistence of multiplicity of identities in this space which is created thanks to the workings of LiQa' as an NGO. In order to function properly, NGOs depend on donations and adherence to certain rules and values attached

to democracy and communitarianism. Thus this is space is precarious and perishable, but potentially translocationable. For this reason I prefer using the term togetherness rather than community. Togetherness, unlike community, is not a romantic term and it refers to the temporary state of achieving realness sharing disavowal.

LiQa' is a safe space for queer (of colour) asylum seekers, other queer migrants (diasporic or not) and everyone who is supportive of the cause of queer migration, antiracism and human rights. It is primarily a support network for queer asylum seekers which provides social space and assistance in practical matters such as finding accommodation and orientation in a new environment. LiQa' is run by activists affiliated to four NGOs and groups of volunteers (who are often migrants themselves) mainly consisted of former, but also current, queer asylum seekers. The four NGOs cede their premises and facilities for organisation of social events and public debates. The physical space is not fixed to one location, while the labour and effort put into running and maintaining LiQa' represents only a share of the activists' overall work engagement. Only Onur, the project coordinator, works on a full-time basis and is primarily available for queer asylum seekers as a contact person. So the social organisation of activities is not just divided, but also fractured, and it highly depends on the input and participation of volunteers. Preoccupied with maintaining this flexible infrastructure, the activists do not have time and possibilities to reach out to queer asylum seekers as much as they would like to. It is the asylum seekers who have to hear about and reach out to LiQa', and decide at their own will if to join.

Onur: Migration Board officers might say: "You should contact RFLS" [The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights]. In that case they are forwarded to me, so I get informed. But they have to be the ones to reach out because I don't have any contact with the state. So it all depends on this person if they want to contact us. We're trying to make the issue of LGBT migration more visible; and to make it more visible to LGBT migrants themselves because there is lack of information and communication. When you live so far away in the camps and when you have perhaps limited financial resources— which is most of the cases— and you don't really know who to talk to, then by reaching out to society in general, people would hopefully be informed about the project and about the public meetings and not just about the closed Friday confidential meetings.

If one is to *decide* to join, then one has to *know* and take up an active position in relation to one's sexual identity. This presumption of *knowing prior to deciding and acting upon deciding* shapes the process of subjectification of queer of colour asylum seekers and marks the move from (SOGI) asylum seeker to *becoming* queer of colour asylum seeker or a participant of LiQa'. It is seemingly a small step, but at the same time gigantic in terms of orientation of one's position and the psychic investments needed to act upon a set of procedural steps. The relationship between these two instances marks the conflation of causality with temporality (cause/effect with before/after). Thus the same pattern present in the rise of homophobia in their homelands is reiterated in the same fashion vis-à-vis knowing one's sexual identity prior to deciding to act upon it whether sexually or in the sense of making a decision to migrate. In all fairness to LiQa' and its strenuous efforts to sustain this infrastructure, the incommensurability of social participation among queer of colour asylum seekers in relation to, in Onur's words, *society in general* is something that is beyond LiQa's immediate impact due the rhetorical operations involved in community building of which Joseph speaks in relation to analogy between community and capitalism. This way a whole range of vulnerabilities are disguised or potentially misrecognised, while the grounds for claiming asylum are divided into types.

When I talked to Emir, a gay refugee from Syria who was granted political asylum, I heard a story of a horrific journey to Sweden. Although Emir never applied for asylum on the SOGI ground because of the 'obvious' humanitarian crisis in Syria, I decided to interview him. Emir is a half Syrian-half Ukrainian health worker in his mid-twenties (he holds only Syrian citizenship). On one occasion Emir got arrested for helping people injured in the fire attacks:

Emir: The real reason [I left Syria] is that they arrested me in Syria because I was helping the people. The situation in Syria is that we have a lot of rockets, snipers and many people get injured. They should be going to the hospitals, but most of them going there are arrested because they [the state authorities] thought they help the Free Army. As a health worker I helped some people that are not related to any part of Free Army. They were just normal people who just wanted to eat and live in peace. As a medical person I helped them. I gave them medicine and treatment. It was fine for me. [The police said:] "You're not supposed to help them. You're supposed to send them [to us]. But it was my humility that pushed me to do that.

