

### Beautify yourself - struggles and strategies of LGBT\*-communities in contemporary post-colonial Namibia

Gemmeke, Moritz

Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

#### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Gemmeke, M. (2020). Beautify yourself - struggles and strategies of LGBT\*-communities in contemporary post-colonial Namibia. *EthnoScripts: Zeitschrift für aktuelle ethnologische Studien*, 22(1), 85-107. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:gbv:18-8-15686>

#### Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter einer CC BY-SA Lizenz (Namensnennung-Weitergabe unter gleichen Bedingungen) zur Verfügung gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zu den CC-Lizenzen finden Sie hier: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.de>

#### Terms of use:

This document is made available under a CC BY-SA Licence (Attribution-ShareAlike). For more information see: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>

## Encountering post-colonial realities in Namibia

Volume 22 Issue 1 | 2020

Moritz Gemmeke

Beautify yourself – struggles and strategies of LGBT\*-  
communities in contemporary post-colonial Namibia

Ethnoscripts 2020 22 (1): 85-107

eISSN 2199-7942

### Abstract

The current social, political and legal situation of the LGBT\*-communities in Namibia allows many conclusions to be drawn about the broader historical and current areas of social tension in post-colonial Namibia. With the help of post-colonial, intersectional approaches, the article examines the following sub-aspects: What are the struggles and challenges in the work of LGBT\*-activism in contemporary Namibia? To what extent do relationships of colonial power and exploitation still affect these struggles and what answers and strategies can be found in these struggles? Due to the historical derivation of key moments for the constitution of identities and institutional rights of LGBT\*-people, this article asks about the effects and relics of colonial and post-colonial gender discourses and politics on the communities and refers to existing patterns of heteronormative power relations.

### Publisher:

Universität Hamburg  
Institut für Ethnologie  
Edmund-Siemers-Allee 1 (West)  
D-20146 Hamburg  
Tel.: 040 42838 4182  
E-Mail: lfE@uni-hamburg.de  
<http://www.ethnologie.uni-hamburg.de>

eISSN: 2199-7942



Dieses Werk ist lizenziert unter einer Creative Commons Licence 4.0  
International: Namensnennung - Weitergabe unter gleichen Bedingungen.

## Beautify yourself – struggles and strategies of LGBT\*-communities in contemporary post-colonial Namibia

Moritz Gemmeke

### Introduction

On one of these Windhoek-typical mild Saturday evenings we, a group of German university students from Hamburg, make our way to Khomasdal, a district in the west of Namibia's capital. It is already dark as we stop two cabs to drive us to the location we had been given, the Ella du Plesis Secondary School. We have been invited by friends to join an event with only a vague idea of what it will be about. But when we reach our destination, an inconspicuous building surrounded by a dark parking lot, the admission ticket reveals more about our evening arrangement: we are going to watch the *MissTransgender Namibia* election of 2019, the first event ever of this kind in Namibia.

When we reach the site and push ourselves past the bouncers into the hall through a tangle of excited, chattering and laughing people, I am struck by the volume, the sheer size of the room and its confusion. A huge, illuminated stage has been set up in the gym. The VIP guests of the evening are sitting around the stage at nicely prepared round tables strewn with food and drinks. The bar opposite the stage is already benefiting from great crowds, non-VIP. Beer, wine and lemonade are served for a small price. The mood is merrymaking, almost exuberant. The smell of freshly applied perfume wafts past me again and again and covers up the stuffy indoor air. We are a little late, so the presenter is already loudly introducing the evening's participants through an overamplified sound system. Meanwhile we are looking for some free seats in the rows of plastic chairs, generally already occupied by groups of mostly young people. So, I lean against the wall at the edge of the gym to have a good overview of the stage and the auditorium.

As Mr. Gay Namibia, one of the judges at *MissTransgender Ambassador* 2019, explains: „the contestants will be judged on advocacy activities conducted prior to the event and in four categories on the day namely their introduction, casual wear, traditional wear and evening wear” (Namibian Press Agency 2019). Following their performances, after their run on the catwalk, all the participants have to face some questions from the judges, a group of

country-wide known LGBT\*<sup>1</sup>-activists, questions such as “What does womanhood mean to you?” or “Which role does education play in the LGBT\*-community?”.



Fig. 1: At *Miss Transgender Ambassador 2019*: The crowd runs closer to the stage after recognizing a special song during the performance. Photo: Moritz Gemmeke

- 1 In this article the term LGBT\* is used as an abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender. The abbreviation I previously used in academic training, LGBTQI+ (Q stands for queer and I for intersexual, the + stands for all other forms of non-binary gender identities), was not used for the different gender and sexual identities described by informants and Namibian gender and sexuality activists I spoke with in the field. As various scholars urge caution in the chosen terms used in one’s research (Currier 2012), I decided to use the self-given acronyms used by my informants and the experts in the field. The \* stands for all non-binary gender identities who experience discrimination due to their sexual and gender identities.

These questions are related to the individual sensations, the own belongingness within as well as outside the communities and to the self-expression and -assertion in direct interaction with the audience; it will be the duty of *MissTransgender Ambassador 2019* to create visibility for trans-persons within and outside the LGBT\*-communities. Furthermore, the aim of this event, and others like it, is to motivate and raise awareness on issues affecting the LGBT\*-communities and to transcend societal norms and social exclusion for transgender-persons (Hipondoka 2019).

