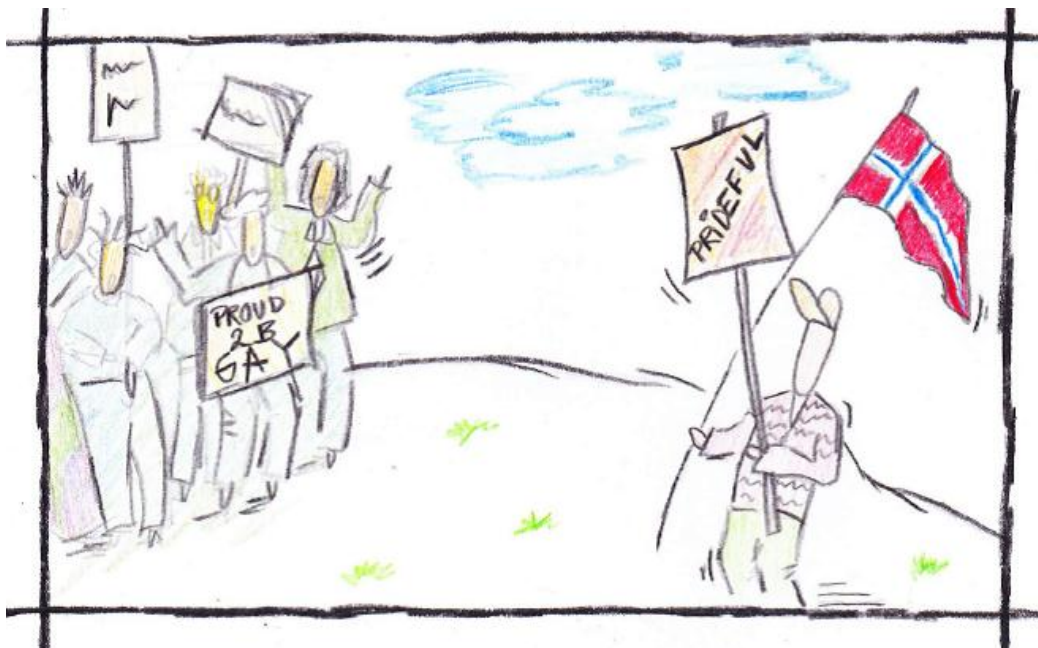


Tina Maria Sæteraas Stoum

Sexually (Dis)orientated?

Conceptualizing the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs'
Promotion of LGBT Rights



Masteroppgave i tverrfaglige kulturstudier
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Introducing

- Norway as an international advocator for LGBT rights

“In Kato’s funeral, USA’s President Barack Obama had sent a letter that was read out loud. That leaves many Ugandans wondering why Western leaders are so engaged when a gay man is killed, while they experience that few Western leaders care when other Ugandans are killed [...] – “All that attention can become a problem for us. People ask themselves why the whole world care about the murder of a gay man, while people are killed here every day. Why should the police use so many resources on a gay man” - said Adrian Jjuuko in the Organization Coalition for Human Rights Defenders.”

Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2011), News Article¹

Beginning in the mid-00s, Norway began announcing itself as an international advocator for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights.² In 2006, Norway developed and issued a joint statement on sexual orientation, gender identity and human rights to the United Nations Human Rights Council, on behalf of 54 countries.³ The statement confirmed widespread human rights violations around the world based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and urged the Council to pay proper attention to such violations. The following year Norway welcomed the launching of the Yogyakarta Principles, a document applying international human rights law to LGBT persons.⁴ Along with other countries, Norway began to specifically refer to the Principles in plenary discussion at the Human Rights Council and in other fora, to increase its importance and its potential to emerge as a legal instrument.⁵

¹ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2011), News Article: “Fiskaa tok opp homo-rettigheter i Uganda”, 9.11.2011.

² Norway’s international LGBT responsibility was first mentioned in *Action Plan for Women’s Rights and Gender Equality in Development Cooperation 2007-2009* “Norge skal benytte internasjonale arenaer, dialogprosesser og programstøtte til å sette kontroversielle temaer på dagsorden og være pådriver for avkriminalisering av homofili og bekjempelse av enhver form for diskriminering og stigmatisering av personer på grunnlag av seksuell orientering.”

³ HRC 3rd session. Joint statement on Human Rights violations based on sexual orientation and gender identity, 1 December 2006, available on: <http://www.norway-geneva.org/unitednations/humanrights/hrc011206/> last accessed 12.11.2011

⁴ See “Report on Launch of the Yogyakarta Principles”: http://www.ypinaction.org/files/45/Report_on_Launch_of_Yogyakarta_Principles.pdf Accessed 12.11.2011, last accessed, 12.11.2011. For the document, See *Yogyakarta Principles on the Application of International Human Rights Law in Relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity* (2006), available on: <http://www.yogyakartaprinciples.org/> last accessed, 12.11.2011

⁵ Michael O’Flaherty and John Fisher, “Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and International Human Rights Law: Contextualising the Yogyakarta Principles” - *Human Rights Law Review* 8:2 (2008), 207-248. Also see: Paula L. Ettlbrick and Alia Trabucco Zerán, *The Impact of the Yogyakarta Principles on International Human Rights Law Development, A Study of November 2007 – June 2010*, Final Report, available on: http://www.ypinaction.org/files/02/57/Yogyakarta_Principles_Impact_Tracking_Report.pdf last accessed 25.05.2012.

Norway's declared responsibility to internationally contest discrimination of sexual minorities is stipulated in the *Government's Action Plan for Improved Life Quality of LGBT persons 2009-2012*. Chapter 13 of the Action Plan sets out four responsibilities for Norway in the international community, a responsibility mainly given to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (hereinafter the Ministry). These include: to communicate and cooperate with Norwegian organizations working with LGBT issues in other countries, support local organizations promoting LGBT rights, advocate for international acceptance of terms and definitions (such as "sexual orientation"), and actively oppose criminalization, discrimination and stigmatization of LGBT persons, including bringing it up in bilateral meetings.⁶

In order to coordinate its efforts, the Ministry created in 2009 a set of guidelines for its embassies to assist their work on LGBT rights.⁷ The Guidelines stress embassies' responsibility to gain an overview of the situation of LGBT people in their respective countries, to raise the issue in talks with local state authorities, and if relevant, offer moral and financial support to local organizations and initiatives. Although a recent priority for the government, the Ministry is confident of their work's success and future potential: "Norway's contribution has made a difference, at the UN in New York, in the Human Rights Council in Geneva, and in many countries. Therefore we should continue."⁸ In 2010, Norway financially supported local projects in 15 countries, amounting to 11 million Norwegian kroners.⁹ All receiving countries were so-called third world countries in Asia, Latin America and Africa, where the main receiving countries were Nepal, Nicaragua, Kenya and Uganda.¹⁰ The funding for local projects significantly increased from 2010 to 2011.¹¹

The Norwegian movement and status quo

The LGBT movement in Norway began some 60 years ago. In 1951, the first and then newly established lesbian/gay organization, The Norwegian Association of 1948 (DNF-48), published the first pamphlet about homosexuality in Norway. From early on the DNF-48 made use of the term "homophile" (Norwegian: homofil) to accentuate "love" (Greek: phile) instead

⁶ Norwegian Child and Equality Department (2008), the *Government's Action Plan for Improved Life Quality for LGBT persons 2009-2012*, Action points 61-64, pages 44-45.

⁷ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2009), *Promoting the human rights of LGBT. Guidelines for systematizing and strengthening embassy efforts* (hereinafter the Guidelines), available on: http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/UD/Vedlegg/Menneskerettigheter/GuidelinesLHBT_eng.pdf, last accessed, 12.11.2011

⁸ Ibid., (my own translation from Norwegian) quote by State Secretary Gry Larsen

⁹ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2011), *Norges internasjonale arbeid mot diskriminering av seksuelle minoriteter*, p.4 (hereinafter the Ministry 2011 report), available on: http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/UD/Vedlegg/Menneskerettigheter/Norges_internasjonale_arbeid_mr_minoriteter_juni11.pdf, accessed 12.11.2011

¹⁰ Ibid., 4.

¹¹ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2011), Press Release, "Doblar stønaden til seksuelle minoriteter", 17.06.2011.

of “sex”. According to *LGBT Issue Worldwide*, Norway is possibly the only country in the world that still prefers the term homophile to homosexual. Another term within the LGBT movement and universally used in Norway is *legning*, which signifies an inborn disposition. *Legning* is closely related to sexual identity, meaning that the Norwegian context generally understands a homophile *legning* in essentialist terms.¹²

The Norwegian lesbian and gay movement experienced several decades of internal conflicts and divisions up until 1992 when the organizations were united under what is now *Landsforeningen for Lesbiske og Homofile* (LLH) in Norwegian, or the Norwegian LGBT Association (hereinafter the Association) in English. It is generally believed that the Association has been very successful in its work on LGBT rights in Norway, much to do with its strong ties to the political machinery. The legalization of male same-sex in 1972, the Act on Registered Partnership of 1993, and the gender neutral Marriage Act which entered into force in 2009, are highlights of the Norwegian LGBT civil rights movement.¹³ The movement has been brought forth within an equality and rights framework, closely connected to an understanding of homo-and heterosexuality as essential identities, where homosexuals are a distinct minority of society. Homosexuals are here “different, but equal” to the majority, however, it is the heterosexual norm and family form which forms the basis of comparison.¹⁴

Although the Association concludes that most LGBT persons experience little discrimination in their daily lives, being LGBT in Norway is not without problems:

“Unfortunately, quite a few young people still commit suicide because they are ashamed of being LGBT. Shame and fear of prejudice and discrimination still makes young LGBT people drink more alcohol and do more drugs than heterosexual youth.”¹⁵

The gender-neutral marital law places Norway in “the lead” regarding full equality in rights terms internationally, yet there is still a public image of “the homophile” as oppressed or worse off in terms of health and quality of life compared to heterosexuals. The persistency of such a public image might ensure allocation of national funds, but possibly also keep cementing a marginalization of non-heterosexual relations and desire. Presenting an image of the

¹² Tone Hellesund, “Norway” in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of LGBT Issues Worldwide*, Volume 2, Chuck Steward (ed.) (2010), Santa Barbra: Greenwood Press, 305-320.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Jennie Westlund, ed. (2009), *Regnbågsfamiljers ställning i Norden. Politik, rättigheter och villkor*. Oslo: Nordisk institut för kunskap om kön, 167-69.

¹⁵ LLH, “Being LGBT in Norway” available on:

<http://www.llh.no/eng/Being+LGBT+in+Norway.9UFRDI1e.ips> last accessed 14.06.2012.

“homosexual” as well established, successful and without any need for public assistance appears inconceivable within concurrent LGBT politics in Norway.¹⁶

The dominating rights-focused identity movement has over recent years been challenged by voices and new organizations which opt for alternative frameworks influenced by queer theoretical perspectives.¹⁷ Organizations established within the 00s such as Queer World (Norwegian: Skeiv Verden) and the Association’s youth organization, Queer Youth (Norwegian: Skeiv Ungdom) are generating debates around affiliation to sexual identities and the categories’ facility to describe human desire.

In line with the 2009-2012 LGBT Action Plan, the Ministry and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) are to assist the Association to expand its network abroad. Consequently, the international efforts of the Association have significantly increased over recent years, where it currently runs projects in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal. As of mid-2012, the Association has five (out of a total 13) employees working on international issues and projects.¹⁸

Thesis statement

The thesis evolves from wondering what lies between the bedroom and foreign policy. Or more precise, if sexuality is brought to rights, and consequently sexuality rights brought to foreign policy, what assumptions are drawn upon in order to make the seemingly distinct features of human society comprehensible? Gay Rubin eloquently points to the politics of sexuality:

“The realm of sexuality has its own internal politics, inequities, and modes of oppression. As with other aspects of human behaviour, the concrete institutional forms of sexuality at any given time and place are products of human activity. They are imbued with conflicts of interests and political maneuvering, both deliberate and incidental. In that sense, sex is always political. But there are also historical periods in which sexuality is more sharply contested and more overtly politicized. In such periods, the domain of erotic life, is in effect, renegotiated.”¹⁹

The thematic focus of the thesis is the Ministry’s promotion of LGBT rights and rights work in foreign countries. The analytical focus is on sexuality and nationhood, with the following thesis statement:

How does the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs conceptualize its policy on the rights of sexual minorities?

Including here are the following sub questions:

¹⁶ Agnes Bolsø, “Mission Accomplished? Gay Elitism and the Constant Misery of a Minority,” *Trickster*, January 2008.

¹⁷ Agnes Bolsø (2010), *Folk flest er skeive, queer teori og politikk*, Oslo: Manifest, and Agnes Bolsø (2007), ‘Identitet og homopolitikk etter queer’, *Tidsskrift for kjønnsforskning*, (4) 50-70.

¹⁸ See “Staff”LHH, http://www.lh.no/nor/hvem_er_vi/ansatte/

¹⁹ Gayle Rubin, “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality”, in Ablove, Barale, Halperin, eds. (1994), *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, New York: Routledge.

- How does the Ministry envision LGBT advocacy in other countries?
- How does it view its own role as a promoter; versus that of the receivers of Norwegian “LGBT aid?”
- What assumptions are drawn upon to describe Norway’s international LGBT work, and what is silenced in this process?
- What possible dilemmas may occur as a consequence of the Ministry’s concurrent conceptualization?

Relevant literature and debate

I have not found any research assessing Norway’s role as a LGBT advocate in the international community, given that the promotion of LGBT rights is a relatively new topic for Norway as well as the international community. One may consider Norway’s international LGBT policy as a continuation of the Norwegian LGBT movement. Esteemed voices within Norwegian LGBT politics consider the LGBT rights movement to have reached its climax with the gender neutral Marriage Act, and consequently seeing the international support as a natural mean to continue and expand the rights movement. Gro Lindstad, a previous activist and State Secretary expressed a turning point for the Norwegian LGBT movement back in 2007, but did not consider new theories on sexuality to be of any use:

“[...] we hope it is not reduced to academic debates on queer theory or similar, which will lead gay politics on a side-track. That does not help young uncertain gays in Suldal [country side Norway] or gays that are thrown rock at because they are attempting to walk in a gay parade in Tallin.”²⁰

Generally speaking, the LGBT rights movement is not contested within the Norwegian political framework. Consequently, LGBT activism and movement have been taken up by Norwegian foreign policy without discussion. There is, however, literature looking at the relevance of using human rights as the appropriate framework for advancing the quality of life for sexual minorities. Several of which are skeptical to either the rights-framework as an effective tool, the sexual categories it seeks to promote and universalize, or the constellation of the two.²¹ A few authors have adversely criticized what they consider a promotion of Western values and understanding of sexuality, particularly in relation to the homosexual identity. A well-known example is Joseph Massad’s critique of international gay (mainly U.S.) organizations’ promotion of a certain understanding of homosexuality in the Arab world, which he argues harms more than it supports sexual minorities.²² As a consequence of

²⁰ Gro Lindstad and Håkon Haugli interview in *Blikk*, 2007, No.4. (My own translation.)

²¹ See Matthew Waites (2009), “Critique of “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” in human rights discourse: global queer politics beyond the Yogyakarta Principles”, *Contemporary Politics*, 15:1, 137-156. Also see: Aeyal M.Gross (2008), “Sex, Love, and Marriage: Questioning Gender and Sexuality rights in International Law”, *Leiden Journal of International Law*, 21, 235-253.

²² Joseph A. Massad (2008), *Desiring Arabs*, Chicago University Press, Ch. 3: “Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World.”

his stark rejection of concurrent US organizations working in the Middle East, Massad received criticism that his book risked reinforcing an already existing homophobia in the region.²³

Jasmin Puar developed the term “homonationalism”, seeing that homosexuals have gone from being associated with death and threat to a nation to becoming tied to ideas of life and a nation’s sustainment.²⁴ Puar suggests that the homosexual subject is increasingly included within the U.S. national order, on the cost of other minorities. Homo-tolerance is part of what makes up the public image of the nation, while non-tolerance (to sexual minorities) becomes incompatible with this image. A related comment was seen in Norway during the Gay Pride Parade of 2010, where the debate on the route of the pride parade contributed to producing an image of Muslims as intolerant in comparison to the image of Norwegians as equal and tolerant (and in effect non-Muslims).²⁵

Similarly, Judith Butler points to dynamics in European states where questions of sexual politics, such as LGBT rights, converges with anti-immigration politics. An example Butler finds is the Dutch civic integration exam (in order to acquire citizenship) that ask whether a picture of two men kissing is seen as offensive for the migrant. Acceptance of homosexuality as the picture is meant to depict stands as a marker for a sufficient “secular” and proper “integration.”²⁶

To sup up, the literature found is *inter alia* critiques of the human rights framework, the conceptualization of sexual categories, and certain states’ tendency to utilize the notion of (gay) sexual freedom as a marker of modernity and a separator between the so-called us and them.

Why interesting and relevant?

The interactions between concepts such as sexuality and international relations are likely to generate new meanings and constellations. Norway’s international LGBT contribution may fall in line with studies of transference, where the West “exports” or introduces a certain formula, be it abstractions such as freedom, the nation state, democracy, development, or as in this case, minority rights. What sexuality or sexual freedoms may be used as an instrument for cannot be fixed outside a political process. Nor do these formulas tend to be as forthright as claimed.

In light of current debates within the Norwegian LGBT movement, one may understand the rights based movement as successful yet not adequate to properly

²³ See Brian Whitaker, “Arabs, Gays and Modernity: How Joseph Massad Promotes Homophobia”, 05.02.2010, available on: <http://direland.typepad.com/direland/2010/02/arabs-gays-and-modernity-how-joseph-massad-promotes-homophobia.html>, last accessed: 26.08.2012.

²⁴ Jasmin Puar (2007), *Terrorist Assemblages, homonationalism in queer times*, London: Duke University Press

²⁵ Stine H.Bang Svendsen & Annika W. Rodriguez, “Homosaken som skyts”, *Aftenposten*, 01.02.2010.

²⁶ Judith Butler (2010), *Frames of War. When is Life Grievable?*, Ch.3: “Sexual Politics, Torture, and Secular Time”, London: Verso.

address the violence and discrimination that continuous to occur due to being or acting in a supposedly non-heterosexual manner. Interacting with foreign organizations and networks working for enhancing the life of sexual minorities, and seeing LGBT activism play out in different contexts, may cast a reflective look upon the Norwegian movement and perhaps more importantly its road to come.

Roadmap

The thesis is organized into four analytical chapters in addition to one chapter discussing theoretical and methodological perspectives. The first analytical chapter considers the understanding of the concept sexual orientation from the Ministry's perspective, while the second analytical chapter looks into representations of the problem of LGBT rights violations in foreign countries and representations of Norway as a promoter of such rights. These two chapters form what I liberally call the concurrent Norwegian "outlook" on its work to assist foreign sexual minorities outside Norwegian borders. The third chapter of analysis attempts to apply the outlook to an assortment of examples from around the world, looking into possible discrepancies between the international and the local. Lastly, the final analytical chapter points out silences in order to emphasize the possibility of alternative problem representations and Norwegian outlooks. The thesis is rounded off with an Afterword.

