

Decolonizing Mo(ve)ments?

Decoloniality in/as Praxis with LGBTIQ+ Activists in Uganda



A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy by Tanja Dittfeld

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I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work, and that all assistance received in preparing this thesis and all sources have been acknowledged.

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Preface

At its core, this thesis is a response to the urgent call for epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2009, 2011b, 2011c). Without digressing into too much detail, epistemic disobedience is a decolonial concept coined to call into question the modern/colonial foundation of the control and management of knowledge that continues to the present-day, and its implications particularly for those who experienced the underside of Western imperial formations (Mignolo, 2009, 2011b, 2011c). Epistemic disobedience is thus not only oriented towards changing the content but also the terms of knowledge for ‘what ‘we’ are, what our ranking is in relation to the ideal of *humanitas* and what we have to do to be recognized as such’ (Mignolo, 2009, p. 161).

My interest in epistemic disobedience as a concept and as a praxis tied to how I came to know of the concept ‘coloniality’ and the decolonial Latin American thinkers who first coined and later developed the concept. The first time I encountered the concept of ‘coloniality’ was when I read the footnotes in Ugandan feminist legal scholar and human rights activist Sylvia Tamale’s (2020) book ‘Decolonization and Afro Feminism’, which came out towards the end of my doctoral fieldwork in Uganda in 2020. In and of itself, this might not seem a particularly noteworthy way to ‘discover’ de/colonial theory and/or praxis. However, as a Danish-born queer woman having lived, studied, and worked in multiple post-colonial countries, drawn on feminist postcolonial theory throughout my educational endeavours, and undertaken my PhD in a settler colonial country (Australia), it was baffling to realise that I had not previously encountered explicitly ‘decolonizing’ knowing, being or doing in my academic, professional, or social life. When I did, it was like a veil being lifted from my eyes, leading to the realisation that I had unwillingly been implicit and complicit in the continued oppression – and following Fanon (2005) – suppression of non-Eurocentric ways of knowing, being and doing (see e.g. Purewal & Ung Loh, 2021; Smith, 2021; Wynter, 2003).

As part of my growing engagement with decolonial theory, I have come to understand epistemic disobedience not simply as a standpoint or a perspective but as a praxis that is only possible if the re/producer of the modern/colonial episteme agrees to humbly, reflexively, and consequentially engage in ‘*consciousness decolonization*’ (Tamale, 2011, 2020) or ‘*cognitive decolonization*’ (Santos, 2018b). As such, the use of praxis in this thesis draws on the Freirean notion of praxis, which puts emphasis on critical reflection and action for liberation rather than

the material transformation of society through revolution in the case of the Marxian use of praxis.

The first step in my consciousness decolonization as the modern/colonial re/producer is arguably to confront my learnt adherence to Western philosophy's '*ego-politics of knowledge*' where ethnic, racial, gender and sexual epistemic locations and the research/er that speaks are decoupled (Grosfoguel, 2007). Drawing on mostly Chicana, black, and 'third world' feminist scholarship on situatedness of power and knowledge, Grosfoguel (2007, p. 213) explained the nexus between Western ego-politics and coloniality:

By delinking ethnic/racial/gender/sexual epistemic location from the subject that speaks, Western philosophy and sciences are able to ***produce a myth about a Truthful universal knowledge*** that covers up, that is, ***conceals who is speaking*** as well as the geo-political and body-political epistemic location ***in the structures of colonial power/knowledge from which the subject speaks*** [emphasis added].

Introducing geo-historical and body-political epistemic locations in processes of knowing, being, and doing is a move towards epistemic disobedience as it shifts the attention from what is known to who knows – or rather, who gets to know – and allows for a radical re-framing and thus decolonization of the modern/colonial apparatus of knowledge (Mignolo, 2009, pp. 160-61). That said, this preface serves to render my epistemic locations visible. Though I agree with both Grosfoguel and Mignolo's sentiments, I find it counterintuitive for the task at hand that 'location' is referred to in the singular rather than plural as most subjects, researchers or non-researchers, surely speak from epistemic locations shaped by temporal, geographical and, perhaps even, identity-based epistemic flux.

During the six years it has taken me to conclude this thesis I have, for example, written (on) in seven countries (Australia, Uganda, Denmark, Mauritius, Malaysia, Brunei, and South Africa), and prior to my thesis also worked, lived, and studied in multiple settler and postcolonial neo-colonised contexts including Uganda, Zambia, India, Thailand, and Australia. It thus seems obscure what my exact geo-political epistemic location is, and misrepresentative if I were to only front one geo-political epistemic location as influential in what and how I know. While 'producing' this thesis, my body-political epistemic location has likewise changed drastically as a result of my continuous globetrotting, of witnessing the increasing repression of the bodily autonomy of people with reproductive organs like mine (e.g., Roe vs. Wade or, even more recently, the newly instated Gag Rule), of having lived through the corona pandemic in an authoritarian state, and of having survived two brain surgeries.

Rather than singling out one geo-political or body-political location as definitive for my position as the speaker, I would argue that my affective epistemic location says more about me as the one who speaks throughout this thesis. My affective epistemic location is shaped by my longstanding relationship with/in Uganda and solidarity with/in the LGBTIQ+ movements spanning over more than a decade, both pre- and post-dating this research. My knowledge of both Uganda and LGBTIQ+ activism in the country is shaped by having lived, worked, and researched around sexual health and rights, especially related to marginalised populations such as people living with or affected by HIV/AIDS, sex workers and LGBTIQ+ peoples in increasingly oppressed civil society spaces in Uganda and globally since 2011.

During the past decade, I have witnessed Uganda being shaped by increasing levels of authoritarianism, poverty, and human rights violations, all coupled with a seemingly never-ending influx of (Western) expats and ever-expanding yet ineffective ‘development’ industry. Collaborating with Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) and Freedom and Roam Uganda (FARUG), two local LGBTIQ+ organizations in Uganda that you will read much about in the coming chapters, during the COVID-19 pandemic allowed me to witness juxtapositions between donors’ neoliberal priorities and lived realities of LGBTIQ+ people in Uganda.

The past decade’s turmoil, particularly the recent resurfacing and signing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act in early 2023, have left me disheartened by journalistic, political, and scholarly representations of and engagement with Ugandans, which more than anything seem to flicker between the ‘White Saviour Complex’ and ‘Inspiration porn’¹ rather than substantive and situated experiences and expressions. My gloomy perception was further exacerbated with the unnuanced ‘one-size-fits-all’ recommendations from the World Health Organization (WHO) and flights of the international community from Uganda at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. To me, these ‘events’ appeared to cement the salience of white over ‘Other/ed’ lives, bodies and experiences, and shed light on the hollow benevolence of so-called humanitarian and development sectors. While I speak with a strong cynicism and scepticism about the international community’s involvement in countries like Uganda, contouring my experiences and perspectives is not to say that I know *with* Uganda/ns – LGBTIQ+ or not –, nor that my attempts at epistemic disobedience have been easy. By contrast, this thesis has been one long

¹ ‘Inspiration Porn’ was coined by the late Australian disability activist Stella Young in 2004 to cover a wide array of media portrayals and uses of disability that share one or more of the following qualities: (1) sentimentality and/or pity; (2) an uplifting moral message, primarily aimed at non-disabled viewers, (3) disabled people anonymously objectified, even when they are named (Pulrang, 2019). Here, I do not refer to the depiction of people with disabilities in Uganda, but the depiction of the Other/ed, especially the (queer) African.

bumpy and at times uncomfortable exercise in unlearning the benevolent coloniality instilled in me as a student and pracademic of development studies, gender studies, and social work.

Looking back at my research collaboration with Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) and Freedom and Roam Uganda (FARUG), two local LGBTIQ+ organizations in Uganda, for this thesis, I can only agree with Ozkazanc-Pan (2012) who observed the acute importance of addressing differences in position, privilege and power in the research process and research relationships, especially in postcolonial contexts. Nonetheless, I think the impact of these differentials are often not considered beyond the immediate research/er relation. The point here is that though I, as a queer feminist woman, do have some glass ceilings preventing me from automatically being allocated to the absolute echelon of the colonial power matrix premised on Eurocentric heteropatriarchy, my experiences in Uganda have, if anything, cemented that I speak from a position of power encapsulated by my biophysical and cultural Whiteness, assumed greater economic resources, and ultimately, a nationality and nation-state that offers me protections irrespective of my non-heteronormative sexuality.

Ending this ‘unconventional’ preface, I want to re-emphasise that I do not posit to know *with* Ugandans. Nor is the research you are about to read a self-congratulatory testament of having reached decoloniality as an endpoint. By contrast, it is research fraught with me falling into what Mignolo and Walsh (2018) term as ‘*decolonial dangers*.’ While these de/colonial failures are disheartening, I find solace in the notion that decoloniality is neither fixed nor marked by a specific point of arrival, but rather by serpentine moves towards ‘*an otherwise in plural*’ (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). With this, my hope is that this research can become a part of a bigger conversation about the praxis of epistemic disobedience as well as a contribution to more suitable political, educational, and epistemic practices of supporting the concrete struggles of LGBTIQ+ activists and allies in, and perhaps even beyond, Uganda without my geo-political, bio-political, or affective epistemic locations as the subject who speaks being concealed.

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Tables & Figures

Figure 1: Criminalization of Consensual Same-Sex Acts Globally	16
Figure 2: Tolerance For People in Same-Sex Relationships in Africa 2021-2022	18
Figure 3: Social Intolerance in Uganda 2015-2022	69
Figure 4: Photovoice Group Discussion between FARUG & SMUG	103
Figure 5: Thematic Overview of Wetegeleze Exhibition	104
Figure 6: Overview of ‘Old’ and ‘New’ School Activists	146
Figure 7: Rolling Stone ‘Hang Them’ Front Page	154

Table of Contents

PREFACE	I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	V
TABLES & FIGURES	VII
ABSTRACT	XIV
CHAPTER 1: THE EPISTEMIC CRISIS OF EUROCENTRISM	1
1. Introduction	1
2. Eurocentrism as an Epistemological System	4
3. Epistemic Violence with/in Social Sciences	6
4. Decoloniality in/as Praxis for Epistemic Justice	9
4.1. Socio-Political Standpoint: Moving towards Pluriversality	9
4.2. Analytical Perspective: Seeing Absences to Support Emergences	14
4.3. Methodological Stance: Reconstituting to Knowing-With	19
5. Chapters Outline	21
6. Conclusion	22
CHAPTER 2: EPISTEMIC OPPRESSION OF AFRICA/NS	25
1. Introduction	25
2. The Decolonial Concept of Coloniality	25
3. Making and Masking Coloniality in Africa/ns	28
3.1. Coloniality of Power	28
3.2. Coloniality of Being	31
3.3. Coloniality of Gender	33
3.4. Colonialities in Social Movement Scholarship	36
4. De/Coloniality in Africa/ns' LGBTIQ+ Rights Movements	40
4.1. Worlding of LGBTIQ+ Rights	40
4.2. Global Polarisation over LGBTIQ+ Rights	42
4.3. Chrononormativity of Modern LGBTIQ+ Rights	43
4.4. (In)Visibly White, Reluctantly Queer	46

4.5.	Mr. Modern Gay	47
5.	Conclusion	49

CHAPTER 3: COLONIALITY OF/IN QUEER LAWFARE IN UGANDA **52**

1.	Introduction	52
1.1.	Life of a Kill Bill	53
1.2.	(Un)Predictable Resurrections	55
2.	Situating Uganda in the Colonial Matrix of Power	57
2.1.	Colonial Conundrum	57
2.2.	New African Leader	59
2.3.	Collision Course	62
3.	Transversal (Political) Homophobia in Uganda	63
3.1.	Transnational Impositions	63
3.2.	Purposeful (State) Strategy	65
3.3.	Social and Cultural Logics of Homophobia	69
4.	Dangers of Queer Lawfare for Ugandan LGBTQ+ Activists	73
4.1.	Erodes Ugandan LGBTQ+ Activists' History	73
4.2.	Impedes Movement Building & Sustaining	76
4.3.	Presents a Single Solution	79
4.4.	Fixes LGBTQ+ Rights in Time	82
5.	Conclusion	83

CHAPTER 4: KNOWING-WITH IN/AS PRAXIS **85**

1.	Introduction	85
2.	Principles of Decolonizing Methodology	86
3.	Praxis of Decolonizing Methodology	87
3.1.	Reciprocal Observation	89
3.2.	Research/er Reciprocity	90
3.3.	Sensory Knowledges	91
3.4.	Curiosity	92
4.	Enacting the Research Collaboration	93
4.1.	Accompaniment	93

4.2.	PhotoVoice	94
4.3.	Photo-Elicitation	96
4.4.	Conversational Interviews	98
5.	Ending the Collaboration?	100
5.1.	Reflexive Thematic Analysis	101
5.2.	(Re-)Presentation	105
5.3.	Distribution/Dissemination	107
6.	Conclusion	108
 CHAPTER 5: WETEGELEZE – ‘PAY ATTENTION!’		110
1.	Introduction	110
2.	What is LGBTIQ+ Activism?	111
2.1.	Solidarity & Support	111
2.2.	Voice & Visibility	115
2.3.	Resistance & Resilience	119
3.	Challenges & Hindrances to LGBTIQ+ Activism	123
3.1.	Violence	123
3.2.	Isolation	125
3.3.	Legislation	127
3.4.	Burn-Out	130
3.5.	Alcohol Abuse	131
3.6.	Monetisation of Activism	132
4.	Strengths & Opportunities for LGBTIQ+ Activisms	133
4.1.	Acceptance	133
4.2.	Community	137
4.3.	Love, Unity, & Hope	139
5.	Explanatory Note	143
5.1.	COVID-19	143
5.2.	COSF-20	144
5.3.	Social Media Activism	144
5.4.	Aluta Continua	145

CHAPTER 6: BECOMING AN LGBTIQ+ ACTIVIST **146**

1. Introduction	146
2. The Old School Activists	147
2.1. Mama Mia: The Social Foundation	147
2.2. Behind the Mask: Out of the Shadows	149
2.3. Homo Terror: The Cost of Visibility	153
3. The New School Activists	155
3.1. Others like Me	155
3.2. Activist by Accident and by Necessity	158
3.3. A New Normal	161
4. Conclusion	164

CHAPTER 7: BEING & BEYOND AN LGBTIQ+ ACTIVIST **166**

1. Introduction	166
2. Betwixt Consultants & Copycat Mentality	166
2.1. Not so Proud: The Failure to localize the LGBTIQ+ Movement	170
2.2. Lost in the Bill: Funding Decriminalization but not Social Acceptance	171
2.3. Like the US: Competition within the LGBTIQ+ community	174
3. Resisting Victimhood	176
3.1. Reappropriating Visibility	176
3.2. Redirecting the LGBTIQ+ Movement in Uganda	179
3.3. Reclaiming the Personal	186
4. Conclusion	188

CHAPTER 8: PERSONAL & IDEOLOGICAL BEDFELLOWS OF ALLYSHIP **190**

1. Introduction	190
2. Rethinking Reasons for LGBTIQ+ Allyship	190
2.1. Anger against Injustices	190
2.2. Room for 'Bad Women'	193
3. Coalition, Collisions, & Costs of Allyship	196
3.1. The Rise of the Coalition of Civil Society Organizations	196
3.2. The Implications of Pretence LGBTIQ+ Allyship	198

3.3.	The Costs of LGBTIQ+ Allyship	200
4.	Rights or Ubuntu?	205
4.1.	The Letter of the Law or the Letter for LGBTIQ+ Liberation	206
4.2.	Changing the Narrative	209
4.3.	Humanising the LGBTIQ+ Movement	214
5.	Conclusion	217
CHAPTER 9: DECOLONIALITY IN/AS PRAXIS REVISITED		219
1.	Introduction	219
2.	Accompaniment as a Rearguard Researcher	220
2.1.	Extracting without Reciprocating	220
2.2.	Understanding Relationality Overall	221
2.3.	Enacting Pragmatic Solidarity	223
3.	Co-production for Change	225
3.1.	Recentring Voice	225
3.2.	Unveiling Power Dynamics Within	225
3.3.	Enabling Rethinking	226
3.4.	Shifting Relationships	228
3.5.	Setting aside Words	229
4.	Subject(ivity) of Elicitation	230
4.1.	Resisting Homogeneity of Experiences and Expressions	230
4.2.	Capturing the Struggles	231
4.3.	Telling Other/ed Stories	233
4.4.	Querying Sensory Knowledge	235
5.	Between Curiosity and Surprise	237
5.1.	Moving from Moments to Movement?	237
5.2.	Enabling Surprising Conversations	239
6.	Conclusion	240
CHAPTER 10: ALUTA CONTINUA		243
1.	Introduction	243
2.	Decolonizing Solidarity	244

3. Doing the Solidaric Work with/out Guidance	247
3.1. Engaging with Differences	248
3.2. Becoming the Accompanier	249
3.3. Circumventing the Double Colonial Move	250
3.4. Developing a Continuum of Engagement	251
3.5. Pursuing Legal Intersections	252
3.6. Rethinking & Remembering Struggles Together	253
3.7. Providing Flexible Funding and Capacity-Building	253
4. Embracing Ubuntu as an Alternative Epistemological System	254
5. Limitations of the Research/er	256
6. Decolonial Futures Ahead?	258
REFERENCES	262
APPENDICES	294
Appendix 1: Participant Information Statement	294
Appendix 2: Consent Script for Participant Observation	301
Appendix 3: Consent Script for Wetegeleze Group Interviews	304
Appendix 4: Consent Script for Individual Interviews	307
Appendix 5: Final Ethics Approval	310
Appendix 6: Relevant Ethics Approvals and Correspondence	312
Appendix 7: Complementarity between Reflexive Thematic Analysis & Photovoice	318
Appendix 8: Overview of LGBTIQ+ Allies	319

Abstract

Anchored in collaboration with two LGBTIQ+ organizations in Uganda, this thesis explores the possibilities of recentring the epistemic agency and authority of Africa/ns' knowledges about LGBTIQ+ activism(s). As such, this thesis seeks to confront and delink from the '*epistemic crisis*' of Eurocentrism whereby the Eurocentric paradigm as an epistemological system produces 'a persistent exclusion of marginalized subjects from contributing to our collective epistemic resources for interpreting our experiences and the world' (Posholi, 2020, p. 296). Here, the epistemic crisis refers to the incongruity between the increasingly visible and vocal LGBTIQ+ activists across Africa, and their near invisibility – or mis- and underrepresentation – within the growing body of social sciences scholarship positing to engage with LGBTIQ+ activism(s) and social movements globally. By contrast, this thesis seeks to elevate LGBTIQ+ activists and allies' counternarratives to the pervasive monolithic story 'that activism does not exist and that there is only homophobia' within Africa/ns (Ndashe, 2013, p. 156).

While the epistemic crisis is hardly acknowledged by social sciences research/ers, feminist and decolonial thinkers have convincingly and consistently argued that the crisis presents a hermeneutical injustice in need of epistemic decolonization. To this end, this thesis is an exploration of choosing decoloniality in/as praxis as the socio-political standpoint, analytical perspective, and methodological stance defining my research/er positionality and practices as an option among many research options (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). As a foundation, the goal of the decolonial option is to confront and delink from the universality of knowledge tantamount to the Eurocentric epistemological system, a twofold endeavour which is articulated as the negative and positive project of decolonization throughout the thesis.

Drawing on the concepts of coloniality of power, gender, and being, this thesis first provides an analysis of the constitutive elements of the Eurocentric paradigm that fuel the persistent exclusion of Africa/ns' LGBTIQ+ activism(s) in and by social sciences research/ers, and further argues that this exclusion exposes LGBTIQ+ activists to other types of violences and exclusions in Uganda (Pérez, 2019). This thesis secondly attempts to recentre the epistemic agency, and authority of LGBTIQ+ activists and allies in Uganda through the methods of accompaniment, photovoice, photo-elicitation interviews and conversational interviews.

Through these horizontal research practices, LGBTIQ+ activists and allies depicted and articulated LGBTIQ+ activism(s) in Uganda as a praxis of knowing, being, and doing anchored in solidarity, voice, acceptance, community, love, unity, hope, resilience, resistance, yet challenged by experiences of violence, isolation, burn-out, substance abuse, (in)visibility, and the monetisation of activism. LGBTIQ+ activists and allies thus enunciated strong counter stories to the Eurocentric homogenisation, victimisation, and pacification of LGBTIQ+ activists, and to the West's self-construed positioning as a productive, collaborative, and solidaric ally to the LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda. Based on these counter stories, this thesis concludes by proposing two pathways for decolonizing solidarity and building a decolonial future that responds to the concrete struggles of LGBTIQ+ activists and allies in Uganda: First, doing the personal and political work with/in transnational LGBTIQ+ activism, and second, embracing Ubuntu as an alternative epistemological system. Each pathway further offers tangible actions that those committed to decolonizing solidarity could take into their epistemic, political and/or ethical projects for decolonization.

Key words: Decoloniality, Praxis, Epistemic Violence, LGBTIQ+ Activism, Uganda, Coloniality, Eurocentrism, Ubuntu

The Epistemic Crisis of Eurocentrism

1. Introduction

While resistance to the rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Intersex, Queer and other non-heteronormative identities, expressions, and bodies (LGBTIQ+) is a global phenomenon (Ayoub & Stoeckl, 2024), it has been particularly prominent in former British colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa over the last two decades (Epprecht, 2013; Goddard, 2004; Gomes da Costa Santos & Waites, 2022; Kollman & Waites, 2009). In tandem, LGBTIQ+ activists are becoming more visible and heard across Africa (see e.g., Baisley, 2015; Epprecht, 2013; Gomes da Costa Santos & Waites, 2022; Hildebrandt, 2014; Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018). Though important strides have been made to draw attention to Africa/ns' LGBTQ+ activists (see e.g. Lennox & Waites, 2013; Nicol et al., 2018; Sloomaeckers & Bosia, 2023), Africa/ns' remains largely absent or, if included, cast in the role of either the villain(s) or victim(s) and hardly ever as the protagonist(s) of and in LGBTIQ+ activism(s) or movements in the growing body of social sciences scholarship that posits to engage with LGBTIQ+ activism(s) and social movements globally (see e.g., Altman & Symons, 2016; Stulberg, 2018; Thoreson, 2014, 2020). With this, one monolithic story has come to pervade Africa/ns' LGBTIQ+ activism(s), and it is 'that activism does not exist and that there is only homophobia' (Ndashe, 2013, p. 156).

This story, however, does not resonate with the academic writings, political analysis, life testimonies, conversations, and artistic works of Africans engaging in the struggle for LGBTIQ+ liberation in Africa (see e.g., Abbas & Ekine, 2013). Though multifaceted, the contributions from Africa/ns appear united in their resistance *against* homogenising Africa as a homophobic continent, and African LGBTIQ+ activists as helpless and passive receivers of 'modernity' from the 'West'. Instead, there is a widespread call *for* exploring the diverse geo-historical, situated, and embodied expressions and experiences of Africa/ns' LGBTIQ+ activism(s) (Abbas & Ekine, 2013).

The incongruency between most social sciences scholarship and the situated perspectives of Africans on LGBTIQ+ activism(s) in Africa is arguably an expression of what Lerato Posholi (2020) named the '*epistemic crisis*' of Eurocentrism at the heart of calls for epistemic decolonization. Within philosophy, Eurocentrism can simply be understood as the

(nearly) exclusive attention to a European canon of philosophical writing and thinking (Alcoff, 2017). Drawing on both Miranda Fricker's (2007) seminal work on '*epistemic injustice*' and Kristie Dotson's (2012, 2014) conceptualisation of '*epistemic oppression*', Posholi (2020, p. 296) subsequently posited that the epistemic crisis is a function of the Eurocentric paradigm as an epistemological system that produces 'a persistent exclusion of marginalized subjects from contributing to our collective epistemic resources for interpreting our experiences and the world.' The epistemic crisis is considered a form of '*hermeneutical injustice*' (Posholi, 2020), which refers to 'the injustice of having some significant area of one's social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to hermeneutical marginalization' (Fricker, 2007, p. 158). Applied here, the argument is that Africa/ns' LGBTIQ+ activists' social experiences of knowing and doing LGBTIQ+ activisms are, generally, obscured from the 'collective' body of social sciences scholarship because of their hermeneutic marginalisation.

While there seems to be a reluctance to both acknowledge and address the specifically epistemic side of in/justice within and by social sciences research/ers (Dotson, 2014, 2018; Pérez, 2019; Pohlhaus, 2020; Posholi, 2020), post- and decolonial thinkers have convincingly demonstrated the power of epistemologies to not only transform worlds but also to create them, and, by extension, underscored that these worlds are predictably and reliably deadly for many people (Berenstain et al., 2022, p. 283). Speaking specifically about colonial epistemologies, Berenstain et al. (2022, p. 283) illuminated this point:

Epistemologies can turn sacred land into 'resources' to be bought, sold, exploited, and exhausted [...]. Colonial epistemologies can remove peoples from their lands and lands from their peoples and then disappear the acts of violence they perform by suggesting that things couldn't have been any other way. They can reliably promote and produce Black, Brown, and Indigenous death and obscure their role in its production under the guise of procedural fairness.

Expanding upon the previous argument, the hermeneutical marginalisation of Africa/ns' LGBTIQ+ activists and activisms can be viewed as a product of most social sciences research/ers being both product and re/producer of colonial epistemologies. For those uneasy with this dual role and the plethora of affects and effects on those epistemically marginalised, epistemic decolonization presents one pertinent option for the epistemic reconfiguration necessary to support rather than suppress 'the ongoing serpentine movement toward possibilities of other modes of being, thinking, knowing, sensing, and living; that is an otherwise in plural' at the heart of definitions and demands for decoloniality as articulated by for example Mignolo and Walsh (2018, p. 81). Considering this conceptualisation of

decoloniality, the contradistinction to ‘an otherwise in plural’ is the singularity of being, thinking, knowing, sensing, and living entrenched and enforced by Eurocentrism as an epistemological system.

That said, it is important to note that though individual research/ers can be implicit and complicit in colonial epistemologies (Purewal & Ung Loh, 2021), hermeneutical injustice is a structural phenomenon with no individual perpetrator (Hutton & Cappellini, 2022; Pohlhaus, 2020; Posholi, 2020). Epistemic decolonization therefore arguably entails two intermingled projects; a negative and a positive (Landström, 2024; Mitova, 2020; Pohlhaus, 2020; Posholi, 2020). Where the negative project involves critically exposing and eliminating the unreflective and latent Eurocentrism embedded within our dominant knowledge production and possession practices, the positive project entails proactively recentring and utilising epistemic agency, authority, and resources of marginalised knowers and their knowledge systems in the advancement of knowledge in various fields (*ibid.*). In concurrence with these perspectives, the overarching aim of this thesis is twofold.

Working towards the negative project of decolonization, the first aim of this thesis is to provide a feminist decolonial analysis of the constitutive elements of the Eurocentric paradigm that has led to the persistent exclusion of Africa/ns’ LGBTIQ+ activists and activisms in social sciences research/ers, and of the harms that persistent exclusion causes in the lived experiences of LGBTIQ+ activists and allies in Uganda. Building on this analysis, the second aim and thus the positive project of decolonization for this thesis is to explore ways of recentring the epistemic agency and authority of Africa/ns’ knowledges about LGBTIQ+ activisms unencumbered by the disembodied, unlocated neutrality and objectivity characteristic of the Eurocentric. Given that epistemic decolonization calls for a performative, dialogic, and dialectical methodology (Darder, 2008, 2015; Datta, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008), the positive project of decolonization is anchored in a research collaboration with two LGBTIQ+ organizations in Kampala, Uganda, that took place from March 2020 to January 2021. Within this research collaboration, LGBTIQ+ activists’ and their appointed allies’ social experiences were explored through the methods of accompaniment, photovoice, photo-elicitation and qualitative interviews.

To establish frameworks for the negative and positive projects of decolonization throughout this thesis, this opening chapter proceeds in six main parts. First, I unfold the position that the Eurocentric paradigm is an epistemological system constituted by and constitutive of hermeneutical injustice in abstract terms. In the second part, I turn to the particular and seek to exemplify the claim that the Eurocentric epistemological system

facilitates epistemic violence in relation to Africa/ns' LGBTIQ+ activisms, and sketch possible implications for decolonizing research/ers. In the third part, I establish a socio-political standpoint, analytical perspective, and methodological stance of decoloniality in/as praxis as a framework for this thesis to further the negative and positive project of decolonization. In doing so I delineate the immediate inferences for adopting this approach towards LGBTIQ+ activisms in Uganda. In the fourth part, I reflect on the meaning of confronting the Eurocentric egopolitics of knowledge in/as a researcher embarking on decolonizing myself and my research. In the final two parts of this chapter, I firstly outline the remaining chapters of this thesis and offer some concluding remarks pertinent to this and the coming chapters.

2. Eurocentrism as an Epistemological System

The Eurocentric paradigm arguably constitutes an epistemological system (Berenstain et al., 2022; Dotson, 2014, 2018). Epistemological systems refer to 'operative, instituted social imaginaries, habits of cognition, attitudes towards knowers and/or any relevant sensibilities that encourage or hinder the production [and possession] of knowledge' (Dotson, 2014, p. 121). The Eurocentric paradigm has its origin in the formation of European colonial empires during which Europe/ans were positioned as 'both the vanguard of the human race *and* as achieving a universal form of thought' (Alcoff, 2017, p. 399). The Eurocentric paradigm is both constituted by and constitutive of a '*paradigm of difference*' (Mudimbe, 1994, p. xii) whereby knowers and knowledge systems were, and are, included or excluded depending on their proximity or distance to Eurocentric notions of existence, analysis, and thought (Mignolo, 1999, 2011a; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Quijano, 2000b). Those excluded because of their distance – or difference – from Eurocentric notions of existence, analysis, and thought are conventionally referred to as the 'Other' (Said, 1979), the 'Subaltern' (Spivak, 2010) or as 'Indigenous people' (Smith, 2021) by post- and decolonial thinkers. The existence and persistence of the epistemic crisis caused by the exclusionary mechanisms of the Eurocentric paradigm can arguably be understood as the most far-reaching, damaging, and yet the least understood effects of colonialism (Mignolo, 2011a, 2012a, 2012b).

While multidirectional and interdisciplinary, the growing field of decolonial scholarship largely propelled by Indigenous and Latin American activists, practitioners and researchers concomitantly argued that the current Eurocentric epistemological system is produced by and productive of what has been conceptualised as the '*coloniality of knowledge*' (Adams, 2014; Barnes, 2018; Bhattacharya, 2013; Grosfoguel, 2011; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mohanty, 1988, 2003a; Swadener & Mutua, 2007; Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012; Zavala,

2013). From this perspective, the world is still ‘terraformed by colonial epistemologies and their corresponding generation of normative practices, the production of epistemic oppression is the default’ (Berenstain et al., 2022, p. 284).

Research/ers are not the only reason for the perseverance and resilience of the Eurocentric paradigm. However, as enunciated by Edward Said (1979, p. 2), research is one mode of the many ‘institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles’ that supported the entrenchment of Eurocentrism and thus the epistemic oppression of the Other/ed. Writing from ‘the vantage point of the colonized,’ Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith echoed Said’s assertion but added the visceral effects of the inextricable link between research/er and European colonialism and imperialism for Indigenous people:

The word itself, *‘research’, is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world’s vocabulary*. When mentioned in many Indigenous contexts, it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful. It is so powerful that Indigenous people even write poetry about research. The ways in which scientific *research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world’s colonized peoples*. It is a history that still offends the deepest sense of our humanity (Smith, 2021, p. 1) [emphasis added].

As one of the ‘modes’ of Eurocentrism, social science research/ers and their institutions are effectively – albeit not necessarily knowingly – implicit and complicit in ‘*epistemic violence*.’ For social science research/ers, the problem with epistemic violence is that it renders the current dominant Eurocentric epistemic resources inadequate to theorise and understand the world in all its pluriversality, and subsequently inept to address key challenges in the world (Posholi, 2020). This inadequacy and ineptitude can lead not only to further epistemic harm but also to exposure of those Other/ed to other types of violences and exclusions (Pérez, 2019).

Though not having coined the term, epistemic violence is commonly associated with Indian postcolonial (feminist) diasporic theorist Gayatri C. Spivak (2010, p. 280) and taken to mean ‘the remotely orchestrated, far-flung, and heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other.’ Spivak’s analysis of epistemic violence is pivotal to epistemic decolonization as it pinpoints the specifically epistemic side of colonialism of disappearing and dismissing local or provincial knowledge and knowers and instead privileging Eurocentric knowledge and knowers (Dotson, 2011). In a more contemporary articulation, Moira Pérez (2019, p. 1) defined epistemic violence as a political, ethical and epistemic phenomenon describing ‘the different ways in which violence is exercised in relation to the production, circulation and recognition

of knowledge: the denial of epistemic agency for certain subjects, the unacknowledged exploitation of their epistemic resources, their objectification, among many other.’

While this definition does not place epistemic violence as strongly into a colonial framework as Spivak (1988) did, it is significant for understanding what epistemic decolonization means as it underscores that even if/when the Other/ed have epistemic agency and resources, ‘the issue is that these do not gain appropriate epistemic authority and collective uptake, and this warps our attempts at making sense of the world’ (Posholi, 2020, p. 293). Speaking to this point, Dotson (2011) outlined two practices of silencing that are constitutive of epistemic violence as ‘*testimonial quieting*’ and ‘*testimonial smothering*.’ In effect, even when the Other/ed may be ‘allowed’ to produce knowledges, the circulation and recognition of knowledges produced might be hampered by epistemic violence. Epistemic decolonization therefore involves a ‘*tripartite structure*’ to ensure that the Other/ed have epistemic agency, authority, and uptake (Landström, 2024).

Up to this point, the epistemic crisis has been outlined by drawing mostly on analytic feminist epistemology. Within a project that aims for epistemic decolonization, this could of course be critiqued for utilising epistemic resources within the Eurocentric paradigm and thus inadvertently reinforcing the epistemic crisis by excluding epistemic resources outside of this paradigm. However, despite substantial differences between analytic feminist epistemology and decolonial and African epistemologies, I, in line with Landström (2024), argue that they intersect in ways that can be utilised in theorising and exposing unjust epistemic practices, relations and structures and in developing counter strategies. Nevertheless, the next section predominantly draws on decolonial and African/ist thinkers to unfold the epistemic violence perpetuated against Africa/ns’ LGBTIQ activists. My presumption is that these thinkers’ experiences of being Other/ed academically and/or socially arguably render them less inclined to cultivate and maintain ‘*epistemic ignorance*’ (Hutton & Cappellini, 2022) or ‘*wilful hermeneutical ignorance*’ (Pohlhaus, 2020) supported by and supportive of the Eurocentric epistemological system than those privileged by this system.

3. Epistemic Violence with/in Social Sciences

The starting point for understanding epistemic ignorance, whether wilful or not, within social sciences research/ers, requires examination of some of the (Eurocentric) positions articulated about epistemic marginalisations of Africa/ns’ LGBTIQ+ activists and activisms. In one of the few studies of LGBTIQ+ activisms in Africa, Namibia and South Africa specifically, Currier (2012) suggested that scholarly neglect of LGBTIQ+ activisms in Africa

can largely be ascribed to hostile socio-political conditions forcing LGBTIQ+ activists to carefully cultivate strategies of (in)visibility, which renders much of their activism invisible in public spaces and thus to the naked (scholarly) eye. Strategic (in)visibility does however not seem to adequately explain the epistemically marginal/ised position of Africa/n LGBTIQ+ activists in and by social science research/ers. After all, despite LGBTIQ+ movements in Africa, and the so-called global South more broadly, increasingly adopting and appropriating the language of LGBTIQ+ rights as universal human rights and visibility-oriented strategies ranging from public advocacy to Pride festivals (Svensson et al., 2024), they are still largely overlooked within social science scholarship using a social movement perspective as pointed out by several scholars engaging with social movements globally (Baisley, 2015; Eckert, 2017; Ellis & Van Kessel, 2009; Rucht, 2017). While Currier's (2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015) continuous work is an example of Africa/ns' LGBTIQ+ activists not being overlooked, the suggestion of strategic (in)visibility being one of the main reasons for the mis- and underrepresentation of Africa/ns' LGBTIQ+ activists appears to inadvertently illuminate the imperceptibility of epistemic violence, which makes epistemic violence so hard to conceptualize and address (Pérez, 2019).

While there are noteworthy exceptions such as Currier (2009, 2011, 2012, 2014) and others (see e.g., Lennox & Waites, 2013; Nicol et al., 2018; Sloomaeckers & Bosia, 2023), the continued mis- and underrepresentation of Africa/ns' LGBTIQ+ activists could, following Tlostanova and Mignolo (2012, pp. 134-35), suggest that social sciences research/ers are too zombified by 'the rhetoric of modernity and its knowledge matrix' to look for, or perhaps even conceive of, Africa/ns LGBTIQ+ activists and activists that do not mirror the Eurocentric modes and modalities of LGBTIQ+ activists and activists. The growing number of scholars attesting to the continued pervasiveness of Eurocentrism within social sciences more broadly (see e.g., Ake, 2012; Alvares, 2011; Joseph et al., 1990; Mehmet, 1990; Oppong, 2014; Wallerstein, 1997) would further support the notion of the epistemic crisis as a result of research/ers still being products and productive of – or zombified by – Eurocentrism.

If we concede to this charge of zombification, most social sciences research/ers can be seen to showcase the 'underside' of modernity that was established during Europea/ans' colonialisms (Mignolo, 2011a) and premised on the inferiorisation of Indigenous ("native") histories, cultures, and languages (Grosfoguel, 2007; Loomba, 2000; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a; Smith, 2021; Tamale, 2020). The underside of modernity appears traceable throughout most social science research/ers on LGBTIQ+ activists in Africa but also gender and sexuality in Africa more broadly. First, of the little scholarship on African LGBTQ+ activists that does

exist, most tends to be geographically limited mainly to Zimbabwe, South Africa, Malawi and Namibia (see e.g., Currier, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2015; Epprecht, 1998, 2008, 2013), the authorship – at least in terms of publications – geopolitically tilted towards non-Africans situated outside of Africa, the focus legalistic, and conceptual frameworks Euro-American (Bennett, 2017; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2017, 2018a, 2018b, 2021, 2023b; Ndlovu-Gatsheni & Ndlovu, 2021; Ndlovu-Gatsheni et al., 2022; Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015; Tamale, 2020).

Second, of the more expansive scholarship on Africa/n genders and sexualities, an increasing number of especially African/ist feminist scholars similarly raise concerns about it being primarily published and distributed by foreign-based non-Africans, too focused on legal or health (HIV) components of sexuality, devoid of historicity and historiography, produced through colonial research practices and cloaked in deeply held colonial assumptions of gender/sexuality categories of analysis (Abbas & Ekine, 2013; Arnfred, 2004; Arnfred & Adomako Ampofo, 2010; Bennett, 2017; Corrêa et al., 2008; Jackman, 2016; Mbasalaki, 2020; Nyanzi, 2013; Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015; Tamale, 2008, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2020). These examples of epistemic violence can, as aptly remarked by Ugandan feminist scholar Sylvia Tamale (2011), be considered a reflection of geopolitical power differences rather than academic superiority (re)produced through colonial epistemologies.

While hardly ever acknowledged as a specific site of violence within the humanities and social sciences, there is a clear social justice imperative for confronting epistemic violence as it can not only affect marginalised individuals and communities in their epistemic exchanges but also expose them to other types of violences and exclusions (Pérez, 2019, p. 1). Epistemic violence can harm LGBTIQ+ activism in Africa by obscuring ‘the diversity and contextual specificity of queer African formations past, present and future’ (Ekine, 2013, p. 85), and thereby subordinating the interests of local LGBTIQ+ peoples and activists to those of external actors, reinforcing racial divides within the global movement, and drowning out progressive voices and developments in Africa (Ndashe, 2013, p. 158). *Rewriting and rerihting* (Smith, 2021) the epistemes and existences displaced by research/ers constituted by and constitutive of the Eurocentric modern paradigm calls for epistemic decolonization of, in and by the research/er. In the African context, this, according to Mbembe (2015, p. 16), entails ‘rejecting the assumption that the modern West is the central root of Africa’s consciousness and cultural heritage. It is about rejecting the notion that Africa is merely an extension of the West.’

Though the social justice imperative for epistemic decolonization is clear, many researchers might be deterred by the obscurity of what it means to move beyond thinking to doing decolonizing research. Without negating the important advances that are being made to

identify the shared principles and best practices of decolonizing research, for example, through the lens of sexual health (Stevens-Uninsky et al., 2023), the problem is that most scholarly discussions of epistemic decolonization rarely move beyond the theoretical foundations and principles to the practical applications (Simonds & Christopher, 2013).

The very notion that a fixed, linear, and universal roadmap for decolonizing research/ers is possible, necessary, or even desirable would however contradict the performative, dialogic, and dialectical methodology articulated by decolonial thinkers (Darder, 2008, 2015; Datta, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Instead, decoloniality convokes and evokes praxis. Taking great inspiration from the two decolonial thinkers, Mignolo and Walsh (2018), the approach adopted here is correspondingly the Freirean-inspired notion of decoloniality in/as praxis as a socio-political standpoint, an analytical perspective, and a methodological stance. The next section outlines the framework adopted for effectively and meaningfully recentring Africa/ns' knowers and knowledges about LGBTIQ+ activisms in Africa within this research.

4. Decoloniality in/as Praxis for Epistemic Justice

While it might be unconventional to provide a detailed theoretical positioning this early in a doctoral thesis, I consider it an important step towards unveiling but also counteracting epistemic violence, insofar as possible, in my own epistemic practices. This approach is inspired by Pérez (2019, p. 9) who contended that as a 'slow violence' characterised by its capillarity, imprecise temporality and quasi-independence of specific perpetrators, epistemic violence is 'almost invisible for those who do not systematically reflect on their own epistemic practices, which in turn results in a remarkable lack of attention in the public agenda.' To this end, the next three sections correspondingly outline the theoretical tenets and practical implications of adopting decoloniality in/as praxis as a socio-political standpoint, an analytical perspective, and a methodological stance within this thesis.

4.1. Socio-Political Standpoint: Moving towards Pluriversality

To understand the socio-political standpoint of decoloniality in/as praxis, it is necessary to first outline the meaning of the highly contested term 'decoloniality.' In almost poetic juxtapositions to the processes of othering constitutive of coloniality, Mignolo and Walsh (2018, p. 81) articulated decoloniality as 'the ongoing serpentine movement toward possibilities of other modes of being, thinking, knowing, sensing, and living; that is an otherwise in plural' and Thambinathan and Kinsella (2021) as embracing 'other(ed) ways of knowing.' Decolonizing research is here hence taken to mean a commitment to *'epistemic*

freedom’ or epistemic justice, which is not to be confused or conflated with academic freedom. Drawing on Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018b, p. 4) explained that whereas academic freedom is about institutional autonomy of universities and rights to express critical and diverse ideas, epistemic freedom is about ‘*cognitive justice*’ as it concerns the very content of what can be expressed and on whose terms. To Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018b), epistemic freedom in Africa is thus about having the possibility to exist, analyse, think, and write unencumbered by Eurocentrism.

As evident in the definition offered by Mignolo and Walsh (2018), the notion of ‘possibilities’ is central in most decolonial thinkers’ conceptualisations of decoloniality. The decolonial possibility of a world with epistemic freedom in other words presents an ‘*embryonic reality*’ (Santos, 2016, pp. 182-83) but also a strong sense of hope (Santos, 2018b; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). As a socio-political standpoint, decoloniality in/as praxis thus becomes twofold by firstly daring us to employ the ‘*decolonial imaginary*’ (Pérez, 1999) whereby we think ‘an otherwise’ as possible, and secondly take responsibility and action for the rewriting, rereighting, and reconstituting of positionalities, perspectives, and practices in, by and for research/ers. As epistemic violence can affect individuals, concepts, approaches and even entire worldviews (Pérez, 2019, p. 6), Maldonado-Torres (2017, p. 435) similarly contended that research/ers must adopt the ‘*decolonial attitude*’ which ‘is as much about decolonizing the sciences (conceptions of subject, object, and method) as about decolonizing society and the world (the world understood as both existing structures and the horizon of possibilities) through forms of individual and collective agency that led to health in subjects and communities.’ While conceptually not overlapping, the decolonial attitude is here taken to mean the same as working towards the previously outlined negative and positive project of decolonization.

Adopting the decolonial attitude means identifying and challenging underlying assumptions, motivations and values that inform research practices and processes (Smith, 2021). Eurocentric research/er practices and processes are arguably encapsulated in five monocultures of valid knowledge, linear time, social classification, the superiority of the universal and the global, and capitalist productivity that together produce what Santos (2016, pp. 172-75; 2018b, p. 26) referred to as ‘nonexistence’ such as the marginalisation of Africa/ns’ LGBTIQ+ activisms outlined above. Epistemic decolonization should not be mistaken for the inclusion of ‘Southern’ epistemologies as a mere corrective to the hegemony of ‘Northern’ scholarship, a turn to subalternity (Connell, 2020) nor as a rejection of ‘everything Western *in toto*’ (Tamale, 2020, p. 22). Instead, it should be taken as a call ‘to name, recognise and then dismantle the apparatus of coloniality so deeply embedded within Western [feminism’s]

registers in order to move towards epistemic change (Purewal & Ung Loh, 2021, p. 128) and thus the ‘socialization of power’ (Tamale, 2020, p. 22). Making visible the marginal/ised position of Africa/ns’ LGBTIQ+ activisms in social sciences, putting emphasis on citing post- and decolonial African/ist thinkers, and producing knowledge in collaboration with Ugandan LGBTIQ+ activists and allies are all part of my endeavour of adopting a decolonial attitude, which will be continuously expanded upon in coming chapters.

Embracing Pluriversality

Oriented towards an otherwise in plural, embracing decoloniality in/as praxis as a socio-political stance entails moving towards pluriversality and not universality (Mignolo, 2020, p. 616). As put by Grosfoguel (2007, p. 212):

(1) a decolonial epistemic perspective requires ***a broader canon of thought than simply the Western canon*** (including the Left Western canon); (2) that a truly universal decolonial perspective ***cannot be based on an abstract universal*** [...], but would have to be ***the result of the critical dialogue between diverse critical epistemic/ethical/political projects*** towards a pluriversal as oppose to a universal world; (3) that decolonization of knowledge would require to take seriously the epistemic perspective/cosmologies/insights of critical thinkers from the Global South ***thinking from and with subalternized racial/ethnic/sexual spaces and bodies*** [emphasis added].

Translating this move against universality has several linguistic, conceptual, and positional implications for this research/er.

Integrating different Critical Perspectives

As stated above, decoloniality requires critical dialogue between diverse critical epistemic/ethical/political projects towards a pluriversal as opposed to a universal world. Here, it is important to note that although not bound to critical theory in the formal European sense, critical is used in the literal sense of invoking a range of decolonial emancipatory action and theorists, rather than drawing on the formality of the Frankfurt school (Keucheyan, 2013). With this caveat in mind, the purpose of this thesis is not to reiterate the already highly debated (dis)similarities between post- and decolonial perspectives. While these debates are important to avoid the call for decolonization becoming a trope as warned by Táíwò (2022), what this research seeks to challenge is a concern shared by post- and decolonial thinkers alike. The shared concern is that a Eurocentric version – or vision – of modernity exists but that it exists as the hegemonic mode and model of modernity in all its singularity devoid of (any) historicity

of power universalised, absorbed, and internalised as much in the social fabric and consciousness of Europe/ans as in the rest of the world and thus the othering of the so-called ‘Orient’ or ‘Third World.’

Notwithstanding the especially important critical work of Lugones (2007, 2010, 2020, 2024) on the coloniality of gender or Mohanty (1988, 2003a) and Spivak’s (1988) works on the construct of the ‘Third World’ woman, post- and decolonial thinkers have largely neglected the ways in which heterosexism and homophobia also shaped the world of hegemonic power (Alexander, 2014). This is, as will be demonstrated in the following chapters, crucial to understanding the backlash against LGBTIQ+ rights in postcolonial neo-colonized contexts. Feminist thinkers, by contrast, forefront the ways in which gender and sexuality are locally situated and socially constructed organising principles (Vanner, 2015). Notwithstanding the historical, ideological, and geographical differences within and between feminists as well as the oftentimes embedded Eurocentrism, feminist scholars, practitioners and activists have long approached feminism as ‘a framework for social justice activism that seeks equality for all oppressed groups’ and as a form of praxis that ‘reflects the changing ideas and context within which it is situated’ (Phillips, 2023, pp. 1-2). The inclusivity of diverse gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations moreover has a profound emphasis in contemporary feminism (now acknowledged as the fourth wave) evident in both global South and global North feminisms (Phillips, 2023). Feminist and decolonial principles, perspectives, and practices are thus brought into dialogue to guide the moves towards decoloniality in/as praxis within this thesis.

Linguistically, the typical dichotomous binary rhetoric of the Global South versus the Global North, the West versus Africa, developing versus developed countries are insofar possible omitted throughout the coming chapters, except for when referring to specific thinkers who might have used one or the other terminology. These rhetorical binaries do not do justice to the gendered, racialized, territorialised, and socialised transversalities of epistemic location(s), nor of experiences of epistemic violence. Further, key concepts conventionally written in singular such as ‘knowledge’, ‘activism’, ‘historicity’ and alike are consistently and deliberately written in plural. While leading to some grammatical conundrums, concepts such as Africa and Africans as well as Europe and Europeans are furthermore often subtracted and written as Africa/ns or Europe/ans to convey the dual meaning of geopolitically constructed places and identities and the colonial conflation of place and people as an expression of epistemic violence. Research and researcher are similarly subtracted to research/er to pinpoint the inseparability between knowledge producer(s) and product(s).

Further, when not referring to or paraphrasing other people's work, the concept 'Western/ized' is used to capture epistemic agents implicit, complicit, and privileged by Eurocentric structures of knowledge as a result of racist/sexist epistemic structures created during the four genocides/epistemicides of the 16th century (Grosfoguel, 2013). Conversely, epistemic agents who have their agency and authority excluded or oppressed by Eurocentric structures of knowledge are referred to as 'Other/ed.' Both concepts as such hopefully convey that epistemic dominance or subordination is not determined by the geographical location or origin of epistemic agents. Rather, the chosen concepts seek to illuminate that epistemic violence, as argued by Pérez (2019, p. 6), results in but is also the result of 'the international division of intellectual work, that is, the allotment of certain communities to the role of epistemic agents and others to the role of objects, while still others are completely left out of the zone of intelligibility.'

Situating the Eurocentric 'LGBTIO+'

Within a decolonizing research project like this one, the use of the LGBTIQ+ acronym to describe the organising for and of non-heteronormative genders, sexualities and bodies in Africa could be seen as counterintuitive. Not only does the ever-expanding acronym 'LGBT' convey a very specific geo-political identity and form of activism that arose in the USA between 1970 and 2010, but it also suggests that the constitutive categories of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender are informed by similar experiences, and therefore open to conflation into one political category (Murib, 2014; Murib & Brettschneider, 2017). Several scholars have correspondingly demonstrated the discrepancy between (local) personal and prevailing (global) collective-identity terms in African LGBTQ+ activisms (Currier, 2015), and argued that their meanings are not directly transferable experiences inside Africa (Epprecht, 2008; Epprecht et al., 2018; Tamale, 2011).

At the time of writing, there is however no readily available alternative to LGBTIQ+ when researching activisms for and by non-heteronormative genders, sexualities, and bodies. In Uganda, Swahili derived 'kuchu' meaning 'same' has been adopted by Ugandan LGBTIQ+ people as a term for sexual and gender minorities and is, as explained by Lusimbo and Bryan (2018, p. 12), 'used in many ways including as a password in public spaces allowing Ugandan LGBTI persons to identify one another and speak freely without other members of wider society being aware of the situation.' However, adopting 'kuchu' uncritically here risks obscuring the constitution and complexities of Ugandan understandings of sexuality, intimacy, and identification (Hart & Dillwood, 2015) and disarticulating the movement in Uganda from

the wider (regional and international) movements. Moreover, LGBTIQ+ activists and allies within this research project mostly used either queer or a version of the LGBT acronym to self-identify or to refer to the national, regional, and international movements. For now, I therefore settled on the problematic LGBTIQ+ acronym to refer to activism for non-confirming gender identities, gender expressions and sexual orientations in Uganda.

Including the 'I'

As the reader will note, the 'I' (Intersex) has also been included in the LGBTIQ+ acronym here. This is not done ignorant of the policy and media disjunctions whereby intersex issues are framed not as matters of sex characteristics but of sexual orientation, gender identity and/or gender expression, or of the disregard for the intersex identity as 'polymorphic' (Carpenter, 2016, pp. 78-79). While there are identity-based and/or political intersections between the wider LGBT movement and the intersex movement, intersex rights advocacy is mainly concerned with rights to bodily autonomy and self-determination (Carpenter, 2016), and with challenging binary legal frameworks that prevent them from enjoying rights to access identification documents, start a family, or be free from discrimination in all areas including employment and sports (Pikramenou, 2019).

Notwithstanding important differences, the 'I' is included here for four reasons: First, most Africans tend to use 'LGBTI' or 'LGBTIQ' (Ekine, 2013, p. 88); second, intersex people have been both pivotal and visible in LGBTIQ+ activism in Uganda (Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018); third, there is an explicit struggle for intersex rights in Africa (Kaggwa, 2013), and lastly, there is a dire need for international human rights institutions and individual governments to challenge and move beyond 'unsubstantiated rhetoric of changing clinical practice on one hand, and an inconsequential rhetoric of inclusion on the other' by international human rights institutions and individual governments (Carpenter, 2016, p. 79).

Taken together, intersex rights advocacy point to the dire need to decentre, not ignore, binary heterosexist and Western/ized assumptions in the proposed research (Clarke, 2013, p. 181), and support the ideological endeavour often articulated by queer theorists to shake foundations of power and cultural normativity, domination, and legitimacy (Epstein, 1996; Stein & Plummer, 1996; Stein, 2022).

4.2. Analytical Perspective: Seeing Absences to Support Emergences

As an analytical perspective, decoloniality in/as praxis aims to confront the relegation of Africa/ns outside of the zone of intelligibility in and by social science research/ers. To this

end, it is useful to employ what Santos (2016, 2018b) termed the '*sociology of absences*' and '*sociology of emergences*.' Whereas '[t]he sociology of absences [...] highlights and denounces the suppression of social reality brought about by the type of knowledge validated by Northern epistemologies, the sociology of emergences [...] captures victims of exclusion in the process of setting aside victimhood and becoming resisting people practicing ways of being and knowing in their struggle against domination' (Santos, 2018b, p. 18).

While not explicitly linked by Maldonado-Torres (2017) nor Santos (2016, 2018b), the decolonial attitude's call for decolonizing the sciences (Northern epistemologies in Santos' words) resonates with the sociology of absences and the call for decolonizing society with the sociology of emergences (the horizon of possibilities in Maldonado-Torres' words). What the following chapters will highlight and denounce is that within Eurocentric modernity, Africa/ns are defined entirely by their absence(s). Unfolding this, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013a, p. x) wrote:

[T]he African postcolonial present [...] is a '*present*' which is '*absent*' because what exists is not what Africans aspired for and struggled to achieve. Africans and other peoples of the Global South who experienced 'darker' manifestations of modernity which included such processes as the slave trade, mercantilism, imperialism, colonialism and apartheid, aspired for a new humanity in which species of the human race would *coexist as equal and free beings*. African nationalism and decolonization were thus ranged against all the dark aspects of modernity, including underdevelopment and epistemic violence. But what emerged from the decolonization process was not a new world dominated by new humanist values of freedom, equality, social justice and ethical coexistence. African people found themselves engulfed by a '*postcolonial neocolonized world*' characterized by myths of decolonization and illusions of freedom [*emphasis added*].

From the sociology of absence perspective, the perpetuation of epistemic violence in and by social sciences research/ers upholds the absent present of Africa/ns' LGBTIQ+ activists by overlooking – or even erasing – rather than privileging localized knowledges and practices for and by Africa/ns LGBTIQ+ activists (Ndashe, 2013, p. 156).

As previously alluded to, epistemic violence transgresses the academic ivory tower. This becomes apparent when considering three heavily colonial frames used by both opponents and proponents of LGBTIQ+ rights across Africa that postulate homosexuality as 'unAfrican', homophobia as a Western import, or LGBTIQ+ rights as universal human rights (Baisley, 2015; Cheney, 2012; Ekine, 2013; Hoad, 1999; Ndashe, 2013; Tamale, 2013; Thoreson, 2008). As will be expanded upon in later chapters, these frames engulf African LGBTIQ+ activists in a postcolonial neocolonized world that forces them to strategically negotiate and navigate 'the meta-narratives of LGBT imperialism and homophobic religious fundamentalism on the one

hand and indigenous contemporary constructions of sexuality and gender on the other’ (Ekine, 2013, p. 78). While distinctly different, the three frames each contribute to the idea of being African and doing LGBTIQ+ activism (in Africa) as an oxymoron.

The sociology of emergences starts from the sociology of absences and ends and moves the passage from victimhood to resistance (Santos, 2018b). Following Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013a), the emergent otherwise would be to have Africa/ns ‘coexist as equal and free beings.’ Writing about contesting narratives of queer Africa/ns, Ekine (2013, p. 87) provided substance to the emergent otherwise in plural that this research seeks to move towards by contending, ‘[t]he African struggle is not only directed at changing existing legislation; it is a struggle in which we seek to reassert our own narrative and reclaim our humanity.’

Uganda as an Epistemic Site for Research

Though over half of the 60 United Nations (UN) members criminalizing same-sex conduct were already located within Africa as depicted below (ILGA, 2024), a pushback to LGBTIQ+ rights has been on the rise in the British colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa ever since President Robert Mugabe kickstarted ‘political homophobia’ by banning the GALZ (Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe) from the Zimbabwean International Book Fair in 1995 (Epprecht, 2013; Goddard, 2004; Gomes da Costa Santos & Waites, 2022; Kollman & Waites, 2009).

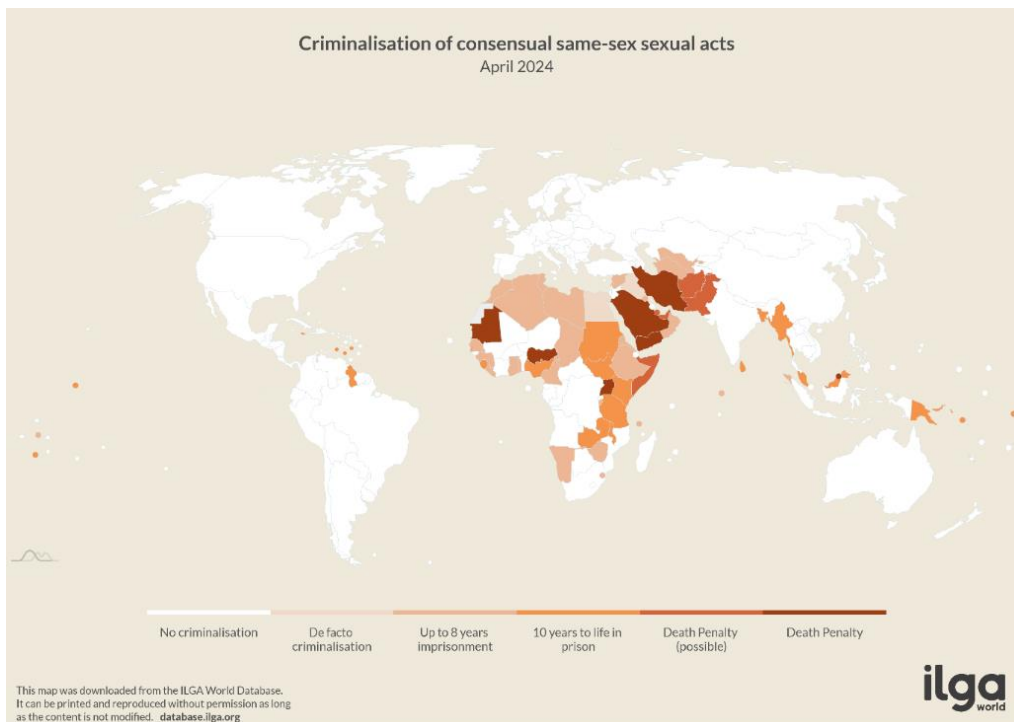


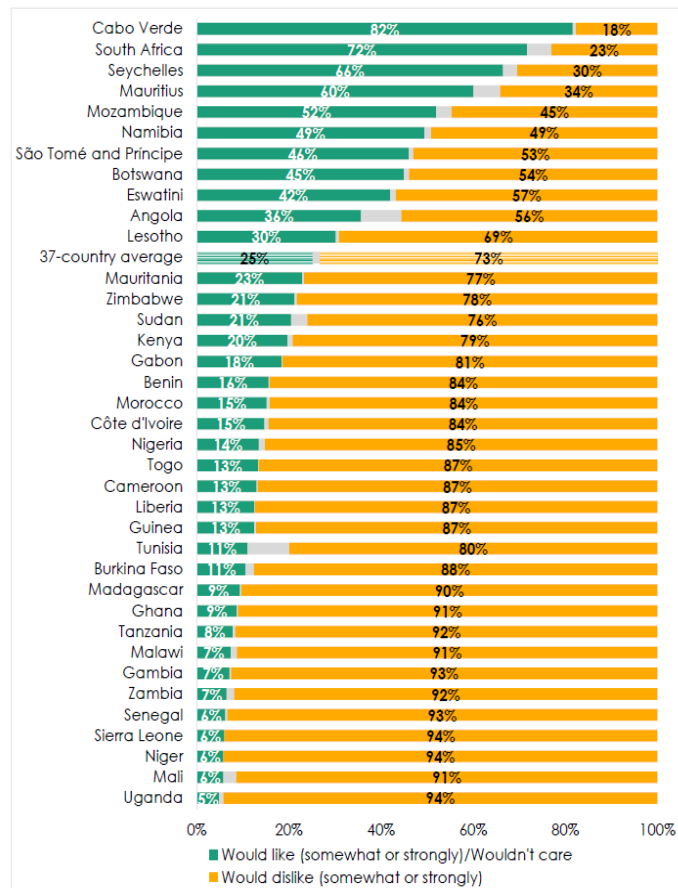
FIGURE 1: CRIMINALIZATION OF SAME-SEX CONDUCT GLOBALLY

Political homophobia is often expressed by political leaders proposing to expand penalties in colonial era laws for ‘sodomy’ and other sexual practices purportedly ‘against nature’ (Gomes da Costa Santos & Waites, 2022). Recent examples include the Burundian President Evariste Ndayishimiye calling on citizens to stone gay people (Ljunggren, 2024) and leaders in Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya and Tanzania, vocally attacking and threatening to increase legal penalties for LGBTIQ+ people (Reid, 2022).

Against this backdrop, the one question, ‘Why Uganda?’, consistently posed to me in informal, professional, and academic fora across the globe, since I started researching LGBTIQ+ identities, expressions, and experiences in Uganda over a decade ago, might appear self-explanatory. By contrast, because the question is not ‘why Africa?’ but ‘why Uganda?’, I see it as mirroring globalised monolithic understandings of ‘Africa as a site of obsessive homophobia’ (Ekine, 2013, p. 78) rather than as (warranted) critical questioning of my motivations for choosing Uganda as the epistemic for my research. Inherently, the question becomes what makes Uganda significant enough as an epistemic site of research on LGBTIQ+ activism within Africa? The essentialist notion of Africa as homophobic is arguably a manifestation of the epistemic crisis. Nevertheless, the question is worth addressing as the implications of the epistemic crisis is not limited to Uganda.

When the first Anti-Homosexuality Bill was tabled in Uganda by Member of Parliament (MP) David Bahati as a private members bill in 2009 (AHB 2009), it included the death penalty for certain same-sex sexual acts and provisions against LGBTIQ+ organising. Since then, Uganda has simultaneously become the most visible case of political homophobia and of queer lawfare, that is the legalised contestations over rights of LGBTIQ+ peoples in international public opinion, media, and trans/national research (Gomes da Costa Santos & Waites, 2022; Jjuuko et al., 2022; Svensson et al., 2024). This visibility could be ascribed to Uganda being uniquely legally and socially hostile to LGBTIQ+ peoples in the African – and global – context when and with the AHB 2009 being tabled (Jjuuko, 2013). The same could arguably be said for now seeing as Uganda’s newest Anti-Homosexuality Act signed in early 2023 is an almost identical replica of the AHB 2009, and the most recent Afrobarometer², a nonprofit, pan-African, non-partisan research network with headquarters in Ghana, shows the level of intolerance among Ugandan adults of all ages and education levels for sexual difference as the highest among the 37 African countries surveyed in 2021/2022, as depicted below (Kakumba, 2023, p. 7).

² The Afrobarometer repost is available here: <https://www.afrobarometer.org/publication/ad639-uganda-a-continental-extreme-in-rejection-of-people-in-same-sex-relationships/>



Respondents were asked: For each of the following types of people, please tell me whether you would like having people from this group as neighbours, dislike it, or not care: Homosexuals (% who say "strongly like", "somewhat like," or "would not care")

FIGURE 2: TOLERANCE FOR PEOPLE IN SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS | 2021/2022

Given the uniquely legally punitive, politically oppressive, and socially intolerant circumstances, it could be assumed that the LGBTIQ+ movements in Uganda would be largely invisible and nascent. By contrast, the Ugandan LGBTIQ+ movement has through its response to the AHB 2009 grown into one of the strongest, organised and visible LGBTIQ+ movements on the African continent (Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018, p. 338).

Outlining how Uganda is unique in the African context is not working up to saying that Uganda has won the undesirable prize as the most homophobic country in a continent that is often mistakenly constructed as obsessively homophobic (Ekine, 2013; Ndashe, 2013), and that this is the reason for Uganda’s visibility in international politics, public opinion, media, and research thus far or that this is the reason for focusing on Uganda here. Rather, it is to underscore that despite the visibility and strong LGBTIQ+ movement, scholarship related to Uganda’s AHB 2009 is still marked by the same epistemic violence that marginalises African LGBTIQ+ activism in social sciences. As will be elaborated in the coming chapter, this can, in the words of Nyanzi and Karamagi (2015, p. 25), be seen in that scholarship ‘overly

concentrates on legal studies, yet this narrow legalistic paradigm ignores the diverse and non-legal components of sexuality and lacks the nuanced emic interpretations of insiders.’

As an epistemic site, Uganda, with its AHB 2009 and now AHA 2023, more than any other (known) African country illustrates Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013a) point of Africa/ns being engulfed in a ‘postcolonial neocolonized world’ by dark aspects of modernity, including epistemic violence. Put differently, epistemic violence is clearly not limited to contexts where LGBTIQ+ activists do not exist or where LGBTIQ+ activists deliberately conduct activism invisibly, thus pointing the finger back at the zombification of scholars rather than the non-existence of African LGBTIQ+ activists.

4.3. Methodological Stance: Reconstituting to Knowing-With

As a methodological stance, decoloniality in/as praxis aims at moving from and against extractivist ‘*knowing-about*’ to and for reciprocal ‘*knowing-with*’ (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Santos, 2018b; Smith, 2021) to reconstitute those Other/ed as epistemic agents. This entails first, treating peoples and communities as more than mere ‘data plantations’ (Swadener, 2000 cited in Ndimande, 2013, p. 94) or as ‘hunters-gatherers’ of raw data (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018b, p. 8); second, challenging the unilateralism of extraction whereby ‘those extracting are never extracted,’ and third, denouncing assumptions that the sources of extraction are available up to total exhaustion (Santos, 2018b, p. 130).

Amongst decolonial thinkers, there is broad consensus that to shift to knowing-with calls for collaborative research partnerships between the Western/ized researcher/s and the Other/ed. Further, these partnerships must privilege Other/ed peoples and communities’ concerns, needs, and values, and connect Other/ed peoples and communities with all parts of the research (Bennett & Gillieatt, 2022; Darder, 2008; Datta, 2018; Kovach, 2021; Santos, 2018b; Smith, 2021). When considering this decolonial principle in relation to Africa/ns’ LGBTIQ+ activism, it is worth noting that Africa/ns’ LGBTIQ+ activists’ concerns, needs, and values will plausibly vary significantly across Africa given the highly diverse experiences, expressions, and conditions for LGBTIQ+ activists and activism. As Sibongile Ndashe (2013, pp. 155-56) underscored:

In some countries, there are no movements to speak of and ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ remains the only form of activism [...]. There are countries where there have been movements which have remained static, as it has not been possible to expand the circles of activism. There are countries where the movement has been able to entrench itself into civil society.

As a methodological stance, decoloniality in/as praxis is understood to be anchored in the principles of contextuality, reciprocity, conviviality and complimentary, and the translation of these principles into a methodology that compels the Western/ized research/er to unthink and rethink it/themselves, and opens up for the Other/ed to *willingly* rethink their lived experiences without having to unthink them (Santos, 2018b, p. 147).

Despite decolonial calls for contextualisation, collaborative research partnerships as sketched here do not necessarily require physical, spatial, or temporal proximity (Santos, 2018b, p. 146). However, given the pervasive lack of historicity and historiography in research about Africa/ns' LGBTIQ+ activisms and the sparring efforts to conduct research with Africa/ns LGBTIQ+ activists, it seemed paramount for this doctoral research to be rooted in material histories and politics of LGBTQ+ peoples in Uganda (Migraine-George & Currier, 2016). Moreover, situating the empirical and, in part, theoretical knowledge production, possession, and uptake of this research in Uganda are seen as part of the ongoing struggle for reconstituting Africa/ns as a legitimate epistemic site from which the world can be interpreted, while also recognising the global relevance of knowledges from Africa (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018b) already pioneered in the works of several Ugandan scholars such as Nyanzi (2013), Nyanzi and Karamagi (2015) Tamale (2001, 2008, 2013, 2014, 2020) and Jjuuko (2013).

Choosing Research Collaborators

Embracing the decolonial call for collaborative research partnerships, this research is guided by collaborations with two Ugandan civil society organizations, Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) and Freedom and Roam Uganda (FARUG) based in Kampala, Uganda. Whereas FARUG is a LBQ diverse persons and womxn's³ rights organization founded in 2003 (FARUG, 2021), SMUG is an umbrella coalition of organizations dedicated to fighting for liberation of LGBTI peoples across Uganda founded in 2004 (SMUG, 2017).

FARUG and SMUG are two of the oldest LGBTIQ+ organizations in Africa, and among the first in Uganda. Historically, FARUG and SMUG shared trajectories, having both emerged from informal organising of and by LGBTIQ+ peoples in bars and social settings in the late 1990s in Uganda (Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018). In 1999, FARUG was one of the first two organised groups to come out of informal gatherings whereas SMUG was established after a pan-African LGBTIQ+ meeting in South Africa in 2004 (Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018, p. 330).

³ While FARUG does not elaborate on the choice of 'womxn' to describe their mandate, I take it as intentionally avoiding the suggestion of sexism by the spelling of 'woman' or 'women.' The spelling womxn – a more inclusive alternative to 'womyn' – has been around since the 1990s, especially within intersectional feminism.

While the relatively long history of both organizations was key in choosing them for research collaboration, their organizational mandates were also of great significance. Whereas FARUG is an organization with individual members, SMUG is an umbrella coalition of more than 18 LGBTIQ+ organizations of which FARUG is a member. As an umbrella organization, SMUG has a wide reach within an otherwise elusive and inaccessible community, and SMUG was furthermore pivotal in having the first Anti-Homosexuality Act overturned in 2014 (AHA 2014). Writing about LGBTIQ+ resistance in Uganda, Lusimbo and Bryan (2018, p. 332) asserted that SMUG was a stepping stone in the ‘boom of LGBTI organizations in Uganda’ since the late 1990s. Choosing SMUG as a collaborator was guided by assumptions that SMUG has ample experience in and knowledge of navigating political and social homophobia, queer lawfare and the adjacent needs and wants of the incredibly diverse LGBTIQ+ peoples and communities across Uganda. While FARUG does not have as wide a scope as SMUG, FARUG has also been pivotal in queer lawfare over the AHB 2009. More importantly, choosing to collaborate with FARUG arose out of a wish to address epistemic violence evident in the all-too-common invisibilisation of LBQ cis- and transgender women in both LGBTIQ+ activism and research due to systems of power and privilege expressed in (cis)sexism (Smith, 2017).

Relevance was not the only driver in choosing the two organizations as research collaborators. My relationship with both SMUG and FARUG dates to early 2015. At the time, SMUG served as my gatekeeper to the LGBTIQ+ community during a 10 weeks’ minor field study funded by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), which I conducted for my master thesis (for the study, see Dittfeld, 2015).

5. Chapters Outline

With the aim of this thesis being the negative and positive project of decolonization, the subsequent chapters are divided into two main parts. The first part is devoted to the negative project of decolonization. Drawing on mostly Indigenous, Latin American, and African post- and decolonial thinkers, Chapter 2 establishes the framework for the negative project by outlining and unfolding the meaning of the coloniality of power, gender and being as three constitutive components of the ‘coloniality of knowledge.’ This analytical framework is then applied in three ways; first, to show how Africa/ns have been and are Other/ed by and subjugated into modern/colonial ontological and epistemological hierarchal constructs of race, gender, sexuality, agency, activism, and knowledge, and to discuss how these colonialities might explain the marginal/ised position of Africa/ns’ LGBTIQ+ activisms in social movement scholarship; second, to call into question universalised LGBTIQ+ (human) rights discourses as

manifestations of modernity/coloniality related to epistemology and real-world politics, and to discuss potential implications for Other/ed LGBTIQ+ activists; and finally, to home in on hermeneutic marginalisation of Africa/ns' LGBTIQ+ activists and activism in social movement scholarship. Continuing with the negative project of decolonization, Chapter 3 seeks to contextualise forms, functions, and consequences of coloniality of power, being and gender by turning to colonialities inherent in the politicization of LGBTIQ+ rights by both pro- and anti-LGBTIQ+ rights advocates in Uganda. This chapter furthermore attempts to substantiate claims that epistemic violence has implications not only for epistemic exchanges but also forms of violence and exclusions for marginal/ised peoples and communities, affecting LGBTIQ+ activists in Uganda.

The second part of this thesis turns to the positive project of decolonization. Building on prior insights into the negative project of decolonization, Chapter 4 establishes the methodological frameworks for knowledge production, representation, and dissemination throughout the research process. Central to this is outlining and translating principles for decoloniality in/as praxis as a methodological stance in choice, design, enactment, and embodiment of modes of inquiry. Chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8, subsequently turn from the abstract to the artisanal side of the positive project of decolonization as these chapters present knowledges produced through photovoice (Chapter 5), photo-elicitation interviews (Chapter 6 and 7), and conversational interviews (Chapter 8).

As decoloniality is understood as ongoing serpentine movement toward an otherwise in plural, Chapter 9 seeks to bring together the negative and positive projects of decolonization as conceptualised and applied throughout the two previous parts. This is done by homing in on not just what knowledges emerged but how they emerged and thus offers critical re- and unthinking of my research relation with and approach to SMUG and FARUG. Finally, Chapter 10 concludes with a discussion of what it means for this research/er to have chosen the decolonial option, and of what pathways could be taken to support the struggles of LGBTIQ+ activists and allies based on the knowledges produced through horizontal research/er practices.

6. Conclusion

In this opening chapter, by way of both introducing and establishing a clear stance for this thesis, I have argued that social sciences research/ers perpetuate epistemic violence against Africa/ns' LGBTIQ+ activists as a function of the Eurocentric epistemological system. Addressing epistemic violence requires uncomfortable recognition that we, as researchers, are perpetrators of a form of violence. However, as posited by Pérez (2019, p. 9);

Ignoring that epistemic violence exists, and ignoring that one exerts it, can result in considerable benefits for an epistemically privileged subject'. Thus, it is indeed a problem of "being able to see", but ***not of one that is solved with mere "visibility"***, unless we also ***address the social license to ignore that which sustains such ignorance [emphasis added]***.