The current climate in the country can be described as highly dynamic. Growing Namibian LGBT\*-activism, increasingly run by a younger generation, raises not only the visibility of LGBT\*-persons in public but also the pressure on politics and institutions to deal with colonial relics. The overarching goal of the activists is to get current colonial laws abolished and replaced by laws that will finally guarantee institutional, legal and ultimately social equality for all Namibians in the long-term. The growing diversity of the LGBT\*-communities is also reflected in the increasing number of different organizations and events: since 2016, pride parades have been taking place regularly in different cities across the country (Interview Strauss), in 2017 various LGBT\*-organizations joined to form an umbrella organization, the *Diversity Alliance Namibia*, and together with events such as the already mentioned *MissTransgender Ambassador 2019*, the transgender-community also hopes for more visibility and influence in the fight for equality, not only within the LGBT\*-communities but also in Namibian society in general (Sauer 2019). Courage and determination are growing, formerly fixed narratives and ideological convictions on gender and sexuality, education, religion and family are on trial. Conversely, this change challenges prevailing norms and values, narratives and stories and therefore also long-established power structures.

However, despite all the visible progress made in recent years, besides being legally discriminated, LGBT\*-people are still exposed to social and public pressure and stigma, especially in everyday life. This stigmatization is expressed through a wide range of discriminatory practices such as hate speech on social media and through actual verbal and physical attacks in public. LGBT\*-activists have long pointed out that LGBT\*-people still encounter homo-, bi- and transphobia on a daily basis in Namibia (Kangootui 2020).

The aim of this article is therefore to understand the current strategies, struggles and challenges of Namibian LGBT\*-activism, its historical origins as well as its interdependencies with the colonial and apartheid eras. The first section gives a brief overview of the theoretical and methodological approaches, as well as of the peculiarities and connections of queer-sensitive and post-colonial research on which this article is based. Building on these approaches, the following questions are at the center of the next sections:

What strategies and practices do the Namibian LGBT\*-activists use, which alliances do they forge and what are the political convictions behind them? How do they relate to patriarchal structures of Namibian politics and society? Furthermore, against the background of ongoing colonial continuities, this article will subsequently trace how the constructions of the Namibian nation and a Namibian identity affected and still affect not only the LGBT\*-communities' activism but also their daily lives. More specifically, in that step the article identifies the historical and political origins of contemporary gender and sexuality discourses in the Namibia of today, especially the ones belonging to topics relevant to the LGBT\*-communities.

The article is based on a 6-week field research collaboration which took place in Windhoek in July and August 2019. During my research, I focused on the LGBT\*-communities, especially on the activism and work of some LGBT\*-relevant NGO's based in Windhoek. The city's selection as my only research location resulted from the central role it plays for the political and social debates in Namibia, as most of the NGO's and institutions are located there (Interview Baumann; Interview Strauss). Besides semi-structured interviews with some key actors of the communities, I draw on ethnographic observation of the activities of the feminist and LGBT\*-organization *Sister Namibia* as well as the earlier described event *MissTransgender Ambassador Namibia 2019*. Additionally, my research is informed by newspaper articles as I analyzed the discourse around LGBT\*-relevant issues in articles that mention "homosexuality" or "LGBT" as a term. Given the extent of the research project, I sampled articles of the privately-owned nationally distributed newspaper *The Namibian*. At this point, it should be mentioned that *The Namibian* has traditionally played an important role in distributing and publishing texts and articles by LGBT\*-organizations or LGBT\*-friendly journalists and as such represents an opportunistic sample on my part.

### Theoretical accesses and challenges of queer-sensible, post-colonial research

My research is theoretically and methodologically embedded in intersectionality and inequality theories as well as in post-colonial and queer-sensible theoretical approaches. The concept of intersectionality has its roots in the Post-colonial-, Queer- and Gender Studies stemming from feminist anti-racist movements of Black women in the US in the 1980s. It builds on the conviction that discriminatory social categories such as class, gender or *race*<sup>2</sup>, among others, are not only categories of marginalization but appear and act interactively, intersecting, with one another (Crenshaw 1989). Hence

2 In this article, I italicize the noun *race* referring to its ideological construct-edness. 'Races' do by no means depict biological realities but continuously affect the present at a social, economic, political and psychological level as a concept.

people can be oppressed in several overlapping ways due to these patterns of subordination. For this research project, this interactivity necessarily means involving an analytical focus on power gaps along these social inequality categories and also along a Global North-South gap. Additionally, this focus marks the knowledge production of research as powerful in creating narratives and stereotypes constructing the “others” permanently in contrast to the assumed self. In the colonial era contexts and categories that once served as a guide for the individual and collective action of oppressed communities were replaced by those of the colonizers with the aim of acquiring the resources of the colonized bodies and colonies. Additionally, the discourse around LGBT\*-relevant topics is also shaped on national, transnational, continental and global levels (Currier 2011). Research on gender and sexual diversity therefore often struggles with bias and generalization in the academic context, too. For example, the widely prevalent misconception that there is little LGBT\*-activism in the area of the Global South is supplemented by generalizing assumptions about widespread homophobia, which is sometimes associated with cultural and political ‘backwardness’ (Epprecht 2013).