Theoretical and methodological inclinations

“...[E]very visitor to the Tower makes structuralism without knowing it (which does not keep prose and structure from existing all the same); in Paris spread out beneath him, he spontaneously distinguishes separate – because known – points- and yet does not stop linking them, perceiving them within a great functional space; in short, he separates and groups; Paris offers itself to him as an object virtually prepared, exposed to the intelligence, but which he must himself construct by a final activity of the mind: nothing less passive than the overall view the Tower gives to Paris. This activity of the mind, conveyed by the tourist’s modest glance, has a name: decipherment.”

Roland Barthes (1979), ‘The Eiffel Tower’

Theory and methodology are at times difficult to separate, and I found it appropriate in my thesis to combine an account of them in one chapter. Several theoretical perspectives and analytical tools will be called upon. Within an extensive theoretical universe, my preference is described as poststructuralist. More specifically, I am utilizing what is named queer theoretical perspectives together with elements of post-colonial critique. Carol Bacchi’s approach to policy analysis offers a loose enough analytical and methodological framework suitable for the purpose of this thesis. The chapter ends with a section describing the documents analyzed, and a discussion on my position and role as a researcher.

Theoretical perspectives on gender and sexuality

Looking at the thesis’ question – “how does the Ministry conceptualize its LGBT policy” – I am interested in the usage of language and its significance for how we understand the promotion of LGBT rights. Language is the key in poststructuralist analysis, as it gives us access to information about the world around us and subsequently shapes how we give meaning to our world.

Language, in its many forms, is part of discourse, which is loosely defined by Jørgensen and Phillips as “a particular way of speaking of and understanding the world”.²⁷ Discourse does not translate reality into language, but is a mean to the ways we perceive reality. In the words of the French philosopher Michel Foucault: “we must not imagine that the world turns toward us a legible face which we would only have to decipher; the world is not the accomplice of our knowledge; there is no prediscursive providence which disposes the world in our favour.”²⁸ Although knowledge of the world goes through discourse, Foucault does not suggest that physical reality is fictional, but that discourse constitutes representations of reality, and not reality in and of itself.²⁹ His definition of discourse changes throughout his works; in *Archeology of Knowledge* he treats

²⁷ Marianne Winther Jørgensen and Louise Phillips (2008), *Dikursanalyse som teori og metode*, 6th.ed., Roskilde Universitetsforlag, 9 (my own translation from Danish).

²⁸ Michel Foucault (1981), “The Order of Discourse”, in R.Young (ed.), *Untying the Text: A Post-structuralist Reader*, London: Routledge, Keagan and Paul, 67.

²⁹ Jørgensen and Phillips, 17

discourse as “sometimes the general domain of all statements, sometimes individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements.”³⁰ The third definition offered here refers to rules and structures not necessarily written down, yet has the power to produce certain utterances over others. Discourse (and its language) shapes our everyday and we cannot fully withdraw from its influence. As discourses talk meaning into phenomena, discourses will also come into play when meaning is given to acts known as human rights violations.

Similarly, language also produces which positions are available for subjects to take in a particular context.³¹ I will come back to how I intend to view and use such concepts as *discourse* and *subject positions* when I arrive at analytical concepts later in this chapter. First, I consider an omnipresent figure in concurrent everyday life, namely sexuality.

(Homo)Sexuality as constructed

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word “sexuality” refers to the quality of being “sexual”, in other words, having the capacity to prepare for or engage in sexual relations with others. Foucault, on the other hand, has examined the concept sexuality from a historical and cultural angle and claims that the concept came about in the last part of the nineteenth century, and has increasingly held meaning for some human beings: “[s]ince Christianity, Western civilization has not stopped saying, ‘To know who you are, know what your sexuality is about.’”³² At least in the West, how and what we desire became a source of self-knowledge. In a poststructuralist fashion, Foucault assert that how we think about ourselves as sexual beings is historically and culturally conditioned. The meanings of being sexual and to desire are thus contingent – they depend on many factors.

Societies may organize erotic life based on different arrangements and give meaning to sexual acts accordingly. In the West, the main preoccupation is largely with whom one has sex with, and not for instance how or in what capacity one has sex.³³ Due to the concurrent understanding of a two-sex model³⁴, it follows that there is a distinction between those having sex with the same or opposite sex. Today, these acts are known to represent heterosexuality or homosexuality. Although sexual relations between persons of the same sex are not a novelty, the category “homosexual” as a person and the origin of one’s sexual desire is relatively modern. Foucault claims in *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* that the homosexual category is a product of the medical sciences in the 19th century: “where the sodomite had been a temporary aberration, the

³⁰ Michel Foucault (2002), *Archeology of Knowledge*, Cornwall: Routledge Classics, 90.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 53

³² Michel Foucault (1990), *History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, New York: Vintage.

³³ Jeffrey Weeks (2010), *Sexuality*, 3rd ed., London: Routledge, 32.

³⁴ Thomas Laqueur (1990), *Making Sex: Body and Gender From the Greeks to Freud*, Harvard University Press

homosexual was now a species.”³⁵ Within this understanding of sexuality, same-sex erotic relations is not something everyone can possibly engage in – it is not universal – but evidence of a certain type of person – of which a minority is formed.³⁶

It is clear that the way the West currently understands sexuality is related to sex, or biological gender. The colloquial language in the West refers to a person’s sexuality in terms of a few categories, straight, lesbian, gay and bisexual – all which are bound up to one’s sex classification. One cannot think of oneself as a lesbian man for instance, it would not be comprehensible for the surrounding world. Although scholars claim that this set of options are socially constructed categories, they are well rooted in the Norwegian society. It is the fact that these categories are taken for granted, yet lead the way in understanding and defining ourselves, which queer theoretical perspectives dispute.

Queer theory’s disputation with identity

The perspectives that form what can be described as queer theory have no clear origin, nor a set of defined propositions, but evolved through a number of academic conferences in the early 1990, taking place primarily in North America.³⁷ I will here only consider a few elements within the queer critique that I find relevant to my thesis, without going into its historical background, activism or etymology.

Queer theoretical perspectives offer a critique of identity, or better, the understanding of identity as “naturally” given. The term identity implies sameness, suggesting that there is a continuity between a person’s characteristics, roles etc. Poststructuralists and cultural theorists prefer the terms identification or subject-positions rather than identity, seeing the formers as more precise than the latter.³⁸ Identification denotes an act, which at times is emotionally driven, and presents itself in specific contexts and at specific times. Similarly, subject-positions refer to language: we constantly subject ourselves to meanings, terms, categories etc., which are made available for us within a context, situation or discourse. Using identification or subject positions allows greater room for contradictions; a person can take upon several subject-positions, some that might even be contradicting.³⁹ Identity is not understood as some characteristic one truly or “deep down” is, although we often in every-day language may refer to it as such.

³⁵ Foucault (1990).

³⁶ For a read on hetero-and homosexuality as socially constructed, see David M. Halperin (2002), *How to do the History of Homosexuality*, London: University of Chicago Press.

³⁷ Nikki Sullivan (2007), *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*, New York University Press,

³⁸ Sørensen, Høystad, et.al. (2008), *Nye Kulturstudier*, Oslo: Spartacus, 138.

³⁹ Catherine Belsey (2002), *Poststructuralism. A Very Short Introduction*, New York: Oxford University Press, 51-52.

Identity politics, such as claiming rights on the basis of sexuality, are based upon the assumption that an individual's sexual relations are the expression of an innate characteristic, similar to gender, age, ethnicity. But according to poststructuralist theorists, the "I" of an individual is not a coherent and stable "I" but a product of socialization, or more accurate, regimes of knowledge and power.⁴⁰ There is no "true" or "essential" self that exist prior to socialization, instead our identities are presented as available to us through language and culture.⁴¹ It stems from this that none of us can essentially be straight or gay as these identities are culturally and historically specific.

Judith Butler builds on Foucault's assertion of the homosexual person as a constructed category and not a discovered identity in her text *Gender Trouble*, where she presents the theory of "performativity". Butler claims that gender, and identity in general, is a product of repeated acts, or performances. By needing repetition the performances are unstable, yet they are rigidly structured and cannot freely be chosen by the individual. Butler goes on saying that identity categories such as gender or sexuality are restrictive to the individual because they serve certain purposes and institutions. As she puts it: "identity categories tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes, whether as the normalizing categories of oppressive structures, or as the rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression."⁴² In the context of gay rights, we may assume that self-identifying as a homosexual is individually felt as liberating, yet the act imposes new set of restrictions of what a homosexual can and cannot be.

Another queer theoretical critique of the view that homosexuality is an effect of one's core identity, is that it strengthens the division between the two central sexualities: heterosexuality vs. homosexuality. Queer theoretical perspectives build on philosopher Jacques Derrida's notion of binary opposition when claiming that the opposition heterosexual/homosexual is a hierarchical structure where one is more valued than the other. In this structure, heterosexuality appears to be the origin or norm, while homosexuality is the addition to the supposedly original.⁴³ The categories' meaning is created through their difference, but the paradox is that these cannot sustain their meaning if the other is removed; they depend on each other for significance. A well cited example is the ritual of "coming out of the closet" for homosexuals, while heterosexuality is in no need to claim presence. When having to "uncover" one's homosexuality, the act acknowledges heterosexuality as the given natural condition, reinforcing the hierarchical structure as well as placing those that are still "in the closet" in a

⁴⁰ Michael Foucault (1995), *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, New York: Random House.

⁴¹ Stuart Hall, "Who need's 'identity?'" in Gay, Evans and Redman, eds., (2009), *Identity: a reader*, London: Sage Publications, 15-30.

⁴² Judith Butler (1990), *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, New York: Routledge, 13-14.

⁴³ See 'Introduction' in Diana Fuss (1991), *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, New York: Routledge.

less fortunate light.⁴⁴ The academic Eve K. Sedgwick has written one of the most influential queer theoretical contributions with her *Epistemology of the Closet*, and is stark in her critique of the current Western understanding of sexuality and its categories:

“To alienate conclusively, definitionally, from anyone on any theoretical ground the authority to describe and name their own sexual desire is a terribly consequential seizure. In this century, in which sexuality has been made expressive of the essence of both identity and knowledge, it may represent the most intimate violence possible.”⁴⁵

Compulsory/Matrix/Norm

The act of “coming out of the closet” is needed because of the assumption that all human beings naturally hold heterosexual desire. The notion that every human being is heterosexual until proven otherwise has received several terms, such as compulsory heterosexuality, the heterosexual matrix, and heteronormativity.⁴⁶ Though these terms are deployed differently, they all look into the processes that produce heterosexuality as the norm, and other forms of sexual behaviors as deviations of the norm. I will in this thesis only refer to heteronormativity, described by Laurent Berlant and Michael Warner as: “the institutions, structures of understanding and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent – that is, organized as a sexuality – but also privileged.”⁴⁷ Heteronormativity assumes that one’s biological sex, sexuality, gender identity and roles are for the most part aligned. Consequently, all individuals are subjected to this normativity; a heterosexual couple must act in accordance to concurrent gender roles and identity, in public as well as in the bounds of their home. As a consequence of heteronormativity, certain lifestyles appear more “natural” than others; however, what constitutes the “natural” tends to fluctuate with time.⁴⁸

Queer theoretical perspectives claim that identities are products of society, which have effects on us and serve certain ends. These norms and processes that maintain the categories available for us, are what queer theoretical perspectives seek to examine. I expect these perspectives to assist my analysis in locating and interrogating relevant identities presented in the texts I will analyze and how it may or may not reproduce unwritten rules and structures. At the same time, a topic such as sexuality and identity are rarely left alone when they intersect with other aspects and artifacts of a society and consequence are re-shaping meaning. Nonetheless, because the analysis wishes to look into the meeting between the

⁴⁴ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990), *Epistemology of the Closet*, Berkeley: University of California Press

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴⁶ These terms are presented by Adrienne Rich (1980), Judith Butler (1990), and Michael Warner (1991), respectively.

⁴⁷ Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner (1998), “Sex in Public” *Critical Inquiry* 24, Winter 1998, 548.

⁴⁸ Fanny Ambjörnsson (2006), *Vad är queer*, Stockholm: Bokforlaget Natur og Kultur, 52.

characterized Norwegian and the characterized non-Norwegian, the analysis is further supported by postcolonial critiques.

Postcolonialism – how “post” are we?

Postcolonialism does not have a set scope or content, nor can it be separated from theories such as poststructuralism, Marxism, feminism or psychoanalysis.⁴⁹ The term might appear a bit diffuse when those known to be its writers see no clear end of colonialism with the independence of previous Western colonies, but a continuous relationship of dominance and subordination, though in new or different forms. Postcolonial critique then analyses how the cultural legacy of colonialism continues to produce meanings of previous colonies and colonizers. Among the vast number of writings within postcolonial critique, I will highlight two interrelated concepts, “orientalism” and “representation.”

The former stems from Edward Said’s book *Orientalism*, first published in 1978, and known to be the main reference point for Postcolonialism. Beginning in the late 18th century, European colonizers began discussing, analyzing, and writing on their relationship with their colonies, which Said says cannot be separated from how the Western powers dominated and ruled.⁵⁰ Orientalism, Said argues, is a system of representations of Europe’s colonies – the Orient:

“Orientalism isn’t a myth, it’s a myth-system with a mytho-logic, rethoric, and institutions of its own. It is a machine for producing statements about the Orient and it can be studied historically and institutionally as a form of anthropological imperialism. The main point to be made about Orientalism is that it isn’t simply a scholarly or imaginative kind of writing (what form is?) with no particular importance for anyone but other Orientalists: it isn’t. It pretends to scientific objectivity, and it is today a perfect instance of how knowledge and writing can be brought from the text, so to speak, to the world – with force and genuine political consequence.”⁵¹

Said expands on Foucault in seeing Orientalism as a colonial discourse; through these writings and the will to understand, Europe -the Occident- became the opposite of its colonies where the latter being considered underdeveloped and uncivilized: “[...] European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self.”⁵² Said conceives a Foucauldian sense of power in Orientalism where the knowledges of the Orient create a power relation where certain subject positions are made available. The core in Said’s Orientalism is the sense that certain people, the non-Westerners, are not like “us” and do not have “our” values.

Feminist postcolonial critics, such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Chandra Talpade Mohanty, apply Said’s Orientalism on the understanding of the so-

⁴⁹ Leela Gandhi (1998), *Postcolonial Theory: a Critical Introduction*, New York: Colombia University Press, “Introduction”.

⁵⁰ Edward W. Said (1994), *Orientalism*, New York: Random House, “Introduction”.

⁵¹ Gauri Viswanathan, ed., (2005), *Power, Politics and Culture. Interviews with Edward W. Said*, London: Bloomsbury, 36.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 3.

called third-world woman, claiming Western liberal feminism to be a new form of colonial discourse.⁵³ The image of the third-world woman as “double suppressed” is a way of Western women to be pictured as more educated and modern. Interconnected to Orientalism, or new forms of cultural imperialism, is the sense that non-Westerners, and in particular women, cannot represent themselves, and need their knowable sisters in the West to speak their cause, and bring them to maturity. Spivak and Mohanty attempt to nuance the category third-world woman to challenge the universal humanist assumption that all women’s lives and experiences are the same, and that “liberation” is experienced and can be brought about in identical manners around the world.

Analytical and methodological tools

The last section presented the overall theoretical framework, while the next will consider analytical and methodological tools suitable within the theory. According to Jørgensen and Phillips, discourse analysis offers a “package” where theory and method are not detached from each other. The analytical guidelines and the language techniques are bind to fundamental theoretical premises.⁵⁴

In order to address the thesis question, I intend to utilize Carol Bacchi’s approach to interrogate official policies. Bacchi presents both a method to organize and read the text, while at the same time integrating analytical tools within her methodological approach.

Bacchi’s problem

My overall methodological and analytical framework is Carol Bacchi’s approach to analyzing public policies: “what’s the problem represented to be?”⁵⁵ Bacchi presents a six question model to find representations of a problem, which refer to how the problem is understood by the policy or rule. These are: (1) what is the problem?, (2) what presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of the problem?, (3) how has this representation of the problem come about?, (4) what is left unproblematic in this problem representation, where are the silences, and can the problem be thought about differently?, (5) what effects are produced by this representation of the problem?, and (6) how/where has this representation of the problem been produced, disseminated and defended, how may it be contested? The thesis will consider all of the questions to various degrees. The questions do not reflect the outline of the thesis, but function as guiding tools to analyze the texts.

⁵³ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1994), “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*, Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman eds., New York: Harvester/Wheatsheaf, 66-111.
Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1988), “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourse”, *Feminist Review*, No.30, 66-88.

⁵⁴ Jørgensen and Phillip, 12.

⁵⁵ Carol Bacchi (2009), *Analysing Policy: What’s the problem represented to be?* Pearson Australia

Generally speaking, a policy exists due to a need of “fixing” a problem. How the policy is worded and presented is crucial Bacchi says, because “governments are *active* in the creation (or production) of policy ‘problems.’”⁵⁶ According to Bacchi, the problem does not exist without an understanding of it: representations affect how the issue is conceptualized, what to do about it, and how it mark those involved.⁵⁷ In this line of reasoning, every policy presents a problematisation of a problem, and it is this problematisation that governs how we understand the problem and our relation to the problem:

“Rather, the approach recommends a critical interrogation of *assumed* ‘problems’. [...] this position does not deny that there are troubling conditions that require redress. However, the emphasis is *not* on the nature of those conditions but rather on the shape of the implied ‘problems’ in specific proposals.”⁵⁸

My perception is that the model assists in framing a complex phenomenon, as well as being a tool to expound what is left unquestioned within a policy. Representations look closely at what is taken-for-granted in the policy – what it relies upon to come across as intelligible. I would like to explore dominant representations of LGBT rights violations, what assumptions these rely upon, and how representations might make subject positions available to Norwegians, as well as those receiving Norwegian support.

Underlying logics and subjectification effects

Bacchi presents a Foucauldian inspired approach where power relations are expressed through language and have the capacity to create, rather than suppress or deny production. Discourse is according to Bacchi “socially produced forms of knowledge” which forms what is allowed to think and say.⁵⁹ In this sense, discourse has the ability to “constitute” – it gives shape to how problems are understood and addressed. Bacchi presents problem representations as developed through and embedded in discourse(s).⁶⁰

Discourse has the ability to be productive, and Bacchi suggests to divide up potential power effects in three categories; discursive-, subjectification-, and lived effects. In short, Bacchi is referring to what can be said and thought about an issue, and what is closed off; which subject positions are made available; and whether there are material effects on people’s lives and bodies.⁶¹

Bacchi suggests that representations of a problem need to rely on certain underlying reasoning in order to come across as legible and appear feasible. In other words, representations depend on discourses; “socially produced

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 31.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 35.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 40.

knowledge that relies upon specific conceptual logics”⁶² As such, representations are a good way to identify discourses through looking for truth claims. Some of these underlying concepts are binaries, concepts and categories. I intend to emphasize examples of these when relevant in the thesis, in order to interrogate how problem representations produce meaning.