They caught me and they found medicine in my rucksack. And this was kind of medicine that I carry for the first aid. So they arrested me for two months.

[...]. And after that I was destroyed totally. I entered there with 55kg and they released me with 44kg. That was totally bad. Thanks to God, Jesus, Buddha, whatever, my family knew where I was and they paid very good money to let me go. After that it took me six months to recover. I was totally destroyed mentally and physically. I was in a very bad shape. I couldn't sleep. I couldn't eat. I was afraid of everyone. I had a very bad experience there. Then I put myself together. So the first thing I did was I moved to Ukraine, because I had some relations and I studied there.

Emir spent some time in a large city in Ukraine and then began looking for options to move to Norway. In Ukraine he worked in a factory where he never revealed his sexual identity to anyone despite the fact he was in an intimate relationship with another young man. Nonetheless, Emir was considering moving to Norway. And in the pursuit for the optimal solution for a way out of Ukraine, Emir was compelled to resort to getting in touch with the local mafia which would forge a fake passport of an EU country. The first two times Emir approached them he was conned; he had paid a lot of money but never got hold of a passport. The third time was successful and he was set to embark on a journey to Norway. Travelling from Ukraine via Turkey and Austria and finally having landed in Copenhagen, Emir bought a train ticket to Sweden. But after spending three whole days in a row without any sleep, Emir winded up applying for asylum in Gothenburg in Sweden because he *just fell in love with the name Gothenburg when [he] checked the map* (I never asked for clarifications, so I did not know if Gothenburg in Emir's ears sounded 'Gothenburg' or 'Göteborg' at that point).

You know, it was a direct train from the airport to Gothenburg. And all the way I was crying. I was just crying. I made it. But I didn't know if I did the right thing, or if I did the wrong thing. I didn't know if my future was here or not. I left everything behind, my family, my home. I was empty-pocketed. It was night when I arrived. I went directly to Migrationsverket [Swedish Migration Board]. It was far from the station. I wanted to take a taxi, but it was too expensive, so I took a bus. I was thinking: "Yes, I did it!"

The question now is: at what point did Emir *decide* to move to and apply for asylum in Sweden? Perhaps it was in prison in Syria where he *had a very bad experience* and was *destroyed totally* and then *put himself together*. Or perhaps it was in Ukraine where he had left his boyfriend and survived threats and trickery by the local mafia and embarked on his journey to Norway. Or maybe it was when he *fell in love with the name Gothenburg*? I am not suggesting that asylum seekers randomly choose Sweden or other West European countries as their final destinations. Surely they are informed through networks of friends, relatives and the information found in the media about the living standards, treatment and other benefits. This is not the issue. However, all the people I interviewed arrived in Sweden alone without any prior connections and contacts, so what I would like to revisit is the perspective of their becoming of a queer of colour asylum seeker by retelling their narratives through the lens of a series ruptures and assemblage and by emphasising their vulnerability. Homophobic and war violence have shattering effects on the people fleeing their countries. And this experience attaches them to the asylum process, while the asylum orients them towards LiQa'. When I wanted to find out more about Emir about how Emir's sexuality informed his asylum process and his later engagement in LiQa', he replied:

I didn't mention I was gay. I didn't want it too complicated. I'm Syrian and I was running from war, so they focused on this point more. If I'd mentioned I was LGBT, that would've taken more time and different questions. At that point I'm really tired and depressed. I was given humanitarian status. My friend, who was also Syrian, mentioned he was gay. In the last five minutes of the interview, they asked him if he wanted to mention something else. And he said he was gay, so they opened more questions for him. But he was given the same status like me.

[...]I'm a sociable guy. In Syria I was working for Red Cross as humanitarian. So when I first arrived here, I searched for something health-related. So I found Noaks Ark and I started to volunteer. And I like to fight for people with HIV or cancer, or whatever. For me it's like I know what it feels like to get sick. I know it's difficult to get infected with a virus and you have to take care of yourself and your partner. I'm not HIV positive, but I can feel this people because I worked with the same category of people in Syria. And there it's even worse because they put them in some places outside the country and they treat them very badly. So here I'm happy to help these people. And it's related to health and I'm curious about that.