That epistemic violence is derivative and constitutive of a social license to ignore is apparent when considering the often-unrecognised systems of power and privileges embedded in colonialism, sexism, racism, ableism, and cissexism (Pérez, 2019). Following on from this, my argument is that without addressing epistemic violence within our academic institutions, curricula, and research practices, irrespective of the research topic and context at hand, we become implicit and complicit in aiding and abetting epistemic oppression. Here, it is important to note that epistemic oppression in the form of hermeneutical marginalisation does not limit itself to those outside of academia who already experience marginality because of their social identity (in terms of gender, race, class, ability etc.), but extends to those inside academia who increasingly experience marginality because of their research interests and/or identities (Hutton & Cappellini, 2022).

By ignoring complicity in epistemic violence, we open the door for other forms of violence and exclusions of certain identities and even deprive ourselves and our field(s) of knowledges about the pluriverse of genealogies, 'historiocities', and strategies that facilitate or impede social change. Ultimately, we render our fields more partial, less global, and less effective and potentially even counterproductive for social change than necessary and, arguably, justifiable. My position as such echoes Santos (2018b, p. 296) who claimed that 'there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice.'

What has hopefully become clear throughout this chapter is that I do not ascribe the epistemic violence towards Africa/n knowers and knowledges in social sciences to individual actors or researchers, nor do I consider myself 'absolved' of complicity in epistemic violence because of my attempt at decolonising research here. Rather, I align with Pérez's (2019, p. 6) articulation of epistemic violence as;

[A] ***structural phenomenon, fuelled by the individual actions of people*** (be them well- or ill-intentioned), but independent from them. Consequently, the effects of epistemic violence go far ***beyond the silencing of individual voices***, or direct censorship from hegemonic subjects towards marginalized ones. They also include ***social phenomena that cannot be easily assigned to specific agents***, or that call into question dualist "oppressed/oppressive" approaches ***[emphasis added]***.

While epistemic violence is a structural phenomenon, and epistemological systems can be highly resilient, meaning they can absorb extraordinarily large disturbances without redefining structure (Dotson, 2014), this should not lead to notions of apathy or absolution for the individual researcher. Instead, it should provide us with the impetus to recognise the imperceptible systems of power and privilege such as colonialism, sexism, ableism, and cissexism that inform us, and lead us to perpetrate epistemic violence, and proactively seek to recentre those marginalised by these systems in our epistemic practices. The sentiment with which I write and hope that my thesis will be read is as one attempt – among many possible ones – at moving closer to an epistemic reality whereby research/ers ‘think from and with struggles that think and thought that struggles’ (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 20).

Epistemic Oppression of Africa/ns

1. Introduction

The epistemic crisis of Eurocentrism described in the previous chapter is arguably a reflection of Western philosophy and contemporary social theory's *'forgetfulness of coloniality'* that 'reproduce[s] blindness, not in regard to space as such, but in relation to non-European ways of thinking and to the production and reproduction of the imperial/colonial relation [...]' (Maldonado-Torres, 2004, p. 30). As part of the negative project of epistemic decolonization, this chapter brings together conceptualisations of the coloniality of power, gender, and being to produce a framework for 'remembering' coloniality and understanding the epistemic oppression of Africa/ns implanted by coloniality. The chapter proceeds in three main sections. The first section defines the concept of coloniality and its constitutive elements, the second section outlines the production and reproduction of the coloniality of power, being and gender in Africa/ns. These are then used to first discuss how these colonialities inform social sciences and social movement scholarship, and second how the universalised notion of LGBTIQ+ rights as human rights is engulfed by coloniality. The chapter concludes with an outline of why and how a feminist decolonial perspective is needed in decolonizing knowledge produced about LGBTIQ+ activism in Africa.

2. The Decolonial Concept of Coloniality

Emerging from Latin American scholars' critical engagement with the European colonial conquest of the Americas in 1492 to the present-day, Peruvian sociologist Anibal Quijano (2000a, p. 342)⁴ first coined the term *'coloniality'* to describe 'one of the specific and constitutive elements of [a] global model of capitalist power.' Coined in response to, and a reflection of, the needs of 'local histories of coloniality at the very historical moment when the Three World division was collapsing' and not to account for the historic, economic or political concerns of Europe, coloniality is as such a decolonial concept illuminating a constitutive and not simply derivative dimension of modernity (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, pp. 111-12).

⁴ While Quijano's first publication with the concept 'coloniality of power' was already published in 1992, his scholarship was not really circulated in Anglophone academia until it was translated into English in 2000.

Since its inception, coloniality has been developed to capture the continuation of colonial racialized and gendered power relations of superiority and inferiority that define the global world order, (inter)national economy, culture, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production beyond direct colonial administrations, typically referred to as '*coloniality of power*' or the '*colonial matrix of power*' (Lugones, 2007, 2010, 2024; Maldonado-Torres, 2004, 2007; Quijano, 2000a, 2000b). Coloniality thus supersedes colonialism's need for direct domination and exploitation and operates in far more subtle and insidious ways. Scholars examining expressions and experiences of coloniality in different contexts refer to the '*colonial situation*' (see e.g. Fasakin, 2021; Grosfoguel, 2007) or '*colonial durabilities*' (see e.g. Mertens et al., 2022). Coloniality is a decolonial concept in the sense that 'once the words and concepts (decolonization and decoloniality) emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, it was possible to understand that the sensing, thinking, and praxis of living in the borders that the words describe, arose at the very moment in which Europeans invaded local histories for the first time' (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 222).

The bedrock of coloniality is '*the idea of race*' (Quijano, 2000b) and – as will be elaborated later – gender (Lugones, 2007, 2024). Unlike in any previous colonialisms, European colonisers crafted and granted themselves a biologically and structurally superior 'self' to juxtapose with an inferior 'Other' through the invention and imposition of the ontological construct – or (social) classification – of race as known today (Quijano, 2000a, 2000b, 2007; Tamale, 2020). The perhaps most visible example of this racialized reality is the Mercator map - a common template for world maps since 1569 – with its distorted (smaller) representation of Africa compared to (enlarged) Canada, Russia, the USA, and Europe.

While race is the organising principle of coloniality, Eurocentric modernity presents coloniality's rationality or logic (Quijano, 2000a, 2000b, 2007). From a decolonial perspective, Eurocentric modernity is racially hierarchised, patriarchal, sexist, imperial, capitalist, Christian-centric, and heteronormative (Grosfoguel, 2007; Lugones, 2007, 2024; Quijano, 2000a). From the time of global European colonialisms to present-day global coloniality, the idea of race has worked in tandem with Eurocentric modernity by effectively changing the relations of superiority and inferiority from a mode of domination to a naturalised condition. This occurred by colonising superior Europe/ans supposedly bringing moral and material improvements – or modernity – to the colonised inferior 'Other.'

Eurocentric modernity rests upon two myths; first, the idea of (Western) Europe/ans as the culmination of the (human) civilisation trajectory, and second, dualist and evolutionist views that differences between Europe/ans and non-Europe/ans are 'natural' (racial) and not

consequences of power (Quijano, 2000b, p. 542). These myths perpetuate the abstract fictional time-concept ‘Evolution’ discursively established in the late eighteenth and nineteenth century and maintained in the coloniality of knowledge, constituting change towards Eurocentric modernity represents the ‘evolution of the species’ rather than the ‘extension of our cultural praxis of living’ (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 219). Consequently, non-Europe/ans or the ‘Other/ed’ is always (im)positioned relative to distance or proximity to the everchanging apex of Eurocentric modernity. That the apex is not static is evident from the justifying discourses of modernity, which have transformed from salvation to progress to development (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 107), or as fleshed out by Grosfoguel (2007, p. 214):

We went from the sixteenth century characterization of *‘people without writing’* to the eighteenth and nineteenth century characterization of *‘people without history’*, to the twentieth century characterization of *‘people without development’* and more recently, to the early twenty-first century of *‘people without democracy’*. We went from the sixteenth century *‘rights of people’* [...] to the eighteenth century *‘rights of man’* (Enlightenment philosophers), and to the late twentieth century *‘human rights’* [emphasis added].

Despite some divergences (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019), post- and decolonial thinkers thus concur that the problem with Eurocentric modernity is not that a Eurocentric version of modernity exists but that it exists as the hegemonic mode and model of modernity in all its singularity, devoid of (any) historicity of power universalised, absorbed and internalised as much in the social fabric and consciousness of Europe/ans as in the rest of the world (Bhabra, 2014; Grosfoguel, 2007; Maldonado-Torres, 2004, 2007; Quijano, 2000a). Notwithstanding positivist undertones, Quijano (2000b, p. 543) observed that ‘[i]f the concept of modernity only, or fundamentally, refers to the ideas of newness, the advanced, the rational-scientific, the secular [...], then there is no doubt that one must admit that it is a phenomenon possible in all cultures and historical epochs.’

Many decolonial thinkers subsequently employ the concept of modernity/coloniality or modernity/coloniality/decoloniality in conjuncture rather than separation to underscore intimate relationships between modernity and colonial experiences, and, in the latter conjuncture, to mark the decolonial option for resistance (Grosfoguel, 2007; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Quijano, 2000a, 2000b). As such, epistemic decolonization involves (re)constituting alternative modernities and imaginations of the world that are delinked from the epistemes – understood here as ways of thinking, being and doing – produced and imposed in the Western world by Protestantism, European Renaissance, Enlightenment and Industrial Revolution (Maldonado-Torres, 2004; Mignolo, 2020; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 106; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a, p.

39). In line with his later work on the ‘decolonial attitude’ (Maldonado-Torres, 2017) outlined in the introductory chapter, Maldonado-Torres (2004, p. 30) positioned this decolonial stance as ‘*radical diversity*’ entailing a ‘critique of roots that brings into light both coloniality and the epistemic potential of non-European epistemes.’

3. Making and Masking Coloniality in Africa/ns

While the colonial experience differs in Africa, it is important to treat Africa as one historical unit given that most of the continent shares a common history of slavery, colonialism and oppression which, as argued by Tamale (2020, p. 11), has fostered a more unified political approach to the challenges of underdevelopment, geopolitical marginalisation, and economic exploitation. This section subsequently unfolds the (re)production of the coloniality of power, being and gender in Africa to demonstrate that coloniality is both constitutive and derivative of modernity, and to use these as a springboard to unpack social sciences research/ers’ epistemic exclusion of Africa/ns’ social movements in general.

3.1. Coloniality of Power

Conventionally, decolonization is often understood as formal ‘flag independence,’ which simply put refers to ‘the achievement of sovereign nation-statehood by a previously colonized territory’ (Collins, 2015, p. 1). In Africa, flag independence took over three decades with Ghana being the first to gain it in 1957 and Namibia the last in 1990. Despite flag independence, the broad consensus amongst African(ist) scholars such as Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2010, 2012b, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b, 2018b), Fasakin (2021), Tamale (2020), Mudimbe (1994) and many more, is however that decolonization of Africa is a myth, and that the coloniality of power permeates every discursive, material and subjective level, arena, and dimension of everyday existence in Africa nationally and continentally.

To understand why flag independence did not lead to decolonization of Africa, it is necessary to consider the modern/colonial nexus between racialized and socialised mentalities, worldviews and (power) relations established through centuries of European colonial expansion based on articulations of race, labour, space, resources, and (consumer) markets according to manufactured needs of capital/ist Europe/ans and continued cultural, social and (geo)political power relations (Grosfoguel, 2007; Quijano, 2000a, 2000b, 2007; Tamale, 2020). To this end, the Zimbabwean (decolonial) scholar and historian Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015c) identified eight epochs of coloniality in Africa including the: (1) paradigm of discovery and mercantilist order including the slave trade; (2) post-1648 Westphalian order

inaugurating the exclusion of Africa from sovereignty; (3) 1884-5 Berlin consensus that firmed dismemberment and fragmentation of Africa; (4) colonial governmentality producing African colonial subjectivity; (5) post-1945 United Nations decolonization normative order announcing the allocation of Africa to the lowest echelons of the modern world system; (6) Cold War coloniality polarising Africa ideologically and reducing it to a theatre of proxy wars; (7) post-Cold War triumphalism of neoliberal order; and (8) post-9/11 anti-terrorist order producing new securitization. Through his meticulous retracing of the genealogies of coloniality, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015c) convincingly demonstrates how Africa/ns were gradually positioned as the ultimate Other/ed.

That coloniality is derivative and constitutive of modernity is evident in considering economic dependencies fostered by the Bretton Woods Institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) through debts and loans that allow(ed) for the imposition of Eurocentric modernist economic reforms such as the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) in the 1980s, or in the aid conditionalities pushed by bilateral and multilateral organizations such as the UN and the EU in the name of furthering (neo-liberal) democracy or human rights. Even the so-called African giants are not exempt from coloniality. In a case study of Nigeria, Fasakin (2021) demonstrated how coloniality manifests in the nature of the state's adoption of neoliberal politics alongside neoliberal economic and political programs.

Notwithstanding many post- and decolonial scholars' critique of it as deterministic, uncritical, and ahistorical (see e.g., Obi, 2010), a less frequently discussed example of the ongoing global coloniality is arguably Africa/ns' experience of the so-called '*resource curse*' or '*the paradox of plenty*' whereby countries rich in natural resources like oil, gas, and minerals counterintuitively experience poor (neoliberal) economic growth (see e.g. Auty, 2002; Papyrakis, 2017; Sachs & Warner, 2001). In Africa, this paradox is enforced by the '*eco-colonial pacts*' that many African governments make, for example, with multinational corporations to conduct mining or convert forestland into plantations of sugarcane and tea, etc. to the detriment of communities and nations from which these resources are being extracted (Tamale, 2020, p. 34). Economic dependencies and the resource curse are intimately tied to the genealogies of coloniality outlined above.

Analysing the long-term effects of the trans-Atlantic slave trades, Nunn (2008, 2017) found that the 72 per cent of the average income gap between Africa and the rest of the world, and 99 per cent of the income gap between Africa and other countries classified as 'developing' would not exist, and Africa would have a similar level of development to Latin America or

Asia had the slave trades not happened. Without the first epoch of coloniality, the enduring economic dependencies experienced by Africa/ns would arguably not be possible, at least not to the same scale. Similarly, effects of arbitrarily set boundaries and associated ethnic fractionalisation resulting from what many historians have referred to as *'the scramble for Africa'* (see e.g. Pakenham, 1992) during the third epoch of coloniality are increasingly clear. South Africa's experiences of mineral extraction (Elbra, 2013), Ghana's growing hydrocarbon industry (Andrews, 2021; Andrews & Siakwah, 2020), and Uganda's emerging oil economy (Ogwang et al., 2019), are all characterised by competition for limited social services, land grabbing, land scarcity, food insecurity, corruption, and ethnic polarisation and difficulties of efficiently utilising (transboundary) resources, which perpetuate the resource curse.

Genealogies of coloniality have created a colonial situation whereby Africa/ns were placed at the bottom of global power structures or the furthest away from the apex of Eurocentric power and knowledge. In silencing genealogies of dependency and exploitation, Eurocentric modernity – and its narrators – have been absolved of guilt, blame and responsibility, and Africa/ns captured in a catch-22 situation whereby Africa/ns are made dependent on external powers. This limits Africa/ns agency and freedom to develop independent action – or an African alternative – but also makes it impossible to blame anyone but Africans for lacking the initiative to develop (Fasakin, 2021; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a). Africa/ns are as such captured in an enduring *'paradigm of difference'* (Mudimbe, 1994, p. xii) and thus deemed unthinkable and unfit as contributors let alone creators of their own – and the global - identity formation, nation building, and state construction, knowledge production, economic and political development (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a, p. xi).

Because colonial epistemologies have not been considered in genealogical terms, they have never been seen as 'limited' but rather as 'universal' in their applicability, and 'global' in their relevance (Alcoff, 2019). Hence, Eurocentrism is not only a philosophical tradition, but a position of power and an epistemic practice that supports and perpetuates an epistemology of ignorance 'born of imperial and colonial projects of plunder that legitimates a lack of investigation and study beyond one's own domain' (Alcoff, 2019, p. 402). Within this epistemological system, there is effectively no dialectical relationship between epistemologies but simply a monologue in which 'Other/ed' epistemologies are judged as worthy/unworthy without questioning the tools of the judge even by those ostensibly and generally well disposed toward inclusivity (Olberding, 2015, 2017). For researchers committed to decolonization, this inevitably calls for new (re)connections between African and European scholars to challenge coloniality within and beyond African and European borders.

3.2. *Coloniality of Being*

The coloniality of power does not only operate at the structural level of governance and economic policies or material level of land and resources, but also the intra- and interpersonal level. While referring to White Supremacy and not specifically coloniality, Dladla (2017, p. 42) posited that ‘the colonial culture is everywhere to the point that the African intellectual history is shaped and determined by Eurocentrism,’ and substantiated this argument by showing the ‘perverse employment’ of African philosophy of ‘*Ubuntu*’⁵ by elite parties aided by the white academic establishment in the transition to the “new” South Africa. Europe/ans’ colonisers in other words perpetrated what Santos (2016, p. 92) termed ‘*epistemicide*, the murder of knowledge’ [emphasis added]. Unfolding the workings of epistemicide, Santos (2016, p. 92) contended:

Unequal exchanges among cultures have always implied *the death of the knowledge of the subordinated culture*, hence the death of the social groups that possessed it. In the most extreme cases, such as that of European expansion, *epistemicide was one of the conditions of genocide*. The loss of epistemological confidence that currently afflicts modern science has facilitated the identification of the scope and gravity of the epistemicides perpetrated by hegemonic Eurocentric modernity [emphasis added].

By committing epistemicide, Europe/ans’ colonialisms become distinguishable from previous forms of colonialisms because, as argued by the Indian literary scholar Ania Loomba (2000, p. 2), it locked the colonisers and colonised into the most traumatic relationship in human history. Europe/ans’ colonisation went beyond the decimation of populations and expropriation of land and resources to the entrenchment of Eurocentrism, not only into the social fabric but also the consciousness of those colonised (Fanon, 1967; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a, 2013b, 2015b, 2018a, 2018b; Smith, 2021). Mudimbe (1994), Fanon (2005), Quijano (2007), Tamale (2020) and other post- and decolonial thinkers, correspondingly posited that the most far-reaching and devastating effect of epistemicide is the cognitive colonisation whereby the oppressed and suppressed Other/ed also understands and measures themselves in accordance with the evolutionary continuum set by and for Eurocentric modernity. Maldonado-Torres (2004, 2007) articulated this ontological colonisation as the ‘*coloniality of being*.’ Tamale (2020, pp. 20-21) illustrated the multifaceted expressions of the coloniality of being by writing;

⁵ Tamale (2020, p. xv) defines Ubuntu as ‘[a]n African traditional ideology of justice and fairness based on the philosophies of humanness, communitarianism, solidarity and interdependence.’

We witness the legacies of colonization every day when: our presidents beg for aid from Western capitals; our governments sell off a natural forest for foreign investors to replace it with an industrial park; we refer to the largest lake on the continent as “Lake Victoria”; the riot police sprays tear gas into a peaceful crowd protesting oppression ; [...] a teacher punishes a student for using their mother tongue; people use dangerous skin-whitening products to bleach their skins; and when an MP adorning a *kitenge* shirt and sporting dreadlocks is chased away from the parliamentary floor for “inappropriate” decorum.

It is worth acknowledging here that some decolonization scholars are hesitant to or critical of referring to colonial ‘legacies’ or ‘vestiges’ – as Tamale does above – because it underplays the ‘various ways colonial structures continue to animate the present and to populate both mental and physical representations of power’ (Mertens et al., 2022, p. 4). Nevertheless, what Tamale’s quote points to, and the coloniality of being invokes, is the need to distinguish between the ‘epistemic location’ and the ‘social location’ of knowledge production and producer as being socially located in the oppressed side of the Eurocentric epistemological paradigm, which does not automatically translate into epistemically thinking from an oppressed epistemic location (Grosfoguel, 2007). Making this distinction aids in understanding why Africa/ns’ geopolitical and conceptual awareness about issues of decolonization and decoloniality remain very low as claimed by Tamale (2020).

For research/ers committed to epistemic decolonization, taking the coloniality of being seriously has two main implications; firstly, while identity and lived experiences of epistemic exclusion may provide a more encompassing view of the world in the research process, it does not necessarily lead to a particular consciousness or unmasking of power relations (Bozalek, 2011, p. 472), and secondly, decolonial responsibility extends from singular research projects to the institutions and frameworks and practices that govern them. Mitova (2020, pp. 236-37) argued:

[E]pistemic institutions have long been deployed in the service of colonization, from maintaining histories that whitewash the violence of colonization to residential schools aimed at destroying communities that resist being colonized. Thus, an approach that brings into focus ***how epistemic systems can actively (and not just passively) harm is critical to decolonizing epistemology*** [*emphasis added*].

Epistemic violence is, in other words, often perpetuated from within, and sometimes through the use of, epistemic practices and institutions such as the structuring of school curricula and academic disciplines in ways that systematically ignore, distort, and/or discredit particular epistemological traditions (Pohlhaus, 2012, 2017, 2020). As demonstrated by Smith

(2021), Datta (2018), Lipscombe et al. (2021), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018b), Tlostanova and Mignolo (2012), Eurocentric indoctrination of and zombification including theories, methodologies, and teaching pedagogies, are not confined to universities in and of the global South. Reflecting on having been an African student in institutions of higher learning in South Africa, Mkasi (2016, p. 1) contended that universities enforce and expect internalisation of Western/ized paradigms, pedagogies and epistemologies, and that with this ‘one’s own identity as a non-Westerner slowly disappears.’

Many decolonial thinkers have consequently turned their attention to the Western/ized University as an epistemic institution implanted in Eurocentrism (Cupples & Grosfoguel, 2019; Gopal, 2021; Grosfoguel, 2013, 2015; Guzmán Valenzuela, 2021; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2023b; Ndlovu-Gatsheni et al., 2022; Pimblott, 2020; Santos, 2018a; Schildermans, 2021). Arguably propelled by the #RhodesMustFall (Mangcu, 2017; Ramaru, 2017) and #FeesMustFall student-led protest movements in South Africa in 2015 (Booyesen, 2016a, 2016b; Godsell & Chikane, 2016), most of this scholarship emanates from South Africa where universities have become protest sites (Hendricks & Leibowitz, 2016) and efforts to decolonize often centre around university curricula and pedagogies (see e.g., Le Grange, 2016; Prinsloo, 2016). Similarly focused on decolonization of curricula and pedagogies in and by Latin American universities, Guzmán Valenzuela (2021) found that similar efforts usually take place at the institutional level, in teaching and in degree programmes across disciplines.

Subsequently, epistemic decolonization cannot be achieved through tokenistic or nativist decolonizing efforts such as merely including African literature in the curriculum or hiring more Africans within Western/ized Universities (Moosavi, 2020, 2023; Pérez, 2022; Zembylas, 2023). Instead, the ongoing struggle for an ‘African University’ must, according to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2017), tackle four core challenges: first, securing Africa as a legitimate epistemic base from which Africans view and understand the world; second, moving the centre through shifting the geography and biography of knowledge; third, rethinking thinking itself as part of launching epistemic disobedience to Eurocentric thinking, and fourth, learning to unlearn in order to relearn, which calls on African intellectuals and academics to openly acknowledge their factory faults and miseducation.

3.3. Coloniality of Gender

A blind spot within most mainstream post- and decolonial scholarship is gender and sexuality – especially in the plural. In a critique of Quijano’s seminal formulation of the coloniality of power, Argentinian feminist decolonial thinker Maria Lugones (2007) argued

that gender and sexuality systems and relations in Africa and the Americas were not merely shaped by the coloniality of power but were constitutive of it. Not taking away from Lugones' critique, it is worth noting that Grosfoguel (2007, p. 217) with a nod to USA 'third world' feminist scholars, also expanded upon Quijano's conceptualisation to include a gender and sexuality perspective by defining coloniality of power as:

[A]n entanglement [...] of multiple and heterogeneous global hierarchies ('heterarchies') of sexual, political, epistemic, economic, spiritual, linguistic and racial forms of domination and exploitation where the racial/ethnic hierarchy of the European/non-European divide transversally reconfigures all of the other global power structures.

Lugones' critique rings true when considering how Africans' bodies and sexualities were made focal points for justifying and legitimising the fundamentalist impetus of colonialism: to civilise the barbarian and savage natives of the 'dark continent' (Tamale, 2011, 2020). Colonial frontiers offered Europeans possibilities of transgressing highly conservative Victorian sexual mores by framing – or othering – African cultures and sexualities as different, less urbane and inferior to those of Europe/ans (Loomba, 2000, p. 158). Consequently, new economic, political, legal, religious, education and social systems were introduced based on capitalist, liberal, Christian, and heteropatriarchal norms, reshaping the political economy of gender and sexuality relations in Africa (Oyěwùmí, 1997; Tamale, 2011, 2014, 2020).

In distilling nine contours of coloniality of power, Grosfoguel (2007, pp. 216-17) included gender and sexuality in two of them. The first contour was the establishment of 'a global gender hierarchy that privileges males over females and European patriarchy over other forms of gender relations', which found full expression in Africa. Nigerian feminist scholar Oyěwùmí (1997), for example, showed how European colonisers' (re)invention of customary systems into customary law deprived women of rights due to the heteropatriarchal bias inherent in Eurocentric lawmaking and thinking at the time. Tamale (2020) provided another example by outlining how, under the British system of indirect rule in Nigeria, the authority of male but not female chiefs was recognised, thus alienating women from the newly created public sphere. Both examples demonstrate the projection of Eurocentric gender norms onto Africa/ns akin to the exclusion of 'white bourgeois women from the sphere of collective authority, from the production of knowledge, from most control over the means of production' crucial to the colonial and racial standing of the 'bourgeois white man' (Lugones, 2007, p. 206).

Notably, several gender and sexuality relations that colonisers sought to alter were themselves a result of colonial encounters and interventions, or, in other words, the genealogy

of coloniality. While also touching upon the impact on ethnic diversity, institutional quality, and (violent) conflict, Nunn (2017) concluded that the slave trades changed female labour market participation as women had to take over many roles traditionally performed by men in agriculture, the military and in positions of leadership and authority. It also caused a long-term increase in the prevalence of polygyny, and, by extension, an increase in HIV prevalence as women in polygynous relationships were more likely to have additional sexual partners other than their husband (Nunn, 2017).

The second contour of the coloniality of power related to gender and sexuality delineated by Grosfoguel (2007, pp. 216-17) was the establishment of ‘a sexual hierarchy that privileges heterosexuals over homosexuals and lesbians [...]’ This resonates with the experience and expression of colonialism in Africa. As identified by Lugones (2007, p. 206), the European colonisers’ gender system was ‘heterosexualist, as heterosexuality permeates racialized patriarchal control over production, including knowledge production, and over collective authority.’ Europe/ans’ imposition of rigid, binarized and hierarchised gender and sexual binaries on Africa (Oyěwùmí, 1997) included laws proscribing non-reproductive sexual expressions, that is same-sex relations against the order of nature (Cornwall, 2014, pp. 610–611; Jolly, 2010). By contrast, there is little or no historical, legal or linguistic evidence of formal or informal sanctions against same-sex relationships in pre-colonial British East Africa (Amadiume, 2015; Cheney, 2012; Epprecht, 2008; Msibi, 2011; Nyanzi, 2013; Oyěwùmí, 1997; Sadgrove et al., 2012; Tamale, 2013). Rather, a ‘don’t-ask-don’t-tell attitude’ prevailed, where marriage and reproduction were acceptably used as camouflage while engaging in same-sex relations (Epprecht, 1999 cited in Msibi, 2011, p. 64).

Examining the coloniality of gender clearly shows the mediation of (Eurocentric) racial superiority and othering through ideologies of gender and sexuality (Alexander, 2014; Lugones, 2007). Murray and Roscoe (2021, p. xxv) furthermore suggested that the heterosexualisation of Africa/ns was more pronounced than in other colonised contexts:

For Europeans, black Africans—of all the native peoples of the world—most epitomized “*primitive man*.” Since primitive man was supposed to be *close to nature, ruled by instinct, and culturally unsophisticated*, he had to be heterosexual, his sexual energies and outlets devoted exclusively to their “natural” purpose: *biological reproduction*. If black Africans were the most primitive people in all humanity—if they were, indeed, human, which some debated—then *they had to be the most heterosexual [emphasis added]*.

Confronting the coloniality of gender sheds light on enduring colonial myths of homosexuality as absent or incidental in African societies (Murray & Roscoe, 2021, p. xxv),

and of African sexualities as deviant and peculiar (Ekine, 2013) that fuel the two dominant discourses of homosexuality as ‘unAfrican’ and of Africa/ns as homophobic used by both pro- and anti-LGBTIQ+ rights movements in Africa today (Baisley, 2015; Ekine, 2013; Hoad, 1999; Ndashe, 2013). Taken together, such colonial discourses position Africa/ns’ LGBTIQ+ activisms as an oxymoron, but more importantly inform political agendas that often work to the detriment of local LGBTIQ+ activists. In South Africa, Ghana, Uganda, and Malawi, African political and religious leaders as part of their political nationalist agendas position LGBTIQ+ peoples as a threat to African social and cultural norms, and LGBTIQ+ rights as imperialist. Western governments, donors and INGOs in turn use this to justify their interventionist approaches to universalise contemporary Eurocentric sexuality and gender norms, expressions and experiences (Baisley, 2015; Ekine, 2013; Hoad, 1999; Ndashe, 2013).

3.4. Colonialities in Social Movement Scholarship

Thus far, this chapter has attempted to show firstly how the Eurocentric paradigm as an epistemological system cultivates and sustains coloniality, and what some of the epistemic harms of the coloniality of power, being, and gender are for Africa/ns. Building upon the preceding analysis, this section focuses on colonialities obscured in social movement scholarship (Berger & Nehring, 2017) and the subsequent epistemic exclusion of Africa/ns’ perspectives and experiences of LGBTIQ+ activisms within social movement scholarship. This should not be read as a critique of the entire discipline or field of social movement scholarship, but rather as an attempt to further the negative project of decolonization by unveiling and explaining epistemic exclusion of Africa/ns’ LGBTIQ+ activisms within one field of social sciences that arguably lends itself directly to the epistemic inclusion of Other/ed epistemes and experiences of social movements including activisms. As such, this section focuses on social movement scholarship to illuminate how deeply entrenched Eurocentrism is in prevalent knowledge production and ownership practices.

Point Zero Perspective

In reviewing the global dynamics of social sciences, Connell (2020, p. 50) aptly observed that ‘most theoretical texts in the social sciences are written in the global North, and most proceed on the assumption that this does not matter.’ While the first underscores that the epistemic power to name, represent and theorise is still located in the global North, the latter reflects the ‘*point zero perspective*’ as articulated by Colombian philosopher Santiago Castro-Gomez (2003 cited in Grosfoguel, 2007) or ‘*techno-scientific epistemology*’ as articulated by

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2015c) whereby knowledge is presented as neutral, time-, gender-, and place/space- less. Arguably, one result of the point zero perspective can be seen in that most social movement scholarship focuses on socio-political movements in Europe, North and South America (Eckert, 2017), generally failing to examine global North concepts of social movements and civil society in African countries (Daniel & Neubert, 2019).

Resonating with this failure, Makumbe (1998, p. 305) asserted that ‘some Western social scientists expect African civil society to develop along the same lines that civil societies in Western liberal democracies have developed.’ While there might have been a time when this expectation could be somewhat excused, it is no longer warranted when considering the shrinking civic space in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, reflecting a global trend of restrictions imposed on civil society organizations since the 2000s (Smidt, 2018). Relatedly, research/ers are beginning to articulate the importance of different conceptual perspectives to account for the duality of authoritarian postures and to examine repercussions for subgroups of civil society organizations such as advocacy NGOs, nonprofit service providers and regime-loyal NGOs within authoritarian and hybrid regimes (Toepler et al., 2020) that characterise many African countries.

Coloniality of power, being and gender make it evident that the ‘point zero perspective’ is reflective of Eurocentric modernity’s naturalised superior identity, the European Man. ‘He’ is the only knowledge producer as he is positioned as the only one capable of achieving and producing universal knowledge, and knowledges produced from any other subject position are deemed too particularistic and possibly even too inferior to be considered knowledge. Aidi (2018, p. 1) argued that Africa/ns’ social movements remain absent from social sciences research ‘ostensibly because African societies are too rural, too tradition- or ethnicity-bound, or lacking advanced class formations.’ Social movement scholarship thus seems to be implicit and complicit in reproducing Eurocentric dualistic worldviews where ‘intersubjective and cultural relations between Western Europe and the rest of the world are codified as: East-West, primitive-civilized, magic/mythic-scientific, irrational-rational, traditional-modern —Europe and not Europe’ (Quijano, 2000b, p. 542).

With social sciences operating from this evolutionary dualism, it could be argued that social movements in Africa are omitted in most social science research because they do not stringently follow Eurocentric trajectories of social movements. By the 1990s, it was commonly accepted that an earlier generation of social movements had been succeeded by so-called new social movements. New social movements are typically characterised by being middle-class based, focused on the sphere of reproduction, highly decentralised, strategically

radical reformist and promoting participatory democracy (Rucht, 2017, p. 45). Arguably, such characteristics do not resonate with cultures, identities, ideologies, and politics that define most African contexts and thus movement building and sustaining in Africa where class and production are of persistent importance (see e.g. Ossome, 2013).

In writing about social movements in Africa, Ellis and Van Kessel (2009, p. 15) stated that it would be erroneous to presuppose that Africa/ns will make the ‘neat jump from working-class to middle-class activism.’ Whether this is true or not, it does display colonialities of power and knowledges as it seems to firstly valorise middle over working class and secondly implies a linear trajectory of (class) as not just universalizable but also desirable for all. In contrast, Aidi (2018, p. 2) noted that ‘the binaries of demonstrators versus rioters; political versus economic protest; violence versus non-violence’ and ‘frameworks that valorize the role of labour, the middle class, or civil society’ may not expound the often underclass-driven activism in Africa. Supporting Aidi’s point against the binary conceptualisation of social movements in Africa, Gore (2018, p. 107) observed that ‘LGBT activists assert rights, challenge homophobia and subvert sexual and gender norms in highly context-specific ways, often rooted in community-level acts of defiance, kinship, solidarity and material and emotional support.’

‘Worlding’ of Africa/ns

When considering the genealogies of coloniality, it is clear that Africa/n as a specific ‘identity’ was (re)produced by and in contradistinction to the Europe/an gaze (see e.g. Kaoma, 2018; Mudimbe, 1994; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a, 2015c, 2018a, 2018b; Tamale, 2020). The modern/colonial process of constructing the Other/ed as dependent on ‘the imperial cultural mission’ can be described as *‘worlding.’* This concept was seemingly introduced into the postcolonial field by Spivak in her essay entitled ‘Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism’ in 1985 (Juvan, 2022) in which Spivak in a footnote stated ‘[m]y notion of the "worlding of a world" upon what must be assumed to be un-inscribed earth is a vulgarization of Martin Heidegger’s idea’ (Spivak, 2014, p. 260). In this essay, Spivak (2014) underscored the need to read nineteenth-century British literature as part of England’s imperial project, and therefore to acknowledge literature’s role in the production of cultural representation. Seemingly concerned, Spivak (2014, p. 243) contended that ‘the emergent perspective of feminist criticism reproduces the axioms of imperialism,’ and examined ‘the "worlding" of what is today "the Third World" by what has become a cult text of feminism; Jane Eyre.’

If these "facts" [literature as part of the imperial project and as producer of cultural representation] were remembered, not only in the study of British literature but in the study of the literatures of the European colonizing cultures of the great age of imperialism, we would produce a narrative, in literary history, of the "worlding" of what is now called "the Third World." To consider the Third World as distant cultures, exploited but with rich intact literary heritages waiting to be recovered, interpreted, and curricularized in English translation fosters the emergence of "the Third World" as a signifier that allows us to forget that "worlding," even as it expands the empire of the literary discipline (Spivak, 2014, p. 243).

While the concept of 'worlding' has been developed and used beyond literary studies, Spivak's literary analysis speaks directly to the forgetfulness of coloniality in social sciences today. Considering the quote above and replacing Spivak's wording of Third World with Africa/ns, and literary discipline with social sciences, arguably sheds light on the worlding of Africa/ns through (Eurocentric) social movement scholarship.

New social movements are typically defined by the relation of culture, identity, ideology, and politics (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 34), and Eurocentric ontological worlding would arguably conceive these as atomic, homogenous, and separable categories (Lugones, 2010; Quijano, 2000a, 2000b). However, with Africa/ns' colonial experience underpinned by colonialism, dependency, and racism, hybridity of ethnic, gender, sexual, and cultural personhood and political and economic nationhood characterise 'Africanness' (Bhabha, 2012). Social movement building and sustaining in Africa is arguably influenced by a diversality that contrasts with the divisibility on which social movement scholarship usually premises its analytical categories.

Examining the colonialities of social movement scholarship makes it clear that epistemic decolonization would first and foremost entail not operating with preconceived notions of 'the social' in the social movements (Berger & Nehring, 2017, p. 13). Considering studies of new social movements, Mignolo and Walsh (2018) provided an idea of how the social impetus of social movements could differ as they observe that Euro-U.S.-centric thinkers often fail to see that it is not resistance but rather '*decolonial insurgency*' that define social movements in the global South. While resistance denotes 'the emphatic no understood as defensive opposition—a social, cultural, and political reaction *against*—', insurgency denotes a propositional offensive *for* 'in the postures, processes, and practices that disrupt, transgress, intervene and in-surge in, and that mobilize, propose, provoke, activate, and construct an otherwise' (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, pp. 33-34).

To substantiate the rather abstract notion of decolonial insurgency for social movements in Africa, it is worth returning to the relationship between modernity and the colonial situation in Africa/ns. Given this relationship, social movements in Africa are characterised by *extraversion* to a higher extent than those in Europe and Latin America. This is to say that social movements in Africa have been (made) dependent on varying forms of financial (loans by IMF and WB), moral (international human rights discourse) and political (the struggle against apartheid) exchanges with external actors (Ellis & Van Kessel, 2009, pp. 5-6). While this does not mean that social movements in Africa do not exist, it does mean that they are more often caught in the crossfire of Eurocentric modernity than social movements elsewhere. As such, any effort aimed at decolonizing social movement research must consider the transversality of the social in social movements in Africa. To this end, the next section will examine colonialities embedded in the universalised LGBTIQ+ rights discourse that define most social movement scholarship on LGBTIQ+ rights movements globally and thus have implications for decolonial insurgency of LGBTIQ+ rights movements in Africa.

4. De/Coloniality in Africa/ns' LGBTIQ+ Rights Movements

LGBTQ+ rights are now widely interpreted as human rights, particularly by the UN and associated human rights law-making bodies (Lennox and Waites, 2013). This positioning of LGBTIQ+ rights seemingly combines modern knowledge and modern law, which are the two most accomplished manifestations of coloniality – also termed as *'abyssal thinking'* – according to Santos (2016, 2018b). That is to say, the predominant discourse of LGBTIQ+ rights as human rights (law) appears to perpetuate a universalised conceptualisation of (homo)sexuality and promote a binary hierarchised legal rights trajectory premised on the idea of a chronological and ascending unfolding universal history of modernity. The next section will unveil colonialities of power, gender, knowledge and being inherent to the modern/colonial LGBTIQ+ rights discourse.

4.1. Worlding of LGBTIQ+ Rights

Legalization – or rather decriminalization - of LGBTIQ+ identities and expressions was almost exclusive to Europe and Latin America until it became a global phenomenon in the 1980s (Hildebrandt, 2014). While sexual rights language was introduced in intergovernmental norms by feminists during the UN conference on population and development in Cairo in 1994, the concept of 'LGBT rights' was not codified until the Declaration of Montreal in 2006. The Declaration was 'unanimously adopted by the International Scientific Committee, consisting

of 37 LGBT activists and experts from all over the world’ and intended as an advocacy tool ‘to summarize the main demands of the international LGBT movement in the broadest possible terms’ and to promote political dialogue on issues and concerns of sexual and gender minorities (Declaration of Montreal, 2006).

In 2006, a distinguished group of international human rights experts moreover launched the Yogyakarta Principles, a set of 29 international legal principles that explain how international human rights law applies to issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) (Vance et al., 2018). The Principles were pivotal in consolidating the nexus between sexuality, gender and human rights within multilateral institutional discourse (Vance et al., 2018) as exemplified by the 2012 report titled ‘Born Free and Equal: Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in International Human Rights Law’ in which the UN Human Rights Commissioner (OHCHR) stated that LGBT persons are indisputably covered by human rights principles, and recommended that all UN member states further their decriminalization of homosexuality and protection of LGBT persons (OHCHR, 2012) and later LGBTI persons (OHCHR, 2019). In 2016, the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) and ARC International moreover launched the YP+10 process to review and update the Principles, which resulted in nine additional Principles, more than 100 additional state obligations, and an expansion of the ‘SOGI’ terminology from the original Principles, to the even more inclusive ‘SOGIESC’ (sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics), much thanks to the intersex movement (Vance et al., 2018).

It is worth noting that compared to ‘LGBT,’ ‘SOGI’ and ‘SOGIESC’ is argued to be a step away from universalist notions of human rights, and towards a more nuanced understanding of human rights considerate of the challenge presented by the cultural relativist stance of other/ed i.e. non-Western countries used to reject non-heteronormative gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations (Vance et al., 2018). Perhaps this could be seen as part of the reason for the Yogyakarta Principles’s significance in catalysing shifts in judicial decision-making (Altman & Symons, 2016, p. 81), and in the two decades following their introduction same-sex acts have been decriminalised in most Asian countries and is slowly advancing in Africa and Oceania too.

Despite the Yogyakarta Principles seeming success, the resistance to LGBTIQ+ rights in former British colonies in Sub-Saharan Africa is, as outlined above, still prevalent. To understand this resistance, it is important to consider several scholars’ critique of the universalist framing of LGBTIQ+ rights as human rights as giving rise to ‘LGBTQ+ imperialism’ (Ekine, 2013), ‘pink imperialism’ (Epprecht, 2013) or ‘Gay International’

(Massad, 2002) whereby LGBT rights are used to reproduce the colonial narrative of Africa as ‘backward, effete, [and] even effeminate’ (Kapoor, 2015, p. 1612) by perpetuating the single story of Africa/ns as homophobic (Ndashe, 2013), and to thus legitimise the West’s continued sexual ‘modernisation’ of Africa (Sabsay, 2012) in the overtraded currency of withholding financial aid (Ndashe, 2013, p. 160). The international community’s interventionist approach to LGBTIQ+ rights in Malawi, Uganda, and Ghana are recent examples of this strategy.

Substantiating the critiques raised further, is the USA’s approach to LGBTIQ+ rights prior to the current Trump administration. Notwithstanding the USA’s dubious human rights records at home and abroad, especially when it comes to sexual and reproductive rights, the universalist framing of LGBTQ+ rights as human rights was firmly placed into the colonial power matrix when Hillary Clinton vowed that the USA would actively seek to ensure that LGBT - rather than LGBTI as advanced by many African LGBTIQ+ activists – rights exist throughout the world in her Human Rights Day speech in 2011 (Ekine, 2013, p. 88). The USA evidently took its self-appointed role as bearer, creator, and protagonist of modernity seriously as demonstrated by President Obama’s attempts to discourage (re)criminalization of LGBT persons through diplomatic encounters with the Senegalese President Marky Sall in 2013, Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni in 2014 and Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta in 2015.

4.2. *Global Polarisation over LGBTIQ+ Rights*

The international outcry against Uganda’s Anti-Homosexuality Bill in 2009 – and later Russia’s attempt at criminalising homosexual behaviour for the Olympic Winter Games in 2014 – effectively marked the formal politicization of sexuality and the international salience of sexual discrimination in domestic contexts (Thiel & Picq, 2015, p. 1). LGBTQ+ rights were thus rendered a marker of Eurocentric modernity universalised, whereby the ‘West’ was reinforced as ‘the exclusive bearers, creators, and protagonists’ of modernity (Quijano, 2000b).

For Eurocentrism’s dualistic worldview to work, the West needs to appear as a unified front. However, even though almost two decades have passed since the Yogyakarta Principles were launched, the European Union (EU) remains the only intergovernmental organization to incorporate sexual orientation within its rights architecture. The UN General Assembly considered a non-binding declaration on human rights, sexual orientation, and gender identity (SOGI) in 2008. However, only 66 of the then 192 UN member states – mainly in Europe and Latin America – initially endorsed the declaration with a 67th endorsement eventually added by the USA. Conversely, many Asian and African countries endorsed a counter-statement condemning same-sex relationships and transgender individuals (D’Amico, 2015).

To avoid the Eurocentric ‘East-West’ dichotomy, it is particularly important to note that the polarisation of LGBTIQ+ rights does not limit itself to inter- and multi-national contexts. For example, in stark contrast to the Obama administration’s work to decriminalise LGBT identities at home and abroad, the Trump administration worked hard to enforce a ban on transgender people serving openly in the military with only one injunction (*Stone v. Trump*) initially standing in the way of it succeeding. Another example is Brazil. In 2003, Brazil tabled a draft resolution known as the ‘Brazilian resolution,’ making Brazil the first country to propose an international normative text exclusively dedicated to LGBT rights, and steadily advancing its position as a promoter of LGBT rights as norms at a global and regional level (Nogueira, 2017). In 2019, Angola was the first country in that year to decriminalise LGBT persons whereas Brazil was the first country to erode LGBT rights. Only hours after his inauguration, Brazil’s then new right-wing President, Jair Bolsonaro, removed concerns of the LGBT community from the new human rights ministry. These examples serve to illustrate that LGBT rights constitute a heterogenous and unstable category that is negotiated and contested between states, within intergovernmental institutions, and by NGOs globally.

The point of outlining some of the political polarisation over LGBTQ+ rights is not to reproduce the racialized modernist hierarchy of progressive – here Europe and Latin America – and non-progressive – here Asia and Africa. Rather, the point is firstly to underline that LGBTQ+ rights are legally and normatively dynamic as also demonstrated in Thoreson’s (2014) thorough institutional ethnography of the IGLHRC’s formation and development as well as conceptualisation and contestation of LGBT human rights at the UN and elsewhere. The point is secondly to underline that this is invisibilised or even silenced in the globalised discourse and imposition of LGBT rights, which unequivocally points to the coloniality of power in that the knowledge produced, possessed, and distributed about the LGBTQ+ rights trajectory towards progress alongside its supporters and opponents is again located within the firm arms of Eurocentric modernity.

4.3. Chrononormativity of Modern LGBTIQ+ Rights

Coloniality is founded on the ‘theft of history’ (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015c, p. 16). For Africa, this is evident in that the historical chromometer was and is, as remarked by Tamale (2020, p. 24), measured from the ‘zero year’ which refers to ‘the birth of an alien Christ (BC and AD).’ The zero year for LGBTIQ+ rights movements globally according to most social science scholarship that posits to study them (see e.g., Altman & Symons, 2016; Stulberg, 2018; Thoreson, 2014, 2020) would appear to be the Stonewall riots in New York in 1969.

What this does is to effectively erode the (epistemological) possibility of every country having its own ‘Stonewall moment’ whereby LGBTIQ+ peoples and rights are galvanized into political consciousness and activism (Epprecht, 2013, p. 151), and disregard that conditions in most (if not all) countries are very different from the 1960s and 1970s when the West (mainly USA) had its LGBTIQ+ liberation(s) (Rahman, 2015, p. 96). Social science scholarship on LGBTIQ+ rights movements is thus remarkably close – or replicable of - Europe/ans colonialism’s creation of a new temporal perspective of history in which the colonised population, along with their respective histories and cultures, were relocated in the past of a historical trajectory whose culmination was – and is – Europe (Quijano, 2000b, p. 541).

The theft of history arguably extends to what queer theorist Elizabeth Freeman (2010) termed ‘*chrononormativity*’ whereby LGBTIQ+ rights is presupposed to follow a specific pattern over time within a set normative framework. The chrononormativity of modern/colonial LGBTIQ+ legal rights trajectory operates according to a Eurocentric dualist evolutionary view that peoples and places move from the primitive to the civilized, from the traditional to the modern, and from the savage to the rational in a neat linear fashion (Quijano, 2007, p. 176). Within the modern conceptualisation of LGBTIQ+ rights, the ‘uncivilised’ moves towards being ‘civilised’ firstly by decriminalising LGBTQ+ identities, acts and allies and secondly by introducing rights to (same-sex) marriage and reproduction (through adoption and IVF) to ultimately ensure assimilation of LGBTQ+ peoples into the universalised cis-heterosexual, racist and white(washed) citizen in full compliance with the global world order.

The linear and rigid conceptualisation of time contrasts with most non-Eurocentric conceptions of time that tend to follow a spiral that ‘revolves through layers of generations, renewing itself with each new birth. It cannot be fixed but is constantly moving in three-dimensional, multilayered space. It allows for recurrence and return but also for transformation’ (Tamale, 2020, p. 24). As a manifestation of the epistemic crisis, there are several faults with the linear logic of the modern LGBTIQ+ rights trajectory. It firstly disregards the legal pluralism of many (African) countries whereby there are state and customary laws (Tamale, 2020). Put differently, in modern law, there is a universal/ised dichotomy between legal and illegal that leaves little room for the shades of grey, for example, the lawless, a-legal, non-legal according to the official state or international law (Santos, 2014, p. 120). It certainly also does not allow room for plural legal systems as often found in Africa whereby (inter)national and customary law exist in tandem (Waites, 2024). Thus, the pursuit and potential achievement of decriminalising LGBTQ+ identities, acts and politics in national law will most likely leave customary untouched and unexplored.

The modern LGBTIQ+ rights trajectory secondly negates the diversality of LGBTIQ+ rights. By contrast, based on analyses of the legal situations facing LGBT people throughout Africa, Kretz (2013) suggested seven stages of LGBT protection; (1) total marginalisation, (2) criminalization of status and behaviour, (3) decriminalization, (4) codification of anti-discrimination laws, (5) establishment of positive rights, (6) full legal equality, and (7) cultural integration. These stages are important as they illuminate the shortcomings of the modern LGBTIQ+ rights trajectory's almost technocratic conceptualisation of LGBTIQ+ rights. Perhaps, the most illustrative example of this globally is South Africa.

South Africa has seemingly achieved LGBTIQ+ rights modernity as the first country not just in Africa but in the world by prohibiting unfair discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the new post-apartheid Constitution approved in 1996, being the fifth country in the world to legalise same-sex marriage and even allowing same-sex couples to adopt children and arrange IVF surrogacy treatments. Yet, in South Africa, strong patriarchal Christian ethic still compound prevalent anti-gay sentiments (Butler et al., 2003), (young) LGBTIQ+ people continue to face homophobia and homophobic violence (Mavhandu-Mudzusi & Sandy, 2015; Mayeza, 2021), and particularly black lesbians are at high risk of corrective rape (Gaitho, 2021; Mwambene & Wheal, 2015). Hence, while South Africa's constitutional and statutory protections for LGBTIQ+ rights surpass the situation in most 'Western' countries and result from LGBTIQ+ rights being tied into South Africa's post-apartheid nation making process, rather than the universalised notion of LGBTIQ+ rights as human rights, there is still a stark contrast between the legal framework and the lived realities for LGBTIQ+ people. What this points to is that the modern/colonial LGBTIQ+ rights trajectory negates the meaning of social and cultural cachets of queer/homophobic rhetoric and sentiments (McKay & Angotti, 2016), even when a country has seemingly reached the prescribed (legal) LGBTIQ+ modernity.

By extension, the prescriptive modern LGBTIQ+ rights trajectory overlooks the 'precariousness of subaltern desires and the malleability of justice' (Kapur, 2015, p. 267) not just in Africa but globally. Recent developments in India and the USA illuminate this precariousness. Starting with India, the much-celebrated decriminalization of same-sex conduct in September 2018 was not the first time that the country decriminalised same-sex conduct. In 2009 the High Court of Delhi decriminalised same-sex conduct, but the decision was reversed by the Supreme Court in 2013. In the USA, the very recent overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in the USA in 2022 dismantled 50 years of legal protection, paving the way for individual states to curtail or even ban abortion. While contextually very different, these examples both underscore that it just requires people in positions of power to change (their minds) to undo

established rights, and that decriminalization and constitutional protections do not necessarily stop queer/homophobic violence and sentiments. Whereas the previous two sections have highlighted the coloniality of power of the modern LGBTIQ+ rights in terms of space, time and politics, the next two sections will turn to the embedded coloniality of gender and being.

4.4. (In)Visibly White, Reluctantly Queer

The Eurocentric paradigm, as outlined above, is premised on universal and global pertinence. As an extension of the Eurocentric paradigm, it is thus perhaps unsurprising that several feminist and queer scholars point to human rights as a patriarchal discourse in which rights are connected to a static, universalised, and naturalised LGBTIQ+ identity (Hildebrandt, 2012; Hines, 2009; Sabsay, 2012; Seckinelgin, 2009; Wilson, 2017). A rights-bearing subject arguably mirrors the masculine, Westernized and heteronormative citizen (Collins & Talcott, 2011; Hildebrandt, 2012; Richardson, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2005), which would point to the fused and intermeshed coloniality of power, knowledge and gender as the rights-bearing subject as essentially the ‘bourgeois white man’ (Lugones, 2007) albeit queer.

It is arguably not just the rights-bearer but also the rights-creator who is representative of a whitewashed man. Most accounts of LGBTQ+ movements underscore heterosexist and racist biases inherent to the coloniality of power by rarely paying tribute to the pivotal role of transwomen of colour including Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson in not just initiating but maintaining momentum after the Stonewall riots. In a comparison of transwomen of colour’s engagement with the history of Stonewall in Brazil and the Philippines, Silva and Jacobo (2020) concluded that the ‘storms and stresses of white colonial patriarchy’ led to the continued erasure of trans identities and bodies, especially of colour, in mainstream discourses around the LGBTQ+ movement and, by extension, the profound lack of knowledge – and interest – about how ‘Stonewall’ has come to inspire and/or sideline resistances and re-existences beyond the USA.

The concept of sexual citizenship has been widely explored to overcome the heterosexist bias in human rights discourse. However, contrary to Weeks' (1998) positive inclinations, sexual citizenship is arguably characterised by a *‘neoliberal politics of normalisation’* (Richardson, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2005) or *‘politics of containment’* (Santos, 2013). This implies an innate duty to assimilate to mainstream heterosexist society to attain equal citizenship rights. Same-sex marriage, adoption and other means of reproduction, for example, is based on the pursuit of acceptance and respectability according to cis- and heteronormative standards, which makes it a priority for LGBTQ+ activisms and movements

more easily understood by mainstream society (Mulé, 2018, p. 242). Yet, acceptable and respectable heteronormative rights claims do not necessarily resonate with the priorities of LGBTQ+ peoples. Hildebrandt (2012, p. 850), for example, showed that same-sex marriage is not a priority in Chinese queer activism, rather, it is the elimination of employment discrimination and family pressures.

In queer analyses of colonisation, scholars such as Thomas (2007) and Morgensen (2011) have demonstrated that for anything to become legible as sexuality or even as ‘queer’, it must be done within a field of intelligibility that upholds Europe/ans’ superiority and (settler) colonisation through the continued erasure of both other erotic practices and the relations of power that keep the epistemic frame of ‘sexuality.’ The implicit demand for intelligibility defines, confines, and impedes LGBTIQ+ activism inwardly and outwardly. Within the context of Portugal, Santos (2012) argues that the human rights discourse translates into LGBTQ+ activism, devaluing sexual diversity to gain access to mainstream forms of marriage and family. In a study of mainstream South African LGBTQ+ movement organizations, Currier (2010) demonstrated how these organizations deployed normalisation to marginalise and expel an internal threat, the Gay and Lesbian Alliance, between 1998 and 2006.

While scholars such as Kollman and Waites (2009) and Waites (2009) suggested possibilities for re-articulating human rights and ultimately sustaining the human rights discourse, they do simultaneously concede that human rights norms in their ‘original’ form can diminish sexual diversity by engendering heteronormative understandings of cultural tradition, national identity and religious beliefs. The human rights discourse has subsequently been argued to foster the ‘loss of the subject’ in national, especially non-Western, LGBTIQ+ activism (Hines, 2009).

4.5. Mr. Modern Gay

In Eurocentric modernity, the world is ontologically organised in terms of atomic, homogenous, and separable categories (Lugones, 2010; Quijano, 2000a, 2000b). The same can be said for the universalised ‘modern conceptualization of homosexuality’ (Bosia, 2015, p. 38) embedded in the LGBTIQ+ rights discourse. Starting with homogeneity, the acronym ‘LGBT’ arose as a political identity category in the USA between 1970 and 2010, mistakenly suggesting that the constitutive categories of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender are informed by similar experiences, and therefore collapsible into one political category (Murib, 2014; Murib & Brettschneider, 2017). Linguistically, this is compounded by lumping together of gender identity (transgender), sexual orientation (lesbian, gay and bisexual), and sometimes medical

condition (intersex) into the letter soup acronym of ‘LGBT(I)’. Taken together, the political and linguistic imposition of homogeneity negates that ‘within LGBTQ demographic there exists a familiar hierarchical positioning that relegates, for example, lesbians behind gays in terms of socioeconomic visibility in the wider population, and transgender and bisexuals even behind both categorical sexual dispositions’ (Thiel, 2015, p. 81).

The hierarchies of LGBTQ+ politics, identities and language are obscured because they too are written from the zero perspective, that is from the invisibilised white bourgeois man. This would offer insight to Euro-American LGBTIQ+ activists’ struggle – or even lack of attempt at – addressing different concerns and identity issues of gay men, lesbians, and others identifying as gender variant or non-binary. As noted by Stein (2022), the primarily white, male, Western/ized activists whose groups and theories gained leverage did not necessarily represent the range of racial, class and national identities complicating a broader LGBTIQ+ agenda. Thus, while gay and lesbian movements make advances in terms of adoption and marriage rights, transgender persons decry being left behind when it comes to more fundamental workplace protection rights or access to healthcare.

By contrast, a study of transgender invisibility in Namibian and South African LGBT movements differ from those in LGBT movements in the USA as LGBT activists in Namibia and South Africa did not fail to include transgender rights and persons in the movement, but few constituents identified as transgender (Currier, 2015). Currier (2015) ascribed this to a discrepancy between (local) personal and prevailing (global) collective-identity terms. What Currier’s study signifies for the scholarly consciousness decolonization related to Africa/ns’ LGBTQ+ activism is that the language of Western/ized sexuality discourse, and the meanings of related concepts, are not directly transferable to realities and experiences inside Africa (Tamale, 2011, p. 12). Insisting on the opposite is not only to continue the coloniality of knowledge about the Other/ed by negating and potentially being at odds with localized understandings of genders and sexualities (see e.g. Epprecht, 2008, 2013). Looking at the scholarship surrounding the concepts of coloniality, these points could also open discussion for an additional concept of coloniality – that of coloniality of language such as embedded in the LGBTQ+ terminology – as well as an expansion of Lugones’ conceptualisation of the coloniality of gender to also include cis-genderism alongside racism and heterosexism.

Moving onto atomisation, LGBTQ+ peoples are framed in the ‘teleological subject position that prioritizes gay identity over other forms of belonging’ (Rahman, 2015, p. 101). This comes with a whole host of implications including the ‘gay for pay’ often used to advance politicised homophobia in Africa, which will be expanded upon in a later chapter. For now, it

is important to note that this individualist framing clashes with the collectivist epistemology of Africa(ns). This is, for example, reflected in the ‘moral economy’ characteristic of many African societies whereby specific relationships and patterns of reciprocity of material subsistence are linked with shared non-monetary values and usually contrasted with market- or self-serving materialism (Tamale, 2020, p. 12). Notably, the pan-African solidarity to reject LGBTQ+ rights, which became particularly visible in the back and forth over Uganda’s AHB from 2009-2014, speaks to a clash between an African collectivist and Western individualist epistemology (Kaoma, 2018). Consequently, the pan-African backlash to LGBTQ+ rights must be understood beyond the simplistic conceptualisation of Africa/ns as homophobic.

Lastly, there is the separability of categories. Within the human rights discourse, LGBTQ+ peoples are framed ‘as atomized individuals rather than members of a social group with a visible ‘collective identity’ – like race or ethnicity’ (D’Amico, 2015, p. 58) who live within and are influenced by (inter)national political and economic realities. This, by extension, means that LGBTQ+ together with their friends, families, and wider communities are affected when, for example, aid is withdrawn to further LGBT rights. LGBTQ+ activisms are hereby decontextualised from wider political struggles related to other identity positions such as race, class, gender and ethnicity (Judge, 2017, p. 89). Moves towards irrevocable LGBT rights requires simultaneous support by civil society and legislative changes as also noted by Devji (2016). However, the atomisation and decontextualization of LGBTQ+ identities and politics impede Africa(ns) LGBTQ+ activists from securing this support in wider civil society.

5. Conclusion

The chapter started with the claim that social sciences is characterised by *forgetfulness of coloniality* that leads to the epistemic oppression of Africa/ns’ LGBTIQ+ activists in social sciences research/ers. By unfolding the colonialities of power, gender and being, this chapter has sought to demonstrate that the epistemic oppression of Africa/ns’ LGBTIQ+ activisms within social sciences research/ers can be understood as a result of the relationship between Africa and the West being underpinned by colonialism, dependency, racism and neo-colonial consensus based on economic imperatives (Ekine, 2013, p. 83), social sciences by heteronormative assumptions, practices, and biases (Compton, 2018), and research by imperial and colonial practices (Smith, 2021). Examining the embedded Eurocentrism not just in social sciences but also the (liberal) conceptualisation of LGBTIQ+ rights moreover revealed how global imperial designs and colonial matrices of power actively work to disrupt and constrain Africa/ns’ LGBTIQ+ rights activisms.

The chapter has also sought to contour the tenets of what it means to work towards decoloniality as ‘a form of struggle and survival, an epistemic and existence-based response and practice—most especially by colonized and racialized subjects—*against* the colonial matrix of power in all of its dimensions, and *for* the possibilities of an otherwise’ (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 17). Scholars embarking on epistemic decolonization of themselves and their scholarship surrounding Africa/ns’ LGBTIQ+ activisms must as such think beyond deconstruction to re-construction (Tamale, 2020).

Ultimately, this chapter has sought to demonstrate that to advance epistemic decolonization within the parameters of this research, it is useful to adopt a decolonial feminist perspective for multiple reasons. Firstly, it challenges the Eurocentric notion that race, gender, sexuality, spirituality, and epistemology are additive parts of the economic and political structures of a capitalist heteropatriarchal world-system, and instead firmly and visibly positions them as integral and constitutive (Alexander, 2014; Lugones, 2007). With the feminist position of knowledge as situated and embodied, a decolonial feminist perspective also challenges the Eurocentric privileging of ‘ego politics of knowledge’ over the ‘geopolitics of knowledge’ and the ‘body-politics of knowledge’ (Grosfoguel, 2007), which effectively deems Africa/ns – especially anyone who is not a cis-het-man – as too particularistic to even be considered as knowledge producers and distributors. More importantly, a decolonial feminist perspective is useful in navigating some of the potential pitfalls in the critical engagement with and moves towards reconstitution.

The first pitfall would be to romanticise pre-colonial African sexualities and postcolonial native culture. The first is unbridled and fraught in that it overlooks that African societies, like any other, involved the organization of gender, sexuality and reproduction (Tamale, 2011), whereas the latter constructs Africa as entirely defined by its relation to colonialism (Loomba, 2000). Nativism moreover risks overlooking that culture in contemporary Africa is largely a product of constructions and reinterpretations by former colonial authorities in collaboration with African male (elite) patriarchs (Tamale, 2011, 2014, 2020). Nativism furthermore negates African feminist scholars working to undo patriarchal and colonial versions of gender and to forefront sexualities as a critical terrain for theory and activism (Bennett, 2017).

The second pitfall would be to perpetuate the simplistic essentially Eurocentric ‘African’/‘Western’ binary. It would be false and counterproductive, as research and advocacy work on African sexualities is often carried out within the contexts of the resources provided by the West (Bennett, 2017), and social movements in Africa informed by extraversion.

Theorising African sexualities will nevertheless differ from Western/ized sexualities in nuanced specificities such as cultural ideology, historical encounters and interventions of colonialism, imperialism, and capitalism, and self-identifying terms that have emerged from Western societies (Tamale, 2011, pp. 26-27). Moreover, the colonial experience is, like hetero-patriarchy, articulated alongside economic, social, cultural and historical factors, and therefore, looks differently in various parts of the world (Loomba, 2000, p. 19), which means that difference in lived experiences of gender and sexuality is both between and within West and non-West (Parashar, 2016, p. 371).

Acknowledging that LGBTIQ+ activisms (in Africa) may or may not differ from that in the West is also to take the feminist concern for agency, power and meaning seriously (Gore, 2018; Manning, 2016; Ozkazanc-Pan, 2012; Vanner, 2015). To this end, it is worth considering LGBTIQ+ rights movements in Africa as defined by resistance and decolonial insurgency. While the particularities of this insurgency will differ across Africa, Ekine (2013, p. 87) arguably encapsulates the unifying tenets as she writes that '[t]he African struggle is not only directed at changing existing legislation; it is a struggle in which we seek to reassert our own narrative and reclaim our humanity.'

Coloniality of/in Queer Lawfare in Uganda

1. Introduction

What the previous chapters have hopefully made clear is that existing and emerging scholarship on Africa/ns' LGBTIQ+ activisms is mired and marred in the colonialities of power, gender, and being, and that the universalised LGBTIQ+ rights discourse is an extension of Eurocentric modernity's articulation of history, law, gender, sexuality, and (human) rights activism. Returning to the conceptualisation of epistemic violence offered by Pérez (2019, p. 2), ignoring these colonialities would mean that social sciences research/ers risk continuing the historic and social denial of Africa/ns' LGBTIQ+ activists' epistemic agency, subjectivity, legitimacy, and even existence. This form of epistemic violence carries real dangers for LGBTIQ+ peoples as 'it makes it easier to impose ready-made solutions in the 'sea of nothingness'; it makes it easier to undermine local processes because 'they are not happening'; and it makes it easier to co-opt individuals and call them local movements in order to gain a foothold in the country' (Ndashe, 2013, p. 156).

Within the context of Uganda, these dangers arguably become reality at the hands of both pro- and anti-LGBTIQ+ rights actors. This chapter sets out to substantiate the dangers of epistemic violence to LGBTIQ+ activists in Uganda by unfolding the insidious ways that LGBTIQ+ rights are deployed to further particular political agendas by the international community, political and religious leaders. To this end, the chapter firstly outlines the trajectory and content of Uganda's two anti-homosexuality bills. It secondly situates Uganda in the colonial matrix of power to understand the international community's unprecedented reactions to these two bills/laws. The third section unravels the trans/national political homophobia leading to the making of the first anti-homosexuality bill and lastly discusses the implications of the innate colonialities of queer lawfare for LGBTIQ+ activists and activisms.

Before launching into this endeavour, it is worth noting that even though Uganda has had two anti-homosexuality bills and laws, this chapter primarily draws on scholarship related to the first anti-homosexuality bill tabled in October 2009 and signed into law in February 2014. The reason for this is simply that little scholarship has yet been produced about the latter anti-homosexuality bill tabled in March and signed into law in May 2023. Rather than being

an analytical weakness, this cements the claim of ‘*colonial situation*’ (Fasakin, 2021; Grosfoguel, 2007) or ‘*colonial durabilities*’ (see e.g., Mertens et al., 2022) as outlined in the previous chapter, given that the framing of the first bill/law and the implications for LGBTIQ+ activists and allies are arguably identical to those seen in the current bill/law.

1.1. Life of a Kill Bill

Commensurate with the time of writing this chapter, a brutal knife attack on Ugandan LGBTIQ+ activist, Steven Kabuye, on 3rd January 2024 made it into the world news. According to LGBTIQ+ activists and allies in Uganda, the attack is just one of many amongst the rapidly rising violence against LGBTIQ+ peoples, activists and allies after the country adopted the Anti-Homosexuality Act on the 26th May 2023 (henceforth AHA 2023) (Nalwada, 2024; Obulutsa et al., 2024; Padgett, 2024). The AHA 2023, in short, prohibits ‘any form of sexual relations between persons of the same sex’ and ‘the promotion or recognition of sexual relations between persons of the same sex’⁶.

Despite the increasing repression of individuals, groups and organizations advocating for LGBTIQ+ rights in many African countries over the past two decades (Gomes da Costa Santos & Waites, 2022, p. 549), Uganda’s AHA 2023 was quickly deemed to be the latest and worst of its kind (Bhandari, 2023). This was due to the law’s incredibly wide-reaching provisions such as the death penalty for ‘*aggravated homosexuality*’ (Article 3), including consensual same-sex acts with a person below the age of eighteen, a person with a disability, with mental illness or of advanced age; up to 20 years’ imprisonment for the ‘*promotion of homosexuality*’ including persuading, advertising, financing, providing spaces, and operating organizations that promotes or encourages homosexuality (Article 11), and the far-reaching provision ‘*duty to report*’ (Article 14) including the obligation to report any ‘reasonable suspicion that a person has committed or intends to commit the offence of homosexuality or any other offence under this Act’ to the police⁷.

With these provisions, the AHA 2023 drastically expands the existing legal repression of LGBTIQ+ peoples including the criminalization of certain same-sex sexual acts defined as ‘carnal knowledge against the order of nature’ in the country’s British colonial era Penal Code from 1950, and the constitutional prohibition of same-sex marriages introduced in 2005 (Jjuuko & Nyanzi, 2022). The AHA 2023 effectively annihilates the social fabric for LGBTIQ+ peoples

⁶ The Republic of Uganda (2023). The Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023. Available here: <https://www.parliament.go.ug/sites/default/files/The%20Anti-Homosexuality%20Act%2C%202023.pdf>

⁷ See the AHA 2023 as listed above.

and outlaws any inkling of LGBTIQ+ rights advocacy and organising. Looking beyond the implications of the AHA 2023 for LGBTIQ+ peoples alone, the AHA 2023 moreover erodes elements that Eurocentric modern/colonial eyes – here meaning the UN General Assembly and the former Commission on Human Rights – considered essential for democracy including the freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of association, and freedom of the press (OHCHR, 2002; UN, 2024).

Encompassing both the possibility of actual and social death, the ‘genocidal intentions’ (Spivey & Robinson, 2010) of the lawmakers and state leaders appear clear. What is particularly alarming is that there is good reason to think that the AHA 2023 will be more than symbolic politics and posturing. Not only does the AHA 2023 seem to resonate with the Ugandan public as the latest Afrobarometer published in May 2023 found an overwhelming majority of Ugandans (94-95%) were willing to report a family member, close friend, or co-worker to the police if they were involved in a same-sex relationship (Kakumba, 2023, p. 2), but the first charges of ‘aggravated homosexuality’ were made only months after the adoption of the AHA 2023 (Al Jazeera, 2023; Ross & Graff, 2023).

Considering the clear collision with the modern/colonial LGBTIQ+ agenda, democratic principles, and racial/ised hierarchies, the fervour with which the international community has reacted to both the attack on Steven Kabuye and the adoption of the AHA 2023 is rather unsurprising. The reactions have included a mixture of strong moral condemnations over Uganda’s material and normative violations of the (human) rights of LGBTIQ+ peoples, diplomatic sanctions such as visa restrictions on Ugandan officials by the USA, economic sanctions such as aid cuts from Sweden, expulsion from the USA’s tariff-free trade programme ‘the African Growth and Opportunity Act’, and the cessation of new loans from the World Bank (see e.g., Atuhaire, 2023; Tharoor, 2023; UN, 2023; WB, 2023). Deep concerns have moreover been expressed not just for the (international) human rights, (national) constitutional rights and public health of LGBTIQ+ peoples but also non-LGBTIQ+ Ugandans. For example, in a joint statement released only days after the AHA 2023 that was signed by President Museveni, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (the Global Fund), the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), and the U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) warned that Uganda’s otherwise successful HIV response is in grave danger as the AHA 2023 will obstruct health education and the outreach that can help end AIDS as a public health threat (UNAIDS, 2023).

Unfortunately, the attack, the law and the reactions appear like a very unwelcome déjà vu. That is to say, the AHA 2023 is not Uganda’s first piece of legislation to expand its already

existing (British) colonial era anti-sodomy laws, nor is Steven Kabuye the first Ugandan LGBTQ+ activist to be attacked. The AHA 2023 is in many ways a reincarnation of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill first tabled on 14th October 2009 (AHB 2009 henceforth). The next section subsequently outlines the trajectory of the AHB 2009 from introduction in 2009 to signing into law in 2014 to nullification in 2014 to make it apparent that the AHA 2023 was both predictable and perhaps even preventable.

1.2. (Un)Predictable Resurrections

Like the AHA 2023, the AHB 2009 was propelled into the inter/national (media) spotlight because of its proposed death penalty for ‘aggravated homosexuality’ and life imprisonment for ‘the offence of homosexuality’ (Bahati, 2009, pp. 5-6). At the time, these provisions quickly earned the AHB 2009 the colloquial name the ‘Kill Bill’ or ‘Kill Gay Bill’ (Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015) and led to Uganda being deemed ‘the world’s worst place to be gay’ (Mills, 2011). This populist rhetoric and sentiment was only compounded by the murder of Ugandan LGBTIQ+ activist David Kato Kisule on the 26 January 2011, which the international community, like the attack on Steven Kabuye, was ‘elbowing each other onto the podium to denounce’ (Ndashe, 2013, p. 160).

When the AHB 2009 was tabled, same-sex conduct was widely criminalised, albeit to varying degrees, across Africa, and political homophobia had been on the rise for over two decades (Epprecht, 2013; Goddard, 2004; Gomes da Costa Santos & Waites, 2022; Kollman & Waites, 2009). The AHB 2009 nevertheless sparked considerable, unexpected and unprecedented inter/national political and media attention (Gomes da Costa Santos & Waites, 2022; Rao, 2020), and Uganda torpedoed into what Jjuuko et al. (2022) termed ‘*queer lawfare*’, that is the legalised contestations over the rights of LGBTIQ+ peoples. The queer lawfare unfolded over four turbulent years of debate, review and shelving before the AHB 2009 was publicly signed into law, the Anti-Homosexuality Act 2014 (AHA 2014 henceforth), by President Museveni on the 24th of February 2014 and continued until and after the AHA 2014 was revoked months later by the Ugandan Constitutional Court on the 1st of August 2014 (Jjuuko, 2013; Jjuuko & Mutesi, 2018; Jjuuko & Nyanzi, 2022; Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015). Given the prominence of the death penalty in the queer lawfare over the AHB 2009, it is worth noting that the death penalty was replaced with life imprisonment in the AHA 2014 (Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015).

While the nullification of the AHA 2014 can be considered the biggest legal victory for LGBTIQ+ rights activists and allies in Uganda to date (Jjuuko & Nyanzi, 2022, p. 155), the

win left a lot to be desired. Despite consistent advocacy and litigation efforts by LGBTIQ+ activists and allies in Uganda to have the AHA 2014 overturned for being unconstitutional, for violating the (human) rights of not just LGBTIQ+ peoples but all Ugandans, and for clashing with Uganda's commitments to nationally, regionally and internationally defined human rights, it was officially overturned for having passed without the required quorum (Jjuuko, 2013; Jjuuko & Nyanzi, 2022; Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018; Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015).