I do assume that there are discourses at play within my material, though my intention is not to name or delimit them. As illustrated by the thesis questions, I am interested in interrogating the representation of LGBT violations, what these are based upon, and potential consequences. These objectives I understand to correspond with the understanding of discourse as constituting. The constituting ability of discourse emphasizes the effects that may take place due to a certain problem representation. Bacchi’s approach recommends that the policy ought to be evaluated in terms of these effects due to the particular problem representation.⁶³

Taking a closer look at the Ministry’s documents

The thesis is a text analysis based on documents issued by the Ministry in the timespan 2007-2011. All documents were found by either typing “homosexual” or “LGBT” in the Ministry’s online search engine. I organized the material into six categories, covering the Guidelines (both a Norwegian and an English language version that differs slightly in content), speeches made by representatives of the Ministry, news and press releases, in addition to relevant theme articles issued on the Ministry’s website. Norwegian statements in international fora were also a category; though part of these statements are often included as quotes in the Ministry’s press releases.

All together the texts published by the Ministry on its webpages counted to some 50-60 units. Due to duplication of texts and lack of direct relevance, 37 were selected as the thesis’ empirical material, ranging from a few paragraphs to several pages in length. All documents are accessible online and for the public to view. A list of them is found in the work cited at the end of the thesis.

I focus particularly on the Guidelines, as they are what Foucault calls “prescriptive” or “practical” texts: “These texts thus served as functional devices that would enable individuals to question their own conduct, to watch over and give shape to it, and to shape themselves as ethical subjects.”⁶⁴ The Guidelines are intended to be read and utilized by all Norwegian Foreign Missions, in addition to exemplify Norwegian policy in domestic and international spheres.

⁶² Ibid., 212.

⁶³ Ibid., 238.

⁶⁴ Michel Foucault (1986), *The Use of Pleasure*, New York: Random House, 12-13.

The Ministry is charged with the responsibility to “work for Norway’s interests abroad.”⁶⁵ With over 100 Foreign Service missions, it is the state’s representative abroad and its public statements are empiric examples of Norwegian official standpoints and policy. As the speaking authority on Norwegian foreign affairs, the Ministry is also the agency with executing activity. Bacchi reasons that governments play a privileged role in the production of “truths” and significance, because their understanding of an issue takes upon a life of its own through legislation and documentation.⁶⁶

The texts were closely read to find representations of LGBT violations and rights in countries beyond Norway, and in particular which themes, concepts, categories and binaries potentially present in the texts. I also looked for pronouns and explicit or implicit references to Norway, such as “we” and “here” as well as references to Norwegian history or culture.

The not so impersonalized researcher

The choice of the research topic is needless to say bound to my academic, professional and personal past and present. Journeys through various institutions and regions of the world created a realization that most things in life contain a surplus of meaning.

The topic of interest is generally speaking Norway’s humanitarian desires. “Rights” and “justice” are terms we can all agree upon, yet not define in agreement. As a researcher I must not only take into account the concurrent context the policy is operating within, but also reflect upon my own role in relation to the phenomenon. Due to location and personal interests I am embedded in the culture(s) producing the texts. My thoughts are found within the context, culture or discourse, just as the phenomenon analyzed, where an absolute distance to the phenomenon is not available. I share the humanitarian yearnings expressed by the Ministry, while continuously being skeptical to such yearnings’ origin, purpose and potential impact. I am at the moment ambivalent to Norway’s wish to promote the rights of the LGBT group outside our borders, mainly because I believe it may, perhaps not today, but someday, be “part of the problem” as International Lawyer and Academic David Kennedy puts it. In his book *The Dark Sides of Virtue* he investigates his own and others’ human rights work:

“I am concerned about the difficulties which our *best* efforts themselves may bring, and with the unacknowledged costs of routine humanitarian endeavors on the international stage. [...] My sense, rather, is that things can go wrong in all sorts of different ways. We promise more than can be delivered – and come to believe our own promises. We enchant our tools, substitute work on our own institutions and promotion of our own professional expertise for work on the problems which gave rise to our humanitarian hopes. At worst, we can find our

⁶⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “About the Ministry”, available on: http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/about_mfa.html?id=838

⁶⁶ Bacchi, 34.

own work contributing to the very problems we hoped to solve. Humanitarianism tempts us to hubris, to an idolatry about our intentions and routines, to the conviction that we know more than we do about what justice can be.”⁶⁷

Being employed with one of the largest International Organizations in the world, I witness and daily utilize the impressive machinery of international advocacy for human rights. The importance of viewing humanitarians as co-producers of policy and governance, instead of withdrawn or in opposition to state policy, is imperative for “localizing” human rights efforts. I am aware that by simply choosing it as a topic of interest, I am taking part in the production and possible reproduction of meaning attached to the topic. I cannot be certain if I am in fact inciting more discourse and perhaps contributing to the presence of an already existing “problem”.

Promoting LGBT rights is inherently difficult to conceptualize in a way that takes into account the severe consequences of non-heterosexual behavior or identities around the world. My ambivalence to Norway’s LGBT efforts in other parts of the world is hopefully justified by reflecting on my presumptions and context. The zoologist and philosopher Donna Haraway calls for “situated knowledges” where the researcher recognizes her viewpoints and gain what Haraway calls a “privileged partial perspective.”⁶⁸ It follows that there exists no single authority to uncover a real “truth” about a topic, but potentially numerous narratives to be told. This essay could be considered one narrative; a narrative that I, according to Haraway, unceasingly need to contextualize.

Prior to moving along to the analytical chapters, I stress that there is nothing behind the documents, or no hidden agenda or truth about the state affairs I wish to take a closer look at. The intentions of the authors of the Ministry is not questioned or criticized. Nor do I wish to devalue the work executed by human rights activists around the world. At the same time I am not advocating for subjectivism, but hoping that through theoretical perspectives and analytical tools I may address processes that normalize and affects peoples’ lives; even geographically far away from the policy’s point of departure.

⁶⁷ David Kennedy (2004), *The Dark Sides of Virtue. Reassessing International Humanitarianism*, Princeton University Press, xviii.

⁶⁸ Donna Haraway (1988), “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective”, *Feminist Studies*, Vol.14, No3, 575-599.

Orientated and visible

- the Ministry's perception of the term sexual orientation

Non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation presupposes a common understanding of two concepts. First: equality; that all humans are born equal and thus must have access to the same rights, and second: sexual orientation; that some or all human beings have a sexual orientation. Same-sex acts may occur in any setting and at any place, though how the act is understood and given meaning may vary among contexts and societies. Extracting from this, one may argue that certain meanings are attached to the idea of sexual orientation within the Norwegian society that may not appear legible in others – where other signifiers or ways of organising sexual acts and desire are in place. This chapter looks at how the Foreign Ministry uses terminology to address sexuality, and in particular sexual orientation. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, there is continuous debate among academics and activists in Norway regarding the usefulness or limitations of the term LGBT in promoting the rights of sexual minorities. Taking this into consideration, one assumes that the official documents from the Ministry will reflect or refer to this contestation, and take note of it in its international commitment. If Norway's concern is non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and promoting LGBT rights, what precisely is wished to be protected or endorsed? Is it an act, a behaviour, a belief, a desire, a status, an identity, a private role, a public image, all, some, or something else? What does the material tell us (or not) about sexual orientation, who has a sexual orientation; and what does it entail?

Terms used

The Ministry uses terms such as “sexual minorities”, “sexual orientation”, “homosexual”, “LGBT” and “homophile” when addressing sexuality. The material written in the Norwegian language mainly uses the word “homophile” (Norwegian: “homofil”) in comparison to “homosexual” found in the English texts by the Ministry. Definitions of any of these terms are not provided within the material, and the usage of them appears to be random and interchangeable. For instance, to sum up Norway's participation in debates on sexuality and rights at the UN in 2010, the press release from the Ministry states:

“The meeting brought up violence and discrimination against sexual minorities – a very vulnerable group in many countries. Worldwide lesbians, homophiles, biphiles and trans persons are daily exposed to gross human rights violations.”⁶⁹

According to the statement, the LGBTs are characterized as sexual minorities. They might not be the only minority, though the concurrent recognized

⁶⁹ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, News: “Norge bak viktige debatter i FNs menneskerettighetsråd”, 17.09.2010. (All documents in the Norwegian language into the English language are my own.)

minorities. The minority status comes from its comparison to heterosexuality, which is taken for granted as the norm, and thus only mentioned implicitly. These minorities, LGBT, are also correlated with the term sexual orientation; as in this short paragraph addressing terminology in the Guidelines:

“In ordinary speech we often talk of lesbian and gay rights. The UN uses the term *sexual orientation and gender identity*. Common generic terms are: LGBT – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people, and LGBTI - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex people. The term “transgender” or “Third gender” applies to all that do not fall into the definition man/woman.”⁷⁰

If LGBT are sexual minorities, it appears here that they are also potential “orientations”. In other words, there are three orientations referred to: lesbian, gay and bisexual, while transgender and intersex refer to a person’s gender identity. These are the terms, now internationally endorsed by Norway and others, to represent or encompass sexual behaviour and desire. Coupled with the previous statement, these are the five sexual categories one can subscribe to if one belongs to a sexual minority, that is – being a non-heterosexual.

Although sexual orientation is not defined within the Ministry’s documents, the Guidelines refer to and endorse the definition found in the Yogyakarta Principles. The Principles define sexual orientation as:

“each person’s capacity for profound emotional, affectional and sexual attraction to, and intimate and sexual relations with, individuals of a different gender or the same gender or more than one gender;”⁷¹

The definition includes both an element of subjective feeling or attraction to someone, as well as behaviours or actions within a relation to someone. There is no clear reference to LGBT in the definition. The orientation may be towards a multitude of genders – it is not confined to one gender in particular, nor does it mention what these genders are identified as, or how many there are (“a different gender”). However, it does state that this “orientation” is in relation to “gender” and not another category or marker. The orientation is in need of gender to create meaning, regardless of the understanding of the latter. I will come back to this relationship later in the chapter.

It’s not just behaviour

Within its definition, the Principles refer to both feelings, attraction, behaviour – all actions that a person may engage in. However, are there only certain behaviours that the Ministry seek to protect with the promotion of LGBT rights? According to the Guidelines, sexual orientation is viewed as a characteristic similarly to a person’s sex and ethnicity: “The starting point for Norway’s efforts is that human rights apply to everyone, regardless of their sex, social and

⁷⁰ Ministry’s Guidelines, Eng., 2

⁷¹ The Yogyakarta Principles, Preamble.

ethnic background, religion or sexual orientation.”⁷² Sex and ethnicity are both biological and social categories created by human society; however, they are still generally considered to be stable throughout a person’s life. Religion is often connected to ethnicity, yet here a person has a noticeable agency – regardless of origin she can choose her religion depending on personal and external factors. Firstly, the statement informs that in spite of these second characteristics, we are all part of humanity and ought to be accorded the same rights. Due to sameness between humans, homosexuals should be accepted into the mainstream (heterosexual) society. This focus on sameness as a mean to achieve tolerance may be referred to as an assimilationist approach to social change.⁷³ By stressing sameness over difference these so-called secondary characteristics do not constitute a threat to the society. Secondly, although not primary to being a human, sexual orientation is coupled with terms that to various degrees may carry great weight in a person’s life.

I am so far left with no recognizable understanding of sexual orientation as only behavioural. The Guidelines continues: “Our main message has been that homosexuality must be decriminalised and that states must take steps to combat violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.”⁷⁴ “Homosexuality” refers here to a behaviour that ought to be viewed as legal, while sexual orientation emerges as something different than a homosexual act. As previously noted, the English and the Norwegian language editions of the Guidelines are not fully identical in terms of content. Consulting the Norwegian version, another short paragraph has been added to the paragraph on terminology quoted above: “MSM – men who have sex with men – is a term which is used in relation to Aids to describe behaviour rather than sexual orientation.”⁷⁵ These men are engaging in sexual acts with other men, but according to this quote these men are not presented as homosexuals. It appears as if the behaviour is not sufficient; it does not amount to what is characterised as a sexual orientation. In reversed logic, one can be a homosexual even in the absence of genital acts. Men who have sex with other men are not “true” homosexuals, but implicitly heterosexuals who (from one time to another) enjoy sexual acts with other men. Whether these men are “true” heterosexuals, or whether the heterosexual category may lack consistency, is not annotated in this context. The protection of these men and safeguarding their ability to have sex with other men is hence not the main objective from the Ministry’s point of view. Rather it is the safeguarding of a person’s sexual orientation, and the rights ascribed to those with a sexual orientation.

⁷² Guidelines, Eng., 1

⁷³ Sullivan (2007), Ch: 2: “Assimilation or Liberation, Sexuality or Gender?”

⁷⁴ Guidelines, Nor., 1

⁷⁵ Ibid., 2. My own translation. In Norwegian: “MSM – menn som har sex med men – er en betegnelse som blir brukt i aidssammenheng for å beskrive atferd snarere enn seksuell orientering”, 2.

The Norwegian homophile

The Association and many influential LGBT politicians prefer to use the term homophile instead of homosexual in the current Norwegian LGBT movement.⁷⁶ This is also seen in the material, where documents in the English language uses homosexual, while homophile is predominantly used in documents in the Norwegian language.⁷⁷ The concept of the homophile originated in a German doctoral thesis in 1924, before it was popularized in other countries. The Homophile Movement that originated in the 1950s in Europe is seen as a predecessor to what later became known as the Gay and Lesbian Liberation Movement.⁷⁸ Homophile however, continues to be a daily and official term in the Norwegian society. Why homophile is favoured over homosexual may have something to do with its reference to love (“phile” from Greek) rather than the act of sex. Love may be a better word in order to persuade the public of the normality of same-sex desire instead of passion or lust. This was an argument and tactic expressed by the Norwegian lesbian and gay movement since the 1960s.⁷⁹ Here, an act is not decisive or a necessary ingredient, but rather the ability of directing feelings toward someone of the same sex as oneself. This reasoning, arguably still very much an assertion in the Norwegian context, infers that a homosexual may love, enter and engage in relationships just as a heterosexual, and again, will not necessarily challenge moral codes or constitute a threat to the established norms. Such an argument establishes a way of creating sameness through difference - homosexuals and heterosexuals are different, yet still human beings.

In Norway the use of *homofil legning* is common, translated in English to “homophile cast of personality”. The word carries a certain connotation of a character trait – it describes a certain person. The word only appears a handful of times in the Norwegian language material, and never in the English language material. The following is an excerpt from the Foreign Minister’s blog on a visit to Uganda in 2011, where he met with the Ugandan President. The Foreign Minister sums up the meeting in his own words and paraphrase his conversation with the President:

“Then follows a passionate discussion on homosexuality (Norwegian: homofili). A legal bill which will prohibit and criminalize both “*legning*” and act is circulating. I bring it up, express Norwegian resistance. ...[...]

FM: My starting point is that it is a “*legning*” and that modern states have a responsibility to protect against discrimination and that basic human rights are accounted for. Do you not believe it is a “*legning*”, but acquired? (Norwegian: *tillært*)

⁷⁶ Bolsø (2008).

⁷⁷ Translated to English, these are *inter alia*: “homophile-accused couple” (Norwegian: *homofilidømt par*), “homophilia”, “homophile-rights”, “homophile behaviour”.

⁷⁸ Sullivan (2003), 22

⁷⁹ Karen Friele (1990), *Memoarer. Troll skal temmes*, Oslo: Scanbok Forlag., 142.

Ugandan President: Ok, Minister, let us say it is a “*legning*”, an “orientation”. But cannot we say it is not a normal orientation?

FM: That may well be your own perception, Mr. President. But I will not get lost in the word normal – if you mean normal in a statistical sense then homosexuality is surely not the norm, but should the state have an opinion on that – should it not ensure basic human rights for all its citizens. Doesn’t the African tradition have a fundamental liberal attitude to a variety of other “orientations,” if you allow me to say it as such? The bill in Uganda sends a negative message – as a friend it would be wrong of me to stay silent.

President: (laughter) Well, well, you are not the first to say this. We take notice. There are differences. We could have done a discussion on abortion. But now I must carry on.”⁸⁰

The blog is translated into Norwegian from a conversation that must have taken place in English, thus I am not certain what word the Foreign Minister used instead of *legning*, and kept the Norwegian word here. The President does not express any confusion with the word, which I find odd considering that the direct translation - cast of personality - is not a commonly used phrase in the English language. Nonetheless, this is the word the Minister uses to describe and make the conversation intelligible to his Norwegian readers.

In the words of the Foreign Minister, homosexuality is again seen as two-folds; either an act or a more profound character trait of a person. In the excerpt both state leaders agree that homosexuality is not acquired, and perhaps not even chosen – it is something more established in an individual. According to such a rationalization, homosexuality may seem fixed and immutable, in addition to being a phenomenon present in both Norwegian and Ugandan society. Arguably there is a tendency to view homosexuality as not a consequence of agency, or socialization, nor situation-based, but a natural condition that a few people have. Indicated in the conversation referred to in the blog, homosexuals represents a statistical aberration from the norm, though the aberration might be beyond the control of a homosexual, and this reason is an argument for why the person ought not to be discriminated against. The “I cannot help it” argument was and arguably still is a dominant perception within the Norwegian Lesbian and Gay movement.⁸¹ Some have viewed it as a main argument and tactic in the Norwegian Movement, pointing out that it would be immoral to ask a homosexual to dislodge her or his sexuality because it is deeply rooted as a permanent personality trait.⁸²

Homosexuality as a congenital condition from birth is not mentioned in any way in any of the Ministry’s documents. However, describing homosexuals as

⁸⁰ Jonas Gahr Støres Blogg, “Dag ut og dag inn: Uke 22”, 03.03.2011, http://jonasgahrstore.no/-/bulletin/show/575895_dag-ut-dag-inn-uke-22?ref=mst

⁸¹ Homosexuality as congenital (by nature or birth) gradually became the Movement’s standpoint in the 1970s. See Jonas Rein Seehus (2009), *Rødt, Hvitt og Skrått. Homofile og lesbiske i Norge gjennom 60 år*. NRK Aktivum, 186. Also see Friele (1990), 139.

⁸² Rian, Ø. (2010), “Dogmatiske kjønnsforskarar”, *Dag og Tid*, No.7.17., Feb.2012 <http://www.dagogtid.no/nyhet.cfm?nyhetid=1724>

something one simply is, and cannot be held responsible for, suggests a condition entrenched in a person's being. Whether this is biological, socially constructed, both, or something else, may not be of relevance here, but that the condition is hard or impossible to change serves a function of illustrating permanency. I would argue that sexuality is understood in the material as something carrying much weight and significance in the life of an individual.

Who has a sexual orientation?

As mentioned above, the Ministry does not describe the notion of sexual orientation in its documents, but uses the definition stated in the internationally (but not globally) recognized Yogyakarta Principles. In one of the first paragraphs, the Principles present sexual orientation as incorporated in an individual's personality. "Sexual orientation and gender identity are integral to every person's dignity and humanity and must not be the basis for discrimination or abuse." If every human being has a humanity, then all of us also have a sexual orientation and gender identity according to this sentence. In other words, we all have a sexuality, and as such, can be ascribed a sexual orientation.