The moments of fleeing war, the asylum process and joining LiQa' are effectively the same moment. They are moments of detachment and attachment in this fractured spectrum. Potential misrecognition of certain subjects instigates the moment of plausible falling outside the cultural intelligibility of humanness as there are separate questions for war refugees and for LGBT asylum seekers. The guilt attached to positive asylum decision, so pronounced in the participants' narratives, bears witness to the wicked nature of disruption and misrecognised violence and the positions they create for the asylum seekers. This way I end up trying to find alternative words for privilege or adding inverted commas under 'privileged asylum seeker'. Are they privileged for being able to flee their countries, survive violence, terror and go through the indignities of asylum process? Or for being sociable or 'street-wise' enough to *decide*, in the midst of confusion, feelings of guilt and abandonment, to get informed about an organisation which *are forwarded to*? Their wellbeing is significantly increased by being affiliated to an organisation run on donations and good will of volunteers and activists. I remember I was a teenager (maybe my memory fails me) when Montenegro, the country I come from, hosted refugees fleeing Kosovo in 1999. A small, poor, post-war and transitional country on the ever politically turbulent Balkan soil and of population counting less than 650.000 inhabitants received a number of refugees proportionate to almost 25 percent of its overall population. Today the number of refugees heading towards Europe would probably count less than one percent of overall European population. Hardly wanting to glorify this moment in contemporary Montenegro's history, my intention is rather to draw attention to the paranoia about migration prevalent in today's Europe. The image significantly changes when the subaltern returns the gaze and when the asylum process and migration is observed from the perspective of needs and not exclusively from the perspective of rights. It is the need to migrate 'in the first place' (a moment of disruption and dis-identification) that speaks of the ideological position of who is entitled to protection.

Let me turn back to Onur's statement about the efficacy and promptness of recruiting newcomers to LiQa' via Emir's experience, it appears that queer (of colour) asylum community is possible only by the means of performative gestures involved in the mimicry of *the society in general* as 'the real' community. This so-called real community instigates the moment of dis-identification through misrecognition on provisionally two instances— one of the society in general and the other of specific social group summoned around RFSL. The residues of this

misrecognition are numerous. They range from dis-identification with the sociality of white middle-class heterosexuals to mere cultural differences of which Yuval-Davis speaks, to (white middle-class) LGBTs holding Swedish (and extendedly European) citizenship. At the same time this opens the space for potential subversion through employment of human rights discourses present in NGOs. I say potential because there is no guarantee that subversion will be successful in the context where the organisation and division of labour are tied to the bureaucratic performances of tasks. When Thorson discussed the queer paradox of human rights in postcolonial contexts such as Uganda and South Africa, he referred to appropriation of queer as a norm by the activists in those countries. This study, on the other hand, deals with human rights the postcolonial queers in the Western context. The point is that human rights organisations have become the main vehicle for instituting queer politics globally. More importantly, the value attached to the rhetorical operations is different in these two contexts. Civil society and human rights organisations are *a priori* recognised as the *real* field of intelligibility in which negotiations and contestations take place. LiQa' is thus preconditioned, not just by sharing appreciation for human rights, but by the organisational infrastructure needed for articulation of its issues.

Ibrahim: So it's a place where they can release a little part of their burden migration-related, sexuality-related in order to open up a bit more. The reason why we need an organisation for that is because those social spaces in other countries are constructed differently and built up in different ways, while in Sweden when people try to get in touch with this type of social spaces, they can get very lost or they can get confused about these. In Sweden you need an organisation in order to have these spaces. They don't come up spontaneously.

Miloš: Like proper, registered organisation?

Ibrahim: Exactly. What is interesting about that is that it's not only social, but it's democratic as well. So you become part of a democratic process in that sense.

The underlying requirement of common good present in the workings of civil society and human rights organisations is the imaginary of the public, community or the *society in general*. Communities are, as Joseph points out, supplemented by performativity of capitalism and vice versa. By means of neoliberal capitalism communities create social hierarchies which are

informed by gender, sexuality, ethnicity and race. However, at the same time the social hierarchies sustain communities and become part of their tissue.