Overturning the AHA 2014 on a technicality had a range of consequences that essentially paved the way for the AHA 2023. First, no new substantive rights were created for LGBTIQ+ peoples in Uganda, and the colonial-era criminalization of same-sex conduct was left intact (Hollander, 2009, p. 224). Procedurally, this meant that any new AHB would merely have to pass Parliament in accordance with the constitutionally mandated procedure to become law, and that nothing prevented the creation of other laws targeting LGBTIQ+ peoples. Second, the trans/national political and religious fundamentalisms that fuelled the making of the AHB 2009 and signing of the AHA 2014 were left unaddressed (Msibi, 2011, p. 59), and have thus been allowed to continue with impunity, and arguably contributed to the AHA 2023.

The time leading up to the AHA 2023 also proved these concerns more than mere hypotheticals. Between the overturning of the AHA 2014 and the signing of the AHA 2023, there have been consistent efforts to repress LGBTIQ+ peoples, allies and organizations. Two of the most prominent legal examples include the Sexual Offences Bill⁸ passed by the Ugandan Parliament in May 2021 but not yet signed by the President, which criminalised same-sex sexual activity, sex work and a range of other sexual offences, and the Non-Governmental Organizations Act⁹ signed by President Museveni in March 2016 (NGO Act 2016 henceforth), which restricts the activities of NGOs, especially those working in support of LGBTIQ+ rights.

The implied argument here is that while the AHA 2023 is draconian, disheartening and dangerous, it is unsurprising. Examining queer lawfare processes in 13 African countries over the past decades, Gloppen et al. (2022, p. 1) explained that '[t]hrough court cases, constitutional amendments, proposed and adopted legislation, and 'rights talk', pro-and anti-queer activists and governments have weaponised the law and used it as a central tool in struggles to advance their goals.' The AHA 2023 is in other words the result of insufficiently unveiling and dismantling the wider (trans)national conflicts over social change, political (state) power and

⁸ Bills Supplement to The Uganda Gazette No. 54, Volume CXII, dated 18th October, 2019. Available here: <https://parliamentwatch.ug/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Sexual-Offences-Bill-2019-1.pdf>

⁹ Acts Supplement to The Uganda Gazette No. 14, Volume CIX, dated 3rd March, 2016. Available here: https://www.ngobureau.go.ug/sites/default/files/laws_regulations/2021/04/NGO%20Act%2C%202016.pdf

global hierarchies embedded in the queer lawfare over the AHB 2009 and AHA 2014 (McKay & Angotti, 2016; Narrain, 2014; Weiss, 2013). To move towards the decolonial socio-political aim of producing knowledges not just out of the struggle but to be used in the struggle for LGBTIQ+ rights in Uganda hence first requires an understanding of these wider conflicts, and their implications for LGBTIQ+ activists and activism in Uganda.

The aim of the coming sections is not to detail every step in the legal battles over the AHB 2009 and AHA 2014 nor the ongoing battles for the AHA 2023. This would, after all, go against the declared decolonial impetus of this dissertation to confront epistemic violence by drowning out the already comprehensive analyses conducted by Ugandan and Uganda-based scholars and activists (see e.g. Jjuuko, 2013; Jjuuko et al., 2022; Jjuuko & Mutesi, 2018; Jjuuko & Nyanzi, 2022; Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018; Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015; Tamale, 2014) and by continuing to ignore the diverse and non-legal components of genders and sexualities as in most research produced (Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015). Rather, the aim is to unpack the epistememes, strategies and framings used by pro- and anti- LGBTIQ+ rights activists in the queer lawfare over the AHB 2009 and AHA 2014, and to use this as a springboard to discuss the dangers these present to LGBTIQ+ activists and activism in Uganda then and now.

2. Situating Uganda in the Colonial Matrix of Power

The inheritance of punitive laws for same-sex practices from former colonial powers is common across Africa, and so is it for post-independence political leaders to propose to increase already existing penalties for those who engaged in ‘sodomy’ and other sexual practices supposedly ‘against nature’ (Gomes da Costa Santos & Waites, 2022). Yet, with the AHB 2009, Uganda became the country that has received most visibility in international public opinion and politics of the queer lawfares taking place globally (Gomes da Costa Santos & Waites, 2022, p. 549). At first glance, it might seem obvious why. After all, first the AHB 2009 proposed the death penalty for certain same-sex acts and effectively curtailed LGBTIQ+ rights advocacy, and second, this coincided with the modern/colonial codification of LGBT rights as human rights. However, when considered in a global and local context, it does not add up.

2.1. Colonial Conundrum

When the AHB 2009 was tabled, several African countries such as Mauritania, Somalia and Nigeria as well as several Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Yemen already had the death penalty for certain same-sex acts enshrined in their legal frameworks, and countries such as Russia, Egypt, Tanzania and Lithuania had ‘morality laws’ and/or

‘promotion laws’ - often formulated as propaganda - that actively targeted public promotion of LGBTIQ+ identities, expressions and politics. Notwithstanding the geopolitical magnifying glass currently directed at Russia because of the war in Ukraine and its recent moves to further repress LGBTIQ+ peoples, neither of these countries have received a fraction of the attention from the international community that Uganda did with its AHB 2009 and now with its AHA 2023. Hence, it is arguable that the death penalty and the promotion provisions in the AHB 2009 cannot be the explanation for the international community’s unprecedented interest and interference in Uganda’s AHB 2009.

Given the observable emphasis put on denouncing the death penalty in both media and political statements, one interpretation could be that Uganda was the first country to expand its already existing colonial era criminalization of same-sex acts to include death penalty. However, this would not explain why Brunei, a small, oil-rich sultanate in South-east Asia, flew under the global radar, when the country introduced death by stoning as a punishment for gay sex and adultery in 2019, nor why there has not been any comparable efforts to challenge the death penalty in the countries that already had it after the AHA 2014 was overturned. Another interpretation could be that Uganda was the first country to introduce expansive barriers to LGBTIQ+ rights advocacy. However, this would not explain why countries such as Hungary, Poland and Russia have not been equally challenged by the international community after their recent moves to further bar and ban LGBTIQ+ identities, advocacy and organising. A final reason for the sudden international interest could be that even though Uganda had colonial-era laws criminalising same-sex conduct, countries with colonial-era laws criminalising same-sex conduct rarely enforced them (Reid, 2022), and it was only with the AHB 2009 that violations of LGBTIQ+ peoples’ rights truly began. This would however also be an erroneous interpretation as Uganda before, during and after the AHB 2009 has routinely used its Penal Code to arrest and charge people primarily under the provision ‘carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature’ (Section 145), and the obscure provisions on ‘idle and disorderly persons’ (Section 167) and ‘rogues and vagabonds’ (Section 168) (Jjuuko & Mutesi, 2018, p. 271).

A decolonial reading of the international community’s engagement before the AHB 2009 could of course be that confronting colonial-era laws with/out death penalty would require the international community to push past its willed ‘postcolonial amnesia’ (Cheney, 2012) about its colonial roles in ‘othering’ non-heteronormative sexualities (Tamale, 2013, p. 35); to scatter the ontological worlding of atomic, homogenous, and separable categories (Lugones, 2010; Quijano, 2000a, 2000b) with the West as one homogenous category clearly separable

from the ‘Other’ by addressing the polarisation over LGBTIQ+ rights within Western/ized contexts; and to embrace a completely different modus operandi than the usual racialized and socialised hierarchy and mode of domination. But the same could be said for the relationship between any African country with existing anti-LGBTIQ+ laws or threats hereof, and the West, and these decolonial concerns did also apply to the West’s engagement in the queer lawfare over the AHB 2009.

Drawing out these contradictions should not be seen as an attempt at ‘whataboutism’. Rather, they serve to argue that the queer lawfare over Uganda’s AHB 2009, AHA 2014 and now AHA 2023 cannot be delinked from Uganda’s position(ing) in the colonial matrix of power as not just an African country at the lowest rung of the Eurocentric modern/colonial ladder but as an African country that had up until the AHB 2009 in many ways complied with the ebbs and flows of Eurocentric modernity. President Museveni’s hitherto seemingly willing positioning as the ultimate other and yielding towards Eurocentric modernity as the desired end destination arguably meant that the introduction of the AHB 2009 not only took the international community by surprise but called into question the assumed modern/colonial world order.

2.2. *New African Leader*

As outlined in the previous chapter, the justification discourse of Eurocentric modernity for upholding the racialized and socialised colonial matrix of power has changed from salvation to civilisation to development to democracy to human rights (Grosfoguel, 2007). For a long time, President Museveni arguably complied with the changing logics of Eurocentric modernity, and in turn received a great deal of lenience from the international community. This claim might seem delusional considering the recent signing of the AHA 2023, the last Presidential Election in January 2021 being marred by ‘the killings by security forces, arrests and beatings of opposition supporters and journalists, disruption of opposition rallies, and a shutdown of the internet’ (Human Rights Watch, 2021), and the weaponisation of COVID-19 to (further) repress civil society including opposition leaders, journalists, activists, and LGBTIQ+ peoples through violence, arbitrary arrests, and killings (Dittfeld, 2020a, 2020b; Human Rights Watch, 2020). However, the claim becomes clearer upon a brief recap of President Museveni’s almost four decades’ long reign.

When the National Resistance Movements (NRM henceforth) seized power over Kampala, the capital of Uganda, in 1986, it was against the backdrop of two decades of economic mayhem, political terror and violence that killed approximately 800,000 Ugandans

between 1971-1985 alone and included Idi Amin's (1971-1979) draconian regime (Tripp, 2004, p. 4). At the time, Uganda was thus hardly considered more than a byword for 'bloody ineptitude' (Reid, 2017, p. 58), and the international community therefore enthusiastically embraced the NRM and its leader, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, as a beacon of hope for Uganda.

Following Eurocentric logic, the hope seemed warranted at first. When President Museveni came to power in 1986, Uganda was dubbed the worst HIV/AIDS affected country in the world (Allen & Heald, 2004, p. 1141) in a time where HIV/AIDS still raged across the globe and was a great development concern for the West. Despite having a multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic population of over 20 million, a limited public health and education systems, high levels of illiteracy and low life expectancy (Parkhurst et al., 2009; Tripp, 2004), Uganda was soon hailed by the international community as the African HIV success story because of its ABC approach – Abstinence, Be faithful and Condoms Use (Cohen, 2005; Kinsman, 2010; Parkhurst, 2011).

While Uganda's success is remarkable, the colonial power matrix is evidently at play. Not only did Uganda not have an approach or strategy labelled ABC in the critical period of its so-called 'HIV success' (Parkhurst, 2011), but there is no discernible link between the approach and its success (Cohen, 2004). Rather, the claim to fame appeared to be a veil for the Bush administration's ideological campaign for 'abstinence-only' approaches (Cohen, 2005), which was arguably largely driven by Bush's evangelical faith and sense of moral mission (Heritage, 2024; Parkhurst, 2012) and could thus be considered counter-modern and considerably anti-science. Nevertheless, Museveni complied with most of the developmentalist tendencies of the 1980s and 1990s, and Western governments and donors in turn praised Uganda for its good governance, economic performance, willingness to adopt structural adjustment reforms and widespread decentralisation policies (Tripp, 2004, p. 20).

Despite these moves towards Eurocentric modernity, the regression of and pushback against LGBTIQ+ rights predate the introduction of the AHB 2009 and the subsequent lawfare. Attesting to this, Jjuuko and Nyanzi (2022, p. 148) in their detailed legal analysis of the queer lawfare over the AHB 2009 pointed to the amendment of the Penal Code to increase the punishment for consensual same-sex relations from 14 years' imprisonment to life imprisonment in 1990, President Museveni's public denial of the existence of homosexual people in Uganda in 2002, the then Minister of Information, James Nsaba Buturo, advising UNAIDS against organising LGBT people to discuss prevention of HIV/AIDS among homosexual people in 2004, and Dr Kihumuro Apuuli, the then Director-General of the Uganda AIDS Commission, publicly declaring that no funds would be redirected to target HIV/AIDS

services for men who have sex with men (MSM) while simultaneously acknowledging that MSM were (and are) among the key drivers of the epidemic in 2008.

Against this backdrop, the international community's hesitance to intervene significantly in Uganda's sexual politics before the AHB 2009 seems puzzling. One somewhat cynical albeit not misplaced interpretation could be that Eurocentric modernity values money over morals. While not writing about LGBTIQ+ rights, Tripp (2004) correspondingly asserted that Uganda's adherence to economic reform as set out by the IMF and the World Bank granted the country more leeway with foreign donors and much of the Western diplomatic community than many other African states in terms of (missing) political reform. Another interpretation could be that Uganda was, seen with Eurocentric eyes, headed in the right direction of LGBTIQ+ rights. According to Ayoub and Stoeckl (2024, p. 60), many in the West consider the realisation of LGBTIQ+ rights in their own societies as the result of a long learning process, and as something that can come only with time and democratic experience.

For the first two decades of his rule, President Museveni seemingly moved in the direction of the Eurocentric vision and version of democracy. Some examples hereof include the introduction of a new Constitution that effectively increased protections for human rights and in turn allowed for the emergence of an active civil society, and a more independent judiciary that could protect the human rights of all persons in 1995 (Jjuuko & Nyanzi, 2022, p. 146), and the (symbolic) move to a multiparty system in 2006 (Reid, 2017). While Museveni was once hailed as one of a 'new generation of African leaders' more committed to democracy than the old school of sit-tight 'big men', especially by the USA, it is, as put by Reid (2017, p. 88), by now clear that President Museveni has staked his political capital and legacy on not being Idi Amin rather than being the person to democratise Uganda.

Whereas many African countries moved toward electoral democratisation in the 1990s, Uganda has remained essentially authoritarian and is today semi-authoritarian at best with power concentrated and personalised in the executive (Jjuuko & Nyanzi, 2022; Reid, 2017). As with most semi-authoritarian states, President Museveni deliberately combines rhetoric of liberal democracy with illiberal rule as evident in having held so-called 'democratic' elections while simultaneously having amended the Ugandan constitution to eliminate the two-term limit for presidency in 2005 after announcing his intentions to rerun for the presidency in 2011 and 2016 and the presidential age limit of 75 years in 2017 (Goitom, 2017), thus paving the way for the then 78 years old President to be 're-elected' in January 2021.

With this, President Museveni is now one of the longest sitting autocrats in the world (Flitton, 2023) with the cost of 'all the political and human rights gains that had been made

earlier, including restriction of civic space and curtailing judicial independence’ (Jjuuko & Nyanzi, 2022, p. 146). When considered in relation to the logic of violence in coloniality outlined by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012a), President Museveni’s mode of governance can be viewed as an endless reproduction of colonial violence and authoritarianism.

2.3. Collision Course

When considering recent developments in Hungary, Poland, and Russia, it is evident that the pushback against LGBTIQ+ rights is not a phenomenon isolated to Africa but a global phenomenon, especially in autocratic regimes and by illiberal politicians who invoke LGBTIQ+ rights in efforts of halting or hindering democratisation in their countries (Ayoub & Stoeckl, 2024). Given Uganda’s increasingly autocratic turn, it could be tempting to think that the AHB 2009 was launched by President Museveni. However, while President Museveni did appropriate the AHB 2009 as his bargaining chip in balancing his popularity among the Ugandan public and the international human rights community (Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015, p. 33), it was tabled as a private members bill by MP David Bahati, a born-again Anglican, belonging to the NRM, and pushed forward by the vociferously anti-gay Archbishop Luke Orombi and Pastor Martin Ssempe (Ssebaggala, 2011, pp. B-44).

Ssebaggala (2011, pp. B-46) asserted that the international community’s response took President Museveni by great surprise, explaining that President Museveni rarely pays attention to ‘the private manoeuvres of legislators, preferring instead to “direct” Members of Parliament (MPs) to do his bidding when he needs it, and sending in his trusted ministerial handlers to read the riot act to those MPs inclined to go rogue.’ While the AHB 2009 was tabled by an MP from Museveni’s own party, there is not much reason to believe that Museveni had directed Bahati to do his bidding in this case as the introduction of the AHB 2009 was rather inconvenient for President Museveni. Not only did it threaten the lenience gained from the international community by getting Uganda out of the abyss of the post-Amin years and having a progressive attitude towards HIV/AIDS in the late 1980s, but also his re-election in January 2011 (Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015; Ssebaggala, 2011). Running his re-election campaign did, as cynically observed by Ssebaggala (2011, p. 48), depend on the money,

[C]hanneled into his coffers by donors in the form of foreign aid and program grants to the Ugandan government. Having already been publicly embarrassed by the same donors in 1999, when he was forced to make a public retreat after he said that homosexuals should be arrested and imprisoned, Museveni would never have endorsed a bill that, as his experience had already told him, would ruffle donors’ feathers in the midst of

a crucial political season. What this points to, and what is usually missed in the dominant monolithic narrative of ‘Africa as a site of obsessive homophobia’ (Ekine, 2013, p. 78) is that homophobia is an increasingly global and modular strategy of ‘ready rhetorics’ with substantial cultural cachet that draws on familiar arguments developed in other countries to consolidate power (McKay & Angotti, 2016, p. 400).

The argument here is subsequently that both the tabling and signing of the AHB 2009 is largely a result of political homophobia. Bosia and Weiss (2013, p. 2) explained:

[P]olitical homophobia as purposeful, especially as practiced by state actors; as embedded in the *scapegoating of an “other” that drives processes of state building* and retrenchment; as *the product of transnational influence* peddling and alliances; and as integrated into *questions of collective identity* and the complicated *legacies of colonialism* [emphasis added].

Overlooking the intricacies of political homophobia can have detrimental effects to LGBTIQ+ rights (Ekine, 2013; Jjuuko & Nyanzi, 2022; Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018; Ndashe, 2013; Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015). This section subsequently unpacks the different aspects of political homophobia in the context of Uganda.

3. Transversal (Political) Homophobia in Uganda

3.1. Transnational Impositions

Of the scholars and activists who have engaged critically with political homophobia in Uganda, many underscore the political and economic influence of USA fundamentalist Christians in the making of the AHB 2009 (see e.g., Jjuuko, 2013; Jjuuko & Nyanzi, 2022; Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018; Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015). Most notably are the USA antigay religious activists Scott Lively and Don Schmierer who together with African Stephen Langa led a viciously homophobic ‘Seminar on Exposing the Homosexual Agenda’ in Kampala in March 2009, which ultimately led to the tabling of the AHB 2009, and the Inter-Religious and Cultural Leaders Alliance who organised the National Parade and Thanksgiving Prayer Rally in March 2014 to thank Museveni for signing (Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015, p. 36).

Seeing the AHB 2009 as the product of transnational influence peddling and alliances extends beyond these visible actors and events to the design and wording of the AHB 2009 itself. With the AHB 2009, Uganda became the first country in Africa not to introduce the death penalty but to simultaneously broaden criminal penalties for those who *engage in same-sex acts*, those who *identify as LGBT* and those in civil society who in any way *aid, abet or promote* LGBT-persons or LGBT-rights (Kretz, 2013). These provisions could, if enforced, ultimately

mean the physical and ‘social death’ for LGBTIQ+ peoples (Spivey & Robinson, 2010) as made evident by local LGBTIQ+ organizations and their allies who during the tumultuous years from the AHB 2009 to the AHA 2014 reported increasing actual or threats of ‘outing of LGBT persons in the public media, arbitrary arrests, blackmail and extortion, corporal punishment – beatings, mob violence, eviction from accommodation, expulsion from school, termination from employment, and forced heterosexual marriages’ (Jjuuko & Mutesi, 2018, p. 149). Whereas these violations of LGBTIQ+ peoples are indisputably consequences of the transnational influence, the influence itself lies in the total immunisation against LGBTIQ+ rights advocacy embedded in ‘aid, abet or promote’ provisions of the AHB 2009 (Nuñez-Mietz and Iommi, 2017, p. 196).

Movement building and sustaining remain integral to the advancement of LGBTIQ+ rights across the African continent (Ndashe, 2013), and is one of the reasons for the Ugandan LGBTIQ+ movement having grown into one of the strongest and best organised in Africa (Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018). While removed in the AHA 2014, the AHB 2009 however also compromised Ugandan LGBTIQ+ rights advocates from forming ties with the international LGBTIQ+ advocates as it included a clause that called for the ‘nullification of inconsistent international treaties, protocols, declarations and conventions advocating human rights based on sexual orientation’ in the AHB 2009 (Wahab, 2016, p. 686).

Taken together, these provisions and clause reflect the anticipatory counter mobilisation (Weiss, 2013) and norm immunization (Nuñez-Mietz & García Iommi, 2017) by USA fundamentalist Christians against the anticipated – and to some extent experienced – Eurocentric LGBTIQ+ rights trajectory of legal rights advocacy from inside and outside of Uganda. What this speaks to is a global pattern of resistance to LGBTIQ+ rights whereby autocrats and right-wing actors inside Western democracies increasingly organise across borders similar to transnational human-rights organizations (Ayoub & Stoeckl, 2024).

The apparent transnational influence of USA fundamentalist Christians have led some scholars to mistakenly conclude that Uganda is essentially ‘collateral damage’ for USA culture wars (Cheney, 2012; Kaoma, 2009), and that the AHB 2009 is the result of USA fundamentalist Christians’ ‘winning’ the ‘norm proxy war’ of outsourcing the battle for the ‘normative acceptability of discrimination of LGBT people’ (Sanders, 2016, p. 166). The first conclusion would suggest that Ugandans are blameless pawns in an essentially Western culture war displaced onto Africa, and the second that discrimination of LGBTIQ+ peoples was not acceptable prior to the political and economic influx of Western anti-LGBTIQ+ rights activists.

Both encapsulate what Rao (2020, p. 33) warns against and terms ‘homoromanticism’ whereby the colonial construct of Africans – here specifically Ugandans – as ‘passive powerless beings easily bullied or fooled into accepting whatever impositions are thrust at them’ (Nyanzi, 2013, p. 954) by both pro- and anti-LGBTIQ+ rights actors from the West continues. Contrasting with these homoromantic notions, Kaoma (2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, 2018), an Anglican priest from Zambia, repeatedly showed that while the recriminalization of homosexuality in Uganda is intimately tied up with USA evangelical Christians, they colluded with local political, social, and religious leaders in the making of the AHB 2009, and Nyanzi and Karamagi (2015) who meticulously outlined the appropriation of the AHB 2009 and AHA 2014 by politicians, ministers and even the president. What both point to is that the AHB 2009 was introduced and eventually signed in large because of political homophobia as a purposeful strategy to consolidate power.

3.2. Purposeful (State) Strategy

Several scholars such as Cheney (2012), Tamale (2013), Nyanzi (2013), Nyanzi and Karamagi (2015), and Jjuuko and Nyanzi (2022) have shown that political homophobia as a purposeful strategy in Uganda is integrated into the legacies of colonialism and collective identity as Africans. In essence, anti-LGBTIQ+ rights actors in Uganda much like anti-LGBTIQ+ rights actors in Southern Africa use what Thoreson (2008) termed the ‘*corruption frame*’ whereby homosexuality is associated with neo-colonialism, foreignness, and un-Africanness (Baisley, 2015; Ekine, 2013; Jjuuko & Nyanzi, 2022; Ndashe, 2013; Tamale, 2013). Jjuuko and Nyanzi (2022, pp. 151-52) concurrently observed that conservative religious and political leaders in Uganda project the fight against homosexuality ‘as a form of patriotically protecting Uganda’s sovereignty from the infiltration of neo-colonisers.’

The perhaps most prominent example of this is the diplomatic clash between Rebecca Kadaga, Uganda’s then Speaker of Parliament, and John Baird, Canada’s then Foreign Minister, at the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Quebec, Canada, in 2012. During the assembly, Kadaga rebutted Baird’s criticism of Uganda’s treatment of LGBTIQ+ people by saying:

When we came for this Assembly, to which we were invited, we expected respect for *our sovereignty, our values and our country*. I, therefore on behalf of the Ugandan delegation, and indeed the people of Uganda, protest in the strongest terms the arrogance exhibited by the Foreign Minister of Canada, who spent most of his time *attacking Uganda and promoting homosexuality*... Let me clarify that as a Speaker of Parliament, it is my responsibility to protect the rights of Members of Parliament, hence *I cannot*

deny them the right to move Private Members Bills ... Mr President, if homosexuality is a value for the people of Canada, they should not seek to force Uganda to embrace it. We are not a colony or protectorate of Canada. The subject under discussion is 'Citizenship, Identity and Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in a Globalised World'. Please stick to it. Please respect our *sovereign rights, our cultural values and societal norms* (Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015, p. 33).

Ayoub and Stoeckl (2024, p. 60) observed political homo- and transphobia as useful tools for mobilising constituencies at election time globally. Even though Kadaga had always been firmly and vocally anti-LGBTIQ+ rights in Uganda, the rebuttal to Baird could easily be seen as a tool to what many considered her ultimate goal of contending for the 2016 presidency against President Museveni (Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015). It was seemingly a move that paid off as Kadaga was warmly received by the anti-LGBTIQ+ rights lobby upon her return from Canada, and her popularity rose even more when she promised to pass the bill into law as a Christmas gift to the Ugandan people (Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015).

Despite Museveni inconsistently ensuring and captiously denying civil and political liberties, the international community has hardly intervened in Ugandan politics and rarely used threats of conditionality on Uganda. However, this changed with the AHB 2009. In what can at best be interpreted as ignorance and at worst as indifference to local power dynamics, several Western countries – including the UK, the USA, Sweden, Denmark, The Netherlands and Ireland – against the advice of many Ugandan LGBTIQ+ activists and allies (Jjuuko & Mutesi, 2018, p. 299) used the LGBT rights imperative to either, threaten to or, withdraw or redirect aid from the public government to progressive civil society organizations, if the AHB 2009 was not revoked (Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015, p. 35). While the use of aid conditionality admittedly led to the AHB 2009 being put to sleep in 2011, it was because of economic and political concerns, rather than public opposition to its violations of Ugandans' fundamental constitutional and international rights (Lebrón, 2011, p. 175). It was hence easily revived to serve economic and political agendas after the clash between Kabaga and Baird. While a year later than promised, it was thus hardly surprising when the AHB 2009 resurfaced and was passed in Parliament on 20th December 2013.

Obviously, the use of aid conditionality gave fuel to fire for the claim of homosexuality as a neo-colonial imposition, and it helped Western fundamentalist Christians substantiate their counterintuitive accusation directed at LGBTIQ+ peoples not just in Uganda but also Kenya and Nigeria of being paid by rich Americans to promote the 'homosexual agenda' (Kaoma, 2009), and state leaders divert attention from prominent socioeconomic and political problems

as rising inflation, increasing unemployment, corruption, and repression (Nyanzi, 2013; Sadgrove et al., 2012; Tamale, 2013) in their ‘politics of distraction’ (Tamale, 2013, p. 39). Throughout the queer lawfare this has only been exacerbated by ‘the single tragic story concerning Uganda often presented by Western mainstream media’ (Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018, p. 325). While there is no denying that donor-directed funding has shaped civil society and even created civil society organizations in postcolonial Africa (Zeilig & Dwyer, 2012), the widespread perception that LGBTIQ+ peoples and activists are donor-funded and externally motivated cements the notion of homosexuality as unAfrican and negates the growing local social movement of LGBTIQ+ rights activists operating in Uganda (Ssebagala, 2011).

Speaking to the collective identity as Africans, the international community’s moral, diplomatic and economic interventions also created or perhaps consolidated a pan-African norm of solidarity to reject LGBTQ+ imperialism from the West (Kaoma, 2018). As Ekine (2013, p. 79) dryly remarked ‘West African politicians must have been on a Uganda anti-gay watch’ as both Gambia and Liberia released statements against same-sex marriage within days of the AHB 2009 being reincarnated in 2012, and is noticeable in the loud silence from African nations, especially South Africa with LGBT rights enshrined in its Constitution (Kaoma, 2018).

Up until now, it could perhaps sound like the support for the AHB 2009 was politically uniform within Uganda. However, what the visibility of the political homophobia drowns out is that the AHB 2009 was also contested by Ugandan politicians. In their critical analysis of the Majority Report of the Sectoral Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs of the AHB 2009 from November 2012, and the Minority Report by Members of the Sectoral Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs of the AHB 2009, Nyanzi and Karamagi (2015, pp. 25-26) for example convincingly demonstrates how Ugandan parliamentary debates led to the amendment of the AHB 2009 to, most notably, the replacement of the death penalty with life imprisonment plus mandatory HIV/AIDS testing, removal of ‘failure to disclose in 24 hours knowledge of homosexuality’, but addition of a new penalty of 5-7 years’ imprisonment and cancellation of licence for conducting same-sex marriage.

With the international community’s definition of LGBTIQ+ rights progress seemingly hinging on the legalistic binary between criminalization and decriminalization, the table serves to make the habitually overlooked and unrecognised success of Ugandan LGBTIQ+ activists and their allies, and the often gradient and gradual trajectory towards LGBTIQ+ rights visible. While the amendments were obviously imperfect and the AHA 2014 still passed into law, understanding the serpentine process that led to them does serve to nuance the monolithic

understanding of Africa/ns as homophobic, and to make it clear that the queer lawfare includes other actors than those pro- and anti-LGBTIQ+ rights actors who dominated the debates.

Caught in the crosshairs of the international community's interference and African resistance, President Museveni was forced to abandon his stalling maneuverers aimed at appeasing both Ugandans and the international community to ultimately consolidate his power by signing the AHB 2009 into law (Jjuuko & Nyanzi, 2022; Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015). As aptly put by Nyanzi and Karamagi (2015, p. 33) 'the widely publicised presidential assent to the anti-homosexuality law was a performance aimed at boosting Museveni's popularity among Ugandan voters. It reiterated Uganda's sovereignty, thereby building solidarity with other anticolonialist and antineo-imperialist opponents of homosexuality, particularly in Africa.'

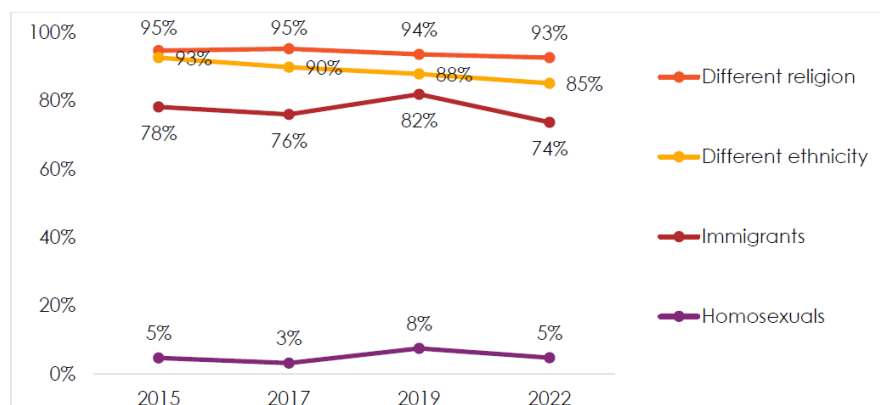
Importantly, President Museveni only signed the law after a Ugandan scientific committee, commissioned by the president himself, found that homosexuality is learnt, and that it is therefore society's, and ultimately the president's, responsibility to prevent the adaptation of this behaviour (Balter, 2014). It is worth noting that this representation of the committee's findings was critiqued by some committee members (Balter, 2014), and that it clashed with an open letter signed by more than 200 international leading scientists sent to President Museveni and published in Ugandan newspapers conveying that no known gene causes homosexuality, but that a combination of natural and environmental factors contribute to sexual orientation (Throckmorton, 2014). President Museveni in other words tweaked the findings to mean that nurture and not nature leads to homosexuality, and hereby arguably shielded himself from accusations of the AHB 2009 being driven by 'animus rather than reason' as put forward by for example Hollander (2009), positioned himself once again as the post-Idi Amin saviour of Ugandans to Ugandans, and simultaneously kept a door open to the international community as he did not sign stating that he is against LGBTIQ+ peoples but instead that he is against any harmful societal developments.

Political self-preservation apparently not only led Museveni to sign the AHA 2014 but also to revoke it. While the official reason was, as stated previously, the inadequate quorum, the nullification of the AHA 2014 happened to coincide with the African Union's Executive Council's unanimous appointment of Uganda's Foreign Minister, Sam Kutesa, to president of the UN's General Assembly, the main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN, in June 2014, which was met with a 'chorus of criticism' by human rights organizations and world leaders because of Kutesa's explicit support for the AHA 2014 (Pilkington, 2014).

3.3. Social and Cultural Logics of Homophobia

Up until now, it might seem like the analysis of political homophobia has fallen into the very trap of homoromanticism by implicitly suggesting that homophobia – as a sentiment – does not exist in Uganda but is merely a product of self-serving agendas. However, as already fronted in the previous chapters, Uganda is seemingly a continental extreme in its intolerance against homosexuality.

As a country characterised by plurality in ethnicities, religions, languages and tribes, this stands in stark contrast to the otherwise socially tolerant attitudes Ugandans express towards other diversities such as people of different religions (93%), people from different ethnic groups (85%), supporters of different political parties (80%), and immigrants/foreign workers (74%) as captured in the graph below (Kakumba, 2023, pp. 2-4). This should not be taken as proof of Uganda – or Africa – as essentially homophobic. Instead, it should, as underlined by McKay and Angotti's (2016) analysis of political homophobia and activist discourses in Malawi, Nigeria and Uganda, be taken as homophobic rhetoric only being made meaningful through its intersection with other social and cultural logics in context.



Respondents were asked: For each of the following types of people, please tell me whether you would like having people from this group as neighbours, dislike it, or not care. (% who say "strongly like," "somewhat like," or "would not care")

FIGURE 3: SOCIAL INTOLERANCE IN UGANDA | 2015-2022

The social and cultural logics are particularly evident in the preamble to the AHB 2009 in which the collusion of political homophobia as a purposeful strategy and a product of transnational influence produce and present the power to define or resist boundaries of belonging and exclusion (Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015, p. 36) by invoking the imprecise idea of a homogenous and static family and marriage form (Cheney, 2012, p. 86):

[T]o establish a comprehensive consolidated legislation to protect the traditional family by prohibiting (i) any form of sexual relations between persons of the same sex; and (ii) the promotion or ***recognition of such sexual relations in public institutions*** and other places through or with the support of any Government entity in Uganda or ***any nongovernmental organization inside or outside the country***. This Bill aims at strengthening the nation's capacity to deal with emerging *internal* and ***external threats to the traditional heterosexual family*** (Bahati, 2009) [*emphasis added*].

What the preamble reveals is something commonly done by anti-LGBTIQ+ rights religious and political leaders not just in Uganda but also across southern Africa (Currier, 2011; Hoad, 1999; Thoreson, 2008) and in Ghana (Baisley, 2015), and that is to effectively frame Africa as an exclusively heterosexual continent by selectively using 'tradition' to erase same-sex relations from Africa/ns' history. Many scholars have pointed to the seeming contradiction of anti-LGBTIQ+ rights leaders postulating to be against neo-colonialism while simultaneously invoking the colonial inscription of (Victorian) heteronormative norms on a more sexually diverse 'traditional' Africa (Cheney, 2012, p. 83; Tamale, 2013).

Within the context of Uganda, especially feminist Ugandan academics such as Stella Nyanzi (2013, p. 953) have challenged the heterarchical homogenisation of Ugandan tradition by pointing to the more than 50 tribes, multiple colonial influences, and three main religions (Christianity, Islam and African traditional religions each with multiple dogmas, sects and ethos), and also contested the idea of a traditional heterosexual family given the multitude of family and marriage forms such as polygamy, polygyny, polyandry, monogamy, bigamy, exogamous, endogamous etc. in Uganda. The corruption frame in other words reproduces the modern/colonial heterarchy, conveniently silencing that the narrative of homosexuality as unAfrican reflects British colonisers' invention of African traditions for Africans, and that this invention offered colonisers' models of command and Africans' models of 'modern' behaviour that has distorted pre-colonial times (Nyanzi, 2013, p. 954).

Like in LGBTIQ+ rights debates unfolding in southern Africa and Ghana, Ugandan-based LGBTIQ+ rights proponents have concurrently sought to counter the corruption framing of LGBTIQ+ rights as imperialist and homosexuality as unAfrican by instead using a '*preservation frame*' 'that criticises colonial taboos and celebrates sexual diversity as inherently African' and essentially presenting homophobia and not homosexuality as unAfrican (Thoreson 2008, p. 688). Despite meticulous concurrent scholarship localising gender and sexuality discourses in Africa and overlapping scholarship on pre-colonial same-sex conduct (Amadiume, 2015; Cheney, 2012; Epprecht, 2008; Msibi, 2011; Muth, 2013;

Oyěwùmí, 1997; Tamale, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2020), historicising homophobia in Africa has so far had limited usefulness in changing laws or effecting social change (Ekine, 2013, p. 81).

What this points to is that unlike the struggle against the external face of imperialism, the struggle for LGBTIQ+ rights is often in social attitudes and institutional arrangements that underpin an unquestioned part of the national culture as outlined by Narrain (2014, p. 162) in his analysis of the contestation over LGBTIQ+ rights in Brazil, India and South Africa. Considering the emerging threats referred to in the preamble to the AHB 2009, the hitherto unquestioned national culture is up for questioning with the past decade's economic stagnation, urban migration, access to Western goods and media, which have decentred religious-, kin- and community-based systems of authority and elevated the rights and desires of the individual in Uganda (McKay & Angotti, 2016, p. 408). While these socio-political and socio-economic changes certainly explain some of the struggle over LGBTIQ+ rights, it extends to the very epistemology of what it means to be African.

Most African cultures place greater importance on intergenerational links than on conjugal ones, and the call for a traditional heterosexual family as seen for example in the AHB 2009's preamble implicitly speak to the continuation of lineage. Elaborating on this point, Kaoma (2013, p. 87) wrote '[s]ince ancestors retain their identity through their living descendants, an ethical person is expected to meet the demands of the ancestors through lineage prolongation. Because same-sex marriages do not encourage procreation, they are viewed as an affront to the ancestors, who desire that their descendants multiply.' Drawing on long-term fieldwork among Ugandan born-again Christians, Boyd (2013) similarly argued that the controversy over LGBTQ+ rights is fuelled by a clash between two different frameworks for ethical personhood. Whereas the first framework for ethical personhood is bound up on the collectivist notion that sexuality needs to be productive and life-giving to strengthen the nation, the second ethical framework is bound up on the liberal notion of the individual right to identifying and expressing any type of sexuality (Boyd, 2013).

Put differently, the adversity to LGBTIQ+ people, particularly those who only experience same-sex attraction, in Uganda could be understood as a manifestation of the conjoined effects of the coloniality of power, gender, and being in that the adversity is really rooted in the perceived threat to the colonial grips of heteropatriarchy posed by LGBTIQ+ people (Asante, 2020). Colonial heteropatriarchy is governed by '*compulsory heterosexuality*' (Rich, 2002), which in Africa means that cis-women are treated as vehicles of reproduction, and LGBTIQ+ people who do engage in this discursive and material process of subjectification are considered Other/ed to the African 'cultural moral order' (Tamale, 2001).

Anti-LGBTIQ+ activists in Uganda seem to understand these logics better than the pro-LGBTIQ+ activists in the West as they further the process of othering LGBTIQ+ peoples in Uganda by presenting them as child molesters (Cheney, 2012, p. 89; Sadgrove et al., 2012, p. 121) and secret recruiters of the heterosexual youth (Tamale, 2013, p. 39). These accusations do not only demonise and dehumanize LGBTIQ+ peoples, but they also divert attention from the abuse and exploitation that children experience by their (heterosexual) family, neighbours, teachers and others (Tamale, 2013), and the Ugandan government's failure to protect family life from other gender- and sexuality- related issues such as issues such as gender and age-based violence (Hollander, 2009, p. 254).

Taken together, LGBTIQ+ peoples are subsequently constructed as unproductive or even counterproductive for the Ugandan postcolonial nation-building project by failing to fulfil their ontological obligation to procreate, and by recruiting others to make the same (immoral) choice. The assumed inability of LGBTIQ+ peoples to procreate in other words constructs them as a threat to Uganda's nationhood. Herein also lies a possible explanation for the apparent contradiction of the actors who use the corruption frame to denounce homosexuality on account of it being a Western import and imposition while simultaneously upholding colonial-era laws. That is to say, as stated in the previous chapter, there was a pre-colonial acceptance of same-sex relations in many African cultures for the purposes of marriage and procreation and were as such not necessarily understood as homosexuality (Epprecht, 2008; Howard, 2001; Oyěwùmí, 1997). The pushback against LGBTIQ+ rights in Africa is hence not merely about the rebuff of (continued) Western domination, but also the rejection of the visible, political and personified gay identity (Msibi, 2011, p. 69).

In summary, three frames have been used in the queer lawfare over the AHB 2009: the universalist, the corruption, and the preservation. Two frames, the universalist, and the corruption frame, have however been predominant as they both speak more to the social and cultural cachets of (imagined) gender and sexuality relations and roles in the Ugandan context than the preservation frame. The seemingly incompatible corruption and preservation frames both invoke decolonization. Much aligned with Baisley's (2015, p. 384) exploration of the frames in the debates over LGBTIQ+ rights in Ghana, the corruption frame in Uganda presents decolonization as 'ridding Africa of homosexuality' whereas the preservation frame presents it as 'ridding Africa of colonial-era laws and attitudes that stigmatise same-sex relations.' From a decolonial feminist perspective, both frames could be read as problematic; one upholds and reinforces Eurocentric heterarchy, whereas the other seeks a return to pre-colonial African heteropatriarchy.

4. Dangers of Queer Lawfare for Ugandan LGBTQ+ Activists

Eurocentric modernity drives a single story of LGBTQ+ activism in Africa as non-existent and of Africa as homophobic (Ekine, 2013; Ndashe, 2013). Lusimbo and Bryan (2018, p. 338) made it clear that the result of the queer lawfare over Uganda's AHB 2009 is the same as it has given rise to 'the notion that Africans are at the mercy of their oppressors or dependent on Western intervention to 'save them'. Importantly, this should, as Santos (2016, pp. 152-53) reminded us, not be mistaken for an inconsequential epistemological artefact, but instead acknowledged as a driver of 'the destruction of the social practices and the disqualification of the social agents that operate according to such knowledges.' This section subsequently turns to how the queer lawfare can and has destroyed and disqualified LGBTQ+ activists and activism in Uganda.

4.1. Erodes Ugandan LGBTQ+ Activists' History

Coloniality is as mentioned previously founded on the 'theft of history' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015c, p. 16). The queer lawfare over the AHB 2009 has concurrently led to the inaccurate assumption that the Ugandan LGBTQ+ movement began when the AHB 2009 was tabled (Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018). Conversely, the scholarship produced by and with Ugandan and Uganda-based scholars and activists convincingly attest that while the main mobilisation for LGBTQ+ solidarity, visibility and voice occurred in response to the AHB 2009 (Nyanzi, 2013, p. 962), the LGBTQ+ movement in Uganda began as early as the late 1990s with informal organising of LGBTQ+ peoples in bars and other social settings. It has, through a series of trans/national movement building and sustaining efforts mainly propelled by and for Africans, grown into one of the world's most visible LGBTQ+ movements (Jjuuko, 2013; Jjuuko & Mutesi, 2018; Jjuuko & Nyanzi, 2022; Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018).

Initially, LGBTQ+ activists in Uganda concentrated on HIV/AIDS programming and family support groups and social spaces for LGBTQ+ peoples (Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018, p. 334). Considering Uganda's positioning as the 'African HIV story' and the general HIV epidemiology of Uganda, embedding LGBTQ+ activism into HIV programming evidently spoke to wider communal and societal concerns. Locally embedding LGBTQ+ rights activism into the national interest of HIV prevention bore fruit with the first national-level example being the inclusion of MSM into Uganda's HIV/AIDS programming in 2004 (Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018). While the news was met with shock and surprise over the timing and scepticism over funding allocations, LGBTQ+ activists' worked to have other sexual minorities like lesbians and bisexuals included into HIV/AIDS programming continued (Lusimbo & Bryan,

2018, p. 332) and was seemingly successful. Though written before the signing of the AHA 2023 and its detrimental effects on the services and service providers of LGBTIQ+ peoples in Uganda, Jjuuko and Nyanzi (2022, p. 147) in outlining the LGBTIQ+ rights landscape in Uganda pointed to the ministerial directive on non-discrimination in the health sector that includes sexual orientation among grounds upon which health service providers cannot discriminate, and the HIV Strategic Plan 2020/21 - 2024/25 that includes services for MSM and transgender persons. Looking back at these successful strategies pinpoints the importance of contextuality in effective LGBTIQ+ activism in Uganda and globally.

The turning point for the visibility of the Ugandan LGBTIQ+ movement came in 2007, two years before the AHB 2009 was tabled. After years of incognito activism expressed by, for example, writing opinion columns in local newspapers under pseudonyms, four LGBTIQ+ activists disguised by hand-made manila masks, in the words of Lusimbo and Bryan (2018, pp. 328-29), ‘stepped out of the shadows and into a room full of international and local media representatives’ to give their testimonies, which also kickstarted the 45-days media campaign called ‘Let Us Live in Peace.’ During this first visible manifestation of the Ugandan LGBTIQ+ movement, one of the activists said:

Across East Africa, we are many who were born like this. We are lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender, and intersex Africans who come from villages that are very far, who come from trading centres, and some who even come from large cities like Kampala, Dar es Salaam, and Nairobi. But our *traditions of loving each other come from very far back in our African history, before the colonialists ever entered our land*. Many of our ancestors in our tribes across East Africa were the way we are. They were born like this.

We were accepted in our communities before the colonialists came, and we come before you today to ask you for that same acceptance that was part of our African culture before we were destroyed by laws from the west. Because of the prejudice brought by the west, we have been threatened, intimidated, and harassed (Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018, p. 328) [*emphasis added*].

With this, the pioneering activist clearly situated their rights claims in the preservation frame. By invoking pre-colonial traditions and culture, LGBTIQ+ activists evidently denounce the influence of the West in shaping what has become the sexual epistemology in Uganda. Assuming the preservation frame as the baseline for LGBTIQ+ activism in Uganda would seem to resonate with LGBTIQ+ peoples’ own understanding of their Africanness as connected to , geography, ethnicity and nationality rather than sexuality (Nyanzi, 2013, p. 960).

These steps of and towards visibility were prompted by the murder of a lesbian student in a Kampala suburb, and the first LGBT court case, *Victor Juliet Mukasa and Yvonne Oyo*, being filed to the High Court by two transgender activists in 2006 to challenge the unwarranted search of LGBTIQ+ activist Victor Mukasa's house and arrest and subsequent sexual violation and humiliation of his guest, Yvonne Oyo, on 20 July 2005 (Jjuuko & Nyanzi, 2022; Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018). This was the first case on LGBT rights in Uganda, and the Justice, Arach Amoko, who presided over the case, ruled in favour of the applicants by stating that their rights to privacy and dignity had been violated, that the rights in the Constitution applied to all Ugandans without discrimination, and that the case was 'not about homosexuality but about human rights' (Jjuuko & Nyanzi, 2022, p. 158). What this first case shows is that despite the limitations on the rights of LGBTIQ+ peoples in Uganda, victories such as the *Victor Juliet Mukasa and Yvonne Oyo* case and later the nullification of the AHA 2014 have been possible because of the Constitutional Court upholding the right to a fair hearing for all persons including those regarded as 'immoral and socially unacceptable', the High Court upholding protections for LGBT persons against hate speech and violations of their privacy, and the recent rights to liberty and to a fair hearing (Jjuuko & Nyanzi, 2022, pp. 146-47).

Three points are worth noting here, firstly that embedding LGBTIQ+ activism into the language of human rights was not something introduced by the West; secondly, that the right to privacy, liberty and fair hearing might be more effective ways to advance the rights of LGBTIQ+ peoples in certain contexts than the claim to LGBTIQ+ rights as human rights, and lastly, the contestation over LGBTIQ+ rights is not merely a dichotomous battle between those explicitly pro- or anti-LGBTIQ+ rights but also other parts of the judiciary such as judges and MPs who may not be for or against LGBTIQ+ rights but who are for upholding the rights framework of the country and against authoritarianism.

While the case became the starting point for the visible pro-LGBTIQ+ rights movement in Uganda, it also became the starting point for the visible anti-LGBTIQ+ rights movement. As noted by Bosia and Weiss' (2013, p. 6);

Political homophobia is invoked where fundamental ***rights to sexual and gender self-determination remain unclaimed*** and sexual minorities have not thought in terms of ***a shared political identity*** or full legal equality, it lingers, too, as an easily ***accessible form of social differentiation*** and privilege, even where legal equality is achieved or in sight [*emphasis added*].

By situating the case within the constitutional and human rights framework of Uganda, Justice Arach Amoko moved LGBTIQ+ Ugandans closer to the same legal rights as non-

LGBTIQ+ Ugandans. This arguably ‘whipped up anti-gay sentiments and is thought to be the real reason why the AHB was tabled the next year (Jjuuko & Nyanzi, 2022, p. 158).

4.2. *Impedes Movement Building & Sustaining*

While the AHB 2009 did not make or break LGBTIQ+ activism in Uganda, it changed the circumstances for LGBTIQ+ activists in Uganda drastically. Not only did it force many Ugandan LGBTIQ+ activists to flee the country, and an increase in violations against LGBTIQ+ peoples, but also forced LGBTIQ+ activists to adjust its hitherto successful strategies to focus almost exclusively on preventing the AHB 2009 from becoming law and thus resorting to the courts of law as the main avenue of ensuring protection of LGBTIQ+ rights (Jjuuko, 2013; Jjuuko & Mutesi, 2018; Jjuuko & Nyanzi, 2022; Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018). Despite the politicization of LGBTIQ+ rights, LGBTIQ+ activists in Uganda have evidently been successful in this adjustment seeing that Uganda is the country in Africa with the highest number of cases on LGBT rights brought before courts, apart from South Africa where LGBT persons are expressly protected from discrimination in the Constitution (Jjuuko & Nyanzi, 2022, p. 165).

Writing about inter-movement support for LGBTIQ+ rights in Malawi, Currier (2014) observed that partnerships with other civil society and social movements can make the difference between political isolation and political gain for LGBTIQ+ organizations and activists. A great part of the Ugandan LGBTIQ+ movement’s success can likewise be ascribed to its continuous efforts and emphasis on building and sustaining a LGBTIQ+ community nationally and regionally (Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018, p. 399). SMUG arose out of a pan-African meeting in South Africa, and the AHA 2014 was overturned in large as a result of the collaboration between Ugandan LGBTIQ+ activists and the Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights and Constitutional Law (the Coalition henceforth) comprising more than 50 organizations ranging from women’s groups to sex worker associations and their litigation, research and documentation on LGBTIQ+ rights in Uganda, identification and lobbying of MPs supportive of the AHB 2009 attest to the importance of solidarity partnerships (Jjuuko, 2013; Jjuuko & Mutesi, 2018; Jjuuko & Nyanzi, 2022; Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018).

Notwithstanding the seeming success of LGBTIQ+ activists, the queer lawfare over the AHB 2009 however impedes both horizontal solidarity partnerships with other local and regional social movements and civil society organizations, and vertical solidarity partnerships with foreign donors and transnational NGOs. The advantage of partnering with other local and regional civil society and social movements for LGBTIQ+ activists in Africa is mainly that

they can lend non-material support, mobilize their activist networks and serve to dismantle the politicised notion of LGBTIQ+ peoples as detached from wider community (Currier, 2014). Here it could be added that partnerships with other national and regional movements and organizations might also allow for greater narrative and strategic control for local LGBTIQ+ activists than partnering with international movements and organizations.

Given the paucity of scholarship on why social movements and civil society organizations not explicitly devoted to LGBTIQ+ rights chose to partner with LGBTIQ+ activists and organizations in the Ugandan context, it is useful to return to Currier (2014) and her analysis of Malawian HIV/AIDS, human rights, and feminist activists and organizations' stance on inter-movement solidarity with LGBTIQ+ activists and organizations. While individual bias toward homosexuality was found to complicate organizations' willingness to express solidarity for LGBTIQ+ rights, Currier (2014) found that the most prominent barrier was that the politicization of homosexuality equated with high political costs for supporting LGBTIQ+ rights and opposing the government. This included threats of violence against activists and their families, as well as conflicts with police and government ministries. The queer lawfare over the AHB 2009 and AHA 2014 can likewise be assumed to have deterred civil society organizations and social movements, other than those in the Coalition, from forming bonds with the LGBTIQ+ peoples and organizations. These barriers could moreover assist in explaining the seeming absence of a visible coordinated effort between, for example, the disability movement, the HIV movement and the LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda despite the AHB 2009 and AHA 2023's infringements on all these movements.

Solidarity partnerships with foreign donors and transnational NGOs may come with more political influence and financial support than local solidarity partnerships. However, when it comes to queer lawfare, they also come with potential implications for local LGBTIQ+ activists. First, solidarity partnerships between local LGBTIQ+ activists and the international community fall right within the corruption frame of LGBTIQ+ rights as a neo-colonial imposition and homosexuality as unAfrican. While highly cognisant of these tensions, Ugandan LGBTIQ+ activists nevertheless turned to the international community after the AHB 2009 was tabled (Jjuuko, 2013; Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018). This should not be seen as Ugandan LGBTIQ+ activists needing to be saved by the West but rather as a strategic trade-off made by the Ugandan LGBTIQ+ activists. Amidst politicised homophobia and prevalent public homophobic sentiments, Ugandan activists and allies struggled with access to the media, MPs and the President in their work to overturn the AHB 2009, and thus sought to engage the international community but to still advise them on moves that would be helpful in overturning

the AHB 2009 (Jjuuko, 2013; Jjuuko & Mutesi, 2018; Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018). This was particularly pertinent after the Parliament passed the AHA 2014, and Ugandan LGBTIQ+ activists and allies sought access to the president to urge him to refuse to sign the law (Jjuuko & Mutesi, 2018, p. 297).

However well-intended, the international community still operates according to colonial logics of power and knowledge and may therefore end up imposing a Eurocentric narrative of LGBTIQ+ identities and activism on the African struggle for LGBTIQ+ rights, and by extension undermine hitherto effective frames and strategies used by local LGBTIQ+ activists. While statements against the AHB 2009 were encouraged, many, but not all, from the LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda advised against the use of aid conditionality because Ugandan LGBTIQ+ peoples do not live in silos outside of inter/national political and economic realities, and are thus impacted alongside their friends, families, and wider communities when aid is withdrawn (Jjuuko & Mutesi, 2018, p. 299). However, clearly operating from the modern/colonial atomisation of the subject and the self-appointed positional superiority, many from the international community still went ahead with the use of aid conditionality.

The detrimental effects of using aid conditionality are made glaringly obvious in a statement produced by more than 100 African social justice organizations and activists in response to the British government's threat of cutting aid in 2011. Warning against donor sanctions as coercive and as a reinforcement of disproportionate power dynamics between donor and recipient countries, the statement further pinpointed that sanctions are:

[O]ften based on *assumptions about African sexualities* and the needs of African LGBTI people. They *disregard the agency of African civil society movements* and political leadership. They also tend, as has been evidenced in Malawi, to *exacerbate the environment of intolerance* in which political leadership scapegoat LGBTI people for donor sanctions in an attempt to retain and reinforce national state sovereignty.

Further, the sanctions *sustain the divide between the LGBTI and the broader civil society movement*. In a context of general human rights violations, where women are almost always vulnerable, or where health and food security are not guaranteed for anyone, singling out LGBTI issues emphasizes *the idea that LGBTI rights are special rights and hierarchically more important than other rights*. It also supports the commonly held notion that *homosexuality is 'unAfrican'* and a western-sponsored 'idea' and that countries like the UK will only act when 'their interests' have been threatened (Africa Feminist Forum, 2011) [*emphasis added*].

Exactly as predicted in the statement, the withdrawal or redirection of funds in relation to the AHB 2009 fuelled the homophobia rhetoric of LGBTIQ+ peoples identifying as such to

gain material and instrumental advantages from the international community (Sadgrove et al., 2012, p. 124), and thus again externalised the push for LGBTIQ+ rights within Uganda. The use of aid conditionality, in short, consolidated LGBTIQ+ peoples as an affront to wider communal concerns to the Ugandan public and created tensions with other movements and organizations because of the notion of LGBTIQ+ rights as more important than other rights.

4.3. *Presents a Single Solution*

In writing about LGBTIQ+ activists' opportunities and challenges of building and sustaining relationships with other local, regional and international movements, South African feminist lawyer Sibongile Ndashe (2013, p. 155) states that '[t]he starting point has always been that LGBTI rights are human rights and hopefully that is the end point as well.' The point here is that LGBTIQ+ rights as human rights is not a notion that the West introduced to Uganda, however the queer lawfare has made a particular narrative of LGBTIQ+ rights dominant. As put by Ndashe (2013, p. 159):

[I]t is even suggested that the answer to how to tackle the various forms of violations of LGBTI people can be found in courtrooms and that the solution can be as uncomplicated as finding a lawyer, a client, writing a brief and getting the courts to declare as unconstitutional the laws that criminalise same-sex intimacy.

This narrative firstly negates that LGBTIQ+ rights presents a continuum from total marginalisation to cultural integration (Kretz, 2013). To achieve cultural integration for LGBTIQ+ peoples in Uganda and elsewhere, it is not enough to merely decriminalise LGBTIQ+ peoples and organising. Rather, it requires changing public opinion, which requires going beyond the courtrooms to advance LGBTIQ+ rights. As Jjuuko and Nyanzi (2022, p. 175) wrote, queer lawfare is largely lost on the public as an elitist fight led by lawyers, judges and government officials removed from everyday realities and concerns. Ugandan LGBTIQ+ activists and allies evidently understand this tension and have therefore not only engaged in consistent litigation efforts to challenge the law but also various advocacy efforts with an emphasis on demonstrating the law's effect to public through media outlets, publications, and public dialogues (Jjuuko & Mutesi, 2018).

The key messages in all of these efforts directed at the public has orbited around the AHB 2009 and AHA 2014 as a part of a broader agenda to narrow political and civic space and of consequence to all Ugandans (Jjuuko & Mutesi, 2018; Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018; Strand, 2011, 2012, 2013). Beyond the public, LGBTIQ+ activists in Uganda have also directed a lot

of their efforts towards the perpetrators of violations against LGBTIQ+ peoples, which, at least when the AHA 2014 was in place, was mainly perpetuated by state actors, especially by members of the Uganda Police Force, in the form of arbitrary arrests, and direct attacks on service providers and institutions that include LGBTIQ+ peoples in their provision of service (Jjuuko & Mutesi, 2018; Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018).

As outlined in the aforementioned statement of African social justice activists, these efforts resonate with the successful strategies of ensuring the visibility and enjoyment of rights by LGBTIQ+ peoples in and by ‘a vibrant social justice movement within African civil society’ by integrating LGBTIQ+ and broader civil society issues, shifting the same-sex sexuality discourse from the morality debate to a human rights debate, and building relationships with governments for greater protection of LGBTI people (Africa Feminist Forum, 2011). The queer lawfare however thwarted these efforts in Uganda. Following Strand’s (2013) content analysis of editorially controlled representation of the AHB 2009 in Uganda’s two most popular newspapers, lack of press freedom and government ownership over media proved it a difficult task for LGBTIQ+ activists and their allies to influence the editorially controlled space and have their concerns with AHB 2009 become part of the public debate before international actors raised similar concerns.

While both the local and international LGBTIQ+ activists used human rights to argue for the overturning of the AHB 2009, the international community used the universalist frame of LGBTIQ+ rights as human rights whereas Ugandan LGBTIQ+ activists used a more situated approach by pointing to the bill’s possible implications for all Ugandans’ in terms of HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care as well as constitutional protections (Strand, 2011, 2013). When aid conditionality was thrown into the mix, the AHB 2009 was reframed from a simple means to deal with the ‘moral panic’ in Uganda (Cheney, 2012; Sadgrove et al., 2012; Tamale, 2013) to a source of conflict and controversy internally and internationally (Strand, 2013, pp. 286–288). This in turn solidified the political homophobic argument of LGBTIQ+ rights as a neo-colonial invention and imposition and thus rendered it contentious for Ugandan LGBTIQ+ activists to continue to use the human rights frame in their activism.

It is worth lingering on the point about the media being unfree in Uganda as it could give an indication as to why Ugandans’ attitudes towards homosexuality have hardly changed in the years between the AHB 2009 and the AHA 2023 and will hardly change moving forward. A quick browse through, for example, Freedom House’s (2023) country report for Uganda would indicate that it is not ‘just’ Uganda’s civil society that is increasingly repressed but also its media sectors, which face increasing legal and extra-legal harassment and state violence.

Ensuring LGBTIQ+ rights thus extends beyond the laws that explicitly address same-sex acts, identities and organizing. In Uganda, Freedom House (2022), for example, highlighted the increasing online self-censorship due to Ugandan authorities common use of surveillance tools against journalists and opposition leaders, and the arrests, and in some cases torture, of activists who in any way criticise the president and his family. This self-censorship has only been exacerbated after the passing of the AHA 2023, which included heavy penalties for sharing LGBTIQ+ related content.

Continuing this point, if the goal is to support the advancement of LGBTIQ+ rights in Uganda – and Africa – a more comprehensive approach to rights that addresses other barriers than those explicitly linked to LGBTIQ+ rights and that works with efforts already made by LGBTIQ+ activists in Uganda must be taken. This would for example include confronting the NGO Act 2016. While the NGO Act does not directly address LGBTIQ+ activists or organizations, it still poses as a barrier to the formation, establishment and registration of sexual orientation related NGOs (Carroll & Mendos, 2017). It is highly unlikely that existing or emerging Ugandan NGOs that are affiliated with LGBTIQ+ advocacy can obtain the newly required approval or MoU given the criminalization of homosexuality. However, what is likely is that NGOs that have been visible or vocal in advocacy for LGBTIQ+ rights have their permits revoked as the NGO Act also holds provisions for the establishment of a National Bureau for NGOs that has been granted broad powers including the power to revoke an NGO's permit. This power has been invoked as recently as the 5th August 2022 when the National Bureau for NGOs announced the shutdown of SMUG (Stephen, 2022).

Even if sticking to the courtrooms and an explicit focus on LGBTIQ+ rights, another problem with queer lawfare is that it limits the battleground to a national context only. By contrast, more than a dozen cases on LGBTIQ+ issues have been filed in courts in Uganda, federal courts in the USA, and at the regional East African Court of Justice (EACJ) since the first LGBT case (Jjuuko & Nyanzi, 2022). LGBTIQ+ activists in Uganda have even flipped the colonial power matrix on its head with SMUG suing antigay activist Scott Lively in the USA for persecuting LGBTIQ+ peoples through conspiring with Ugandan actors, which effectively led to the tabling of the AHB 2009.

The case could truly have flipped the colonial power dynamic as it was brought under the USA Alien Torts Statute whereby American citizens can be held liable for actions overseas that lead to crimes against humanity and persecution is one of these (Jjuuko & Nyanzi, 2022, p. 163). While the USA District Court in Springfield, Massachusetts, condemned the actions of Scott Lively as amounting to persecution as defined in international law, sufficient activity

was allegedly not carried out on USA soil by the pastor to invoke the court's jurisdiction under the Alien Tort Statute (ibid.). By approaching LGBTIQ+ rights as fixed in place, Western/ized LGBT persons, human rights activists, and organizations neglect to confront American right-wing leaders who travel to countries like Uganda to spread their version of 'family values' (Koyama, 2010), and by extension the norm diffusion of Western anti-LGBTIQ+ rights actors.

4.4. *Fixes LGBTIQ+ Rights in Time*

Epistemic violence is often strengthened by its own imperceptibility, because it presents a diffuse form of violence contrasting the prevailing conceptions of violence 'as an event or act that is specific, explosive and spectacular' (Pérez, 2019, p. 2). Perhaps this is why, queer lawfare presents the starting and endpoint of LGBTIQ+ rights as the introduction or nullification of legislation that criminalises same-sex acts, identities and organising in one way or another. A key problem with queer lawfare as it is approached by the international community is that it is, as such, reactionary involvement rather than proactive.

As stated in the beginning of this chapter, the AHA 2023 does not come as surprise when unveiling the legal, political, or social trajectory of the AHB 2009. What is more, ever since the AHA 2014 was revoked, there have been repeated moves to recriminalize and attack LGBTIQ+ peoples and organising. In August 2017, Uganda's now deceased Minister of Ethics and Integrity, Simon Lokodo, issued a directive ordering the police shut down the Ugandan Pride in August 2017, subsequently stating '[w]e know they are trying to recruit and promote homosexuality secretly. But it's worse to attempt to stand and exhibit it in public arena. This is totally unacceptable. Never in Uganda' (Okiror, 2017). In April 2018, Ugandan MPs pushed for the revival of the AHA 'to reject homosexuality in all its forms and manifestations', which was followed up by supposedly 'ex-gay' Ugandans petitioning the Speaker of the Parliament, Rebecca Kadaga, to re-table the AHB, reiterating a rhetoric about LGBT peoples as a source of moral decay and child abuse (Leighton-Dore, 2018).

In October 2019, Ethics and Integrity Minister, Simon Lokodo, reported that Parliament planned to introduce a bill that would criminalize 'promotion and recruitment' by gay people and include the death penalty for 'grave' consensual same-sex acts. While President Museveni's office disavowed Lokodo's statements saying that 'the Government of Uganda does not have any plans of re-introducing the anti-homosexuality bill on the floor of Parliament', a wave of attacks on LGBTIQ+ peoples followed (Human Rights Watch, 2019a). One of the examples that circulated in the international media the most was the arrest of 16 activists with Let's Walk Uganda, a community-based organization working on economic

empowerment for LGBT youth, in the same month. The activists were arrested by the police after having called the police to seek protection from a mob that surrounded a house that activists used as an office and shelter, and shouted homophobic insults and threatened to break in. While the AHA 2014 was revoked at the time, the police used the colonial Penal Code provision ‘carnal knowledge against the order of nature’ to charge the activists based on finding condoms, lubricant, and anti-retroviral medicines in the house (Human Rights Watch, 2019a, 2019b). During the arrest, the 16 activists were submitted to forced anal examinations to find proof of homosexuality. Uganda is moreover one of the eight countries in the world where there is evidence of the use of the torturous method of forced anal exams to find proof of homosexuality (Human Rights Watch, 2016, 2019b; Mulé et al., 2016).

These examples are just a few of the ones that have managed to make it into the purview of international media and politics. The point of recapping them here is to once again underscore that the problem of LGBTIQ+ phobia in Uganda extends far beyond the legalised contestations over LGBTIQ+ rights. For social sciences research/ers committed to addressing epistemic violence, this means thinking beyond the legalistic realm when conceptualising and researching Africa/ns’ LGBTIQ+ (rights) activisms and retaining our scholarly – and activist – attention to the struggles of LGBTIQ+ peoples far beyond a specific event such as the AHA 2014 or AHA 2023.

5. Conclusion

Building on the previous chapter’s more abstract analysis of the implications of the coloniality of power, gender, and being for the epistemic exchanges and real-life politics for Africa/ns’ LGBTIQ+ activisms, this chapter set out to unfold these in the context of LGBTIQ+ rights activisms in Uganda. Following Brunner’s (2021) conceptualisation of epistemic violence, this chapter has arguably done so by looking at the macro-, meso-, and micro level of epistemic violence. At the macrolevel, this chapter turns to the geopolitical and epistemic space of global modern/colonial world order itself (Brunner, 2021, p. 206) by situating Uganda in the colonial matrix of power, and thus offering an explanation for the international community’s unprecedented outrage against Uganda’s AHB 2009 and AHA 2023.

At the mesolevel, this chapter traces the coloniality of knowledge in the intersection of African traditions, Christianity, and Western influence that produce the disparate stories of Africa/ns and homosexuality. At this level, the emphasis is on unveiling the mechanisms that normalise multiple forms of violence (Brunner, 2021), and thus on challenging the transversal political homophobia espoused by political and religious actors by underlining that

queer/homophobia is not inherent to ‘Africanness’ nor disconnected from local or global modern/colonial epistemic spaces.

The microlevel of epistemic violence refers to ‘the embodied dimensions of the epistemic racism/sexism that is constitutive of colonial modernity’s abyss’ (Brunner, 2021, p. 205). At this level, this chapter offers an analysis of the epistemic, social, and material dangers of the hetero-nationalist discourses that delegitimise Uganda/ns’ LGBTIQ+ peoples, communities and activisms to the neo-liberal homo-nationalist discourses that articulate simplistic conceptions of queer/homophobia in Uganda/ns for Uganda/ns’ LGBTIQ+ activisms and activists. While discursively very different, both ultimately deprive Uganda/ns’ LGBTIQ+ activists of epistemic agency, subjectivity, and existence.

If we wish to counteract the denial of the Other/ed’s epistemic agency, we must move beyond the analytical dimension of decoloniality in/as praxis and reconfigure our ways of knowing, doing and being research/ers. The following chapter subsequently turns to decoloniality in/as praxis as a methodological stance, and aligned with praxis as defined by Mignolo and Walsh (2018, pp. 17-18) outline ‘the affirmative and prospective thought-actions-reflections-actions that give shape, movement, meaning, and form to decoloniality’ within the epistemic and socio-political space of my research.

Knowing-With in/as Praxis

1. Introduction

The introductory chapter posited negative and positive projects of epistemic decolonization as the overarching aim of this research. To this end, the previous two chapters have served the negative project of decolonization by applying decoloniality in/as praxis as an analytical perspective to ‘see’ the mechanisms of epistemic violence as fostered and furthered through the coloniality of power, gender, and being within social sciences scholarship about Africa/ns’ LGBTIQ+ activisms, and in the universalised politicised notion of LGBTIQ+ rights. While ‘seeing’ epistemic violence is quintessential to the negative project of decolonization, advancing the positive project of decolonization requires moving beyond ‘the topos of "visibility"' (Pérez, 2019, p. 9). To recall, the positive project entails proactively recentring and utilising the epistemic agency, authority, and resources of marginalised knowers and their knowledge systems in the advancement of knowledge in various fields.

Visibility, Pérez (2019, p. 9) contended, ‘is somewhat insufficient to address this issue [epistemic violence] since, like other forms of violence, it is based on a series of privilege mechanisms that favour ignorance or "not seeing".’ As stated in the introductory Chapter, these privilege mechanisms can lead to what Hutton and Cappellini (2022) referred to as ‘*epistemic ignorance*’ or Pohlhaus (2020) ‘*wilful hermeneutical ignorance*.’ With this in mind, it is possible to understand why, despite an increasing interest in and efforts to decolonize, most social sciences research/ers still do not appear to apply ontologically, epistemologically and axiologically appropriate methodologies to indigenous research (Botha, 2011, p. 315), but rather to appropriate, appreciate or accommodate them (Morgan, 2003). As argued by Botha (2011, p. 315), epistemic decolonization requires the expansion and deliberate reconfiguration of research/er practices ‘in recognition of the fact that indigenous voices in research cannot be enabled by benevolent Western practices alone.’ With these caveats in place, this chapter firstly outlines the principles and then the praxis involved in the positive project for decolonization within this research/er including the process of devising the research methods, establishing, and enacting the research collaboration, and lastly, analysing, representing and distributing the knowledges produced.

2. Principles of Decolonizing Methodology

Methodologically, decolonizing includes ‘every process capable of producing trustworthy, reliable knowledge in a nonextractivist way, that is, through cooperation among knowing subjects rather than through subject/object unilateral cognitive interactions’ (Santos, 2018b, p. 130), or, as elaborated in the introductory chapter of this thesis, to move against the extractivist ‘*knowing-about*’ to the reciprocal ‘*knowing-with*’ (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Santos, 2018b, p. 147; Smith, 2021). Decolonizing research is not about rejecting everything Western but integrating Western/ized and non-Western/ized epistemologies when it is appropriate and beneficial for Indigenous peoples and communities (Smith, 2021).

When seeking to move towards this form of reciprocity, it is necessary to appreciate how Other/ed epistemologies and therefore methodologies differ from dominant modern/colonial ones. Other/ed epistemologies are not epistemologies in a conventional sense as they ‘concern the knowledges that emerge from social and political struggles and cannot be separated from such struggles’ (Santos, 2018b, p. 2). In contrast to conventional research, decolonizing research therefore does not mean:

[T]o study knowledge or justified belief as such [but] to ***identify and valorize that which often does not even appear as knowledge*** in the light of the dominant epistemologies, that which emerges instead as ***part of the struggles of resistance against oppression*** and against the knowledge that legitimates such oppression (Santos, 2018b, p. 2) [*emphasis added*].

With this, decolonizing research/ers resist ‘*methodological fetishisms*’ (Santos, 2018b, p. 136) typical of conventional research. Importantly, this should not be taken as a carte blanche for ‘*methodological anarchy*’ (Santos, 2018b, p. 146) but rather as a decolonial insurgency not to define and decide on methods based on ‘a given academic specialisation but by the context of the artisanship of the practices into which the research in question is integrated’ (Santos, 2018b, p. 149). Interpreting context to mean colonially constructed subject positions of otherhood, decolonizing the methodology devised for this research is informed both by scholars emic and etic to African and Ugandan sexuality and gender research/ers.

Reconfiguring research practices in/as praxis requires critical reflexivity whereby the epistemological assumptions, situatedness, and power dynamics in and of the research/ers are examined and, if necessary, reconstituted (Datta, 2018; Rossi et al., 2013; Smith, 2021; Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021). Attempting to move beyond mere lip service to critical reflexivity, the subsequent sections seek to indirectly answer the reflexivity questions proposed by McGannon and Johnson (2009) - ‘what do I know,’ ‘how did I come to know it,’ ‘how did

this knowledge come into being and what was my role in its construction?’ – in outlining the process of decolonization in/as praxis of this research/er.

3. Praxis of Decolonizing Methodology

Predominantly Indigenous decolonial scholars led to the identification of qualitative inquiry as best suited for a decolonization project (see e.g., Botha, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Smith, 2005) because of its ‘potential to respond to epistemic challenges and crises, to unravel and weave, to fold in and unmask the layers of the social life and depth of human experience’ (Smith, 2005, p. 136). While articulated in different ways, the same scholars caution that realising the decolonial potential of qualitative inquiry goes hand in hand with adopting the decolonial attitude to circumvent ‘conventional’ qualitative research’s contentious history and presence as a vehicle of coloniality and continued ‘empiricist overtones’ (Bryman, 2001 cited in Botha, 2011, p. 319).

When considering how to realise the decolonial potential of qualitative inquiry, Santos (2018b, p. 136) usefully proposed that ‘[a]ccording to the epistemologies of the North, method is almost everything, while the subjectivity of whoever uses that method is almost nothing; or, worse still, subjectivity is an obstacle to the right use of the method.’ Recentring subjectivity in the choice and use of research methods could be a move towards decentring the ego-politics of modern/colonial epistemologies. While primarily stemming from conventional qualitative research (Botha, 2011), most Indigenous methodologies concurrently put emphasis on narrative approaches such as the ‘conversational method’ (Kovach, 2010), ‘storying’ (Windchief & San Pedro, 2019) and ‘yarning’ (Geia et al., 2013).

When widening the scope beyond Indigenous to decolonial scholarship, subjectivity is similarly pivotal to methodological discussions. Particularly reflective methods such as critical personal narratives including testimonio, performance autoethnography, short stories, fiction, creative nonfiction, photographic essays, and personal essays are posited as central to decolonizing research because of their critical approach to understanding power and inequality (Swadener & Mutua, 2007, p. 16). Taken together, these methods offer an ‘otherwise’ to conventional qualitative inquiry by giving primacy to subjectivity and by countering the devaluation of oral, visual, and experiential knowledges typical of modern/colonial sciences. In this, these methods hold the potential to reconstitute the research relation from unilateralism to cooperation by inherently acknowledging that the Other/ed can not only speak but speak with power, conviction, and firsthand experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 16).