This is a universalistic claim that may well be questioned. For instance, how about those claiming to be asexuals, or individuals who are in one's profession or life calling abstain from sexual acts? The academic Ayeal Gross in his critique of LGBT rights stresses that although the definition of sexual orientation found in the Principles is broad, it still, "maintains an understanding of sexual orientation as a distinct component in the identity of the self, determined based on the similarity of difference between one's gender and the gender of one's object of desire."⁸³ This inherent and fixed aspect of an individual, called sexual orientation, based upon the sex of the person one desires, is seen by some as a distinct product of Western modernity and that may not applicable to all societies at all times.⁸⁴

It is difficult to state for certain the understanding of sexual orientation in the Ministry's documents, because it is simply not mentioned or accounted for. Yet, because there is no detected discussion within the material, it is arguably a dominant understanding that every human being has, deep down, or if allowed to be shown and lived out, a sexual orientation. If this is the position, certain sexual orientations are made more visible than others – the sexual minorities. Deferring from the Ministry's documents, one unmistakable orientation remain invisible. Heterosexuality is never mentioned as a sexual orientation; it is primarily sexual minorities that seem to possess a sexual orientation.

⁸³ Ayeal Gross (2007), "Queer Theory and International Human Rights Law: Does Each Person Have a Sexual Orientation?", *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting American Society of International Law*, Vol. 101, March 28-31, 2007, 129-130.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* See also Massad (2007).

Where did the heterosexuals go?

The sexual majority, heterosexuals, is rarely mentioned explicitly in the Ministry's documents, but is very much present as the qualifying norm for sexual minorities. In the few instances where heterosexuality is referred to, it is as a counterpart to homosexuality. For instance, heterosexuality is mentioned when addressing same-sex marriage as in the case of the Norwegian Marriage Act of 2009, in which "gay" and "straight" couples were given the equal right to enter marriage.⁸⁵ Except from a few examples when referring to marriage, heterosexuality or heterosexuals are not noted in any of the documents.

The silence of heterosexuality endorses it as the taken for granted norm by which others are judged. The LGBT group is consequently positioned as aberrations from the norm. The normalizing power of heterosexuality – or the assumption of heterosexuality as norm – presupposes that heterosexuality does not need to be explained or debated.⁸⁶ By silencing heterosexuality as a sexual orientation the material far from disputes heterosexuality as the given natural. The production of the Norwegian ministry's activism is due to the questions and projects surrounding what are considered a marginalized minority. The categories of sexuality, here understood as LGBT and heterosexuality, appear self-explanatory and steady in their distance from each other.

It is tempting to argue for a dualism between on the one hand the sexual minorities, and on the other, the majority, the heterosexuals. Although the sexual minorities have several names and what can be seen as subcategories, they are predominantly understood as representing homosexuality. As the Guidelines states, LGBT rights is the politically correct word for what is "commonly understood as gay rights." Based upon the absence of heterosexuality as an acknowledged sexual orientation and where homosexuality infers the LGBT group - there is a prominence of heterosexuality and homosexuality as the central categories to organize an understanding of sexuality within the Ministry's documents. The two categories are dependent on its so-called opposite for its identity, they are internal to each other, or as Diana Fuss puts it: "[e]ach is haunted by the other."⁸⁷

As mentioned earlier, the homo/hetero binary has been opposed by queer theoretical perspectives as a simplified as well as *one* particular understanding of sexuality. It is a superficial biological standpoint, in which it is defined solely on the biological gender (sex) of object choice, regardless of potential other significant factors. When a woman has sex with another woman, regardless how, why or where, it is defined as a homosexual act, and the participants are

⁸⁵ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2010), Theme article: "Seksuell orientering og kjønnsidentitet", My own translation.

⁸⁶ Annfelt, Andersen, Bolsø, eds., (2007), *Når heteroseksualiteten må forklare seg*, Trondheim: Tapir Akademiske Forlag.

⁸⁷ Fuss (1991), 4.

expected to have a homosexual orientation. If the woman's sexual partner was a man, again, regardless of how, where and for what purpose, it is viewed as a heterosexual act, but here it is not to the same extent necessary or expected of the participants to declare their orientation.

Visibility – the guide to rights

How does Norway prescribe, or wishes to solve, the problem of discrimination against sexual minorities - what is the ideal development in the countries Norway has selected as areas of promotion? According to the Ministry, Norway has an untapped potential to influence the LGBT promotion in other countries due to its assuming status as a law-abiding and progressive country in respect to equality and rights. In the Ministry's theme article on "sexual orientation and gender identity", the Ministry considers Norway as a credible and legible promoter of equality for minorities:

"It is an area where we have a good reputation and high competency. Our model and the Norwegian experiences are according to the Government's viewpoint worthy of transference. Equality is an area Norway is listened to. This, the Government wishes to take advantage of."⁸⁸

The Norwegian model is considered to be worth exporting, meaning that similar strategies and actions to those occurring in Norway can be put into place in other countries where sexual diversity is sought. Similarly, the Guidelines present the homo-activism in Norway as a case in point of how changes may occur:

"It may be worthwhile to look back on the history of campaigns for greater equality in Norway. Both women and gay and lesbian groups have used campaigning methods that were against the law in order to make themselves heard. Due to the efforts of Norwegian homosexuals, their situation has changed from a prohibition against homosexual practices 35 years ago to the recent adoption of amendments to the Marriage Act to make it applicable to both same-sex and opposite-sex couples. It seems likely that there will be situations where LGBT activist in other countries make use of campaigning methods that states consider to be illegal. Norway should take a particular responsibility for speaking out precisely in cases where the rights of sexual minorities are a controversial issue."⁸⁹

Norwegian women and homosexuals are presented as frontrunners paving the way for greater equality within their society. The instigators of change are the minority themselves; efforts by homosexuals to claim their presence and rights is the cause and starting point, instead of referring to shifting understandings of sex or sexuality within a society or context. From this reasoning it is assumed that the minority is already present within the society; homosexuality exists, perhaps in every society, though are silenced and suppressed. In a Nepalese project funded by NORAD and run by the Association, the thought that LGBT persons exists in every society is central: "Every single day Binita and Sthaphana go out walking in the Kailali district in western Nepal to find lesbians. They are

⁸⁸ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2010), "Seksuell orientering og kjønnsidentitet", My own translation.

⁸⁹ Guidelines, Eng., 2.

on a mission for one of the Association's partner projects in Nepal.”⁹⁰ The reason why homosexuality is repressed is due to the phenomena's “sensitive” nature, as the material repeatedly pronounces. I will come back to reasons for why it is sensitive, and for whom, in the next chapter when looking at representations of the sender and receiver of international LGBT aid.

Written in this context, Norwegian LGBT activists are narrated as examples to be remembered and presented in the work for greater equality in other countries. Norway may in other words view the development in other countries through this lens, indicating that a similar “development” in other societies will eventually take place, although obstacles are clearly expected.

The primary objective for Norway's efforts is decriminalization of homosexual acts. However, Norway is also supporting LGBT initiatives in countries where such acts are no longer or never been criminal offences, for instance in Nepal and Nicaragua. The bulk of Norwegian funds go to what one may call “visibility” of a distinct group of people. Being seen is viewed as a first step to being recognized and consequently acknowledged as existing within a society, and is according to the material argued to be crucial in developing tolerance and respect of homosexuals: “a good approach to support the LGBT work is exactly visibility, declarations of support, and [Norwegian] presence at arrangements.”⁹¹ Consulting the Guidelines, Norwegian Embassies ought to meet with representatives from LGBT organizations, and to consider financially supporting their activities. Examples of initiatives supported are conferences, seminars, research, and campaigns. Norwegian representatives from the Ministry shall also discuss the situation of LGBT with local authorities in order to confirm a presence of LGBT in the respective country, and hence the authorities' lack of recognition of this distinct group.

Being visible is closely related to being “open” about one's sexuality – here understood as one's sexual orientation. In the Norwegian LGBT Movement, as well as in the Norwegian society in general, there is an extended use of the images of openness and “the closet” in relation to sexuality.⁹² Being “out” or “in the closet” is a crucial marker of homosexual identity in Norway, where it is expected to publicly announce to family and surrounding society in general one's homosexuality in order to be authentic. The coming out suggests an individual's effort to avoid secrecy or concealment, and is according to Sedgwick in her book *The Epistemology of the Closet* a phenomenon

⁹⁰LLH, News: “Ut og finne jenter”, 12.04.2012, available on: http://www.llh.no/nor/hva_gjor_vi/internasjonalt/Ut+%C3%A5+finne+jenter.b7C_wtFY0V.ips last accessed 14.06.2012

⁹¹ The Foreign Minister's answer to Right Party representative Andre Oktay Dahl: “Svar på spørsmål om diskriminering av seksuelle minoriteter i Russland”, Skriftelig spørsmål nr.328, 02.12.2011.

⁹² Seehus (2009), (throughout the book, for example page 116). Also see: Moseng, Angeltvedt, og Chepstow-Lusty (2009), *Gay Kids*, Oslo: Abstrakt Forlag, and Huitfeldt, A., and Linn, K.O., eds., (2010), *Skapsprengere*, Oslo: Aschehoug.

distinctively found in Western thinking.⁹³ Sedgwick argues that the act of publicly announcing oneself as different is oppressive because it is a mandatory act in order to appear authentic. One cannot be a homosexual without having public declaring oneself as non-heterosexual, if not, one is “closeted” and bordering dishonest. For Sedgwick and others, the action is problematic because it reinforces heterosexuality as the unquestionable norm. Declaring to be out entails acknowledging heterosexuality as the “natural” sexuality. As mentioned earlier, the self-scrutiny demanded of homosexuals is not directed towards heterosexuals.⁹⁴

Norwegian efforts then seek to assist homosexuals to emerge from confinement and oppression by coming out of the closet. “Coming out” implies here “coming into” a legible understanding of homosexuality from the Norwegian perspective. In the article: “How to say ‘come out of the closet’ in Arabic?”, Jason Ritchie finds the coming out script and the following gay identity which is demanded by Palestinians in Israel problematic, because queer Palestinians have not been asked if they need or want to come out and attain visibility by Israeli gay organizations.⁹⁵ Ritchie argues that the coming out script normalizes the queer Palestinian to be portrayed as a victim repressed by an Arabic culture, illustrating how identities and interests are working to include some and exclude others from the Israeli “nation.”⁹⁶ This is an example where coming out as the “cure” to repression may not be as plain as believed, and where understandings of sexuality may interrelate with other concurrent dimensions and powers.

If decriminalization and human rights are the objectives, and where visibility is both a mean and an objective, then where does the “development” lead? If the frontrunner is Norway, the ultimate goal for the Association and the LGBT rights work in Norway was considered to be equal marriage rights between so-called straight and gay couples. As the Norwegian Ambassador to the U.S.A. uttered at a press conference in 2011, the right to marry was viewed as a climax for the LGBT movement in Norway:

“Norway has come a long way since the formal decriminalisation of sex between men in 1972. In fact, Norway’s new Common Marriage Act comes into force in exactly two weeks. [...] The coming into force of the act is seen by many as the culmination of the struggle for legal parity. It is the final frontier, if you’d like.”⁹⁷

If the Norwegian model is to be advocated to other societies, then same-sex marriage appears to be an ultimate task also for other countries. Although appearing reasonable within the Norwegian context, there is a long conceptual

⁹³ Sedgwick (1993).

⁹⁴ Fuss (1991).

⁹⁵ Jason Ritchie (2010), “How do you say ‘come out of the closet’ in Arabic? Queer Activism and the Politics of Visibility in Israel-Palestine”, *GLQ* 16:4, Duke University Press.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 568.

⁹⁷ Norwegian Ambassador to the United Nations, Speech: “LGBT rights”, held at the Norwegian Mission at the UN. 18.12.2008.

way from one to the other. Both academics and activist have articulated a critique of the “Gay Marriage” aim within western countries, seeing a discrepancy between the marriage rights and sex rights. Having sex within the contours of marriage is for many not the supreme format of having sex and not being prosecuted by it.⁹⁸ Gay Rubin in her well known article “Thinking Sex” pointed to a current sexual hierarchy where certain forms of sexual activities, such as sex in the home between a monogamous and married couple, are of a higher sexual value and more “normal” and “good” than let’s say sex in public between two men.⁹⁹ Sexual liberty in terms of sex rights may release us from these hierarchical structures, yet reinforcing marriage as the sought after status may place limits on human sexual activity because some activities are more legitimate than others.¹⁰⁰ The gap between genital contact and a marriage ceremony is filled with content proclaiming what sex and sexuality should and could signify.

Representations of the foreign (national) homosexual

The predominant picture of the homosexual, in countries Norway wishes to promote LGBT rights, is an individual exposed to discrimination, repression and possibly life-threatening danger:

“In practice, LGBT people are subjected to criminalization and discrimination, in the form of both harassment and actual violence. In some cases, LGBT people are the victims of abuse and discrimination on the part of the authorities themselves. In others, the authorities fail to protect them against abuse and discrimination by family members or society in general. Many LGBT people also experience more indirect forms of discrimination in the labour and housing markets”¹⁰¹

This paragraph from the English language version of the Guidelines points to a range of potential discriminatory practices, from risking incarceration to experiencing discrimination when applying for employment. In addition to addressing these issues, the Ministry also expresses a wish to “better the life quality of LGBTs”.¹⁰² The LGBTs are repeatedly stated as “an exposed group” of people. In other words, the homosexuals in third world countries are *de facto* unprotected and thus living in a threatening life situation. Reading the texts one gets the impression that homosexuality is a difficult yet pressing issue that all societies eventually must confront. There is a strong illustration of the homosexual in third world countries as repressed; if it is not a crime, then the homosexual is likely to have poorer life quality: “[i]n most countries teasing on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is a problem. Young people

⁹⁸ See Michael Warner (2000).

⁹⁹ Gayle Rubin (1984), “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality”, in Vance, C.S. *Pleasure and Danger: Exploiting Female Sexuality*, 267-319.

¹⁰⁰ Gross, A.M. (2008), “Sex, Love, and Marriage: Questioning Gender and Sexuality Rights in International Law”, *Leiden Journal of International Law*, 21, 235-253.

¹⁰¹ Guidelines, Eng., 1.

¹⁰² The Foreign Ministers’s written answer to Right Party representative Håkon Haugli, “Svar om menneskerettighetsbrudd ovenfor lesbiske, homofile, bifile og transpersoner ”, Spørsmål nr.816, 10.03.2010

are especially vulnerable. Systematic discrimination can drive people to depression and in certain cases suicide.”¹⁰³ Portrayals of the life of homosexuals in other countries are primarily in the news articles from the Ministry. Within the news and press releases, three events or stories of homosexuals are told. These are two men in Malawi being sentenced to 14 years of prison after publicly announcing their engagement¹⁰⁴, the death of a “homo activist” in Uganda¹⁰⁵, and a lesbian woman “from Africa” being raped by her uncle in order to “cure” her.¹⁰⁶

These few stories illustrate a life of suffering and victimization, which is a noticeably dominant subject positions available for the foreign national homosexual. Who these individuals are in terms of multiple subject positions, be those socially, economically, political, if they are members of other communities or similar, is not noted - they are first and foremost individuals with a sexual orientation. Presenting the homosexuals as oppressed is argued to be a prevailing image within the Norwegian political context.¹⁰⁷ The unison picture of the repressed homosexual supports a belief that the homosexual, be it a Norwegian or Malawian, is a standardized character and life situation.

From this representation stems the Norwegian desire to “help” or “rescue” the homosexual. Representations of Norway as an aide are dealt with in the following chapter.

Summing up

The material does not explicitly define sexual orientation, and uses the terms LGBT and homosexual more or less interchangeable, the former being understood as a more correct and overarching term than the more colloquial yet predominant latter. Overall, the topic and sexual categories are taken for granted as understandable and legible for the reader. Homosexual conduct or behaviour does not in itself constitute a homosexual identity, though the meaning attached to it in the material is that the person most likely can be identified as a homosexual. Meaning, if you have sex with someone beside yourself, you also have a sexual orientation defined based upon the sex (male or female) of the other participant(s). The Ministry’s documents assume that homosexuals exist in foreign countries though is often repressed and hidden from the public eye. Main tactic and aim for the Ministry’s efforts is then assisting in making homosexuality and homosexuals visible within their societies.

¹⁰³ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2011), News: “Kampen mot homohets er et felles ansvar”, 12.12.2011

¹⁰⁴ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2010), Press Release: “Norge reagerer på homofildom”, 22.05.2010.

¹⁰⁵ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2011), News: “Norge fordømmer drapet på homoaktivist”, 27.01.2011

¹⁰⁶ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2008), News: “Kjemper mot livsfarlige aborter og homofrykt”, 07.03.2008

¹⁰⁷ Bolsø (2008).

Perhaps there exist a potential for reformulations, though at present, a dominant understanding of sexual orientation in relation to gender is the main signifier present in the Ministry's documents. Although it is well known that the understanding of these two dominant categories is a time and cultural specific phenomenon, the texts do not make note of this understanding. In none of the documents, such as in a report from 2011 where the Ministry gives examples of its LGBT work in countries and at the UN¹⁰⁸, no explanation on the term sexual orientation or potential local understandings of sexuality is mentioned. Nor is it mentioned that the sexual logic concurrent in Norway may not be convertible to other countries and societies. To some, a lack of recognition of one's own presumptions may be alarming because it is likely to reinforce an already present attachment to existing categories.

¹⁰⁸ See the Ministry 2011 Report.

The Benevolent Exporter

- Representations of Norway as the international LGBT advocate

“However – it is not necessary to start from scratch. Here – today, we have the opportunity to share experiences, point out the direction and identify what are the most important challenges. We can even suggest how these challenges can be dealt with in the most efficient fashion. We will gladly share any experiences from Norway that might be of interest.”

Speech by State Secretary Lotte Grepp Knutsen at World Congress on Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, Paris, 2009¹⁰⁹

As pointed out in the introduction, Norway has over recent years demonstrated a willingness to play a leadership role in promoting LGBT rights outside its own borders. According to the Ministry, this work is “sensitive” and encounters much resistance worldwide. However, Norway’s international LGBT contributions seem to raise little controversy within Norway. This chapter stems from wondering why Norway has chosen to take upon such a responsibility, and why do we as the State Secretary says in the quote above wish to share our experiences? I will not analyze possible discrepancies between the local and the international in this chapter, but look into reasons why LGBT rights promotion is a taken-for-granted activity which can, and to some extent must be, done by our state?

I assume the promotion of LGBT issues in foreign countries is made possible due to an understanding of Norway as a legitimate promoter. Utilizing Carol Bacchi’s approach “what’s the problem represented to be”, I wish to point out representations of the promotion of LGBT rights. I am interested in exploring state perspectives and the language utilized in public documents to express LGBT rights violations as a current phenomenon and why it deserves Norway’s attention. Based on these problem representations, the chapter will investigate possible subject position available to Norway in promoting LGBT rights internationally, and if found, what information is produced and in whose interests? Arguably, these representations have subjectification effects which form a certain picture of Norway as a benevolent exporter versus the foreign receiver as someone in need of our assistance. In particular, I am interested in binaries that affect representations of Norway.