Ibrahim: There are social issues that are trendier than others, so sometimes you have to compromise if you want to have funding. Ideally, an organisation shouldn't be restrained in that sense. Ideally, if you have a lot of members and everyone is paying their membership, then you become financially independent too. You work on the points that your members want you to work on. Obviously, that is not the case in most NGOs. Then you have to apply for funding and go through this compromising process. And those who set those priorities are state-owned agencies, or private, or semi-private ones. It is interesting because you're supposed to be independent, but you get dependent on the state finance or its priorities.

Furthermore, reading through El-Tayeb's memory discourse I turn to the way of queer of colour asylum seekers reside the LiQa' space. The fusionism El-Tayeb is in even more restrained when dealing with a social group which temporary resides in a precarious space. I try to find a loophole with the aim of achieving the realness of their sociality that is recognised by others who share the same experience of dis-identification and disavowal. Their memories are often marked by the shift from roots to routes, but these routs do not necessarily be understood as ones actual points of their journeys. These can be routs of their psychic investments and the course of action. As the asylum process disavows and silences part of the seekers' subjectivities, I am interested in possible ways of turning the melancholia about those lost parts into of non-violent action. When I talked to Azad about his motivation to apply for asylum, he seemed more eager to refer to the possibility for meaningful and purposeful political engagement and not just homophobia in Egypt:

Maintaining my personal sanity can help. The last couple of months I was in Egypt, I spent all the time at home and not doing anything because I didn't want to do anything. I feel I don't belong any more. But now I feel there is a lot I can do—building my own capacities to do better projects and better planning for different things in Egypt. I know for sure I won't stay forever out of Egypt. I can't. You can't.

References to the Arab Spring and the moment of hope for larger social change were quite prominent in Azad's talks throughout my fieldwork. Azad often shared his comments and

political views as he felt his racial, sexual and religious identities were hard to reconcile: *It is hard to be gay, black and Muslim in Sweden*. Homophobia provided a normative spatiotemporal framework in which Azad's experiences of his intersecting identities are situated since it was oppression based on sexual identity that made possible for him to stay in Sweden. The fact Azad eventually was granted asylum on the SOGI ground could not be overlooked and it significantly shaped how his other identities were subjectively understood, felt, experienced and negotiated. As Murray has noted queer asylum seekers exercise the migration-to-liberation narrative for the migration officers. But once granted asylum, queer asylum seekers are often compelled to perform this narrative outside the asylum-seeking process. It is, in a manner of speaking, engraved in their memories. The queer asylum seekers are called upon to reify it in order to make it more real and believable for themselves and others. Homophobia in this sense operates both as a mechanism of separation and assemblage. It separated Azad from his home country while it affiliated him with other queer asylum seekers and migrants in Sweden. It was *now I feel there is a lot I can do* while this *now* was supplemented with an experienced *here* (LiQa') as space for possibility of political action directed at the movement taking place *there* (Egypt) *in the imagined future*. The religious and racial identities of Azad were mediated through the recollection of moments of the Arab Spring and the political upheaval in Egypt which he felt were neglected in Sweden since it was hard to be all those highly politicised identities at once. I understand that LiQa' is that space where these identities can be lived out and the violence and guilt can be suspended for a time.

The third point I looked at are exit points of queer of colour asylum seekers from LiQa'. I am in agreement with Lubhéid's broad understanding of migration which bypasses classification of migrants, and in that sense I see queer of colour asylum seekers as being part of the larger queer migrant community regardless of their temporary and conditional stay. However, what I do consider is how the different positions and moments informed by the migrant status affect the sociality of queer of asylum seekers. It is not enough to say that different migrant statuses are products of the power enacted by the state institutions. These interventions have real repercussions on the migrants. Granting different migrant statuses do not necessarily cease the bonds and connections of queer of colour asylum seekers to LiQa', but they give them an orientation toward different purposes and act centrifugally on them.

Ibrahim: When you're in the asylum process, you are in a circle- very bureaucratic stuff. You survive on day-to-day basis. But then when you get your residency, you have to plan longer. You have to get used to planning. It's a new life. You have to get used a different kind of bureaucracy. You have to get used to new kind of attention. Because you had two volunteers helping you out while you were an asylum seeker and you felt there was support. But once you've got your residency, those volunteers have to focus on other people and you feel like being left out or alone. So that migration-related stress is not to be undermined even if you stay in Sweden for long time. When you move from a perspective of survival to the perspective of long-term planning, it can be very difficult to get a grip.