As a methodological stance, decoloniality in/as praxis does not presuppose a fixed set of methods nor reject all ‘conventional’ methods but rather argues against the mechanistic and for creative use of methods. In their systematic review of Indigenous research methods, Dawson et al. (2017) found that Western methods such as community-based participatory research, participatory action research, autoethnography, and photovoice have been used within Indigenous communities in efforts of decolonizing research, and that Indigenous research methods are often combined with Western qualitative methods. For example, Elder and Odoyo (2018) combined community-based participatory research and decolonizing methodologies in examining the development of a sustainable inclusive education system in Western Kenya.

Identifying and valorising experiential epistemologies of the Other/ed require methods that are reflective and reflexive of widely diversified contexts of the production of knowledges (Botha, 2011; Santos, 2018b). To this end, Ugandan feminist legal scholars and human rights activists Stella Nyanzi and Sylvia Tamale’s writings on sexualities research in Africa clearly rendered three main cautions for devising methods specifically related to LGBTIQ+ activism in Uganda; first, the topic of sexualities is wrapped in silences and taboos, requiring researchers to hone distinctive techniques and methods that unearth invisible, silenced and repressed knowledges; second, many acts associated with sexualities are criminalised or highly stigmatised in Africa, therefore researchers need to tread the territory with care and sensitivity; third, and most importantly, researchers need to recognise the heterogeneity of the experiences and expressions of sexualities within one culture, community and among individuals (see e.g., Nyanzi, 2011, 2013; Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015; Tamale, 2013, 2014, 2020).

Despite having these contours, caveats and cautions for decolonizing methods, overcoming the methodological fetishisms of my fields (development studies, social work, and gender studies) and my associated prior experiences of using participant observation and semi-structured interviews in conventionally extractivist ways proved challenging but not impossible. The next sections subsequently briefly outline the aspirational decolonial reasoning for choosing the four methods of accompaniment, photovoice, photo-elicitation and conversational interviews for this research. While the first three methods were used in collaboration with SMUG and FARUG, interviews were conducted with LGBTIQ+ allies identified by SMUG and FARUG respectively.

3.1. Reciprocal Observation

A fundamental premise for decolonizing research is that it is through ‘genuine relationships and interest in knowers and their knowledge that one can expand and transform their own epistemology’ (Lipscombe et al., 2021, p. 7). Writing from a queer lens, Jackman (2016, p. 121) contended that it is not *travel to* a particular field that enables new avenues for inquiry, but *travel along with* informants that can provide in-depth analysis of the push and pull of sexualities in a particular time and space. In alignment with these two positions, a method was needed that could challenge the disembodied, distanced, and disempowering research/er typical of the Eurocentric ego-politics of knowledge.

Drawing on the epistemology of African studies with its foundation in experience rather than observation about people in African spaces, Adams (2014, p. 469) suggested ‘*accompaniment*’ as a method in which ‘researchers immerse themselves in the flow of community life and experience events alongside people in the context of everyday activity.’ Outside of African studies, accompaniment finds application in a variety of fields ranging from social medicine, peace activism, pastoral support, human rights, liberation and social psychology (Watkins, 2015), but at the moment of writing, it had evidently yet to be used with LGBTIQ+ activists in any context.

From a liberation psychology point of view, Watkins (2015) placed accompaniment firmly within a decolonial framework by tracing the method back to Fanon’s (2005, p. 238) call for walking ‘in the company of others’ and by requiring both psychic and social decolonization of researcher(s) and clinician(s) wishing to move towards accompaniment. Rooted in *compañero* or friend (Goizueta, 1998), accompaniment holds the potential to move towards decolonial knowing-with by challenging ‘cool detachment from societal struggles as the preferred mode of intellectual inquiry’ (Dobles et al., 2017, p. 537) and by opening up ‘*reciprocal observation*’ (Santos, 2018b) within collaborative research partnerships. As the researcher(s) can accompany in different ways, including as advocate, friend, carer and so forth, accompaniment holds the possibility of disrupting expected (colonial) research roles and relations (Saxton, 2021).

While similar, accompaniment should not be mistaken for the classical ethnographic method of participant observation, as both the purpose and positionality of the research/ers differs. Accompaniment is more about standing-with people and understanding relationality overall than it is about documenting patterns of relationality in ‘Other/ed’ contexts (Adams, 2014, pp. 469-70). Drawing on her experiences of accompanying im/migrant farmworkers

within the California agribusiness, Saxton (2021, p. 123) described accompaniment as a form of ‘pragmatic solidarity’ and deemed it a more politicised way of applying participant observation as it allowed her to follow leads, threads, and concerns expressed by im/migrant farmworkers rather than merely following her original research protocol.

3.2. *Research/er Reciprocity*

The decolonial attitude as outlined in the introductory chapter demands reconstituting processes by which research is validated and legitimised (Ewing, 2022). As such, the question of who benefits from research is key in scholarship on decolonizing methodologies (Datta, 2018; Keane et al., 2017; Kovach, 2021; Smith, 2021). Perhaps the most radical articulation of this reconstitution is by Santos (2018b, p. 143) who contended that the credibility and usefulness of research do not depend so much on sophisticated theoretical elaborations as they do on ‘the practices of the social groups and movements that utilise them in their struggles against capitalist, colonialist, and patriarchal domination.’

Grounded in feminist theory, Freire’s critical pedagogy and community-based participatory research (Liebenberg, 2018; Milne & Muir, 2020; Wang & Burris, 1997), photovoice is a qualitative visual research method entailing an emphasis on voice, agency, and participation called for in moves towards decoloniality in/as praxis. Photovoice has been used in a wide range of contexts and demographics for health promotion research since its inception in the 1990s (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Nykiforuk et al., 2011). Recently, photovoice has been adapted and adopted to gain insights into social worlds of marginalised peoples and communities such as transgender women of colour in the USA (Ruff et al., 2019); migrant sex workers in South Africa (Oliveira & Vearey, 2017); and black men who have sex with men with HIV in the USA (Sun et al., 2019). Therefore, photovoice seems highly compatible with the decolonial call for contextuality and pluriversality of those hermeneutically marginalised within the Eurocentric knowledge system.

Procedurally, photovoice typically unfolds in three main parts; the research participants are asked to take photographs to record and reflect their realities; the photos are discussed in groups; and the photos are disseminated, typically in a photovoice exhibition (Milne & Muir, 2020; Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 1999). By offering concrete ways for people to communicate their views to inform policy and having at least one ‘output’, the exhibition, photovoice is arguably one of the four methods used in this research that is most complimentary to the socio-political change oriented core of decolonizing research, which can be summarised as ‘what is at stake is not knowledge born of struggle but rather knowledge produced to be used

in the struggle' (Santos, 2018b, p. 156), and as consideration of uptake of the knowledges produced by marginal/ised people.

By design and intent, photovoice ultimately moves against epistemic extractivism and for epistemic reciprocity as it provides access to different types of knowledges including tacit and experiential knowledge; can be a catalyst for social change and for developing critical consciousness; has the potential to positively change relationships, between individuals and communities, communities and researchers, and communities and policymakers; and enables people to record and reflect their own stories, narratives and concerns through a medium that is not reliant on literacy (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Liebenberg, 2018; Milne & Muir, 2020; Nykiforuk et al., 2011; Sun et al., 2019; Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang, 1999).

3.3. *Sensory Knowledges*

The third method chosen was photo-elicitation interviews (PEI). PEI is a qualitative interview method whereby either researcher-generated or participant-generated photographs or other images are used to solicit responses, reactions, and insights (Harper, 2002; Lapenta, 2011). Since conceptualised as 'photo interviewing' in the mid-1950s, Harper (2002) found that PEI studies have been concentrated in four areas; social organization/social class, community, identity and culture. While PEI and photovoice both emphasise mutuality between researchers and interviewees as they focus on visual objects of shared interest (Lapenta, 2011), PEI does not fall within a communal participatory or action-oriented agenda of photovoice. Instead, PEI involves images and interviews individualised for reasons particular to the research (Harper, 2002).

Drawing on extensive experience with and advocating specifically for PEI, both Harper (2002) and Copes et al. (2018) contended that images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than words, and that PEI can therefore both elicit more information, and a different kind of information. By privileging deep listening to the lived experiences of Other/ed individuals and social groups, PEI arguably confronts Eurocentric modern sciences by taking senses and feelings seriously as sources of knowledge (Santos, 2018b, p. 165), and aligns with many feminists' emphases on the importance of emotions and values as a critical lens in research (Hesse-Biber, 2006).

Writing as and to health researchers, Harris and Guillemin (2012) argued that sensory awareness, understood as paying attention to a research environment and utilising sensory questions or prompts, can enrich qualitative interviews by opening up for un- and underexplored experiences that are either too difficult to articulate or too intangible to describe.

Therefore, PEI seemed particularly appropriate in responding to the three cautions for doing sexualities research in Africa as outlined by Stella Nyanzi and Sylvia Tamale, detailed above.

Finally, PEI can furthermore alleviate some of the ethical concerns with conventional qualitative interviews as relying solely on colonial languages to define Indigenous realities (Battiste, 2014, p. 9). While not situating PEI in a decolonial framework, Collier and Collier (1986) argued that PEI can serve as communication bridges between researchers and the interviewed, because the photos function as reference points for discussions.

3.4. Curiosity

Accompaniment, photovoice and PEI demonstrably align with decolonial moves towards an otherwise way of knowing, being, doing and sensing. As usually organised around an unbalanced ‘question–answer’ discourse structure said to either create or reinforce an epistemological and social asymmetry between those involved (Lapenta, 2011), it may appear puzzling that this research also made use of interviews. While decolonizing research clearly offers possibilities of transgressing conventional methodological barriers and boundaries, the motivator for choosing to conduct interviews within this research was however not due to the mode of knowledge production that this method offers, but rather a wider curiosity. That is to say, the method arose out of literature on LGBTIQ+ solidarity partnerships.

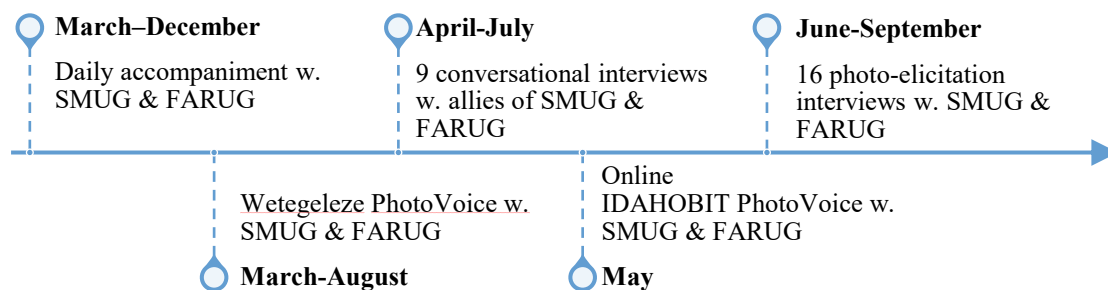
As outlined in the previous chapter, LGBTIQ+ activists are often dependent on forming either horizontal solidarity partnerships with local social movements and civil society organizations, and/or vertical solidarity partnerships with foreign donors and transnational NGOs to secure financial assistance, moral support, and contacts for additional supporters in their struggle (Currier, 2014), but these partnerships are often compromised by colonial metanarratives of Africa as homophobic and homosexuality as unAfrican. As such, I was curious to see who SMUG and FARUG would identify as allies, how identified allies would respond to being identified as such, and how they navigate the potential personal, political, and existential implications of being allies. By asking SMUG and FARUG to identify allies rather than relying on my own literary and lived biases, hence SMUG and FARUG were re/positioned as the (rightful) protagonists of allyship.

Curiosity is important for the decolonial endeavour, as it holds potential for bringing ‘together the bearers of scientific knowledge and the bearers of artisanal knowledge: their common interest in strengthening the resistance and struggle of the oppressed’ (Santos, 2018b, p. 147). Within this research context, the bearers of artisanal knowledges can be seen as both the identified allies and SMUG and FARUG, and the interviews held the potential to further

SMUG and FARUG’s struggles by possibly opening new knowledges about challenges and possibilities for allyship.

4. Enacting the Research Collaboration

Whereas the previous sections have outlined how the methods were chosen, this section unfolds how the methods were utilised. Each participant in the research was provided with a participant information statement¹⁰ and a link to an online consent form¹¹, and additionally asked for confirmatory verbal consent prior to the interviews. Though the four methods unfolded in parallel as illustrated below and were mutually informative, the next sections outline the enactment of each method in isolation for clarity.



4.1. Accompaniment

Accompaniment with SMUG and FARUG took place in Kampala, Uganda, in both physical and digital form. While the photovoice projects, PEIs and conversational interviews unfolded during the same period and were intimately connected to the accompaniment, this section focuses on other components of the accompaniment and returns to other methods below. When I rejoined SMUG, there were eight staff members including the CEO; programme director; finance officer, communication officer; research and documentation manager; legal officer; linking and learning officer and maintenance officer. During my time with SMUG, Richard¹² and the communication officer left SMUG, and three new staff members joined; a research manager; a research assistant; and a finance manager. FARUG had six staff members:

¹⁰ See appendix 1.

¹¹ See appendix 2, 3, and 4 for the consent forms used as the baseline for the online consent form.

¹² Richard Lusimbo is mentioned by name as he is already a public LGBTIQ+ activist and expressly stated that he wants his name mentioned whenever relevant throughout the thesis. Furthermore, Richard was my gatekeeper to the LGBTIQ+ community during the fieldwork that I conducted from and with SMUG in 2015, and again the person who enabled my return and collaboration with SMUG for my PhD fieldwork in 2020.

the CEO, programmes director, finance manager, communication officer, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) officer, and the maintenance officer plus members volunteering daily.

Within the first week of arrival, several meetings took place within both SMUG and FARUG to discuss the research collaboration including setting the expectations and clarifying the intended and desired roles and responsibilities within the collaboration. During these meetings, I first presented my scholarly and socio-political reasoning for conducting the proposed research and for the tentative methods of photovoice and photo-elicitation. Both organizations were very interested in digital and visual methods, and they also had prior experience with digital storytelling and photovoice from engagements with different Western donors. Examples include SMUG, specifically Richard Lusimbo, being involved in the making of the documentary film entitled 'And Still We Rise' released in 2015, which weaves together the resistance to the AHB 2009 and AHA 2014 personal stories of the widespread repression following passage of the AHA 2014. Shortly after these initial meetings, I flagged my interest in and reasons for wanting to interview allies as identified by the two organizations, and both agreed to not only identify but also put me in contact with allies.

Having agreed on the contours of the collaboration, my time was divided between FARUG and SMUG with two to three days at each organization weekly. I followed the two organizations' working times and organizational rhythms in terms of staff meetings, meals, and other in- and outside of the office gatherings. The act of accompanying took different practical, spatial, and relational forms. As for the practical accompanying, it refers to the contributions I was asked and offered to make in terms of organizational tasks. The course and content of the accompaniment is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 9 as part of reflecting on the method's decolonial potentials and pitfalls.

4.2. PhotoVoice

The photovoice process commenced in March 2020 and culminated with an exhibition in August 2020. During this time, in line with the majority of photovoice projects, FARUG and SMUG were brought together in a series of workshops and group discussions (Catalani & Minkler, 2010). The first session served as an introduction to and training in photovoice and had 11 participants, five from FARUG, and six from SMUG. The four hours of training was co-facilitated by SMUG's communication officer who had previous experience with photovoice and consisted of an overview of the photovoice method, process and potential, the proposed timeline, and obligations for research participants (presented by me) and photo technique and ethics (presented jointly).

The training concluded with a collective discussion of the name for the photovoice project, roles and responsibilities, avenues for communication and dissemination. It was agreed that the photovoice project should be called '*Wetegeleze*', a Luganda term for 'paying attention,' and that the three photo prompts – also called photo assignment or photo questions – would be (1) What is LGBTQ+ activism (not) to you?; (2) What strengthens or hinders LGBTQ+ activists and activism?; (3) What are the opportunities and challenges of LGBTQ+ activism? While these prompts had been devised prior to the introductory workshop in collaboration with SMUG's research and documentation manager and FARUG's programme director, the workshop participants were given an opportunity to revise and/or reject the suggested prompts. The workshop participants however did not have any amendments to the proposed photo prompts.

Of the 11 attendees, nine agreed to be a part of the photovoice project. The remaining two needed more time to think about it and chose not to be part of the photovoice project but to participate in other components of the research, including the photo-elicitation interviews. Three people who did not attend the training agreed to be part of the photovoice project. Immediately after the first workshop, a secure WhatsApp group was established for each organization to ease communication about the project. The informed consent form, which included a link to a secure online platform, was distributed to participants. Cognisant of the socio-political context, participants were not asked to sign the consent form but to agree to it verbally and electronically upon uploading their photos.

The 12 photovoice participants were initially given four weeks to take two to four photos, write captions of no more than 400 words per photo in response to three photo prompts, and upload these to a secure designated digital platform. Shortly after the first workshop, Uganda imposed its first Covid-19 restrictions including a ban on private and public transport, and on working from offices. It was therefore agreed to extend the time to complete the photo assignment to nine weeks, and to add a fourth photo prompt formulated as; What does COVID-19 mean for LGBTIQ+ activism, activists, and communities? During confinement to digital accompaniment, I suggested producing a 'mini photovoice' for the occasion of International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersex Discrimination, and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT)¹³. Both SMUG and FARUG agreed, and a small steering group was formed to set up, monitor and administer the Facebook group used for this purpose.

¹³ IDAHOBIT is celebrated annually on 17th May, and marks the anniversary of the World Health Organization's (WHO) decision in 1990 to declassify homosexuality as a mental disorder.

Research participants were encouraged to write photo captions in whichever language they felt most comfortable. Using Indigenous languages in research not only decentres the hegemony of colonial languages, but more importantly situates the research within and simultaneously affirms the social and political contexts of research participants (Battiste, 2014; Ndimande, 2012, 2013). As Ugandans are tribally and therefore linguistically diverse, research participants were asked to provide a loose English translation for each other's sake, the researcher, and the eventual audience of the exhibition. All research participants chose to write captions in English, simultaneously lessening and heightening the risk of losing nuances and meanings inherent in the responses (Ndimande, 2012, 2013). As will be elaborated below, the photos and captions were collectively analysed through three group discussions: one with SMUG, one with FARUG and lastly one with both organizations, which laid the groundwork for the thematic organization of the photovoice exhibition in mid-August 2020.

A guestlist was devised jointly for the exhibition. Each organization invited 15 allies, partners and/or members to the exhibition and forty-five people, including research participants, participated. In response to the (compounded) social isolation and employment discrimination faced by LGBTIQ+ peoples during the COVID-19 lockdown, we decided to have a community forum during the exhibition to allow community members to display and sell their crafts. SMUG hired a photographer for the exhibition, and secured coverage of the event in the LGBTIQ+ news platform, Kuchu Times. After the exhibition, guests and research participants were asked to complete an online survey about the photovoice exhibition experience.

4.3. Photo-Elicitation

The COVID-19 lockdown delayed not only the photovoice process but also the PEIs and conversational interviews. Between early July and late August 2020, 16 PEIs were conducted with activists from SMUG and FARUG. The shortest interview took 58 minutes, and the longest took 2 hours and 18 minutes. Each interview was audio-recorded with permission and later transcribed. The images used in PEIs interviews are typically made, taken or selected by the researcher(s) (Lapenta, 2011). However, to open up for self-determination and definition, I opted for 'reflexive photography' (Harper, 1987) whereby the research collaborators were to take, make and select their own images, making the subsequent interview an exercise in joint meaning-making (Padgett et al., 2013). Prior to the interview, each person was provided the following prompt: 'Please bring 2-4 new or old photos or other images that you think represent your journey to becoming a LGBTIQ+ activist, your experience of being a

LGBTIQ+ activist and your views on who you are beyond an activist.’ These prompts were not devised collectively but informed by different curiosities of mine arising from my lived experiences in Uganda and from a gradually deepening understanding of colonialities embedded in the universal LGBTIQ+ rights discourse and social science scholarship as described in the two preceding chapters.

Both the question of becoming and being a LGBTIQ+ activist stemmed from a want to query the chrononormativity and extraversion of LGBTIQ+ rights movements in Uganda by getting a better understanding of defining moments, people, and discourses for each activist. Part of this was also prompted by personal and political pains and gains of LGBTIQ+ activists being highly underexplored and thus allowing for the colonial construct of LGBTIQ+ peoples and activists as victims. The question of beyond came from wanting to query the conjoined universalisation and atomization of LGBTIQ+ identities that present LGBTIQ+ as the only way of knowing, being and doing. When I later (re)engaged with decolonizing methodologies, I found that these motivations inherently reflect two situations that the decolonial researcher must necessarily contemplate when producing and valorising knowledges capable of strengthening resistance against domination according to Santos (2018b, p. 153):

First, she must realize that *social life is not made of resistance and struggle alone*, but rather of fruition and contemplation as well, that there are *moments and contexts of sociability* that are experienced as if there were no domination and, thus, as if no resistance or struggle were necessary. Second, she may encounter situations in which, although domination is acknowledged as such, there is *a consensus that it is impossible to resist or to struggle* and, therefore, desistance and defeat are to be accepted. Both situations call for *a stance of humility proper to the rearguard intellectual* [emphasis added].

The prompts correspondingly recognised that this research project grasped only a small part of the picture of the infinite paths that lead to resistance and struggle, understood here as LGBTIQ+ activisms, and that even when desistance seems to be unavoidable since, the capacity or will to fight against it might not be (Santos, 2018b, p. 153).

The interviewees were asked not to send photos/images to me prior to the interview, along the same lines of reasoning as with the conversational interviews, to shift the narrative control more towards the interviewees and to make the interview conversational. While each interviewee was free to choose whichever photo to begin with, I would ask them to describe the photo, to relate it to one of the three categories of becoming, being and beyond, and then to expand upon how and why the photo related to that category.

4.4. *Conversational Interviews*

When the Covid-19 restrictions eased, interviews with allies identified by SMUG and FARUG respectively commenced. Between mid-June and mid-July 2020, nine interviews were conducted. The duration of the shortest interview was 1 hour and the longest 2 hours and 30 minutes. Whereas one interview was conducted on Zoom and one at an interviewee's home, the remainder took place in interviewees' offices. Each interview was audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. Prior to interviews taking place, each interviewee received the participant information statement, and at the onset of the interview, each interviewee was briefed on or asked about: the research content and data security measures; verbal consent to be interviewed; degree of anonymity desired in the writeup of the interview and representation in the research dissertation. It should be noted that at the time of interviews, most of the allies wished to be mentioned by name and organization when relevant in the doctoral dissertation.

Of the allies identified and reflective of SMUG and FARUG's respective organizational mandates, the allies identified by SMUG worked within either public health or human rights and/or legally focused civil society organizations, and the allies identified by FARUG in feminist and/or womanist organizations. The two organizations had one ally in common who works as a professor within Makerere University. Interestingly, neither organization identified allies from any 'Western' INGOs, bi- or multilateral organizations or embassies. Nevertheless, one interview was conducted with an ambassador from a European embassy after contact was facilitated between the ambassador and I in the backdrop of the articles written about the situation for LGBTIQ+ peoples in Uganda during Covid-19 as described above. The interview with the ambassador was only conducted after consulting both SMUG and FARUG on whether they would classify the ambassador as an ally, which both organizations did.

Deciding on a conventional qualitative research method such as interviews inevitably required critical reflection on how to employ the method in conjunction with the principles of decoloniality in/as praxis. My first consideration of how to support a less unilateral and more reciprocal research relation during the interviews with the allies was to omit an interview guide altogether. Arguably indicative of methodological fetishism as described earlier, an interview guide was however required by my university's human research ethics committee (HEC). While an indicative interview guide was submitted as part of my ethics application and was a part of the ethics approval, I decided to omit the use of the specific, submitted interview guide in the eventual interviews with allies, as it is widely recognised that a submission of an interview guide to the HEC is indicative only and I had achieved approval for a flexible

approach to the methodology as a decolonizing project from the HEC¹⁴. Within this research, there were several reasons for choosing to do this, which neither negated the institutional research/er guidelines nor ethics approval provided by my university, also it did not compromise the allies' safety.

As outlined previously, using Indigenous languages in research, and interviews are, simply put, most effective and ethical when research participants can use languages in which they are proficient (Ndimande, 2013). To comply with the required interview guide but still move towards decoloniality, I therefore initially intended to translate the interview guide into Luganda and to provide an English and a Luganda version to the allies, and to have any responses given in Luganda later translated. However, as outlined before, Uganda is a multilingual country, and the allies could not be expected to have Luganda as a first language, which would thus require having the interview guide translated into multiple languages. While this process might have been somewhat cumbersome, this did not discourage the use of an interview guide. Instead, ethical, hermeneutical, and relational concerns did.

Having someone translate the interview guide within the socio-political context for LGBTIQ+ people in Uganda could present serious ethical and safety concerns for the translator in question, risking arrest for translating LGBTIQ+ related material, as well as for the allies and myself, risking that the translator in question would report the research/er. Providing either hard- or soft copies of the interview guide to allies could furthermore compromise the allies as well as myself given the extensive government sanctioned surveillance of digital communication platforms and frequent raids on suspected LGBTIQ+ organizations. Additionally, translating interview guides into Indigenous languages and later the responses back into, supposedly, English for data analysis would also come with the risk of losing nuances and meanings inherent in the responses (Ndimande, 2012, 2013), and thus potentially aid rather than counteract the hermeneutical injustice at the heart of calls for decolonization. Relationally, an interview guide was also considered to possibly reproduce the typical distanced rather than reciprocal research/er relation. In addition to these concerns, it is important to note that the HEC acknowledged the interview guide as indicative and as potentially not fitting within the decolonial framework nor the specific circumstances of this research. To quote the HEC approval¹⁵:

¹⁴ See appendix 5 for the final ethics approval of Project No.: 2020/036 with the Approval Period: 25/02/2020 to 25/02/2024.

¹⁵ See appendix 6 for the relevant correspondence with the HEC regarding the research project including the acknowledgement of the need for a flexible methodology.

It was acknowledged that the methodology must remain flexible to be able to respond to local conditions and restrictions, and that the outputs will depend to some extent on what is possible in the field.

While there was no interview guide, the interviews would begin and end in similar fashion. To begin, the allies would be asked why they thought that either SMUG or FARUG had identified them as allies, and then what their understanding of allyship was. To end, the interviewees would be asked if there was anything they wished I had asked during the interview. This approach opened up spaces for an otherwise of knowing by allowing surprise understood here as ‘the attitude before what one doesn’t know or perhaps even what one doesn’t understand’ (Santos, 2018b, p. 146) to guide the knowledge production process. Relatedly, Santos (2018b, p. 149) argued that ‘surprise doesn’t arouse distance or strangeness; it rather arouses the curiosity and humility capable of constructing a new proximity and familiarity.’ Whether the potential of the chosen interview approach was realized is discussed in Chapter 9 alongside the allies’ experiences of the interviews.

5. Ending the Collaboration?

Embracing decoloniality in/as praxis as a methodological stance entails working towards integration of different knowledges in a way that is not merely a modification of hegemonic modern Eurocentric knowledge traditions (Botha, 2011, p. 315). While seemingly scarcely discussed in decolonial scholarship, this endeavour does not start or end with the selection or application of research methods to produce knowledges but extends to analysis, representation, and dissemination of produced knowledges. As such, this section turns to moves towards decoloniality in/as praxis in these parts of the research process and relation.

Drawing on 15 years of teaching, research and service activities with various Indigenous communities around the world, Datta (2018) argued that collective ownership, data analysis and presentation can both assist in decolonizing the research and researcher, and , more importantly, create positive impact on and in the research participants’ community. To this end, it is worth making the different contributions of ‘scientific’ and experiential knowledges clear, which Santos (2018b, p. 146) articulated as follows:

The major contribution of *postabyssal scientific knowledge* to the epistemic minga consists in ***clarifying the different modes of domination***: what they are and how they function [...]; their causes and historical trajectories; their many manifestations and disguises; their strengths and weaknesses; ***how they articulate themselves to reproduce social, economic, political, and cultural domination***; how oppressed social groups have organized their resistance and

struggles in different spaces and times; their successes and failures; and so on and so forth. *Artisanal knowledge*, in its turn, contributes with *its experience of having lived within and without relations of domination* [emphasis added].

Outlining the different contributions here serves to argue that moving towards decolonizing data analysis, representation, and dissemination requires processes that allow each contribution to come to the fore, and thus to be complementary. For this research, this means that reflexive thematic analysis (henceforth RTA) as developed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019, 2021a, 2023) has been chosen to complement the iterative and emic analytical components of photovoice, PEIs and conversational interviews to exercise critical reflexivity about the accompaniment but also epistemological assumptions, situatedness, and power dynamics that have influenced the research process from design to dissemination. The next sections will outline how both modes of analyses have been applied.

5.1. Reflexive Thematic Analysis

While Clarke and Braun (2017, p. 298) did not posit RTA as an ‘omni-method, suited to any and *all* qualitative research questions and designs,’ they did simultaneously state that RTA distinguishes itself from most other qualitative analytic approaches because it is unbound from theoretical commitments and can therefore be applied across a wide range of theoretical frameworks, research paradigms, and data/knowledge types. Operationally, RTA intends to unveil patterns of meaning (‘themes’) through six phases summarised by Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87) as (1) getting familiar with the data through transcribing data, reading the data, and noting down initial ideas; (2) generating initial codes; (3) searching for themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) lastly, producing the ‘report.’

Despite the apparent paucity of scholarship about the use of RTA within decolonial research frameworks, the approach appears to align well with several of the principles of decoloniality in/as praxis. Like decolonizing methodology, RTA posits the analysis process as recursive instead of linear (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86), which has the potential to confront the ego-politics of Eurocentric (social) sciences by emphasising ‘the researcher’s subjectivity as analytic resource, and their reflexive engagement with theory, data and interpretation’ (Braun & Clarke, 2021b, p. 3). It moreover aligns with the decolonial attitude by demanding the researcher be reflexive about inherent assumptions, motivations and values and their potential influence on the coding (Braun & Clarke, 2021a, p. 39).

When using the RTA approach within a decolonial framework, it is noteworthy that whereas linking abstracted themes may be compatible with modern/colonial methods, it may

also be an aggressive action from the perspective of the Other/ed as it ‘changes the relationship between the storyteller and the receiver of the story and loses the relationship of the pieces of the story to each other’ (Simonds & Christopher, 2013, p. 13). To circumvent this de-linking, Datta (2018, p. 18) usefully contends that collective data analysis can be significant for research participants in understanding and influencing how their research participation is transformed into a written format. Insofar as possible, the themes developed through photovoice, PEIs, and the conversational interviews have been anchored in collective analysis as outlined below.

PhotoVoice

With its iterative approach, collective analysis is an integrated part of photovoice as the photos and, if applicable, photo captions are analysed through group discussions with the involved photovoice participants. For this research, three group discussions constituted collective analysis processes of the selected photos and captions. The first two group discussions were conducted with FARUG and SMUG separately. Prior to these, each activist was asked to choose five of their own photos that, in their view, best responded to the four photo prompts, to inform me of their choice, and to prepare a brief presentation of each photo according to the following questions: (1) What does the photo show?; (2) What does the photo represent to you?, and (3) How does the photo relate to the photovoice question in your view?

Based on activists’ input, I prepared a presentation for FARUG and SMUG with the selected photos and captions to aid individual presentations within each organization. Each group discussion commenced with me providing a brief recap of the photovoice process, aims and opportunities before the activists presented their photos and captions. For each presentation, the listening activists were asked to reflect and collectively discuss the presented photos according to the ‘SHOWeD’ questions developed by Wang and Burris (1997):

- S - What do you **S**ee here?
- H - What is really **H**appening?
- O - How does this relate to **O**ur lives?
- W - **W**hy does this problem or strength exist?
- E - How can we become **E**mpowered through our new understanding?
- D - What can we **D**o about it?

After individual presentations and collective interpretations, the research participants were asked to first develop categories representative of the presented photos in response to the photo prompts, and then to rank the categories to find those most valuable to participants. The presentations were organised according to the four photo prompts; thus four rounds of

individual presentations took place followed by collective discussions. The separate group discussions resulted in SMUG developing 22 categories of which solidarity featured in response to two of the prompts, and FARUG developing 12 categories. It is noteworthy that FARUG and SMUG had three overlapping categories; Resistance, Resilience, and Hope.

After separate group discussions, research participants were given an opportunity to rewrite captions and titles, and to resubmit these prior to the joint group discussion. Three weeks after the two separate discussions, a final joint discussion was held. The purpose was for the two organizations to view and interpret each other's photos and captions, to narrow down the categories and to reorganise the photos and captions in preparation for the exhibition. As with the separate group discussions, I prepared a power point presentation to begin the group discussion with a recap of the results of the separate group discussions, and an outline of the purpose of the exhibition. To facilitate the collective discussion, I used multiple online and 'hands on' participatory methods. As there was no electrical power on the day of the joint group discussion, the process of (de)selecting and (re)organising photos and captions was facilitated through participatory methods involving hard copies of photos and captions, and themes devised by each organization.



FIGURE 4: PHOTOVOICE GROUP DISCUSSION BETWEEN FARUG & SMUG

Cognisant of principles of reciprocal observation and collective analysis, I also opted to introduce categories not devised by SMUG and FARUG that I considered relevant based on my lived experiences and scholarly readings about LGBTIQ+ rights, politics and activism in Uganda and Africa, and the interviews conducted up until this point. These included: Religion, Media, Family, Parenthood, Elitism/Professionalism, Sex/sexuality and Culture. The photovoice participants then had a chance to revisit the deselected photos prior to the separate group discussions, and to consider the photos submitted for IDAHOBIT. The joint group discussion resulted in the exhibition being divided into three thematic areas closely linked to the photo prompts; (1) What is LGBTIQ+ Activism; (2) Challenges and Hindrances for LGBTIQ+ Activism; and (3) Strengths and Opportunities of LGBTIQ+ Activism with each thematic area was made up of several sub-themes devised by the activists.

The table below depicts how the exhibition was organised; Starting from the top, ‘Wetegeleze’ became the name of the exhibition as the collectively chosen name for the photovoice project. Each prompt or topic received its own wall with a banner with the respective prompt outlined to demarcate a specific section. The colour-coding below shows which subthemes belonged under each prompt i.e. the (blue) section ‘what is LGBTIQ+ activism?’ had three sub-themes; (1) resistance & resilience, (2) solidarity & support, and (3) voice & visibility. Each sub-theme would then have photos and captions organised under it. The photovoice process appears to both align with the recursive six analytical phases of RTA and allowed complementation by contributions from SMUG, FARUG, and me.¹⁶

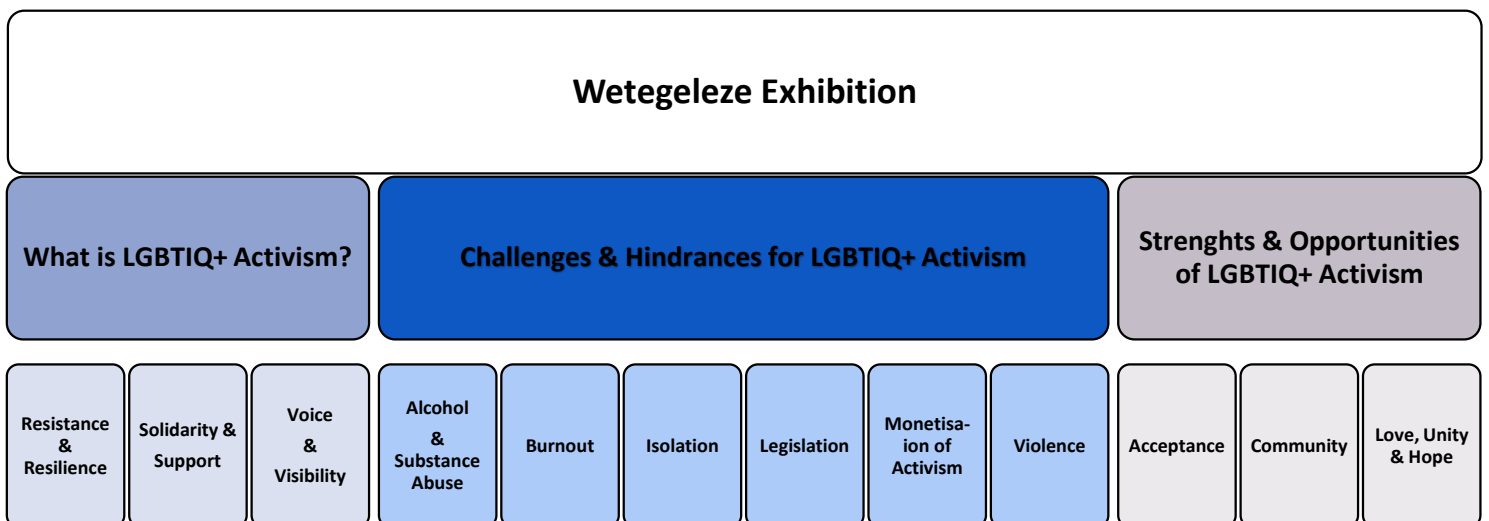


FIGURE 5: THEMATIC OVERVIEW OF WETEGELEZE EXHIBITION

¹⁶ See appendix 7 for a detailed overview of each step in RTA compared to the photovoice steps.

PEIs & Conversational Interviews

For both the PEIs and interviews, TA has been applied abductively. For the PEIs, the approach was to consider the photo prompts of being, becoming and beyond an LGBTIQ+ activist that guided the individual interviews with SMUG and FARUG respectively as the defining and naming of themes (TA phase 5), and to then expand upon each theme by following the other phases of the TA based on transcripts of the PEIs.

Adhering to the principle that decolonizing research should ideally produce knowledges useful for social groups and movements in their struggles against capitalist, colonialist, and patriarchal domination, the TA of the interviews has been anchored in the themes devised for and through the photovoice project and PEIs with the intent to both centre and link FARUG and SMUG's perspectives with those of the interviewed allies.

While shifting the perspective to allyship, the transcribed interviews have been analysed through and organised around the themes; (1) Becoming, Being and Beyond an LGBTIQ+ ally; (2) Challenges and Hindrances for LGBTIQ+ allyship; and (3) Strengths and Opportunities of LGBTIQ+ allyship.

5.2. (Re-)Presentation

Decolonizing research/ers does not begin or end with the question of how and who produces knowledges, but also the question of how to speak and write 'for', 'with' or 'about' the 'Other' without othering (Manning, 2016; Spivak, 2010) and with who is doing the speaking and writing about decolonizing methodology (Barnes, 2018). This is arguably pertinent when, as with this research, the representation of knowledges produced is primarily in the hands of a researcher not only schooled in colonial/modern epistemologies but also confined by (settler) colonial/modern institutional/ised research framework while researching about and with a highly marginalised community in a postcolonial context.

The thorny issue of representation, or rather the act of representing, is further highlighted by Mignolo and Walsh (2018, p. 109) who argued that '[r]epresenting is a toxic word in the vocabulary of modernity and modern epistemology' because it presupposes a constituted objective reality with different interpretations, and thus negates the decolonial position that 'life is lived among options, and options are built by people and institutions according to their own assumptions and interests.' Drawing on the postcolonial critique of epistemological foundationalism particularly by Spivak, Moreton-Robinson (2021, p. xxii) similarly outlined two dimensions to the act of representation; first, to perceive representation as 'speaking for', and second, to perceive representation as involving interpretation, and thus

to re-present. With this, Moreton-Robinson (2021, p. xxii) operationalised the concept of ‘self-representation’ to distinguish between how one represents oneself through interpretation as opposed to how one is represented by another.

The aim of the coming four chapters is to re-present the activists and allies’ social and epistemic locations as these were visually and verbally self-presented through photovoice, PEIs, and interviews. While representation is undeniably embedded in choosing how to structure and what interview quotes to include, multiple strategies were employed to stay as close as possible to activists’ and allies’ self-representation in the coming four chapters. The first, and most important, strategy was to keep the photos, captions, and interviews as unadulterated by my interpretation as possible and let them speak for themselves by ‘simply’ displaying the photos and captions from the photovoice exhibition, and by including thick excerpts from the two types of interviews. The second strategy was to not insist on anonymising the activists and/or allies out of some misplaced benevolent concern and instead respecting both those who wish to be named and visually identifiable and those who do not. In effect, photos and captions from the photovoice project, and images from the PEIs are included when relevant, and when research participants consented to have them in the PhD dissertation.

Considering that the coming four chapters were written after the AHB 2023 was signed into law, this was admittedly a difficult decision to make, and one that could perhaps be reproached by the reader for being ‘unethical.’ However, allowing activists and allies to decide exactly what to include in the written dissertation is arguably an important step towards restoring epistemic agency and authority of the activists and allies. Beyond this lofty argument, it is important to note epistemic agency and authority in action throughout the research process as activists and allies clearly navigated and negotiated possible implications of visibility by, for example, consenting to having their photos displayed during the photo exhibition or sharing personal images in the PEIs, but not necessarily consenting to these being a part of the written dissertation.

A final strategy used to honour activists’ self-representation is to include photos of the photovoice workshops taken by research participants, and of the photovoice exhibition by photographers organised by both SMUG and FARUG to contextualise processes of knowledge production, analysis, and representation within the cooperation. The hope is that these representational strategies lay the foundation for the epistemic meeting between the self-representation and representation of LGBTIQ+ activists, allies, and their activisms to unveil but more importantly disrupt the hermeneutical injustice embedded in the epistemic crisis of Eurocentrism, which are to be analysed and discussed in Chapter 9.

5.3. *Distribution/Dissemination*

While the question of knowledge possession and uptake is widely discussed in post- and decolonial scholarship, the question of dissemination appears scarcely touched. Dissemination is however key to advancing the negative and particularly the positive projects of decolonization. After all, how can the epistemic agency, authority, and resources of marginalised knowers be used to advance knowledges in various fields, and, more importantly, to counteract obscurement of marginalised knowers' social experience from collective understanding without dissemination beyond the dominant Eurocentric formats and platforms?

When speaking specifically about research in, about, and with Africa/ns, it is particularly important to consider how to disseminate research in a way that allows for Africa to be reconstituted as an epistemic site, and to consider Africa as the prime target for African knowledges (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a, 2018b, 2021). To this end, one strategy used within this research was to suggest that SMUG and FARUG would provide guided tours during the photovoice exhibition, and to ask SMUG and FARUG to devise the guestlist for the exhibition. As such, SMUG and FARUG were at liberty to choose how to present their epistemic resources through the exhibition, and more importantly to whom it was represented. SMUG and FARUG further suggested a community forum during which invited guests could sell or buy their crafts and, at the same time, have an opportunity to discuss the exhibition with each other.

Examples from the Wetegeleze Exhibition & Community Forum



When considering dissemination, another important point is to consider dissemination not as a one-off or as something that requires the involvement of ‘Western’ research/ers. To this end, decolonizing research/ers requires ensuring knowledge possession for the marginalised knowers. As such, SMUG and FARUG have kept the printed photos and captions of the photovoice project and been offered a full and summarised version of this PhD. However, the ‘conventional’ sharing of the PhD dissertation is arguably the least decolonial way to disseminate knowledges produced and to make them useful in the struggles given the length, language (English and academic), and format combined with the high cost of internet, unstable internet, and malicious government spyware used to target LGBTIQ+ and other human and civil rights activists and peoples in Uganda.

Arguably, the most important and contextually relevant way of disseminating knowledges produced were the photovoice exhibition, which SMUG and FARUG posted on their respective social media as well as organising an article in the queer Ugandan online news media, Kuchu Times. While increased (media) visibility can also mean increased danger for LGBTIQ+ activists in Uganda, sharing the exhibition in these ways was important to cement the existence and resilience of LGBTIQ+ peoples, but also to make the exhibition visible and reachable for the wider LGBTIQ+ community who, for example, lived in rural areas or those who could not participate in the event itself.

With permission from SMUG and FARUG, the research was disseminated through articles written about the impact of COVID-19 on scapegoating of the LGBTIQ+ community in Uganda, international academic conference presentations in fora especially concerned with Africa (studies), activism and civil society, social work, and LGBTIQ+ rights, and professional presentations in internationally oriented civil society organizations concerned with LGBTIQ+ rights and/or HIV/AIDS.

6. Conclusion

To return to the beginning of this chapter but also of the thesis, the position taken throughout is that to advance the positive project of decolonization requires a researcher positioned on the privileged side of the Eurocentric fundamentalist paradigm to both ‘get the story right, [and] tell the story well’ (Smith, 2021, pp. 273-83). To this end, this chapter builds on but also extends decoloniality in/as praxis as an analytical perspective presented in the two preceding chapters into decoloniality in/as praxis as a methodological stance.

Being epistemically disobedient implies going beyond disciplinary or interdisciplinary controversies and the conflict of interpretations (Mignolo, 2009, 2011b). With this in mind, the

methodological choices here have sought to challenge the Eurocentric research/er tendencies to reduce Africans to mere ‘hunters and gatherers’ of raw data that is processed in the West into theories and concepts that are consumed in Africa (Mamdani, 2011 cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a, p. x). To this end, this research/er’s moves towards decolonizing methodology have considered Indigenous, decolonial and African/ist scholarship, the social, (geo)political, and cultural context of sexuality and gender norms in Africa, and the reality for LGBTIQ+ activists and allies in Uganda.

Considering the methodological deliberations and choices, this chapter aligns with much of the literature on epistemic injustice in its orientation towards those (e.g. social sciences researchers) in positions to perpetrate injustices, and the attempts to devise ways to dismantle systems of epistemic dominance and oppression (Pohlhaus, 2020). Staying with perspectives of those already privileged by the Eurocentric epistemological system however risks negating perspectives of those who endure epistemic injustices, and their perspectives on how to survive in the face of epistemic oppression (Pohlhaus, 2020). Also, staying with the perspective of those privileged by Eurocentrism could be viewed as staying with the sociology of absences instead of the sociology of emergences as introduced in the introductory Chapter.

Recalling the articulation of the sociology of emergences offered by Santos (2018b, p. 18), the impetus for the following four chapters was to capture the process of LGBTIQ+ activists, allies, and people in Uganda ‘setting aside victimhood and becoming resisting people practicing ways of being and knowing in their struggle against domination.’ To shift the perspective, situate the struggles, and underscore the practices of resistance for and by LGBTIQ+ activists and allies, the next four chapters subsequently re-present rather than interpret the activists and allies’ self-representation throughout the research relation.

Wetegeleze – ‘Pay Attention!’

1. Introduction

While the previous chapter established the framework used to further the positive project of decolonization, this chapter turns to the results of applying this framework in/as praxis with LGBTIQ+ activists in Uganda. Before proceeding, it is important to note that the positive project of decolonization is often obfuscated by a two-sided de/colonial conundrum; first, by marginalised knowers articulating what cannot necessarily be told in conventional modern/colonial terms, and second, for marginalised knowers to be heard without their knowledges being mistranslated into normative Eurocentric logics that occlude their meaning-making (May, 2014). Put differently, even research/ers with the impetus to further the positive project of decolonization can fall prey not only to hermeneutic marginalization but also interpretive violence (May, 2014). While these could, as argued by feminist and decolonial scholars, be seen as a consequence of epistemic ignorance, it is not simply ignorance in the sense of imperfect knowledge but ignorance as a consequence of practices of domination and disciplinary apathies (Hutton & Cappellini, 2022).

Grappling with the question of how to best circumvent interpretative violence, I have decided that the best way for SMUG and FARUG’s photovoice to be heard here is to represent it as close as possible to the actual exhibition at SMUG’s offices in mid-August 2020. Philosophically, this means that you, the reader, is invited to employ your decolonial imaginary and to accompany SMUG and FARUG through their visual and written meaning-making of LGBTIQ+ activism in Uganda. You are, in other words, encouraged to ‘Wetegeleze’ i.e. to ‘observe/understand/be critical/get to know/analyze’¹⁷ unencumbered by my potentially epistemically ignorant interpretations. Practically, this means that the next three sections correspond to the three parts of the exhibition. Each section presents the photos selected and themes devised by FARUG and SMUG. At the end of this chapter, I do offer some explanatory notes to contextualise some of the photo captions further.

¹⁷ The definition used is the same as stated by SMUG in their tweet about the PhotoVoice exhibition: <https://t.co/7W3s4snQe7> <https://t.co/VFTfyLqrLQ> / X (twitter.com)

2. What is LGBTIQ+ Activism?

In defining what LGBTIQ+ activism meant to them at an individual and collective level, FARUG and SMUG chose 26 pictures and developed three themes to organise them under; (1) Solidarity & Support; (2) Voice & Visibility, and (3) Resistance & Resilience.

2.1. Solidarity & Support



Julian Onziema

Transgender man, Kampala, Uganda
Head of Programs, SMUG

Greater Calling

It is a calling to be greater than my present. Activism is doing whatever it takes even if it means walking into unknown, unsafe spaces and believing you will make a change.

Mutyaba Gloria

Lesbian, Kampala, Uganda
Programs Director, FARUG

Balance Diet

Do not underestimate how much you can contribute to the fight. Each of us has a role to play in creating change. It does not matter which space you occupy - start by creating change there.

Create change in your marketplace, in your place of worship, in your house, in your neighborhood, in your school, in your hospital.





Hannington Ssebulime

Transgender man, Kampala, Uganda
Welfare Officer, SMUG

Growth, support, collaboration

The photo shows all the key aspects of LGBTIQ+ activism. The bottle is covered in the rainbow that symbolises LGBTIQ+ people globally, and through SMUG’s name on the bottle LGBTIQ+ people in Uganda are also represented. The photo also indicates collaboration across borders as the rainbow flag has the name of a Swedish political party.

Indirectly, the photo also shows the creativity and support within the LGBTIQ+ movement. FARUG members made the bottle and then the executive director of SMUG, Frank, decided to buy it for the SMUG office. Lastly, behind the bottle there is a plant growing, which symbolises the growth of the LGBTIQ+ movement every minute.

Faridah Nabada Nalinva

Heterosexual woman, Kampala, Uganda
Finance Officer, Kampala, Uganda

Support

With all the chaos of the COVID-19 and quarantine happening, having physical and moral support from family and friends was and continues to hold me up even when I feel low. The corona pandemic has shown how strong and versatile the LGBTIQ+ activism is. At the drop of a hat call for online meetings, webinars, psycho-social support to community members by the activists themselves, this is a long list of how the LGBTQ Activists have come out and faced this incredible challenge.

Communities have had it tough, those that would rely on workshops and transport refunds to contribute towards ends meeting with the little salaries feel challenged, the staff members that can get funding because the funds were set for activities that can’t happen now due to the pandemic, health risks like failure to attain medical services due to limited transportation.





Phyllis Wanjiru

Lesbian, Kampala, Uganda
Communications & Information Officer, SMUG

Solidarity

LGBTIQ Human Rights Defenders braved the rain to stand in solidarity with the #COSF20 who were remanded in jail for 50 days after they were arrested from a homeless shelter where they had hoped to stay during the COVID-19 lockdown.

For me, this stands for solidarity and unity that the community shows in time of need.



Diane Sydney Bakuraira

Lesbian, Kampala, Uganda
Linking and Learning Officer, SMUG

Protection and support

In this picture we see my colleague, community members and myself in solidarity support for the COSF 20 court case.

We see the perseverance of a community even in hard times the support continues.



Frank Mugisha

Gay man, Kampala, Uganda
Executive Director, SMUG

Activism is being able to celebrate our victories.

Richard Smith Lusimbo

Gay man, Kampala, Uganda

Programmes Manager, Pan Africa ILGA

Support system

I have no shame to cry. We all have moments of vulnerabilities, but I am delighted that I can still be me regardless of who I am in the community. I cry tears of joy for this far we have come as a community, but I am also encouraged that, I have a community to lean on.



2.2. Voice & Visibility



Pepe Julian Onziema

Transgender man, Kampala, Uganda
Head of Programs, SMUG

Rise Up

Standing up and raising my fist high above my head to be a source of my own power to be mirrored to the world to see it and draw hope and inspiration from it.

The bracelet of Uganda's colours symbolizes my love for my country and that I will rise up to be counted as Ugandan.

Hashim Ramlah

Mukono, Uganda
IDAHOBIT

Rainbow Girl

Black is my skin, and happiness flows through my skin when I sit down and feel the rainbow rushing its colours through my blood. I'm a wolf in sheep's skin when I walk through my society, because I'm a rainbow girl. They do not want to see my face as it irritates them, because I'm different from what they were taught by their culture and tradition. I'm bold and hold myself high because, because I believe self-acceptance starts with me.

Life has given LGBT people trials and breakdowns there is nothing bigger than hope. Just when you are about to be hopeless, remember there is hope. A friend of mine called once told me, it is us against the world not the world against us. We are just different from the community, a reality that they need to understand and appreciate with kindness. Being LGBTIQ is what we are, and it is the real us. As the LGBTIQ community, we love one another with care but not ego.





Mutyaba Gloriah

Lesbian, Kampala, Uganda
Programs Director, FARUG

Lower the Mask, Let them see You

Having to hide who we are refrains and erases a lot of what we have and could have done.

We are also masking a lot - our pain, our relationships, our sexuality, our places of work. We are always living in fear of being judged, but if you think about it, judging you never changes who you are.

If you know who you are, why live apologetically? Walk your truth, be yourself, be happy in your skin - even if you are the only one that enjoys that happens.

Arthur Mubiru

Transgender man, Kampala, Uganda
Administration Officer, FARUG

Fighting for Visibility

This photo taken at the roof of Grand Global Hotel in Makerere Kikoni.

In most cases we LGBTIQ+ people are left behind, and many people have objected to our progress and visibility both as individuals and as organizations.

However, let us learn to look for that space where we can be seen, where we can stand high until we will get full recognition, visibility and existence.

Do not resist putting out your face even in obstacles!



Griffin N

Gay man, Uganda, *IDAHOBIT*

Get Out

Silence is never an answer and closets are for clothes. If you are able, get out of that closet. Not just for you, but for others out there, waiting to be inspired. You are worthy and loved -don't let anyone tell you otherwise. #AlutaContinua



Mutyaba Gloriah

Lesbian, Kampala, Uganda
Programs Director, FARUG

Life isn't Black and White, it's a Rainbow

Just like rainbow made it easy for the other clothes on it to dry to, it is important for us as activists to understand that integration in other community initiatives and organizing is strength.

Do not isolate your fight and work, you are human beings who exist in a world that every other human being does too. Make sure your voice is heard everywhere; corruption - speak up, police brutality - speak up, violence against women-speak up. Do not be silent about things that are not "LGBTIQ+" work!

Arthur Mubiru

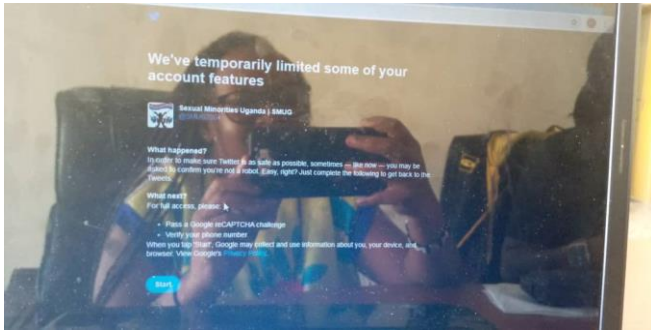
Transgender Man, Kampala, Uganda *Administration Officer, FARUG*

Opportunities to amplify our voices

In this photo of me I was attending The Rethink, Reimagine, Reboot conference organised by CREA and it took place in Kathmandu Nepal 2019. This conference brought together different activists from the world to address today's most challenging socio-political issues and intersections with feminism, art and technology.

With these opportunities available, activists are empowered and able to build strong networks and allies for the growth and strength of the movement.





Phyllis Wanjiru

Lesbian, Kampala, Uganda
Communications & Information Officer, SMUG

Secret Eye

Our social media work is often censored. When things like this happen, we feel exposed, naked, like someone is taking away our privacy.

Meaningful Involvement

I was actively participating in a dialogue that was addressing issues of Gender Based Violence and Intimate Partner Violence.

When we actively participate in issues that affect us, we easily come up with solutions that benefit us. Involving people affected by an issue helps them to fully give out the facts of the issue.

LBQ women are not only facing GBV because of their sexuality but as women too. With organising such interventions, a clear solution can always be attained.



Arthur Mubiru

Transgender man, Kampala, Uganda
Administration Officer, FARUG

2.3. Resistance & Resilience



Pepe Julian Onziema

Transgender man, Kampala, Uganda
Head of Programs, SMUG

Taste of Freedom

There's strength in a collective anger, resolve and vision against the tide of oppression. The oppressor always seeks to isolate and trap us when we're alone. Collectively or together, we can rise strong, strategize, heal and win.

With this photo I see hope and tranquillity the raised fists represent victory for the LGBTIQ community while the waterfall represents the rapid change within advocacy work, we do as Sexual Minorities Uganda.

Faridah Nabada Nalinya

Heterosexual woman, Kampala, Uganda
Finance Officer, Kampala, Uganda

Defiance

I was walking during the quarantine and with the rule of face masks, I opted for my rainbow colours to share with any person who understood the meaning of the rainbow colours that they were not alone and to any officials, we are here to stay. Activism can be as easy as walking on the street with a rainbow mask with a simple message to those who know what the rainbow stands for, telling them that they are not alone.

Activism can also mean the risk of moving in a quarantine to go and cater to community members, or as hard as walking in a street campaigning for LGBTIQ rights and being surrounded by pure undulated hatred to a point of mob justice or being vocal and challenging a priest in an argument of love. Simply put, LGBTIQ activism can come in all manners depending on the target audience.



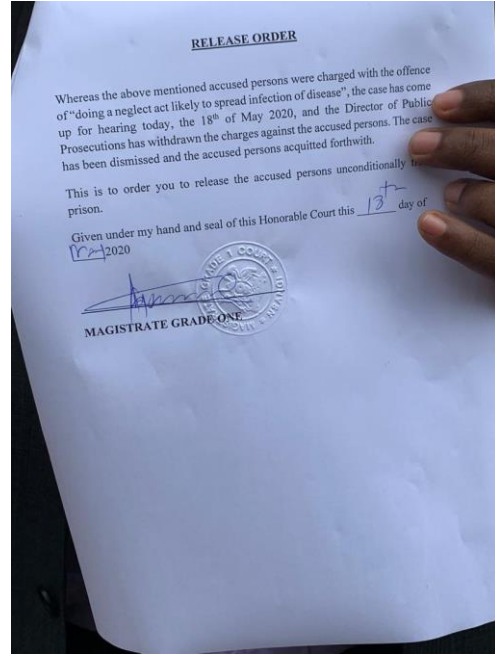


Pepe Julian Onziema

Transgender Man, Kampala, Uganda
Head of Programs, SMUG

Leap of Faith

Taking the chance, the leap of faith to stand up against oppression and trusting that I can gain freedom. When I took this photo, I was near a slippery waterfall and I could easily have fallen and gotten injured seriously, but I felt like if I didn't take this photo I'd have missed out on the chance for a beautiful memory. I took the chance and conquered my fears.



Frank Mugisha

Gay Man, Kampala, Uganda
Executive Director, SMUG

Activism is being able to get the court to set the #COSF20 free



Mutyaba Gloria

Lesbian, Kampala, Uganda
Programs Director, FARUG

Resilience

It is time to keep fighting, to keep working and serving even when the COVID-19 responses like social distancing, isolation and limitation on social gatherings have affected LBQ organizing and safe spaces.



Arthur Mubiru

Transgender Man, Kampala, Uganda
Administration Officer, FARUG

Resilience

This photo was taken on 8th March 2019 during the women’s day celebrations. Prior to the celebrations, Police denied us the chance to cerebrate from FARUG office premises as programmed earlier.

Police further stated that they can't allow gay celebrations to take place and stated that the neighbouring community was complaining of the unconfirm caused by our gatherings. Even after undergoing such pain and inconvenience, FARUG as the organiser and her staff did not fail to celebrate women’s day.

We requested for another space and MARPS Network offered space for the celebrations. Many LGBTQ community members turned up for the event and many other services accompanied the occasion. Therefore, with resilience, we can still achieve our goals.



Arthur Mubiru

Transgender Man, Kampala, Uganda
Administration Officer, FARUG

Commitment

This photo shows me with the bike that we use to reach our targets in their respective areas of stay.

The Covid-19 pandemic outbreak has affected many programs, not only for the LGBTQ community but the world at large. However, we as LGBTIQ+ activists, we had to think about new measures of implementation such that operations keep moving.

As part of our work support to adherence is crucial for LBQ women living with HIV. We therefore use the bike to take services to the people, assist with drug refills, PrEP services, condom distribution and self-testing kits distribution.

We as activists are committed to reach our community with service even during this lockdown.

Bridging the gaps

LGBTIQ+ activism entails meeting amazing people across divides to discuss and chart a way forward over issues affecting groups.

Activists meet in the cover of darkness to chart a way forward to discuss many other issues that do affect them in their operation. It's only through solidarity and sharing ideas that activists can realize their potential to overcome some common challenges. COVID-19 could not prevent people from meeting and albeit the conditions set for meeting and issues around social distancing.

There are those moments when one thing is that the conditions set as COVID-19 prevention measures are measures set to prevent people from meeting.



Douglas Mathew Mawadri

Kampala, Uganda

Legal/Human Rights Officer, SMUG



Anna Xwexx Morena

Heterosexual transgender woman, Wakiso, Uganda

Right to Respect

We as transgender persons should not have to bind and tuck for our identities to be respected. We should not be forced to put ourselves through physical pain and torture to cater for cis-gender standards of desirability to earn our respect.

We are human and it is our right to be respected.

3. Challenges & Hindrances to LGBTIQ+ Activism

In this part of the exhibition, SMUG and FARUG selected 23 pictures and organised them under 6 themes: (1) Violence, (2) Isolation, (3) Legislation, (4) Burn-Out, (5) Alcohol and Substance Abuse, and (6) Monetisation of Activism.

3.1. Violence



Joanita Warry Ssenfuka

Lesbian, Kampala, Uganda
Executive Director, FARUG

Silencing us

LBQ women must be silent to be accepted. To gain access to funding for the LGBTIQ+ community by using the language of MSM (men who have sex with men) and not by using the language of WSW (women who have sex with women), mainly because homosexuality is still equated with same sex amongst men.

As a LBQ woman, you can only be accepted, if you are silent. Activism is however about disrupting the silence. Disrupting the silence is speaking – there is nothing that can be done, if you do not speak up about anything.

Jordan

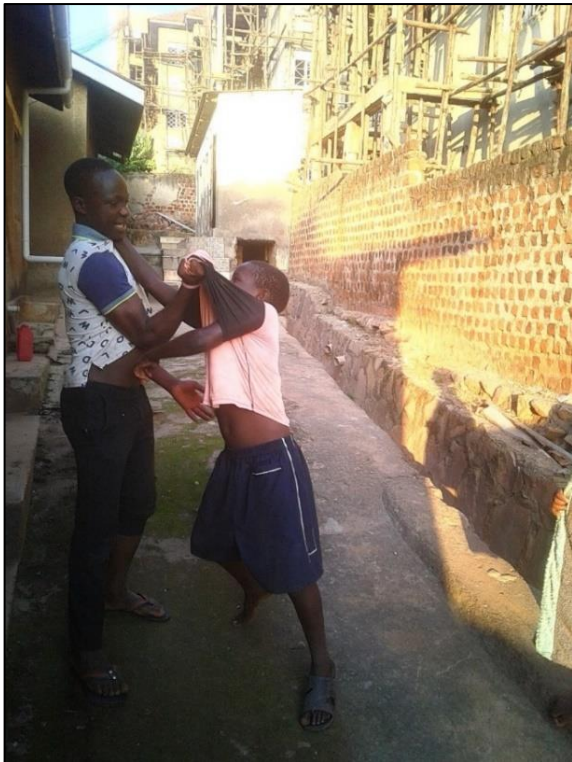
Transgender Man, Entebbe, Uganda
IDAHOBIT

One Day

We are about to mark International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia across the world. While it is humbling to see social media abuzz with words of support and unity for the cause, we all know that there is still so much hate and a distinct lack of understanding in the world.

While many are arguing that there should not be a single day where we make a stand against homophobia, transphobia and biphobia – because that should happen every day. The fact of the matter is, there is still a long way to go.





Hannington Ssebulime

Transgender man, Kampala, Uganda
Welfare Officer, SMUG

A better future

COVID-19 provided an opportunity for people to stay home, rest and spend time with their partners, families and friends, and to understand them better. COVID-19 also forced people to think about their own future e.g. opening small-scale businesses. However, everyone was yearning for food, and the government was crying for rich people in the country. This led to conflicts and fighting, even with your nearest and dearest.

The COVID-19 lockdown has also shown the need to plan for the future as individuals and as activists. If we had saved, we would have had money to take us through the lockdown. LGBTIQ+ activists need to save for their future and for themselves, and not always wait for donor money.

In this pandemic, even the donors were affected. LGBTIQ+ activists need to save for a better future and not always rely on donor money – donors can decide to stop providing from one day to another, and without proper planning you will then be unable to provide for your community, members and family.

Reality

One of the challenges we face is the fear of being physically attacked by either the police, boda boda riders, community members or our own partners.

This photo of the late David Kato's portrait was taken at a vigil to remember our fallen LGBTIQ comrades who have lost their lives to violent attacks.

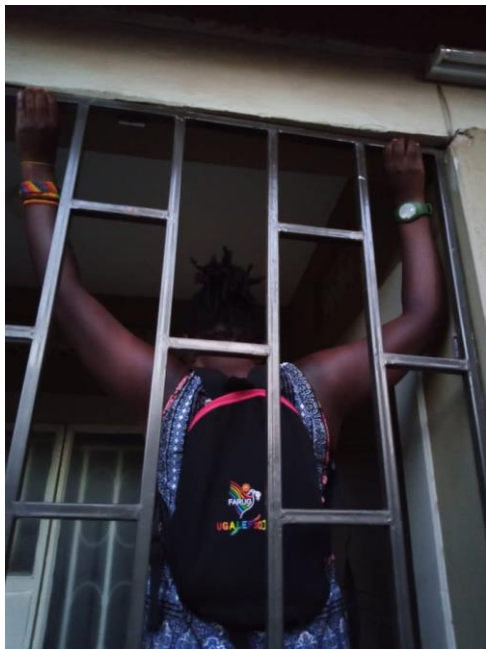
Last year, 2019 we lost at least 5 community members. Uganda police is yet to complete the investigations into these murders.



Phyllis Wanjiru

Lesbian, Kampala, Uganda
Communications & Information Officer, SMUG

3.2. Isolation



Mutyaba Gloria

Lesbian, Kampala, Uganda
Programs Director, FARUG

Dismantle the silos

We cannot achieve much if we do not work together. There is strength in holding space for each other.

Every letter in LGBTIQ+ counts, and activism around it should like human rights be indivisible. LGBTIQ+ activism is not putting one acronym above or against the other.

We all matter, all queer lives matter!

Faridah Nabada Nalinya

Heterosexual woman, Kampala, Uganda
Finance Officer, Kampala, Uganda

Isolation

I was walking on an isolated street, and it brought on all kinds of challenges and opportunities, Opportunities were the complete isolation exposed the complete and utter beauty of a clear sky, the fact that the streets were deserted, a person could take a moment to admire a beautiful day. Other opportunities can also be funding for an organization, exposure for better job opportunities, travel to meet great new people, trainings to improve skills, these are endless.

The challenges of LGBTIQ+ activism include burning out from constant travel, health issues arising from being over worked due to the small staff that is mainly from lack of funding, being attacked by homophobes, being outed in newspapers and general fear of your life and this leads to hypertension issues and finally the constant feeling of isolation that can hinder mental health.





Faridah Nabada Nalinya

Heterosexual Woman, Kampala, Uganda
Finance Officer, Kampala, Uganda

**Challenges of Working in COVID-19
Quarantine**

LGBTIQ Activism is the ability to undergo the worst tests and challenges to be able to advocate the rights of all LGBTIQI.

During Quarantine we would risk our health to go out in public to continue the activism and work with all the challenges and one of them was transportation.

All public transport was cut off and private cars were stopped too, so for a usual fare is about 100,000/= but in the quarantine period, only essential workers had stickers to move, so for a person to get a ride and run to the community members aid, there was a literal tripling of transport charges for a person to afford a ride from a person who had a sticker.



Douglas Mathew Mawadri

Kampala, Uganda
Legal/Human Rights Officer, SMUG

Ghost town

Empty streets and ghost town, businesses and employment affected as people retreated to social isolation.

The picture shows the intersection between the different housing facilities occupying activists during COVID-19 lockdown.

Safety of activists is paramount and at the center of social protection during the COVID-19 crisis. Community members are forced to their housing facilities due to the pandemic.

3.3. Legislation



Hannington Ssebulime

Transgender Man, Kampala, Uganda
Welfare Officer, SMUG

Why are they arresting us?

Many LGBTIQ+ people are arrested in Uganda, because there is no federal law that bars discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

I want to fight for laws that criminalise the discrimination on basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. The need for protective laws has only become clearer during the COVID-19 lockdown.

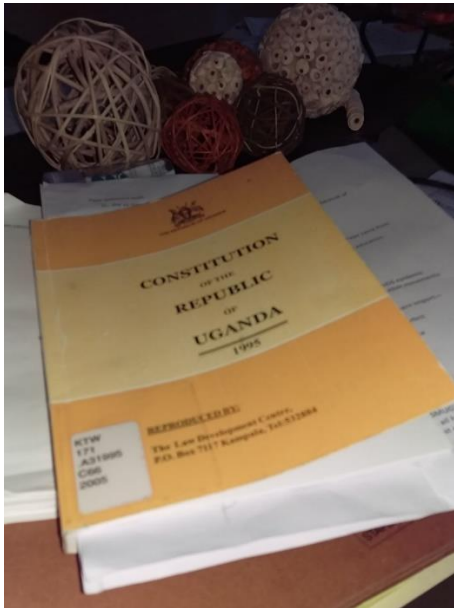
Take for example the arrest of the 23 young people at COSF. Why crackdown on that shelter, when there are so many people who live together in homes? The police just wanted to show the government that they were working hard during COVID-19. Even if you are LGBTIQ+, you are not supposed to be imprisoned without reason - also not during the lockdown!

Frank Mugisha

Gay man, Kampala, Uganda
Executive Director, SMUG

Solidarity by the LGBTIQ community strengthens activism. Here 3 community members came together in solidarity with the #COSF20 while at the same time practicing social distancing





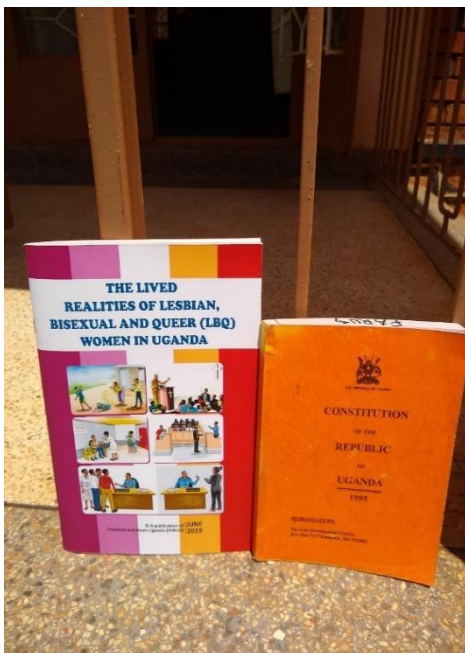
Pepe Julian Onziema

Transgender man, Kampala, Uganda
Head of Programs, SMUG

Knowledge is Power

Activism is aided and hindered by laws of the country. The Constitution of Uganda contains the Bill of Rights in Chapter Four, the same constitution has limitation for queer people by prohibiting same sex marriage which is taken blanketly to criminalize every queer person.

But we must seek knowledge as a weapon to withstand and challenge the oppression we aim to change.



Joanita Warry Ssenfuka

Lesbian, Kampala, Uganda
Executive Director, FARUG

Double-edged sword

The Constitution is both a weapon and a hindrance. The Constitution is one of the few things that we can use to defend us as LGBTIQ+ people and as LGBTIQ+ activists. It speaks of freedom to life and education.

The Constitution is however also often used to bash and misrepresent us. As LGBTIQ+ activists, we therefore need to give you the information about who we are, what we do and what we go through to counteract the misrepresentation.

When you talk about LGBTIQ+ people and activism, it is about you, and we use that to educate other people or stakeholders.

Pepe Julian Onziema

Transgender Man,
Kampala, Uganda
Head of Programs, SMUG



Invisible bars

The danger of incarceration is eminent over activists. I have been arrested and detained 6 times for my activism, some publicized some not publicized. The trauma never leaves. As I write this, I cannot hear from my right ear after I was hit during the Venom Bar Raid while hosting a Pride event. We were arrested and bundled into a police station despite having permission to hold the event. This photo means that there are “Orders from above” bigger than the law.



Douglas Mathew Mawadri

Kampala, Uganda
Legal/Human Rights Officer, SMUG

Field Realities

LGBTIQ+ activism is to be able to engage law enforcement officers and authority freely about any matter concerning arrests and detentions of any member of the marginalized community. Activism involves engagement with the police to understand the diversities of persons in the communities and to treat LGBTQ members as equal to the rest of the community members.

While this may not be a one day even, it involves continues engagement with the law enforcement agents to understand the law and offer protection to the vulnerable persons in their own communities.

3.4. Burn-Out



Frank Mugisha

Gay Man, Kampala, Uganda
Executive Director, SMUG

LGBTIQ activists often face fatigue and burn out. Richard Lusimbo our former team member is taking a much-needed break.



Phyllis Wanjiru

Lesbian, Kampala, Uganda
Communications & Information Officer, SMUG

Burnout

Often due to loads of work, many LGBTIQ activists are burnt out. It is important, it is okay for an LGBTIQ activist to take some time off and get the much-needed rest. It is okay to retreat and rejuvenate.



Richard Smith Lusimbo

Gay man, Kampala, Uganda
Programmes Manager, Pan Africa ILGA

Not even the ground can hold

Happiness at its best. Here I was in Cambodia, and nothing mattered but just me. At our hotel, I had fully checked in and I was ready to fly.

With home miles away, I was at liberty to fly and look not behind for who I am

3.5. Alcohol Abuse

Phyllis Wanjiru

Lesbian, Kampala, Uganda
*Communications &
Information Officer, SMUG*

Reality Escape

Alcohol and drug abuse are some of the things that hinders LGBTIQ activism.



Diane Sydney Bakuraira

Lesbian, Kampala, Uganda
Linking & Learning Officer, SMUG

Alcohol Abuse

In this picture we see the reflection of the quantity of alcohol vs the water and juice content.

Which narrates my story of how many activists, and I haven't utilised our full potential because of distracting behaviours like over consumption of alcohol.

3.6. *Monetisation of Activism*



Joanita Warry Ssenfuka

Lesbian, Kampala, Uganda
Executive Director, FARUG

Resources

The availability of resources boosts the work that we do, and the lack of resources limits the work that we do. Resources are however often limited by the lack of accountability.

The availability of resources has however also changed the LGBTIQ+ movement. Originally, we did not have a lot of money. Originally, activism was voluntary, and it was not about the money.

We just did whatever we did because we had passion and love for what we are doing. Activism was not motivated by how much you made but by your vision for the movement. Money however turned that around.



Hannington Ssebulime

Transgender Man, Kampala, Uganda
Welfare Officer, SMUG

One Love

When funding is available in the LGBTIQ+ community, it helps us to conduct our trainings, research, documentation, safety and protection measures.

Before funding became a reality, LGBTIQ+ activists used to share the scarce resources amongst themselves. However, ever since activism became a funded activity, activists have started fighting and badmouthing each other in the battle for funding. Money has sadly brought so many conflicts instead of collaboration amongst LGBTIQ+ people.

Before funding came in, people were working with one love. Before funding, people were very organised, aggressive, collaborative. Now, activists are more concerned with boozing and showing off with money.