Norway’s problem – human rights violations on the basis of orientation

Norway’s policy is broadly understood as promoting tolerance and rights of LGBT people by raising concern for LGBT rights violations within the international community, as well as supporting local initiatives in countries where violations occur. Simply put, the overall problem that Norway anticipates

¹⁰⁹ Speech found on Ministry’s website, available on:
http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/bld/aktuelt/taler_artikler/politisk_ledelse/statssekretar-grepp-knutsen/2009/international-and-national-lgbt-politics.html?id=577771, last accessed 25.02.2012.

to address is violations of LGBT rights. However, there are other implied representations within this problem, and some more dominant than others. Firstly, there is the impression that the world at large lacks tolerance toward those identifying as LGBT. The delicate nature of LGBT persons and rights is continuously referred to in the Ministry's documents, and as illustrated in preceding chapter, LGBT persons are presented as a wronged or mistreated minority in most societies.

Secondly, LGBT rights are to be included within the international human rights regime, and as such, violations of LGBT rights (regardless of what these might be) are of an international concern. The changing understanding of human rights from a domestic to an international concern has its own history, where in concurrent international relations, human rights issues may even reach the highest levels such as the United Nations Security Council.¹¹⁰ I am here specifically referring to the so-called basic human rights: the right to life and non-discrimination, however, as illustrated in the Yogyakarta Principles, LGBT rights are also covering a whole range of political, social, economic, and cultural rights.

Building on these two representations, it is because some countries fail their international responsibility toward a purportedly LGBT population that they need to be held responsible by other members of the international community. Consequently, a third representation of the problem is that LGBT rights violations in other countries is a matter of Norwegian responsibility, akin to the promotion of women's and children's rights. The Guidelines clearly stipulate this:

“Norway should take a particular responsibility for speaking out precisely in cases where the rights of sexual minorities are a controversial issue. Norway is playing a leading role in promoting women's and children's rights, and should have the same level of ambition when it comes to the rights of LGBT people.”¹¹¹

The quote infers that due to Norway's good practices and the current situation of minorities in the Norwegian society, Norway has an expected responsibility also outside of its borders. Our government ought to hold other governments responsible for not enforcing rights and for failing to protect their minorities.

According to Bacchi, one approach to find problem representations is the allocation of funds.¹¹² Out of the 15 million Norwegian kroners allocated by the

¹¹⁰ For the development of International Law regimes see Malcolm D. Evans, ed. (2006), *International Law*, 2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, “Introduction: Perspectives on International Law”. Another example is the “Responsibility to Protect” doctrine, where state sovereignty is presented as a responsibility and not a privilege, see Gareth Evans, and Mohammed Sahnoun, Co-chairs (2001), *The Responsibility to Protect: Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty*, Ottawa, ON, Canada: International Development Research Centre, Minister of Foreign Affairs.

¹¹¹ Guidelines, Nor., 2.

¹¹² Bacchi (2009), 4.

Ministry to LGBT projects in 2010, the amount varied from a few thousand Norwegian kroners to several millions. Examples of larger projects were 491,000 kroners given to a sexuality rights project in Uganda, and nearly 7 million kroners for long term rights work within the police and health care sectors in Nicaragua. In the latter country, Norway helped create, and is now financially supporting, the Nicaraguan Special Ombudsman for Sexual Diversity.¹¹³ In addition to the funds given directly from the Ministry to local projects, the Norwegian LGBT Association received 2,7 million kroners in 2011 to continue and expand their cooperation and networking with LGBT organizations abroad.¹¹⁴ This is one million kroners more than what they received in the previous year. The Association's international projects includes assisting local organizations in holding seminars and conferences, documentation of human rights violations, and exchange projects or hosting of foreign LGBT organizations, such as hosting a Same-Sex Marriage Committee from Nepal.¹¹⁵ Regarding their international efforts, the Association writes the following on their webpage:

“We work to liberate LGBT people around the world from oppression and discrimination. We have a project in Nepal where we work closely with the Nepali LGBT organization 'Blue Diamond', and in Kenya, with our partner organization 'Gay and Lesbian Coalition' (GALCK). We also support the work of organizations and networks in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and India. LLH also works with the Norwegian government, particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and also Norad in order to help them incorporate and mainstream an LGBT perspective in their work. LLH is a member of ILGA, the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association.”¹¹⁶

The Association wishes to “liberate” a universal minority by supporting organizations in the so-called developing world. The assumption of certain places in need of “liberation” presents an image of certain countries as non-tolerant toward LGBT people. Due to non-tolerance and insufficient protection or recognition of the LGBT minority, Norway can interfere with the intention of “exporting” its model.

One example of international intervention is seen in Norway's statements in response to instances deemed by Norway to be related to sexual orientation. In Malawi in 2010, two men were accused of homosexual behaviour and “gross indecency.” Norway followed up by condemning the sentencing by issuing a press release together with the EU. Furthermore, the Norwegian Minister of International Development confronted the Malawi authorities when visiting the

¹¹³ Ministry Report (2011), 4. (All references from this source are my own translations.)

¹¹⁴ LLH (2011) News: “Ny million til LLHs internasjonale rettighetsarbeid!”, 10.05.2011, available on: http://www.llh.no/nor/hvem_er_vi/nyheter/Ny+million+til+LLHs+internasjonale+rettighetsarbeid!.b7C_wIDMYk.ips

¹¹⁵ These are examples from LLH's webpage, section “Internasjonal”:
http://www.llh.no/nor/hva_gjor_vi/internasjonalt/

¹¹⁶ LLH (2012), English “What does LLH do?”, available on:
<http://www.llh.no/eng/What+does+LLH+do%3F9UFRDIZT.ips>, last accessed, 06.03.2012.

country a few months after.¹¹⁷ Later, the Ministry issued news that the President of Malawi had pardoned the men; an act Norway accredited to the international lobbying and attention given the case.¹¹⁸ This intervention was a success, and consolidated the perception that LGBT is a marginalized minority not respected in many countries, and where interference is thus crucial. This representation can be attributed to particular assumptions about Norway, as well as the states Norway has or wishes to pay attention to.

The like-minded and the unwilling

The Ministry's documents explicitly refer to Norway as active and engaged. Words used to note its role are for instance: "a staunch defender"¹¹⁹, "plays an active role as an advocate"¹²⁰, "is willing to speak up when others are silent"¹²¹, "contribute to fight all forms of discrimination and stigmatization of LGBT"¹²², "has helped make a difference"¹²³. Represented here is an image of willingness and dedication on Norway's behalf, shared by other countries, named as "like-minded embassies and their networks."¹²⁴ Examples given within the Guidelines are the Netherlands, UK, France and Sweden, some which have also drawn up LGBT guidelines to their respective embassies. Norwegian embassies are advised to gain an overview of like-minded countries and seek to cooperate with them on initiatives and responses to local events, such as in the case of arrest or abuse of LGBT persons.¹²⁵ This potential cooperation among particular countries is based on the perspective that some countries appear to be unwilling or incapable of sharing their part of the responsibility in enforcing what is considered LGBT rights. As a result of this negligence, Norway and the so-called like-minded states ought to: "contribute to raising awareness among states of their responsibilities for their citizens' rights."¹²⁶ Implicitly derived is a dichotomy between those willing to act in the favor of LGBT and those unwilling or not aware of their responsibility. The former is within this binary the normative and thus privileged one, in comparison to its counterpart who is not abiding by these norms and supposedly represents intolerance to LGBT persons.

The Ministry's references to debates on the highest international level suspects that certain countries will act in opposition to the like-minded states. The Ministry's theme article on sexual orientation refers to the reaction to the Joint Statement from 2008 with the following words: "[t]he statement received

¹¹⁷ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2010) Press Release: "Norge reagerer på homofildom", 22.05.2010.

¹¹⁸ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2011), News: "Homofildømte benådet i Malawi", 31.05.2010.

¹¹⁹ Guidelines, Eng., 1

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ministry Report (2011), 3.

¹²³ Ibid., 4.

¹²⁴ Guidelines, Eng., 3

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

support from 66 countries, where 6 of these were African.”¹²⁷ Noting the number of African states must carry significance because no other continent is mentioned. What about the Asian votes? Were all the European states supportive, or did some also abstain from voting? Were there no other relevant classification besides supporting states and African states? The statement implies that the large majority of African states voted against or sustained from voting. Inferred is the assumption that these few African states represent the exception and must be duly noted when most of the African continent is suspected to be intolerant to the LGBT group. Another reference to Norway’s work at the UN stems from the Human Rights Council’s Resolution on LGBT in 2011:

“The resolution was brought forth by South Africa, with 39 other supporters. Norway has participated in demanding negotiations, where among others a row of African countries and the group of Islamic countries (OIC[Organization for Islamic Countries]) showed stark opposition. It was still adopted, with 23 votes for, 19 against, and 3 abstained.”¹²⁸

African and Islamic countries represent the unwilling in this narration of international politics, they are in clear contrast to the willingness illustrated by the Norwegian state’s persistent engagement to convey the appropriate message. Here lies an understanding once again of the precarious nature of the issue, and of some societies needing more time and assistance than others in terms of accepting “sexual diversity” within their countries.

In addition to a division between those states promoting and those resisting, there is a discernible hierarchy between the states receiving assistance. It goes without saying that the “like-minded” states are of necessity as promoters the tier one countries with the highest level of tolerance and rights. But not all countries receiving Norwegian funding are on the same “level” in terms of development of LGBT tolerance. According to the Report on the Ministry’s international LGBT work in 2010, Nepal, as one of the main receivers of Norwegian LGBT funds, has reached “further” than other countries:

“In Nepal the work for sexual minorities’ rights has proceeded relatively far. [...] In 2010 the Nepalese government established a committee with mandate to explore options for introducing a gender neutral marriage law.”¹²⁹

According to the quote, Nepal is arguably “closer” to Norway and its like-minded countries exemplified by talks on changing the concurrent marriage law. This is a different picture than the one given on African states. In the Foreign Minister’s reply to how Norway is contributing to LGBT rights around the world, he notes a recent negative development in Africa:

¹²⁷ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2010), Theme article: “Seksuell orientering og kjønnsidentitet”, My own translation.

¹²⁸ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2011), Press Release, “Historisk FN-vedtak for seksuelle minoriteter”, 17.06.2011. (My own translation.)

¹²⁹ Ministry’s Report (2011), 7.

“In your question you mention negative trends in several African countries. This is correct, and we follow this closely. We work with these questions in a range of African countries. Let me here mention a few examples. In Nigeria a group of homosexuals were sentenced to death in 2006.”¹³⁰

The Foreign Minister goes on and mentions Uganda (bill proposing death penalty for homosexual behavior), Kenya and Malawi (both in regards to violence) as examples. The same text is also alarmed by developments in Russia, who is said to be “in our own region.”¹³¹ Meaning that LGBT rights violations occur even in close proximity to Norway and Europe. No other countries besides Russia and the four African states are mentioned. All the countries receiving attention and funds from Norway are non-Western; the examples given by the Ministry are from the African continent and Russia, while the like-minded ones refer to where European representatives. The texts thus offer a picture where intolerant states are marked as non-western. The Russian Federation is not part of Europe, yet “reminds” Norway of the discouraging realities near us through a geographical illustration.

According to the Ministry, the rights of LGBT people should be introduced gradually to places where it is still a “sensitive issue.” In order to emphasize a long term perspective, the Guidelines refer to Norway’s own LGBT movement:

“It might be worthwhile to look back on the history of campaigns for greater equality in Norway. Both women and gay and lesbian groups have used campaigning methods that were against the law in order to make themselves heard. Due to the efforts of Norwegian homosexuals, their situation has changed from a prohibition against homosexual practices 35 years ago to the recent adoption of amendments to the Marriage Act to make it applicable to both same-sex and opposite-sex couples.”¹³²

Implied in the paragraph above is a progress narrative of Norway achieving acceptance of LGBT people, culminating with the newly introduced Marriage Act of 2009. Presented here is a description similar to what Gayatri Gopinath calls a “teleological narrative of modernity” where the “present” in other countries is the “past” of another country.¹³³ In his article “Bollywood Spectacles” Gopinath considers the increased popularity of Bollywood films in the US and among non-South Asian audiences as odd in a time when these populations are being scrutinized as never before due to the “war on terror”. With a postcolonialist perspective, Gopinath claims that the recent imperial aggression by the USA post 9/11 is connected with the “discovery” of Bollywood cinema in the USA. Through a particular progress narrative, the US is presented as the holding the “now” of history, in contrast to other countries that are still in the country’s “past”. In Gopinath’s words:

¹³⁰ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2010), Written Answer: “Human rights violations of lesbians, homosexuals, bisexuals, and transpersons”, No.816 (2009-2010), 10.03.2010, 1.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Guidelines, Eng., 2

¹³³ Gopinath Gayatri, “Bollywood Spectacles: Queer Diasporic Critique in the Aftermath of 9/11,” *Social Text* Fall-Winter 2005 (84-85), 157-169.

“The “we” in these comments interpellates an implicitly white Western viewer, where Bollywood enables “us” to come face to face with an exotic other that is uncannily familiar: “we” confront an earlier version of ourselves, one that is faintly recognizable while retaining a pleasurable frisson of otherness.”¹³⁴

In addition to the willing/unwilling or tolerant/non-tolerant binaries, I would argue that it is an implied civilized/uncivilized dichotomy present in the material. Norway with its Marriage Act has gone the furthest, and is a rightful advocate for those that have not arrived as far in the teleological narrative, where the unwilling or unable are still within Norway’s historical or past development.

These images of sociocultural change where other societies will with time change and become liberal in their acceptance of their sexual minorities carries a resemblance to colonial thinking. The tolerance, or rationality, supposedly originates with the Europeans and is consequently exported in order to be acquired by non-Europeans. The logic of the previous colonial “civilizing mission” was that the colonies were to be brought out of their marginal state in order to reach the maturity state of their colonizers.¹³⁵ Neo-colonialism is a far-fetched perspective to place on Norway’s promotion of LGBT rights around the world, yet the perception that certain countries are not as “developed” as us, giving Norway and other like-minded states the responsibility to contribute to the “raising of awareness” and to ensure the proper rationalization and behavior, may arguably draw on similarities of a “civilizing” logic. One of the Association’s news articles clearly points out its role as an “educator.” Referring to Ugandan organizations working on LGBT rights, the article states: “[t]o ensure that all of these [organizations] are able to work for LGBT rights, the Association will also develop a plan for internal schooling.”¹³⁶

One may also imagine a reversal of stereotypes, such as a European “promoter” taking the position of decadent Westerner. The understanding of tolerance and rights for the non-heterosexual population as originating in the West can be used by non-westerners to oppose LGBT rights endeavors as morally inferior or inauthentic to “local” cultures or societies. Previous colonized nations have used nationalisms to culturally self-differentiate themselves from their previous European colonizers. Showing resistance to LGBT rights work and pressure to adopt this from certain European states may represent an anti-colonial stance within continuing national liberation projects. As Leela Gandhi illustrates in her account on postcolonial theory, representations are readily available to be fashioned by opposing parties:

¹³⁴ Ibid., 161.

¹³⁵ Gandhi (1996), 32.

¹³⁶ See fn. 103, LLH (2011), News.

“Scholars [...] argue that anti-colonial nationalist movements regularly drew upon affirmative Orientalist stereotypes to define an authentic cultural identity in opposition to Western civilization. [...] Thus, Orientalist discourse was strategically available not only to the empire but also to its antagonists.”¹³⁷

Correspondingly, Norway’s emphasis on the unwilling/willing dichotomy and the underlying representations in terms of geography, are accessible to use within agendas that wish to oppose the pressure to accept and adopt LGBT rights. I will take a further look into arguments on cultural authenticity as a counterargument to the promotion of LGBT rights in a subsequent chapter.

The difference that makes us

Reasons for skepticism or deferral from states regarding LGBT rights are not given any room for discussion - the Ministry’s language is stark in its discontentment of the so-called non abiding states: “violations of universal human rights cannot be justified by perspectives derived from culture, religion or tradition.”¹³⁸ The main arguments opposing LGBT rights appear to be connected to certain societies, where the dominant culture, religion or traditions are allegedly hostile toward a LGBT population. Considering that the cited willing states are North and Western European, which are predominantly secular Christian nation states, the unwilling are inferred to have other cultures, religions, or traditions than the European. The history of the LGBT movement in Norway, along with the geographical demarcation of willing states, produce a “we” and “others” in geographical and cultural terms. Within this representation, Norway’s promotion of LGBT rights is situated as self-explanatory because the problem lies external to Norway. A postcolonial theoretical perspective claims that the image of the West and Westerners understanding of themselves is heavily indebted to the available representations of the so-called Orient or East. I am not advocating a perfect fit between what Said describes as the process of Orientalism and Norway’s promotion of LGBT rights and language in third world countries. Nevertheless, a comparable dynamic of meaning is produced within the material, laying down allegorical boundaries between the liberated “we” and the “them” we seek to liberate. The theorist Judith Butler lays forth a hypothesis in her book *Frames of War* that acceptance of homosexuality is in Europe considered the same as acceptance of modernity. In other words, modernity is linked to sexual freedoms and to the sexual freedom of gay people in particular, in order to “exemplify a culturally advanced position.”¹³⁹

In the context of how a homo-tolerant nation may be constituted, we may consider the concept of the “the national order” by Marianne Gullestad, a Norwegian anthropologist writing on immigration and every-day prejudice in

¹³⁷ Gandhi, 78.

¹³⁸ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2009), Speech by Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre, Labour Party’s Homo-Network, Oslo, 17.06.2009.

¹³⁹ Judith Butler (2010), *Frames of War. When is Life Grievable?*, London:Verso, 105.

the Norwegian society. Gullestad's concept may be used to examine how the promotion of LGBT rights can play a demarcating role for what constitutes an "us." In her book *Plausible Prejudice* Gullestad analyses how residents in Norway are categorized in relation to an order – a framework which separates the Norwegian majority from the non-Norwegians. Membership to the national order is according to Gullestad currently based on genes and not for instance on citizenship or language.¹⁴⁰ The majority are the unmarked population which represents the privileged and normative.¹⁴¹ Consequently, the national order produces a hierarchical structure between the Norwegian "us" and the non-Norwegian "them" where the former holds moral superiority. I think the concept is fruitful as it illustrates a dominant understanding of what constitutes "Norwegianness" – what categories and subjects are included and which are not, and what such an understanding relies upon.

The group identity, such as Norwegian or Norwegianness, is constituted by accentuating certain characteristics while ignoring others. The group identity, as the identity of an individual, is however makeable depending on its contingency: how the subject is interrelated in a particular situation.¹⁴² There are certain positions that Norway or Norwegians can take within LGBT promotion. The relevant position for Norway is one of a tolerant and benevolent nation who is sexually liberated and wishes others to be as well. The Ministry can be said to represent Norwegians and offer a representation or a position for us through its work. The position of a benevolent promoter is given meaning through highlighting those that seek to hinder it. In the texts, Norway is identifying itself in opposition to those countries or people that do not wish to partake in Norway's policy of LGBT promotion.