Regardless of the fact that many successful asylum seekers remain affiliated to LiQa' and are charged with some hopefulness for better future. As 24-year-old Richard from Jamaica said:

You know, I've never been the kind of person that has expectations because expectations leave room for disappointment. If you have an expectation, then you expect a certain outcome. If it doesn't go to that outcome, then you're left disappointed. I've had a lot of disappointments in my life, and I've learned not to have expectations just to avoid that feeling of being disappointed because it's not a good feeling. So I don't have any expectations...I, I I'm hopeful. I'm hopeful for good outcomes. I'm hopeful. I am very positive, hopeful and optimistic for good things, Richard: I've never been comfortable speaking publicly about myself because I've always been afraid of judgement or being judged. So that's where my discomfort came from. But I find I'm more comfortable here and now at this point because I've realised that there is nothing really I need to be afraid of. And that these people I'm speaking to, they're not looking at me with judging eyes. By sharing I'm helping others. I'm contributing somewhat to spreading awareness. By contributing I might be able to help somebody else but I don't expect a specific outcome.

5.3 (Skeletons) coming out of the closet: experiencing intimacy and sexuality, and creation of public gay image by queer of colour asylum seekers

Here I discuss how queer of colour asylum seekers negotiate gay scene and the sexual freedom in Malmö. First of all it is important to highlight that the people I met live in Malmö or in its vicinity and have had the possibility not live in the refugee camps. Those who live in places far away from urban areas where gay scene takes place, they are severely restrained from exercising their freedom for which they migrated. In fact, talking to the activists I have realised that the migration authorities do not have capacities or are not sensitive to the specific situation of SOGI asylum seekers in terms of finding suitable accommodation for them. While asylum seekers can benefit from legal recognition of SOGI, they are disadvantaged in the sense that they might be left with no choice but to live with people from whom they have fled. The authorities often put under the same roof the asylum seekers who might be in conflict on the ethnic or national lines. The situation is even direr in case of SOGI asylum seekers because there is no *a priori* visible criterion of assessing one's homophobia. It would be discriminatory to assume one's inclination to homophobia simply because they come from a certain country or culture. So they cannot intervene before homophobic and/or sexual violence actually occurs in the camps. And this is only on condition that it gets reported by the asylum seekers.

None of the asylum seekers whom I had a chance to meet have had this kind of experience, but they have faced social barriers and violations in urban gay life. Gaspar from Iran moved to Sweden to complete his master degree, but prior to finalisation of his studies he had applied for SOGI asylum. As with many other asylum seekers I met, it never occurred to him he would apply for asylum. It was to an extent a last resort decision. Coming from a recognised and respected family in small city in Iran, his realisation of attraction to the same sex did not come as straightforwardly.

I knew since I was young I had this attraction. You know that I mean? There is always this kind of attraction and you feel that, but you're in a specific context, that you can always find yourself as a sinner if you look though that attraction and thoughts. So you have those things in you, but you're struggling with yourself and you try to experience the opposite of that. I was trying to have a girlfriend. That was OK with my family [chuckling].

The pursuit of higher education in a European university was welcomed by Gaspar's family because of the value and prestige of European education attached to it. However Gaspar's moving to Sweden did not immediately create access to gay spaces.

For the first year I was so, so naïve in Sweden. It was just an experimental period for me to make my mind, to figure out myself in this situation. As I told you, my time was so limited, so my whole planning was intensive. So when I came to Sweden, I just went to the school. [...] Even though I was living in an open society, I was living in the same pattern. I wasn't open to my roommates because I couldn't. One of them was from Iran and the other was from Egypt— two others from Islamic countries again in the same apartment. So I was living three years again in the same situation. I didn't meet anyone in my apartment for three years because I was living in [pauses]... The Iranian guy moved out and another guy from Ethiopia moved in. He was like a fundamentalist Christian. He moves out, and another comes from Sudan. He was Muslim.