The aim of this work is therefore to counter these ethnocentric generalizations with qualitative insights, which is where my motivation also stems from. The discipline of Anthropology and ethnography as its principal research method, is acutely well positioned in this respect as it is so centrally concerned with describing lived everyday life worlds shaped by marginality and otherness (Boyce et al. 2017). Even if the origins and history of the discipline are deeply racist and always have to be considered reflectively, the methodology still has an empowering, progressive potential. As always, context matters:

*“Postcolonial feminist approaches have to be applied in a context-sensitive and situation-specific manner. There is no universal object and knowledge interest in postcolonial feminist research, but the need to reflectively and responsibly conceptualize the tension between local and global situations.” (Hornscheidt 2012: 220).*

The identity terminology used in the international field of queer-sensitive research and its rapidly progressing innovations and discussion standards alone require thorough work beforehand and a specific adaptation of local terminology and codes in the field itself. There may be various reasons for that, one of which is language. In part, English is not the first or second language of the communities’ constituents and furthermore represents colonialism. Secondly, research on personal LGBT\*-identity construction in Namibia has shown that bisexual- or transgender-identity terms have been relegated to secondary positions by homosexual-identity terms but could describe the same preference or identity-related sense of belonging (Currier 2015; Lorway

2008). The rise of gay identity and culture from the Global North also exerts its influence on the Global South with general labeling practices often not used in the local contexts before (Altman 2001; Currier 2015).

### Methodological considerations

Given these theoretical challenges, one consideration of my ethnographic research in these manifold post-colonial contexts, as well as in the context of structural discriminations, is the unconditional exclusion of personal, potentially re-traumatic, coming-out narratives or personal experiences with trans-, bi- or homophobia and violence. I did not ask any questions about these topics during my research stay. If testimonials of this kind appeared in the course of research, these were excluded as much as possible from this article and from the research process as well. The existence of boundaries in my interviews and in my ethnographic observation in this regard is based on the fact that the dismay and suffering of others must not be part of one's own academic work.

*“We cannot study gender in isolation from other inequalities, nor can we only study inequalities’ intersection and ignore the historical and contextual specificity that distinguishes the mechanisms that produce inequality by different categorical divisions” (Risman 2004: 443).*

Furthermore, it is essential, especially in the research field of gender and sexualities that draw upon post-colonial contexts implying the personal concern of potential informants, to disclose the researcher's own position from the outset. This disclosure should be the case not just with regard to one's own sexual and gender identity but also with regard to one's own academic background, political sense of belonging (ally<sup>3</sup>) as well as to social and political factors related to discrimination (*race*, class, gender and sexual orientation). As I am a white, heterosexual cisgender man from Germany with an academic background, the research process also requires me to check on my various privileges stemming from this position. Therefore, I am not able to entirely relate to the various forms of discrimination my informants experience throughout their lives. Additionally, the thematic approach requires a discussion and reflection with possible own internalized patriarchal and/or

---

3 In this case the bywords ally, straight ally or heterosexual ally stand for heterosexual and/or cis-gender persons actively advocating for equal rights and gender equality of LGBT\*-persons and their communities and rejecting homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. But not every person referred to by this description automatically identifies with it. An ally also acknowledges the social, political or judicial discrimination and its resulting social disadvantages. Given that, allies try to utilize their social and political privileged (meaning heteronormative) standing/position to react to these forms of discrimination.



racist patterns of thought and behavior. Under no circumstances should this reflection be understood as a one-off, closed process. It should therefore be open to criticism continuously during the research process, as critical academic research should always be.

The indispensable need for transparency and foregoing consultation and queries is also proven by more drastic cases. For example, LGBT\*-activists from the Global North have been criticized in the past for being prompted to intervene in the issues of African gender and sexuality policies. Especially with regard to the rhetoric and narratives of the governments of some African countries, which view non-heteronormative<sup>4</sup> sexuality as a neo-colonial continuation of Western interference, local activists can get caught in the crossfire. Additionally, international pressure is applied on Namibians to change their norms and structures, a pressure some see as a form of post-colonial interventionism. The dynamics and conflicts of and between human rights, cultural practices and gender equality are ideologically charged by a global dialogue (Currier 2015).

#### Beautify yourself: Strategies, struggles and challenges of the LGBT\*-communities in contemporary Namibia

*“As a trans-woman, we all come from different cultures and I think beauty is just a way to show, [...] that you are also part of a woman and you need to beautify yourself so that the people can see your beauty. Not just your visible beauty, but the beauty that you have from inside.”<sup>5</sup> – The newly appointed MissTransgender Namibia 2019, Penelope, said in a television interview after the election.*

There is a tension between LGBT\*-communities’ conception of culture and conceptions of ‘traditional’ culture in Namibia’s heterogenous social and collective relations (Interview Strauss; Interview Baumann). Fundamentally, a human agency perspective on gender,<sup>6</sup> which is represented by most of the actors of the LGBT\*-communities, entails revisiting the notion of tradition and culture as closed corporate systems. Following the seminal concept of tradition by Hobsbawm and Ranger (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), social and cultural anthropologist Heike Becker states that “tradition is generally understood in contemporary Namibia, i.e. that it is supposedly based

4 Besides the assumption that the social gender corresponds to the biological sex, heteronormativity in this context also means the structural favoring of opposite-gender sexual pairings and gender conformity (Currier 2011).

5 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mWoeQbm3cP8>).

6 A human agency perspective insists that human beings are active agents in history and not just passive, hapless victims of circumstances (Becker 2010).

on fixed cultural norms which represent a largely imagined African past” (Becker 2010: 174).