4. Strengths & Opportunities for LGBTIQ+ Activisms

4.1. Acceptance



Arthur Mubiru

Transgender man, Kampala, Uganda
Administration Officer, FARUG

A walk of Freedom

The photo shows me at a bird cage at Malakai Echo Lodge. Even the presence of strangers in their area did not scare them away. They instead offered a warm welcome to whoever wanted to see them. In life, sexual and gender minorities must be embraced and understood without prejudice and discrimination such that they can walk.

Douglas Mathew Mawadri

Kampala, Uganda
Legal/Human Rights Officer, SMUG

Liberty during COVID-19 lockdown

LGBTIQ+ activism is to be able to go to the market without being heckled at and or attacked. The marketplace is a social place for people to interact freely. The picture depicts an interaction in the market without any interference. Activism, to me, is that freedom to go to places, unbarred by any kind of measures and to exercise any freedom granted under the law.



Richard Smith Lusimbo

Gay man, Kampala, Uganda
Programmes Manager, Pan Africa ILGA

The world as I see it

By the holy temples in Cambodia, life was at its fullest. In April 2019, I took time off to fly to Cambodia to sit for my exams for my international training program in sexual and reproductive health rights at Lund University in Sweden. Just taking time off to relax and be in the presence of these historic and holy temples gave me an opportunity to reflect on what matters in my life and how to achieve it.





Diane Sydney Bakuraira

Lesbian, Kampala, Uganda

*Linking & Learning Officer,
SMUG*

Advocacy through Sports

Picture shows swim meet of different teams around the world. Our movement background and membership were based on sports as a unifier, but also as using it as an alternative advocacy tool.

Joanita Warry Ssenfuka

Lesbian, Kampala, Uganda

*Executive Director,
FARUG*

Beyond Sports

Sports is an opportunity to do advocacy. Sports brings different people together. You may be appreciated more, if you are part of a team, and you can easily be accepted for who you are irrespective of your sexual orientation or gender identity.



It is easier for people to accept for who you are, especially if you help the team win. People seize to see your sexuality, and you just become a part of a team. If you are however a non-performer, do not expect people to defend you. If you are a performer, and your sexual orientation is different, they are forced to accept you.

As an LGBTIQ+ person, you must be at the peak at everything. Even in your family, if you want to be independent, you need to be able to pay your bills. If you are dependent on your family members, you are the one that there is something wrong with. If you can provide, you are seen in a different perspective. As an LGBT person, you need to buy acceptance.



Diane Sydney Bakuraira

Lesbian, Kampala, Uganda

Linking and Learning Officer, SMUG

Self-care and Reflection for Activists

Me face masked myself with scrub during the tight Lock down directive I was running nutts and wasn't in the work or school mood and I remembered to take a break and breath.

During the break I was reflecting but also wanted some physical activity to remind me that I must take care of myself no matter the situation.

With the kind of work that we do it is key to self-love and care for ourselves before we serve others. We cannot give what we do not have.

Richard Smith Lusimbo

Gay man, Kampala, Uganda

Programmes Manager, Pan Africa ILGA

Life beyond what we see

Time for self-reflection. In isolation, it been a moment for me to think out clearly on who I am and what it means for me to wake up and do the work that I do.





Anna Xwexx Morena

Heterosexual Transgender Woman,
Wakiso, Uganda

Understanding the Difference

We are all assigned a gender at birth. Sometimes that assignment does not match our inner truth, and there needs to be a new place - a place for self-identification.

I was not born a boy! I was assigned boy at birth.

Understanding the difference between the two is crucial to our culture and society moving forward in the way we treat - and talk about - transgender individuals.

4.2. Community



Anonymous

Perseverance

Reaching my LGBTIQ people with services at their doorsteps.

Joanita Warry Ssenfuka

Lesbian, Kampala, Uganda
Executive Director, FARUG

Survival

Everyone needs their food, and COVID-19 has made that evident. People are not asking for rent; they are asking for food. They need to eat to survive.



Arthur Mubiru

Transgender Man, Kampala, Uganda
Administration Officer, FARUG

Reaching the marginalised

In this photo, I was in Arua District, and we had organised an outreach to offer HIV related services to LBQ women in that area after them encountering challenges at health care centres in the area.

Irrespective of one's sexuality and gender, everyone is entitled to quality health care services as a citizen of the nation.

Diane Sydney Bakuraira

Lesbian, Kampala, Uganda
Linking & Learning Officer, SMUG

A Community Worship Service

During a community worship service as an aspiring reverend, I am serving the community with Holy communion. This goes to show that much as the homophobia is instigated by religious folk as queer people, we should not lose touch with our spirituality.



Phyllis Wanjiru

Lesbian, Kampala, Uganda
Communications & Information Officer, SMUG

Together

ness
Solidarity from and by the community strengthens LGBTIQ activists and activism in Uganda. Here, some members of the community and some of our allies went to Kyengera court early in the morning to support the #COSF20 who were arrested from their shelter home and incarcerated for 50 days.

In this photo, we were asked to move into a tent to shelter ourselves from the rain as we waited for the Director of Public Prosecution to show up in court.



Richard Smith Lusimbo

Gay Man, Kampala, Uganda
Programmes Manager, Pan Africa ILGA

Freedom

Dance
We are the rainbow; we shall shake it. We come in diversity, and I am glad we can even find this on a dance floor.

4.3. Love, Unity, & Hope



Pepe Julian Onziema

Transgender man, Kampala, Uganda
Head of Programs, SMUG

Love

Queer love is criminalized in Uganda, therefore pushing people; out and unapologetic like myself to love in the closet for the safety of our lovers and of our love. Not being able to love openly and proudly hinders the full potential of an activist as you can't fully live for the one thing you're so desperately fighting for LOVE.

Moments like these of intimacy and private vulnerability scare me but at the same time motivate me to be the admired, brave and inspirational activist in public.

Leilah Kiberu

Lesbian, Kampala, Uganda
IDAHOBIT

Love without Gender

Through misogyny rose feminism, because everyone is entitled to rights. I grew to understand that the only religion there should be is love. Love does not come with perfection, but realising the imperfections make it perfect. We all love in different ways that is why love does not call for gender differences. Love has no gender.



Sylvester Kazibwe

Heterosexual transgender man, Kampala, Uganda, *IDAHOBIT*

#HateNot

Holding on to the rainbow for it gives me hope each day. The key to freedom and happiness is embracing who you are and holding on to it. Do not hate people for doing this.



Mutyaba Glorah

Lesbian, Kampala, Uganda
Programs Director, FARUG

Where do we intersect?

Working in silos or in isolation only hinders the progress that we have achieved thus far.

Let us work together, because the worst that can happen is a double result, double the impact, double the human resource, double financial resources!

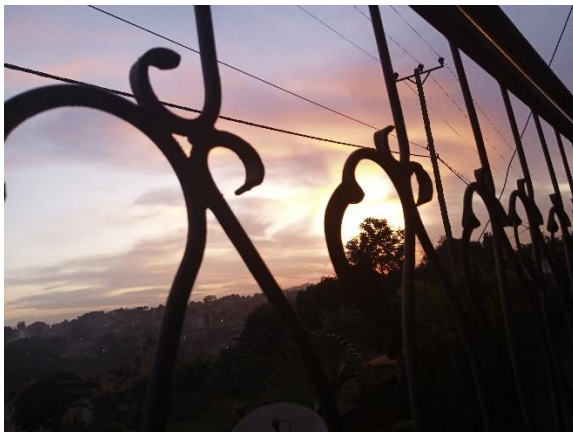
Hannington Ssebulime

Transgender man, Kampala, Uganda
Welfare Officer, SMUG

Unity

The existence LGBTIQ+ activism depends on love and unity amongst LGBTIQ+ activists.

The photo represents that to me – both because the people in the photo represent all the colours of the rainbow and because people came together to say farewell to a colleague, despite the restrictions of COVID-19.



Pepe Julian Onziema

Transgender man, Kampala, Uganda
Head of Programs, SMUG

Strength, Hope, Love

COVID-19 sunsets have brought me serenity and hope for better things to come.



Faridah Nabada Nalinva

Heterosexual woman, Kampala, Uganda
Finance Officer, Kampala, Uganda

Togetherness

Even different flowers/plants can live or grow on one patch of land and still come out looking beautiful. The co-existence of all races and all different sexual orientations of people should not expose the differences, but rather the togetherness and unity of all of us existing in Uganda peacefully.

Strength can come from, family, friends, a simple “GOOD JOB” from a colleague has seen many activists’ spirits lifted, simply looking at pretty flowers and smiling and finally financial support attained from funders when great work is seen from the activists.

Hindrances I would believe the direct opposite of the strength in addition to lack of enough medical insurance support from funders, this is something that is rarely considered, and most activists end up burning out with health issues.

Frank Mugisha

Gay Man, Kampala, Uganda
Executive Director, SMUG

As an individual I’ve learned to appreciate nature even more during the COVID-19 lock down. I took this photo while heading to Nsangi court.



Arthur Mubiru

Transgender Man, Kampala, Uganda
Administration Officer, FARUG

Hope keeps us moving

This photo was taken at the rooftop of Grand Global hotel and it clearly shows that I was hopeful of a better time to come, despite the hardships and challenges we encounter as LGBTIQ+ activists in our journey of fighting for equal rights and recognition.

Many times, the laws affect our work and hinders our progress but with hope and endurance we will achieve, the struggles are a powerful weapon of realising the worth of inclusive participation.



Krest Lear (Steven)

Gay man, Kampala, Uganda
IDAHOBIT

A better tomorrow

As we grow, our bodies change and so I want to cheat not myself when I still have the energy to do better! I have therefore dedicated most of my youthful age to advocate for the community I love and belong to (LGBTQ).

I have lived and witnessed the agony LGBTQ people go through in growing up and it takes one's zeal in a very homophobic country like Uganda to take the front line wearing a rainbow flag which defines us all as LGBTIQ persons.

To my LGBTIQ family, when we stand together especially in our toughest times, we are assured of a better tomorrow.

5. Explanatory Note

At the end of the exhibition, you might have some lingering questions about what you have seen and read. Here, I will therefore address what I imagine might be questions a non-Ugandan and/or non-LGBTIQ+ activist and/or ally (in Africa) might have after the *Wetegeleze* exhibition. It is not my aim to analyse the photos or captions for you or on behalf of the creators of them, but rather to contextualise the photos and captions further for non-Ugandans and/or non-LGBTIQ+ activists and allies in/outside of Uganda.

5.1. COVID-19

Throughout the exhibition, you will probably have noticed that many of the captions refer to COVID-19. While it is probably safe to assume that the entire world is familiar with COVID-19, the specific impact of COVID-19 on a country like Uganda and a community like the LGBTIQ+ one might have escaped you. Uganda was among the first countries in sub-Saharan Africa to enact COVID-19 specific laws as early as 17th March 2020.

The President addressed the nation on several occasions throughout the COVID-19 outbreak and announced 35 public health measures (Non-pharmaceutical Interventions) to control the spread of COVID-19 (Achan et al., 2023). 21 Rules and Orders resulted from these public health measures including the controlled movement of vehicles, vessels, and aircraft; closure of international borders (except for cargo); closure of education facilities; closure of places of prayers; curfew, and mandatory wearing of facial masks (Achan et al., 2023). Instead of deferring to the Ministry of Health's Public Health Emergency Operation Centre (PHEOC), President Museveni militarised the response by establishing a COVID-19 National Task Force and imposing a command-and-control system with operations running through the Office of the Prime Minister (Parker et al., 2020).

In June 2020, President Museveni imposed a 42 day lockdown and severe restrictions on the movement of people was swiftly announced and the Ugandan Peoples' Defence Force (UPDF) tasked to enforce it with additional support from paramilitary Local Defense Unit's (LDUs) (Parker et al., 2020; Seruwagi, 2021). Both the UPDF and LDU's had a highly visible presence on streets and highways as they were tasked with preventing movement across international borders (unless it involved cargo); checking that people had elicited the relevant permission letters to travel; ensuring the closure of markets, churches, mosques and other public places; providing deployments to ensure quarantine at designated centres was carried out appropriately; checking that burials, weddings and homestead gatherings were carried out

in accordance with official Standard Operations Procedures, and strictly enforcing curfews (Parker et al., 2022; Parker et al., 2020).

5.2. COSF-20

With this militarised response, COVID-19 was, as I have written about elsewhere (Dittfeld, 2020a, 2020b), used as a smokescreen to further crack down on marginalised communities including the LGBTIQ+ community in Uganda. For the LGBTIQ+ community, the most vivid example of this was arguably what many of the captions above refer to as the COSF20 or COSF-20 torture case. This case sprung out of the arrest of 23 people during a raid led by a local mayor on the Children of the Sun Foundation (COSF), a shelter for homeless LGBT people, in response to neighbours' complaints about the residents' gender expression on 29th March 2020 (Persaud, 2020). During the raid, police searched the shelter for evidence of homosexual activity, and confiscated HIV medication, self-testing kits, and condoms as proof hereof. Using the presidential directives to combat COVID-19, shelter's residents were subsequently charged with 'a negligent act likely to spread infection of disease' as well as 'disobedience of lawful orders' (Persaud, 2020). Of the 23 people arrested, five were non-shelter residents visiting from another shelter, one was a guest to one of the residents and one a resident nurse (SMUG, 2020).

Following the arrest, 20 of the 23 people were detained for 49 days during which they were denied access to lawyers, suffered torture, ill-treatment, and possible exposure to COVID-19 according to the Kampala-based legal aid group Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF) and the African Human Rights Coalition (Nathan, 2020; Nyoni, 2021). Because of its REAct programme that documents security incidents against the LGBTIQ+ community and seeks to help the victims, most commonly police harassment, threats and arrests, SMUG was the first organization to be contacted about the COSF-20 case, and was together with HRAPF and other paralegals paramount in securing the release and subsequent award of damages to the COSF-20 (Mugisha, 2020).

5.3. Social Media Activism

In the photo entitled 'Secret Eye', Phyllis Wanjiru pinpoints to the censoring of LGBTIQ+ activism in social media in Uganda. With this, Phyllis speaks to the growing trend of citizens, particularly in repressive and/or unresponsive regimes, using a mix of online and offline invented spaces for anonymous citizen participation (Matsiko & Kersting, 2023). In Uganda, the use of online spaces and instruments of participation such as Facebook,

Instagram, Twitter (now X), and SMS has gained prominence recently, and been used to engage in public debates, challenge and monitor political representatives, and seek information of the provision of services (Matsiko & Kersting, 2023) and to challenge authoritarian elections (Garbe, 2024).

As being LGBTIQ+ in Uganda often requires concealment in the public sphere, online spaces and instruments have likewise become important for LGBTIQ+ people and activist to express resistance and contest the dominant anti-gay discourse (Valois, 2015), and especially Facebook can be said to be used to create a '*queer counterpublic*' (Amoedo, 2021). However, using the internet to express resistance and discontent does not come without significant risks for LGBTIQ+, and other social justice and human rights, activists as Uganda has expansive and repressive online and digital communication laws.

For example, the Computer Misuse Act 2011, which provides state authorities with the power to punish any person digital stalking or the use of vulgar language against a person or group, has been used to prosecute and harass civil society organizations and individuals critical of the state (Matsiko & Kersting, 2023). Another prominent example is the Anti-Terrorism Act of 2002, which allows state security agencies to keep any person suspected of acts of terrorism in Uganda under communication monitoring and surveillance (Matsiko & Kersting, 2023). Particularly journalists have become a target for suspicion and interception including using communication tools such as letters and packages, telephone calls, faxes, e-mails, bank accounts and public meetings, often without any consideration for data protection laws and a person's right to privacy (Matsiko & Kersting, 2023).

5.4. *Aluta Continua*

In the 'Get Out' photo and caption, you might have noticed that Griffin ends his caption with #AlutaContinua. Although already mentioned in the 'What is LGBTIQ+ Activism' part of the exhibition, and only once in all the captions, it is worth pausing at the expression as it beautifully encapsulates the entire exhibition, from despair to hope. Even though 'A luta continua' (Portuguese for 'the struggle continues') is a slogan first used by the FRELIMO movement during Mozambique's war for independence from Portuguese colonial rule, it has been adopted by various activist movements globally. In Uganda, LGBT rights activists wore T-shirts with the phrase at the funeral of David Kato in 2011 and is still frequently used in activist discourses within Uganda.

Becoming an LGBTIQ+ Activist

1. Introduction

Whereas the previous chapter displayed the collective understanding of LGBTIQ+ activism, and the challenges and opportunities for LGBTIQ+ activism through the photovoice exhibition ‘Wetegeleze,’ this chapter turns to the individual stories of becoming an activist as obtained through 16 photo-elicitation interviews with nine people from SMUG and seven people from FARUG. While the photo-elicitation interviews focused on three aspects – becoming, being, and beyond an LGBTIQ+ activist – this chapter homes in on the activists’ stories of *becoming* LGBTIQ+ activists and turns to the other two aspects in the next chapter. This division is arguably an important step in the positive project of decolonization of rewriting and rerighting the activists’ epistemic agency and authority as the activists’ stories of becoming offer a strong counternarrative to the Eurocentric notion that LGBTIQ+ activism and activists did not exist prior to the AHB 2009 (Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018) as outlined in Chapter 3. This chapter is organised into two sections in accordance with what the activists referred to as the ‘old’ and ‘new’ school activists. The ‘old school’ is generally used to describe the activists who founded or rather formalised the LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda between the late 1990s and the early 2000s whereas the ‘new school’ is used to describe those who came after the formation of the first LGBTIQ+ organizations such as SMUG and FARUG. Four of the interviewed activists as not named below as they wished to be anonymous in the writeup of the thesis.

	FARUG	SMUG
Old School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biggie, Lesbian, Executive Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frank, Gay man, Executive Director • Pepe, Transgender man, Head of Programs • Diane (Didi), Lesbian, Linking & Learning Officer • Geoffrey, Gay Man, Research Officer
New School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gloriah, Lesbian, Programmes Director • Arthur, Transgender Man, Health & Admin Officer • Tatiana, Lesbian, Communication Officer • Leah, Lesbian, Peer/Member • Franc, Transgender Man, Welfare Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phyllis, Lesbian, Communication Officer • Hannington, Transgender Man, Welfare Officer

FIGURE 6: OVERVIEW OF 'OLD' AND 'NEW' SCHOOL ACTIVISTS

2. The Old School Activists

2.1. *Mama Mia: The Social Foundation*

Though all having been involved in LGBTIQ+ activism for over two decades, having the narrative control allowed for the four old school activists to take their respective photo-elicitation interview in distinctly different directions. Nevertheless, they all, in line with Lusimbo and Bryan (2018), at some point mentioned bars and other social settings as the birthing place of the current LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda, and echoed Biggie's assertion that *'the foundation [of the LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda] was social.'*

As the only person who had a photo of one of the early meeting places for LGBTIQ+ people, Frank started his interview by showing a photo of a restaurant called 'Mama Mia,' and spoke about a bar called 'Dizzy Drops,' stating that both represented 'some of the significant places that politically spoke to me as a young person in Uganda.' While Frank continued to say that he was already open to his friends and, to some extent, his family, Mama Mia was still the first place that he experienced a sense of belonging:

Back then, for me, when I started meeting up people, it was like home. It was like heaven because I felt this is where I belong.

This sentiment was echoed by Didi, Biggie, and even Geoffrey whom each emphasised that in the early 2000s, Mama Mia was one of the few places that LGBTIQ+ people could meet without fear of being harassed or attacked and was a place of significance in their realisation that they were not alone in Uganda.

In the glory days of Mama Mia, there was no visible LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda, and nowhere to safely 'advertise' for LGBTIQ+ spaces. As such, most of the old school activists only came to know about these LGBTIQ+ hotspots through either friends, schoolmates, or partners. For others, like Geoffrey, the road to Mama Mia was more incidental. Recalling his first meeting with an openly gay man, Geoffrey shared:

So, it so happened that the first person that I met who said it openly, "I am gay," was when I was still a teaching assistant at Makerere. And it was in an internet cafe, a public internet cafe, and a dude was watching gay porn.

And then I was like, "Oh." Then he looks at me, and he says, "You have a problem with it?" I'm like, "No, no, no, no, no. I actually also like it." Then he says, "Oh. So, are you gay?" and I'm like, well, nobody had ever asked me such a question and I'm like, "Are you?" and he goes, "Of course yes, I'm gay," and I'm like, "Oh, I'm also gay." Like, "Okay." It was like, "You're the first person who I've met who would openly say that he's gay." And then he

said, "Oh, there's so many in this city." I'm like, "Really?! Where?" "Let's make an appointment. I'll take you to where they gather" [...] and he took me to Speke Hotel and there's a restaurant there called Mamma Mia. And the owner is a gay Italian guy [...]. And there we were. I was in the middle of like a bevy of gay men, and I was like, "What?!"

In the early days of the Ugandan LGBTIQ+ movement, internet cafes like the one Geoffrey described were essential for LGBTIQ+ people to find and meet each other, and for LGBTIQ+ activists to do their work. Speaking to this, Frank shared a photo of 'Pioneer Mall', explaining that he brought this photo because:

[I]t's sort of a symbolic way of how the internet really provided a lot of support for our movement in terms of like Pioneer Mall was a place where you could go on the internet and do most of your work secretly. The fact that we had internet, we could access internet in town. I believe, people who were trying to do activism before me, it was so difficult without access to the internet. Pioneer Mall had an internet cafe that was one place where that would provide a safe haven for LGBT persons to do their work.

But also, the other issue was on matchmaking because however much we were doing this work, your personal life has to keep going on. In terms of meeting people for relationships, friendship, this internet cafe still provided that avenue where you can go as long as you pay for your time, of course, you ask for the person or attendant, the one in the corner. They may keep the corner, they will turn it for you like this.

Whether it was in Mama Mia or Pioneer Mall, the old school activists generally described a sense of disbelief at encountering other LGBTIQ+ people. With the lack of visible LGBTIQ+ people at the time, this disbelief was, to many of them, anchored in the notion of being the only LGBTIQ+ person in Uganda. Prior to meeting other LGBTIQ+ people, the activists explained that this notion had often fuelled self-doubt about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity, internalised homophobia and, in some instances, even denialism about being LGBTIQ+ with associated homophobic rhetoric and behaviours. Geoffrey illuminated these early battles of self, when he explained that:

So, I have always known I was different, but then I thought I was the only one who was different, right? And also, I went through – which some people also do go through that phase – I went through the phase of being in denial, right? And then I went through the phase of trying to do something to change it.

[E]ven when I would be approached by guys, this is despite me thinking I'm still the only one who feels this way, even if would be approached by guys, I would actually insult them and tell them what is wrong with them, why are they approaching me and telling me sexual stuff, and my catchphrase was, "I am not a woman." That was my catchphrase.

2.2. Behind the Mask: Out of the Shadows

Despite the thrill of meeting other LGBTIQ+ people, none of the old school activists set out with the ambition of becoming LGBTIQ+ activists in Uganda but rather of experiencing kinship. Describing himself as a very shy person, Frank stated that he did not go to Mama Mia or any of the other known LGBTIQ+-friendly places with the intent of getting politically involved, but rather to find a place to meet, relax, and talk to other LGBTIQ+ people. As such, his first experience of Mama Mia was a mixture of glee and envy.

I think it's a very first time I saw some activists who were not really so much organized, but they were hanging out there. I was fascinated. Part of me was envy. I'm like, "They can be open. My God. That's so hard." But then I would never imagine that I would be so open.

Elaborating on this reluctance to be open, Frank later shared:

When I started getting involved in activism, I wasn't really so open because of how Uganda is and everything. I mean, I was open to my friends and everyone but not to the general public and I wanted to keep it that way. In fact, my vision was I'll keep in the shadows but do a lot of good work but then in the shadows.

While Frank tried to remain in the shadows by writing blogs, op-eds and articles under a pseudonym, he inadvertently started to emerge from the shadows when he decided to try to help people with their coming out experiences, drawing on his own relatively unproblematic one. Frank, however, quickly realised that for most LGBTIQ+ people coming out and being out was imbued with fear of rejection and of violence. Recalling one particularly significant encounter:

I met this guy, and he had saved my number in his phone as a girl. I asked him. He's like, "If you call me and send me romantic messages and people look, it's a girl." I was like, "But you should... Don't you have any person in your family who you can be open with? At least tell them who you are because don't you feel it's a big burden just be on your own?" This one was like, "I can't tell anyone. They will murder me. They'll kill me. I'll be killed."

I felt like there were many people like that and I decided to encourage some of my friends and tell them if we can't assert ourselves within families and within friends, then let us start hanging out together." [...] Actually, we started by hanging out, not even an idea of an association.

While organising to 'hang out together' might sound quite activist already, Frank did not think of himself as such, explaining that:

It was very hard to notice that I'm even doing anything political because I was just doing in my free time because I was at university then and the majority of my friends were university students.

Alongside organising social gatherings, Frank shared that in his pursuit of knowledge about and connection with other LGBTIQ+ people, he was 'talking to people in Uganda, outside Uganda, everywhere, like LGBT persons.' One of these people happened to be a person in the UK who ran an organization concerned with men's health, and this interaction led to a new frontier in Frank's nascent activism:

I was talking to someone, and he was running an organization in the UK that was mainly dealing with men's health. I could swear I'd never seen a lubricant. He was telling me about lubricants. I was like, "Can you send me some?" He's like, "I can send you some but how will I... Won't you get arrested or something?" I give him a postal address for a family friend who was very supportive of my sexuality. I was like, "I want to receive a package, but it'll come to your place." He went and wrote something and put birthday card and everything and mailed it to me. So, it arrived at the post office. I opened. It had a lot of lubricants and condoms and a lot of information on sexual health.

I had all this information. I'm like I have to keep sharing it. I started now going on blogs. Majority of these blogs were for matchmaking. I would go on the blogs and put on health information. I also started sharing some of that information... In fact, it was pamphlets and then I made copies. I Xeroxed them and then I started sharing them with people I would be meeting, I share with them. Now, I became sort of a name that people knew within the LGBT community and stuff. But not within the LGBT community, rather within the gay movement, gay men mostly.

In 2004, while still at college, Frank eventually decided to move from merely 'hanging out' to starting a group named 'Icebreakers' to help guide but also connect those LGBTIQ+ people who were out or in the process of coming out, and to be able to distribute his health information more efficiently.

In parallel to Frank's increasingly activist endeavours, the formalisation of the LGBTIQ+ movement moved forward with both FARUG and SMUG being formed in 2003 and 2004 respectively. The formation of these organizations however did not happen without some contention within the LGBTIQ+ community. Within the lesbian circles, Didi shared that many, herself included, were opposed to transforming their social gatherings into associations because of their fear or actual experiences of being expelled from school, fired from their jobs, evicted from their homes, and ostracised by their family and wider community after being involuntarily outed in one way or another. By contrast, many of those who were proponents of forming

associations with political agendas often had certain privileges in terms of family acceptance and economic resources. Reflecting on this early contention, Didi shared:

Didi: *But some of us were a bit afraid of engaging. Me and Rachel wanted it to stay social. Can you just meet, have a beer, go home? Not start speaking to politicians, go to embassies. We did not want that. It was a bit of a fight. That's how Kasha¹⁸, we ended up after we formed FARUG, Kasha was now very privileged. She, her mom was supportive, the family was supportive. Some of us, when we got expelled, or were suspended, or thrown out of home, we first lived at her place a bit, until we got on our feet. She was so hard on being very political [...], but I was not ready.*

Tanja: *Was the fear more rooted in family and family reaction?*

Didi: *Family reaction mainly. Family reaction was the main thing. Some of us had been expelled from school. If we've been expelled, and family has been notified why I'm being expelled, and then now I'm getting involved in the issue that has made me get expelled. I'm still in school, so I was protecting that. I'm sure most of my other peers were having the same issue. We told Kasha, you know if you're getting political, you leave the organization. We expelled her.*

It is worth noting that the early discussions of whether to formalise and become more political happened against the backdrop of an increasingly hostile socio-political environment. For example, in September 1999, shortly after publicly stating that there are no homosexuals in Uganda, President Yoweri Museveni ordered his police to round up gays after (inaccurate) published reports of a wedding ceremony between two men in Uganda after which police reportedly arrested and tortured several people (Long, 2007; McGreal, 1999).

Unfortunately, coming out of the shadows also swiftly proved to have consequences for many of the more well-known activists. In 2006, not long after starting Icebreakers, Frank found his name on a list of 45 alleged gay and bisexual men published by the Ugandan tabloid paper 'Red Pepper' with the justification that it wished 'to show the nation how fast the terrible vice known as sodomy is eating up our society' (Greenslade, 2006; HRW, 2007b). Thinking back, Frank recounted his initial reaction:

I was like, "Oh, my God. We have to buy all the newspapers and keep them [Laughs] before our relatives and friends see them." [Laughs] During that political... When I was doing all that, I think eventually, I made myself sort of

¹⁸ Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera has lived openly as a lesbian all her life. In 2002, when studying to become an accountant, she was nearly expelled from university for her sexual identity, which allegedly motivated her to become a human rights activist. After taking courses in human rights law and interning with a South African LGBT+ organization, Kasha founded FARUG in 2003. Nabagesera is one of the few activists in Uganda who has engaged in judicial processes to advance the rights of the LGBTIQ+ community.

political because I had a feeling I'm being alienated by some people. Then I started feeling that I'm leaning more closer to perform more open in their sexuality. I found myself a meaningless to my heterosexual friends and my family and I'm leaning more this side to the people who are more open and who are more open to receiving being LGBT.

The same year as Frank was first outed would also become the year that he first met Victor Mukasa and David Kato, two of the founding members of SMUG. The instigator of this encounter came from Esther Loeffen from the Dutch ambassador who, to Frank's surprise, called him out of the blue one day, because she had heard about 'Icebreakers', and wanted Icebreakers and SMUG to join forces to stand stronger in the Ugandan context. According to Frank, Esther moreover urged Frank to show his support for Victor in the *Victor Juliet Mukasa and Yvonne Oyo case* described in Chapter 3. While agreeing, Frank set the condition that Esther would provide him with the phone number of Professor Sylvia Tamale whom he had seen on TV whom he admired. Shortly after, Frank and Sylvia Tamale met. Not only did Sylvia encourage Frank to make Icebreakers into an organization, but Frank also recalled that:

She started telling me all in depth about sexuality and everything, even things I didn't know myself. I'm like, wow. I went back very happy.

To the old school activists, Professor Sylvia Tamale has been pivotal to the formation and support of the LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda, and she was concurrently one of the allies identified by both FARUG and SMUG and thus interviewed as outlined in Chapter 8.

Shortly after meeting Tamale, Frank attended the court case where he first met Victor Mukasa and David Kato in person, which led to Icebreakers joining SMUG. To Frank, joining SMUG signified his transition into becoming truly active in his activist endeavours because he got inspired by the organization and ambitions of those already at SMUG. In August 2007, soon after Frank joined SMUG, the organization took its first deliberate move towards visibility with the 'Let Us Live in Peace' campaign, partly as a reaction to the murder of a lesbian student in a Kampala suburb, and the *Victor Juliet Mukasa and Yvonne Oyo case* (Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018). The campaign came as a surprise to proponents and opponents of the LGBTIQ+ community alike. Recalling this very first deliberate act of visibility by the LGBTIQ+ community, Frank recalled:

It was the very first day the Ugandan LGBT community was being open to the public about, you know. I did all the technical work, everything, organizing the campaign, everything but I wasn't in press. But I even called the media myself on the phone to come. I had a phone number from the same lady from the embassy.

They didn't believe there was a press... We did a press conference on eve of the campaign, which was all naive ideas that we were coming up with. But I remember, and this how the movement was so solid, we actually spent maybe three, two nights in the building at SMUG working on the campaign. I even bought my computer and printer at the office, and we were printing things. We had mattresses everywhere. People were sleeping anywhere. We had food. Some people were cooking and then we were designing. The issue was this campaign, people were wearing masks.

It could perhaps be tempting to think that the idea behind the masks was to keep people anonymous. However, while this was one of the reasons for the masks, the main reason was to send an entirely different message according to Frank:

The idea behind the mask was that anyone can be behind the mask. That's what we told the media. Anyone can be behind the mask. Can be your dad, can be your mom, can be anyone.

This campaign became a turning point not only for Frank's role within SMUG, but also for the wider LGBTIQ+ community.

2.3. Homo Terror: The Cost of Visibility

Shortly after the campaign launch, the activists' worst fears came true as it was met by an avalanche of political backlash and media outings. Only a week after the campaign launch, Radio One broadcasted that Deputy Attorney General, Fred Ruhindi, stipulated for the criminal law to be used against lesbians and gays in Uganda, allegedly stating; 'I call upon the relevant agencies to take appropriate action because homosexuality is an offense under the laws of Uganda' (Human Rights Watch, 2007a). A few days prior to this, the then Ethics and Integrity Minister, James Nsaba Buturo, publicly called homosexuality 'unnatural' and, while deprecating charges that police harassed LGBTIQ+ people, warned '[w]e know them, we have details of who they are' (Human Rights Watch, 2007a). In addition to these political statements, the Red Pepper (2007), again published a list of first names, workplaces and other identifying information of 39 alleged gay men under the headline 'Homo Terror' with the promise of naming and shaming top gays in the city a few weeks after the campaign launch.

While the campaign was certainly a transitional moment for the visibility of the LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda, it also presented a transitional moment for SMUG as an organization and Frank as a person. Only a few days after the campaign launch, Victor Mukasa announced that he was leaving SMUG and moving to South Africa, and Frank was asked to take over. When asked why Victor decided to leave, Frank explained that it was partly because

the involvement in SMUG was voluntary and thus unpaid, and partly because of the political heat on the few now visible activists. Despite already having been outed in the media and having attended the campaign launch unmasked, Frank was hesitant to take over, because he did not yet consider himself to be out in public. It was therefore decided that Frank and Pepe would co-chair SMUG.

I was like, I mean, I'm not out to the public and everything. So, it was suggested we can co-chair, me and Pepe. Pepe can do the face and then I can do the technical work. It was supposed to be temporary. The campaign itself, it had to be temporary because now, we started getting international community calling, local community calling and imagine Victor had left who was the face of the campaign. So, I was in the middle of it. Now, it was very, very hard.

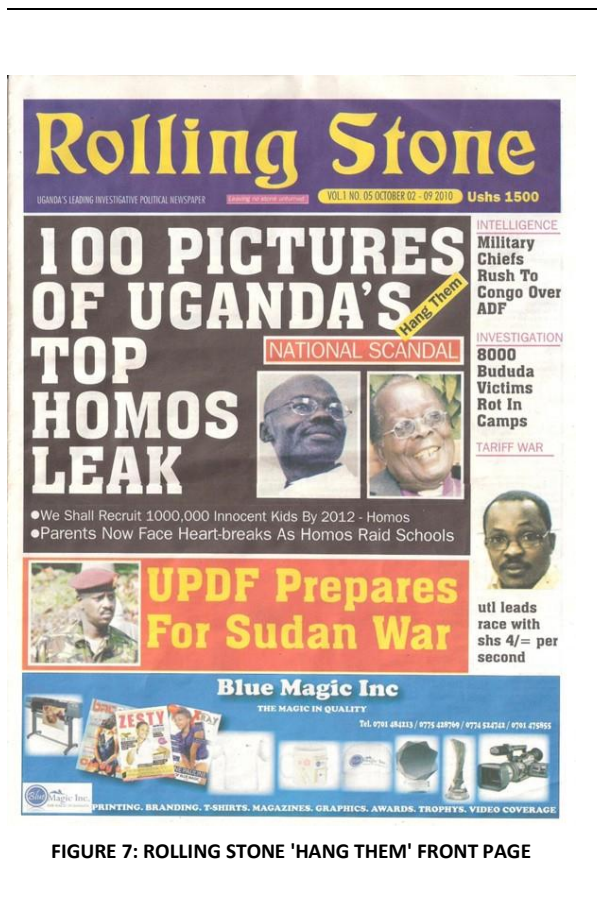


FIGURE 7: ROLLING STONE 'HANG THEM' FRONT PAGE

While SMUG’s work continued amidst the political backlash and media outings, another significant turning point arose when a little-known Ugandan tabloid, the Rolling Stone (2010), published the pictures and personal details of several alleged homosexuals in Uganda with the ‘100 Pictures of Uganda’s Top Homos Leak’ and the banner ‘Hang Them’ in early October 2010. The tabloid further claimed that Ugandan homosexuals were recruiting ‘innocent kids’ and that ‘[p]arents face heart-breaks [sic] as homos raid schools’ (ibid.). One of the pictures on the front page was of David Kato.

While SMUG sued the tabloid, and the High Court of Uganda consequently ruled that the Rolling Stone had violated the plaintiff’s constitutional rights to dignity and privacy and issued a permanent injunction, the victory was bittersweet as Kato was murdered only weeks later (Human Rights First, 2014). In contrast to the previous outings, the old school activists pinpointed that this one received widespread international coverage and condemnation not only

because of the murder of Kato but because it happened amidst the queer lawfare as described in Chapter 3. As someone who had worked side-by-side with Kato since the inception of SMUG, Frank was particularly thrown by his murder. However, while the murder made many LGBTIQ+ people to fear visibility even more, it had the opposite effect on Frank.

My visibility only started when David was murdered because then I think I became a bit reckless. I just let it go, let my gut go and I just started now appearing on every news station, everywhere, you know, everything [...].

I think by then, there was no turning back. I even stopped thinking about this whole transition, just momentary, I'll just leave. I stopped thinking about all that because when David was murdered, I was in the US. I never even one moment thought of staying but everyone convinced me you can stay here, pursue more education. Even the State Department was like if you want to claim asylum, you could do that and stay here in the US and not go back to Uganda. I was like, 'No, I just need some time then I'll go back.'

As evident from the photovoice photo 'Reality' which shows a painting of David Kato, the murder of David not only left a mark on Frank, but also the wider LGBTIQ+ community, and the new school of activists' experiences of becoming activists.

3. The New School Activists

3.1. Others like Me

More than two decades have passed since Frank and the others first went to Mama Mia, and more than a decade has passed since the murder of David Kato. Much has evidently changed since then, particularly in terms of internet access and usage and the general acceptance of LGBTIQ+ people amongst the young(er) generation of Ugandans. Reflecting on the differences these changes and their implications, Frank observed that:

[R]ight now, I think so many young people, they feel they can pretty much find friends anywhere. They can meet up. They know like people, you've been in school and people know each other, they're gay and they're okay. Even their heterosexual friends know they are gay but they're okay with them. But then, you couldn't know anyone. You think you're just the only one. Once you meet another person, you want to hold on to them and can't let them go. If you know of a social space, you want to go to that social space all the time.

Despite the advancement of social media and of the Ugandan and international LGBTIQ+ movements, the new school of activists nevertheless appear to have experienced a Eureka moment like that of the old school activists when they first became aware of and engaged with other LGBTIQ+ people in Uganda. Attesting to this is Tatiana's first photo,

which showed her attending Uganda's fourth annual Pride in 2015. Speaking to her photo, Tatiana said:

On this day is when I first attended Pride, the first time. I got to meet the larger group. I went with my friends. It was so nice. I was so shocked. I didn't believe what I was seeing. That was my first time and see how everybody is [...] Africans believe by seeing. I was like, let me go see that there are actually more people like me. There are many.

Tatiana, as a generation Z Ugandan, did not really know about the LGBTIQ+ community prior to 2015. However, here it is important to note that most of the new school activists grew up against the backdrop of continuous repression and persecution of LGBTIQ+ people, spaces, and organizations in Uganda. For most of them, Tatiana included, their late teenage years and early 20s were significantly marked by the drafting, tabling, and passing of the AHB 2009, and by the murder of David Kato.

In the post-AHA 2014 period, homosexuality was still criminalised and homophobic sentiments and violence against LGBTIQ+ people still flourished. Describing this period, both the old and new school of activists said that LGBTIQ+ people and organizations were marred by an overshadowing fear and experiences of raids and arrests by the police but also of mob justice by other (non-LGBTIQ+) Ugandans. Consequently, LGBTIQ+ events such as the Pride described by Tatiana were, and still are, seriously safeguarded. With the Pride in 2015 taking place just one year after the AHA 2014 was revoked, the organisers had thus opted to keep the locations secret and only circulated the details on private online networks only (Shearlaw, 2015). Had it not been for friends already involved in the LGBTIQ+ community, Tatiana asserted that she would not have come to know about or to attend the Pride in 2015. When asked whether she did not search for LGBTIQ+-related fora or content prior to Pride 2015, Tatiana explained that she would not even know what to search for at the time as the very notion of an organised LGBTIQ+ community was so inconceivable given the pervasive political and social homophobic discourses.

It is very likely that for the young(er) generation of LGBTIQ+ people, the poor, yet expensive Internet access in Uganda means that many only have access to the Internet at work or at school, and those who do have access to the Internet at home, often live with multiple family members. The lack of access combined with a profound fear of being found out or even just associated with the LGBTIQ+ community, means that many of the new school activists shared not even daring to search for any LGBTIQ+-related content online. Phyllis explained

her own ignorance about the LGBTIQ+ community prior to her employment with SMUG in the following way:

I wasn't even following that [the AHB 2009], because I tried to like to stay out of everything LGBT. I don't even think it was for my safety. I was just afraid that someone would find me maybe reading an article or maybe watching anything to do with LGBT, so I just tried to keep myself away from all that stuff. And then I didn't even have a personal laptop, so for me to access the internet would be at work, and you don't want to risk being found reading or anything else LGBT. So, I really didn't know much. I'd read stories on for example BBC.

Due to the writings, radio and TV interviews conducted by old school activists, some of new school activists of course knew about the existence of a LGBTIQ+ community and organizations prior to knowingly meeting other LGBTIQ+ people. However, for many new school activists, meeting other LGBTIQ+ people and accessing LGBTIQ+ spaces and organizations was not attainable as they either tended to be in Kampala, and/or usually had no publicly accessible contact details or addresses. For Arthur, who has been involved with FARUG since roughly 2008, the first time that he became aware of LGBTIQ+ people was when Victor Mukasa gave an interview on radio FM in 2007. While elated to find out that he was not alone and eager to meet other LGBTIQ+ people, Arthur described it as difficult to find organizations, and that even when he did, he lived too far away from Kampala, where most were located. When he moved to Kampala in 2008 and started playing women's rugby where he met Pepe. Seeking to shame Pepe, who had not yet transitioned at the time, Arthur recalled some of the other players telling Arthur that Pepe was a lesbian. While Arthur wanted nothing more than to speak to Pepe, he waited three months to approach him out of fear for what the other players would think, but once he did, Pepe introduced Arthur to the wider LGBTIQ+ community.

Though Frank is evidently right in observing that the younger generation of LGBTIQ+ people have more expansive opportunities for finding each other and connecting online, distrust and fear of being outed are still pervasive amongst the younger generation, and they seem to rarely search for LGBTIQ+-related content nor discuss their LGBTIQ+ identity in social or public fora. While from different generations, both Geoffrey and Tatiana illuminated how extensive the self-concealment of LGBTIQ+ people in Uganda are as Geoffrey recalled his surprise about finding that Pepe and he were from the very same (small) village, and Tatiana explained that even though she had met Gloriah at university and at several house parties prior to Pride in 2015, she had no idea that she too was queer.

3.2. Activist by Accident and by Necessity

Growing up in parallel to the increasingly visible LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda and witnessing the repercussions, not only meant that the new school activists were very careful not to disclose their LGBTIQ+ identity but also that neither of them ever imagined or aspired to be involved in activism. Instead, their stories of becoming LGBTIQ+ activists were marked by either accident or necessity as aptly described by Geoffrey:

I must say I kind of joined activism either by necessity or accidentally, I think it's like 50/50 accidentally and by necessity.

After years of denial including a failed heterosexual marriage, Geoffrey explained his pathway into LGBTIQ+ activism:

The necessity was that I needed a job, yes. The accidental part was that, well, I don't think it was the next thing I was thinking of. I was probably thinking of looking for a job in another NGO that works with children or does community development work or rural agriculture or something like that. I didn't envision myself becoming an activist [...].

First of all, I didn't know there were organizations. I didn't know there were already established activists like Frank Mugisha. Because I never used to see anybody until I met them physically. That's when I started knowing Kasha, there's Kasha or there's Frank or there's Pepe or there's the one who went to the US, what's his name? Victor and so on. I guess that's how, for me, I found myself in that space.

For many of the new school activists, the necessity indicated by Geoffrey came from either being fired or unable to find employment because of their gender identity, gender expression or sexual orientation. For Tatiana, it was years of unemployment that led her to decide to join FARUG as a member after she attended the Pride in 2015, and later to apply for a job at FARUG. For Didi, it was years of sexual harassment in workplaces, being outed in the media, and eventually being fired from two different courier companies, that led her to apply for a job at SMUG. For Arthur, it was losing his job as a nurse at a hospital due to accusations of being a lesbian prior to his transition as a transgender man that led him to first become a member and later staff at FARUG.

Prior to their engagement with FARUG and SMUG respectively, most of activists tried their best to conceal their identities by being very conscientious about what they would wear and how they would act in their respective workplaces. While being a teaching assistant at a local university in his late 20s, Geoffrey for example shared that he used to 'dress up real lousy' and 'put on big clothes', because he 'tried to be less meticulous just to hide it' as there

is a common conception of gay men as meticulous and vain in Uganda. While now usually meticulously dressed in shirts and suits, Arthur shared that when he worked as a nurse, he too would wear t-shirts and jeans as they are considered unisex clothes in Uganda, and this was the furthest he could safely push expressing as a transgender man. Despite their best efforts of concealment, many were however eventually outed by either colleagues, friends, or family members, and thus lost their jobs.

As there was what many of the activists described as a ‘witch hunt’ for LGBTIQ+ people in Uganda, some even experienced being outed in the media prior to their activist debuts. To Glorlah, both happened. Prior to her involvement with FARUG, her first experience of being outed was in 2013 when she attended a kasaki (bachelor party) for Kasha’s brother with her girlfriend. At the time, she worked for a telecom company, and as her company supplied internet and airtime services to the brother, some of her colleagues were invited. Assuming that the party was a safe space, because it was hosted by Kasha’s brother, Glorlah let her guard down, and said that she ‘got intimate, began kissing my partner.’ Unfortunately, her colleagues saw her, took photos of her and her partner and decided to out her at work, which eventually led to her telling her brother, the first one in the family, that she is a lesbian. Glorlah recalled:

They took these pictures, and they sent them to the office Outlook [...] of me and my partner kissing [...].

I'm being called in the disciplinary committee and that kind of thing. I was scared I was going to lose my job, and I needed to talk to somebody so badly and I didn't know. So, I called up my brother [...].

I had been expelled from school before for like touching and kissing girls, but my mom was not so sure. She still had that denial. Because you know when you're young, you cry and be like, "They're lying," point. I think I was looking for a support system like someone who will support me. Yeah. I was like, "So, this and this happened, and I'm scared that maybe it may cause me trouble. If it happens, I want you to know that I'm not a bad person," and that kind of thing.

Sharing her first experience of being outed, Glorlah touched upon an aspect of most of the new school activists lived experiences, having been outed at school but successfully dissuading their families from believing the rumours. However, for Glorlah, her ordeal did not end there. About a month later, her and her girlfriend were outed in Red Pepper.

The headline was... What was it? Let me remember. Mulago medical doctor over what, like some very derogative and there was a picture of me and her. I remember just before the story, I think like the night before, someone calls

me from inside the news house because I have friends that I went to school with that are there. They're like, "So, this story that I see your picture on, if you give me money, I can kill it." I'm like, "I don't have money." She asked for 500,000. 500,000 in 2013 was a lot of money.

[...] But by then, Oh God, it had value. I was like, "I don't have the money." She was like, "Okay. Well, just know you're going to be the newspapers tomorrow."

When it came out, I had issues home. My mom got married again. I was living with my mom and my stepdad. Oh, God, my stepdad lost his shit. It got bloody. It got physical. They wanted to like... We have this thing in Africa which is weird where like a child is community property. So, when you misbehave, the community has to discipline you.

For him, his idea of disciplining me for embarrassing the family was to call all my brothers and uncles and aunties at home, have me lie down and they beat the gay out of me. I was like, "There's no fucking way I'm going to let you do that to me." He's like, "If you don't want us to flog you..." Because they're going to flog me like 50 or 100 canes. Like oh, God, for what? I was like, "There's no way you're going to." Already, because he's not my biological father, he never felt like I respect him enough as a person. I did respect him but he was violent, so I just hated him because he was a violent person.

I was like, "No." I got into like a shuffle. He was trying to get me to lie down by force and I was refusing. My brother came in and bailed me out. I have never seen my brother so angry. I didn't even know he had anger. ... I'm like, "No. You're not going to beat me." My brother comes and he's like, "Don't touch my sister." And then they fight, like fight, blows, man to man.

And then my stepdad is like, "So, you people are disrespecting me. You even got into a point of beating me." I didn't beat him. I was just trying to stop him from getting me to lie down by force. He's like, "I'm not going to accept... This is my house. This is not a house for gay people. So, you can go with your gayness out of the house." And asks me to leave.

Being denied entry to her home, Gloriah called her girlfriend who happened to be friends with Biggie. Both Biggie and her girlfriend rescued Gloria, and Gloriah then lived with her girlfriend until the girlfriend went overseas. After this, Gloriah started working for FARUG. For many of the new school activists, their pathways into FARUG and/or SMUG were, like Gloriah, paved with family rejection and abuse. For Tatiana, she decided to leave home after her mother continuously brought around a pastor to pray the gay out of her.

Last year she brings a pastor. They pray for hell out of me, they prayed, and prayed, and prayed, and then the pastor took a lot of things. I kept on looking at them with no answers [...]. [T]hey kept on bringing very many pastors, very many for me, but I am just too strong. Not until I left home, was like, you know what? Uh-uh. I can't live like this, in this house.

Like Gloriah, Leah mainly faced issues with the patriarch in the family. After being outed at school, Leah's mother tried to cover it, but soon after a family friend found out and deemed Leah 'a prophet of doom' and told Leah's father. Leah's father could not accept Leah's sexuality, and to protect her mother and her siblings, Leah eventually decided to move out.

I couldn't stand seeing my mom being attacked this way. I told my dad, "If you're going to come home and you keep having this and then you move away and you leave her crying, leave her in this mess, I'm not ready to stand that."

It became me and my dad having a battle about my mom, their issues. My mom asked me to actually leave, maybe to cool the tension between me and my dad. Because she saw in case maybe we pushed on, he's going to stop providing [...] He was the sole provider generally because by that time, my mom was now not working. It was my dad that we we're looking up to be it fees, tuition for all my siblings.

I'm the one who has suggested that let me move out and let's go seek greener pastures somewhere else. That's when I came to the city to battle out myself.

When Leah left, she secretly stayed with her girlfriend who was also staying at home. However, when the girlfriend's family found out, they were both kicked out. After a tumultuous period of repeated evictions, Leah and her girlfriend were offered a place to stay at FARUG. While Gloriah, Leah, and Tatiana, to some extent, made a choice to leave their paternal homes, others like Hannington had no choice. As one of the only activists, he decided to tell his family of what he thought was his same-sex attraction, before he became aware of what being transgender means, of his own accord. However, this proactive honesty was anything but appreciated by his sisters and father. Hannington described his coming out experience:

In I told them when I was 19. They got so furious, they used to beat me, take me to the police station, they used to chase me away from home. Me, I didn't grow up from home, they used to chase me. I left home for 2 years [...].

Ehhh, I suffered. I was even imprisoned. My very sisters are the ones who took me into police, and they told the police station 'this one, brings her friends in the house, and she kisses them, we don't like that. She is ashaming us, everyone is talking about her, the whole village doesn't like her, because she dresses badly, she dresses like a boy.' My sisters only accepted me because of my mum, and now she has passed away.

3.3. A New Normal

As evident from the stories above, to many of the new school activists, joining FARUG and/or SMUG meant survival, be it in terms of housing security, financial stability, or social belonging. Of all the activists, Hannington probably put it most poignantly:

I thank God for Diana who brought me to SMUG. If it wasn't for Diana, Tanja, I'm telling you, I would be dead by now. I would be very dead! I was living a very bad life.

After he came out to his family, Hannington lived in what he described as ghettos where he was not only subsumed into alcohol and drug abuse to deal with his distress but also lived under constant threat of violence and even rape. After a queer DJ got raped, the threats accelerated, and he had to be relocated with the help of a friend who also happened to know Didi (Diana). After being relocated, Hannington obtained a job as a cleaner in an organization for transgender men in which Didi worked as the administrator. Didi later secured him a job interview for the position of welfare officer with SMUG where he has been since 2015. When Hannington joined SMUG, it was in the immediate aftermath of the queer lawfare, the continuous outings of LGBTIQ+ activists, and the death of David Kato. Yet, when asked about his concerns about joining a prominent LGBTIQ+ organization like SMUG, Hannington promptly replied:

I was not worried, because I've always yearned to meet the family where I belong [...]. I kept thinking; 'If I get someone like me, I'll stay with them for the rest of my life.'

Most of the activists similarly contended that they were not really concerned about joining their respective organization, because they finally felt that they had found a place of belonging, of reprieve, and out of hiding. With most of the new school activists' pathways to becoming being paved with fear and experiences of rejection, violence, and loss, many of the new school activists saw that joining FARUG and SMUG finally allowed them a breathing space to consolidate their LGBTIQ+ identities and focus on aspects of life other than disguising and surviving. Leah for example shared that to her just being a lesbian, not even a LGBTIQ+ activist, has resulted in loss:

[M]e losing my friends, me losing actually everything. [...] Sometimes I think about it, maybe I'm not doing the right thing. Maybe I'm not living the right normality because I don't have friends. All my classmates, all my old friends, the fact that they know I'm a lesbian, I lost all.

Elaborating on what she meant by 'living the right normality,' Leah explained that as long as she embraces her lesbian identity, she cannot live a 'normal' life in accordance with Ugandan aspirations and norms. She therefore finds it hard to even know how to connect to her (previous) friends, because she cannot get married nor have children with her (female) partner in the Ugandan context. This, in addition to her being rejected by her father and family friends,

has led to pervasive and persistent self-doubt for Leah, with which her affiliation with FARUG is slowly but surely helping her cope:

FARUG is laying a foundation in myself that I have to focus on a lot of myself as me because sometimes, not sometimes but being a lesbian has prevented a lot. It has not given me room to focus. On the other side, because this is my private, you see but I'm also always on this worrying like because time is going to come. You're going to have to give birth to child and you're not doing that. That is not normal. Getting married, that is not normal. Focusing on the other things has been hard.

Like Leah, many of the new school activists described joining either SMUG or FARUG as a continuous journey of self-discovery, growth, and acceptance. To Tatiana, joining FARUG meant that she had not only gotten a job but also overcome the trepidation that she initially had when first encountering the LGBTIQ+ community. When Tatiana joined FARUG as a member after the Pride in 2015, she repeatedly recalled how she used to be withdrawn and keep quiet whenever she was in the organization, in part because she was so used to using silence as a coping mechanism within her family, and in part because she was so used to feeling wrong that she did not believe that she had anything to offer within the LGBTIQ+ community;

When I joined here, you should hear my story, when people are talking. I just wish. I can't even sit looking at you. I used to sit looking like there, if I see anyone coming, I would run and hide just to keep myself busy[...]. When I go for training, I used to fear even eating with people. I used to fear, so just imagine. What if I'm eating bad? What will people say? That was my day. That is how I was. When I joined, they used to call me for trainings. I don't talk. I keep what I was feeling, what, how you look when you try out something. What will they say? Will it be bad? Will it be good? I kept quiet.

In time, Tatiana realised that she had (computer and communication) skills that she could offer not only FARUG as an organization but also other members as a resource.

While the exposure to other LGBTIQ+ people seemed to have benefitted activists' selfhood, this was particularly prominent for those who identified as transgender. Though Hannington and Arthur are now both proud transgender men, they initially had no notion of transgender identities, therefore identified as lesbians when they first encountered the LGBTIQ+ community. As Arthur explained, when he first met Pepe at the women's rugby club 'we had not mastered the trans identity, the trans existence. That gay boy is too much, he is like a woman [...].' In addition to finding a newfound understanding and vocabulary for their selfhood, many of the new school activists shared that becoming activists aided them in overcoming some of their own biases and preconceptions about other sexual orientations,

gender expressions, and gender identities than their own through ‘mere’ exposure to ‘the others’ and through educational opportunities mainly outside of Uganda. For example, Gloriah recounted that by becoming a LGBTIQ+ activist, she was able to participate in a USA-based fellowship that made her aware of and able to counter her own transphobia:

[T]o tell you the truth, I was transphobic before I went. I didn't really have... I wouldn't say transphobic but I didn't get trans women. I didn't get them. I just kept wondering like... I used to always feel like oh, God, there's so much. I can't deal with this. And then I go to this office, and I'm surrounded by trans women. It changed a lot because like I had honest conversations about my thoughts. I'm like I think this and this and this. And also had honest conversation with me. Now, I've politically changed to a person who is like trans women are women.

4. Conclusion

This chapter set out to provide a counternarrative to the epistemically unjust Eurocentric notion that the LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda started with the AHB 2009 and, by extension, with the international community’s involvement. While the previous chapter to some extent circumvented the thorny issue of self-representation versus representation as addressed in Chapter 4, this chapter has had to grapple with the question of how to re-present the activists’ journeys of becoming activists, which admittedly gave rise to some trepidation as the re-presenter. In navigating this trepidation, it was, however, useful to recall the answer to the question ‘what does it mean to decolonize?’ composed by Mignolo and Walsh (2018, p. 108) in which they argued that the answer cannot be an abstract universal, but that it must be intimately tied to other ‘W questions: Who is doing it, where, why, and how?’ While Mignolo and Walsh (2018) mused and used these questions to demarcate their introduction to a particular school of thought on decoloniality and its different avenues, these are similarly useful to re-present the counternarrative emerging from the activists’ particular geo- and body-political experiences of becoming LGBTIQ+ activists in Uganda.

With the ‘who’ being rather self-evident, the ‘where’ is more divided. While the old school activists consistently pinpointed pivotal bars and restaurants as the epicentres of their becoming, the new school activists underscored the organizations established by old school activists as the places of their becoming. Speaking to the ‘how,’ it appears that the experience of becoming an activist as born out of accident and necessity as articulated by Geoffrey resonated with most of both the old and new school activists. However, whereas old school activists seemed to find their way through each other, new school activists’ stories of becoming were intimately tied up with meeting one or more of the old school activists.

While Mignolo and Walsh (2018b) do not include a ‘when’ in their list of W questions, it is an important dimension in understanding the activists’ becoming for two reasons; first, because the many personal, organizational, legal, and political turning points described by the activists illuminated their ‘becoming’ as an accumulative rather incidental experience prompted by the AHB 2009, and second, because the activists’ contrasted the linear chrononormativity embedded in the modern LGBTIQ+ rights discourse as described in Chapter 2. For some of the old school activists, when would be somewhere between the first social meetings and deliberate moves towards formalisation during late 90s and early 20s, whereas others would pinpoint it to be somewhere in-between the first unwanted (the media outings) and wanted (the court case and campaign) visibility of the LGBTIQ+ movement. To most of the new school activists when was however more easily articulated as either shortly before or after 2010 when they were first introduced to either FARUG and/or SMUG.

Of all the aspects of becoming, the why seems to differ most between the old and new school of activists. While old school activists were certainly also driven by a sense of necessity, because they experienced discrimination and violence in school, in the workplace, and in the family, it appeared as if their becoming was also fuelled by an immediate, primary sense of solidarity with each other. Old school activists decided to gather and eventually formalise their gatherings to provide more LGBTIQ+ people with safe spaces and with information, but also to counteract the increasing homophobic violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ community. In contrast, new school activists predominantly seem to have ‘fallen into’ activism by accident and necessity as described by Geoffrey, because of their individual experiences of hardship, and only later developed a solidaric and political outlook. Regardless of the where, when, how, who, and why, all the activists’ stories of becoming were essentially stories of becoming resisting people by resisting dominant local norms of gender and sexuality, kinship, family, and personhood, and international norms of activism, LGBTIQ+ identity, and power relations.

Being & Beyond an LGBTIQ+ Activist

1. Introduction

Expanding the previous chapter, this chapter turns to the activists' experiences of being an LGBTIQ+ activist in Uganda, and of their identities beyond activism as depicted and articulated during the photo-elicitation interviews. While the previous chapter served as an important counternarrative to the epistemically unjust Eurocentric notion of the Ugandan LGBTIQ+ movement having only arisen with the AHB 2009 and the involvement of the international ('Western') community, this chapter is an equally important step towards realising the positive project of decolonization as it provides an insight into the activists' *willingly* rethinking their lived experiences of being activists in Uganda without having to unthink them (Santos, 2018b, p. 147) as detailed in Chapter 1-3. To this end, the chapter's first section outlines the impact of the international community on the Ugandan LGBTIQ+ movement including the professionalisation and dislocation of the activists' strategies and representation within Uganda. It then turns to elucidate the activists as resisting people through them reappropriating visibility, redirecting the LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda, and reclaiming the personal side of being an LGBTIQ+ activist.

2. Betwixt Consultants & Copycat Mentality

While the international community has had a pivotal role in funding and politicising the LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda as described in Chapter 3, none of the activists had photos of or made mention of the involvement of the international community of their own accord. When asked how they viewed the international community's involvement with the local LGBTIQ+ movement, the overarching response was however that the international community has had a tremendous impact on the local LGBTIQ+ movement. While both the old and new school activists generally agreed that the international community has been useful to the local movement in terms of funding and facilitating trainings, fellowships, and meetings in and outside of Uganda, the main response was that the international community has hampered rather than furthered the consolidation and localisation of the local movement. Having been

involved in the movement since its infancy, Biggie argued that the old and new school activists differed in the following ways:

I think we [the old school] were so close to each other that we cared. We didn't care about money. We didn't care about class, which kind of, where are you living, no. We didn't care. We cared so much about who we are, and we loved ourselves who we are, regardless of our education and what... We used to come together to party together, and fight, and then have fun.

This time, this generation that comes, and I think there's a lot of competition. Competition, wanting to be that activist there. Instead of supporting each other, you're competing. Our foundation was about social, started by having fun. But this guy is coming with serious activism. You must know how to speak. You must know how to engage. Do you know how to write a proposal for us? All those things came after the bond that made us the bond of a family. This is a family. This is us. This is who we are. Then this seriousness of, now this is our organization. We have less of parties. We need to write proposals. We need to speak to donors. We need to appear.

[...] Yes, you can party, but they didn't get that bond. The people who got that bond are us. That's why it's easier for people to trust the old school as opposed to trusting the new school, this one. It's more of money, have to be driving our best car, have to have a good, nice car. They need to dress up. I need to travel. For them, that is what it is. There's less time to love each other, think about each other, support each other. Someone who'll refuse to help the other, because they're in the same league. But for us, we have to look out for each other.

The first point worth noting in Biggie's statement is the notion of 'serious activism' that now characterises the LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda, which entails knowing how to speak, look, and write proposals. In a similar vein, Frank asserted that there has been a transition into '*this NGO corporate thing*' within the LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda. Throughout the photo-elicitation interviews, the activists offered two possible explanations for the transition into 'serious activism' or NGO corporatism. The first pertains to what Frank called the institutionalisation of the LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda, which according to him was prompted by the influx of international partners during the AHB 2009 and with them an everchanging array of consultants with their own contextually disjointed directives and directions for the LGBTIQ+ movement:

[C]onsultants started coming in because I think donors were interested and saying Uganda is a hot cake. There's so much going on. They kept sending in different people to come in and try to make it right. Along the way, I think that's how we ended up where we are because every... Now, if I look back, I don't know whose expert opinion we are on right now at SMUG. But I believe this is not us. Someone put us here and now we're sort of stuck here.

These consultants, according to Frank, imposed contextually ineffective structures, policies, and agendas, and confused rather than consolidated the movement with the constantly changing directives:

There are so many things that the Ugandan LGBT movement that the international community has hampered. The whole institutionalizing the movement [...]. You know, structures that don't even work for us, policies that don't even work for us. And then another person even comes with the new ones, you know, confusion. We're like, "What do we do now?"

When asked why the LGBTIQ+ movement complied with the consultants, Frank replied that *'[u]nfortunately, most of the people who supported us and cared about us, the international community, so we had to take on everything.'* Adding to this point, Arthur moreover claimed that despite the debates around postcolonial sovereignty, Africans tend to assign more importance to outside versus inside voices in Uganda:

[H]ere in Africa, one certain thing is that when the voices from outside Africa, it can be having an impact as compared to a voice from here. And the fact that most of the donors are from the international fraternity, there is also a way that it has helped activism to thrive [...].

When speaking about the international community, the activists mainly focused on the issues around funding conditionality, meaning that the donors and not the activists and their organizations set the direction for the LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda. Speaking specifically about the deliberations within SMUG, Frank explained:

But then we found ourselves here, which is very hard to push back [...]. [A]t SMUG, it took us some time to even get funding because we were trying to keep ourselves in the movement the way it was. But then, like I said, we've had, like I mentioned that where we are right now, I don't know which consultant is responsible for this but we had as many as possible coming in and saying, "No, you have to do this, you have to do that."

Drawing on the example of prioritising HIV prevention over economic self-empowerment, Arthur similarly asserted that the donors often dictate the course of action for LGBTIQ+ organizations in Uganda without adequate consideration for the lived experiences and expertise of the activists on the ground:

Of course, they have been harmful to an extent that they dictate what they can fund. They dictate their areas of funding. Yet here, for us on ground, we know what we need most, we know what can help the community to avoid most of the messes we encounter or most of the things that go on. But again, you find

that the interest of funding is different, and it's dictated. [...] I don't know, if in future it will change, but it has really affected most of the operations in LGBT organizations.

While conceding that activists of course have the option to not apply for the funding or comply with donor demands, Arthur however also underscored that this would mean that they would be left 'behind' by the donors and thus be without monetary means to do their work. Though activists underscored the donors' tendency to use funding to dictate everything from organizational structures to activist agendas, some of them also stated that the institutionalisation of the LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda was compounded by Ugandans including LGBTIQ+ people and organizations tending to copy the 'West.' Referring to this as the 'copycat mentality,' Gloriah explained:

[I]t's through donors but it's also a lot of copycat mentality. People fail to recognize that the context in which we organize is different from the context in which many western countries organize. We want to copy things that do not... Because even a thousand or a million years from now, Africa will still be Africa. We are a community space, communal. That is one thing that never changes. Most European countries that we copy naturally, they're individualistic as people.

Situating the copycat mentality in a broader geo-historical context, Frank likewise observed:

I think because Uganda is a very young country so the ambition to be like western is too high. [L]ike I said, most Ugandan, they don't think on their own. No Ugandan has that instinct where they can come and say that, "I do understand that you guys, within the LGBT community, there are also people who have ambition for the movement look like other countries." They don't see that for us when we do that, we are copying, you know, we are copying the Western world.

To some of the activists, the Westernisation, professionalisation, and institutionalisation of the LGBTIQ+ movement meant that they even questioned their want to be in LGBTIQ+ activism and their ability to do activism. After coming back from some years in South Africa, Geoffrey explained:

I don't believe in the streamlining of activism. Activism is being streamlined because we have conflated with NGO-ization. Now we have to be officers, senior research and policy officers, program officers. Now it's about officer for this, officer for that, officer for that. Activism is not officer. An activist is an activist, right? An activist, I think should be able to do things on the spur,

should even be able to stand all alone when the rest of the world is on the other side.

Drawing on his experiences in both South Africa and Uganda, Geoffrey continued to contend that the streamlining of activism has led to the death of civil society activism, and the lack of 'rogue' activism in Uganda:

[A]ctivism has really died out. Even activism across the board, not just queer activism. We used to have feminists in this country that were really loud, they've all gone quiet [...]. So, what happened? I think we've kind of like... But I don't think we've also been that rogue in Uganda.

I wouldn't compare it with any other country or place, but I'm yet to see the day when we defy all fear, get our banners, and march on Kampala Street, knowing very well we're going to be beaten and imprisoned and put in police custody, but we still will do it. I'm yet to see that day.

I'm yet to see the day when we'll not go and ask for fake police permissions so we can go do Pride in a forest in Entebbe. No, we're going to do Pride on the fucking Kampala's Road. And of course, we're not going to march even 10 steps before we're going to be arrested, but that's fine. I want that kind of activism!

2.1. Not so Proud: The Failure to localize the LGBTIQ+ Movement

Caught between the international community dictatorial tendencies and the LGBTIQ+ community's copycat mentality, the most severe consequence was, according to most of the activists, the failure to 'localize,' to 'appear Ugandan,' and to 'domesticate' the Ugandan LGBTIQ+ movement. Drawing on the example of Pride, Frank explained:

[I]n terms of making the movement appear Ugandan, that has really failed because however much everything we're doing is mainly looking at the international community. For example, I love Pride so much but if you look at those who wants to do Pride, we're trying to do Pride in an international setting [...].

There are some people who have a very bad mindset how the international LGBT movement is because they have sexualized it. It's only about, you know, it's only related to sex and sexual activities. Which is not a bad thing but given Uganda's traditions, how it is as Uganda entirely and very conservative, I think Uganda wouldn't be ready for such. There will be a clash all the time for that. I felt like had we taken the approach of a more Ugandan visible Pride that's not even called Pride, then maybe it would be accepted somehow differently.

With the limited visibility of LGBTIQ+ activists and activities in Uganda, Frank furthermore stated that there is a danger of for example Pride, in its Westernized form, becoming the visual identity of the LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda, which might create more resistance than support for LGBTIQ+ people in Uganda:

It's more of ambition to be like other countries, which is also a good thing, but I wish it wasn't entirely a face of the movement. Because when Pride happens, whenever it's happening, it's the face of the movement. Whoever is an outsider, not in the movement will see that as the LGBT community.

Relatedly, several of the activists considered the Ugandan LGBTIQ+ movement's failure to appear Ugandan to feed the (political) homophobic discourses of homosexuality as a foreign import, and of LGBTIQ+ people as 'recruiters' and as people who are 'gay for pay' as detailed in Chapter 3. While not intimately involved in donor relations, even Leah remarked on the thorny issue of money:

[T]hey know the kuchus have money so they can recruit anyone. Because of money, someone may be a kuchu because of money.

In a similar vein, Frank observed that while fully aware that the institutionalization of the movement reinforces homophobic discourses, there is, again, little leeway for the activists to untangle themselves from it, because the donors do not fully comprehend the local dynamics and would pull funding, if the activists opposed the donor's vision and version of activism too strongly:

The whole institutionalizing the movement because even there are some people who would believe why do you have to have all these fancy things, why do you have to be all these if you're struggling for human rights, if you want to just come as from human rights? But then if you come and explain to the donor, then they won't give you funding if you're not doing that. And then you need the money to move everything. It becomes a bit difficult. It's very, very hard of course to explain and understand.

2.2. Lost in the Bill: Funding Decriminalization but not Social Acceptance

Following the activists' photos and narratives, there was an overarching sense of the international community pushing the LGBTIQ+ movement in a counterproductive direction. This became particularly apparent during the queer lawfare over the AHB 2009 and AHA 2014 during which most of the activists identified the direction set for the Ugandan LGBTIQ+ movement as decriminalization. As Frank succinctly explained:

For decrim. It's like that's what we are moving towards. It's like we're pushed there. I was telling Pepe. I'm like we need so much to go back and start rethinking of how we get involved in communities so much into majority of the work that we're doing.

The push towards decriminalization was, however, viewed as useless without wider social acceptance by activists. Furthermore, the international community's approach to express solidarity and support with the LGBTIQ+ movement was seen as detrimental to the movement's efforts to build social acceptance and cohesion with other movements. Speaking to the first point, Gloriah shared a discussion that she had had with Biggie about decriminalization:

So many times, people end up doing things we are not ready to. Biggie once told me; "Uganda is not ready for decrim." I'm like, "Biggie, how dare you say that? We've been doing work." She's like, "Even if they decriminalise today, they'll still kill us because the society doesn't like us."

While Gloriah maintained that the social acceptance is higher now than previously, she conceded that there is a long road ahead before LGBTIQ+ people are not only accepted but integrated into the Ugandan society, and that decriminalization is not the most suitable pathway to advance social acceptance:

Now, there is a lot of social acceptance. Because now being gay, gay people is no longer news. People know, people see, people recognize but they feel we are imposing, and we are recruiting. Regardless of how much we talk about, like even if they woke up tomorrow and decrim it, they would still beat us because the society is not yet ready to integrate us because they still feel like we impose.

Continuing this point, Gloriah reflected that because the LGBTIQ+ activists in Uganda had to learn on the go, and the threat of a new anti-homosexuality bill never subsided after the annulment of the AHA 2014, it allowed for the social foundation and the work towards social acceptance to get lost along the way:

We started the movement as social. Some of these political moves we never really sat down and contemplated. We're just playing chess. So, every, you move, you move, check mate. You're like, "Oh, hell. Where do I go from here?" That is what is happening right now. The most important thing we should have talked about at the beginning is one thing we along the way lost because they did it at the beginning, social acceptance, getting the society to accept us and understand us.

To Gloriah, the fight for social acceptance got lost in the fight against the AHB 2009, and it has not really recovered since:

It got lost in fighting the bill. It got lost in fighting the bill because when we invested a lot in fighting the bill, then we began seeing so many things. So, then we went up there and forgot our everyday lives. Now, unfortunately, that we are up there, we have to come back to our everyday lives.

Working for social acceptance of LGBTIQ+ people in Uganda was further seen as hampered by the victimhood imposed by the international community. While acknowledging the best of intentions, the activists generally viewed the international community to have fuelled a notion of LGBTIQ+ people as victims with the way they were represented in mainstream media, political statements, and research by the international community, particularly during the queer lawfare over the AHB 2009 and AHA 2014. Frank explained that in their efforts to amplify the voices of LGBTIQ+ people in Uganda and push for decriminalization, the international community mainly victimised LGBTIQ+ people and thereby isolated them from the wider society and from other movements:

International partners amplified our voice so much. Of course, international partners have amplified the most extreme aggressive towards the LGBT community, you see. [...] Because if someone, if a friend of mine is in Norway or Denmark, they will be happy if I'm home and I'm sleeping very well but if I get attacked, they're going to get annoyed. They'll say, "Oh, my God, this is my friend, Frank." They're going to go on their Facebook and say, "I'm so annoyed," and put up my pictures.

I think in a way, they mean very well but the way it's portrayed back here, it has caused this long-term victimization. And then like the corporate and the gay people who couldn't come in and support the movement.

The long-term victimisation that Frank spoke about was seen to hamper the LGBTIQ+ movement's ability to move towards social acceptance, and towards coalition building with other civil society actors:

[I]n other movements, you find how activists and non-activists who are LGBT are all looking for the same goal saying, "We want respect. We want support." But here you have even non-activists who are saying, "No, no, no. We don't. We hate those activists. They are causing the trouble for us."

But why? Because the movement has not been localized. If the movement was localized actually, we would even be getting local support from local activists who would even be funding us. But right now, they don't want. Most of them

they don't identify with the movement because we've only victimized ourselves and we've allowed that.

If you speak to majority of Ugandans, they'll tell you, "Those guys are suffering. Oh, they're always making up stories." Or they will tell you, "Oh, no, no, no. It's terrible. You can't even talk about them. We're in the corner. We're the victims in the corner."

To Frank, the singular focus on decriminalization moreover negates the manoeuvres by which the government simply disguises the criminalization of LGBTIQ+ people in new laws, and overlooks the societal fatigue surrounding the queer lawfare:

But like you said, we moved from this law to another law. Sexual offences is there then, it's a pattern. If it's a new law, that is very hard. It would be very hard to challenge. Right now, rallying behind a law is so difficult. It's so difficult.

We can't get the same reaction we got from the AHA. It is impossible. There's too much fatigue. People are tired of LGBT things here in Uganda. They're like, "No, you guys are always talking about the same things again and again all the time."