On several occasions expressed he could not know his sexuality because he *was in the same pattern* he had learned in Iran. Regardless of Gaspar's not *knowing* the 'real' name of his sexuality, he had thoughts and feelings about it he could not share. As an international student Gaspar followed the same pattern and dynamics of social life available within the student environment. The student social life in Sweden may mean to adhere to conventions and practices that might be at odds with international students' views about sociality, and especially when it comes to sex and sexuality. This view was also expressed by Ibrahim and Onur who felt they could not partake as much in the student social life which was predominantly heterosexual and Swedish. The well-rehearsed pattern of social student life in Sweden usually leaves international students to a choice to either follow it or to create social circles with other international students. But this self-segregation is more complicated for queer people inasmuch as they choose between stereotypically homophobic migrant and stereotypically gay-friendly Swedes. And living in a surrounding where people of only 'similar' cultural backgrounds circulate makes the situation even harder, like in Gaspar's case. So coming to terms with one's sexuality in a *limited time* usually for queer students migrants orients them to the *open city*.

Yet an *open city* turns out not be so open. The gay scene in Malmö is again predominantly Swedish and requires substantive financial resources which students, and especially asylum seekers, usually cannot afford. The access to gay club is even more constrained considering that provisional LMA cards that asylum seekers are issued to confirm their status are not considered real ID cards necessary for entrance in a club. It is possible that queer of colour asylum seekers are returned at the door of a prominent gay club in Malmö. And once and if found in the club social intersection happens in accordance to again well-established set of rules.

Gaspar: If you go to Club you will see people are dancing, but it's divided, divided, divided groups. It means that I'm coming with two or three friends; you're coming with two or three friends. In public meetings, if you're gonna get new people, if you don't have eye contacts, how do you start a conversation? I was going to Club in the third year more regularly— sometimes every weekend— but I gave up. I said it's not fun to go there alone and sit there alone and nothing happens. Plus I don't drink because I stick to some beliefs. I don't even drink to get wasted or drunk, so I will be just bored in a club. You know what I mean? It was more fun to be with my friends in the heterosexual community, but at least you have your friends around you. You dance with them and have fun. And then going to a night gay club alone, sitting and looking around, you don't get attention from those guys who are thinking about something else.

Making oneself gay in when one “can't be properly gay”, to use El-Tayeb's words, is a painful process that many queer of colour asylum seekers and migrants feel they have to subjugate themselves to in order to participate in social gay life. The ongoing depoliticisation of LGBT politics through consumerism and commoditisation of gay spaces and identities delineates the field of who can be recognised as ‘properly’ gay, so those who cannot follow the pattern are left to find alternative arrangements. The mainstreaming of LGBT politics is increasingly being built upon the image white middle-class gays and lesbians who have gained the recognition and acceptance by the state. This not only makes harder for queer of colour asylum seekers to relate to it, but it actually fuels divisions and self-segregation further.

Complementary to clubs, digital spaces and dating apps pare another tool for expanding social networks. Despite the accessibility of digital technologies and the communication possibilities

they open up, they may also play part in perpetuating prejudices and inequalities. In that sense, queer of colour asylum seeker and other queer of colour migrants may face outbursts of racism and exoticisation in addition to the structural inequalities.

Azad: But when you're on dating websites and people ask where you're from, and you say "I'm from Egypt". And then say "I've never done an Egyptian before".

Miloš: Wow! Do people really say that?! Openly?

Azad: Yes! They do it because they don't feel it's bad. "Oh, I've never done an Egyptian before". So you feel you a part of the collection.

[...]I was once sent a message on a dating website: "Oh you're another idiot in town. Go back to your country because eventually we'll kick all the stupid Arabs out of Sweden. Enjoy the party, but you will be kicked out of Sweden at any moment." And this was a gay person. I think they're cowards to do it in your face. They'd never do it in your face. They only do it when they feel safe from the reaction.