In her statement, Penelope was referring to the meaning and potential that the *MissTransgender Ambassador Namibia* has in store for her personally. When she spoke of cultures in the plural, she consciously pointed out that, due to ethnic diversity in Namibia, generalizing statements about cultural conceptions were hard to make. In contemporary post-colonial Namibia, gender and sexuality are strongly shaped by rigid, inviolable conceptions of ‘culture’ defining the idea of culturally accepted, standardized behavior and thus made policeable (Bhana et al. 2007). The category ‘traditional wear’, which was one of four categories on the evening of the election, challenged these perceptions of culture by questioning individual semantics and perceptions of beauty in the patriarchal norms of clothing and appearance. Theoretical debates, especially those of Judith Butler, emphasize the fluidity of sexuality and gender (Butler 1999). Accordingly, gender is a performative act, an idea essential for understanding gender as doing, as a “stylization of the self that is open to repetition and reinvention” (Bhana et al. 2007: 135). At the same time, these theoretical approaches emphasize fixed gendered identities and heterosexuality as compulsory. Penelope also demands to be perceived and referred to as the woman she describes herself as. Concepts of beauty, as she makes clear, are not tied to heteronormative gender concepts. Rather, beauty depends on the invisible, inner beauty – values, convictions and moral ideas.

Events such as the *MissTransgender Ambassador* not only fulfil the function as a competition between the individual participants in terms of showcasing their perception of beauty. More to the point, they can be seen as a sociocultural network in which important information is being exchanged and useful contacts made. They are events to celebrate oneself and one’s community; they empower and let one feel free from social and public pressure and stigma. Moreover, such events are a dynamic place of dialogue where key issues such as community, family, and sexuality, belonging and politics are negotiated. These events are also the chance for younger people who are not yet active in these communities to acquire an overview both thematically and organizationally. There is a sort of collective identity arising organically from these kinds of events, more precisely from the now shared experiences, desires, emotions and beliefs that previously were separated identities. All this was buzzing around me standing in the gym of a secondary school in Windhoek willing to catch some of these vibes.

### Educate ambiguity – the feminist educational programs of *Sister Namibia*

In the blazing afternoon sun, I am sitting in another collective cab on my way to the *University of Namibia* (UNAM) campus, located a little outside Wind-

hoek. I am on my way to an event organized by *Sister Namibia*, which will be a talk to UNAM university students about the concepts of *toxic masculinity* and *gender-based violence* (GBV) under the title “Broken Silence – How we use arts to influence social justice”. The hall of the university’s local theater group serves as the venue. Before I enter, students who have taken a seat at plastic tables in front of the hall give me a form and ask me to fill it out. In addition to some personal information and information about one’s own sexuality and gender affiliation, the form primarily asks for the participant’s understanding of topics such as feminism, gender and masculinity.

When I finally enter the hall, there is hardly any space left, so I sit on the floor between two chairs. The participants are young, the majority probably students. They are seated in a semicircle around a small stage. The event is already in full swing and the curious students are eagerly watching the performance on stage. There are always short bursts of laughter; the mood fluctuates between exuberance and tension. The young people often whisper briefly to their neighbors. The organizers depict everyday situations of sexual assault in scenes. These discriminatory practices, such as *catcalling*<sup>7</sup> for example, are to be problematized by means of the acting performance. Following the scene in which suggestive and sexual offensive terms are shouted after someone, intended at a woman on the street, the students are confronted with the question of the potential options for women in public to oppose these practices. Strategies of verbal and physical communication are explained by these scenic performances.

I am amazed at the openness with which the participants share their personal, everyday experiences with sexualized violence in quite such a public setting. At the same time these experiences uncovered the everyday occurrence of sexual violence. The workshop aims to sharpen conceptual definitions: what does feminism mean? What are toxic patterns of behavior and where do they stem from? The event then works out possible courses of action. In addition, one’s own (male) entanglement should be shown. Therefore, the male participants are always explicitly addressed and encouraged to reflect on their behavior. The various forms of sexuality and gender are also discussed. The point is raised that a dual gender conception produces exclusions and contains toxic notions of masculinity for all members of a society, constraints and disadvantages. But in the extreme, it also harbors concrete manifestations of violence.

Compared to those in other African countries, the Namibian LGBT\*-activists began early to organize in strategic alliances with feminist groups and human rights organizations (Currier 2012). One consequence of these

---

7 *Catcalling* possesses characteristics of stranger and street harassment and is “use of crude language, verbal expression, and nonverbal expression that takes place in public areas such as streets, sidewalks, or bus stops” (Chhun 2011 cit. in Farmer and Jordan 2017: 4).

coalitions is the close personal, organizational and thematic overlap of feminist, human rights and LGBT\*-organizations. The described event, part of the educational programs of *Sister Namibia*, shows these close interlinkages and intersections. A broader example can be seen in the activism and engagement of Linda Baumann, who holds leading positions in both contexts and focuses her work on thinking the two topics in context and connecting them more closely, in terms of content and organization (Interview Baumann). Baumann has been active in feminist and LGBT\*-organizations since 2000 and has seen the movement growing since then. She was also the founding director of *OutRight Namibia*, the largest human rights organization in Namibia specializing on LGBT\*-issues. Today Linda is head of *Namibia Diverse Women's Association*, a young feminist organization that works with “minority women such as lesbians, bisexual women who have sex with women and trans-diverse women” – as Baumann stated (Interview Baumann). When I asked her in an interview about her understanding of what feminism means to her, Baumann responded:

*“So being a feminist it basically means I challenge any norm that is there and through that I've been doing transitioning work in the country that strengthens the intersectionalities of the women and the LGBT\*-movements”* (Interview Baumann).