Jasmin Puar coined the term "homonationalism" where tolerance for homosexuals is connected to the idea of what constitutes the national. Puar claims that homosexuals in the U.S.A. have gone from being associated with death and a threat to a nation (e.g. HIV/Aids) to becoming tied to ideas of life and the nation's sustainment (e.g. same-sex marriage).¹⁴³ A subject position as homo-tolerant illustrates that Norway might include the homosexual subject within its national order, or that some homosexuals are included. If the national order includes those considered homo-tolerant, Norwegians are taken for granted as such - while those that do not fit in the national order are assumed intolerant and thus subjects not belonging to the nation.

As a consequence of the dominant subject position of Norway as tolerant, the LGBT situation in Norway is for the most part silenced. It is taken for granted

¹⁴⁰ Marianne Gullestad (2003), *Det norske sett med nye øyne*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 21.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 17.

¹⁴² Jørgensen and Phillips, 56.

¹⁴³ Jasmin Puar (2007), *Terrorist Assemblages, homonationalism in queer times*, London: Duke University Press.

that Norway is liberal to its sexual minorities. There is little room within this representation to bring forth instances of discrimination on the basis of sexuality occurring within our own borders. Another potential troubling aspect is the lack of opportunities to discuss representations of minorities “within” the LGBT category that might indeed challenge the simplification of the dominant representation. I am here not only referring to possible additions to the LGBT categories (queer, intersex, etc.), but also other characteristics given meaning in a social setting, such as a person’s class, religious faith, cultural and language background. The concurrent Norwegian society includes non-westerners and non-ethnic Norwegians noted as unwilling in the texts. Subject positions available for these appear to be few within the concurrent national order, in which they may not fully attain status as subjects of the Norwegian nation.

Summing up the dominant problem representation

The dominant problem representation found in the Ministry’s documents is that LGBT issues in non-western countries are part of Norway’s international responsibility. The dominant subject position available for Norway within this representation is an active and tolerant advocate with good intentions. This benevolent role rests upon a distinction between those countries that are willing to make a difference and those that arguably are not. The effect is a simplification of a complex phenomenon into an either - or issue, where Norway and like-minded western states export a “future” for non-western receiving states. Addressing and questioning the not so tolerant aspect of Norwegian society in relation to the LGBT group is silenced. Here, I view homo-tolerance as a defining characteristic in what constitutes a concurrent Norwegian national order. This benefits the western Norwegian, while it might have negative subjectification effects on non-western Norwegians.

Here lies also a paradox; those we wish to assist and protect are part of those we suspect as intolerant and backward. The LGBT population within the societies we suspect to be intolerant are more fabrics of “them” than “us” in the problem representation presented in this chapter. The homosexuals we attempt to “rescue” from their oppressive societies are more social products and subjects within their own society than the geographical distant Norwegian society. One may wonder what consequences this has on our efforts to promote these sexual freedoms represented by LGBT rights, if tolerance is narrated in such a particular historical and geographical way.

In keeping with Bacchi’s approach, the current dominant representation may limit the way Norway views and consequently act in international LGBT issues. We might be constrained by our representations of LGBT rights violations, and consequently by the subjectification effects these representations produce, both on us and the ones receiving our attention and funds. The possibility of representations other than the one argued in this chapter will be discussed in the

last chapter of analysis. First, the representations presented in these last two chapters are applied to hypothetical cases from around the world on same-sex relations or desire.

Cases – applying a Norwegian outlook

The previous two chapters took a closer look at how the term and phenomenon sexual orientation is understood, and how possible representations and subject positions are presented within the Ministry's documents. The content of these two chapters form what I liberally call the concurrent "Norwegian outlook" on categorizing sexual desires and acts. The outlook attempts to map and make intelligible all the world's bodily and sexual practices according to the concept of sexual orientation. One's sexual orientation is established based upon the sex of the object choice, and as long as the object choice is not solely the opposite sex, the sexual orientation represents the non-heterosexual minorities: LGBT. Within this outlook there is a tendency to bring sexual practice into identity, where one folds into the other. Documents from the Ministry view Norway as a society that can, and is obligated to, assist those individuals in non-western societies with a sexual orientation that fall outside the heterosexual norm.

The question I wish to pose and further discuss in this chapter is how the Norwegian outlook may produce meaning in stories and examples from non-European contexts. Will the dominant understandings of sex and sexuality pointed out earlier be compatible with stories from other societies; and can one imagine possible consequences of applying a Norwegian outlook? Considering possible situations where our policy is likely to have a touchdown, this chapter delves further into the understanding of sexuality present within my material, and its assumptions on the sexually active human being, and how we best organize our sexual relations.

The cases presented are found within recent anthropological and ethnographical literary works, and is by no means exhaustive in its range. These examples are not meant to be taken at face value, but to introduce another context to potentially perceive an interaction with the Norwegian outlook.

Intelligible sexual categories?

The first example stems from Rudolf Gaudio's book *Allah Made Us*, published in 2009, and based on his research and numerous visits in the Hausa-speaking region of Northern Nigeria.¹⁴⁴ Gaudio's ethnographic fieldwork analyses the experiences and lives of the 'yan daudu in the Islamic city of Kano. 'Yan daudu refers "to 'men who act like women' openly and are publicly recognized as such."¹⁴⁵ Generally speaking, the 'yan daudu offer services to conventionally masculine men, such as cooking and selling food at markets, and working at "women's houses" where they together with "independent women" (often translated as prostitutes or courtesans) entertain male visitors. The entertainment

¹⁴⁴Rudolf Pell Gaudio (2009), *Allah made us. Sexual outlaws in an Islamic African city*, Chichester:Wiley-Blackwell

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 10.

is not necessarily sexual; other services are offered, among them serving alcoholic drinks, food, playing cards or games, and engaging in flirtatious conversations. A number of ‘yan daudu work at women’s houses as intermediaries between independent women and their male patrons to facilitate their interaction. At times, some ‘yan daudu may have sex with their male patrons or other conventionally masculine men in exchange of gifts or money.¹⁴⁶ Women houses are located in neighbourhoods known as *barikis* – areas of Hausa towns where un-Islamic practices are known to be tolerated. Being seen upon as “feminine” men, who are associated with independent women, ‘yan daudu are not revered in the Hausa society, and are subjected to both official and unofficial persecution and harassment by police and other men.¹⁴⁷ The ‘yan daudu may be viewed as projecting gender non-conformity and consequently stigmatized in this case, but whether all ‘yan daudu are engaging in sexual relations with men is not explained by Gaudio.

There are several local categories in the Hausa region of Nigeria for men engaging in sexual relations with other men. Conventionally masculine “men who seek men” typically identify themselves as *masu marka* – “men who do the deed” – a code term that embraces both masculine men and ‘yan daudu who are sexually active with other men. Some masu marka call themselves “homos” (also those with little to no knowledge of the English language), and according to Gaudio only educated urban citizen tend to use the word gay to describe themselves.¹⁴⁸ There are also some men that identify as ‘yan daudu in private, but maintain the masculine occupation and appearance in public. These are known as “shirted yan daudu” because they can choose to take on or off the “feminine” shirt based upon the circumstances.¹⁴⁹ The sexual preference of the “unshirted” ‘yan daudu is not discussed by Gaudio.

How would the ‘yan daudu be characterized and what sexual minority would they fall into? Gaudio reflects upon ‘yan daudu’s compatibility with Western categories in the introduction of the book:

“When I describe ‘yan daudu as ‘feminine men’ to people from the USA and other Western societies, I am often asked, “Are they gay”? The answer is not straightforward. In the earliest days of my research [...], [I] could not help but compare these images to gay life at home. Although subsequent events forced me to reconsider, but not to reject outright, the naïve idea that ‘yan daudu were men with whom I could communicate on the basis of shared sexuality, my interactions with them introduced me to a thriving social world of men who acknowledged and acted upon their sexual attraction to other men. These men comprise what could arguably be called a Hausa homosexual community, though their social life differs in important ways from gay life in the West.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 6.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 9.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 87.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 9.

Out of the four possible categories for sexual minorities - L, G, B or T - trans may be the first orientation that comes to mind. Transgender or transsexual is understood within the Yogyakarta Principles as a gender identity which “do not correspond to the sex assigned at birth”.¹⁵¹ However, Gaudio finds it difficult to designate ‘yan daudu as “trans” when he cannot find among his ‘yan daudu acquaintances a wish to be or become a woman: “[w]ith the exception of a male ‘transvestite’ in Kano whose story circulated on the internet in 2004, I have never met or heard about a dan daudu [singular form] who tried to pass as a woman socially.”¹⁵² Gaudio finds that although ‘yan daudu are stigmatized as feminine and some also referred to by female names, they view themselves as “real” men, and do not wish to renounce privileges that stems from being a man in their society.¹⁵³

If transgender is not adequate, then may ‘yan daudu be characterized as gay? Gaudio, along with previous academic research he notes in his book, finds it difficult to categorize all ‘yan daudu as homosexuals or bisexuals because the ‘yan daudu status does not automatically entail sexual relations with other men. Further research argues that for some being a ‘yan daudu is an occupational choice because of the money one can make as an intermediary for independent women and their patrons.¹⁵⁴ Gaudio also notes examples of ‘yan daudu who leave the “profession” at the women’s houses and take up other employment opportunities such as live-in servants, while others have left the feminine role as a ‘yan daudu and apparently resumed to live as a conventional masculine man.¹⁵⁵ The gender and sexual roles and identities seen in the example of the ‘yan daudu can be seen in terms of socioeconomic factors; to take upon the dan daudu identity may lead to a somewhat economically independent life.

I find no coherent picture of ‘yan daudu as possessing *a* sexual orientation among Gaudio’s informants. Perhaps the principles of categorization differ between the Norwegian outlook and the ‘yan daudu example. While the determining principle in the former is the sex of the desired one, the gender role of the sexual partner may be of more significance in the latter one. This is similar to the “top” and “bottom” illustration where the penetrating top maintains the traditional masculine role and “maintains” his heterosexuality, while the one being penetrated symbolizes the feminine role and thus alone represents the aberration.¹⁵⁶ The penetrator/penetrated model carries less

¹⁵¹ Yogyakarta Principles, 8.

¹⁵² Gaudio, 10.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 55.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 86.

¹⁵⁶ Michel Foucault in the *Use of Pleasure* discusses the penetrated/penetrator model. In Annick Prieur (1998), *Mama’s House, Mexico City: On Transvestites, Queens, and Machos*, Chicago: Uni.of Chicago Press, the penetrators, generally speaking, remain viewed as heterosexuals, regardless of who they have sex with. See p., 26.

significance in the Norwegian outlook – here, they are both identified as gays. An interesting side note here is whether the Norwegian outlook manages to differ between a sexual aim and sex of object choice? Due to the focus of object choice, the potential aims of the act (be those for instance the outcome, roles, power dynamics, pleasures, fantasies or so forth) becomes irrelevant and overrun by the “who” one has sexual relations with: a man or a woman?

Conceptually, the ‘yan daudu identity (as in I am a ‘yan daudu) is hardly reducible to any of the four categories representing sexual minorities, however, empirically on an individual basis this may be possible. To address the incompatibility among identity categories present in the ‘yan daud example, the Norwegian outlook could view the ‘yan daudu as cultural heritage, a local tradition that may exist alongside the politically correct and internationally endorsed orientations. But the example is not easily discerned, because it plays with the idea that gender and sex roles are complex and which cannot be separated from socio-cultural and economic aspects of a society.

The gender and sexual nonconformity seen in the example of the ‘yan daudu does not necessarily equate a subscription to a sexual orientation. For the sake of the Norwegian outlook, the ‘yan daudu identity, would not be the category of significance, but the sex of a dan daudu’s preferred partner would. In other words, not all dan daudu would be “true” homosexuals according to the outlook. Or they may mistakenly be seen as such, because of their gender non-conformity.

How to organize our sexual relations?

The Norwegian “model worth exporting” as claimed by the Ministry is heavily orientated around rights work, where the Norwegian marriage law exemplifies a final aim. Marriage is both a juridical and social contract between two people, now available for both same-sex and different-sex couples in Norway. Within this context, entering a heterosexual marriage would be incompatible with same-sex desire or acts and in particular if there exist a homosexual identity. ‘Yan daudu on the other hand, does not see the incompatibility between the two. Several of the yan daudu presented in Gaudio’s book consider marrying a woman in the future, not due to a (bi)sexual attraction to women, but as a moral and social obligation. Here, marriage does not equal heterosexual desire, and is not inevitably viewed as contrary or limiting to same-sex desire. This is also a phenomenon among homosexual Chinese men illustrated in a graduate thesis from Norwegian student, Øystein Ruud, in 2007:

“In the beginning of my field work, Q gave me the impression that he was in spite of his situation pleased with having a marriage. His life situation was stabilized because he on the one hand did not have to confront the pressure to marry from his surroundings, and on the other hand, had an open and clarified relationship with his wife, in which he still had the opportunity to live his own life. He was with his wife during the weekends; from Monday to

Friday she lived with her parents. This gave him the freedom to be with his boyfriend during the week, in his lunch breaks and after work.”¹⁵⁷

Ruud’s material includes both interview and participatory observation in a middle-size city in China. His informants are men engaging in sexual relations with other men, many who self-identify as a homosexual. One of Ruud’s thematic focuses is the connection between marriage and economy. The informants’ parents emphasize the tradition and social expectation of a heterosexual marriage, where marrying a woman is considered an economic strategy; it may increase the money flow to the extended family, and ensure economic safety in retirement age. Due to tradition or economy, or both, several of Ruud’s informants have or are about to wed a woman. In the case above, the wife is aware of her husband’s relationship with other men. Ruud concludes that there is room for alternatives or exceptions within the traditional view of the Chinese family, where homosexual practice for men is not sanctioned as long as the husband fulfils his economic duties.¹⁵⁸

However, Ruud is sceptical to his informants “double life.” This can be seen in his questioning of informant Z’s wish to marry a woman, while continuing seeing male sexual partners:

“I attempted to question his wish to marry, though it did not appear to be a problem for him. I asked about having sex with a girl. Would he be able? Would it not be strange because he did not at all think about girls? He answered that he liked girls a little, but he also gave the impression that he did not fully understand my questions. He did not foresee any trouble having sex with a girl. I tried to turn the coin, and asked, considering that he was mainly attracted to boys and never had been with a girl, if it would be unfair toward the future wife if he entered a relationship with her, particularly if she fell in love with him. He did not see the issue here either and did not fully answer it. I asked how he would find a girl to marry. He said that would not be hard, because he knew many girls.”¹⁵⁹

Ruud attempts to problematize the perception his informant has on marriage. From Ruud’s perspective, it would be wrong to marry without romantic love and especially if one were more interested in having sex with the other sex than future wife or husband. Z does not respond well to Ruud’s questions on future marriage, which can be interpreted as a resistance to the understanding of sexual relations and marriage Ruud is instigating. What is of importance to Ruud, being in love and desiring one’s partner, does not seem to have the same significance for Z. Similarly, Ruud does not seem to comprehend Z’s economic and biological view of marriage (such as the potential of ensuring Z a son one day). Conceivably, within Ruud’s scepticism of Z’s future plans, lies an idea of marriage as a romantic union between two people, where Z’s extramarital sexual

¹⁵⁷ Øystein Ruud (2007), *Homoseksualitet i Kina. Menn, erotikk, familie og penger*. Masteroppgave i Tverrfaglige kulturstudier, Trondheim, August 2007, 46. (My own translation from Norwegian)

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 84. (All the quotes from Ruud are my own translation.)

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 72.

activities are not morally appropriate if marriage is to be a monogamous arrangement.

The tone of Ruud's thesis appears to be a sad one; his informants are presented with little agency against succumbing to what he calls the tradition – marriage with a woman. The “double life” lived by the informants creates a conflict according to Ruud, which prohibits men to engage in long term romantic relationships with other men.¹⁶⁰ Inferring from this understanding, it is thus not enough to live out one's desire (from time to time, or daily); one ought to live them out in a certain way, preferably in a relationship based on mutual and possibly exclusive romantic affection. The Chinese informants' extramarital acts may be considered an indignity to the Norwegian outlook, however, the acts may also be viewed as rebutting the notion that marriage equals romantic love, and that sex ought to occur within a monogamous relationship.

The Chinese men presented in Ruud's thesis have access to places (bar, disco) where they may meet men interested in other men. Harassment from Police is according to Ruud and his informants not a concern. However, all informants are afraid of exposure because it may have severe consequences for their family and work life. The fear of disclosure as a homosexual, or someone who is sexually interested in the same sex, is due to shame and potential economic ruin, such as the fear of sanctions from employer who traditionally hold a high status in China.¹⁶¹ Ruud concludes in his thesis that there are few incentives among his Chinese informants to partake in rights advocacy for homosexuals, one reason being that males can practice same sex desire within the framework of their heterosexual marriage.¹⁶² Demanding visibility appears to be close to impossible for the Chinese men in Ruud's thesis. Ruud expresses this to be of a concern, because his informants cannot develop a homosexual identity, but only “practice” homosexuality.¹⁶³ Ruud notes that sex between men is more understood as a practice than an identity in China, but claims that lack of disclosure troubles his informants because they cannot fulfil the normative sexual practice which takes places within organized cohabitation. Ruud does not elaborate further on this, but it seems as if it is an unhealthy situation living or “acting out” desires without a so-called open identity, in particular if they are otherwise living in a heterosexual relationships. Still, there is a lack of willingness among Ruud's informants to make themselves “visible” – which may prove problematic for Norway's aim to support visibility of sexual minorities.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 85.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 76.

¹⁶² Ibid., 86.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 82.

The risk of disclosure – necessary costs?

“The next day he received a police summons. At the station Tayseer was told that his sex partner was in fact a police agent whose job is to ferret out homosexuals. If Tayseer wanted to avoid prison, he too would have to become an undercover sex agent, luring gays into orchards and turning them over to the police. Tayseer refused to implicate others. He was arrested and hung by his arms from the ceiling. A high-ranking officer he didn’t know arranged for his release and then demanded sex as payback. Tayseer fled Gaza to Tulkarem on the West Bank, but there too he was eventually arrested. He was forced to stand in sewage water up to his neck, his head covered by a sack filled with faeces, and then he was thrown into a dark cell infested with insects and other creatures he could feel but not see...During one interrogation, police stripped him and forced him to sit on a Coke bottle.”¹⁶⁴

The quote is originally from a news magazine, but I found it first in the book *Unspeakable Love, Gay and Lesbian Life in the Middle East* by journalist Brian Whitaker.¹⁶⁵ Whitaker covers a whole range of LGBT issues in Middle Eastern states, and includes many personal stories experienced first-hand, as well as secondary material from webpages, news media, and international human rights organizations. The picture Whitaker gives is grim. Persons engaging in sexual acts with the same sex, or announcing themselves as homosexuals, are highly exposed to discrimination and violence.

Several scholars have criticized Whitaker’s narrative of suppressed homosexuals in Arab societies as Eurocentric.¹⁶⁶ My aim with quoting Whitaker is not to discuss his assumptions or agenda, but to exemplify that many individuals experience a subjective fear due to their actions, feelings, or identity, perhaps even on a daily basis. A similar depiction is what the Ministry’s gives when referring to the many states where same-sex acts are criminalized and punishable by social or legal codes. Norway’s engagement is based upon this narrative of grimness, in which the principal strategy and aim of Norwegian international LGBT commitment is to support visibility of these individuals.