Sexuality always intersects with other social divisions such as race and class. By migrating to Western countries, queer of colour asylum seekers do not necessarily find freedom. At times when suspicion of migrants is high and deeper restructuring underpinned by neoliberal politics, it becomes increasingly more difficult to have a united queer liberation movement which would transverse racial, national and class divisions. Legal recognition of SOGI is beneficent for some asylum seekers, but this should be read within the wider context of global inequalities which are mediated by sexuality, race and ethnicity. Individualisation of responsibility intrinsic to neoliberal capitalism often means that vulnerable groups such queer of colour asylum seekers delinked from substantive support and left to cope with more inequalities alone. This is why the work of Project LiQa' is very important.

6. CONCLUSION

This thesis was set to explore the experiences and sociality of queer of colour asylum seekers gathered around the Project LiQa' in Malmö. I departed from the fact that all queer of colour asylum seekers come from different cultures, societies and countries which inevitably affect the ways they understand sexuality. Their identities are inevitably multiple, so sexuality cannot be singled out a distinct category. Queer of colour asylum seekers' sexuality always intersect with social categories or divisions such as race, ethnicity, class, religion and nationality. What queer of colour asylum seekers do share is the experience of asylum process in Sweden and experience of political homophobia, war and fear of persecution in their home countries. Some of them whom I have met and interviewed end up being part of a small support network in Malmö called Project LiQa'.

For me it has been particularly interesting to analyse the four moments— multiple identities, political homophobia, asylum process and Project LiQa'— and see how they are intertwined and played out towards forming a sociality I named togetherness. Inspired by Donna Haraway's critique of objectivity and her notion of partial vision, I treated these four moments as partial vision of queer of colour asylum seekers' subjectivities. But I noticed that this each of the 'parts' of this vision continued to fragment further, so I complemented it with the notion of shattered sight. Looking with the eyes of shattered sight, queer of colour asylum seekers' narratives and language are fractured. Withering through and between the fissures of the shattered sight, my aim was not to restore the 'wholeness' of queer of colour subjectivities, but rather to accentuate that brokenness shaped how they experience their being-in-the-world and that through that mutual experience of brokenness they form sociality.

In contrast to much celebrated sexual freedoms in the West Europe and North America which focus on creating positive image of sexual identities of LGBT persons, I argued that queer of colour asylum seeker's sexualities are shaped by a series of identifications and misrecognitions. But the series of moments of dis-identification should not be understood as subsequent points of on the spatiotemporal continuum where conditions of prior to and leading to are easily locatable. From queer of colour perspective these dis-identifications coexist and are lived out and embodied simultaneously. What is difficult, though, is the creation of language which can be

achieve the status of authenticity or realness, and which can adequately communicate these identifications with less violence than the dominant language.

Throughout the paper I have argued that the escalation of homophobia in the postcolonial is brought about by dissemination of LGBT identities through global processes, cultural imperialism of the West and military interventions. Many of the postcolonial cultures had more flexible and diverse understanding of gender norms and sexuality before European colonisation took place. Without romanticisation of the past times and 'exotic' cultures, I wanted to highlight that same-sex sexual practices were organised in ways that did not require emancipatory projects or interventions from the outside. Today's homophobia in the postcolonial world should be observed in the wider context of colonial legacy and political upheavals taking place in those countries where it is mostly pronounced. It is present in those places where nationalism and continuous exploitation and war reign supreme. On the one hand, globalisation and modernity gave rise to formation of modern gay identities worldwide which are translated into local vernaculars. And this translation is contingent on the cultural and political context and material resources necessary for translation. It is not full closure of local understandings of gender and sexuality, and consequently it is not Westernisation of sexual culture in post colonies. But the impact of Euro-American gay identities on is something that should not be undermined in terms of creating a normative or desirable (self-)image and intimate relationship in the postcolonial world. On the other hand, homophobia emerges where translation is hampered by political upheaval and where inequalities in society are polarised. The polarisation of inequalities is gendered in the sense it gives rise to nationalist discourses and exploitation, which in turn naturalises heterosexual violent masculinity. Homophobia thus is not just a matter of sexual practices but it is a specific gendered knowledge, and it is an effect of deeper societal divisions informed by poverty, exploitation and (neo-)colonisation.