Above all, the education programs of *Sister Namibia* that I attended addressed the rising gender-based violence (GBV) and violence against women (VAW) as urgent problems, but sexual education also is a main part of the education programs (Interview Baumann). In fact, the lack of access to information in many regions of Namibia, especially outside Windhoek, is one of the main reasons for sexual violence, as *Sister Namibia* states. This connection has led *Sister Namibia* to shift its educational activities to rural areas in the past few years, where it had been far less available (Interview Baumann, Interview Strauss). The goal is to stimulate a process of thinking about sexuality and gender that is not heteronormative and rigid and makes alternative, fluid identities conceivable (Currier 2015).

Besides the strong, early feminist influence, intersections of gender and social class also appeared in the movement's buildup. Especially in the early days of organization after the declared independence, it was primarily upper- and middle-class actors who determined the political agenda framing (Lorway 2008). In 1991, when the former president Nujoma called for the arrest, detention and deportation of all gays and lesbians, young people from Katutura, the biggest impoverished district of the city of Windhoek, started to join in huge numbers *Human Rights Week*, organized by *The Rainbow Project*. It was the beginning of an opening process so to say, in which the communities' dynamics changed as youth and younger LGBT\*-people joined the movements with great interest and different experiences as they mainly

suffered from the violence stemming from the *political homophobia* rampant at that time in Namibia, especially in Katutura (ibid.).

Up until the mid-2010s, not only did non-binary gender identities in particular fall not only from the mainstream social discourse but also the LGBT\*-organizations complained about the low number and consequently the invisibility of transgender and bisexual members in their own ranks. This invisibility was seen as a problem. It is also reflected in the fact that those with transgender and bisexual identities are more often affected by violence (Currier 2015).

### Why visibility matters – political representation of LGBT\*-communities

With the beginning of the resistance against colonial oppression and the following independence movements of many African states in the 1980s, the new rulers often committed themselves to the principles of democratic participation and to implementing rights such as the protection of social, gender and sexual minorities. This commitment is historically important, as it had an impact on creating visibility around queer activism in many African countries (Ossome 2013). Of course, such generalized statements should be treated with caution, but a stronger visibility can also be determined for Namibian LGBT\*-activism. The creation of public visibility, which is also achieved through pride marches and non-heterosexual beauty pageants, is intended to generate a broader understanding of and tolerance for being bisexual and transgender among the Namibian population, an understanding that already exists in the broadest sense for homosexuality (Links 2019). The process of increased visibility and organizing is also reflected in a greater number of explicitly LGBT\*-organizations in the country.

Multiple social discourses and identities tend to reproduce norms and values and therefore also constantly shape and reshape conceptions of gender and sexuality through social practices in everyday life. They are mediated through processes of compliance and acceptance, but also through those of change and resistance; they may even be competing (Becker 2010; Cole and Thomas 2009). Inspired by post-structuralist thinking, this article understands politics as debates and struggles over meaning. This approach is particularly useful when complemented by an analysis of the historical processes of State formation and the differences in the ways women, men and non-heteronormative gender identities have experienced them at a particular time and space (Becker 2010; Spronk 2012). The exclusion of LGBT\*-liberationists by SWAPO officials is just one example of making non-heteronormative and alternative approaches invisible in the process of nation-building, of which the male heroism of the liberation struggle is a core feature (Saunders 2007). In 1997, Dr. Sam Nujoma in a speech to the *SWAPO Youth League*

even asked were lesbian and gay Namibians were “when we sacrificed our lives during the bitter liberation struggle” (Currier 2010: 123). This exclusion is by no means due to the fact that there were no homosexual or gender diverse fighters, but due to the lack of an “identity political logic” on the basis of which non-heterosexual combatants could have organized (Currier 2012: 450). As a result, these one-sided current post-colonial debates strengthen the invisibility of non-heteronormative identities and practices until today: “Within the postcolonial project of nation (re)building, the ‘truth’ of Namibian sexuality – as ‘traditionally heterosexual’ – is produced through the silencing of alternative practices and identities” (Lorway 2006: 448).

Marginalized positions therefore need a way of articulation before they can generally bring about changes by contesting hegemonic narratives. How these forms of articulation are generated in the post-independence context will be exemplary illustrated by a short extract from an interview with Baumann. In the year 2004 the aim of *Sister Namibia* was to attract attention to the regularly published magazine of the same name in the Namibian parliament:

Baumann: *“When I worked for Sister Namibia, we had a strategy. We went to drop magazines in the parliament. They [the ministers] threw away the magazines and then we found a strategy to put the magazines in envelopes and in beautiful letters about what the magazine is all about. That’s how the ministers started reading. The lady we just saw there, the old lady, Rosa Namises, has been a parliamentarian. And has been the only parliamentarian that brought issues of the LGBT\* up and the only parliamentarian who brought up issues of sex work.”*

Interviewer: *“The only one in the whole parliament?”*

Baumann: *“Yes, all these years. So, she has been our anchor. She has been labeled to be lesbian, she’s been labeled to be a sex worker and she didn’t care. So that magazine she was our promoter for in parliament. She said: guys, read! They are calling me a homosexual [...] there is an article for you to read.”*