2.3. Like the US: Competition within the LGBTIQ+ community

Up until now, the focus has been on how the LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda transitioned into serious activism, and the wider implications for its ability to localize rather than become a mirror image of the 'West.' Continuing with Biggie's reflections on the difference between the old and new school activists, the second significant issue relates to how people no longer care about each other but more about the money involved in activism. Along the same lines, Frank noted that not only have LGBTIQ+ organizations sprouted in Uganda since the influx of funding, but mainstream civil society organizations try to partner with LGBTIQ+ organization to get access to some of the funding. Speaking to the first point, Frank noted that there is now a long history of competition and conflict over funding and donor relations within the LGBTIQ+ community, which to him goes against the very grain of the movement but also what it means to be Ugandan:

You find that in the end, if we keep like this, you find that in 10 years' time, we are becoming like the US, all those international movements whereby the trans community is alone, gay community is alone, everyone is separating. That's not how... We were never like that here in Uganda.

As one of the first organizations to receive funding, and as the perhaps most visible one in Uganda, Frank relatedly shared that there is a sense expectation and entitlement from the

new LGBTIQ+ organizations and community to get financial support from SMUG at any given time. Speaking to this point, Frank shared:

[W]hen it comes to anything to do with community, then they come back to SMUG and say, "We want you to come and do this." We are asking, but what do you do? There is dependency. You already started an organization, gave yourself an obligation. You created yourself that you have to be accountable and then when it comes to actual work, then you want it to be done by someone else.

That's the face of victimization whereby I am the victim. You have to help. You have to do this for me. We have someone, an ED who runs an organization, everything. They've been posting a video where they're giving relief food and everything. But yesterday, they sent us a bill to pay for their hospital bills of 60,000. I was like, really? [...]

Maybe it could also be a Ugandan thing because Ugandan people like depending on some. There's not so much, how can I say, there's not so much free thinking. Someone always wants to be told, "Do this, do that, do that or come to me for this, come to me for that."

To almost all the activists, there has been a shift within the LGBTIQ+ community whereby the preoccupation is not with self- and community building but rather monetary gains. Hannington for example observed this in some LGBTIQ+ people's attitudes towards attending training whereby they came across as more interested in transport refunds than in building skills and knowledge:

I want LGBT people to stop thinking about transport refund whenever they are going for trainings, whenever they are being given knowledge and skills. Some people don't want to come without transport refund.

Many of the less visible activists moreover had experiences of being asked for money by community members and are therefore often hesitant to disclose that they work for either FARUG or SMUG. Phyllis observed:

There is a way they look at you differently. For example, they think because you work at SMUG, you have money. So, they will call you, and constantly keep on asking for money, and when eventually you get tired of giving them money, and you don't give it to them, they start hating you, and you know, start talking about you and all that.

Thinking about the influence of the international community, Gloriah in short concluded that *'[p]rofessionalizing NGO just fucks things up.'* While FARUG is intensely trying to maintain the social foundation through its Social Fridays, Gloriah described the resistance that

they now get from in- and outside of the community for not being professional enough and for spending some of their resources on socializing:

Social Friday, do you know how many people have fought us from having social Friday? They feel like it's a redundant space, people just come and take alcohol. They don't see the reason that. We keep explaining to them this is a safe space. We don't need to have formal organized events all the time. Do you know what it means for someone to walk in here and take a beer with other gay people even if they're not interacting?

Because for me, I know what social Friday did for me when I was on campus, like this was my plot. Like every last Friday of the month, I was like, "Oh, God, I can't wait," because you would just come here and dance. Now, bars are closed. If someone is dealing with a lot and they just come in on social Friday and sit and interact and laugh a bit, it makes them feel better. Some people's esteem has just been built by coming for social Friday. They'll come and first... Because there are people I have watched that first came, Tatiana, would sit in a corner and watch people for a very long time. So, know her as the corner girl.

3. Resisting Victimhood

3.1. Reappropriating Visibility

Following the re-presentation of allies' perspectives until now, it could appear as if visibility is always imposed upon activists with detrimental effects. However, embracing and reappropriating visibility has become an important part of being an LGBTIQ+ activists to many of those interviewed. To Frank, Kato's murder became the transitional moment that launched him into the spotlight as a visible LGBTIQ+ activist in Uganda. He further explained that when the international community started showing interest and engagement in LGBTIQ+ politics in Uganda, it provided him with a certain degree of cloud and protection to be visible and to do his activism in the open. Frank explained:

I felt a level of security. I'm like now that I'm internationally known, I think the risk is less from the Ugandan government and from the state. I felt less fear for example, in approaching governments and police. I felt I could walk into the police. I could approach government. I could pick up a phone call and call a government official. I had less fear to do that.

To Pepe, authority over his own story as a transgender man in Uganda is a key facet of his becoming and being an LGBTIQ+ activist. The first photo Pepe shared, displayed him at around 11-12 years old when he had just travelled to South Africa with his mother. When showing this photo, Pepe stated that it was important to him to correct the common misconception of him being born cis-gender, and to pinpoint that he always expressed himself

in a masculine way. When asked why it was important to him to correct the misconception of him as cis-male, he explained:

I really don't want my history to be erased, and I say this because there are people who talk about dead things in their past for trans people or gender conforming persons. But for me it's important because in a way I already offered myself as the storyboard for trans people in Uganda and that even if it's a past where there's trauma, this pain, and so on, for me to be who I am, and confident today is based on that journey.

But also I have the authority to tell my story. I think if someone else was telling my past, I think I would kind of maybe be hesitant for them to tell that story because I feel that it's my story. I should be able to tell it whether in the most painful way or in the way that I got myself at the end of that day...I choose to do what I need to do with my story myself.

Just like Pepe has offered himself as a 'storyboard' for transgender people in Uganda, Arthur had also started embracing and promoting visibility of himself as a transgender man in Uganda, especially on social media. To Arthur, this had been an integral part of his journey as an activist because it counteracts the general perception that all there is to being LGBTIQ+ is 'pain and sorrow.' He said:

I don't want you to associate your negativity, your dark thoughts towards my existence. Being queer is just part of me. It is a component in my blood. Why do you want to separate it from me? Why do you think that it's not normal? Do you look at me as an abnormal person? You see? That's the strength I've gained, that's the courage I've got through the journey.'

Generally, using his personal Facebook site to upload photos of himself in the FARUG uniform or doing his work at FARUG, Arthur shared that this form of visibility was important for two reasons; first, to challenge his family's societally informed perception of LGBTIQ+ people as aliens by letting them know; '[n]o don't look far, you have one alien in your family,' and second; to 'create that voice for the voiceless.' Expanding the latter, Arthur stated:

[I]t might encourage a lot of people out there. I'm in Uganda, I'm LGBT, I'm trans in Uganda, I work every day. It shows the other person who is still cocooned somewhere, first of all thinking what they are is very wrong, secondly being tortured by the people around them, thirdly losing hope.

So, when I stand up, or when I share such a picture with the rest of the world, I know that there is that trans boy out there, there is that trans girl out there, there is that queer parent out there, there is that parent of a queer person out there who is going to change their perception towards LGBT people, towards someone being queer.

In a similar vein, Hannington articulated the importance of activists being visible in other domains than purely those related directly to LGBTIQ+ activism:

Through activism, we can also participate in games and sports. Not within Uganda, but beyond. At an international level. It feels good when you see Diana swimming on YouTube, on TV, in newspapers. You see your fellow activist, this person is there, shining. It gives credit to us who are here in Uganda and the person giving us credit.

To Arthur, his self-directed visibility was however not only directed towards society at large but also towards the LGBTIQ+ community, because he experienced low levels of understanding, and at times

Throughout the photo-elicitation interviews, the rainbow flag came up as an important part of the LGBTIQ+ movement's visual identity, but also as the activists' way of making themselves visible to each other. In three out of seven photos chosen by Biggie, she was wearing or displaying the rainbow, and she repeatedly returned to these three photos.



When asked what she thought of the rainbow as a prominent symbol of the LGBTIQ+ movement globally, Biggie first responded:

For me, it [the rainbow] symbolizes my being. I am here. I concur with all the generation of other flags that they want, but for me the rainbow itself shows I am here regardless of what you're saying. Negative, what? I am here. I always play with my rainbow, and I thought one time they would ask me to remove it, but I never removed it ever since I received it [...].

It's also nice with the rainbow in a sense that it's a neutral one, in terms of it being a natural phenomenon that can occur anywhere. It doesn't care about geopolitics.

While most of the activists expressed having reappropriated visibility in either direct or symbolic ways, most also conceded the need for a different kind of political visibility to disrupt the portrayal of them as either victims, demons/aliens, and/or pawns of the 'West,' and to enable effective change for LGBTIQ+ people in Uganda. To this end, most of the activists

stated their hope to have open representation in Parliament, either in the form of an openly LGBTIQ+ MP fighting for the rights of LGBTIQ+ people, or ‘just’ MPs who does not ‘hide behind the rhetoric of KPs and leave out lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender people’ as Arthur articulated it. Many of the activists furthermore underscored the need and want for LGBTIQ+ people to be included in national programming beyond the ‘loophole’ of health and instead have a say across all sectors.

3.2. Redirecting the LGBTIQ+ Movement in Uganda

With the sense of having lost authority over the direction of their own movement, as described above, many of the activists underscored a need to redirect the movement to its social core, and to break free from the ‘Western’ template for activism. To redirect the movement, the activists concurrently underlined three focal areas; first, becoming self-sustaining, second, increasing social acceptance; and lastly, (re)building capacity of the LGBTIQ+ community to lead its own movement..

Becoming Self-Sustaining & Settled

As evident above, the activists have a clear sense of being pushed and shoved in an unwanted direction by the international community. With very few flexible and often precarious donor relations, many of the activists articulated that a quintessential need for the LGBTIQ+ movement to rethink and reclaim itself was to become self-sustaining and physically anchored. As explained by Frank:

If we are rich and had money and we're okay, I think self-sustaining ourselves, it would be a bit different. I think then, we would just be resilient and doing our work. I believe we would have achieved more results then because the results we're achieving now are almost temporary because even if we get decrim, then what?

With the constant stress of being found out and then evicted by landlords or shut down by the authorities for going against the then NGO Act, many of the activists also considered owning a house for the organization as pivotal to being self-sustaining. Not only would it mitigate disruptions of being evicted and having to move, but also make it easier to budget, knowing that the housing costs are fixed. As Hannington explained:

We need to be real organised, like the way you see SMUG now. At least now we have our own building. Police used to disturb us, now which police man can come and disturb us? We have upgraded [...]. I want all organizations in five years to be like SMUG. To stop spending money on rent, useless things,

partying... We have a lot of work to do, our members are so many. Others are not even registered, we don't know them, but they are there, and they are suffering.

Strategies and Spaces to Advance Social Acceptance

As already alluded to above, the activists considered the primary frontier for Ugandan LGBTIQ+ activism as social acceptance. The activists' emphasis on social acceptance should not only be understood against the backdrop of the continued discrimination and stigma experienced and witnessed by the activists after the AHA 2014 was revoked, but more the activists' continuous experiences of being socially ostracised, alienated by their friends, family, and immediate community and wider society. In the early days when Frank tried to spread crucial health information for gay men through blogs, pamphlets, radio appearances and conversations with people, he felt the social ramifications almost immediately:

Now, I became sort of a name that people knew within the LGBT community and stuff. But not within the LGBT community, rather within the gay movement, gay men mostly. Most of them did not want to meet me anymore because I was exposed. Because they felt like, "Oh, Frank Mugisha is too exposed." In fact, one of my very, very good friend right now, he made a comment to someone and said, "I cannot stand 200 meters near Frank because he's too exposed."

As such, the activists generally must mask (their LGBTIQ+ identity) and be hyper vigilant in all social settings. Many of the activists thus constantly negotiate what Glorinah aptly called 'levels of closetedness':

I feel like there are levels of closetedness because now my closetedness right now is not being comfortable to have conversations and to affirm that I'm queer is very hard. Because they have outed me but that doesn't mean I am. There are so many times I have denied and it hurt. There's so many times I've had to hide who I am.

I have segregations of friends. I have queer friends and non-queer friends. I have this group of like childhood friends that I grew up with that I've never confirmed to that I'm queer. It just hurts when I'm just part of these conversations and part of them and I just can't be myself [...].

Even basic intimacy becomes awkward like hugging or pecking or touching, like everything just becomes awkward. Things that you would normally do now make them feel like you're violating them.

Given her self-described ‘butch’¹⁹ appearance and mannerism, Biggie similarly shared that as soon as she interacts with a girl or woman in her rugby club, people tend to assume that she is dating them, which in Uganda is often bound to have repercussions. As such, Biggie often avoided interacting with girls or women:

[T]here's that period of time where everyone whom I was close to was called lesbian. Everyone thought that every girl I talked to, I am dating [...]. It is life. It's part of me. What can I do? I can't even lie. There's no solution to such a thing. It is part. Even everywhere someone finds me, they think I am dating the person I'm with. Yeah. I'm used to it. Sometimes I don't talk to people. They say I am a bad person, they say I'm hard to reach, because I'm not talking to them. Not knowing that I'm trying to protect them [...].

It was clearly indicated that even within their biological families, most of the activists do not find any solace or reprieve. For those activists who still have some contact with their family, they described having to navigate and negotiate transactional tolerance, meaning as long as the activists provided financial support for their families, their families will begrudgingly tolerate their identity, – or rather remain silent about it - being LGBTIQ+ and involved in a LGBTIQ+ organization. Having been thrown out by his sisters and father when he, prior to transitioning, disclosed that he was a lesbian at age 19, Hannington was only allowed back home after 2 years when his mother returned home from working in another region of Uganda and insisted on Hannington being allowed back home. However, especially since the mother’s passing, Hannington’s relationship with his family has been contingent upon him providing them with financial support:

Before my mum died, they had accepted me, but I also need to work very hard, so that they can see me. Now, if I stop working here, and I'm not earning anything, they will throw me out again. They are now accepting me, because I have some money to help them, but when they know I'm not working anywhere, they are like that. They tolerate me when they know I have money, because they know I'll do whatever they want, because me, I love them so much. But when I don't have money, I'm not recognised [...].

In a similar vein to Hannington’s story, Leah similarly shared:

¹⁹ Currently, the terms butch and femme are commonly used by lesbian, bi- and pansexual women to simply refer to traditionally ‘masculine’ and traditionally ‘feminine’ presenting women. Butch and femme identities have historically subverted traditional expectations of womanhood and deconstructed the gender binaries within both intra- and interpersonal experiences (Liesch, 2024).

The way it is with the family supporting whether you're lesbian or you're what, what, the fact that you can give, they'll try to not see the other bit of you but now when you don't have, it's even worse.

Having been in the movement from the beginning, Frank considered it an uphill battle to change Ugandans' social acceptance of LGBTIQ+ people:

It has been very difficult to change hearts and minds of people with the narrative that they have in their heads. Ugandans are so gullible. They listen to all these things, and they keep them in their heads [...]. Why can't we open it up, let everyone come in? But it's quite a bit difficult but that is something that right now, I don't really have many ideas in how to change the narrative from being seen as victims only.

By contrast, Arthur provided an idea of how to overturn the victimisation of LGBTIQ+ people by stating:

I have realised that if we don't come out and talk, if we don't show people that look, we need this or we can do this, people will not understand us. People will keep on pressing us or violating us, thinking we are wrong people, thinking we are not capable, thinking we can't do this. Actually, that's one of the reasons I went back to school because to disprove people who look, I can be a transgender person who is also qualified like this, I can be a transgender lawyer, I can be a transgender professor, I can be a transgender lecturer, I can be a transgender everything!

Providing a rather generous interpretation, the activists generally ascribed both the victimisation of LGBTIQ+ people, and the discursive homophobia to Ugandans' being uninformed about gender and sexuality and mainly fed through homophobic discourses. Speaking about an online thread, Biggie gave an example:

I was reading through that thread, the comments, and I saw some people were trying to inform, but majority was homophobic. I realized they're homophobic, because they're not informed. They still stick on the notion of homosexuality is not African. It was painful.

With the movement's work to overturn the AHB 2009 and AHA 2014, many of the activists pointed out that the importance of local leaders and service providers had been forgotten. Consequently, Gloriah asserted that to move forward with social acceptance and thus make decriminalization more a reality with any weight, there was a need for the movement to turn its attention beyond high-level advocacy within court rooms, the government and parliament towards the wider community:

That's why you will see that you go to a training to teach health workers about sexuality, and they are agreeing. These are people who live with us in the community every day. They should know these things but honestly, they are praying. And then government workers know about sexuality, but they are not helping because they are up there. It is our local council people we are supposed to start with. It is our neighbours we're supposed to engage with.

Drawing on personal experiences, Biggie, Didi, Hannington, Pepe, and Arthur also highlighted the potential of underexplored arenas such as gyms and sports clubs to advance social acceptance. While Biggie, Pepe, and Arthur were all involved in rugby, Hannington played basketball, and Didi did swimming. To Biggie, gyms are a 'neutral' place where she can be herself, and where she has experienced people that she perceived as homophobic to change their attitude towards her after going to the same gym for some time. She explained:

I find the gym is the most accepting place when you're there. It's teamwork. Somehow people even help, even if you're doing something wrong, someone will tell you [...]. For me, gym, that's why I think I love going to the gym.

[I] think sports is a unifying factor. Sports is a unifying factor, and gym is like hospital. Why? Because we come with different issues. That one has a big tummy. That one wants to get the muscles. That one wants to trim...

In addition to inadvertently changing people's attitudes, Biggie also identified the gym as an important site for sexual health information for LGBTIQ+ people alike, and went on to describe how she had started chatting with and bringing condoms for 'young boys' at the gym:

There's a gym I go to here in my place. It looks like most people who work out there are these boys who, I think, snatch phones and do that, [...] but I like going there. The young boys, I carry condoms I take for them, because need these things.

I even wanted to bring a dispenser and put it there for them to be using the condoms, because those are the conversations that they have during the gym. Oh, this girl. Oh, that girl. Oh, this one. I was listening. I used to listen to them. One time I just brought two boxes of condoms, said, "You guys need these things." They were laughing. I told them no. You really need them. You really, really need them. Your life will be better with this. If you can't keep them at home, you can't keep them here. When you know you're about to do something fishy, you go, you pick the condoms from here and go, but you need them. They couldn't believe.

Like Biggie, Hannington has also used his basketball team as an arena to show solidarity and provide sexual health information. As a person living with HIV, Hannington similarly provided people within his 'ghetto' and his basketball team with information about, and support related to HIV prevention, treatment, and care.

Despite being a nurse, Arthur does not use his rugby club as an arena to provide sexual health information, but to, like Pepe, serve as a storyboard for transgender people in Uganda. Though Arthur has transitioned to male in his appearance, he still played for the women's rugby team at the time of the interview. Arthur asserted that playing even while transitioning was an important way of 'sensitising' 'people in the rugby fraternity', but also conceded:

[I]t is a sensitive situation, it has been sensitive all the time. But then again, it has given me strength, because at least there are people who are appreciating these changes, and you find that there even those who are feeling sorry. They are like 'oh no, why didn't God create you like that. I wish that God created you fully as a man.'

Central to all the activists' reflections on how to move towards social acceptance for and of LGBTIQ+ people was the notion of care and caring as foundational not only to their understanding of themselves as Ugandans and Africans and to their impetus for doing activism, but also to ethical personhood in Uganda and Africa more broadly. Geoffrey linked these notions of care and caring to the African philosophy of Ubuntu:

I think in the African society, we did have the spirit of caring, we did have the spirit of making sure everybody is fine, right? [...] I think when you talk about care, caring for your next person, what they call ubuntu, what the Southern Africans have now conceptualized as ubuntu which is the spirit of caring for one another.

[...] I am because we are, that thing. So, streamlining activism, now we hear more of there's ways of doing advocacy, this is how you do it. Okay, I'll try it. If it works out, fine. If it doesn't work out, I'm going back to my rogue activism.

When asked what he meant by 'rogue activism', Geoffrey juxtaposed it with the streamlined activism flourishing in Uganda, and referred to the now exiled human rights activist, legal scholar, and poet Stella Nyanzi's rogue, or 'vulgar', activism. For context, Nyanzi is notorious for using the aesthetics of 'radical rudeness' in her activist tactics including naked protests and in her poetry to caricature the tyranny of Museveni's dictatorship in Uganda (Akingbe, 2023). Nyanzi's irreverent writings have even led to her being jailed twice before she accepted a writers-in-exile programme run by PEN Germany in 2022 from where she continues her outspoken critique of Museveni (Davies, 2022). When asked what could prompt LGBTIQ+ activists to embrace rogue or vulgar activism, and why it is important, Geoffrey argued:

[...] I thought Kato's death would prompt it. Kato's death instead made us more cowardized, and we all ran and hid like crazy. Right? When we were burying Kato, the police actually came towards the end. We all scrambled into embassy cars to escape. I would have wanted to sit there, right? The kind of... Now, Stella Nyanzi's activism, I know where I stand with it, I know exactly where I stand with it. But I usually don't express it because I know about 60, 70% of people will come to me and say, "You're so wrong about Stella Nyanzi." Because I sit in the corner, I'm like, "Go, girl. Yes, girl! Go!" Because my activism is also very vulgar.

Because people don't listen to niceties. No, they don't. My own mother doesn't listen to niceties until I told her, "Your whole family are whores so don't call me a homosexual because you think you're the holy one." She's like, "Oh, my God. You're so disrespectful." I'm like, "You are disrespectful, Mom. You called me a whore. You called me a homosexual whore. You are also a whore. You think I cannot say the word whore back to you when you use it on me?" She said, "Okay, okay. Let's just let it go. I'm so sorry. Okay, mm-hmm."

(Re)building leadership capacity within the LGBTIQ+ community

In addition to increasing the wider community's social acceptance of LGBTIQ+ people, Frank also saw a need to bring back social spaces both for LGBTIQ+ people but also for other civil society partners. Speaking about his plans for SMUG, after settling into their new office at the time of the interview, Frank shared:

It is very, very important because that [social spaces and interactions] is what built and shaped this movement, social spaces ... brought out everyone's potential because you can never know someone's potential unless you let them come in and explore. That's what I'm trying to do here. When things settle down and when we finish rebuilding, I want to start doing trainings for civil society here every weekend so that we interact more, then they can maybe get engaged more.

And then also doing trainings for legal students at least every summer, who can come here and learn about SOGI, and then when they finish law school, they are more comfortable. I want to start also providing leadership sort of like a leadership forum or a like a leader... I don't want to give this like a fancy name but sort of [place] where different leaders in the LGBT community come, all those who want to come and we just maybe have tea, cookies and talk and share ideas on what we've been doing. That is what I want to do.

Speaking to the latter, Frank added that there is a need for more leaders in the LGBTIQ+ community as they otherwise risk being overrun by local 'mainstream' civil society partners who are only supporting the movement because of the funding allocated to LGBTIQ+ issues by international partners:

[I]t's a big problem because majority of our partners, it's mainly about funding because they're funded to do this work. But if the funding shifts totally to other, maybe other issues that have nothing to do with LGBT definitely, we shall lose the biggest percentage of those partners. By then, our community will not have the capacity that we had to do anything. That's why I keep saying that we need to go back and start building a movement that have people who will be available to work even without... That are not partners. That are too leaders of the LGBT community.

When asked what he wants the future of activism to look like, Hannington similarly pointed to the need for LGBTIQ+ people to unite and to get more organized:

Let's focus, get together, unite, and fight for our rights. That's what I want to see. I want to see LGBTQI people happy! I want to see people marching at Pride, not these things of hiding just to take shots of bandanas and... no, we need to march! Proper marching like those in the US, UK, where... We need to be, also we need to be organised. We are organised but not that much. We need to be really organised, like the way you see SMUG now.

3.3. Reclaiming the Personal

Throughout the photo-elicitation interviews, several of the activists underscored that they often consider the personal side of activism and being an activist forgotten, underexplored, and underrepresented, especially by ('Western') journalists who were seen to generally have a 'copy and paste' approach to the representation of LGBTIQ+ people in Uganda. This section therefore explores the lived experiences of being a LGBTIQ+ activist and thoughts about the life beyond activism.

While both the old and new school activists brought photos of themselves doing sports, in their cultural attire/cultural dress, and their future plans of leaving activism to do farming, they all eventually stated that there is nothing beyond their activist identity, because in any setting beyond the explicitly LGBTIQ+ one, they will always be 'the Other/ed' and have to explain themselves. Pepe summarised the general sentiment:

Sometimes I can't tell the difference between my personal life and activism itself. I need time to tell the two apart. Activism is really mainly about resistance and about dismantling the things that...any form of oppression that exists. And I think I do that all the time. So, my life is activism. But for the two pictures that I've shown you... It's really difficult to see the two separately.

The perceived inseparability between the personal and activism is, in part, an imposition from outside society. In less abstract terms than Pepe, Arthur made this clear when he talked about his want to go into farming after his 'official' activist life:

One thing I know about us LGBT persons is that even if you leave the community, you always stay an activist, even in that other life. Why? Because in the society people will still be misgendered you or talking about you and your partner. Here, people don't know how to mind their own business. So, you find yourself sensitising them. So, you can't fully leave activism, but maybe you change to a different type of activism.

Even in farming, it can be activism. How? People in the agricultural sector, when they come to know about your gender and sexuality, they want to know more, and you can sensitise them. And the younger people might realise that it's normal to be LGBT and owning a company, to be LGBT and producing something...

Generally, the activists also said that they rarely turn off their activism, because their community members will call them at all hours of the day with their issues. The activists listed three main reasons for never being off: first, the volatility of the socio-political context for LGBTIQ+ Ugandans whereby it is never certain when someone will get evicted, beaten, arrested, and/or harassed; second, the personal investment in the LGBTIQ+ community as a LGBTIQ+ person themselves, and lastly the professionalization of activism. When asked what she thinks of the professionalization of activism, Gloriah's first response was:

I hate it. I hate it. I'm always getting into fights with members when there are so many unrealistic expectations of the staff. I'm like guys, none of you asked these people to come and work in this organization. They came because they wanted to serve. You have not walked a single step in their shoes. You do not know what they deal with on a daily, you get it.

Also, I hate when activists are looked at as superheroes or superhumans. Like we're just ordinary basic. We're not Spidermans and Flashes like are going to get everything done somehow in magic. That is one thing people have failed to realize like [Inaudible 01:34:47], we are human beings. We have feelings. We also get exhausted. I have days when I don't want to get out of bed. I have days when I have mood swings. I have days when I have period cramps. I am just your basic human being. Stop having unrealistic expectations of me.

With the volatile conditions and unrealistic expectations, many of the activists articulated experiencing or having witnessed others burning out, and, in the process, often resorting to alcohol and drugs. Gloriah shared:

I was burning... Actually, not even I was, I was burnt out. I began drinking. I was abusing drugs. I was losing myself. I would barely function if I wasn't high. I was worried for myself because I'm like already I'm the gay one. Now, I'm the alcoholic and I'm the drug one. Like, oh, God, one crime at a time. I can't be all these things. Now, because I'm a little bit kinder to myself, my spirit has also begun being kinder to people. I understand people better, I

work with them better. I used to be like a dictator. I was a very terrible leader. Now, a lot of things have changed.

Especially the activists from FARUG thus put emphasis on the need for them to create mechanisms for ‘self-care’ and to prevent activist burnout. To FARUG, some of these mechanisms included to switch off their phones from time to time, to create ‘purely’ social environments for themselves and their members through Social Fridays, and to have Mondays off whenever possible.

4. Conclusion

Through the activists’ rethinking, this chapter encapsulates an important counternarrative to ‘the single tragic story concerning Uganda often presented by Western mainstream media’ (Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018, p. 325), and more broadly the monolithic story of the non-existence of Africa/ns’ LGBTIQ+ activism as outlined previously. . As such, this chapter extends the positive project of decolonization in/as praxis by embracing the sociology of emergences, as described in Chapter 1, by pinpointing the activists’ becoming resisting people practicing ways of being and knowing in their struggle against domination (Santos, 2018b, p. 18). Ultimately, this chapter’s emphasis has been to re-present the activists’ decolonial insurgence (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, pp. 33-34) evident in their resistances against Eurocentric ways of being and knowing LGBTIQ+ activism in Uganda, and of being known as LGBTIQ+ activists and people, and for a localized Ugandan LGBTIQ+ movement.

Resisting the professionalization of the movement and monetization of activism induced by the transversal flows of funding and norm diffusion from the international community emerged repeatedly in the activists’ perspectives on the current state and future of the LGBTIQ+ movement. While acutely aware and critical of these impositions, the activists acknowledged their own part in initially uncritically adopting Western/ized movement principles. Their docility and complicity in their own demise as epistemic agents was explained with the assumed superiority of everything Western/ized in the minds of many Ugandans, the politically, legally, socially, and economically disadvantageous conditions for LGBTIQ+ activists to form horizontal partnerships with other national or regional movements, and the West’s willingness to dictate and to use economic conditionality to shape and shift the Ugandan LGBTIQ+ movement to become the West’s mirror image.

While some activists expressed a sense of ennui towards reclaiming the movement, there was still a strong insurgence to return to the social core of the movement by rethinking their strategies for localizing the Ugandan LGBTIQ+ movement and for advancing societal

acceptance. Some of these strategies included reappropriating visibility to counteract both the demonization and alienation characterising the representation of LGBTIQ+ people by anti-LGBTIQ+ advocates in Uganda, and the victimisation characterising the representation of LGBTIQ+ people in Uganda by pro-LGBTIQ+ advocates from the international community. Relatedly, the activists conjured up many strategies for rethinking their approach to advancing social acceptance including using sports as an arena for '*normalising*' LGBTIQ+ people within '*mainstream*' society, engaging in conversations with immediate family, and altering activist tactics become less streamlined and more '*rogue*' or '*vulgar*.'

To recentre the LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda, the activists moreover acknowledged the need to build intra- and interpersonal capacity in the LGBTIQ+ community instead of having the LGBTIQ+ movement rest on the shoulders of a few notorious and well-known activists and rely on precarious funding streams and donor directions for the movement. Adding to this, there was an explicit want to open and integrate rather than isolate the LGBTIQ+ movement with other movements in Uganda, and to thus further an intersectional understanding of LGBTIQ+ people and politics.

While the chapter aimed to delineate the activists' experiences and expressions beyond their activist identity, this proved to be a moot point as the activists almost unanimously pointed to the inseparability of their personal and political selves, even in situations where they would leave 'official' activism. With this, the activists articulated another point of resistance; the internalised notion of having to be available and the need for navigating levels of closetedness in everyday life. Ultimately, the activists' experiences and perspectives of being an LGBTIQ+ activist in Uganda underscored the ludicrousness of Western/ize philosophy's '*ego-politics of knowledge*' (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 213) by vividly and viscerally re-presenting that ethnic, racial, gender and sexual epistemic location and the epistemic agent that speaks cannot be decoupled in a hermeneutically just world as it would inevitably obscure significant areas of activists' social experience from collective understanding.

Personal & Ideological Bedfellows of Allyship

1. Introduction

Whereas the previous three chapters have centred the LGBTIQ+ activists' experiences of becoming and being activists and of the wider LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda, this chapter turns to the LGBTIQ+ allies appointed by SMUG and FARUG. Arguably reflective of their respective mandates, SMUG mainly identified allies from civil society organizations focused on human rights law, whereas FARUG exclusively identified allies working with or in feminist civil society organizations.²⁰ In the following sections, this chapter firstly outlines the allies' impetus for becoming allies. The chapter then turns to the allies' experiences of being allies including their reflections on coalition building between the LGBTIQ+ movement and 'mainstream' human rights movement, implications of Western/ized donors' involvement, and the personal, professional, and organizational costs of LGBTIQ+ allyship in Uganda. The third section dives into the allies' concerns about using the Western/ized human rights discourse as the vantage point for their allyship and for the LGBTIQ+ movement, and the role of hetero-patriarchal structures in preventing LGBTIQ+ allyship in Uganda. Finally, the chapter offers allies' suggestions for ways to humanize and localize the LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda.

2. Rethinking Reasons for LGBTIQ+ Allyship

2.1. *Anger against Injustices*

As with the PEIs, there was no interview guide nor set line of questioning for the allies. Nevertheless, the PEIs usually commenced with the rather speculative question of why FARUG or SMUG might have identified the respective ally as an ally. Without exception, allies ascribed this to their work as human rights, feminist and/or women rights activists targeting the judiciary or specific areas such as health and education. Shaped by their legal backgrounds, Opiyo, Jacqueline, Tamale, and Isaac unsurprisingly all underscored that as human rights activists, lawyers, and/or academics, they would naturally align themselves with and advocate for the rights of LGBTIQ+ people. Tamale aptly stated:

²⁰ See appendix 8 for a brief description of the allies' professional affiliation and background.

[O]f course I am an ally. I'm a human rights activist, and I don't pick and choose which rights. I'm a social justice activist so that includes sexual minorities.

While Tamale's contention appears self-evident, I nevertheless probed on by asking allies why they had chosen to become and continue to be allies considering the legal, political, and social repression and repercussions of any kind of LGBTIQ+ activism – and therefore also allyship – in Uganda. To this, allies' immediate responses similarly pointed to their human rights and/or feminist ideologies. Yet, as the interviews unfolded, each allies' origin story turned out to be before and beyond their ideological convictions and professional identities and centred around particular personal experiences or relationships.

Jacqueline, for example, conceded that it was not her profession as a human rights lawyer, her work with/in human rights organizations, or the research on access to healthcare for sex workers commissioned by 'Western' donors that had prompted her to become an ally, but her relationship with her sister who is gay. Despite her human rights work, legal background, and want to support her sister, Jacqueline however described feeling very conflicted about becoming an LGBTIQ+ ally, particularly a public and vocal ally, because of her father being a, now retired, well-known Anglican priest in the Church of Uganda, and her having grown up in the Anglican tradition *'knowing that homosexuality's wrong.'* Solidarity with her sister eventually persevered and drove Jacqueline to become an overt LGBTIQ+ ally and collaborate with explicitly LGBTIQ+ organizations and activists:

I think when I do that, the reason I've come to that is, look, if I can't do it for my sister, who else would I do it for? So, in that sense, it's personal. It's like for many people who are HIV activists, that when it hits close to home... I think that sometimes, maybe, the more up close and personal these things are, the more you see them in a different way, in a different light, I think your appreciation of it. And therefore, when I stand up there, I should be standing for a Pepe or a David, whoever, but I'm also standing for my sister. That for me, I would die for her, and so then maybe I would die for anybody else who is like her.

Initially, Nicholas also linked his allyship with his organization's mandate to promote the right to health through access to comprehensive sexuality education and ability to live positively and productively with HIV amongst young people, and the inevitable overlaps between his organization's target groups including MSM, sex workers, and transgender people and that of LGBTIQ+ organizations. Later, Nicholas however asserted that his allyship probably originated from having grown up in *'a very open-minded family'* and yet having witnessed his gay uncle being societally ostracised and having to seek asylum in Canada.

To Isaac, his allyship was not prompted by the hardship of a (queer) relative, but still by meeting and engaging with a queer person. Tracing the genealogy of his own allyship, Isaac deemed meeting Pepe during a TV interview about the AHB 2009 as a transitional encounter. While Isaac had been invited on the show to oppose Pepe, he quickly found this to be an impossibility because of the alignment between their world views:

We had never met, but somehow our views tallied. Our world outlook tallied on live TV, and even him, he was shocked because he expected it'd be somebody in the studio to oppose him. But at least the person would be far more respectful than Pastor Ssempe.²¹ But then there was no opposition from me. So, the whole show actually broke, you know. In the break, this guy wrote to me and said, "But Isaac, I brought you to oppose Pepe. You mean you have no points of disagreement? How can I do the program?" This was backstage. From that whole place, so he said, "You mean, Isaac, there's nothing? You have to challenge Pepe on something."

I'm like, "I don't challenge him on that. That's not my view. I don't have that view." So, he said, "How about this? How about this? How about this? Can you just fake it for the show?." I said, "How can I fake it? I also have a reputation. I have a home, I have family is watching." This is the person they raised. So, they the decision right there to call Ssempe and so he participated by phoning in. So, we did the next half of the interview where Ssempe was taking on both me and Pepe [Laughter]. So when we left the studio, that's when we are relieved and we are talking and we say, "We'll catch up. We'll catch up."

For Opiyo, his journey into human rights law and to LGBTIQ+ rights allyship was not connected to a specific LGBTIQ+ person but rather to his own experiences of growing up in Northern Uganda while it was still ravaged by the Lord Resistance Army (LRA). Having witnessed family and friends being abducted and abused, he decided to pursue the knowledge and tools, which would enable him to address human rights abuses and stand up for those affected by them:

It's a difficult question to answer, and I'm being asked that question over and over again. I've not articulated that in a convincing manner, but I think that ultimately, it's what I call the anger against injustice. Look – I'm a product of a very unfair society. I grew up in Northern Uganda at the height of the war in Northern Uganda. I was sleeping on the street; I was a night commuter [Laughter]. My siblings, my father, close people to me were abducted by the LRA, and I grew up in the frontline of gross human rights abuse.

²¹ Martin Ssempe is a Ugandan pastor, and the founder of the Makere Community Church. Ssempe is internationally known for his strong and vulgar advocacy for the AHB 2009, depicting gay pornography including fisting, anilingus, and coprophilia in churches etc. These gave rise to a viral meme, "Eat Da Poo Poo."

And from a very early age, I decided that I wanted to do something about my situation. First, I wanted to be a journalist to write about it. I quickly found out that that's not good enough. I'm going to law school. And so, for me, it's just the anger against injustice. The sense that we can't allow an injustice to continue because it could be me, it could be my sister, it could be my neighbour. Okay?

It was just that anger that made me channel my energy and effort to try and use my privilege to help those who I see myself in them, I see myself in them. I've defended a rebel leader who was abducted as a child who himself abducted my sister [Laughter]. So, I see myself in those people, and I want them to end up like me, not the way they could have ended up. That's why I do what I do.

2.2. Room for 'Bad Women'

Comparably, the self-declared feminist allies, Solome, Lillian, Brenda, Jacqueline, and Tamale, stated that being a feminist meant working towards equality and equity for all genders and sexualities, and anything less was considered anti-feminist practice. The perhaps most succinct phrasing came from Lillian who asserted that as a feminist *'there are no ifs and buts.'* Despite their strong ideological convictions, most of the feminist allies conceded that the move into LGBTIQ+ allyship had been a long and difficult process of un- and relearning. When first joining MEMPROW, an explicitly feminist organization, about nine years ago Lillian shared:

[W]hen I had just joined, I was like what is this, you know? And I even took my mother, and my mother was like "You leave that organization!" But I was inquisitive. I wanted to know more and more [...].

You get to understand human rights before anything else, you understand that everyone is born with rights. Like, everyone has rights! Why would you make it about what someone does in her or his bedroom instead of seeing it at this level? What about the heterosexuals? Who minds about what they do and even heterosexuals they do things differently. Like sex we don't do sex the same way, but no one bothers [...].

It isn't like you wake up one day and understand it's a learning process. Gloriah at FARUG has offered to give us a session as staff to understand the issues better. Acceptance is the first place.

To many of the feminist allies, their LGBTIQ+ allyship was ignited by them starting to see the diversity of women alongside the separatist tendencies within the Ugandan feminist/women's movement. While interviewed separately, Solome, Brenda, and Jacqueline all recalled a particularly eye-opening meeting in the Uganda Feminist Forum. Jacqueline described the following transitional moment:

We have in Uganda what is called the Uganda Feminist Forum, and that is a forum of women who openly identify as feminist. The Uganda Feminist Forum is a space where we learn, unlearn, relearn, like just have the tough, hard conversations we need to have about our politics as feminists. It was during those kinds of times that I started becoming aware of the array of women, and the array of rights for women.

In one of the meetings, I remember in Jinja that we held, there were two sex workers, and I believe Jacqueline Kasha, who is a founding ED of FARUG. I remember because they were in that room, some of the women walked out of that meeting, literally left and drove back to Kampala, because in their view, they could not be in the same room as bad women.

Describing the same event, Solome exclaimed that it really cemented the budding realisation for her that the Ugandan feminist/women's movement was not only unwilling and unready to include 'queer women,' but to include anyone not conforming to hetero-patriarchal gender and sexuality norms.

[B]y then we were still actually just talking as women, even within us as women, lesbian women did not have space, sex workers did not have space, people who do not identify as male or female didn't have space [...]

Whenever there would be violations that were targeting queer women, there would be a lot of hesitance on the part of the collective as the women's movement because people were saying 'oh, but you see those women, the bad women, you know, we weren't sure, and for me it became something that I really needed to delve deeper into, because by then I started being uncomfortable with just saying 'I'm a woman's rights activist.'

As a result, Solome started reflecting on her understanding of power, patriarchy, activism, and the feminist/women's movement, which eventually led her to take a deliberate stance for the rights and inclusion of LGBTIQ+ people:

I started questioning power, I started questioning many things. I started being uncomfortable with patriarchy, very deeply uncomfortable. I also started asking why there are things that, you know, we replicate the same system of the oppressors anyway.

So, on a personal level, I felt it's very important for me and the number of people that felt that way to deepen our feminist thinking, to deepen our activism but also to roll out to say we need to build a bigger feminist movement.

People that believe that all women are - irrespective of their diversity or even also how they identify, because that is not important - have an equal right. So that is not where my personal journey began.

While Solome, Tamale and Lillian's allyship could be said to be mainly ideologically driven, Jacqueline (as above) and Brenda both described their journeys into allyship as

personally motivated. Though Brenda started her interview by listing her many accomplishments with/in human rights organizations and underscoring that '*[w]hy I say I'm a feminist is I'm proud of this work. That's the reason why I am motivated to be an ally of LGBTI people,*' she eventually conceded that her incentive to become an LGBTIQ+ ally was when a friend disclosed her (homo)sexuality to Brenda:

She was like, "I feel this. I'm attracted to women. I don't know. Maybe God has to come... God, I feel like okay, you're telling me I'm a woman but I'm a man." She really struggled and she confided in me of all people. That was challenging [...]. That was the beginning of me saying now, if someone can come and confide with me their sexual orientation, what is it that I have to do?

While Brenda initially brushed off her friend's disclosure as a joke, and felt uncomfortable with the idea of homosexuality, she later realised that it was no joke, and that she wanted to do something to support her friend:

But because she confided in me as a friend, "How do I deal with what I'm feeling?" It challenged me to really start looking through ways in which I can support very marginalized people in our communities, yes.

A crosscutting theme for allies was the difficulty to find ways to support LGBTIQ+ people. Brenda explained her difficulties were rooted in first having her own views on gender and sexuality challenged, and later in LGBTIQ+ organizations not being well-known nor visible at the time.

That was in 2006. We didn't know about SMUG, we didn't know about FARUG at that time. At that time, we didn't know much about those. Because of the environment and the legal issues of registering LGBTI organizations even when you're asking for which organization can support, it was really a closed in, closed in information. So, it was very difficult. Now, because of that, I started trying to interest myself with human rights organizations to try and see how I can be part of the campaign against an attack against sexual minorities in Uganda.

After having approached various human rights organizations in Uganda, Brenda described being both disillusioned by these organizations' disinclination to work with women's rights and the rights of sexual minorities as well as with the women's movement's resistance to collaborating with the LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda. Finding herself at a loss, Brenda eventually decided to advance her unlearning and relearning by travelling to the USA to do a

master's degree at a university with LGBTI studies, which to her gave her 'the zeal' to work with and for LGBTIQ+ rights. Brenda observed:

[W] are just trying to dismantle patriarchy which causes all these issues of gender identity, gender roles and what. For me, that keeps me going to be an ally for LGBTI persons.

3. Coalition, Collisions, & Costs of Allyship

3.1. The Rise of the Coalition of Civil Society Organizations

The allies repeatedly underscored the continuous lack of awareness, acknowledgement and advocacy for – or locating of – the rights of LGBTIQ+ people within 'mainstream' human rights civil society organizations in Uganda as one of the greatest barriers to LGBTIQ+ allyship and to the LGBTIQ+ movement. To understand this assertion, it is worth outlining the allies' experiences of the 'The Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights and Constitutional Law (the Coalition).' For context, the Coalition consisted of 51 Ugandan civil society organizations coming together because of the tabling of the AHB 2009. While the Coalition set out to oppose the AHB 2009, its vantage point was not, as reflected in the Coalition's full name, the rights of LGBTIQ+ people but human rights and constitutional law. This is also reflected in the Coalition's (NA) published critical analysis of the AHB 2009, which in part stated:

A much better title for this Bill would have been the "The Anti Civil Society Bill", the "Anti Public Health Bill", or the "Anti-Constitution Bill" [...]. As a matter of fact, this Bill represents one of the most serious attacks to date on the 1995 Constitution and on the key human rights protections enshrined in the Constitution [...].²²

To the allies, the tabling of the AHB 2009 led to the formation of the Coalition because the bill brought a form of awakening about the continuously state-induced shrinking of civil society space amongst local civil society actors. As Brenda stated:

[W]e all saw a shrinking civil society space. That was the time they were attacking the media. They were attacking civil society organizations, shutting them down, political activists were being shut down. For me, I remember at that time, it is because everyone could tell that now the civic space is getting narrower and narrower.

²² The Coalition continued to refer to multiple articles in the Constitution including; Article 20: Fundamental rights and freedoms are inherent and not granted by the State; Article 21: Right to Equality and Freedom from discrimination; Article 22: The Right to Life (the death penalty provisions); Article 27: The Right to Privacy; Article 29: Right to freedom of conscience, expression, movement, religion, assembly and association (this includes freedom of speech, Academic freedom and media freedom); Article 30: Right to Education; Article 32: Affirmative Action in favour of marginalised groups and Article 36 on the Rights of Minorities

In addition to a sense of unity, some allies underscored that the Coalition brought a novel space for mainstream human rights organizations to become aware of and address their own personal and organizational queer/homophobia as noted by Tamale:

I think since that coalition that is really the silver lining around that dark cloud of the AHB. When that Coalition was formed, there as a lot of awareness raising within human rights organizations, so many organizations which would never have touched LGBT issues with the longest rod sat in those sessions.

Many of them, actually because of their donors would ask them “are you part of the Coalition?”, so many of them were quote on quote forced to join the Coalition. But so many of them were changed, their mindset, because they had all these, you know, preconceived ideas about what homosexuality was and all that [...].

As alluded to above, allies observed that most of the organizations that joined the Coalition were not intrinsically but financially motivated to further LGBTIQ+ rights because of pressures from their respective donor(s). As cynically put by Opiyo:

I think for the first time, there was an acceptance that AHA was not just a law that targeted the LGBTI. There was a threat to the broader civil society movement. And so, people came together, not because they supported the LGBTI community, but out of their own self-interest.

Opiyo further contended that ‘[t]he funding infrastructure encourages, I think for me, an unhelpful posturing by many human rights organizations,’ which to him in effect meant:

[T]he Coalition did not in any way substantially change mainstream human rights movement or their views towards the LGBTI community, it really wasn't. It didn't change much. But it did provide a platform for the community to at least infuse themselves and refuse to be ignored.

While not having been a part of the Coalition, and only becoming an LGBTIQ+ ally after the AHB 2009 was tabled, Lillian echoed Opiyo’s observations about the ‘posturing’ of civil society organizations in what she called the ‘pretence’ of civil society:

Civil Society you know there's a lot of pretence. When it comes to real issues they don't want to appear, they don't want to. I wouldn't say we're all so good but at least we tried to be in their spaces, and they invite us for some spaces. I don't see it so much. I see them fighting for themselves.

All allies raised the question of whether it is even accurate to refer to a human rights let alone LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda. For example, Opiyo asserted:

We're not building a human rights movement here; we're building small organizations that are professional. There's no human rights movement here. So, perhaps we need to get back to building a human rights movement that is more intentional about what they're doing than driven by you need to get a job, to get a grant.

Isaac similarly contended:

So, along the way, this has become a job – a job, a lifestyle, experience. So, if we look at state civil society organizations from that perspective in Uganda, we miss something. The state has allowed this civil society organizations to exist if they can only perform a particular role. And that is, "We have given you a diversification of your civil society. Stick to your area. If you're in health, stick to health." So, these actors are selfishly unwilling, they're selfishly invested in the status quo. And they have donors that enable it.

3.2. The Implications of Pretence LGBTIQ+ Allyship

The lack of intrinsic motivation was seen to have four main implications by the allies. First, that ('Western') donors incentivising – or forcing – and setting the direction for many of the participating civil society organizations fed directly into the discourse of LGBTIQ+ rights as a foreign ('Western') import and of LGBTIQ+ people – and their allies – as 'recruiters' of people into homosexuality. Solome encapsulated this tension:

[T]he Coalition donors wanted to influence the agenda of the Coalition. You have to allow it to be grounded for people to say this is not something that is imported, this is our own issue [...].

Second, the 'forced' or rather monetised allyship resulted in tensions and lack of consistency and coherence from the participating organizations, which had detrimental effects on the inter-movement building. As a member of the Coalition, Solome observed:

Any coalition has tensions and fighting, especially when the money comes. Before the money comes, you are all a big Happy Family. After the money comes, the fights and the tensions begin. So that one was expected. However, with the Coalition, we did not put in place mechanisms of conflict resolution and management. So, along the way, some of the very active excited people that were there at the beginning, they got tired of the tensions, they got tired of the negativity that comes with the fighting, so they just stepped back.

Repeatedly, allies underlined that posturing or pretence allyship misaligned with their understanding of both activism and allyship as a persistent and resistant commitment to dismantling oppressive structures and to standing with marginalised people irrespective of the monetary or statutory rewards. For example, Brenda asserted:

It is this kind of activism which you do whether you have money, or you do not have money. That if you see they are attacking on TV an LGBTI person, you are not going to just sleep. You don't even think about it, no. It's this activism work that is part of you.

I'm not talking about allies who are allies because of the work they do. It might be that that is what I do. Because even in the feminist movement, we have seen those who, in the women's movement, those who say they are activists, but they are doing it because they are employed. I am telling you, you find them in spaces with religious leader and they will not challenge some gender stereotypical comments.

Further, the pretence and precarious allyship exhibited by some organizations was seen to make the LGBTIQ+ activists distrustful and reproachful towards allies. This resulted in some allies turning away from the Coalition and the LGBTIQ+ movement. Solome explained:

There's a time, when the Anti-Homosexuality Act was presented, by then I was still in Akina Mama Africa. We did a lot of work, set up a coalition, brought like-minded actors together, as much as possible deconstructing the thought that act was supposed to be an issue only for, by then they will call it homosexuals, because we wanted to create a level responsibility for any human rights activist to say:

'We can't have a law that is like that but also a law that attacks people for who they are, that is unconstitutional, it's contrary to the international treaty but also, it's contrary to African cultural beliefs and practices of collectivity.'

Along the way, of course we began with no money, when money comes, you know how things change, so at some point in time, I didn't feel welcome. There is a particular meeting where I sat and some of the activists were saying 'ah, you people, you're just part of this because of the money.' I was so offended, I remember I disengaged for a whole year.

A final implication of the influx of donor influence and money articulated by the allies was that the LGBTIQ+ movement started becoming 'NGOised' as Solome put it. As 'a response to the funding climate,' Solome asserted that the reality – and requirement – to formally organise kicked in for the LGBTIQ+ movement, which to her both obliterated the social foundation of the movement and hampered activism directed at the structural factors leading to the AHB 2009. In a longer elaboration, Solome stated:

[...] then things started becoming NGOized where, which was the result of two factors; a) the more the movement started growing, the more the reality of organising formally and when you say formal organising, it meant you had to register, you had to have a registration certificate, you had to have a bank

account, you had to have a board, you have to create structures, so it's now actually took away taking away the safe space and being converted into a formal workspace [...].

At the same time, the formal organising was really a way in which the... it was a response to the funding climate, and I don't have to blame the activists, because we also rely on external funding. It was a response to the funding climate where donors were not.... and for some of us, we were so uncomfortable that donors were giving \$3000 or \$5000 and saying you can't talk about issues of oppression and systemic exclusion with \$5000 - What is that? So, their excuse was to say you know what, we need to work with groups where we are reducing our risks, we need to be formalized [...].

Describing funding as a 'double-edged sword' that both forces the movement to formalise but also facilitates its growth in some respects, Solome added that the funding climate had also led to the fragmentation of the LGBTIQ+ movement, enabling many new LGBTIQ+ organizations to proliferate.

[E]very other day there is a new group that forms. And actually, now, it is generally within the gay and MSM movement. We have so many small organizations!

When people disagree about something, they don't even sit to reflect, they go and create a new space. When they disagree about basic basic things, they don't even take time to say what is the culture within the organization. So with the expansion of resourcing, then the groups had to expand but also people had the right to organize.

So, it is a two-edged sword. [W]hen you talk about the formalizing and localising, it's one of the effects of the movement moving beyond working as a movement to where people have to write reports and proposals and set up formal institutions and go and meet donors.

3.3. The Costs of LGBTIQ+ Allyship

Whereas the personal, ideological, and inter-movement struggles of becoming and being an LGBTIQ+ ally in Uganda have been outlined thus far, the allies also highlighted the sociopolitical conditions and precariousness as a key barrier to LGBTIQ+ allyship. Isaac asserted:

The general precariousness I would say here also, because there is a lack of a safety net. If you lose your job, you cannot provide for yourself or your family or you don't have access to all these institutions like education and healthcare. So, I also think the precariousness of the sociopolitical establishment makes it harder also to be an ally, at least openly because there's more at risk than for instance let's say if I'm an ally in Denmark, even if I lose my job for being an ally to Black Lives Matter or LGBT, whatever, the state will still provide.

The lack of a safety net and the potential costs of LGBTIQ+ allyship emerged vividly through the allies' relational, professional, and organizational experiences of being allies. Opiyo stated:

It's come at a real cost, a real cost. I've lost relationships, I've lost houses just because I work with LGBTI people. So, it's difficult, it's difficult.

Relational costs were of particular concern to allies. Most allies described being hesitant to be public about their LGBTIQ+ allyship out of fear of reactions from their families and reactions towards their families. As the daughter of a publicly known Anglican priest, Jacqueline's allyship not only had her grapple with sexual morality norms, but also with the increased visibility and the potential implications of her allyship for her connection with/in her family and the Anglican community:

[the father] became one of the more popular well-known Anglican prelates [...] So, even when I have long left home or whatever, there are people who will see me on the street and identify me as Reverend's child. So, there was often that, "How do I tread this for people who will confront me?" [...] Again, knowing the kind of tradition that we grew up in, they'll either pray for you or tell you, "You have to leave that job, you're disobeying." And I didn't want to go through all that, so the easier thing is just to deny, right?

[...] for one of the Prides, I was asked to be the chief marcher [...] I believe it was Pepe actually who, I can't remember, either SMUG or FARUG asked me to be their chief walker, and I'm like, "Why? I can't be seen. My goodness. And if there's media and then what?" But yeah, it was more the being scared. I think in some senses, we all sort of keep up appearances, for whoever it is and for whatever reasons.

And so maybe now I wouldn't, but then it was like, "Ah. I have too..." Not much too much at stake in the sense of... But yeah, it's just too many people to protect. Like, I can't. I don't want my questions from my parents, I don't want questions from Christians who, because I'm still connected to that community, I don't want questions from.

Adding to Jacqueline's experience, Solome described the price paid by her children in school because of her public allyship:

At a personal level, I paid a price for my allyship. My children would always be bullied in school, I had to change them in schools, I had to make sure they go to International School, get out of the UNAP curriculum because when the bullying would happen, it would be the teachers and the children to tell them 'ah, your mother, you know what, she whatever, gays', you know, so much and there was still young.

Having grown up in what she described as a diverse family in terms of politics, religion, and class, Solome's allyship had not caused any contention within her family, but had with her first husband's family:

In my first marriage, they [the husband and in-laws] had issues about anything to do with rights as basic as women's land rights. They would always say 'you're embarrassing us, you're always on TV, it shows that you're so dissatisfied', and then when it came to the vagina monologues or LGBTIQ or sex work, it was really a huge, a huge battle.

Further to this experience:

And then when I was doing my divorce, I temporarily lost custody of my children because of my politics, because the judge was saying my parenting skills are lacking, because I support LGBTIQ persons and sex worker, so I am questionable as a parent who can raise a child.

Informed by their own experiences, allies expressed empathy with the civil society organizations, religious and cultural leaders, and others hesitant to stand up for and with LGBTIQ+ people despite being sympathetic. Reflecting on this tension, Brenda said:

[W]hen you talk about the issues of LGBTI in most civil society organizations, they feel for their cause, but they still care about their families and their communities. They would say, "Oh, if my family gets to know, my husband is going to divorce me, my children will feel this." So, there is lack of comfort that you find them in some space [...].

Reputationally, many allies described having felt the brunt of LGBTIQ+ allyship too. As perhaps the most prominent Ugandan scholar on LGBTIQ+ rights, Sylvia Tamale recalled being named the 'Worst Woman of the Year' by New Vision, Uganda's biggest daily newspaper, based on an end-of-year poll in 2003. Adding to this, she observed:

Some people think I'm mad, some people think I'm crazy, some people think I'm paid. But whatever they say, I don't care. I just say what I have to say. And I write, because I'm a scholar, and I do a lot of writing on these issues.

Most allies shared experiences of accusations of being gay or lesbian, promoting homosexuality, and/or recruiting into homosexuality from out- and inside the human rights and feminist movements in Uganda. While these sentiments caused some allies to deliberately distance themselves from parts of the human rights or feminist movements, or seek employment in other organizations, some were forcibly removed. In addition to personal relationships, LGBTIQ+ allyship cost Opiyo his leading position among lawyers in Uganda:

I was a pretty big guy [Laughter]. I was managing the affairs of all the lawyers in this country until because we filed a case in court, the case was high profile, bastards were preaching with my name, approaching my parents, the Christian lawyers in the Law Society organized to kick me out, and they did. So, it was a difficult moment, a difficult moment. I think I found myself crying several times.

Many allies furthermore described harassment and violence from both law enforcement and the general population. Describing a situation where she was supporting LGBTIQ+ people who had been arrested in a bar, Brenda shared her arrest and a beating in a slum where one of the arrestees lived:

When the bill came in, it was even tough because you'd hear from radio calling sessions, you'd hear from the public. "These people must be killed." [...] The police arrested them because they were in a bar. For me, I went there to support. When I went there to support, I was also arrested. They released us of course.

Then eventually, for him, he broke his leg. When he broke his leg, he went and stayed with the mom in - it's a slum somewhere. Then I visited but he was still in closet. He didn't want the mother to know. So, we're giving care support. When I went there and they told the mother that these are people who are recruiting your child into homosexuality, I was beaten.

Allies also underscored profound challenges towards but also within their organizations. The challenges within commonly pertained to colleagues' homophobic sentiments or reluctance to learn about or engage with LGBTIQ+ people, the management's board's disinclination to engage with LGBTIQ+ issues of any kind, and the unwillingness of other civil society organizations collaborating with the ally's organization. However, challenges within organizations included hosting events including LGBTIQ+ people. Such challenges came from other non-LGBTIQ+ participants reluctant to be in the same room as LGBTIQ+ people, the risk of neighbours finding out about the presence of LGBTIQ+ people or reporting it to the police. Challenges also came from participating LGBTIQ+ people behaving in ways that could put the organization or themselves at risk. For example, Lillian shared:

But for us from the moment they come this is a free space if you want to ask anything if you want to do anything... But we do discouraged them from loitering around because it may bring problems for us, and maybe the challenge, because many of them are very frustrated and very rejected and angry and what, so sometimes they tend to behave in a certain way like they come when they're already drunk or maybe they spent the night drinking and they smoke around but we talk them through these issues.

The organizational costs of LGBTIQ+ allyship were well exemplified by the organizations that hosted the Coalition described above. Working within one of the hosting organizations, Akina Mama wa Afrika, Solome recalled the ‘*witch hunt*’ at the time:

The state started witch-hunting organizations that were hosting it. When you look at the witch hunts that the refugee law project faced, even in Akina Mama, we used to get that witch hunt. What helped us is that we are an international organization that will not even keep all our money in Uganda, some of it will be kept in London in our London office, in our London accounts or in Geneva.

So, when they came to refugee law project, remember it is under the university which is a government institution, it became challenging, the witch hunt became difficult. EDs having to go into exile [...].

While it could be thought of as in the past, the allies shared that they live in constant fear of their organizations being either raided, shut down, or targeted by new government laws intent on curbing civil society voice and space, and of being evicted by their landlords. As Brenda explained:

There was the Public Order Management Act and the NGO Act. You can't know whether they will renew your license or not. Those things are scary. We have the Anti-Money Laundering Act because now... These are things that civil search organizations worry about, what is life after this? And yet, you have these people you're looking at, your constituents. So, the legal regime that is trying to curtail the work of civil society voices is really scary. But I think in terms of, are we organized our civil society?

Further to this, Brenda indicated that civil society organizations fear ‘GONGOs’, (government non-government organizations):

We think government has planted some organizations doing work as though they are purely NGOs, but they are planted by government. So, people are careful with that. They are really mindful and that scares them away.

Lastly, allies underscored implications of LGBTIQ+ allyship on their organization’s ability to conduct other forms of rights advocacy, because their respective organizations’ work was often discredited by the judiciary and other organizational or individual opponents. Opiyo shared an example of how Chapter Four’s work for other civil liberties such as opposing the NGO Act was attacked:

We were perhaps the leading organization in the campaign against the NGO Act and we had some resources to do some advocacy around it to bring

together governance-based organizations and those who are providing services to show them the impact of this law on their activities. And we were supposed to work with the religious groups, the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda just chased us away, says, "You're agents of homosexuals. You're here to spread homosexuality." "Who's talking about LGBTI, I'm talking about the NGO Law and its impact on your work."

In general, allies admitted that while proud of and committed to their allyship, many had experienced or witnessed other allies becoming burnt out and bitter. Brenda proclaimed:

[F]or a long time, we are burnt out, we are bitter. Some of us do this activist work because of who we are. That comes with a lot of trauma, with a lot of stress and it drains us. We end up not enjoying our activity more because we rarely take care of ourselves.

4. Rights or Ubuntu?

Despite the many struggles of LGBTIQ+ allyship, allies did not express any intention of abandoning their allyship. Yet, they did express a sense of impasse in terms of using a rights-based approach in its current form to further inter-movement building and counteract societal and political homophobia. Speaking about her now published book ‘Decolonization and Afrofeminism,’ Tamale inadvertently summarised the crosscutting concerns over using rights as a vantage point for their activism and allyship:

I am gravitating away from the concept of rights, because of its history and its liberal underpinnings. We have been singing rights for decades and nothing has changed, so I've become very sceptical about you not using right as the avenue for liberation whether it is for women or sexual minorities, leaning more now towards traditional indigenous concepts that resonate with people here like Ubuntu.

You know, can we tap into those kinds of ideologies which resonate with people. When you bring this list, you know, long list of rights and go and read them to people, they just bounce of them, it doesn't resonate with them at all. So, I think we need to change our strategies and our outlook, our concept how we approach leadership - as a movement generally.

Addressing the common misconception that ‘Ubuntu’ is a South African concept, Tamale explained:

[I]t's a very African concept. We are connected with nature, we connected with each other. I am because we are, okay?! Not like the Cartesian concept "I think, therefore I am." So, as I'm preparing for my retirement, I'm rethinking many of the strategies and concepts that we have been following, because it is just not working. And really, you have to go back to history to

know why rights were steeped in capitalist, it is about protection of property, that's really basically at the core what it is about.

Speaking to the liberal tendencies embedded in the 'Western' human rights discourse, Isaac similarly stated *that 'the language of human rights is based on focusing on the state as the main accountability duty bearer and everything, but it ignores the threats from society.'* Opiyo further observed that the pursuit of the 'Western' concept of rights meant that both the LGBTIQ+ movement and the civil society movement have failed to find localized and context-specific ways of organising:

You can accuse the entire civil society movement of failing to find indigenous ways of organizing. It's even more so for the LGBTI community. We've failed to find indigenous, authentic, context-specific ways of organizing and pushing this discussion, that we think about ourselves in the context of the way they're community organizing elsewhere.

Knowing the context of the work here, we know that that's not going to work, it's going to be counterproductive, and yet we fail to find new and context-specific ways of organizing.

4.1. The Letter of the Law or the Letter for LGBTIQ+ Liberation

Following Tamale's proclamation about the liberal and Cartesian underpinnings of a rights framework used in Uganda, a predominant (self-)critique raised by the allies was an overemphasis on the law rather than social ties and attitudes as the object and subject for the LGBTIQ+ movement and civil society organizations in general. Despite being a human rights lawyer, Opiyo was highly critical of the emphasis put on changing legal frameworks:

[W]e are overly focused on this as lawyers for taking the core problems and legal problems. It is not a legal problem, it is a cultural problem, it's a mindset problem. It's a much longer, much more... So, in order to be able to change this, you have to be invested in the long run and look at things that will change attitudes and minds.

In explaining the drivers of this legalistic tunnel vision, Opiyo stated:

Look, the whole thing about – it's not just LGBTI, in all aspects of our life – if there's a problem, enact a law. If there's a problem, parliament must enact a law. The belief in criminal sanction as a deterrent is so pervasive that almost people think that once there's a law, the problem is resolved. But it's much more than a law.

First because even those laws, the process of enactment is top-heavy. People in Kampala sit and draft a law and pass it. We have a law against female genital mutilation. People are still mutilating girls in the east because they

have no idea why this law is important. So, I think for me the perception that criminal sanction would sort out any problem is one that has become so pervasive, partly because of our history. But I think that the bigger problem, maybe there are too many lawyers. Too many lawyers, call it a red volume mentality.

According to allies, there are several reasons for the law becoming the primary focal point for the LGBTIQ+ and civil society movements in Uganda. First, with the tabling of the AHB 2009, the LGBTIQ+ movement had to shift their focus to the law, to the judiciary, as a matter of survival. Second, as pointed out by Opiyo above and echoed by Tamale, and Isaac, the state uses the law to position itself and serve its interests. Third, the international community, particularly diplomats within Uganda, want quick and tangible results to showcase to the countries they represent. Speaking to the latter point, Opiyo remarked:

Look, I think that these ambassadors are well-meaning, and sometimes their actions have good results, their involvement in the COSF case, other cases, but I think they're very naive, and they do it with a fear of their foreign press. Ambassadors here live in fear of their home or their own domestic press, "If I don't do this, the press will kill me." And so, I think they're doing this not to support the local community but to respond to pressures in their domestic capitals, both from organized groups there and the press [...]. I don't think they're invested in the long-term support to the community, the support is very hard work, very short-staffed, and that doesn't help out.

Complementing Opiyo's assertion about short- versus long-term investment and Tamale's avowal of rights as '*steeped in capitalist about capitalism*', Solome furthermore addressed the '*capitalist thinking*' fusing into the LGBTIQ+ movement in the form of the demands for productivity in tangible and numerical forms such as decriminalization, the neglect of building agency, capacity, and community, and of the dismissal of alternative modes of measuring progress:

For instance, when you talk about decrim, there will be that paper that says the law was annulled or we have a new law, instead of saying that ok the capacity, the agency has been built, people can engage. If someone would sit at home and lament and also, they are in the closet, they are now bold enough to go out there and say I am gay and it's okay.

Because for many and it's all even around the capitalist thinking, how capitalism operates, where you have to tick the boxes and tick all the stars, so where it is about counting what you achieved but also where is not around building agency, building community because that one you can't measure easily.

Jacqueline's reflections on her own process of unlearning what she had been taught as a lawyer during her evolving LGBTIQ+ allyship, resonate with Opiyo's observations:

I think the assumption is that, yes, you do not criminalise a person for who they are and didn't choose to be, right? I get that. But it doesn't go to the root of the stigma and the discrimination that causes laws like... So, yes, we can take it off our statute books, right? But I can still deny you a house, I can still deny you food, I can still deny you your very existence, right? I can still chase you out of my school because you're gay. So, I think the larger question is... I get it, I understand. And as a lawyer who was... I guess we've often been taught somehow that if you remove the legal obstacles, suddenly people are free, and I learned it takes a lot more to be free.

The final reason for the overemphasis on the law for LGBTIQ+ activism and allyship was suggested to be found in the education of lawyers. In a vehement critique of the 'establishment' and 'smart-ass' lawyers, Isaac, himself a lawyer, claimed that part of the problem is that the 'African intelligentsia' (within law) has not been critically interrogated or played a critical role in producing or publishing knowledge to challenge dominant post-war discourses:

Like I said, the Ugandan individual, the Ugandan elite, is an interesting creature. The Ugandan intelligentsia. Yeah, probably it's part of the whole critique of the African intelligentsia. Post-war, post-Cold War, there hasn't been a systematic interrogation of the role of the African intelligentsia [...].

Actually, some teachers at O Level help kids aspire. I mean, that's why there's so much interest in university education. So, somewhere, someone's doing it right, helping kids get an aspirational desire for an intellectually grounded education. So, they think they'll find this in university. Then they come to university, and they find that everything has given way, the center has ceased to hold. Everything is in disarray, and the academics are not confident [T]here's just no ambition.

Expanding Isaac's connection between the law and education, Tamale argued that the problem is a lack critical engagement with the coloniality of the education system itself, lulling people into complacency with directions set out by the 'West':

[E]ven in the formal education system, I mean it's just ridiculous for example we learn about the French Revolution, we learn about... Nothing about the Haiti Revolution, that's not in the syllabus, and that is not accidental - very very deliberate... I mean when I was doing research for this book, I was shocked by this kind of history that I discovered, which I have never heard about, and I'm a professor, so you can imagine the genocides in Namibia by the Germans... There's nothing in our history syllabus from primary to

secondary to university about Leopold in Congo nothing but we learn about the Jewish Holocaust.

It is all very deliberate, so we really have to wake up and you know... So that we... if I don't know about what the Belgium the Belgians did in Congo, if I don't know what the British did to the Mau Mau and the Mau Mau movement, you know, what they did to, you know, and all I learn about is how these colonialists helped in developing quote on quotes Africa, building railway, building roads, that we are really meant to transport their raw materials, the raw materials that they were stealing from us, so narrative is very very important - how you tell stories is very, very important in in placating people in in dulling them into doing nothing...

Do you know what, it is re-story, we need to re-story!

4.2. Changing the Narrative

When considering how to 're-story' as the LGBTIQ+ movement, Opiyo underscored the importance of changing the narrative from 'LGBT rights' to 'the rights of LGBT+ people' for two primary reasons; firstly, to counteract the *'homophobic narrative of the radical Christian movement'* of there being a special category of rights for LGBTIQ+ people and secondly, *'to locate your work with the broader human rights community and help to deal with the isolation question that the community faces.'* When pressed on the importance of changing the narrative away from 'LGBT rights' compared to for example women's rights or children's rights, Opiyo explained that the sentiments towards LGBTIQ+ people are quite different from that of women and children as they are not a socially controversial issue and *don't 'elicit the sort of vitriolic, deep-seated hatred that LGBTI individuals'* experience. Therefore, a different narrative is needed.

Challenging the Homophobic Narrative of the Radical Christian Movement

Starting with the first reason for changing the narrative, all allies ascribed a predominant role to (Christian) religion and religious actors for the prevalence of homophobia in Uganda. Having grappled with the tension between her religious upbringing and her LGBTIQ+ allyship, Jacqueline observed:

[T]he Bible came with the sword, right? So, they've always been bedfellows. I know that many of... I mean, now we're going into an election season. Literally, people seek out the prelates to endorse them. They are kingmakers in our communities in that sense. They're opinion leaders. They are also largely male. It's a male coalition [...].

Despite religious actors primarily being a ‘*male coalition*,’ Jacqueline, alongside the other feminist allies, moreover, articulated the conundrum of Ugandan feminists identifying with their religion before their feminist ideology:

Because we are a British colony, Christianity came along with the colonizers. And so in a sense, we've bought into the Bible as our guide, and so if the Bible says homosexuality is wrong, it is wrong, even when you're a feminist because I think people identify first probably as their religion [...].

When asked how Ugandans can on the one hand reject LGBTIQ+ people and LGBTIQ+ rights as a foreign ‘Western’ import, but on the other hand follow and defend (modern Christian) religion, the answers were uniform. Putting the religious stronghold into a geo-political and geo-historical context, Opiyo explained:

So, I think it's ignorance. It's simple ignorance and lack of knowledge. The truth is that very few Ugandans have encountered LGBTI individuals, so they have no idea [...].

I've spoken to doctors who nobody's identified to them as lesbian or as trans and they have no idea. So, there's a real lack of knowledge, ignorance, but also, I think a deliberate attempt at revisionism of our history. Because if you look at traditional African societies, different sexual expressions existed before the contact with Arab traders from the East and Western colonial and religious groups from the West.

And they attempt to try and whitewash that historical fact by what I call cultural imperialist, Christian cultural imperialist. This has made people believe very strongly that this [LGBTIQ+ identities and expressions] is imported from the West. I think that the reverse is true. What has been imported is homophobia, it's hatred.

Jacqueline added that there is no norm or space for critical questioning:

And Tanja, again, the religion that was handed down to us was also the kind, "Don't ask, don't tell. It is what it is, take it." And so anything I think that causes a questioning, when you're taught, "You do not question," right? God's word is infallible. So, yes, "How dare you?" So, I won't question where it came from, who brought it, why, did they have ulterior motives. If faith and spirituality is part of who we are as humanity, what was our faith and spirituality, why is it suddenly bad and evil and dark and satanic and theirs isn't? We both rely on rituals; we both pray to a deity.

As such, one of the strategies for moving forward was to invest more in identifying and mobilising religious leaders as allies.

There could be allies but allies may not feel as protected as they would want in the religious institutions, at all levels, even at community level. But at least, what we are seeing is we are seeing some bit of audience in Uganda here. They will listen. Which is also one good thing because others will just push you away, "We don't want to call attentions."

Acknowledging that many religious leaders face additional exposure and risk of backlash as LGBTIQ+ allies, Brenda therefore observed a reluctance from religious leaders who are sympathetic to LGBTIQ+ people or who are LGBTIQ+:

I'm not sure how to engage them [...]. Even when we want to ask them if we are to engage, give us talking points. What can we use in terms of maybe biblical teaching or the Koranic teaching and engage them from that, it's not something they are really open to doing.

Jacqueline however expressed more optimistic sentiments about engaging religious leaders given the successes that FARUG and SMUG have had in engaging other otherwise unwilling actors through 'behind-the-scenes' work:

But just as SMUG and FARUG and others were doing the behind-the-scene work to create allies among the police in Entebbe to even allow us to have a quiet, underground, away-from-the-public Pride, I guess in the same way, I'm assuming that there are some who are working slowly [Laughter] but surely, hopefully, to win over religious allies.

Situating the rights of LGBTIQ+ People in the Human Rights Movement

The need for inter-movement building and strengthening became evident throughout the PEIs as allies pointed to the reluctance of 'mainstream' human rights organizations to engage with the rights of LGBTIQ+ people. In addition to purely viewing human rights work, and LGBTIQ+ allyship, as a steppingstone to a secure income, job and good donor relations, allies argued that mainstream human rights organizations were generally reluctant for four reasons; first, insufficient investment in building social capital between the different actor who were a part of the Coalition, not out of ill-will but impossibility at the time. Reflecting on this point, Jacqueline shared:

Maybe what we could have done better was just to build more understanding of each other and of each other's viewpoints. Because literally, many of us were meeting in that room for the first time, and then we do the coalition business and we go our way, and our lives are literally separate [...].

In a pressure cooker moment, maybe you don't even have time to think about and take apart what is your interest, really, what's your motivation, what would you like to know, what do you not know, what are you uncomfortable

with, what are you okay with. You're just, yes, there's an imminent threat, and that's what you're dealing with.