Today's homophobia is tackled by international and national human rights organisations and the possibility for SOGI asylum. However, these treat the symptom rather than cause as they obfuscate and close down spaces for more direct action and participation by those who are most affected by homophobia in the postcolonial world. They operate on the principle of privilege and elitism which is evident in queer migration. Often postcolonial queers are tempted to migrate to the West by means of finding a partner or pursuing higher education. This way the whole structure is moved upwards, deepening and perpetuating inequalities. Those who pursue

education want to be free to act on their sexuality but are faced with lack of opportunity to directly participate in the neoliberal consumerist city or feel they socially excluded by white middle-class gays, which in turn orients them toward becoming queer of colour migrants. By working in NGOs and projects focused on queer migrants, they inevitably adhere to a set of ideas and rules attached to work policy, ethics and work organisation, being in control of only a share of decision making process. The queer of colour activists are more vulnerable to social changes and employment opportunities. Conversely, they are more privileged in relation to queer of colour asylum seekers who are more vulnerable and do not enjoy the rights due to their specific migration status. But the chain of privilege and elitism continues since queer of colour asylum seeker are often tormented by guilt and the perception of them being privileged in comparison to those who are deported and those in their home countries who never get the chance to apply for asylum. So the vicious circle of violence and inequalities repeats.

Indeed, queer of colour asylum seekers have no direct access to language describing their experiences. From their shattered perspective, the language inherently calls upon the language of the dominant society. This point is valid at the level of calling upon the organisation of sexual practices precolonial times. Globalisation and modern gay identities do not necessarily mean their appropriation, but it does require positioning to them in this sense. It is valid at the level of asylum since their narratives have to be recognisable and constructed in ways that migration officers can understand and make judgments. In this process homophobia is delinked from the wider (neo)colonial interventions and demands of cultural imperialism. Importantly, the migration-to-liberation narrative prioritises sexual identity of queer of colour asylum seekers while their ethnic, cultural and ethnic identities are shadowed. Queer of colour asylum seekers reiterate and authenticate this narrative as one of liberation despite the fact that they may face social isolation and verbal and physical attacks and offences on the racial basis even by other gay white men. Further, it is valid at level of LiQa' since it must organise itself that is understandable for the general public and follow certain rhetorical operations and procedure involved in the NGO work. Incommensurability in social participation of queer of colour asylum seekers and queer migrants is something that LiQa' tries to draw attention to the dominant white society. The greater demand for visibility steers LiQa towards the public through engagement with NGO sector. This affects their accessibility, their internal organisation of work, and it furthermore increases their dependence on external funding for which they have to compete with other

NGOs. In doing so LiQa' is torn between trying to make their organisation as politically horizontal, transparent and accessible to the asylum seekers as possible, and trying to reach out to the general public and the state institutions which by and large still do not want to reach out to migrants and understand that migration is does not mean assimilation but hybridisation.

6.1 Limitations of study and recommendations for further research

Throughout the process of making this study several issues came to forefront. Firstly, this research was focused on queer of colour asylum seekers who identify as men. This was not a coincidence since the same problem had been raised in the literature by many authors. The disproportionate number of asylum seekers along the gender line and in favour of men directly influenced the accessibility of researching transgender persons and lesbians. In that sense, this study could benefit from including a variety of sexual and gendered identities.

Secondly, I did not include the representatives from governmental institutions. Such an endeavour would have required of me a long-time fieldwork and approval from the relevant authorities, for which I did not have enough time. I had an informal conversation with a migration officer whom I met by chance, but I decided not include it because, thinking retrospectively, my role as a researcher at that point was not quite clear, and I did not obtain information relevant for this study. A full-time fieldwork at a state institution such as the Swedish Migration Board would provide access to asylum archives, migration officers and hearing session.

Thirdly, my research included a group diverse in cultural, national and geographical backgrounds. Surely this partly is correlated to LiQa's vision and the ways LiQa' was set to operate. But I believe that learning or researching more about the cultural history of a group coming from a certain country would enrich the material and allow for more detailed accounts of social dynamics within LiQa' and organisation connected to it.

Finally, I wish the participants would have been more included in the analytical part of the process. A truly collaborative work would also mean my own engagement in public addressing of queer of colour asylum seekers in Malmö through this study. Unfortunately this is not the case and my contribution remains at academic level, but any in-depth research in the future surely would necessarily include such aspirations in its agenda.

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