Interviewer: *“Yes. And it had success?”*

Baumann: *“Yes, and that become a great success and now the magazine goes into parliament without any questions.”*

From this account, some conclusions can be drawn about the possibilities of articulation of LGBT\*-relevant issues in institutional settings. The political representation of LGBT\*-relevant topics is marginal, a situation that has changed little or not at all in the years since 2004. The activists’ efforts make it clear that LGBT\*-narratives always face resistance, sometimes even hostile-

ity in their work against hegemonic political structures. This further reveals, on the one hand, the scarcity of information to which even parliamentarians succumb and, on the other, the unwillingness to remedy this scarcity. The extract reveals the importance of political representation in institutional and parliamentary contexts. Only with the help of a long active parliamentarian did the magazine make its way into parliament. As is clear and as the critical legal studies movement has revealed, legal doctrines have developed in ways that protect the privileges of the powerful. According to those studies, strategies focusing on legal frameworks are “doomed to re- create the relationships of power and domination that gave rise to oppression in the first place. Legal rules may prohibit overt sexist or racist expression in some social relations but do nothing to redress the structural racism and sexism that resides in many institutions” (Bernstein et al. 2009: 4; see also Crenshaw 1989).

The time of my research stay must also be understood in the context of the then upcoming national general elections in 2019. LGBT\*-relevant topics were hardly on the political agenda, but some election programs still commented on them (Miyanicwe 2019). Given that, the need for political representation also came to force through the urges of the first ever elected *Miss-Transgender Namibia*, Penelope Delapoirte, who in a later interview with *The Namibian* requested that the communities vote wisely in the upcoming elections (ibid.). The interactions with political parties may also be an important strategy in achieving social participation for the communities. For this purpose, it will also be necessary to study the parties’ various manifestos concerning explicitly LGBT\*-relevant issues (ibid.). When it comes to the political and social participation of marginalized groups, many of the election-approved parties are still citing an alleged incompatibility between traditional and religious views and LGBT\*-rights. In addition, they refuse a constructive debate, arguing with reference to protect one’s privacy, which is a relic of the moral order of Christian morality and colonial rule, a discourse thread that runs through the entire history of LGBT\*-activism in Namibia and silences sexuality and non-conform gender identities by marking them as *private* (LaFont 2007a).

### Colonial residues, law reform efforts and the case of the anti-sodomy laws

As the article has pointed out so far, colonial residues are omnipresent in contemporary Namibia. Their effects are often subtle and can only be identified at a second or even third glance. Besides the more or less subliminal, internalized discriminatory dynamics and abstract principles described above, the legal framework of rights and responsibilities can uncover official, obligatory values and practical reality. Namibia’s constitution is considered to promote guaranteed gender equality rights, as the *Fundamental Human*

*Rights and Freedoms*, Article 10 reads: “(1) All persons shall be equal before the law. (2) No persons may be discriminated against on the grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic origin, religion, creed or social or economic status” (Republic of Namibia 2020). The framing of LGBT\*-rights as inherent in human rights is also crucial for the work of many LGBT\*-organizations in Namibia and, as such, a response to the dehumanizing efforts of SWAPO-officials in the early days after independence (LaFont 2007a). Furthermore, the Namibian Constitution is one of the few constitutions that uses a gender-neutral language (Hubbard 2007). Nowadays there also is a Namibian policy, more precisely the *National Human Rights Action Plan*, that is inclusive of the LGBT\*-issues.

But there are still laws in effect stemming from colonial rule, such as the Anti-Sodomy Laws.<sup>8</sup> Introduced by the former German colonial power and anchored in Namibian law since independence they are still affecting people’s lives today. Decolonization, as the southern Africanist Henning Melber puts it, does not amount to democratization (Melber 2003). The decolonization programs of the newly elected Namibian state leaders have failed to consider the colonial-era legislation criminalizing homosexuality besides other declared policy aims and goals. The law on sodomy marks an interesting point in the Namibian discourse on gender and sexuality because, as Liz Frank and Elizabeth Khaxas, both former members of the feminist organization *Sister Namibia*, commented: “no one we have asked, including the State Attorney, can remember a single case of legal persecution of lesbian or gay men in this country” (Frank and Khaxas 1996: 115). This condition persists to this day. But even though there is no persecution, Tatum Strauss, who organized many pride marches in Windhoek and in Swakopmund and also worked for *Sister Namibia* in the past, clarifies:

*“The Sodomy laws still have an effect in the perception of the LGBT\*-community, specifically towards the gay community.”*

---

8 “‘Sodomy’ is part of the Roman-Dutch common law inherited by Namibia at independence. Historically, it was the legal label given to all manner of ‘unnatural’ sexual offences including masturbation, oral sex and anal intercourse between people of the same sex or opposite sexes, sexual intercourse with animals, and even heterosexual intercourse between Christians and Jews. Gradually, much of the broad content of ‘sodomy’ fell away, and the prohibited activities were split into three separate crimes in South Africa: sodomy, bestiality and a residual category of ‘unnatural sexual offences’. Today the common law crimes of ‘sodomy’ and ‘unnatural sexual offences’ criminalize only sexual contact between males. Anal intercourse between males is all that is left of the once wider definition of ‘sodomy’, but ‘unnatural sexual offences’ covers mutual masturbation, ‘sexual gratification obtained by friction between the legs of another person’ and other unspecified sexual activity between men. None of these sexual acts are illegal if they take place between a man and a woman, or between two women.” (Hubbard 2000: 1)



*Gay people still have this notion that being gay especially is against the law. Because they don't have a proper understanding around the sodomy law itself. So, sodomy is criminalized even within straight communities, right? So, a straight couple who are engaging in any form of sodomy, male to female, female to male, is also criminalized. But obviously nobody has ever been persecuted for it. So, it's more like this underlying background fear of being persecuted.” (Interview Strauss 2019)*

In the same interview, Strauss told me about the direct consequences the law still has in the daily life of some Namibians. For example, the distribution of condoms in Namibian prisons is prohibited, although many prisoners become infected with HIV after being sexually abused. The Anti-Sodomy Laws were stated in the reasoning of the judgment (Hubbard 2000; Oliveira 2019).