Second, insufficient critical reflection within mainstream human rights organizations on gender and sexuality norms in Uganda. In contrast, feminist allies considered themselves to have grappled with these questions ideologically and personally, thus being more open to inter-movement building with the LGBTIQ+ movement. Reflecting upon the shift from excluding to including 'bad women' in the feminist movement in Uganda, Solome asserted:

[M]any people have taken time to go and learn more about why why is sexuality and gender identity and expression a huge conversation within the feminist discourse, and many have actually gotten to their harmonies 'aha, so this is what it is', and then with a lot of work around connecting violence, connecting issues around reproduction, connecting issues around space and voice, many have realised that actually when you talk about patriarchy, it is exercised by having women in the diversity spite each other.

Going back to the days of the Coalition, Jacqueline similarly observed that the feminist movement was 'ahead' of mainstream human rights, because many of feminists had done (some of) the work to see intersections between the women's/feminist movement and the LGBTIQ+ movement:

We had started confronting what it really means to do women's rights work, what it means to call ourselves feminist, what it means to understand that all rights for all women regardless. And I think in fact, Akina wa Mama hosting the coalition was in a sense a recognition that the women's movement was the one that had been accepting of lesbian, trans, and sex workers before the broader human rights movement.

In fact, within the broader human rights movement, it's still very uncomfortable. I know that anytime we've raised this issue with our male-led human rights organizations, there's still a "No, wait. That's too much." They avoid it, right? And so, I think the fact that we had walked that journey slightly before gave ground for even a coalition to land or to be formed or to be held together.

Third, as indicated by Jacqueline, human rights organizations are primarily male-led, privileged by hetero-patriarchal structures and thus unwilling to dismantle them. Feminist allies unanimously pointed to critical engagement with hetero-patriarchal structures as a necessary step for inter-movement building. Brenda argued:

[W]e must come from one ideology of understanding that the unequal power relations create all forms of discrimination, marginalization and human rights violation [...].

I think we must share an ideology that recognizes that the system that was created by the colonialists, the system that is patriarchal creates all these divisions of saying you are a woman, you're a man. That is it. Of saying, of not even recognizing that gender is about how you express yourself, how you want to be. You negotiate it. It's not something which is static [...].

Expanding beyond 'just' mainstream human rights organizations, Opiyo underscored patriarchy as the driving force behind reluctant civil society actors engagement with the LGBTIQ+ movement, and uptake of politically and religiously driven homophobia in Uganda:

[D]ifferent sexual expressions challenge the conception of male, the patriarch in the African traditional sense or the Ugandan sense, I can't speak about other African communities. The idea that a man can have a sexual relation with a man, the idea that a woman can have sexual relations with a woman challenges the patriarchal nature of our society and the concept of the place of a man and puts that man in a less position, in the position of being inferior. And these are thoughts, norms, and practices handed down to people over decades.

It's how they identify. So, it challenges the place of the male members of society, and subconsciously, that is what we are responding to, really. [Laughter] That's what we are responding to. It can be expressed through many other ways, but the truth is it challenges just the power dynamics between male and female.

Fourth, Solome described an 'absorption of power by mainstream human rights organizations' whereby LGBTIQ+ organizations are sidelined both by human rights organizations instead of being with them but also by donors preferring well-established highly professionalised mainstream organizations over less polished LGBTIQ+ organizations:

[A]llyship with the mainstream human rights organizations is somehow contested. [W]hile within the feminist movement, there is an appreciation and consciousness of power and how your power can a empower or disempower, and I do not think that happens in the mainstream human rights movement.

Within the feminist movement, it is very rare to find for instance an organization, even Akina Mama where it was, even where it is now, can't take on the core work of FARUG, am I clear? There's an appreciation that I'm an ally, I'll support, I'll travel the journey, but you need to have your voice out there. I'll speak with you; I'll not speak for you.

4.3. Humanising the LGBTIQ+ Movement

Ultimately, the allies established that ‘battle lines’, as Nicholas observed, are not around decriminalization, and that expectations of decriminalization substantially improving the conditions for LGBTIQ+ people without first changing the social attitudes would be ‘a square peg trying to be fitted in a circle’ as Isaac put it. Opiyo also proclaimed:

[W]hat drives people crazy here is the unforeseen, unreported daily acts of intolerance and discrimination. From the boda-boda guy, from your grocery store guy, from your taxi guy, from your family. Little small things that keep dropping in drops of water and drops in the same place will break a rock. That is the bigger problem. Unless you can deal with that, no amendment in laws will help us!

While describing Ugandans as currently ‘mesmerized and tantalized and bamboozled and confused by this homophobia,’ Isaac reiterated:

Intolerance is not the gene of Ugandans. They feel if there had been a fair conversation, tolerance would have won. I believe we are very tolerant people.

As such, there should be hope for changing the social attitudes. However, activists and allies must first address their ‘failures.’ Isaac explained that prominent homophobia dominates because the LGBTIQ+ movement has not managed to make their struggle resonate with the wider struggle for equality with/in Uganda:

The biggest contribution that LGBT movement could have done is to help Ugandans understand equality issues. There are several. But I guess because there's donor funding and there's no talking to the donor. Donor's way, they over-promote the donor's way, which is wrong. I guess, let me put it this way. The biggest national issues that would unite Ugandans are issues around equality and enforced inequality. My view, and the question I've always asked is that why don't you look at inequality in all these forms? Why do you silo to LGBT?

The lack of a ‘fair conversation’ can be traced in Tamale’s pinpointing of liberal, capitalist, and Cartesian underpinnings of the current rights discourse. The first has to do with the adoption of Western identity politics by LGBTIQ+ people to be and present in a certain way as put by Tamale:

The same was as the LGBT as an identity. Identity politics is very very Western. People - like the ones you're talking to at SMUG - will have adopted it, appropriated

it, copied it, you know, consciously, unconsciously... But you know when you when you go to the subtlety of sexuality in Africa, first of all this notion that is unAfrican is bullshit. It has always been there, where there has been humanity, there has always been same-sex attractions. I think the difference is that here in in most African contexts, it wasn't an identity issue. There was no pressure, no need, no desire to out - quote on quote - like in the West you have to out - like even the term "out" [...]

Further, other tendencies within the LGBTIQ+ movement were seen as mirroring identity politics of the West and thus amplifying notions of LGBTIQ+ activists as puppets of the 'West' and as 'alien' to Uganda/ns. These tendencies were described by Isaac and Opiyo as firstly, LGBTIQ+ people presenting themselves as victims, and secondly, LGBTIQ+ activists behaving elitist and flaunting their 'White money.' Isaac declared:

[W]e fail to direct national consciousness in a uniform manner. For me, the biggest critique is the victim. I've never seen LBG, where I come from, who I am instinctively, I do not see them as victims but their leaders and the way they scheme their work, they use their victim language amongst themselves. We call it echo-chambering. Donors give them money so they victim-victim. But don't the Ugandan... I don't know and now, this has stuck. Now, it has stuck. To identify as LGBT in Uganda is to be victim [...].

Isaac described the LGBTIQ+ movement being seen to be 'eclipsed by elitism' and as having 'a burden, a yoke of elitism.' In an almost direct echo of each other, Opiyo and Isaac described the elitism in the following way:

Opiyo: [W]e have to move away from Frank flying to foreign capitals, really, I don't think it's helpful. My own view is that's not helpful. He may disagree. LGBTI individuals spend their time out of this country more than they do here [...].

If you ask any Ugandan about LGBTI people – globetrotting, partying, well-dressed or dress funny individuals.

Isaac: [T]he LGBT moment has meant flights. They have been able to fly to capitals they would never have seen. I don't know, they are under corporate capture.

To foster 'Ubuntu' between LGBTIQ+ Ugandans and non-LGBTIQ+ Ugandans, allies unequivocally underscored the need to humanize and localize the LGBTIQ+ movement. Opiyo asserted:

I think that we need to humanize this discussion and not present them in Western concepts of human rights. Okay? And then we're doing something here very, very small in the hope that we can humanize that discussion. Okay?

We've begun a separate group for the parents of LGBTI individuals, so that when they get to a point in which they're comfortable, a discussion of "This is my child who I love so much. This is my child. That's who he is, that's who she is." So, we have to ... humanize this discussion in ways that will strike a chord to people.

Opiyo emphasised the need to have these discussions in intimate rather than public spaces, and in languages in which they are most comfortable:

We pick people from the community to go and visit parents and have an intimate discussion, identify a need, if they need an expert, we bring an expert, a doctor, whatever. Let them have their discussion. Because when you don't know their language, you don't know what connects with them. So, you're right. We must find people in their spaces and speak to them in their language and the way they understand best. Not those of us in a necktie speaking Latin maxims of the law.

Lillian similarly described her work in communities whereby she would 'package' rights in a contextually appropriate way for it to resonate with people:

[W]hen we go to the communities, you know you choose your battles or ways you are saying certain things. In the centre it is very easy but when we go to the communities in maybe Arua, Sombo, Pakuachi, there are of course you package it differently like you focus on human rights - everyone has rights because when you start those things [LGBT rights] to me, they can even chase you away with a machete (laughter) you cannot!

Giving an example of her own organization's work towards humanising LGBTIQ+ people, Jacqueline underlined the need to 'tap into the social ties' and fabric of Ugandans as givers and into the cultural rooting of protection through photographs:

We've always been givers. We may not have too many zeros in our bank accounts. And so I just did a project where we were doing Proverbs on giving. The next project that we're going to do is contract a photographer to go around as much of the country as we can cover, depending on the funds, to take photographs of our symbols of giving. Just to keep pressing the point that it's intrinsic to us, it's not foreign to us. We are givers before anyone came to give us and save us, right? So, maybe in the same way, I think a lot of what the cultural rooting of protection is, of looking out for, of love.

Drawing on the previous successes of the LGBTIQ+ movement, Jacqueline spoke to tying the struggles for the rights of LGBTIQ+ people with wider national or societal priorities such as HIV/AIDS and reproductive health:

For me, I'm thinking one of the approaches that is working very well is where they have attempted to engage local communities is using certain campaigns to also support LGBTI persons, to support parents who are having LGBTI persons, to support their communities to tolerate, what they say is to tolerate but to promote for instance, LGBTI people is through campaigns on sexually reproductive health, access to health, HIV. I think those are enabling community mobilization to advance rights of LGBTI people [...].

Opiyo asserted the need for making the LGBTIQ+ movement more personally and relationally anchored, but also to change the means and modes of the movement:

Because there's a certain sense of sympathy for a mother pleading for her child. Okay? And so, let's just get nontraditional constituencies to make the case from a very personal view, so in the process humanize, humanize the movement. Show that it could be a next-door neighbor who is known, who is known. That's the first. The second thing is that this is a long-time initiative that requires the use of subtle approaches, the use of the arts, music, spoken words, such things that...

Such things that have a long time effect on the psyche of individuals. Okay? But to do that, you must be deliberate, you must be deliberate. You can't be like rushed, you have to be subtle, deliberate, and incremental.

And those are things that the donors don't want to... We must have artists involved, we must have people who are singing or enjoying taking photos, people who are depicting LGBTI individuals as normal human beings, as part of our community, as a bricklayer in your village, as a market vendor in your town, and that there's nothing different about them from all of us.

5. Conclusion

As previously mentioned, the interviews with the allies were rather impromptu and driven by my curiosity to see who SMUG and FARUG would consider allies, especially given the monolithic story of Africa/ns as homophobic and African LGBTIQ+ people as helpless and passive receivers of ‘modernity’ from the ‘West’ (Abbas & Ekine, 2013). Interestingly, both FARUG and SMUG only identified allies from what Currier (2014) referred to as ‘horizontal solidarity partnerships’, meaning from other local social movements and civil society organizations, and no allies from ‘vertical solidarity partnerships’, meaning foreign donors and transnational NGOs. Considering the allies’ perspectives on foreign donors and transnational NGOs, this is perhaps not that surprising as the allies like the activists pointed to the corporatisation, professionalisation, and legalisation of LGBTIQ+ activism as part and parcel of the involvement by the international community.

The allies’ accounts of their journeys into and experiences of allyship would indicate that it is important to understand the motivators and barriers to allyship for LGBTIQ+ rights in

Africa within a given country and not merely the continent. For example, while the LGBTIQ+ allies in Uganda certainly echoed Currier's (2014) findings of the main barriers to inter-movement solidarity in Malawi being individual bias towards homosexuality, the politicization of homosexuality, and the high political and organizational costs for supporting LGBTIQ+ rights and opposing the government, they also added other context-specific barriers to and costs of LGBTIQ+ allyship. In terms of costs, allies had experienced rejection from and harassment of their families, spouses, and children, and deep existential confusions in whether and how to be allies to LGBTIQ+ people and the movement.

Speaking to inter-movement building, the allies pointed to the lack of a socio-political (state provided) safety net for allies makes people sympathetic to the struggles of LGBTIQ+ people shy away from allyship out of concern for their own and their families' safety, livelihood, and employment. The allies furthermore contended that the missing synergies between 'mainstream' civil society movements and the LGBTIQ+ movement was a result of civil society actors generally failing or refusing to critically engage with questions of patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism, being fiscally and not ideologically or relationally motivated, and the LGBTIQ+ rights discourse being imposed and, in part, coopted by 'Western' donors and partners. While enunciating these barriers, the allies importantly also pointed to changes necessary for the LGBTIQ+ activists to make to move towards sustainable and intersectional inter-movement building in Uganda including more deliberately choosing to situate themselves discursively, geographically, and aesthetically within Uganda, to articulate their expectations and demarcations of genuinely motivated allies, and to pursue a form of activism rooted in Africa/ns' philosophies, sociabilities, and personhood. Particularly these last points could be important for the LGBTIQ+ activists' struggles against domination, and for agency and authority over their own movement.

Decoloniality in/as Praxis Revisited

1. Introduction

Adopting decoloniality in/as praxis here means embracing the notion that '[d]ecoloniality [...] is not a static condition, an individual attribute, or a lineal point of arrival or enlightenment. Instead, decoloniality seeks to make visible, open up, and advance radically distinct perspectives and positionalities that displace Western rationality as the only framework and possibility of existence, analysis, and thought' (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 17). While cognisant that decoloniality does not denote a condition of illumination or enlightenment that some possess and others do not (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 81), decoloniality in/as praxis should ideally amount to a reconfiguration of the research practices and positionalities within a given research relation that compels 'Western' research/ers to unthink and rethink our/themselves, and allows for the Other/ed to *willingly* rethink their lived experiences without having to unthink them (Santos, 2018b, p. 147).

Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to offer reflections on the usefulness of the four methods used throughout the cooperation with SMUG and FARUG in furthering my un- and rethinking and the activists and allies' rethinking. This revisiting of the moves towards decoloniality in/as praxis is particularly motivated by a caution raised by Barnes (2018) who contended that for researchers to embrace decolonizing methodology and to immerse themselves in the field does not, *ipso facto*, contribute to decolonization. As my intentions and theoretical contemplations might not always have translated into furthering the positive project of decolonization, I hope this chapter at least reveals consciousness about my conduct within the research relation and opens space for Western/ized research/ers enacting decolonization.

In an attempt to follow the decolonial call for '*consciousness decolonization*' of the researchers (Tamale, 2011, p. 17), I try to avoid mere '*confessions of privilege*' (Lockard, 2016, p. 2) as '[o]versimplified confessions [that] can be loopholes absolving researchers from a duty to continuously ensure their research is supporting resistance to colonization in tangible ways, as opposed to reinforcing or reproducing colonial legacies' (Thambinathan & Kinsella, 2021, p. 3). To this end, the chapter is organised into four sub-sections that offer reflections on the perspectives and positionalities made visible, opened up, and advanced through each method,

and the ways in which I did or did not move towards decoloniality in/as praxis in the enactment of the method. In the concluding section, I return to the thorny issue of re/presentation outlined previously, and lessons learnt from employing the four methods in ‘devising’ decolonial representational ethics.

2. Accompaniment as a Rearguard Researcher

2.1. *Extracting without Reciprocating*

As the method purported to hold the potential of ‘standing-with’ (Adams, 2014) and ‘pragmatic solidarity’ (Saxton, 2021), accompaniment is perhaps the one of the four methods most promising for reconfiguring research/ers’ practices and positionalities from and against the extractivist ‘*knowing-about*’ to and for the reciprocal ‘*knowing-with*’ (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Santos, 2018b; Smith, 2021) through cooperation among knowing subjects rather than through subject/object unilateral cognitive interactions’ (Santos, 2018b, p. 130). While acutely aware of the pivotal role of ‘reporting back’ and ‘sharing knowledge’ for moving towards this reciprocity (Smith, 2021), my accompaniment was initially hampered by my hyper-focus on assuming the position of ‘*rearguard researcher*’ (Santos, 2018b, p. 148). In effect, this meant that I did not make suggestions to, nor observations about, the existing or potential new modes of working when I first started working with SMUG and FARUG. Preoccupied with not imposing my Eurocentric worldviews or practices, I inadvertently assumed the position of participant observer instead of accompanier and waited for people at SMUG and FARUG to instruct me in what to do and, to some extent, be. In hindsight, it is thus evident that I was temporarily stuck in the unilateralism of extraction whereby ‘those extracting are never extracted’ (Santos, 2018b, p. 130).

My perhaps biggest failure in unthinking myself as a researcher to allow for ‘reciprocal observation’ (Santos, 2018b) was when some activists from SMUG suggested that I too would submit photos and write captions for the ‘Wetegeze’ photovoice project. With this, I perpetuated two methodological pitfalls within decolonizing research/ers; first, the (re)production of the ‘West’ as homogeneous and other (Bozalek, 2011, p. 472), and second the notion that researchers from the global North need to constantly walk on eggshells with imagined sensitivities (Tamale, 2011, p. 27). Taken together, I made a mistake typical of ‘well-intending and conscientious whites’ in that I made decoloniality the natural purview of the activists within SMUG and FARUG (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 81), and negated that accompaniment would not be possible without them also being given an opportunity to rethink

themselves and, in this instance, their agency and authority in an expected research/er relation (Saxton, 2021).

Despite these initial failures, something seemed to shift with time as evident from several of the activists remarking that I was the first Muzungu²³ *'to work with them.'* Though tempted to take this at face value and be self-congratulatory in my endeavours to disrupt the 'typical' (colonial) research relation, I instead inquired what they meant given their extensive experiences of engaging with Bazungus²⁴ as journalists, researchers, donors, development partners, and diplomats. The activists responded that while they have had and do still have frequent engagements with Bazungu researchers, partners, and donors, their experiences of them were that they usually *'kept to themselves'*, *'would not even eat lunch with them'*, and usually just *'disappeared'* after serving their own purposes.

2.2. Understanding Relationality Overall

To understand this shift, it is worth recalling that standing-with people and understanding relationality overall is the core of accompaniment more than documenting patterns of relationality in 'Other/ed' contexts (Adams, 2014, pp. 469-70). Hence, while I could simply attribute the shift to me starting to proactively contribute to the organizations' work (e.g. proposing a new documenting/monitoring tool for human rights violations for LGBTIQ+ peoples for SMUG and pointing out inadvertent 'whitewashing' of much of FARUG's communications) this would be insufficient to capture the relationality overall and present the shift as a unilateral decision on my part

Significantly, my first main contact person, Richard, left SMUG for another job shortly after my arrival. With Richard's departure, a vacuum was left as the old school activists, Pepe, Frank, and Didi had not envisioned or prepared for him ever leaving SMUG. With this, the organizational dynamics changed as SMUG hired new people to replace but also expand the scope of SMUG's work. Relationally, Richard's departure became significant for me and my positionality within SMUG, as prior to Richard leaving, I had mainly worked alongside him and complemented his work with limited engagement with others' work. This was in part because I felt that I owed Richard and needed to 'compensate' him for his help in setting up the collaboration and getting ethics approval, and in part because of our long-term relationship

²³ Muzungu is a Bantu word that means 'wanderer' or 'foreigner', which was originally used to describe early European explorers in East Africa. It's commonly used in East, Central, and Southern African countries, such as Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zambia. In Uganda, it is widely used to refer to white people, and sometimes to non-Ugandans/non-Africans more broadly.

²⁴ Bazungu is the plural word of Muzungu.

and prior experience of working together, but equally important, because other SMUG staff saw me as ‘his’ ally/friend. As put by one of the other activists at SMUG, *‘Richard kept you to himself, and we thought that you were only his friend.’* Evidently, I had ‘let’ Richard keep me to himself and thus stood in my own way of accompanying others within SMUG. For researchers committed to accompaniment within a decolonization project, this speaks to a need for ensuring researchers not confine themselves or let themselves be confined to and by one ‘gatekeeper.’ Otherwise, researchers risk perpetuating the decolonial danger of simplifying, generalising, and over subjectifying the Other/ed (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, pp. 81-82), and, by extension, not producing adequate knowledges to be used in the struggle against domination by the group in question (Santos, 2018b, p. 156).

Another reason for the relational shift was to embrace accompaniment as truly relational and thus allow for it, and to some extent even pursue it, beyond the office spaces. As such, accompaniment also took place during car rides to and from the offices offered to me by activists from SMUG and FARUG; reciprocal home visits; invited participation in two multi-day staff retreats, one for each organization; social gatherings and celebrations in and outside of the office; one-on-one meetups; jointly attending court cases and so forth. While there is no denying that these interactions produced knowledges about the explicitly formulated research topic, more importantly they provided deeply personal insights into activists’ perspectives and experiences as activists and as people not solely defined by their activism in ways that neither photovoice nor photo-elicitation interviews facilitated. These experiences resonated with Adams (2014, p. 469) who asserted that accompaniment happens when researchers immerse themselves in the flow of community life and experience events alongside people in the context of everyday activity.

The gradual accompaniment was not merely a one-sided experience on my part, apparent as several activists from SMUG and FARUG gradually started opening up about and coming to me with concerns pertaining to their lives outside of the organizational space. These ranged from a request to help with a job application and later interview; a person wanting to discuss and potentially having me accompany them to a rehab facility; a person asking for my input on setting up an association for queer women of faith. These shifts arguably support Naples’ (2003) feminist argument that the insider and outsider status of researchers is constantly (re)negotiated. When accompanying researchers start understanding their positionality as less stable and coherent than typically assumed, it can also become a crucial site of (queer) knowledge production as argued by Connell (2018, p. 131).

Within the organizations, it also became apparent that expected research/er relations had been transgressed and my position(ality) as the extractivist Western/ized researcher had been renegotiated as the activists increasingly proactively asked me to contribute to their work. While both organizations initially predominantly asked me to contribute to what I, with my background in development studies and the sector, would label ‘NGOisation’ by writing and editing reports and proposals as well as attending meetings as per the requirements and prerequisites of Western donors and donations, they started asking me to conduct tasks outside of this realm of compliance. For example, for one of the Social Fridays hosted by FARUG for its members, I was asked to facilitate a workshop on terminology and meanings of different gender identities, gender expressions and sexual orientations, stating that many of their members were unaware of these and therefore experienced or perpetuated exclusions, alienation and sometimes violence. While wary of reproducing the colonialities of LGBTQ+ language, identities, and politics, I agreed to this and similar requests. Another, more important example, is perhaps that the organizations also started to ask my opinion about how to deal with conflicts and tensions with other ‘mainstream’ human rights organizations on account of these organizations supposedly coopting the LGBTQ+ movement’s mandate to further LGBTQ+ rights. With this, I was invited to support the activists’ struggles on their terms.

2.3. Enacting Pragmatic Solidarity

The perhaps most promising decolonial potential of accompaniment as a method lies in its potential for enacting ‘*pragmatic solidarity*’ (Saxton, 2021, p. 123). While my year with SMUG and FARUG holds many examples of this, it became particularly pertinent when President Museveni introduced some of the world’s harshest – and sudden – Covid-19 restrictions a few weeks into my research (Achan et al., 2023; Parker et al., 2022; Parker et al., 2020; Seruwagi, 2021). These restrictions evidently had several implications for the accompaniment; temporally, my stay was extended beyond the intended end point in July 2020 to December 2020 as I chose not to leave Uganda before the borders closed completely; spatially, accompaniment had to take place digitally/online for some months while we, alongside everyone else in Uganda, were banned from working in the offices; practically, the accompaniment suddenly entailed responding to the Covid-19 restrictions being used as a smokescreen to crackdown on the LGBTQ+ community, and relationally, it not only meant a different mode of interacting but also different needs from the LGBTQ+ community and from SMUG and FARUG organizationally.

Wanting to respond to some of these challenges and considering my geo- and body-political privileges, I proposed to reach out to the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, GlobalNyt (Global News) - the main news outlet for development/international news in Denmark -, and Humanity in Action - a transnational organization focused on minority rights of which I'm a senior fellow and former board member - to pitch various articles about the situation for LGBTIQ+ activists and allies during but also beyond the Covid-19 pandemic. As they all responded in the affirmative, I wrote four articles after agreeing on the main points with, and interviewing, activists from SMUG and FARUG.

While the coproduction of the articles was arguably an important step towards the '*tripartite structure*' of epistemic decolonization (Landström, 2024), they inadvertently also served as a magnifying glass to some of the colonialities that activists met in struggles to speak and be heard. For example, for the article for the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a photo was requested of one of the activists interviewed for the article. Considering the potential ramifications of imposed visibility for activists as discussed throughout this research, this was a contentious request. It furthermore underlined the incessive need for a specific kind of visibility by and from 'Western' actors. As a deliberately visible activist, Pepe agreed to submit a photo. However, the de/colonial struggle did not end with the submission of Pepe's photo as the editor of the magazine requested a different photo, stating that Pepe did not really look like an activist. Pepe was, in other words, too urban and well-dressed to fit the victimhood of a Ugandan LGBTIQ+ activist expected by the editor. When I shared the editor's request, Pepe scoffed and rolled his eyes, which prompted an exchange between us about 'Westerners' superiority and saviour complex. Eventually, Pepe asked me what I thought he should do as it was important for him, and both SMUG and FARUG to get some information about their situation under Covid-19 out, especially as most so-called development partners and donors had left Uganda to safeguard themselves. My view was that we should refuse to submit another photo, and let the editor decide whether to have a photo that clashed with her colonial expectations or run the article without a photo. While the result was that the article was published with the submitted photo, the exchange pinpointed the thorny issue of uptake when it comes to epistemic decolonization. It is, in other words, not merely a question of whether the Other/ed can speak, but also whether they can perform their otherness to the satisfaction of a Eurocentric judge and jury.

3. Co-production for Change

3.1. Recentring Voice

'We never get to tell our own stories' was a prompt response from Biggie when first asked why activists would allocate valuable time to participate in the photovoice project during the first photovoice workshop, a statement reaffirmed by other activists. The immediate appeal of photovoice to activists resonated with the intent of the method to facilitate silenced and marginalised peoples and communities' views and voices to be heard in policy by putting cameras directly in their hands to record and potentially change their own communities (Wang & Burris, 1994). Photovoice provides space for privileging rather than simply accommodating Other/ed research participants' interpretive and inquiry practices.

However, while there was a seemingly widely shared experience of wanting to be seen and heard on their own terms and with their own terminologies, one important lesson throughout the photovoice collaboration was to not take the desire for visibility in the shape and form offered by photovoice for granted. This caution is particularly pertinent in a context like Uganda where visibility can carry a plethora of repercussions for LGBTIQ+ people as outlined previously. Within this research, one person for example chose not to participate in the photovoice project, because she had not yet been public about her sexual orientation. When implementing photovoice, researchers committed to decolonizing their research and themselves, must critically consider the use of cameras as not necessarily intrinsically liberating in a way that can, will or should produce similar results irrespective of context.

3.2. Unveiling Power Dynamics Within

Even though photovoice holds the potential to recentre Other/ed voices, the method can exclude and silence Other/ed without sufficient understanding and consideration of power dynamics within a given community. This became evident in photo discussions whereby everyday (positional) power structures prevailed in who spoke and who was heard, whereby those in higher positions within the organizations, conversant in English and used to engaging in political and knowledge producing spaces were most vocal, and some other activists waited for those privileged to speak first. Within a photovoice project intended for decoloniality in/as praxis, research/ers must navigate the decolonial danger of leaving out or obscuring power relations within Other/ed communities carefully (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 81), and consider strategies for mitigating power asymmetries amongst photovoice participants.

As a gradual realisation on my part, I eventually rethought the photovoice process and deviated from photovoice ‘guides’ that I had found in the literature. The most prominent example of this was that I facilitated the third joint photovoice discussion by using multiple participatory methods such a co-centric circle discussion, anonymous sticky notes voting, and set up anonymous online polls prior to the final joint photovoice group discussion to aid this process. I furthermore sought to create a more informal ambience by rearranging the chairs into a circle, omitting use of power point, and playing music during breaks, using a playlist that I had asked the activists to contribute to.

Though these might seem like minor irrelevant tweaks, they changed the entire dynamic and interaction between the activists and between me and the activists. Afterwards, several activists commented positively on the final workshop during informal conversations or individual PEI. For example, toward the end of her interview, Leah said:

About the photo voice at that time, it was so, so, so... But I wanted to tell you that in the person. It was very, very interesting very fun and more engaging. Most times, we always sit back, and everything becomes boring! But here, you tried to engage us more. We were all part of. I really love that [...].

And then the music also. That was actually... Oh, it nailed it because in this break that we had, the two times that we had a break, some music played, which I have not really seen during any trainings, workshops or any discussions I've gone through, I've not really seen that. That was actually a new trick that I will borrow in case of anything.

Apparently, tweaks and twists of the method contributed to destabilising, not disrupting, existing power dynamics by enabling everyone to contribute and furthermore offered activists ideas on how to rethink themselves as learners and as facilitators of trainings, workshops, and discussions. This suggests that even when using a participatory social change oriented method like photovoice, researchers should not be blinded by the potentials of the method and thus succumb to ‘*methodological fetishisms*’ (Santos, 2018b, p. 136) by uncritically following preexisting protocols set for the method. Instead, the method should be anchored in the context of the artisanship of the practices into which the research in question is integrated (Santos, 2018b, p. 149).

3.3. Enabling Rethinking

By facilitating Other/ed people and groups’ control over the photographic process and recording of their own lives, communities and experiences, photovoice can respond to some cautions raised by Sylvia Tamale and Stella Nyanzi as outlined in Chapter 3 as it allows for

explorations of complexities embedded within sexualities activism without blueprint definitions imposed by the researcher. However, though decolonizing methodology seeks to privilege Indigenous epistemologies and world views (Smith, 2021), several scholars including Barnes (2018) and Bozalek (2011, p. 472) warn that indigeneity should not be valorised uncritically. They posit that while lived experiences of marginalisation may provide a more encompassing view of the world in the research process, it does not necessarily lead to a consciousness about or unmasking of power relations (ibid.). Through the iterative and integrative analysis process with photovoice participants, photovoice holds potential for research participants to also develop critical consciousness and rethinking their ways of being, doing, and seeing. This occurred and was probably the most significant outcome of the photovoice project.

During the joint photovoice discussion, the narrowing down of categories revealed overlaps in three categories between the two organizations: Resistance, Resilience, and Hope. The joint discussion however also revealed discrepancies between these categories that the activists considered most important for them as LGBTIQ+ activists, and three categories considered most important for them as LGBTIQ+ individuals (or allies within). The activists furthermore expressed surprise that buzzword categories such as ‘community’ and ‘solidarity’ were not amongst the overlapping categories nor amongst categories held most important at individual or collective levels. The joint discussion provided critical consciousness of facets of being an LGBTIQ+ activist that the activists were reluctant to address or admit, for example, alcohol and substance abuse. More importantly, the photovoice process afforded activists with agency to still decide to re-present these facets in the photovoice exhibition after they agreed to show the full story of their (non-)existence.

Lastly, there was a fruitful discussion about categories and themes not reflected in any of the submitted photos but are prevalent in LGBTIQ+ activism research in Uganda, for example, religion, homophobia, parenting and accountability. These thematic absences should not be considered a shortcoming of the photovoice process but rather as an analytical step. As underlined by Wang and Burris (1997, p. 375), understanding and exploration of absences, silences and exclusions may be even more important than what is present, particularly when working with individuals and communities who could be afraid that photographs may be used politically or, indeed, if they want to show their ‘best selves.’

3.4. *Shifting Relationships*

Photovoice can shift relationships between individuals and communities, communities and researchers, and communities and policymakers by enabling individuals to control the photographic process and recognising that people have expertise and insight in their own lives and communities that professionals or ‘outsiders’ often lack (Wang & Burris, 1997). While activists were included in most stages of the photovoice process, the scope of the research and their roles in decision-making were largely predetermined and controlled by me. This was in part a result of the choice of photovoice not being made until entering the field, and in part a result of the researcher being part of a doctoral program with fixed structures that do not allow for reflexive and dialectical method development that decolonizing research ideally demands, which I will return to later in the chapter.

Importantly, decolonizing research does not reject the involvement of an outsider but centres expertise with the researched instead of the researcher. Despite this limitation in the given photovoice project, it did shift relationships in three central ways. First, staff with ‘lower’ positional power gained power, including the ‘welfare manager’ (person in charge of cooking and cleaning) being involved in the photovoice. These staff were provided with a never experienced experiential platform (research) from which to speak. This offer came as a surprise to welfare staff at FARUG and SMUG. They were initially hesitant to participate, because they feared not having valuable insights corresponding with assumed expectations of the researcher and about transgressing established hierarchies of who speaks and who is heard within established activist spaces in Uganda.

While decolonizing photovoice might involve identifying and disrupting existing power structures, non-participation needs to be considered as a potential act of resistance by desired research participants. For example, to the research being overwhelmingly designed and funded by an ‘outsider’. Second, the involvement of welfare staff shifted the relationship between the activists by, to some extent, exposing new perspectives to other staff in the organizations, and a consciousness about (unintentional) silencing of certain voices within activist spaces. As a methodology, decolonizing photovoice must acknowledge that even though it intends to amplify voices of each research participant, it may also contribute to silencing and exclusion of research participants.

Third, photovoice shifted the relationship between activists and the research/er. When initially introduced to photovoice, several activists asked if I could take photos of them and then those photos be discussed, suggesting how deeply embedded, internalised and normalised

empiricist research practices were to the participants. This was reinforced on multiple occasions during the photovoice process, when activists mentioned that they had only experienced researchers coming to do scheduled and scripted interviews and never this kind of collaborative research. While the novelty of the research served to shift perspectives on what research and who producers of research can be, it also posed unanticipated challenges. For example, several activists had difficulty understanding the flexibility and reflexivity inherent in the photo assignment. Put differently, several activists expressed that they expected there was a correct motive and way to take photos in response to the prompts. Decolonizing the photovoice processes could arguably have benefitted from follow-up sessions with each research participant ensuring that the photo assignment was clear, to create space for research participants to have direct input into (re)developing and (re)defining the research (Battiste, 2014), and to show that I, as the researcher, was ready to make appropriate changes when the intended methods were not appropriate (Simonds & Christopher, 2013, p. 12).

3.5. *Setting aside Words*

Milne and Muir (2020) argue that literacy is often assumed by researchers but should be carefully considered when working with individuals and in communities with restricted access to education. While the value of a decreased emphasis on literacy extends beyond concern about access to education, especially in postcolonial contexts, it does provide a space for reconstructing mainstream research methodologies' classification of historical accounts of African sexualities that are alive in folklore, traditional songs, dance, folk art, body markings, jewellery, and naming systems as oral traditions rather than histories (Tamale, 2011, p. 14). In decolonizing photovoice, the notion of literacy should arguably be broadened beyond reading and writing to technical and digital literacy.

In line with most photovoice projects, I assumed that participants would welcome the use of camera technology. However, two participants were worried about their skill level and the quality of their phone cameras. Further, it was assumed that research participants would have sufficient digital literacy to upload photos and captions to an online submission form. Several participants struggled with technical aspects of uploading photos as well as internet connectivity. Some challenges could have been mitigated by more regular individual follow-up sessions. However, the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown – including a ban on public and private transport, curfew and orders to stay at home - combined with the material challenges around internet availability, electricity and control of social media in Uganda complicated checking processes.

4. Subject(ivity) of Elicitation

4.1. *Resisting Homogeneity of Experiences and Expressions*

Compared to photovoice, PEI involves images and interviews individualised for reasons particular to the research (Harper, 2002). By providing activists with epistemic agency and authority to steer their PEIs in distinctly different directions, the PEIs arguably circumvented existential and experiential homogenisation of Africa/ns' LGBTIQ+ people otherwise perpetuated by Eurocentric epistemological paradigms in three distinct ways. First, by disrupting the depersonalisation of LGBTIQ+ activists. While it could have been expected that activists shared experiential and embodied experiences of becoming and being LGBTIQ+ activists in Uganda would have led to them homing in on similar aspects of the building and developing of the movement as a collective, they instead predominantly seized the PEIs to depict and word themselves as individuals in dialectic with the movement but also beyond the movement. Apart from Frank, most activists either explicitly or implicitly resisted depersonalisation of LGBTIQ+ people by focusing on their personal rather than political realities through detailing their family relations, cultural beliefs, educational and professional competencies, personal desires for the future, and hobbies. Through activists' deliberately personal stories, it appeared that one of the decolonial potentials of PEIs is to move towards bridging gaps in research rooted in material histories of LGBTIQ+ peoples in Africa (Migraine-George & Currier, 2016). This became clear in new school activists' stories of becoming as accidental and necessary, which surfaced the intimate link between their material histories and their entry into activism.

Second, PEIs allowed activists to articulate their experiences of gender and sexuality hierarchies within the LGBTIQ+ community and movement. Particularly transgender activists expressed experiences of both Eurocentric and Ugandan cis-heteronormative gender and sexuality hierarchies within the LGBTIQ+ community. Examples included transgender activists having had to unlearn their thinking that a transgender (male) body cannot have breasts, and that transgender people cannot have anything but homo- or heterosexual orientations. Within the LGBTIQ+ movement, transgender activists expressed having experiences of not having transgender issues prioritised, and of there being little understanding of transgender identities within the movement. Arthur contended:

The other thing that people don't know is that we transgender people are not the same. Our transitional journeys are totally different. To me, it was an easy pass, you know, not that easy but my looks, my voice, they easily attach with a gender, with my gender identity, you get? LGBs are also still questioning

or trying to understand [b]ecause even the gay, lesbian, bisexual people do not understand us.

Continuing the point about hierarchies, the PEIs also pinpointed the implications of social hierarchies in activists' journeys of becoming and being. For example, while Frank and Pepe described having relatively unproblematic coming out experiences, the opposite was the case for Didi. Relatedly, those activists that came from privileged positions such as Pepe who was appointed as chief within his clan, or Frank who was from a financially resourceful family, were less reluctant to become activists and using themselves as storyboards for other LGBTIQ+ people than those in less privileged positions. Taken together, PEIs could thus be seen to counteract the decolonial danger of leaving out or obscuring power relations within Other/ed communities (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 81)

Third, PEIs provided space for activists to disrupt 'the single tragic story concerning Uganda often presented by Western mainstream media' (Lusimbo & Bryan, 2018, p. 325), and, research/ers. This was clearly articulated by Arthur who stated that LGBTIQ+ existences are usually only associated with '*pain and sorrow*', and who, as a strategy of resistance, decided to showcase himself being happy and doing 'productive' things such as studying, working, and travelling. While not denying the challenges of being a LGBTIQ+ person, let alone an activist, in Uganda, activists displayed critical awareness of and concern for the impact of homogenous representations of LGBTIQ+ victims. To them, imposed victimhood had translated into self-victimisation within the LGBTIQ+ community, alienation from other social movements, and strengthening of homophobic discourses within Uganda. As a method, PEI as such seemed to resonate with methodological cautions specifically for research/ers preoccupied with Africa/ns' sexuality and gender research/ers as it opened up knowledges about the heterogeneity of experiences and expressions of sexualities within one culture, community and among individuals (see e.g., Nyanzi, 2011, 2013; Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015; Tamale, 2013, 2014, 2020).

4.2. Capturing the Struggles

While a significant part of the decolonial potential of PEIs lies in the method's subjectification of those interviewed, the PEIs also demonstrated potential to support the sociology of emergences in capturing the concrete struggles for the LGBTIQ+ movement. Inadvertently, activists demonstrated that the strength and endurance of epistemic violence often lies in its own imperceptibility by presenting a diffuse form of violence contrasting the prevailing conceptions of violence 'as an event or act that is specific, explosive and spectacular'

(Pérez, 2019, p. 2). Activists' stories of becoming made it clear that dominant narratives of LGBTIQ+ activism in Uganda as framed almost exclusively against the backdrop of the queer lawfare over the AHB 2009, AHA 2014, and now AHA 2023 erodes not only the 'glocal' discursive developments leading to their existence but more importantly the local resistances to them prior to the Eurocentric gaze being set upon Uganda. This, in turn, ends up perpetuating rather than disrupting the modern/colonial monolithic story 'that activism does not exist and that there is only homophobia' (Ndashe, 2013, p. 156). By contrast, the PEIs unveiled that LGBTIQ+ activism in Uganda existed before it entered the purview of the 'West', and more importantly, that it was not motivated by the tabling of the AHA 2009 but rather by the search for kinship and by solidarity between LGBTIQ+ people. Clearly in the process of becoming resisting people, the PEIs also allowed for the activists' horizon of possibilities to emerge. That is to say, the activists not only pinpointed multiple capitalist, patriarchal, and colonialist dominations that they individually and collectively experienced, but also articulated both epistemological (Ubuntu) and practical strategies of resistance. I will return to these strategies in the concluding chapter to discuss how the activists' epistemic and existence-based struggles can possibly be supported moving forward.

The PEIs arguably also provided an opportunity for the activists, as the Other/ed, to 'talk back' to the 'West's' (Beverley, 1999) self-defined position of dominance. A status evident in a Western perception of the culmination of a (human) civilisation trajectory, convinced of a dualist and evolutionist view of differences between Europe/ans and non-Europe/ans as 'natural' (racial), not a consequence of power (Quijano, 2000b, p. 542). Through the PEIs, the activists described the NGOisation and professionalisation of the LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda because of the international community's funding conditionalities setting the direction not only for (visible) activism but for the activist identity in accordance with 'Western' norms. With this, the activists' stories resonate with Moreau and Currier (2018, pp. 223-24) who likewise found that while partnerships with foreign donors and transnational NGOs may come with more financial support than local partnerships, 'accepting funding renders LGBT groups vulnerable to both heteronormative and homonormative pressures that buttress neo-colonial power relations.'

The detrimental results of these pressures and power relations emerged most prominently in activists' reflections on the failure of the Ugandan LGBTIQ+ movement to localize, their often-forced assimilation to visibly Eurocentric organising politics, strategies, and events such as Pride. Similar to Brown (2023), the activists unequivocally identified a specific form of visibility as central in 'Western' governmental and non-governmental efforts

to promote and defend LGBTIQ+ Rights as counterproductive to the effectiveness of the struggle for LGBTIQ+ rights in Africa. Similar to Gore's (2018) findings about LGBT activists in Ghana, the interviewed activists considered it more purposeful, effective, and 'Ugandan' to assert (their) rights, challenge homophobia and subvert sexual and gender norms through community-level acts of defiance, kinship, solidarity and material and emotional support.

4.3. Telling Other/ed Stories

With qualitative inquiry identified as best suited for a decolonization project (see e.g. Botha, 2011; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Smith, 2005), PEI could seem like the ideal method in that photographs arguably elicit more quality information than other methods because they enable those interviewed to take the lead in enquiry (Collier & Collier, 1986; El Guindi, 2004; Harper, 2002). Without wanting to put PEI on a (decolonial) pedestal, the activists' evaluation of the method in the PEI debriefs seem to support this assertion. Reflecting on his experience of PEI, Frank shared:

You remind me of my colleague, David who was so busy with the anti-gay bill and then a journalist called him, and he told the journalist, "Copy and paste." The journalist was like, "What do you mean?" He's like, "I already said that I already answered that question. Go and find it. Go and google it."

[...] I think when we're speaking freely with you, most of this information is not information that I share in the news because also being the fact that the movement was very sensitive. We were almost limited, like you see Pepe and me, what we share in the news is not as raw as other people because then if you shared something that was so sensitive, you would be held so accountable back in the movement. So, we were a bit very careful. But now, when I'm speaking to you, it is like I'm speaking freely talking about everything as it was.

The experience of not being able to or allowed to tell the 'whole story' was crosscutting. Towards the end of the interview, Leah like Frank stated:

But I'm glad that I've had this talk. I will say a talk because I guess I've tried to lay this out. Apart from Hwami, no one else knows this whole story.

Thank you so much for giving me your time. I appreciate it. Also, give me a listening ear, at least. We have counselling, our counsellors work but I'm not familiarize myself with that because still, with the issue of trust also. But I appreciate much you giving me your time, me to give you my time too.

Considering these, and other activists' related statements, the reflective PEIs within this research collaboration seem to have moved towards a reconstitution of the research/er relation from unilateralism to cooperation by inherently acknowledging that

the Other/ed can not only speak but speak with power, conviction, and firsthand experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 16). While it is tempting to simply celebrate this seeming success, it is also important to note nuances in the two statements above as they speak to the struggles that research/ers have with the option of supporting rather than suppressing epistemic agency and authority of Other/ed.

The first is Frank pinpointing the need to be ‘careful.’ Here, he referred to two reasons for LGBTIQ+ people, particularly high-profile activists like himself, having to weigh every word they say, even when given a platform. When given a platform by the international community in the form of UN high-level meetings, press conferences and so forth, activists like Pepe and Frank do not necessarily feel at liberty to say what they want to say or how they want to say it, because it can backfire, as political backlash, and/or as other LGBTIQ+ people feeling misrepresented. This contributes to activists often not being able to speak. An additional layer to this is the ‘copy and paste’ approach perpetuated by both journalists and academics when engaging with LGBTIQ+ people in Uganda. Hence, some of the epistemic exclusion experienced by activists can also be viewed as epistemic laziness of Western/ized academics and journalists who expect LGBTIQ+ people to do majority of the epistemic labour, even when there are readily available epistemic resources.

This, to me, fuels the question of whether the Other/ed’s epistemic agency and authority could also be seen when/if they refuse to do unnecessary epistemic labour and decide to withhold their epistemic resources!? What also leads me to muse over this question is that Leah thanked me for giving her the time and ‘ear’ to unfold her whole story, but also for me to allow her to give me her time. Arguably, embedded in this is, first, Leah’s own knowledge of herself as an epistemic agent with epistemic resources (she is giving her time and knowledge), and second, a call for researchers to produce knowledge differently by allocating enough time and practicing deep listening. It is not my intention to argue that the positive feedback from activists is a result of me being an expert deep listener and re-inventor of the PEI wheel, but it is worth reflecting on why PEI worked in this specific research relation, and how it could have been different.

My interpretation is that the PEIs produced quality knowledges for three main reasons. First, the timing of the PEIs. When the PEIs took place, the research relation was already characterised by accompaniment, meaning that even if all the activists had not engaged closely with me, they had had a chance to observe my conduct in photovoice workshops and within their respective organizations every day. While this does not mean that all activists necessarily

liked me personally, they were assured of my motives for being in their spaces, and of my investment in giving back in one form or another. This supposedly translated into a form of trust from the activists towards me, and into a feeling of not merely being exploited for their epistemic resources. Adding to this, when the PEIs commenced, the activists also had opportunities to observe what was collectively ‘sayable’ from the photovoice workshops and from the online IDAHOBIT project, and how photographs could be used as a medium to translate personal stories. While some of the activists still expressed initial uncertainty about the interview form, either because it was different from any other interview they had experienced or because it was the first time they were being interviewed, they all seemed to quickly ease into the format and take the lead.

The second reason arguably lies in the chosen form of PEI. Reflecting on documentary PEI, Collier and Collier (1986) argued that this method supposedly opens up discussions by enabling those interviewed to take the lead in enquiry largely because they are not the point and subject of interrogation. As this research opted for reflective instead of documentary PEI to further recentring the activists’ epistemic agency and authority, the activists were, by contrast, intentionally both the point and the subject of the interview. Reflective PEI decentres the modern/colonial researcher and centres the Other/ed’s subjectivity to a greater extent than documentary PEI as the Other/ed is not limited to merely ‘taking the lead’ in responding to photographs (re)presented to them by the researcher. Within this research, the PEIs as such allowed for a ‘*symbiotic collaboration*’ (Manyozo et al., 2016) by eliciting valuable information for the research/er and by allowing the activists’ to rethink their experiences without chasing an absolute or ultimate truth about what it means to become or be a LGBTIQ+ activist in Uganda.

Third, the PEIs took place in a vacuum not safeguarded by or having to serve certain political, journalistic, or economic interests. For some of the activists, this was the first time that they were provided a space to tell their individual story without having to serve any particular movement interest such as getting funding or building partnership/donor relations, without fearing socio-political repercussions from within Uganda, without having to fit into a journalistic angle or interest because of a specific preceding event, and without being in a communal space fearing to be judged by other LGBTIQ+ people.

4.4. Querying Sensory Knowledge

Rethinking my experiences, one of the limitations of the PEIs within this research, which will presumably resonate with many ‘Western’ researchers in ‘postcolonial’ contexts

was my language skills. Prior to going to Uganda, I had already read and decided that I agreed with Battiste (2014, p. 10) who heralded that ‘[n]on-Indigenous researchers must learn Indigenous languages to understand Indigenous worldviews. As outsiders, non-Indigenous researchers may be useful in helping Indigenous peoples articulate their concerns, but to speak for them is to deny them the self-determination so essential to human justice and progress.’ Unfortunately, decolonial principles sometimes clash with pragmatic realities.

Taking this research as an example, the COVID-19 related closures of all language schools and cultural institutions eroded my ability to undertake the intensive Luganda classes I had signed up for during fieldwork in Uganda. However, even if the Luganda classes had taken place, I would most likely not have become fluent enough to competently conduct in-depth interviews in Luganda. Moreover, while Luganda is the most widely spoken language in central Uganda and therefore Kampala, the tribally and educationally diverse backgrounds of the research collaborators meant that they were also not all fluent in Luganda. A final option to deal with the (de)colonial linguistic conundrum of conducting interviews could have been to involve an interpreter. However, given the hostile socio-political landscape for and criminalization of LGBTIQ+ peoples and their allies, hiring an interpreter from outside of SMUG, FARUG or the wider LGBTIQ+ community could be unsafe, and hiring an interpreter from within the LGBTIQ+ community would be a violation of privacy and confidentiality and unnecessary bias.

In outlining this, I want to challenge or perhaps rather add to Harris and Guillemin (2012, p. 690) who suggested that by developing sensory awareness with PEI we, as researchers, enable participants to participate more fully to say that PEI also enables the researcher who is not proficient in non-colonial languages to participate more fully and listen more deeply. This is arguably an important distinction to make to surpass the hierarchical binary notion of who has the responsibility but also capability to produce and possess knowledges. By saying that PEI (only) enables participants to participate more fully, it appears as if they are deficient in knowledge production or as knowledge producers because they do not fulfill or comply with colonial languages that best suit the research/er, and the Eurocentric epistemological paradigm.

Lastly, considering that one of the great potentials is to create a space for sensory knowledges, I wonder if the PEIs here should not have allowed for any imagery, object, or even place as the subject of discussion. Within a context where the technological divide still prevails, and within a research/er project dedicated to decolonization, the method would have better served the purpose of opening up for sensory knowledges by not confining the medium for

elicitation to photos but instead allowing activists to choose from folklore, traditional songs, dance, folk art, body markings, jewellery, and naming systems as oral traditions through which African sexualities come alive and are remembered (Tamale, 2011, p. 14), or any other scent, place, or object deemed significant by an activist in their rethinking of their being and becoming.

5. Between Curiosity and Surprise

5.1. *Moving from Moments to Movement?*

The main difference between the allies' and activists' enunciations of the struggles for and with LGBTIQ+ people in Uganda was the refinement and sophistication by which it was enunciated. That the allies generally portrayed a more refined and (re)structured enunciation is worth punctuating at as it is arguably a marker of some of the differences in privilege and power between the activists and the allies. In contrast to most of the activists, most of the allies have been allowed to complete their basic education and advanced to university degrees inside and outside of Uganda. This is reflected in their analytical and linguistic capabilities matching what would be expected within a Eurocentric epistemological paradigm. Moreover, most of the allies only became allies after having been able to start and build a career in highly professionalised and intellectualised spaces with exposure to international discourses, politics, and 'partners.' It is as such fair to assume that the allies are generally more accustomed to being allowed to speak but also heard as epistemic agents than the activists.

While the allies were clearly passionate about and invested in their allyship, and other social justice causes, it is important to also note that their expression was not as emotive as the activists, which could easily be explained with the allies' vantage point being solidarity (and choice) whereas the activists' vantage point being survival (and force). For these reasons, it is arguably more remarkable that the activists and allies' perspectives and experiences overlap and complement each other. While the allies' contributions will be revisited in the next and concluding chapter, this section does not repeat the points already made and fronted by the activists and allies in conjuncture. Rather, this section aims to front critical points made by the allies that can potentially be utilised by the activists in their struggles against domination.

The perhaps most significant point of contention emerging from the allies' perspectives was whether there is even a human rights let alone LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda. Isaac enunciated this by stating that he considered there to be moments but not movements of (LGBTIQ+) liberation. Isaac elaborated on this point:

The thing is we like to call many things movements but it's small events, these moments as the tributaries of a movement. I began to see it that way. Much as we call ourselves movement lawyering, we pick on people's causes with a passion as though they would be a movement. We play our part for the time of our life as though it was happening now. Now, sometimes we can't reach the branch of justice in its full bloom as we would want but our participation, the way we thought, the way we spoke, the way we loved each other happens to be the most, the legacy we leave. That way, I came to understand very sensitive work like promotion of better living conditions, better legal environment for LGBT people in my country here and probably in the continent as the not yet movement.

So much is missing. It begins from the individual, I told you. So many allies, even the leaders themselves, they don't have the ideological clarity. The language, we don't have the language within which to have this conversation. We don't have the stories. We are afraid of the story. We aren't doing the storytelling right.

So much is missing and because so much is missing, I think for me, I celebrate moments. I celebrate each engagement as a moment. I see everything as a moment, a moment which must be enjoyed and with which we must take the risks. Now, there's a lot of risk averse culture which comes from this elitism and corporatism.

As the purpose of decoloniality in/as praxis is to ultimately produce knowledges useful for social groups and movements in their struggles against capitalist, colonialist, and patriarchal domination (Santos, 2016, 2018b), I will not dwell on the details of the allies' individual experiences. Instead, I will focus on allies' ideas for how to further the struggle for LGBTIQ+ rights in Uganda with/out allies to become a movement rather than mere moments. Epistemologically, allies, like LGBTIQ+ activists, articulated the need to localize the struggle not just in Uganda but in Africa through an exploration and reorientation towards Ubuntu as a framework for knowing, doing, and being. As an epistemology or philosophy of interconnectedness and care, allies relatedly argued that there is a need to break free from the abstract, high-level, and juridically focused form of activism to instead rethink the possibilities of doing LGBTIQ+ activism within families, communities, and local leaders. The task of localising was furthermore articulated as a call for the visible LGBTIQ+ activists to resist the professionalised, Westernized, and jetsetter activist persona and to instead be more within and with Uganda, Ugandans, and Ugandan personhood.

Movement wise, allies pointed to the need for LGBTIQ+ activists to build an organizational or rather movement memory of the history, strategies, and allies of the movement. Along the same vein, the allies underlined the need to locate the LGBTIQ+ movement within the broader human rights movement by changing the narrative from

LGBTIQ+ rights as a form of special rights to the rights of LGBTIQ+ people, and for LGBTIQ+ activists to also proactively position themselves as allies to other movements without these movements necessarily being involved with LGBTIQ+ rights.

5.2. Enabling Surprising Conversations

To move from moments to a movement, allies underscored the necessity of having proactive and not merely reactive co-generative conversations about the intentional direction for LGBTIQ+ activists and allies, and civil society actors in Uganda more broadly. Returning to Isaac, he clearly enunciated this:

First, having conversations like this, it doesn't happen. It doesn't happen. I think the only people that have requested such an interaction like this one are foreign. For the most that do, I do have interviews. But there again, I still have to give a story. It's not reflective, it's the moment. "You're doing Stella case. Is she going to get bail?" It's that.

Against the predominant critique of 'Western' foreign impositions, it is interesting that Isaac did highlight 'foreigners' as some of the select few who have 'requested such an interaction' that he and the other allies deem necessary within Ugandan civil society broadly speaking. For a foreign researcher like me it is worth taking note of what made the interviews serve as an opportunity for allies to rethink their positioning within in Uganda despite this method being the most closely related to 'conventional' extractivist qualitative enquiry. To this end, I highlight Lilian's debrief after her interview:

Many times, people will come with their structured interviews, their structured questions, sitting with a paper and asking, and it makes the environment so tense. Like you feel like you are at an interview. But anyways you have made it so so informal and so relaxing (laughter).

[S]ometimes they send you questions even before they come, and you have to prepare so the moment she goes off those questions and asks another one you do not have the answer (laughter).

[B]ut this has been really really nice!

Throughout the interviews, allies would usually end by remarking on their interview feeling 'nice' and like 'a conversation.' However, by simply removing the 'tool' of extraction (the interview guide), allowing the allies to take the lead in the interview (epistemic agency and authority), not focusing on a specific 'moment' such as the passing of a certain law (contextualisation), being informed about the socio-political context and not expecting allies to do the foundational intellectual labour for me (epistemic responsibility), and otherwise

treating the exchange like a dialogue (reciprocity), the experience of the interview for allies seemed to have shifted positively. From my research/er position, this affirmed that decolonizing methodology is not necessarily about inventing new or rejecting old methods but rather about choosing and enacting ‘research practices that are reflexively consequential, ethical, critical, respectful, and humble’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 8).

Facilitating allies’ experiences of interviews as conversations within a de/colonial perspective, it appeared as if they had previously mostly experienced being treated like ‘data plantations’ (Swadener, 2000 cited in Ndimande, 2013, p. 94), and like ‘sources of extraction’ available up to their total exhaustion (Santos, 2018b, p. 130). Supporting this assumption, was the surprise expressed by several allies at not having received any interview questions in advance, and in realising that I did not have an interview guide at hand. The element of surprise, this specific surprise, seemed to confirm the contention put forward by Santos (2018b, p. 149) that ‘surprise doesn’t arouse distance or strangeness; it rather arouses curiosity and humility capable of constructing a new proximity and familiarity.’

6. Conclusion

In contrast to the four chapters re-presenting the activists and allies’ epistemological and existential experiences, the purpose of this chapter was to offer my interpretations of whether the devised methodology served my rethinking- and unthinking as the epistemologically privileged Western/ized researcher, as well as the activists’ rethinking as the epistemologically oppressed Other/ed at the core of decoloniality in/as praxis. Overall, the chosen methods appear to have moved towards decoloniality by enabling the ‘evolving process of discovery,’ taking direction from preceding generated knowledges, grounding knowledge claims in the phenomena, and responding to the research context research (Lipscombe et al., 2021, p. 6).

By choosing horizontal rather than vertical practices of research as articulated by Lugones (2003), it was thus seemingly possible to make visible, open, and advance radically distinct avenues of resisting both exclusions and inclusions that prevent epistemic agency and authority of LGBTIQ+ activists. One of the most prominent examples of this comes to fore when considering the question of representational ethics particularly related to Africa/ns’ LGBTIQ+ people. As one of the few Western/ized (US-American) researchers preoccupied with LGBT organising in Southern Africa, Currier (2011) devised five ethical principles for representation; (1) not to collect narratives of violence or coming-out stories from LGBT constituents or activists; (2) to focus data collection and analysis on LGBT activists’ strategies

to evade the victimising portrayal of African LGBT activists; (3) to omit controversial episodes harmful to the LGBT organizations' reputation; (4) to carefully contextualise to guard against representational distortion, and finally (5) to omit emotionally laden experiences and events from the analysis to avoid them being misconstrued.

While these principles carefully negotiate the tension between 'narrative fidelity' and responsibility to research participants, they move against decoloniality in several ways. The principles firstly appear to reproduce the modern/colonial point zero perspective by implying that LGBTIQ+ activists and activism only arise from and respond to the victimising portrayal of African LGBTIQ+ activists; secondly, to counteract radical 'diversality' by pre-emptively deciding what should be omitted from the written research; and ultimately, to operate in and reproduce modern/colonial hierarchical research relations by deciding what is ethical to represent from the research without the research collaborators, which denies them as equal knowing partners, and positions the researchers as all-knowing individuals and the researched as naïve subjects.

Considering activists and allies' experiences of only being allowed to speak to certain moments or events rather than to 'tell the whole story', there is seemingly a risk of allowing a predetermined representational ethics like the one articulated above to become an inadvertent practice of epistemic exclusion. The methods chosen in this research by contrast appeared to advance the activists' epistemic agency and authority to decide what to represent, how to represent it, and who to represent it to. Photovoice particularly served this purpose, and activists' discussions and deliberations about whether to represent the photos and captions pertaining to alcohol and substance abuse in the photovoice exhibition clearly spoke to representational tensions that they were able and willing to navigate and negotiate amongst each other as knowing subjects.

Another advantage of choosing horizontal practices, as explained by Pohlhaus (2020, p. 245), is that it 'directs one's epistemic energy toward and in connection with other non-dominantly situated subjects. It resists impediments to agency by withdrawing one's epistemic energies from those who are dominantly situated and enlisting those energies to enable agencies elsewhere.' Horizontal practices as such have the potential to circumvent the notion of 'automatic knowing' among epistemically oppressed people, and thus the illusion that such people are interchangeable and not unique epistemic agents in their own right (Pohlhaus, 2020, p. 247). That activists do not possess automatic knowledge simply because of their shared experiences of epistemic and socio-political oppression became apparent both through devising photovoice themes where activists assumed certain buzzwords to be crosscutting, and through

activists' and allies' heterogenous experiences of and perspectives on LGBTIQ+ activism and allies. By utilising both photovoice and PEIs as research methods, this research arguable enabled new connections and forms of knowing between the activists and positioned them as epistemic agents in their own right.

Horizontal practices would arguably not have been possible without the accompaniment unfolding in parallel as this method allowed for the familiarity and relationality necessary for horizontal practices to unfold in a research relation otherwise tainted by hierarchical power differences produced and productive of the Eurocentric epistemological paradigm. While seemingly praising horizontal practices in/as praxis within this research, I do not intend to claim that the research was salvaged from coloniality. This would be a positional impossibility on my part as I agree with Mignolo and Walsh (2018, p. 81) when they contended that 'decoloniality is not a condition to be achieved in a linear sense, since coloniality as we know it will probably never disappear,' and I have attempted to make visible when and how I have fallen into decolonial dangers of essentialising, generalising, and distancing myself from the LGBTIQ+ activists throughout the chapter and offer options for doing decoloniality in/as praxis differently – and better – within a similar research context.

As outlined in the introductory chapter, the purpose of pursuing the negative and positive project of decolonization is ultimately to 'think from and with struggles that think and thought that struggles' (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 20). To this end, the next chapter brings together the analytical, methodological, and empirical knowledges that have emerged throughout the preceding chapters to capture the LGBTIQ+ activists and allies' setting aside victimhood and becoming resisting people, and to revisit the concept of the struggle to offer suggestions for avenues to support their ways of being, knowing, and doing in their struggles (Santos, 2018b, p. 18).

Aluta Continua

1. Introduction

In this concluding chapter, I return to the impetus with which this thesis is written; to move towards epistemic justice and freedom by research/ers thinking ‘from and with struggles that think and thought that struggles’ (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 20). To this end, this thesis is an exploration of choosing decoloniality in/as praxis as the socio-political standpoint, analytical perspective, and methodological stance defining my research/er positionality and practices as an option among many research options (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). The option offered by decoloniality is distinguishable from the postcolonial option in that it does not decouple modernity and coloniality but instead centres questions of power, epistemology, and ontology as foundational (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019, pp. 20-21).

As a foundation, the goal of the decolonial option is to confront and delink from the universality of knowledge tantamount to the Eurocentric epistemological system (Mignolo, 2011b; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018), a twofold endeavour which has been articulated as negative and positive projects of decolonization throughout the previous chapters (Landström, 2024; Mitova, 2020; Pohlhaus, 2020; Posholi, 2020). Decoloniality is, however, not to be understood as a project aimed at becoming a new abstract universal paradigm seeking to replace or improve Eurocentrism. Instead, decoloniality should as noted by Mignolo (2011c) be established as ‘a third force that – on the one hand – delinks from both projects and – on the other – claims its existence in building futures that cannot be left alone in the hands of rewesternizing or dewesternizing designs.’

Building decolonial futures is more than an academic exercise. It is part of marginalised but persistent political and epistemological movements merged from struggles *against* the slave trade, imperialism, colonialism, apartheid, neo-colonialism, and underdevelopment and *for* re-existence, liberation and freedom (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015a, 2018a, 2018b, 2023a). Choosing the decolonial option here has thus meant a commitment to broker ways of building political and epistemological futures that support Africa/n LGBTIQ+ activists’ struggles not only to change existing legislation, but more importantly to reassert their own narrative and reclaim their own humanity (Ekine, 2013, p. 87). This concluding chapter revisits the struggles

as articulated by the LGBTIQ+ activists and allies and offers suggestions for possible pathways for building futures to confront these struggles without falling (entirely) into the hands of rewesternising or dewesternising designs.

2. Decolonizing Solidarity

Revisiting the photovoice exhibition serves to remind the reader that ‘solidarity and support’ was one of the three overarching categories chosen by LGBTIQ+ activists in Uganda to describe what LGBTIQ+ activism is to them. Typically, solidarity is understood as ‘standing with others based upon the recognition of the common experience of humanity’ (Markham, 2019, p. 2), translating into a plethora of solidarities such as rights solidarity (e.g., focused on human rights violations), material solidarity (e.g., disaster aid), and global solidarity defined as ‘a form of solidarity that emphasizes similarities between physically, socially and culturally distant people, while at the same time respecting and acknowledging local and national differences’ (Olesen, 2004, p. 259)

While most of the photos within this category referred to solidarity and support from family, friends, and the LGBTIQ+ community as well as horizontal solidarity partnerships with other local (human) rights organizations, the photo entitled ‘*Growth, support, collaboration*’ made explicit mention of a vertical solidarity partnership with a Swedish political party. While there was scarcely any direct mention of vertical solidarity partnerships in the photovoice exhibition, it was a recurrent theme throughout the interviews with activists and allies. On the one hand, activists and allies were clear that Western donors, transnational NGOs, researchers, journalists and so forth were seen to hold potential to amplify often silenced voices, bringing critical (political) attention to issues requiring urgent action and providing much needed funding for LGBTIQ+ activists and organizations. On the other hand, LGBTIQ+ activists and allies’ experiences and rethinking of vertical solidarity partnerships revealed that for them to become effective in supporting the struggles for decriminalization as well as rehumanization of LGBTIQ+ activists in Uganda, solidarity as a concept and practice is in dire need of decolonization.

Over the last two decades, the terms ‘*noncolonizing solidarity*’ (Mohanty, 2003a, 2003b) or ‘*decolonizing solidarity*’ have gained momentum, particularly in discussions of allied work towards solidarity within settler colonial contexts such as Australia (Land, 2011, 2015; Reynolds, 2014), New Zealand (Showden et al., 2022), Canada and the USA (Boudreau Morris, 2017; Kluttz et al., 2020) by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers. While still relatively underexplored in relation to Africa/ns’ LGBTIQ+ activisms, some scholars have

started confronting the complex intersections of contemporary transnational LGBTIQ+ activism with coloniality, often with a focus on activists situated in the Commonwealth and in ‘the Global South’ (Farmer, 2020; Lennox & Waites, 2013; Waites, 2017).

Without using the term ‘decolonizing solidarity’ specifically, Farmer (2020) captured its essence by critically examining how solidarity is conceptualised and applied in UK-based NGOs’ negotiations and participation in transnational LGBT activism. Aligned with the negative and positive projects of decolonization, decolonizing solidarity in transnational LGBTIQ+ activism according to Farmer (2020, p. 31) entails firstly seeing how coloniality influences the power dynamics of transnational activist engagements. This manifests in unequal distribution of resources, constraints on non-Western activists’ capacity for participation, cultural and political negotiations over the framing, mediation, and reproduction of non-Western activist struggles, and the lack of non-Western activists’ control over their own narratives at an international level. Secondly, beyond merely ‘seeing’ coloniality, decolonizing solidarity recognises experiences and feelings of coloniality for non-Western activists, affecting their participation in transnational networks, and encouraging alternative approaches to understanding and enacting a liberating praxis of solidarity (ibid).

Viewed within this conceptualization of solidarity in transnational LGBTIQ+ activism, experiences and feelings of coloniality were irrefutable in the knowledges produced with activists and allies in this research. Akin to arguments made by Moreau and Currier (2018), LGBTIQ+ activists and allies within this research enunciated experiences of funding and partnerships with Western/ized donors and transnational NGOs as buttressing neo-colonial power relations, invoking heteronormative and homonormative priorities, and imposing Western/ized LGBTIQ+ praxis of power, gender, and being. Examples of these included restricted and directive funding, a tunnel vision on the legislative aspect of decriminalization, the NGOisation of the movement, and the Western/ized professionalization of the activists’ aesthetic, language, and behaviour.

Adding to his previously outlined conceptualisation, Farmer (2020, p. 28) stated that decolonizing solidarity requires Western/ized actors to be reflexive about how our participation in solidaristic relationships may produce exclusionary assumptions of others’ experiences. Without engaging with the concept, what Farmer stated is close to how epistemic violence is conceptualised throughout this thesis, as acts that can cause epistemic harm and expose those violated to other types of violences and exclusions (Pérez, 2019). Experientially, this too emerged from the LGBTIQ+ activists and allies’ rethinking of themselves. Western/ized funding, strategic outcomes, and expressions of the LGBTIQ+ movement and

LGBTIQ+ activists were seen to add more fuel to politicisation and legalisation of homophobia as well as social bigotry against LGBTIQ+ people in Uganda. Further, Westernisation of the praxis of knowing, doing, and being LGBTIQ+ activists appeared to contribute to the disarticulation and exclusion of the LGBTIQ+ movement from other rights-based civil society movements in Uganda. Speaking to the latter, LGBTIQ+ activists in other words found themselves imbued into atomised world/ing of the Eurocentric epistemological system by being framed in a ‘teleological subject position that prioritizes gay identity over other forms of belonging’ (Rahman, 2015, p. 101).

Despite activists’ photovoice and PEIs speaking directly to, and of, resilience and resistance, persistent epistemic exclusion and oppression of LGBTIQ+ activists within vertical solidarity partnerships seemed to have invoked a feeling of impasse. Even worse, a sense of failure for both localized and humanized LGBTIQ+ actions for LGBTIQ+ activists and allies emerged. Entangled in these experiences and feelings of impasse and failure lies the hermeneutical injustice produced by the epistemic crisis of Eurocentrism as significant areas of LGBTIQ+ activists’ and allies’ social experiences are obscured from collective ideological, identitarian, cultural, intellectual, and political understanding.

This sense of impasse and failure arguably reflects a vicious cycle of the colonial power matrix. By silencing or even wilfully ignoring the genealogies of coloniality of power, being, and gender (Pohlhaus, 2012), LGBTIQ+ activists are not only made dependent on a Eurocentric epistemological system – and its perpetrators – that refuses and refutes their epistemic agency and authority but are also blamed for not meeting the very same system’s ideas for (human) evolution (Fasakin, 2021; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013a). Further, LGBTIQ+ activists evidently, to some extent, internalised this blame, which contributed to a persistent turning to Western/ized donors and partners for guidance, getting more deeply entrenched into inferiority and superiority fictions tantamount to the colonial matrix of power. Ultimately, activists’ sense of failure sheds light on one of the main reasons for the high resilience of the Eurocentric epistemological, meaning that it can absorb extraordinarily large disturbances without redefining its structure (Dotson, 2014, p. 121). This is, as stated previously, because Eurocentrism is not only entrenched into the social fabric but also the consciousness of those Other/ed by Eurocentrism.

Importantly, while the visible Westernization of LGBTIQ+ activists’ aesthetics, behaviours, and language were considered a challenge by both activists and allies, it was through photovoice that visibility and voice emerged as another cornerstone in the activists’ collective understanding of LGBTIQ+ activism in Uganda. Throughout the exhibition category

‘Voice & Visibility,’ activists made it clear that the struggle for voice and visibility is tripartite in that it is about daring to be seen as the Other/ed by family, friends, and society. It is making themselves visible to each Other/ed through, for example, the display of the rainbow symbol in covid-masks, clothing, towels, and cups, and finding platforms to be seen from in the ways that they want to be seen. Photos like the *‘Lower the Mask, Let them see You’* exemplify this struggle vividly, and its caption invokes the decolonial imaginary (Pérez, 1999) of a future where LGBTIQ+ people in Uganda do not have to partake in their own non-existence.

It is hard not to see parallels between Fanon’s (1967) seminal book ‘Black Skin, White Masks’, and activists and allies’ accounts of being Westernized and Whitewashed in their praxis of knowing, being and doing of activism. Particularly when considering that even when provided with research, media, or political platforms from which to share their hermeneutical experiences through vertical solidarity partnerships, LGBTIQ+ activists, and to some extent allies, expressed not having epistemic authority over the content nor the terms of their representation as they were either obfuscated by contextually ill-informed copy-paste approaches or confined by rewesternization and dewesternization designs. With narrative control out of their hands, LGBTIQ+ activists experienced silenced speaking, which in turn led to Eurocentric representations of them as one victimised homogenous group with the same experiences of becoming and being LGBTIQ+ activists. By contrast, decolonizing solidarity entails recognising difference and appreciating diverse raced, classed, gendered, and sexed intersectionalities of lived experiences and identities between LGBTIQ+ people, and how these are further complicated by coloniality

3. Doing the Solidaric Work with/out Guidance

Broadly speaking, there is a growing critique both of western states’ inaction in relation to sexual minority rights, and the over-zealous and culturally insensitive interventions of global NGOs’ activism into postcolonial neo-colonised countries (Blake & Dayle, 2013). According to Blake and Dayle (2013, p. 469), there are nascent developments towards a more inclusive transnational activism where those supported are not merely viewed as ‘victims’ of repression, but as equal partners in a joint struggle, which should encourage activists to eschew separatism and begin to work towards a more inclusive and self-critical sexuality rights agenda. Advancing nascent developments further would not only counteract hermeneutic marginalisation of Africa/ns’ LGBTIQ+ activists and allies but could also equip Western/ized actors with tangible examples of forms of resistance strategies that work effectively in postcolonial neo-colonised

countries as well as with ideas of ways to do decolonial allied/solidarity work with diaspora within Western/ized countries.

In the following suggestions for ways Western/ized actors could decolonize their solidarity with LGBTIQ+ activists and allies in Uganda, I deliberately do not distinguish between government, NGO, nor multi-lateral organizations for several reasons. Firstly, at different levels, LGBTIQ+ activists and allies in Uganda either engage directly or are influenced indirectly by these actors and the implicated colonial power dynamics. Second, the suggested seven actions are easily applicable and implementable by any Western/ized actor. Irrespective of how Western/ized actors seek to confront the victimisation of Africa/ns' LGBTIQ+ activists, two cautions are pertinent here; first, that while Western/ized actors might commit to learning from and fronting LGBTIQ+ activists' resilience and resistance, both personally and strategically motivated invisibility and/or disengagement should remain options for LGBTIQ+ activists to choose. Second, Western/ized actors must pay particular attention to the possibility of epistemic injustice emerging as a result of intra-group power hierarchies (Tobi, 2023) between LGBTIQ+ activists, as exemplified through the photovoice group discussions, and not becoming complicit in reinforcing these hierarchies nor in cultural tokenism (Mignolo, 2009) by only letting one – or a select few – LGBTIQ+ activists speak on behalf of the rest.