Supporting and encouraging visibility is well-intended; however, reversing the logic, it may be worthwhile and legible to claim that visibility may cause extreme consequences for certain individuals. If visibility is the main tactic, then some individuals, the majority of those presented in Whitaker’s book for instance, will indeed be more exposed to being beaten, ostracised, imprisoned or flogged within their immediate societies. Norway’s response to this, as seen in previous chapter, is its narrative of the Norwegian LGBT movement: “It may be worthwhile to look back on the history of campaigns for greater equality in Norway. Both women and gay and lesbian groups have used campaigning methods that were against the law in order to make themselves heard.”¹⁶⁷ It follows from this narrative that some brave individuals must be forerunners in

¹⁶⁴ Yossi Halevi (2002), “Refugee Status”, *The New Republic*, 19 August 2002.

¹⁶⁵ Brian Withaker (2006), *Unspeakable Love: Gay and Lesbian Life in the Middle East*, London: Saqi Books.

¹⁶⁶ Joseph Massad comments the book as “a remarkable example of what ill-informed journalism can produce when inspired by social Darwinism and racialized Eurocentrism”, see Massad (2008), 187, footnote 101.

¹⁶⁷ Guidelines, Eng., 3

order for others to, “down the line,” acquire rights, and subsequently safety. However, is it justifiable to compare “costs” from one society to another; did the individuals in Norway, let’s say Kim Friele as the first Norwegian to claim visibility, risk the same as Tayseer in the example above? The Norwegian model to be transferred suggests that “homo” activism is a trans-historical and -cultural phenomenon. What developed in Norway several decades ago is expected to take the same shape in concurrent societies around the world. It seems as the alleged compatibility between the Norwegian movement and movements in other societies is a reductionist approach to describe sexual behaviour, and may not be an effectual strategy for promoting sexual freedoms.

One measure to promote visibility is responding to local news stories covering non-heterosexual acts or individuals – in most cases this implies condemning state authorities for persecuting or not offering protection to a vulnerable minority. However, not all individuals subjected to Western international media and international gay-rights organization welcomes the attention, and may not consider it as an opportunity to declare themselves as homosexuals. Gaudio presents cases of international media frenzy from the Hausa region, where in one of them a woman is accused of holding a “polygamous lesbian wedding.” The story was quickly picked up by gay-rights organizations abroad and international media, yet the woman did not take this chance of visibility:

“Aunty Maiduguri was on her way to becoming an African Muslim lesbian icon whose brave attempt to assert her rights was being crushed by Islamist militants. A few days later, she publicly rejected that honor. In an audio interview broadcast on the BBC website, she told a reporter in clear, Nigerian-accented English, “It’s a lie, it’s unbelievable. I have never in my life seen where a lady can marry four ladies at one time. I have never practiced – never heard the word ‘lesbian’ – truly.”¹⁶⁸

The BBC knocking on your door is an obvious opportunity for international attention. Reasons for why Aunty Maiduguri chose not to take this opportunity are not known to me; perhaps the event was in fact not centred around same-sex relations, or she did not wish to utilize the term “lesbian” when seeing it unfit to adequately describe the event, or the stakes for “admitting” would be too high for herself and, or, the participants. Perhaps the recognition was unwanted not based upon a possible homo-erotic aspect, but because the uncalled attention signifies losing face as a reputable person.¹⁶⁹ Hence, the threshold for acquiring the LGBT language may not be as straightforward as perhaps anticipated. If the chances for violence or social exclusion are high, then many might think otherwise, and rather continue expressing one’s desires in a non-public fashion.

¹⁶⁸ Gaudio, 178.

¹⁶⁹ Gaudio gives an interesting example of meanings around “outing” on pages 110-112 where the reputation as someone who minded his own business was the basis of negative judgments from others, and not his “secret” lifestyle.

It is not unlikely that the demand for visibility may lead to increased antagonism toward those that act and live in non-heterosexual relationships. The potential for inciting antagonism is one of Massad's claims in his book *Desiring Arabs* from 2008. According to Massad, the work of the so-called Gay International (the western notion of a homosexual identity and the organizations that represent and seek to spread this notion) leads to less tolerance for non-conformist individuals and groups. The principal example Massad shares is the Queen Boat incident in Egypt. In May 2001, the Egyptian Police raided a discotheque on a cruise vessel docked on the Nile outside of Cairo, in which predominantly "westernized Egyptian gay-identified" men and western male tourist were present.¹⁷⁰ Fifty-two of the men were tried before an Emergency State Security Court; all were charged with the "habitual practice of debauchery," and nearly half convicted. It was evident that most of them had been exposed to physical and psychosocial torture in detention.¹⁷¹ After the Queen Boat incident, the many months with court cases that followed, and the attention given by international organizations and states, the press and conservative Islamists began to call for criminalizing same-sex practice.¹⁷² According to the Human Rights Watch's report from 2004 on the Queen Boat incident, exposing same-sex practice was becoming "a route to career advancement" for police officers.¹⁷³ In the beginning of its report, the Human Rights Watch notes that the concurrent safety of Egyptian men engaging in same-sex practice is unpromising:

"Egypt is carrying out a crackdown. The professed motive is cultural authenticity coupled with moral hygiene. The means include entrapment, police harassment, and torture. The agents range from government ministers to phalanxes of police informers fanning out across Cairo. The victims are men suspected of having sex with men. The violence is aimed not only at their loves but at their lives."¹⁷⁴

Of obvious reasons, the Egyptian Police will not manage to disclose all individuals engaging in same-sex practices, it is thus easier to pursue individuals that represent stereotypes, in terms of dress, mannerisms, and hang out places. The Police in the Queen Boat incident were looking for individuals who would and could on command pronounce the English word "gay", or who wore coloured underwear (instead of "normal" white underwear), and foreign stylish clothing and jewellery. Aeyal Gross claims that there is a certain visible "gay body" in Egypt that is based upon the "foreign" and "commodified."¹⁷⁵ As seen above in the quote, cracking down on same-sex conduct is portrayed as a matter of cultural authenticity and morality, where certain persons engaging in same-

¹⁷⁰ Massad (2008), 181

¹⁷¹ Human Rights Watch (2004), *In a Time of Torture: The Assault on Justice in Egypt's Crackdown on Homosexual Conduct*, New York: Human Rights Watch.

¹⁷² Massad, 184.

¹⁷³ Human Rights Watch, *In a Time of Torture*, 49.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁷⁵ Gross (2007), 131.

sex relations are more “foreign” than others because of their “visibility” – where visibility in this case refers to a western “look.”

This picture of homosexuality as something foreign, in most cases, western, is an argument launched by local leaders and authorities in several African nations.¹⁷⁶ As noted in a previous chapter, a conceivable consequence from the representation of LGBT rights as orienting in the West, or that the West is the “first” to advance these rights, is that non-western voices can argue LGBT rights as un-authentic to local customs and morality. Neville Hoad describes in his book *African Intimacies* how African leaders claim homosexuality to be a Western decadent import, opposed to national and racial authenticity. Local LGBT organizations using the universal language of human rights to attract funding from abroad may reinforce notions of homosexuality as an immoral import from the West. Showing resistance to LGBT rights work is then portrayed by local leaders as an anti-colonialist stance.¹⁷⁷ A conceivable consequence is the exclusion of certain subjects from the idea of the nation, where those identifying by the LGBT umbrella in these African societies cannot become national subjects – an African identity is presented as incompatible with a homosexual identity. As LGBT rights and non-heterosexual subjects are incorporated within the “Norwegianess”, quite the opposite may occur in other conceptions of national subjects. Authenticity is inherently debatable, and other Western things are clearly accepted by African nations (examples such as Christianity, western business suits, and even monogamy in certain places), yet it illustrates how anti-homosexuality and homophobia can be employed as a political strategy for state leaders to assert their nationalism. The logic that increased visibility eventually leads to increased tolerance may not always hold water.

The power of words: lesbian love or mutual masturbation?

In my search for accounts of same-sex practices around the world, I find much less contemporary research on women’s same sex-practices than men’s. Based upon the examples above, it often appears as if men’s sexual privileges are largely at the expense of women’s, where men’s same-sex practices and relationships, as in the example from China and the Nigerian Hausa Region, can more freely occur because of the marginalized economic and social roles available to women. An appropriate question is whether the situation of women and men in regards to same-sex practices and relationship can be placed under the same LGBT rights work?

¹⁷⁶ Whitaker (2006), notes that a homosexual Palestinian may be viewed as a collaborator with Israel, thus as a national threat to Palestine, see p.37.

¹⁷⁷ Neville Hoad (2007), *African Intimacies: Race, Homosexuality, and Globalization*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 75.

One book dedicated solely to women's same-sex practices is Ruth Morgan and Saskia Wiering's *Tommy Boys, Lesbian Men and Ancestral Wives*.¹⁷⁸ The book stems from a research project where women from different African nations were asked to interview other women about women's same-sex experiences and practice, so-called bare-foot researchers. The book also gives an overview of relevant anthropological research. Several examples of same-sex practices in Eastern and Southern Africa were discussed, such as versions of homo-erotic play among girls, and bond relationship between girls or women. One example of girl's homo-erotic play is girls assisting each other in the practice of elongating the labia minora. The main function of the practice is to increase pleasure in a future heterosexual relationship, though manipulation of the genitals through what can be seen as a communal masturbation also creates a room for homo-erotic attraction and relations among girls.¹⁷⁹ Morgan and Wieringa quote Bagnol, an anthropologist writing on homo-erotic relations among women in present day Mozambique, to illustrate that a same-sex relationship beginning in youth may extend after a woman marries:

“In a place where there are women who don't have the possibility of contact with men, if there is some confidence between two girlfriends, one of them asks the other to help out at the moment... Each person keeps this as an intimate secret... It is very possible to continue this after marriage, if one of them continues unmarried. One of them continues to satisfy the other, always in secret. Children have been known to do this, but in their case it is easy to be caught at this. When those involved are adults, it is difficult to be discovered.”¹⁸⁰

In several of the examples given in the book, both by the bare-foot researchers and the author's look into other anthropological accounts, women are engaging in same-sex relationship alongside fulfilling their roles as heterosexual partners. As the quote illustrates, the hiding and silence around same-sex practices and relationship appear to protect those involved. Another reason for why girls and women may more freely engage in deep affectionate relationship is because genital contact between women is not considered “sex” as it does not involve penile penetration.¹⁸¹ Although not amounting to “real” sex, it allows some women greater space for physical expressions with other women without being accused of abnormality.

As pointed out in the book, the silence that first protects also marginalizes women's experiences and voices if there is a wish to disclose a relationship as sexual.¹⁸² The risk of disclosure is an overarching theme among the interviewees and very few of them wish to publicly express their affection for other women due to potential negative repercussions. The majority of the informants prefer

¹⁷⁸ Ruth Morgan and Saskia Wieringa (2005), *Tommy Boys, Lesbian Men and Ancestral Wives. Female same-sex practices in Africa*, Johannesburg: Jacana Media.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 289.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 290.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 282.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 298.

not to label themselves: “[n]one of the Kenyan respondents want to be labelled as a lesbian, as this would be too dangerous.”¹⁸³

Girls engaging in collective masturbation and who develop same-sex relationship with other women can be classified as lesbian or bisexual according to the Norwegian outlook. If expressions such as collective masturbation or bond friendship or other expressions of love and affection among women are characterized as “lesbian” behaviour, the practices may be closed for many girls, and the women or girls engaging in them are likely to experience stigmatization from their surrounding societies. Certain practices will be viewed through the lens and vocabulary of a certain understanding of sexual orientation, leading to both inclusion and subsequently exclusion of bodies, by producing new meanings of a local practice.

It is also worth noting that the individual situation of a woman engaging in same-sex practices may not be similar to a man with same-sex practices within the same society – mainly because forms of subordination differ, where women’s economic, social, and political situation is often closely related to their status as women. The sexual autonomy of women engaging in same-sex practices and relationships may not necessarily be best advanced within the LGBT human rights framework – local organizations working for forms of empowerment and economic independence may at times be better suited to address the many needs of an individual.

Who will receive Norway’s attention and support?

Some requirements must be in place prior to Norwegian support. To start with, there must be some people that are “visible” for Norwegian eyes and ears abroad. The individuals or organizations will most likely subscribe to a sexual orientation, or at least be familiar with these and utilize the LGBT labels and human rights vocabulary in order to attract Norwegian funds. Here is a difference between those the outlook may deem to have *a* sexual orientation, and those that claim to have it. Although the Norwegian outlook may classify someone as having *a* sexual orientation in accordance with the outlook, the subject might not accept it as such. A woman may engage in same-sex relations and not use the label “homosexual” or “lesbian” to describe herself. It is highly unlikely that denying the validity of the LGBT labels, such as with Auntie Maiduguri above, will help attaining Norwegian funds.

Local LGBT organizations supported by Norway¹⁸⁴ appear to fall within the criteria of utilizing the LGBT and human rights vocabulary. Tailoring the rhetoric and agendas to attract and satisfy a donor is necessary to acquire funds, yet this may be problematic. If Norway is looking for individuals in accordance

¹⁸³ Ibid., 322.

¹⁸⁴ Some of these are: SMUG (Uganda), GALCK (Kenya), and Diamond Society (Nepal).

with the outlook, other criteria such as conditions for membership, action plan, organizational structure, and cooperation partners fall secondly. As long as a few are visible, it confirms the universal presence of homosexuals and the need for local rights advocacy. Hoad describes for instance how LGBT organizations in South Africa received funding from Western countries although their numbers of membership were what he considered to be suspiciously low.¹⁸⁵ Hoad claims western donors did not do adequate research prior to funding LGBT projects, as he saw the low numbers of membership to signify little rooting within the communities. Whether numbers of membership signifies local backing is debatable, the Norwegian Association is for instance not known to have a high number of members within the gay community in Norway, yet there is little doubt that the Association is organisationally and politically well-established within the Norwegian society.

Nonetheless, a condition such as local backing is second to the visibility of the few, which may raise a question of autonomy. How dependent are local organizations working generally with sexuality rights or sexual diversity on funding from abroad? Whitaker insists that in the Middle East they dependent on the moral and economic support from European or North American gay rights organizations. In discussing the Beirut located organization *Helem*, an Arabic acronym for “Lebanese Protection of Homosexuals”, Whitaker states:

“[b]esides its Canadian connection, it has support groups in Australia, France and the United States. These international links are important and, in some respects vital to its existence: they are a source of both funds and expertise[...] International links also give a measure of protection because the Lebanese authorities know there will be complaints from abroad if repressive action is taken.”¹⁸⁶

Appearing to depend heavily or solely on funding from abroad may harm the autonomy of local organizations. Factors such as funding, the number of members and active participants, political support from local authorities and voices, and cooperation and dialogue with other local human rights organizations illustrates an organization’s anchorage within a society. If local support is little to non-existing, the image of LGBT rights as a decadent Western import is considerable harder to discredit.

Looking back at the examples given in this chapter, I wonder which ones are likely to receive Norway’s attention and support. In the ‘yan daudu example the outlook may run into problems of appropriate classification. The Chinese informants may be seen by the outlook as potential receivers of support, yet they are unlikely to call for it when they can continue same-sex practices without the need for visibility and rights work. The stakes might be too high for most of Whitaker’s informants in the Middle East to organize in groups and claim

¹⁸⁵ Hoad (2007), Chapter 4: “White Man’s Burden, White Man’s Disease”.

¹⁸⁶ Whitaker (2006), 48

visibility. The examples of erotic play among girls and women will in most cases not lead to any formation of rights organizations, though in some instances may be seen as having a sexual orientation by the outlook. Yet, the majority of the informants in Morgan and Wieringa's book prefer not the label themselves as lesbians or homosexuals. If self-labelling as homosexual is a criterion for membership in a local LGBT organization and ensuing funding from Norway, it appears as if none of the examples above can be expected to receive communication from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Summing up: whose gain?

What then may, hypothetically and briefly speaking, be the potential outcomes of introducing Norwegian outlook and funding? First, it becomes evident that there is more to LGBT rights work than ensuring the freedom of having same-sex relations without discrimination and violence as consequence. Embedded within understandings of sex and sexual relationship lie norms of how to best conduct one's sexual relations. The Norwegian outlook assumes an intelligible sexual orientation that informs who the individual wishes to have sexual relations with, and where love and affection is part of the equation. Being in a heterosexual relationship and engaging in same-sex relations simultaneously is from the Norwegian outlook not desirable – it does not fit the preferred committed relationship. After all, the principal aim of same-sex marriage is to organize non-heterosexual relations in heterosexual ways. When identity is understood as being in relation to one's sexual orientation, one is not "true" to one self if engaging in sexual relations which does not correspond to the designated sexual orientation.

Second, there is a problem of incompatibility of the sexual orientations available and the hybrid forms of expression and sexual relations seen among the human population. How do we include "difficult" individuals while maintaining the legibility of the outlook's understanding of sexual orientation? In the current logic of the four orientations, it seems additions may follow in order for the framework to maintain its legitimacy. As academic and trans-activist Riki Wilchins notes, there is a tendency to fixate on categorization:

"We sometimes risk becoming obsessed with making sure no one is left out of or unnamed in our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersexual, queer, questioning, straight-sympathetic allies youth movement – otherwise known as the LGBTIQSSAY."¹⁸⁷

In the midst of classification and calls for recognition and visibility, one sexual orientation is left untouched. Heterosexuality continues to appear as a monolithic and stable orientation that lack the nuances seen among the non-heterosexual categories and the many variations of sexual desire and relations presented here. Quoting Massad: "By inciting discourse about homosexuals where none existed before, the Gay International is in fact *heterosexualizing* a

¹⁸⁷ Riki Wilchins (2004), *Queer Theory, Gender Theory*, Los Angeles: Alyson Books, 138.

world that is being forced to be fixed by a Western binary.”¹⁸⁸ Reproducing and strengthening the homo and hetero categories may result in a continued “need” to keep to one of the two.

Third, it is difficult and arguably irresponsible to disregard problems around the demand for visibility. “Coming out of the closet” as understood within the Norwegian outlook is not necessarily desirable for those engaging in same-sex relations, or wish to engage in these, in other regions of the world. Simply referring back to Norway’s own LGBT movement and the measures and consequences taken by its members appears inappropriate if not incompatible when confronted by histories of physical and psychological consequences faced world over.

This leads to the fourth, where there is a possibility that in certain situations or contexts the demand for visibility may lead to inciting more antagonism toward those engaging in non-heterosexual relations. Within the Zambian debate in the last few years, it is argued that “homosexuality is a Norwegian conspiracy.”¹⁸⁹ Recently, in 2010, the ruling Zambian party attempted to disparage its opposition when accusing them of secretly meeting with foreign governments who wished to recognize homosexuality.¹⁹⁰ Hoad affirms that such arguments are not uncommon and must not be ridiculed as unfounded:

“When the Zambian government calls homosexuality a Norwegian conspiracy, a recognition exists of what is at stake in transnational gay and lesbian organizing. As absurd as it may sound to well-intentioned Westerners, it cannot just be dismissed as a knee-jerk xenophobic homophobia.”¹⁹¹

The increased presence of international actors demanding LGBT rights may backfire on those practicing same-sex relations or acts, where these individuals may increasingly be excluded from public life and exposed to harassment from immediate surroundings. Additionally, local power and political structures may utilize the LGBT issue as a tool or argument in their own agendas, leading to lesser ability for engaging and maintaining same-sex relationships. This development can be viewed as “inciting discourse”; increased focus on the situation of LGBT people in certain countries leads to increased negative statements and acts in response to the pressure of countries such as Norway, which again reproduces the image of a victimized individual in need of external assistance. As Foucault noted, it was through a similar process the homosexual category and subsequent identity was shaped within Western societies.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Massad, 188.