And thus, one of the key strategies of international, continental and also Namibian LGBT\*-organizations for years, besides educational programs as a second key strategy, has been legal tactics such as law reform campaigns to challenge the legal landscape and promoting court cases, as such precedents can push forward a law reform (Currier 2010; Hubbard 2007). Some of these cases gained wide attention and triggered debates about sexuality, gender and social equality in the country. For example, there have been several cases where the ban on gay marriage has been challenged in a court (Becker 2007; Shikongo 2019). As the literature on social movements in the context of gender and sexuality reveals numerous different approaches, the effectiveness of these legal tactics is not uncontested. Some theorists and activists even argue that an engagement with the law is detrimental to advancing social movements because “the law normalizes some lifestyles and identities through legal recognition at the expense of others with less normative genders, sexualities and family structures” (Bernstein et al. 2009: 5).

The *Legal Assistance Centre*, a public interest law firm specialized in human rights and based in Windhoek, was a very helpful source for this aspect as it documents and comments on various cases. The firm also works together with other LGBT\*-organizations. In addition, the documented discussions held in parliament provide information about the background and key areas of conflicts.

### The impacts of national and cultural imaginary on Namibian gender and sexuality concepts

It is impossible to overemphasize the impact of colonialism and foreign rule on Namibian sexual and gender relations. Previous to European colonization, besides class, marriage and kinship were crucial structuring features in many regions of Africa, also in what is now Namibia (LaFont 2007b, Pauli 2019), colonized by the Germans in 1884. Before the colonial invasion, women

often held high social positions. With the beginning of Christian missions in what is now Namibia, patriarchal and puritanical doctrines stemming from the concept of the European national state entered as well, which introduced African sexuality as *primitive* or *perverse* in order to reinforce the racist, gendered, colonial hierarchy (Steinmetz 2007: 83). Sexuality and gender so became tools for the exercise of power (LaFont 2007b). Until today, there has been and continues to be a strong impact of conservative Christian moral obligations on sexuality and its concepts and practices in Namibia (*ibid.*).

These colonial discourses also exaggerated African men's heterosexual masculinities, while at the same time ignoring a wide range of same-sex relationships and the diverse local sexual and gender identities that the data suggests existed in pre-colonial times in Namibia (LaFont 2007b). Homosexuality and not explicitly mentioned non-binary gender identities were constructed exclusively as white, European idiosyncrasies. In 1966, at the same time as the armed struggle began, the resistance fighters of the SWAPO also ideologically opposed the apartheid regime. They devised a counter-concept to the humiliation and stigmatization that the colonial pathologizations and emasculations had meant to them. By this, African male 'virility' was reversed into confident African nationalist masculinities by living out a "*hyper-heterosexism*" with a strongly national character (Currier 2010: 113; Epprecht 2004). These conceptions of masculinity came to be defined in opposition to white, apartheid masculinities, but within the same racialized, masculinist and heterosexist parameters (Currier 2010). As a result, 'un-masculine' behavior was associated with homosexuality. Additionally, "boys and men intentionally use homophobia to deflect attention away from un-masculine behavior and to reinforce their masculine identities" (*ibid.*: 125). Furthermore, these masculinist ideas were influenced and sharpened by the socio-psychological influence of the military struggle and its conception of a heroic, military masculinity, which had a lasting effect on the consciousness and the mentalities of post-colonial Namibian society (Melber 2014).

Aside from those issues, women and womanhood were constructed along, and limited to, reproductive, procreative and heteronormative gender roles in favor of Namibia's survival and to fulfill the needs of a strong nation<sup>9</sup> (Currier 2012: 444). The described fragile construction of masculinity had its effect on visibly non-heteronormative gender identities. To that fact, this is also expressed in large numbers of violent acts against people of non-conforming gender identities. Black, lesbian and "masculine" women in particular, due to the visibility of their gender variance, became victims of the fragile notion that they would take other women away from men and were not themselves sexually available for those men (Currier 2015: 102).