For Western/ized actors, doing personal and political work of decolonizing solidarity in transnational LGBTIQ+ activism involves proactively taking responsibility and accountability for each other as participants (Farmer, 2020, p. 28). A key challenge identified by Indigenous researchers in settler contexts was that settler activists' sense of 'taking responsibility' seemed to depend on the guidance of Indigenous actors (Land, 2011, 2015; Showden et al., 2022). If no guidance was available, settler activists often fell into what Showden et al. (2022, p. 668) called 'Pakeha paralysis,' meaning settler activists' inability to engage constructively out of fear of making mistakes. For any non-Indigenous activist, it is important to know but avoid always relying on guidance of Indigenous or Other/ed people as 'they have other priorities, and are often spread too thin (Showden et al., 2022, p. 668). Inevitably, this raises the question of how to best take responsibility and be accountable without othering the already Other/ed in the process.

3.1. *Engaging with Differences*

A starting point for decolonizing solidarity within transnational LGBTIQ+ activism could, as underlined by Farmer (2020, p. 29), be to conceptualise solidarity beyond identity

politics as identity politics can fail to enact solidarity beyond LGBTIQ-likeness, particularly when understood and enacted through a homonormative, Western lens of sexuality. Within this is a call for acknowledging that Western gender and sexuality terms and trajectories might not, and should not, be transferred to Africa/ns' contexts as discussed with reference to the coloniality of gender in previous chapters (Currier, 2015; Epprecht, 2008; Murib, 2014; Murib & Brettschneider, 2017; Tamale, 2008). For Western/ize actors engaging in transnational LGBTIQ+ activism, this means appreciating that solidarity entails more than simply working together by virtue of a shared LGBTIQ+ identity. Additionally, Farmer (2020, p. 30) argued that 'being attentive to the complexities of our relational differences is more productive for engaging in solidarity based on responsibility and accountability for our histories and positionality than appealing to generalised notions of fixed experience that obscure the nuances and fluidity of our differences.' In a similar vein, Boudreau Morris (2017, p. 466) contended that '[t]he enemy of solidarity is not difference but the lack of engagement with difference.'

Drawing on Mohanty (2003b), Boudreau Morris (2017, p. 466) further argued that more specific explorations of differences are part of understanding commonalities and thus building deeper solidarities, and underscore the process of decolonizing solidarity as requiring constant and uncomfortable engagement with difference. Instead of searching for ontological and epistemological LGBTIQ-likeness imbued in hetero- and/or homonormativity, Asante (2020, p. 115) proposed the inherent political possibilities of the erotic to push against the grain of heteropatriarchal social relations – or compulsory heterosexuality as discussed in a previous chapter – that limit Africans in how to love, whom to love, how to feel, and with whom to feel it, and to open up intercultural possibilities of the erotic for coalition building that takes love as its point of convergence. Decolonizing solidarity can in other words be understood as '*affective solidarity*' where the basis for solidarity is not a shared identity but rather '*affective dissonance*,' meaning a range of affects such as anger, frustration, and rage that provide a productive grounding for a sustainable politics of transformation out of the experience of dissonance against the odds (Zembylas, 2023, p. 310).

3.2. *Becoming the Accompanier*

With a long history of exploring the praxis of decolonizing solidarity, a return to Indigenous thinkers in settler contexts is useful to further guide the struggle to decolonize solidarity with LGBTIQ+ activists in Uganda. Referring to the responsibilities of non-Indigenous activists in Australia, Land (2011, p. 56) argued that 'non-Indigenous activists must undertake both the personal work of understanding the dominant / white / colonial mindset,

and political work amongst their own people and in support of Indigenous struggles.’ For Western/ized actors in transnational LGBTIQ+ activism, the point here becomes that there cannot be any useful solidarity partnerships in the name of human rights or other liberationist projects without an understanding of colonialism and its continued impact on how Africa/ns or Uganda/ns imagine themselves or relate to the outside world (Blake & Dayle, 2013). However, it is important not to fall into a fixation, and thus perhaps paralysis, of these problems or to view all activism in local versus global and Western/ize versus Other/ed terms, and to instead adopt a pragmatic approach to activism for change (Blake & Dayle, 2013).

Learning from the research relation on which this thesis is built, Western/ized actors could embrace accompaniment as a part of any solidarity partnership as a form of doing pragmatic solidarity. This would entail Western/ized actors not only facilitating the possibility of being accompanied by Ugandan LGBTIQ+ activists in Western/ized territorialities, but more pertinently Western/ized actors being willing to become the accompanier by travelling to Uganda, and accompanying Ugandan LGBTIQ+ activists through extended and repeated project/program visits, fellowships with local research institutions, internships and even homestays with LGBTIQ+ activists contoured in accordance with Ugandan and not Western/ized designs.

3.3. *Circumventing the Double Colonial Move*

When considering how to decolonize solidarity in transnational LGBTIQ+ activism, it is important for Western/ized actors be conscious of the risk not only to succumb to paralysis but also use of ‘ally’ relationships with Indigenous people to perform a ‘*double settler move*’ seeking redemption through performative statements. This occurs while continuing to colonise Indigenous people in activist spaces through acts of exclusion or marginalization within settler-led movements, and to abject themselves to an ‘idealised Other’ while diverting the debate from the material conditions of oppression to their own ‘psychic malaise or bicultural-neediness’ (Showden et al., 2022, p. 668).

Circumventing this double colonial move, Western/ized actors should first and foremost acquaint themselves with the cultural critiques of the human rights movement. Blake and Dayle (2013, p. 468) went so far as to contend that this ‘should be morally obligatory.’ Additionally, Western/ized actors need to show critical consideration of possible real life impact of any project, campaign, statement and so forth on the people who are the subjects of the advocacy, and realise that real damage can result from the very best intentions (Blake &

Dayle, 2013). Following Waites (2019, 2020, 2024), this moral obligation would entail engaging with decolonial agendas without abandoning but rather renegotiating human rights.

Within the context of Uganda, Western/ized actors could move beyond this double settler move in two pragmatic ways; first, by turning their performative statements of condemnation into acting against Western/ized actors who repress LGBTIQ+ activists and allies from inside and outside of Uganda such as USA-Evangelicals espousing and funding the politicization and legalisation of homophobia. After all, if we can conceive of Western/ized actors as proponents of LGBTIQ+ rights, we should also be able to conceive of them (us) as proponents of LGBTIQ+ oppression. Plus, addressing the oppressive discourses of our ‘own people’ through tangible actions could arguably lessen ‘cross-cultural sensitivities’ (Blake & Dayle, 2013) that sometimes stifle Western/ized actors. While it is not possible to turn back time, Western/ized actors could also engage in some intra- and retrospection to not repeat the mistakes made during the queer lawfare over the AHA 2009, AHA 2014 and now AHA 2023. For example, Western/ized actors could refrain from using frontstage diplomacy, political condemnations, and economic dependence to force the Ugandan government’s hand when activists explicitly advise against it and ask not to settle for having the AHA 2023 overturned on technical rather than constitutional terms as with the AHA 2014.

3.4. *Developing a Continuum of Engagement*

Solidaric responsibility is, interestingly, not indivisible. Evident in a study by Showden et al. (2022), with young settler activists in Aotearoa (New Zealand) taking responsibility entailed Western/ized actors being honest with themselves and with LGBTIQ+ activists in Uganda about where on the continuum of engagement in the solidarity partnership they stand, for how long, what their engagement is predicated on, and when either changes. According to Showden et al. (2022, p. 669), the continuum included evasion, paralysed awareness, sharing space, reimagining actions and structures, and lastly reflexivity and relationality, and it served to highlight that ‘grappling with settler decolonial responsibilities is a process, not an end point.’

To date, there are no studies similarly articulating a continuum of engagement for decolonial responsibilities related to LGBTIQ+ activists in Uganda nor Africa. However, devising a similar continuum of engagement for LGBTIQ+ solidaric relations in Uganda *with* LGBTIQ+ activists themselves as co-researchers could potentially provide a concrete tool for LGBTIQ+ activists to articulate and demarcate their needs and wants from solidarity partnerships, thus alleviating at least some of the precarity experienced by LGBTIQ+ activists

in both vertical and horizontal solidarity partnerships as well as the allies' uncertainty about the level and form of engagement desired by LGBTIQ+ activists.

3.5. Pursuing Legal Intersections

One of the key struggles for Africa/ns' LGBTIQ+ activists and allies in transnational solidarity partnerships is, as evidenced by both this and other studies, the monolithic focus on the legal realm, and laws that criminalise LGBTIQ+ people specifically. While I did previously point to the hypocrisy of Western/ized actors not addressing the colonial legacy of existing sodomy laws in most African countries, decolonizing solidarity here is not a call for a shift away from newer criminalization of LGBTIQ+ people to simply focus on sodomy laws nor for abandoning the legal realm as one area of LGBTIQ+ activism. In line with the analysis provided of the contentiousness of pro-LGBTIQ+ rights actors using the 'preservation frame' in Uganda in Chapter 3, Farmer (2020) argued that while sodomy laws are an easily identifiable colonial legacy, an apology risks a discourse suggesting that LGBTIQ+ issues are a more significant legacy of the problems of colonialism than others. This could do what I would term as LGBTIQ+ exceptionalism, meaning that LGBTIQ+ people are marked as special recipients of 'imperial atonement' only for the implementation of sodomy laws (Farmer, 2020, p. 211).

As enunciated by LGBTIQ+ activists and allies' experiences of LGBTIQ+ allyship in Uganda, this form of LGBTIQ+ exceptionalism negates the wider effects of colonialism on the lives of LGBTIQ+ people beyond their gender and/or sexuality-based experiences, isolates LGBTIQ+ people from other Ugandans who experience the same effects of colonialism, and disconnects LGBTIQ+ people and activism strategies from the broader challenges that colonialism has entrenched in international relations and postcolonial neo-colonised states (Farmer, 2020, pp. 210-11). Instead of a simplistic focus on colonial sodomy laws or modern/colonial anti-homosexuality laws, decolonizing solidarity in the legal realm would mean using convergences in the experiences of the effects of colonialism as vantage points for transnational solidarity partnerships.

Based on the LGBTIQ+ activists and allies' narratives, there is ample scope for using convergences are plentiful in the context of Uganda. Western/ized donors, NGOs and others could for example identify and establish solidarity partnerships to dismantle colonial sedition laws used to prohibit freedom of expression and assembly or similar but newer laws such as the Computer Misuse (Amendment) Act 2022 used to curtail the right to freedom of expression online as evident from the arrest of novelist, Norman Tumuhimbise, and journalist, Farida Bikobere, in 2022. Solidarity partnerships could also target digital laws such as the Anti-

Terrorism Act 2002 used to justify extensive government monitoring of digital communications surveillance and privacy violations, laws governing the operations of NGOs such as the NGO Act 2016 used to suspend civil society organizations, and finally, national laws and policies used to ban comprehensive sexuality education (since 2016).

3.6. *Rethinking & Remembering Struggles Together*

Another avenue for decolonizing solidarity that emerged from horizontal research practices employed throughout the research was the need for LGBTIQ+ activists and allies to rethink their struggles together. As noted by Isaac in his interview, LGBTIQ+ activism in Uganda could be seen as a series of moments rather than a movement towards liberation. Considering contributions from allies and activists, this is arguably a result of a void in critical conversations between activists and allies about long-term responsibilities, aspirations, and strategies, and lack of coherent, collected, and consolidated movement memory. Western/ized actors could assist in enabling critical conversations by providing spaces, human and financial resources, and perhaps even assisting in facilitation through horizontal conversational practices as evidenced by this research. Based on activists and allies' experiences, these conversations could for example be about how to tackle the elitism, siloing, and competition within the LGBTIQ+ movement as well as how a localized and humanized Ugandan LGBTIQ+ movement would look like.

Activists and allies' concerns with the lack of movement memory echo Migraine-George and Currier (2016, p. 201) who stated that '[l]osing queer African archives is a real concern to African activists and historians' as it renders them vulnerable to being 'reduced to sensationalist news stories featuring queer Africans as victims of violence.' Decolonizing solidarity could therefore also entail Western/ized contributions to building an LGBTIQ+ movement archive with LGBTIQ+ activists and allies in Uganda by probing discursive protocols necessary for collecting and collating activists and allies' narratives without rendering them 'a mere avatar of a Western queer subject shaped by the identity politics' (Migraine-George & Currier, 2016, p. 197) or falling into the (anthropological) taxonomical 'violence of collecting' (Pollock, 2023).

3.7. *Providing Flexible Funding and Capacity-Building*

As mentioned previously, decolonizing solidarity entails not diverting from material conditions of oppression. Throughout the process of accompaniment, photovoice, and interviews, it became irrevocably clear that while activists and allies denounced their activism

as monetarily driven, funding constituted one of the biggest challenges in various ways. Funding conditionalities included: use to override or negate activists' historical and contextual expertise; funding often not even enough to secure long-term office spaces for activists; funding processes depriving activists of time to do much else than search for funding streams, write proposals as well as compliance reports; and the precarity of funding.

Activists offered guidance for redress, and stated that flexible, sustainable, and long-term funding would be desirable to give activists much-needed stability but also time to engage in actual activism. Being utterly uninterested in continued entrapment of economic dependency, activists articulated a desire for Western/ized actors to provide capacity building aimed at making activists, and their allies, self-sustaining coupled with self-determining their activism, which could furthermore aid enablement of activists to be proactive rather than reactive in activism.

4. Embracing Ubuntu as an Alternative Epistemological System

The relationship between research and activism is, as noted by Smith (2021), neither easy nor natural. Whereas Indigenous communities and activists assert claims to traditional Indigenous knowledges, researchers have played a significant role in dismissing or denying existence of Indigenous knowledges (Smith, 2021). It could be argued that possible pathways for decolonizing solidarity already outlined fall on different sides, although I acknowledge that there are activist researchers and research activists. However, the final pathway emerging from LGBTIQ+ activists and allies' struggles in Uganda seemingly offers a potential bridge between research and activism as it presents an entirely alternative epistemological system referred to as Ubuntu. Rooted in the communal ethos of many African cultures, Ubuntu is often translated as *'I am because we are,'* as outlined previously (Tamale, 2020), encapsulating a philosophy for the collective respect for all rights for all people without distinction, human interdependence, and group solidarity (Ntlama, 2014).

When considering the reach of global coloniality, it is noteworthy that chowdhury et al. (2021) contended, 'Ubuntu is not merely a locally practised ideology or discursive discourse; instead, it may guide us in this New Normal. For a long time, Ubuntu has been central to driving the decolonizing methodology as complementary to the Indigenous paradigm.' As ways of knowing, Ubuntu includes frameworks within and outside academia, emphasising trust, interdependence and spiritualism, and extended kinship networks (chowdhury et al., 2021). In the African management system context, Ubuntu philosophy represents humanness, and a pervasive spirit of caring, compassion, fellowship, empathy and cooperation transcending

ethnic, gender, and national borders (chowdhury et al., 2021). While a few LGBTIQ+ activists explicitly pointed to Ubuntu as an option for building (decolonial) futures where rights advocacy is unencumbered by Eurocentrism, the relevance of Ubuntu emerged even before it was explicitly named. Revisiting the photovoice exhibition and homing in on LGBTIQ+ activists' collective understanding of the strengths and possibilities of LGBTIQ+ activism in Uganda reveals that the themes devised were acceptance, community, love, unity, and hope, all of which appear to mirror the very ethos of Ubuntu.

As a way of being, 'Ubuntu is an epistemological process that creates a space for being an Ubuntu', meaning that Ubuntu ways of acting are both a 'synthesis and an articulation' (Martin & Marriboopa, 2003, p. 211 cited in chowdhury et al., 2021, p. 371). The ethos of 'being an Ubuntu' resounded in LGBTIQ+ activists' emphasis on the praxis of being an LGBTIQ+ activist as centred, or ideally centred, around care, not money; relationality, not professionalism; localisation, not externalisation; social acceptance and belonging, not decriminalization; kinship and community spaces, not international stages; Ugandanness, not LGBTIQ+ exceptionalism.

Considering these convergences, Ubuntu appears to hold a lot of promise as a decolonial option. This notion is further backed by nascent scholarship around Ubuntu. While still relatively unexplored in social sciences research, African/ist scholars have already propositioned Ubuntu as a new dialogical heuristic model with potential to transform the politically, ethically, and epistemologically heteropatriarchal landscape in which sexuality and gender are contested in Africa (Epprecht, 2013; Kaoma, 2016; Tamale, 2020), and to Africanise the discourse in homosexuality (Chitando & Mateveke, 2017). Bongmba (2016) even found Ubuntu to offer a way of rethinking negative discourses on homosexuality in Africa and in the African church. African/ist scholars have furthermore employed Ubuntu as an Indigenous Southern African research paradigm to decolonize research/ers (Keikelame & Swartz, 2019; Seehawer, 2018; Tavernaro-Haidarian, 2018).

Ubuntu appears to present an alternative epistemological system with the possibility to support decolonial insurgence of LGBTIQ+ activists and allies' praxis of knowing, being, and doing, and for bridging research and activism. To recall, insurgence here denotes a propositional offensive *for* 'in the postures, processes, and practices that disrupt, transgress, intervene and in-surge in, and that mobilize, propose, provoke, activate, and construct an otherwise' (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, pp. 33-34).

5. Limitations of the Research/er

While the previous chapter touched upon some of the decolonial dangers that I inadvertently fell into during my research collaboration with SMUG and FARUG, I want to highlight two further limitations of this research/er that both pertain to the call for transforming ‘Westernized Uni-versity into a Decolonial Pluri-versity’ (Grosfoguel, 2013, p. 89). The call to decolonize Western/ized universities, and other epistemic institutions, is well warranted as Africa/ns will otherwise continue to be construed as sub-and non-beings said to have no history, no reason, no rationality and no knowledge (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018b) within academia, which has implications for the political and epistemological movements of decoloniality as discussed in Chapters 3, 4, and 5. This recognition seemingly resonates with a lot of Africa/nist scholars as the literature on decolonizing universities has been flourishing within Africa in recent years (Godsell & Chikane, 2016; Keikelame & Swartz, 2019; Le Grange, 2016; Mogorosi, 2018; Ndimande, 2012; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018a, 2023b; Oliveira & Vearey, 2017). Notwithstanding the urgency of decolonizing universities, it is outside of the scope of this research for two main reasons. Firstly, I simply do not have room for it within the confines of this thesis, and secondly, it did not emerge as one of the key struggles for LGBTIQ+ activists and allies in Uganda.

Nevertheless, having engaged in literary debates, I do consider important avenues for future decolonizing research/ers to include confronting challenges of locating Other/ed scholars, literature, concepts and ideas as these are often forgotten, unknown or may not adhere to Eurocentric disciplinary boundaries, are evident in the reluctance or outright resistance to decolonizing efforts within universities and universities’ deep-seated complicity through ethnocentrism, elitism and exclusion (Moosavi, 2020, 2023; Zembylas, 2023). Further, when pursuing these avenues, decolonizing research/ers must confront and navigate the dangers of nativist and tokenistic decolonization (Moosavi, 2020, 2023; Pérez, 2022) as well as the psychological and emotional taxation involved for Other/ed when trying to negotiate normative Whiteness, diversify Eurocentric curricula and conceptualise the racial mirco-aggression as noted by Arday (2018). Finally, efforts to decolonize universities must steer clear of merely falling into the ‘decolonial bandwagon’ of intellectual decolonization (Moosavi, 2020) by engaging with the material aspect of decolonization, which could include making Western/ized universities delink from companies and industries of ‘*colonialist extermination*’ (Pérez, 2022).

The second related limitation of this research/er touches upon the im/possibility of decoloniality in/as praxis as it highlights the increasing rhetorical use of decoloniality within spheres of power without practical application (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Without absolving

myself of de/colonial mishaps, the limitation in question pertains to the ways in which my university's research ethics administration curtailed my ability to do decoloniality in/as praxis. This was firstly done by the research and ethics administration insisting on fixed empiricist methods including scripts prior to me travelling to Uganda, which clashed with my initially designed methodology aimed at ensuring collective ownership over production, possession, and distribution of knowledges (Datta, 2018). Secondly, the research and ethics administration suggested that there was no need to do the research with LGBTIQ+ activists in Uganda, a suggestion based on the 'vulnerability' clause pertaining to certain minority groups such as LGBTQ+ inherent in Australia's national human research ethics guidelines. With this, the research and ethics administration arguably positioned LGBTIQ+ activists as a population in need of 'special protections', which suggests that vulnerable peoples should only be involved in research if the research cannot happen without them (Bracken-Roche et al., 2017). This was despite the research/er already having been authorised by both SMUG and FARUG. Thirdly, the research and ethics administration asserted that I should use a written consent form, despite me having outlined the socio-political landscape in Uganda and argued against a written consent form. The research and ethics administration thus seemed to fall into the uncritical use of consent forms, which can absolve researchers and institutions from responsibility, infantilise research participants, especially those considered 'vulnerable', conceal more than they reveal, and be inappropriate in contexts and cultures where signing one's name can cause unease, suspicion and even fear (Sikes, 2013, p. 530). Finally, the research and ethics administration initially insisted on me obtaining research approval from the Ugandan Government to conduct the proposed research, despite me arguing against this out of concern that the Ugandan Government could use me to locate LGBTIQ+ organizations, to identify LGBTIQ+ activists and individuals, and me thus ultimately jeopardising their anonymity, safety, and security.

While some compromises were eventually reached as described in Chapter 4, my experiences evidently align with several scholars' contention that the ethical review process institutionalised in Western/ized universities is inadequate, particularly for research in postcolonial neo-colonised contexts (Fazal, 2022; Kiragu & Warrington, 2013; Shamim & Qureshi, 2018). Interestingly, decolonial thinkers' engagement with Research Ethics Committees (RECs) as an increasingly institutionalised feature of research/er practice (Dixon-Woods et al., 2007) is scarce. It would however be a highly relevant avenue for future decolonizing research/ers given that research ethics regulations are largely produced in and governed by Western/ized Universities (Israel, 2018), and Western/ized Universities have a tendency to promote universal methodological and bio-medicalised ethics criteria (Barnes,

2018). In line with Lipscombe et al. (2021) who pondered on the construction of vulnerability of First Nations peoples and its implications for research about Australia Day, I would argue that research ethics should serve to make ethical inclusions rather than default unethical exclusions, and future decolonizing research/ers could be an important part of this endeavour.

6. Decolonial Futures Ahead?

I began this thesis with the contention that the near non-existence of African/ns' activism in social sciences knowledge production, possession, and dissemination is one of many manifestations of the '*epistemic crisis*' of Eurocentrism at the heart of calls for epistemic decolonization (Posholi, 2020). I further posited that this crisis is a form of '*hermeneutical injustice*' (Posholi, 2020) in which social sciences scholars and their institutions are both implicit and complicit through acts of both ignorant and wilful epistemic violence (Alcoff, 2017; Brunner, 2021; Dotson, 2011, 2012, 2014; Grosfoguel, 2013; Mertens et al., 2022; Pérez, 2019; Pohlhaus, 2020; Posholi, 2020; Purewal & Ung Loh, 2021), which not only oppress African LGBTIQ+ activists epistemically but exposes them to predictably and reliably deadly consequences (Berenstain et al., 2022; Santos, 2016; Grosfoguel, 2013, 2015; Jjuuko et al., 2022; Mertens et al., 2022; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2012a; Pérez, 2019; Waites, 2018).

In response, I have chosen decolonizing strategies to intervene in one of the three different and interrelated spheres of our praxis of living responsibly for the epistemic crisis; the system of disciplinary management of knowledge (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 223). An intervention of this kind requires adopting a decolonial attitude (Maldonado-Torres, 2017) to challenge not only terms (assumptions, regulations, principles) of disciplinary knowledge management, but also to delink from the Eurocentric modern/colonial praxis of living and knowing as the only option (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). Ultimately, decolonizing research/ers should support the emergences rather than absences of those hermeneutically marginalised by Eurocentrism as an epistemological system (Santos, 2016, 2018b).

Drawing heavily on Mignolo and Walsh (2018), I have chosen to embrace decoloniality in/as praxis as a socio-political standpoint, analytical perspective, and methodological stance. Analytically, I have taken decoloniality in/as praxis to necessitate the integration of multiple critical perspectives that wilfully challenge and seek to move beyond the totality of the Western/ized canon (Grosfoguel, 2007). Throughout this thesis, I have thus cross-fertilised particularly decolonial, feminist, and social epistemological perspectives to unfold an argument that the call for epistemic decolonization can be understood as a call to confront and delink from hermeneutical injustices produced by persistent epistemic marginalisation, exclusion or

oppression of people whose praxis of living, thinking, sensing, and being is different from the European, capitalist, liberal, Christian, heteropatriarchal, and cis-gender Man (Grosfoguel, 2007, 2013, 2015; Landström, 2024; Lugones, 2007, 2024; Maldonado-Torres, 2004, 2007; Pohlhaus, 2020; Posholi, 2020).

Within this framework, I have drawn on concepts of coloniality of power, gender, and being to demonstrate that the long list of subject(ivity) markers – or more accurately human(ity) markers – implanted in the colonial matrix of power, relegate Africa/ns including LGBTIQ+ activists and allies to a postcolonial neo-colonised present which is ‘absent’ and to a position of epistemic non-existence (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2010, 2013a, 2013b, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a). I have further used this framework to demonstrate coloniality of power, gender as imbued in universalised LGBTIQ+ rights discourses as well as pro- and anti-LG BTIQ+ discourses used in struggles over the legality and lives of LGBTIQ+ people in Uganda. Further, I have extended this analysis to the calamitous implications for LGBTIQ+ activists’ praxis of knowing, being, and doing their activism in Uganda.

As a methodological stance, I have interpreted decoloniality in/as praxis as the relationally-driven, contextually-informed, and action-oriented moves beyond the ‘topos of “visibility”’ of coloniality (Pérez, 2019, p. 9) to reconstitute my research relation and practices from knowing-about to knowing-with LGBTIQ+ activists and their appointed allies in Uganda (Datta, 2018; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Rossi et al., 2013; Santos, 2018b; Smith, 2019; Smith, 2021). Highly informed by Indigenous (Kovach, 2010, 2021; Smith, 2021) and Ugandan feminist scholars (Nyanzi, 2011, 2013; Nyanzi & Karamagi, 2015; Tamale, 2001, 2008, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2020), this led me to choose and employ methods of accompaniment, photovoice, photo-elicitation and (conversational) interviews for their potential to centre subjectivity, agency and authority of the LGBTIQ+ activists and allies, and to establish a research relation characterised by relationality, reciprocity, and reflexivity. As epistemic decolonization is not merely about knowing-with in the process of producing but also in the process of possessing and disseminating knowledges produced, I furthermore decided to emphasise self-representation (Moreton-Robinson, 2021) of activists and allies in the presentation of the knowledges produced within this thesis by letting them speak for itself insofar as possible throughout Chapters 5-8.

In this final chapter, I turned to decoloniality in/as praxis as a socio-political stance, which should be taken as an intertwined epistemic, political, and ethical (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018) and affective project (Zembylas, 2023). To this end, I have used this chapter to explore two possible pathways for decolonizing solidarity with LGBTIQ+ activists in Uganda in their

struggles including (1) doing the personal and political work with/in transnational LGBTIQ+ activism; and (2) embracing Ubuntu as an alternative epistemological system. While the pathways suggested here seemingly require different actors and enactments of decoloniality in/as praxis and operate in different de/colonial realms, their main potential for building decolonial futures with LGBTIQ+ activists and allies in Uganda is the same. Both pathways arguably move to recognise how embodied repositories of colonised and racialized experiences continue to be reproduced in everyday encounters, thus moving not only towards intellectual decolonization but also affective decolonization (Zembylas, 2023).

Aligned with Zembylas (2023), I would posit affective solidarity *as* decolonising solidarity, which may open up a new pathway for decoloniality in/as praxis by engaging with the entangled relations between embodied experience and political feeling. Speaking from the position of a privileged Western/ized researcher, I see great potential in a deeper understanding of this entanglement leading to a better understanding of how to incentivize other Western/ized researchers, practitioners, politicians and so forth to decolonize beyond the metaphor. Applied to the experiences of the Other/ed, I would more importantly say that the onus of affective solidarity could extend decolonial discourses about ‘hermeneutical injustice’ to what I would call ‘*hermeneutical dysmorphia*’ and ‘*hermeneutical dysphoria*.’ While hesitant to adopt concepts (and meanings) from psychiatry, the coupling here serves to highlight a function (hermeneutical marginalisation) and an affect (dysmorphia and dysphoria) of the Eurocentric epistemological system on the praxis of knowing, being, and doing for the Other/ed, and thus opens pathways for shared affective dissonance to decolonize solidarity.

Whereas hermeneutical dysmorphia emerged from the LGBTIQ+ activists’ self-representation of their embodied experiences of becoming and being an LGBTIQ+ activists and the Eurocentric praxis for becoming and being LGBTIQ+ activists, hermeneutical dysphoria emerged from the LGBTIQ+ activists and allies’ perspectives on the LGBTIQ+ movement in Uganda as a series of moments rather than a movement. Both seemingly present affective dissonance expressed as frustration, ennui, and even anger that could serve as the vantage point for decolonizing solidarity between LGBTIQ+ activists and allies in Uganda. At its core, the dissonance comprised of the clash between the LGBTIQ+ activists’ embodied experiences of competitiveness, isolation, fragmentation, and extraversion within the LGBTIQ+ movement and their affective self-representation of Ugandanness, and their praxis of being and doing LGBTIQ+ activism, as rooted in sociability, care, relationality, and more than anything, love of country, community, and self.

Nearing the literal end, it seems pertinent to end on a note of love – not because of the tired slogan ‘love is love’ used in Western/ized discourses of transnational LGBTIQ+ activism, but because it is at the core of the LGBTIQ+ activists’ self-representation, and of the decolonial option. Decolonial love implies a dignified anger to confront and delink from the Eurocentric meanings of love, and to instead reconstitute those Other/ed by Eurocentrism through respect, listening, cooperation, and care (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, pp. 223-24). As a novice decolonizing researcher predominantly privileged by Eurocentrism, decolonial love to me implies that I must not only nurture discomfort (Boudreau Morris, 2017), but also accept ambivalence and de/colonial failures as part of moving towards decoloniality in/as praxis without putting either under the guise of good intentions, bury them in wilful ignorance, or hide behind privileged paralysis.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Participant Information Statement



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STUDY TITLE

'(De)colonising civil society activism in postcolonial Uganda'

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

1. What is this study about?

You are invited to take part in a research study exploring the agency, knowledge and experiences of LGBT+ activists and organizations in Uganda. With this, the study wants to produce knowledge that can contribute to supporting rather than undermining African LGBT+ struggles and local processes.

You have been invited to participate in this study because you are a self-identified LGBT+ activist and/or you work for an organization working with LGBT+ rights or related areas in Uganda.

This Participant Information Statement tells you about the research study. Knowing what is involved will help you decide, if you want to take part in the research. Please read this sheet carefully and ask questions about anything that you don't understand or want to know more about.

Participation in this research study is **voluntary**. You will be given a copy of this Participant Information Statement to keep.

After you have read this statement, the researcher will discuss what exactly you do and do not consent to. You will only be asked for **verbal** and not written consent to mitigate any risk of exposure of your participation in this study.

By giving consent to take part in this study you are telling us that you:

- Understand what you have read.
- Agree to take part in the research study as outlined below.
- Agree to the use of your personal information as described.

2. Who is running the study?

The study is being carried out by the following researchers:

- Tanja Dittfeld, PhD Candidate, The University of Sydney, Australia.

Tanja Dittfeld is conducting this study as the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) at The University of Sydney. This will take place under the supervision of Professor Ruth Phillips and Professor Susan Goodwin.

3. What will the study involve for me?

3.1. Participant observation

The researcher will work with and within two LGBT+ organizations in Kampala from March to July 2020. The purpose of the participant observation is to gain insights to the organizations' missions, strategies and activities, and LGBT+ activists' beliefs, politics and goals. If you work for one of these organizations, you will be asked to act as you would, if the researcher was not present. The researcher will make handwritten notes of the observations (fieldnotes) in Danish in a field journal. You will be able to get a verbal overview of the observations for as long as the researcher is in Uganda. The observational notes are **not person specific**. During the participant observation period, you may also be asked to be interviewed.

Location and timing: The participant observation will take place from March to July 2020 during which the researcher is in Uganda. The general location of the participant observation is the offices of the two LGBT+ organizations with which the researcher collaborates. The participant observation may however also take place elsewhere, depending on the two organizations' activities and events.

Review process: The observations are recorded in Danish, the native language of the researcher, to increase the unidentifiability of the notes. It may therefore be hard for you to review the notes. The notes are however also not person specific. The observations will be used to inform the individual and focus group interviews.

Personal details: The fieldnotes will not be person specific. This means that even if an observation about you is recorded, it will not contain any information that can be traced back to you.

Access to records: Given that the fieldnotes are recorded manually in a field journal, the notes not identifiable and the journal to be always kept on the researcher, access to the field notes will be limited. Should you want to hear what the researcher has observed in general, this can be shared in person.

Use of observational notes: The knowledge from the observations will be published in the researcher's PhD thesis in summative form. The observations may also be used in journal articles, books and creative works such as short stories as well as in conference and other academic presentations and presentations to local and international civil society organizations who work with LGBT+ issues.

3.2. Individual interviews

You will be asked to participate in one-on-one interviews during which the researcher, Tanja Dittfeld, will ask open-ended questions about your knowledge and experiences of LGBT+ activism in Uganda. Each interview is expected to last between 45 to 90 minutes, but the duration of the interview(s) will be adapted to your availability. If you agree, the interviews will be audio-recorded. Otherwise, the researcher will take notes during the interview and then write a summary of the interview after the interview.

Location and timing: The interviews will take place from March to July 2020 during which the researcher is in Uganda. As for specific time and location, this will be agreed upon between you and the researcher. The researcher will generally recommend that the interview takes place within one of the LGBT+ organizations given their extensive security measures.

Review process: If the interview is audio-recorded, the interview will be transcribed. If the interview is not audio-recorded, the interview will be summarised by the researcher. You will be able to review the interview transcripts or summary by letting the researcher know that you would like to and by then providing your e-mail address or WhatsApp number to the researcher.

Personal details: The researcher will ask questions about your name, age, gender identification and sexual orientation. However, you are in no way required to provide these details to be interviewed. If you do provide these details, they will not be recorded in a way that makes you identifiable in the interview, and pseudonyms will be used when sorting and storing the interviews. Findings of this study may be published, but these publications will not contain your name or any identifiable information about you. If, for whatever reason, you do want your name or organizational affiliation to appear in the interview material and subsequent publications and presentations, this is possible. However, please consider the potential risks that this involves.

Access to records: Given the sensitive nature of the research, any access to the audio-recordings, notes or transcripts of your interview(s) will be determined by you. If you do want access, you could for example get it on a memory stick, sent by e-mail or to WhatsApp. The researchers generally recommend WhatsApp as the encryption is stronger than the other methods of information sharing.

Use of interviews: The knowledge from the interviews will be published in the researcher's PhD thesis in the form of either direct or summative form. The interviews may also be used in journal articles, books and creative works such as short stories. The interviews may moreover be used in conference and other academic presentations and presentations to local and international civil society organizations who work with LGBT+ issues.

3.3. Focus group interviews

You will be asked to participate in focus group interviews with no more than 12 people in total. The focus group interviews will focus on discussions and analysis of data generated from the observations and one-on-one interviews. For you, this means that you will either be presented with field notes, interviews transcripts and interview summaries in their pure, unprocessed form or with topics, concepts and themes that have emerged from the field notes, interview transcripts and interview summaries.

Location and timing: The interviews will take place from March to July 2020 during which the researcher is in Uganda. As for specific time and location, this will be agreed upon between you and the researcher. The researcher will generally recommend that the interview takes place within one of the LGBT+ organizations given their extensive security measures.

Review process: If the interview was audio-recorded, the interview will be transcribed. If the interview was not audio-recorded, the interview will be summarised. You will be able to review the interview transcripts or summary by letting the researcher know and then by providing your e-mail or WhatsApp number to the researcher. Audio-recordings of the focus group will however not be shared with anyone.

Personal details: You will not be asked to provide any personal details during or after the interview. The researcher will most likely ask what your name is and how you identify in terms of gender and sexuality (in local or English terms). However, you are not required to provide these details. If you do provide these details, they will not be recorded in a way that makes you identifiable in the interview, unless you want to be identified. The results of this study may be published, but these publications will not contain your name or any identifiable information about you, unless you consent to being identified.

Access to records: Any audio-recordings, notes or transcripts of the focus group interviews will be stored at one of the LGBT+ organizations with which the researcher collaborates to avoid discussion by third parties. If you want to review any of the material, this will have to happen in the presence of the researcher and on the premises to ensure the confidentiality and safety of all the focus group participants.

Use of interviews: The knowledge from the interviews will be published in the researcher's PhD thesis in the form of either direct or summative form. The interviews may also be used in journal articles, books and creative works such as short stories. The interviews may moreover be used in conference and other academic presentations and presentations to local and international civil society organizations who work with LGBT+ issues.

4. How much of my time will the study take?

The observation will take place every day across a period of six months, March to July 2020. Considering both informal interviews, formal (individual or focus group) interviews, and review of interviews or field journal, you will probably be asked to devote a few hours per week across a period of six months. Your time commitment will be agreed upon with the researcher.

5. Do I have to be in the study? Can I withdraw from the study once I've started?

Being in this study is completely voluntary and you do not have to take part. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney.

If you decide to take part in the study and then change your mind later, you are free to withdraw at any time. You can do this by contacting Tanja Dittfeld on e-mail tanja.dittfeld@sydney.edu.au. If you withdraw from the study, the following will happen in the case of:

5.1. Observations

If you do not want to be notated, please advise the researcher hereof. However, the fieldnotes are generally not person-specific or detailing activities of individuals.

5.2. Individual interviews

You are free to stop the interview at any time. Unless you say that you want us to keep them, any recordings will be erased and the information you have provided will not be included in the study results. You may also refuse to answer any questions that you do not wish to answer during the interview.

5.2. Focus-group interviews

If you take part in a focus group, you are free to stop participating at any stage or to refuse to answer any of the questions. However, it will not be possible to withdraw your individual comments from our records once the group has started, as it is a group discussion.

6. Are there any risks or costs associated with being in the study?

Aside from giving up your time, we do not expect that there will be any risks or significant costs associated with taking part in this study. Participating in the study may involve cost of transportation to the site of the interview. Given the criminalization of consensual same-sex acts under the Penal Code and the NGO Act of 2016 effectively criminalising legitimate advocacy on rights of LGBT peoples, participating in the study may cause intimidation and threats from government officials, or feelings of distress, mild discomfort and anxiety for you.

7. Are there any benefits associated with being in the study?

There is not any direct financial benefit of participating in this study, and we cannot guarantee that you will receive any direct benefits from being in the study.

However, potential indirect benefits of participating in the study are:

- Raising awareness about LGBT+ in activism in Uganda;
- Inspiring LGBT+ activists and organizations elsewhere;
- Informing policy recommendations for international institutions and NGOs that work to support LGBT+ activism in Uganda;
- Providing knowledge for better NGO engagement around LGBT activism generally and within Uganda specifically.

8. What will happen to information about me that is collected during the study?

- Individual interviews will, provided that you consent, be audio-recorded. If you do not consent to have the interview audio-recorded, the researcher will ask for your consent to take handwritten notes during the interview and then write a summary after the interview;
- The audio-recordings will be distorted with audio-distortion software to increase your anonymity;
- The audio-recordings may be transcribed by a third party external to Uganda;
- Interview transcripts and journal notes will be used for the researcher's PhD thesis and potentially in other publications such as journal articles, books and creative works.
- The interview transcripts and journal notes may also be used in different presentations such as conference presentations and presentations to organizations working with LGBT+ issues in and outside of Uganda;
- Observations will be recorded by hand in Danish in a field journal by the researcher;
- Your personal information such as name, gender, age, sexual orientation and so forth will be kept confidential, unless you explicitly state that you want it not to be;
- You will have access to audio-recordings, interview notes and summaries that pertain to you only upon agreement with the researcher;
- No personal information will be included, unless specifically requested by you;
- The data will be stored electronically on Research Data Store (RDS), which is a central networked drive maintained by the University of Sydney. The researcher, Tanja Dittfeld, and the Chief Investigator, Ruth Phillips, will have access to the data.
- The data will be retained for minimum 5 years and audio-recordings deleted. Transcripts may however be used for future research projects.

By providing your consent, you are agreeing to us collecting personal information about you for the purposes of this research study. This information will only be used for the purposes outlined in this Participant Information Statement, unless you consent otherwise.

Your information will be stored securely and will only be disclosed with your permission, except as required by law. Study findings may be published, and you will be identified in these publications if you decide to participate in this study.

9. Can I tell other people about the study?

Please do not talk to other people about the study, because the government has increasingly sought to curtail the work of NGOs working on topics such as governance, human rights, land, oil, and LGBT+ peoples by tactics such as closure of meetings, threats, and heavy-handed bureaucratic interference. We therefore want to keep the scope of the study as confidential as possible to ensure the highest degree of safety possible.

10. What if I would like further information about the study?

When you have read this information, Tanja Dittfeld, will be available to discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have.

If you would like to know more at any stage during the study, please feel free to contact Tanja Dittfeld, PhD Candidate, tanja.dittfeld@sydney.edu.au, +61 435 576 178.

Ugandan contact: Richard Lusimbo, Research and Documentation Officer with SMUG, rlusimbo@gmail.com

11. Will I be told the results of the study?

You have a right to receive feedback about the overall results of this study. You can tell the researcher that you wish to receive feedback, when you read this form or later in the research process. If you wish feedback about the overall results of this study, you will need to provide the researcher with your e-mail address or WhatsApp number. This feedback will be in the form of a short summary of the overall results of the study and the PhD dissertation. You will receive this feedback after the study is finished.

12. What if I have a complaint or any concerns about the study?

Research involving humans in Australia is reviewed by an independent group of people called a Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the HREC of the University of Sydney [**protocol no – 2020/036**]. As part of this process, we have agreed to carry out the study according to the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)*. This statement has been developed to protect people who agree to take part in research studies.

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you wish to make a complaint to someone independent from the study, please contact the university using the details outlined below. Please quote the study title and protocol number.

The Manager, Ethics Administration, University of Sydney:

- **Telephone:** +61 2 8627 8176
- **Email:** human.ethics@sydney.edu.au

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted or you have further questions about the study, you are welcome to contact the researcher, Tanja Dittfeld:

- **Email:** tanja.dittfeld@sydney.edu.au / **Telephone:** +61 4 3557 6178 (Ugandan number to be obtained)

If you are concerned about the way this study is being conducted by the researcher, you can also contact the researcher's supervisor, Ruth Phillips:

- **Email:** ruth.phillips@sydney.edu.au

OR

Richard Lusimbo, Research and Documentation Officer with SMUG:

- **Email:** rlusimbo@gmail.com

Appendix 2: Consent Script for Participant Observation



ABN 15 211 513 464

Ruth Phillips
Associate Professor

Discipline of Social Work
School of Education and Social Work
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Room 741
Education Building A35
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NSW 2006 AUSTRALIA
Telephone: +61 2 9351 6899
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CONSENT SCRIPT FOR PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION FOR THE STUDY:

'(De)colonising civil society activism in postcolonial Uganda'

1. Recap of participant information statement

The researcher, Tanja Dittfeld, will work with and within two LGBT+ organizations in Kampala, Uganda from March to July 2020. During this time, Tanja will participate in the work of the two organizations and simultaneously observe and take note of the organizations' missions, strategies and activities, and LGBT+ activists' beliefs, politics and goals. If you work for one of these organizations, you will be asked to act as you would, if the researcher was not present. To capture the observations, the researcher will keep a field journal in Danish. You will be able to review notes in the field journal for as long as the researcher is in Uganda. During the observation period, you may also be asked to be interviewed.

Location and timing: The participant observation will take place from March to July 2020 during which time the researcher is in Uganda. The general location of the participant observation is expected to be the offices of the two LGBT+ organizations with which the researcher collaborates. The participant observation might however also take place elsewhere depending on the sites of work for the two LGBT+ organizations.

Review process: The fieldnotes are recorded in Danish, the native language of the researcher, to increase the unidentifiability of the notes. It may therefore be hard for you to review the notes. The notes are however also not person specific. The overall themes and observations will be used to inform the individual and focus group interviews.

Personal details: The fieldnotes will not be person specific. This means that even if an observation about you is recorded, it will not contain any information that can be traced back to you.

Access to records: Given that the fieldnotes are recorded manually in Danish in a field journal, the notes not person-specific and the journal to be always kept on the researcher, access to the field notes will be limited. Should you however want a general overview of the observations, this can be shared in person.

Use of observations: The knowledge from the participant observations will be published in the researcher’s PhD thesis. The interviews may also be used in journal articles, books and creative works such as short stories. The interviews may moreover be used in conference and other academic presentations and presentations to local and international civil society organizations.

2. Participant consent

In giving my consent, I state that:

- I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
- I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.
- The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study, and I am happy with the answers.
- I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney now or in the future.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don’t wish to answer.
- I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.
- I understand that the results of this study will be used in publications and presentations, but these will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me unless I consent to being identified using the ‘Yes’ checkbox below.

3. Identification

I wish to be identified by:	YES	NO	Details
- Name			
- Gender			
- Sexuality			
- Gender expression			
- Organizations(s) I work for			
- Other:			

Obs.: Please carefully consider the potential risks of choosing any form of identifier. You can still participate in the study, if you wish to remain completely anonymous. Please also note that the observational notes are by default non-person specific, hence there is no guarantee that you would be identified in the observational notes, even if you would like to be.

4. Consent

I consent to:	YES	NO
- Observations that may involve me recorded in fieldno		
- Permanent archiving of study materials		
- Potentially being contacted about future studies		

5. Feedback

I would like to:	YES	NO
- Receive feedback about the overall results of this study		
- Review publications or presentations that draw on my interview(s) for accuracy		

6. Contact details

If you answered YES to any of the above in point 5, please indicate your preferred form of contact and provide the details accordingly:	
E-mail	
WhatsApp	
Other	

Obs.: Please note the following:

1. If you want to receive feedback about the overall results of this study, WhatsApp is the recommended choice because the encryption of WhatsApp is stronger than of e-mail in general;
2. It is your responsibility to notify the researcher, if your e-mail or WhatsApp number changes during or after the study;
3. If you would like to use WhatsApp for the purpose of this research but the social media tax prevents you from this, the researcher will reimburse you for the additional cost of using WhatsApp.

Appendix 3: Consent Script for Wetegeleze Group Interviews



ABN 15 211 513 464

Ruth Phillips
Associate Professor

Discipline of Social Work
School of Education and Social Work
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Email: ruth.phillips@sydney.edu.au
Web: <http://www.sydney.edu.au/>

CONSENT SCRIPT FOR FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS FOR THE PHOTOVOICE PROJECT:

'Wetegeleze'

1. Recap of the participant information statement

Focus group interviews

You have been asked to participate in focus group interviews with no more than 12 people in total. The focus group interviews will focus on discussions and analysis of the photos taken in the first and second part of the photo-voice project.

Location and timing: The interviews will take place from March to July 2020 during which time the researcher is in Uganda. As for specific time and location, this will be agreed upon between you and the researcher. The researcher will generally recommend that the interview takes place within one of the LGBT+ organizations within which the researcher works given the extensive security measures.

Review process: If the interview was audio-recorded, the interview will be transcribed. If the interview was not transcribed, the interview will be summarised. You will be able to review the interview transcripts or summary by letting the researcher know and then by providing your e-mail or WhatsApp number to the researcher. Audio-recordings of the focus group will not be shared with anyone.

Personal details: You will not be asked to provide any personal details during or after the focus group interview. The researcher will most likely ask what your name is and how you identify in terms of gender and sexuality (in local or English terms). However, you are not required to provide these details. If you do provide these details, they will not be recorded in a way that makes you identifiable in the focus group interview, unless you want to be identified. The results of this study will be published, but these publications will not contain any identifiable information about you, unless you want them to.

Access to records: Any audio-recordings, notes or transcripts of the focus group interviews will be stored at one of the LGBT+ organizations with which the researcher collaborates to avoid discussion by third parties. If you want to review any of the material, this will have to happen in the presence of

the researcher and on the premises to ensure the confidentiality and safety of all the focus group participants.

Use of interviews: The knowledge from the interviews will be published in the researcher’s PhD thesis. The interviews may also be used in journal articles, books and creative works such as short stories. The interviews may moreover be used in conference and other academic presentations and presentations to local and international civil society organizations.

2. Participant consent

In giving my consent, I state that:

- I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
- I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.
- The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study and I am happy with the answers.
- I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney now or in the future.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I understand that I may leave the focus group at any time if I do not wish to continue. I also understand that it will not be possible to withdraw my comments once the group has started as it is a group discussion.
- I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.
- I understand that the results of this study will be used in publications and presentations, but these will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me unless I consent to being identified using the ‘Yes’ checkbox below in point 3 entitled ‘identification’.

3. Identification

I wish to be identified by:	YES	NO	Details
- Name			
- Gender			
- Sexuality			
- Gender expression			
- Organizations(s) I work for			
- Other:			

Obs.: Please carefully consider the potential risks of choosing any form of identifier. You can still participate in the study, if you wish to remain completely anonymous.

4. Consent

I consent to:	YES	NO
- Audio-recording of the focus group interview		
- Notes being taken during the interview		
- Permanent archiving of study materials		
- Potentially being contacted about future studies		

Obs.: Please observe that out of concern for all the group's anonymity and safety, audio-recordings of the focus group interview will **not** be forwarded to individual participants. You can, however, receive a summary of the focus group interview.

5. Feedback

I would like to:	YES	NO
- Receive feedback about the overall results of this study		
- Receive a summary of the focus group interview(s)		
- Review publications or presentations that draw on my interview(s) for accuracy		

6. Contact details

If you answered YES to any of the above in point 5, please indicate your preferred form of contact and provide the details accordingly:	
E-mail	
WhatsApp	
Other	

Obs.: Please note the following:

- If you want to receive feedback about the overall results of this study, WhatsApp is the recommended choice because the encryption of WhatsApp is stronger than of e-mail in general;
- It is your responsibility to notify the researcher, if your e-mail or WhatsApp number changes during or after the study;
- If you would like to use WhatsApp for the purpose of this research but the social media tax prevents you from this, the researcher will reimburse you for the additional cost of using WhatsApp.

Appendix 4: Consent Script for Individual Interviews



Discipline of Social Work
School of Education and Social Work
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

ABN 15 211 513 464

Ruth Phillips
Associate Professor

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CONSENT SCRIPT FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS FOR THE STUDY:

'(De)colonising civil society activism in postcolonial Uganda'

1. Recap of the participant information statement

Individual interviews

You have been asked to participate in one-on-one interviews during which the researcher, Tanja Dittfeld, will ask open-ended questions about your knowledge and experiences of LGBT+ activism in Uganda. Each interview is expected to last between 45 to 90 minutes, but the duration of the interview(s) will be adapted to your availability. If you agree, the interviews will be audio-recorded. Otherwise, the researcher will take notes during the interview and then write a summary of the interview immediately after the interview.

Location and timing: The interviews will take place from March to July 2020 when the researcher is residing in Uganda. As for a specific time and location, this will be agreed upon between you and the researcher. The researcher will generally recommend that the interview takes place within one of the LGBT organizations within which the researcher will be working, given the necessary, extensive security measures.

Review process: If the interview is audio-recorded, the interview will be transcribed. If the interview is not transcribed, the interview will be summarised by the researcher. You will be able to review the interview transcripts or summary by letting the researcher know that you would like to and by then providing your e-mail address to the researcher.

Personal details: The researcher will ask questions about your name, age, gender identification and sexual orientation. However, you are in no way required to provide these details to be interviewed. If you do provide these details, they will not be recorded in a way that makes you identifiable in the interview, and pseudonyms will be used when sorting and storing the interviews. Findings of this study may be published, but these publications will not contain your name or any identifiable information about you. If, for whatever reason, you do want your name or organizational affiliation to appear in

the interview material and potential publications, this is also possible. However, please consider the potential risks that this involves.

Access to records: Given the sensitive nature of the research, any access to the audio-recordings, interview notes or transcripts of your interview(s) will be determined by you. If you do want access, you could for example get it on a memory stick, sent by e-mail or WhatsApp. The researchers generally recommend WhatsApp as the encryption is stronger than the other methods of information sharing.

Use of interviews: The knowledge from the interviews will be published in the researcher’s PhD thesis. The interviews may also be used in journal articles, books and creative works such as short stories. The interviews may moreover be used in conference and other academic presentations and presentations to local and international civil society organizations.

2. Participant consent

In giving my consent, I state that:

- I understand the purpose of the study, what I will be asked to do, and any risks/benefits involved.
- I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been able to discuss my involvement in the study with the researchers if I wished to do so.
- The researchers have answered any questions that I had about the study, and I am happy with the answers.
- I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary and I do not have to take part. My decision whether to be in the study will not affect my relationship with the researchers or anyone else at the University of Sydney now or in the future.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.
- I understand that I may stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, and that unless I indicate otherwise any recordings will then be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study. I also understand that I may refuse to answer any questions I don’t wish to answer.
- I understand that personal information about me that is collected over the course of this project will be stored securely and will only be used for purposes that I have agreed to. I understand that information about me will only be told to others with my permission, except as required by law.
- I understand that the results of this study will be used in publications and presentations, but these will not contain my name or any identifiable information about me unless I consent to being identified using the ‘Yes’ checkbox below in point 3 entitled ‘identification’.

3. Identification

I wish to be identified by:	YES	NO	Details
- Name			
- Gender			
- Sexuality			
- Gender expression			
- Organizations(s) I work for			
- Other:			

Obs.: Please carefully consider the potential risks of choosing any form of identifier. You can still participate in the study, if you wish to remain completely anonymous.

4. Consent

I consent to:	YES	NO
- Audio-recording of the interview		
- Notes being taken during the interview		
- Permanent archiving of study materials		
- Potentially being contacted about future studies		

5. Feedback

I would like to:	YES	NO
- Review my interview transcripts and/or interview summary		
- Receive feedback about the overall results of this study		
- Review publications or presentations that draw on my interview(s) for accuracy		

6. Contact details

If you answered YES to any of the above in point 5, please indicate your preferred form of contact and provide the details accordingly:	
E-mail	
WhatsApp	
Other	

Obs.: Please note the following:

- If you want to receive feedback about the overall results of this study, WhatsApp is the recommended choice because the encryption of WhatsApp is stronger than of e-mail in general;
- It is your responsibility to notify the researcher, if your e-mail or WhatsApp number changes during or after the study;
- If you would like to use WhatsApp for the purpose of this research but the social media tax prevents you from this, the researcher will reimburse you for the additional cost of using WhatsApp.

Appendix 5: Final Ethics Approval

Assoc Prof Ruth Phillips

Social Work; Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Email: ruth.phillips@sydney.edu.au

Dear Ruth,

The University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) has considered your application. I am pleased to inform you that after consideration of your response, your project has been approved.

Details of the approval are as follows:

Project No.: 2020/036

Project Title: (De)colonising civil society activism in postcolonial Uganda

Authorised Personnel: Phillips Ruth; Dittfeld Tanja; Goodwin Susan;

Approval Period: 25/02/2020 to 25/02/2024

First Annual Report Due: 25/02/2021

- It will be a condition of approval that appropriate travel insurance is obtained prior to travel.

Condition/s of Approval

- Research must be conducted according to the approved proposal.
- An annual progress report must be submitted to the Ethics Office on or before the anniversary of approval and on completion of the project.
- You must report as soon as practicable anything that might warrant review of ethical approval of the project including:
 - Serious or unexpected adverse events (which should be reported within 72 hours).
 - Unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
 - Any changes to the proposal must be approved prior to their implementation (except where an amendment is undertaken to eliminate *immediate* risk to participants).
 - Personnel working on this project must be sufficiently qualified by education, training and experience for their role, or adequately supervised. Changes to personnel must be reported and approved.
 - Personnel must disclose any actual or potential conflicts of interest, including any financial or other interest or affiliation, as relevant to this project.
 - Data and primary materials must be retained and stored in accordance with the relevant legislation and University guidelines.
 - Ethics approval is dependent upon ongoing compliance of the research with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*, the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research*, applicable legal requirements, and with University policies, procedures and governance requirements.
 - The Ethics Office may conduct audits on approved projects.

- The Chief Investigator has ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the research and is responsible for ensuring all others involved will conduct the research in accordance with the above.

This letter constitutes ethical approval only.

Please contact the Ethics Office should you require further information or clarification.

Sincerely,

Associate Professor Helen Mitchell

Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC 1)

Appendix 6: Relevant Ethics Approvals and Correspondence

Project Title: (De)colonising civil society activism in postcolonial Uganda

Project number: [2020/036]

Human Ethics application outcome

Your ethics application was reviewed at a committee meeting held on **11 February 2020**. The Committee approved this application in principle, subject to the following information being sought and reviewed by the Chair.

Please note that you may not start your study until final approval has been granted.

Methodology

1. It was acknowledged that the methodology must remain flexible to be able to respond to local conditions and restrictions, and that the outputs will depend to some extent on what is possible in the field. However, putting aside all safety, travel and legal issues, the committee would like a brief broad statement in lay language which describes the purpose and scope of the project.
2. In 367, it says 'Following Datta (2018, p. 18) collective presentation can be an important part of centring Indigenous voices in the proposed research. Presentations could be made to SMUG and FARUG and their members, other LGBT organizations in Uganda or potential local and transnational solidarity organizations, which would in turn allow for feedback to be collected and integrated. Please describe this process, what it would involve, and how information and consent would be achieved.
3. In 367, it says 'Other participants may include self-identified LGBT+ activists who do not necessarily work with SMUG and FARUG, and people who work for other LGBT+ organizations in Uganda.' Please clarify how these potential participants will be approached, and where interviews will take place.

Participant Information Statement (PIS)

4. The PIS provides details of all components of the research but does not describe how data collected will be used in the various types of outputs described. It would be helpful for participants to know how their data will be used. Please update PIS accordingly.

Consent

5. It would be useful to have a consent script for each stage of the project so that the specific questions/conditions are covered for consent in fieldnotes. The researchers may have already prepared this informally. Please provide a copy of the consent scripts and/or please undertake to confirm different levels of consent, noting that consent is different for individual, group and observational data collection. This should also include a clause for being named, as that is mentioned in the PIS.

Data security and privacy

6. Please comment on the feasibility of using WhatsApp in Uganda as it was suggested that use of the app was prohibited.

Administrative Concerns

7. PIS is version 4 of previous application and includes incorrect dates and approval number. It would be helpful to update as version 1 for this new iteration with the new project number.
8. Please add Susan Goodwin as a co-investigator on the coversheet of your response.

Special Conditions

It will be a condition of approval that Tanja's proposed project and travel is approved by the DVC-Education. It will be a condition of approval that appropriate travel insurance is obtained prior to travel.

The following is the final approval after the above issues were addressed satisfactorily by the HEC:

The Response:

Response to [2020/036] Human Ethics: Application outcome on the 14th of February 2020

METHODOLOGY

It was acknowledged that the methodology must remain flexible to be able to respond to local conditions and restrictions, and that the outputs will depend to some extent on what is possible in the field. However, putting aside all safety, travel and legal issues, the committee would like a brief broad statement in lay language which describes the purpose and scope of the project.

Answer

LGBT+ politics have never been more visible in global politics, and LGBT-organising is undeniably on the rise in Africa, historically grounded empirical research on LGBT-organising in Africa and the struggles underpinning them remain sparse. Importantly, Africa remains largely absent from social science research that employs a social movement perspective (Eckert, 2017, p. 212). Furthermore, studying social movements in Africa presents somewhat of a conceptual conundrum as social movement theory mainly focuses on socio-political movements in Europe, North and South America (ibid.). As such, there is little knowledge about what is African about African social movements, or to what extent they were and are shaped by external actors, concepts and norms.

The proposed research will contribute to circumvention of the scholarly neglect of African social movements and social movements in Africa as well as further an appreciation of LGBT+ rights as a heterogenous and unstable category that is normatively and legally dynamic in both the Global North and Global South (Thoresen, 2014, p. 7). The research also seeks to increase understanding of how broader socio-political systems shape LGBT+ organizations' missions and strategies as well as how individuals animate them with their own beliefs, politics and goals, which may illuminate strategies to evade the imposition of ready-made (Western) solutions on African LGBT struggles and to support rather than undermine local processes (Ndashe, 2013, p. 156). This is central the research inquiry and requires the chosen theoretical and methodological frameworks of postcolonial, queer and feminist theories.

Utilising postcolonial, feminist and queer theory, this research will therefore critically examine the cultural, temporal, and national specificity of the agency, knowledge and experiences of LGBT+ activists and organizations in Uganda. As such, the overarching research question is: *How do LGBT activists and organizations in Uganda navigate and negotiate LGBT imperialism, politicised homophobia and localized understandings of genders and sexualities?*

Sub-questions:

1. *What are Ugandan LGBT activists and organizations' missions, strategies and activities?*
2. *How do Ugandan LGBT activists animate these missions, strategies and activities with collective and personal beliefs, politics and goals?*
3. *Why, when and where did the Ugandan LGBT movement develop according to Ugandan LGBT activists and organizations?*

Drawing on decolonizing methodology, the knowledge needed to answer these questions will be produced through four months of qualitative inquiry including participant observation, informal, semi-structured and focus group interviews within and with two LGBT+ organizations in Kampala, Uganda.

In 367, it says 'Following Datta (2018, p. 18) collective presentation can be an important part of centring Indigenous voices in the proposed research. Presentations could be made to SMUG and FARUG and their members, other LGBT organizations in Uganda or potential local and transnational solidarity organizations, which would in turn allow for feedback to be collected and integrated. Please describe this process, what it would involve, and how information and consent would be achieved.

Answer

Decolonizing research entails ensuring collective ownership, data analysis and presentation between the researcher and the research participants. The research participants hence need to have direct input into developing and defining research practices and projects related to them, and the researcher needs to be ready to make appropriate changes when the intended (Western) methods or theories are not appropriate. At present, it is therefore difficult to state what the exact process of presentation would be, meaning that FARUG and SMUG have co-ownership about whether there will be any presentations, and if so what the topic, scope, setup and location of the presentation would be. The purpose of any presentation is, in line with decolonizing methodology, to ensure reciprocity in the form of knowledge sharing and reporting back.

In terms of reporting back, potential presentations could be to SMUG's and FARUG's individual and organizational members, outlining the focus of the proposed research and/or the results of the research. As for the feedback loop implied in the ethics application, a presentation on proposed policy recommendations for national and especially international organizations wanting to support LGBT+ activism in Uganda paired with a participatory workshop in which the member organizations get to provide their inputs to the suggested policy recommendations could be highly relevant. These policy recommendations could then later be presented to relevant international organizations in and outside of Uganda that are supportive of LGBT+ activism in Uganda. These presentations could, if the research participants from SMUG and/or FARUG consent, be presented jointly. Another potential audience for the policy recommendations could also be international conferences outside of Uganda e.g. ILGA's

annual conference, in which case the presentation would probably be done solely by the researcher unless funding could be obtained to have some of the research participants to join.

Another potential presentation could be on the strategies, missions and activities of the two LGBT+ organizations. This could be given both to individual and organizational members but also potential solidarity organizations in Uganda. In the first instance the purpose would be to create transparency around the two LGBT+ organizations as well as allow for involvement of the members in their own representation and the advocacy that is done on their behalf, and in the latter case, it could provide an opportunity to discuss ways of collaborating around LGBT+ rights despite the socio-political landscape in Uganda and the inherent risks of being affiliated with a LGBT+ organization.

Irrespective of the presentation topic, format or location agreed upon with the research participants, the PIS and the consent scripts now include information and questions that cover presentations and the research participants would have to provide consent for each presentation before it goes ahead. As for the audience of the presentations, the individual and organizational members would, upon invitation to the presentation, be informed that the presentation is a part of the proposed research project and that their inputs, in workshops and/or Q&A sessions, might be recorded in a non-identifiable form in field notes and incorporated into the research. They would also be advised that the researcher might suggest that members could volunteer to part of the study and be interviewed but that this is in no way a requirement for attending the presentation. If a member expresses interest in being interviewed, the PIS would be provided, and the consent script followed. As for presentations to international organizations, this would be at the end stage of the research in the sense that these organizations would be provided with the results of the research, and while this audience can of course also engage with the research by asking questions and providing comments, they are not research participants and would therefore not be provided with the PIS or taken through the consent script. Should the researcher deem it relevant to interview someone from one of these organizations, the usual informative and consent protocol would however be followed.

In 367, it says ‘Other participants may include self-identified LGBT+ activists who do not necessarily work with SMUG and FARUG, and people who work for other LGBT+ organizations in Uganda.’ Please clarify how these potential participants will be approached, and where interviews will take place.

Answer

The primary research participants will be the employees/activists working at FARUG and SMUG. If additional people are to be invited to participate in the study, this would be done through SMUG and/or FARUG and would only include other activists, whether individually driven or affiliated with another LGBT+ organization, who would ask to be part of the study because they have heard that it is taking place, they will not get approached directly by the researcher. Tanja would hence not recruit or attempt to recruit anyone directly but rely on her colleagues at FARUG and SMUG to inform other potential participants on her behalf, if they felt it was appropriate and relevant to the study. A similar (snowball) sampling strategy was employed in 2015, when Tanja did fieldwork for her MSc thesis. The main difference was, however, that the participants for the MSc fieldwork were members of the LGBT+ organizations rather than employees/activists and thus at greater risk than the participants in the currently proposed fieldwork. Any participants recruited outside of SMUG and FARUG would also

receive the participant information statement, presumably and preferably ahead of meeting with Tanja, and then be taken through the relevant consent script upon meeting with Tanja.

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

The PIS provides details of all components of the research but does not describe how data collected will be used in the various types of outputs described. It would be helpful for participants to know how their data will be used. Please update PIS accordingly.

Answer

The PIS has been updated. Please see attached.

CONSENT

It would be useful to have a consent script for each stage of the project so that the specific questions/conditions are covered for consent in fieldnotes. The researchers may have already prepared this informally. Please provide a copy of the consent scripts and/or please undertake to confirm different levels of consent, noting that consent is different for individual, group and observational data collection. This should also include a clause for being named, as that is mentioned in the PIS.

Answer

Copy of consent scripts attached.

DATA SECURITY AND PRIVACY

Please comment on the feasibility of using WhatsApp in Uganda as it was suggested that use of the app was prohibited.

Answer

In July 2018, the Ugandan government introduced a social media tax that applies to more than 60 platforms including WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter. The Social Media tax requires users to pay a tax of UGX200(US\$0.05) per day to access over-the-top (OTT) services. Officially, the tax was introduced to raise revenue for public services. However, critics (rightly) describe the tax as an attempt by President Museveni to (further) restrict free speech as he, in March 2018, wrote a letter to Finance Minister, Matia Kasaija, insisting that the revenue collected by the social media tax would help the country "cope with consequences of olugambo [gossiping]". Social media have become an important political tool in Uganda for both the ruling party and the opposition. The social media tax is essentially a continuation of Museveni's authoritarian rule and control of the political discourse through social media, beginning with the shutdown of social media sites during the elections in 2016 to stop the spread of so-called misleading information. With the next election being less than two years away, it is also not farfetched to think that the social media tax is a preparation of a similar tactic. In sum, WhatsApp is not prohibited, but the cost of using the app has increased.

See more here:

- <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/feb/27/millions-of-ugandans-quit-internet-after-introduction-of-social-media-tax-free-speech>

- <https://www.genderit.org/resources/offline-and-out-pocket-impact-social-media-tax-uganda>
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-44315675>

ADMINISTRATIVE CONCERNS

PIS is version 4 of previous application and includes incorrect dates and approval number. It would be helpful to update as version 1 for this new iteration with the new project number.

Answer

The PIS has been updated. Please see attached.

Please add Susan Goodwin as a co-investigator on the coversheet of your response.

Answer

Done

Special Conditions

It will be a condition of approval that Tanja's proposed project and travel is approved by the DVC-Education.

- On the 30th of January 2020, the Associate Dean of Research (Education), Daniel Anzelark, approved Tanja's proposed project and travel, and subsequently sent an e-mail to the Deputy-Vice-Chancellor (Education), Pip Pattison, wherein he confirmed his support.
- On the 13th of February 2020, Ruth, Tanja and Pip had a meeting about Tanja's proposed project and travel during which Pip declared her support, presupposing that HREC approves the projects and the dean of FASS, Annemarie Jagose, approves Pip and Daniel as the ones to sign off on Tanja's project and trip. It will be a condition of approval that appropriate travel insurance is obtained prior to travel.
- Comprehensive care including 24/7 emergency assistance, overseas medical cover costs \$1389 with Cover More. It will be obtained upon ethics approval and approval from DVC.

Appendix 7: Complementarity between Reflexive Thematic Analysis & Photovoice

OVERVIEW OF COMPLEMENTARITY RTA & PHOTOVOICE		
RTA Phases	PhotoVoice Research Participants	PhD Researcher
1. Familiarising yourself with your data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Presented their individual photos and captions to the other photovoice participants within their organization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed the submitted photos and captions for the individual presentations. Created and presented a power point presentation with the individually selected photos for the separate group discussions. Presented the categories devised by each organization during the joint discussion. Transcribed the three photovoice group discussions.
2. Generating initial codes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMUG and FARUG separately discussed the individual presentations according to the SHOWeD questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitated the group discussion through the SHOWeD questions
3. Searching for themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMUG and FARUG separately devised categories to represent their photos and captions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Took notes and ‘archived’ the devised categories and associated photos.
4. Reviewing themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FARUG and SMUG rewrote the titles and captions for their individual photos after the two separate group discussions; FARUG and SMUG jointly discussed the categories devised during the separate group discussions, the new categories introduced by the PhD researcher, the discarded photos prior to the separate group discussions, and IDAHOBIT photos and captions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewed the resubmitted captions, titles and photos; Created an online platform for the research participants to review the revised, IDAHOBIT, and initially deselected photos and captions; Created a power point presentation to introduce the separately devised categories and their relative importance to each organization to start off the group discussion.
5. Defining and naming themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SMUG and FARUG separately devised a total of 30 different categories in response to the individually presented photos and captions. FARUG and SMUG jointly devised 3 overarching themes and 12 sub-themes for the photovoice exhibition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduced new categories to the group discussion; Facilitated the creation of new joint themes through participatory methods; Recorded and archived the result of the discussions
6. Producing the report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The photovoice exhibition. The post-exhibition evaluation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PhD dissertation, conference papers/presentations, and journal articles organised according to the three main themes and 12 sub-themes.

Appendix 8: Overview of LGBTIQ+ Allies

DATE OF INTERVIEW	ALLY	APPOINTED BY SMUG/FARUG
15 th June 2020	<p>Nicholas Niwagaba was Uganda Network of Young People Living with and Affected by HIV (UNYPA)²⁵ Executive Director at the time of the organization, an organization he had been with since 2014.</p> <p>During his time at UNYPA, Nicholas led a big YPLHIV (young people living with HIV) team to do advocacy to increase access to quality SRHR/HIV services in different projects, and to think of innovative ways to breakdown HIV-related stigma.</p>	SMUG
16 th June 2020	<p>Dr. Sylvia Tamale is an Associate Professor and prior Dean of Law at Makerere University, the first woman to ever hold that position in Uganda.</p> <p>Tamale moreover founded and serves as Coordinator of the Gender, Law and Sexuality Research Project at the School of Law.</p> <p>She holds a Bachelor of Laws from Makerere University, a master's in law from Harvard University and a PhD in Sociology and Feminist Studies from the University of Minnesota.</p>	SMUG/FARUG
26 th June 2020	<p>Ambassador for European embassy in Kampala.</p> <p><i>Interview excluded from the thesis by TD.</i></p>	Tanja Dittfeld
8 th July 2020	<p>Isaac Ssemakadde is a lawyer, founder and chief executive of Legal Brains Trust (LBT)²⁶, which he described as a democracy and human rights watchdog in Uganda.</p> <p>LBT is specifically defined as ‘an independent nonprofit organization that seeks to establish the rule of law, ensure equal and equitable access to justice and tackle the root causes of exclusion, vulnerability and poverty in Africa.’ LBT also established a specialist agency called Centre for Legal Aid, which is Uganda’s first national pro bono public interest law firm.</p>	SMUG

²⁵ More information about UNYPA available here: <https://unypa.org/>

²⁶ More information about LBT available here: <https://ucca-uganda.org/member/legal-brains-trust/>

14 th July 2020	<p>Brenda Kugonza is the Executive Director of Women Human Rights Defenders Network Uganda (WHRDN-U)²⁷.</p> <p>Inspired by the experiences of women defenders who continue to stand against the discriminating social, cultural, and religious stereotypes, Brenda Kugonza, Helen, Kezie Nwoha, and Pamela Agwech founded WHRDN-U in 2017. WHRDN-U’s mission is to ensure a safe and secure work environment for women HRDs to increase the quality and quantity of their work.</p> <p>Today, WHRDN-U comprises of 147 members directly engaged in women’s rights and other civil rights all over Uganda.</p>	FARUG
15 th July 2020	<p>Nicholas Opiyo is the Executive Director and Lead Attorney at Chapter Four Uganda²⁸, a civil rights charity working to defend civil liberties.</p> <p>He is the recipient of German Africa Prize, 2017, Voices for Justice Award from Human Rights Watch, 2015 and the European Union Parliament Sakharov Fellows Prize, 2016. Until 2017, he was a member of the Team of Expert to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Peaceful Assembly and Association.</p> <p>In 2020, Nicholas and four colleagues were arrested and detained on allegations of “money laundering and related malicious acts,” but later granted bail by the Buganda Road Court</p>	SMUG
15 th July 2020	<p>Solome Nakaweesi is a Pan-African feminist activist and analyst within the women’s rights, human rights, sexual rights and feminist movements in Uganda and around the world.</p> <p>She has played a fundamental role in supporting the (re)emergence of progressive social movements and organizing through her various past positions.</p> <p>Solome served as; Executive Director – Akina Mama wa Afrika, Executive Director – Uganda Women’s Network, Chief Executive Officer – Nnabagereka Development Foundation, Lecturer – Makerere University, Nkumba University and External Research Supervisor for the Noragric University.</p>	SMUG/FARUG
16 th July 2020	<p>Jacqueline Asiimwe is the CEO of CivSource Africa²⁹, a pan-African organization with the mission to refine the</p>	SMUG

²⁷ More information about WHRDN-U available here: <https://www.whrdnuganda.org/>

²⁸ More information about Chapter Four Uganda available here: <https://chapterfouruganda.org/>

²⁹ More information about CivSource available here: <https://www.civsourceafrica.com/>

	<p>practice of philanthropy and the footprint of civil society in Africa.</p> <p>Jacquelin is a Ugandan and USA-trained lawyer with a long record of accomplishments in leadership, management, law, and policy formulation, advocacy and training. She has 25 years of work experience spanning civil society, government, and donor agencies.</p>	
<p>16th July 2020</p>	<p>Lillian Nalwoga is a Programme Manager and Counsellor with the Mentoring and Empowerment Programme for Young Women (MEMPROW)³⁰, a national Ugandan human rights feminist organization that was set up in 2008.</p> <p>MEMPROW seeks to power adolescent girls and young women, aged 14-29 years to expand their aspirations, strengthen their voice, and exercise more choice.</p> <p>Additionally, MEMPROW aims to build a bold young-centric feminist movement that redefines the dominant narrative, provides thought leadership on women’s consciousness, fosters multigenerational activism and catalyses societal transformation through dismantling patriarchy.</p>	<p>FARUG</p>

³⁰ More information about MEMPROW available here: <https://memprow.org/index.html>