¹⁸⁹ Hoad, 83.

¹⁹⁰ The Norwegian Council for Africa, News: “Zambia: Ruling party uses gay debate to disparage opposition”, 18.10.2010, available on: <http://www.afrika.no/Detailed/19998.html>, last accessed 16.09.2012.

¹⁹¹ Hoad, 84.

¹⁹² Foucault (1978).

To sum up, the range of Norway's international LGBT commitment appears narrower than what is assumed within the Ministry's document. It does not appear as if the majority of the sexual non-conformist around the world will be eligible for attention and support within the present Norwegian outlook. And is that regrettable one may ask? Supporting sexual diversity or freedoms among human beings may not be synonymously with supporting LGBT categorization, because the latter apparently leaves out too many to do the former. A certain understanding of a homosexual and homosexuality tend to produce new excluded subjects.

Silences and dilemmas

- Opportunities for alternative problem representations

The purpose of this concluding chapter is to stress the role of assumptions for the Ministry's policy to reach its audience and receive legitimacy. Assumption is here understood as what is taken for granted and thus unexplained. Out of necessity then, with assumptions something will be silenced. Here, I will not attempt to re-write or prescribe alternative approaches to the concurrent Norwegian policy, but mark the assumptions that produce silences within the problem representation, which in turn may create debates where there have been none.

Homosexuals as policy target

A simplified version of the dominant problem representation I see in the material, would say something like this: all societies have homosexuals, where in most places they are treated badly, but Norway is one of few countries where they are better off and as a consequence of this, Norway has an international responsibility toward those societies where homosexuals are (more) suppressed (than in Norway). A multitude of assumptions assist in producing the above statement as logical. These are *inter alia* that homosexual behavior and desire exist in every society and that these individuals have a non-heterosexual orientation (read: LGBT). Their orientation represents a permanent personality trait that the person is either open or "closeted" about. This sexual minority is a suppressed minority because they essentially *are* (more than what they do) a controversial group of people in comparison to the heterosexual majority. It follows that those with a non-heterosexual orientation ought to (again and again) "come out" and make themselves visible (while potential costs) to the public, before claiming rights on the basis of a group identity.

I have so far presented the main challenge to the Ministry to lie with unwilling or incapable nations and societies. However, individuals possessing a non-heterosexual orientation are the actual recipients of our help; it is *them* we wish to give safer and better lives. Norway's policy and methods addresses other societies and their leaders, yet in the end homosexuals are the target. It is because of their very existence that our policy exists; if there were no homosexuals in other countries then Norway would not need to establish a policy and use its resources to assist in spreading tolerance *of* them. Hence, our own production of the foreign homosexual and these persons' life struggles can be said to be the cause of our policy, and also the cause of our challenge. In other words, the reason for our engagement is the production of a group of people that now are available as targets for our rights or liberation agenda.

It is also the dominating picture of the oppressed foreign homosexual that legitimizes Norwegian interference. The existence of foreign homosexuals and the tolerance they are in need of due to their troublesome situation, allows Norway's responses to be seen as benevolent and generous. Implied here is the understanding that homosexuals are an exception to a norm and in need of being accepted by society at large. As Political Scientist Wendy Brown examines in her book *Regulating Aversions*, the term "tolerance" refers to a strategy for coping with something strange or foreign. In other words, there would be no need to talk of tolerance if homosexuality was something desirable. The understanding of sexual minorities as subjects of tolerance allows us (and the like-minded) to be viewed as compassionate and liberal members of the international community, legitimizing our interference in other societies and states.¹⁹³

In addition to a lack of tolerance by some societies, there is also a lack of skill or ability by the LGBT population in the receiving country. Bacchi describes such a scenario as a 'supply-side problem'.¹⁹⁴ The sexual minorities experience shortcomings of moral, economic and structural nature, which Norway can and will give. But what is missing from this analysis of "deficiencies"; where are the silences?

Problematizing commonsense(s)

In the view of the Ministry, the violation of LGBT rights is a distinct kind of international problem. This problem representation draws upon certain assumptions that fail to be interrogated. In the following I will point at binaries and simplifications that are left unquestioned within the concurrent policy.

First, the problem representation is heavily based upon the binary homosexual versus heterosexual orientation. Homosexuals are presented as a distinct minority group that ought to be made visible because of the deep-seated assumption of identity being connected to sexual orientation. Here, however, the third analytical chapter looking into cases illustrates inconsistencies in the way the categories are deployed. In general, a person has more than one identity to call upon depending on the concurrent circumstances. Accentuating a so-called already present and irrefutable homosexual identity may exclude more individuals than not. For instance, within the problem representation, same-sex desire or relations are not something one can have or enjoy if one is not a homosexual.

To give an example, in the mid- 1990s, a USAID funded HIV project established a gay community center in Bolivia. The well-intended center ended up being little used by its target group because its presence accentuated the

¹⁹³ Wendy Brown (2006), *Regulating Aversion. Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*, Princeton University Press.

¹⁹⁴ Bacchi, 66.

social class differences among the available sexual categories - the MSM and those identifying as western “gays”. As the center was increasingly used by those individuals with an appearance associated with the western gay male, those without this appearance, yet practicing same-sex relations, were not coming to use the activities or information provisions at the center. In addition, the highlighting of sexual categories within the nearby community, as the center sought to do, led to punitive reactions from the surrounding society. Quoting one of the US citizens working on the project:

“While pro-gay, I opposed the foundation of a gay organization as I watched it established by gay-indifferent or anti-gay authoritarian structures. As I witnessed the sound and fury generated by the foundation of a gay center, the endless press coverage, the urgent call to count up the “homosexuals,” and the ultimate conversion of los gays into a target group parallel to that of “registered” prostitutes, I grew to understand the meaning of silence to the gente de ambiente [in Spanish: people of the atmosphere, signifying “homosexuals”]. Aids work still needs to be carried out in this group, but it will not be very effective until ethnographic research sensitive to subculture realities is taken into account.”¹⁹⁵

As our identities can take upon hybrid forms and articulations, sexual partner is but one aspect. Cementing sexual categories may be proven counterproductive in promoting tolerance in certain settings. The content of the category homosexual or similar categories are determined by social, cultural and historical context. Members of the to-be-marked LGBT population are already integrated within existing socio-cultural and economic contexts, not as LGBT but on the basis of other characteristics, roles and privileges. In the enthusiasm of helping, Norwegian and other international donors may downplay socio-cultural frameworks. Taking these contingencies into consideration, it is advisable to take a reflective approach when engaging in other countries with the aim of supporting sexual diversity.

The predominant notion of sexual orientation within the problem representation is also one way of conceptualizing same-sex relations and desire. Professor in Cultural Studies, Sara Ahmed, examines “what it means to be orientated?” in her book *Queer Phenomenology*. Ahmed imagines a body placed and “extended” in a changing time and place. Here, our bodies change as we move through the world and as we continue to re-orient ourselves toward or away from nearby persons or objects. The focus in Ahmed’s claim is on “direction” rather than identity, yet direction does not come by an easy shift or turn:

“To act on lesbian desire is a way of re-orientating one’s relation not just toward sexual others, but also to a world that has already “decided” how bodies should be orientated in the first

¹⁹⁵ Timothy Wright, “Gay Organizations, NGOs, and the Globalization of Sexual Identity: the Case of Bolivia”, in Jennifer Robertson, ed., (2005), *Same-Sex Cultures and Sexualities. An Anthropological Reader*, Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

place. So, it takes time and work to inhabit a lesbian body; the act of tending toward other women has to be repeated [...].¹⁹⁶

Ahmed emphasizes the need for performativity in orienting ourselves, as well as a focus on the act of “orientation”, rather than the more permanent personality trait as the Ministry’s concurrent understanding of sexual orientation signifies.¹⁹⁷

A second binary within the problem representation is the so-called unwilling and willing states. Generally speaking, a sensitive international subject is rarely fought with an absolutist’s stand. As a negotiator with foreign states and their leaders, one would assume that avoiding feeding polemics is a favored approach within international diplomacy. Yet, Norway expresses a standpoint of zero-tolerance for views that are said to discriminate against LGBT persons. Norway is, in other words, non-tolerant toward the non-tolerant. A seemingly absolutist stand of no-discussion may in turn weaken the image of Norway as considerate and accepting.

Furthermore, if homo-tolerance is repeatedly stated as the “Norwegian way” it may conceptually include sexual diversity within the Norwegian or western sphere, while potentially having opposite effects on other societies’ conceptualizations. In the introduction chapter of the thesis, I opened with a quote from an Ugandan human rights activist who questions Western countries emphasis on cases of individual homosexuals in Uganda, when there are more pressing human rights concerns. In the same news article by the Ministry on State Secretary Fiskaa’s visit to Uganda in 2011, another human rights activist points to the representation of LGBT rights and homosexuality as something foreign:

“Sara Stella from East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders explained that many Ugandans think that there were no homosexuals in Uganda before the West interfered. Several points to Western intervention as the root to sexual minorities. And the United Nations is considered in large part as a representative to promote Western values in Uganda, explained several of the people present at the meeting.”¹⁹⁸

Instead of utilizing potential local practices and identities as a starting point, the problem representation is labelling homo-tolerance as originating in the west. As seen within the Zambian debate mentioned in a previous chapter, the viewpoint that homosexuality is a Norwegian conspiracy may indeed counter the inclusion of queer subjects within the foreign state’s nation image.

Related to the willing/unwilling is the binary dependent/independent. The dependent homosexual in foreign countries is in need of representation and

¹⁹⁶ Sara Ahmed (2006), *Queer Phenomenology. Orientations, Objects, Others*, London: Duke University Press, 102.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., see chapter 2: “Sexual Orientation”.

¹⁹⁸ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2011), News: “Fiskaa tok opp homo-rettigheter i Uganda”, 09.02.2011

assistance from the independent Norwegian homosexual, or the homo-tolerant Norwegian state, to stand up to the unwilling or incapable foreign state. These mentioned binaries of willing/unwilling and dependent/independent accentuates the difference between “us” and “them”.

Third, the concept of sexual freedoms is equaled with LGBT rights within the policy. Rights of LGBT are presented as non-negotiable, self-standing and seemingly not in conflict with or in contact with other norms and expectations within societies. Within the problem representation lies an expected cultural homogeneity and universality in respect to sexual minorities (and the heterosexual majority), regardless of location in the world. What about other identifying characteristics, roles and identities among different genders, sex, ethnicities, language groups and so on – are their needs and priorities the same due to one seemingly common characteristics? One problem which may arise is the cultural differences of what constitute a man or masculinity, woman or femininity and the implication this may have on LGBT projects’ planning, implementation and evaluation. In particular as development projects tend to be formed by and for men and where women often are invincible.¹⁹⁹

Continuing on the third problematisation regarding the presentation of culture, the problem representation presents the Norwegian so-called liberal standpoint on sexual diversity as fixed. The Guidelines briefly refers to the history of the LGBT movement in Norway, but positions the battles of rights and discrimination as something in the past, and does not open up for present differences and inconsistencies within the Norwegian society.

The view that certain cultures tend to be more civilized than others are presented within the problem representation through certain developmental narratives, where modernity equals (gay) sexual freedoms. A concept such as tolerance is highly politicized and versatile. According to Wendy Brown, talk about tolerance as a norm has steadily increased since the 1980s. There is no unified meaning of “tolerance”, but more often than not it is focused around different subjects – those that call upon tolerance. Brown does not call to abandon tolerance as a concept but call for awareness of its potential political effects in producing subjects.²⁰⁰ Tolerance discourse marks certain subjects, in this case the sexual minorities, as a marginal group that needs to be tolerated, and presents itself as a characterization available only to certain groups or cultures. According to the problem representation, tolerance is readily available and expected of Norway and the disagreement Norway may have with other countries regarding sexual minorities is presented as cultural differences. These

¹⁹⁹ Turid J. Arnegaard and Hanne Svarstad, “Kjønnsperspektiver på miljø og utvikling”, in Tor a. Benjaminsen and Hanne Svarstad (2006), eds., *Samfunnsperspektiver på miljø og utvikling*, 2nd ed., Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

²⁰⁰ Brown (2006), 11.

differences mark the site where tolerance or intolerance is played out. Norway is presented as cultureless because culture is a more dominant aspect in the life of “others” in this case the unwilling or intolerant societies. In Brown’s words: “[...] “we” have culture while culture has “them,” or we *have* culture while they *are* culture. Or, we are a democracy while they are a culture.”²⁰¹ In this view, Norway is culturally neutral and culturally tolerant while its political opponents are indisposed of tolerance, and even “disposed toward barbarism.”²⁰²

Evaluation based on effects

Bacchi’s approach recommends that the policy ought to be evaluated in terms of its effects.²⁰³ The effects due to a particular problem representation are divided up as discursive, subjectification and lived effects. Discursive effects are signified as “truths” produced or reproduced by the problem representation. Examples of self-evident truths are the understanding that homosexuals have a universal distinct personality trait. As a consequence of being different than homosexuals, homosexuals are universally vulnerable and in certain countries exposure to gross human rights violations. Another reality presented is that those responsible for the problem are unwilling foreign states who deploys “irresponsible” behavior. The subjects within the representation are the marked minority in foreign countries in need of assistance, and the unmarked majority group – the western nations who are characterized as responsible. There are rather clear subject positions available both to the homosexual in need and the benevolent Norwegian state. A lived effect of the representation is the day to day stigma associated with being a marked minority in need of assistance. In the case of sexual minorities in foreign countries, being targets of international or foreign countries’ assistance may in turn conceptualize them as external to the national image.

Anything else possible?

Problematizing the problem representation as seen above illustrates that not all conditions and situations are part of the discussion. What is excluded from the discussion is for instance the content of categories and concepts, and the fact that rights promotion might feed into already present local and international antagonisms. Furthermore, the problem representation takes little note of historical and cultural contingencies and the conceptual logics of an autonomous individual’s identity. Nor must the characterization of unwillingness or dependency automatically be negative and opposing conditions. These notions among others are all excluded from the discussion around the problem to be “fixed”.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 151.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Bacchi, 238.

According to the dominant problem representation, certain activities are considered productive and worthwhile, in particular activities which bring about some sort of visibility of a distinct minority. Indirect, yet more substantial and plural activities and measures, such as promoting sexual autonomy, economic independence, preventing sexual violence, various HIV/Aids and health projects are, not brought into the discussion. Also, can it be conceived that the fight for equality may build upon other arguments and concepts than found within the Norwegian society? The notion of sexual choice and the autonomy over one's body may lead to alternative policies, where the range and number of potential subjects is far greater than the current LGBT policy. The one-size-fit-all policy The Ministry is currently promoting reduces "sexual freedom" to LGBT rights. In line with Bacchi, the Norwegian policy on LGBT rights is constrained by the ways in which we represent the problem. Bringing these silences into the discussion may cast light on possible alternative ways to conduct our foreign policy on the subject.

Afterword

“If we deploy feminist theory (or any other social theory of sexuality) prescriptively – if it is itself emancipatory – then taking a break from it is to give up on emancipation. If it’s not – if it’s about hypothesis formation and about seeking to “see the world” politically – taking a break from one hypothesis might expose you others, and so to new insights into power that are different, clashing perhaps, but possibly also emancipatory. You might face a split decision about what to think and do then, but that would be a vital and engaged moment.”

Janet Halley (2008), *Split Decisions*

This thesis explored a foreign policy for the promotion of sexual freedoms, more specifically understood as the promotion of LGBT rights. I have sought to identify how the “problem” this policy seeks to “fix” is represented, what assumptions it is based upon, the subjects within its reach, and potential dilemmas that may come as consequences. This short afterword will point to a few thoughts lingering at the termination of this journey of producing a thesis.

Norway’s promotion of sexual diversity abroad is a continuation of the Norwegian LGBT movement and its understanding of the notion “sexual orientation.” This particular framework of understanding affects who and what characterizes as a sexual minority, and which methods are preferred to promote and attain sexual diversity. As a consequence, individuals and groups are directly and indirectly targeted, and it remains to see whether these effects may be considered harmful in any way.

Currently, the policy is understood by the Norwegian state as liberal and progressive. The measures within its reach are indeed well-intended, but as the policy is based upon particular terms and framework of understanding, this thesis demonstrates a narrower commitment than argued by the Ministry. The documents from the Ministry reduce what could have been an expansion of the term sexual freedom to solemnly signify the human rights of LGBT people. As potential beneficiaries would need to match the available sexual categories and self-recognize as such, it is sound to say that many persons with same-sex relations will not be reached.

I set out by claiming no intention to discredit the work of LGBT activist and human rights defenders inside or outside Norwegian state borders, but stress the socio-cultural baggage of a particular foreign policy. There is generally a lack of situatedness from the Norwegian side, and a sense of moral and culturally superiority; seeing the movement other places as less developed and in need of assistance from a movement supposedly more advanced. In an age where both private and humanitarian actors are working side by side with states, activists for sexual minorities and others within the humanitarian sphere must ongoing guard against colonial thinking.

I cannot help wondering how a non-heterosexual individual might feel about being the objective of a small European nation barely heard of. Perhaps then, by interrogating the policy we inquire more about “us” than “them”. We may talk of others and approach with support and dialogue, yet the policy confesses a tendency of self-centering rather than an interest in something different, or same, than “us”.

Summing up, the thesis illustrates that there is a difference between advocating LGBT rights and advocating sexual diversity. Simply put, Norwegian LGBT advocacy must not be expected to equal humanities many ways of expressing love or desire.

I would like to end here on a note on possible further research. In particular, I consider it highly likely that there would be a lack of coherence between the current analysis and a potential analysis of the LGBT work done with the funds from the Ministry. Organizations seeking funds may utilize the language understood by the Ministry, but may not utilize it when the funds are already acquired. In the analysis of documents in the thesis, specific subject positions appear rather cemented, yet this rigidity of positions may not be transferable to the intended subject themselves. The subject positions and agency potentially among the persons and organizations receiving Norwegian funds may be an interesting continuation of the work done in this thesis. For instance, the mutually exclusive sexual identities – homosexual and heterosexual – may not play out as strong headed as what the Ministry’s documents may suggest. Sexual subjectivities beyond or outside the seemingly rigid binary may occur. Although taking account of various power mechanisms, it would be interesting to follow and analyze the interaction between persons, communities, and organizations receiving LGBT funding.

Different emphasis and constellation may form differing politics within their respective social, political and cultural contexts. Analyzing local situation and contexts would require different methods and theoretical approaches than used here. The situation on “the ground” may be quiet different than what I have read out of the Ministry’s documents. Our promotion of what we consider to be sexual freedoms isn’t only ours to hold, and its discussion and execution is far from being finished.

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