---

9 Until today, the economic situation of women female-headed households is among the poorest of the poor because of care and reproduction conflicts with income productivities. (LaFont 2007b)

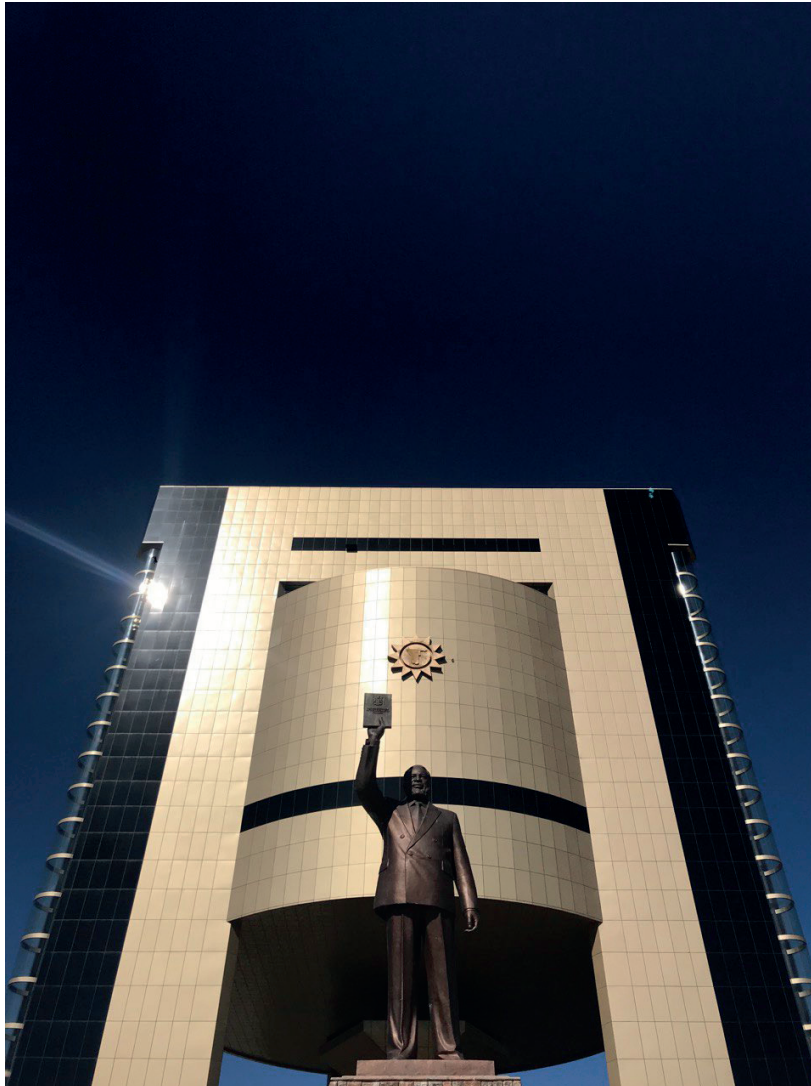


Fig 2: The figure of Sam Nujoma in front of the Independence Museum in Windhoek. A Symbol of patriarchal nationalism. Photo: Moritz Gemmeke

From 1995 on, leading party politicians at SWAPO began framing same-sex and non-heteronormative sexualities as “Western”, “un-African” and “un-Christian” (Currier 2010: 112). The aim of the expressed *political homophobia*, as Ashley Currier calls it, was not just to spread hate against LGBT\*-activism but to preempt criticism and suppress political dissidence in general (ibid.: 124). The construction of the “un-African” is problematic in several ways. On the one hand, the sheer diversity as well as the complexity of gender identities and sexualities in pre-colonial Africa, also in what now is Namibia, are obscured by this construct. On the other hand, the discourse suggests a static, homogeneous and ultimately authentic African culture that does not actually exist. The rhetorical recourse to the “un-African”-discourses follows on from other religiously and anti-feminist motivated narratives of the sup-

posedly ‘true African’, which were mostly used selectively when marginalized social groups advanced their right to participation and self-determination (Tamale 2015).

Imaginarities interact with each other and are shaped by those in power producing and maintaining their masculinist authority. Independence marked an important turning point because, since then, LGBT\*-people have organized themselves and contested the power over imaginaries and their transmission. Until then, the SWAPO party claimed these interpretive agencies for itself through the creating of a univocal, linear historic narrative of the liberation struggle and especially through the projects in the name of decolonization. From this point on these national, cultural and religious imaginaries of gender and sexuality were questioned and renegotiated on a social and institutional level by the LGBT\*-communities.

The narratives mentioned are strikingly homogeneous along clear dichotomies. Dichotomous thinking not only structured ideologies of colonialism and nationalism but is also deeply rooted in the structural thinking of Namibian society that the entire gender and sexual discourse also runs along dichotomous, heteronormative boundaries.

#### The broader picture: historical dichotomies – colonial and post-colonial references on namibian gender and sexuality discourses

In his seminal work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Franz Fanon attested to the colonial world a binarity (Fanon 2004). A deathly binarity that was structured strongly hierarchically and nevertheless, or precisely because of that, inscribed itself in the mentalities and ideologies of both the colonized as well as the colonizers itself in a dialectical way (ibid.). Crenshaw even points out, referring to Derrida, that dichotomous thinking forms the core of Western thought, in that the *other* is always also constructed as the inferior (Crenshaw 1995). The manifold worldwide anti-colonial struggles for liberation in certain cases reproduced specific parts of the colonial character through the liberationists that they thought they were defeating: its hierarchical order and features of the authoritarian, but to a certain extent also its dichotomous worldview; both the social structure of colonialism and that of nationalism are, besides their fundamental differences and very own characteristics and dynamics, deeply sexualized, gendered and *racialized* (Kim-Puri 2005; Steinmetz 2007). Traces of these dichotomies, sharing the common ideological element of minority exploitation and exclusion, were also evident in the consolidation phase of the Namibian state and the structures and concepts of its governance planned and executed by SWAPO officials’ decolonization programs (Melber 2014). When it came to create a common, national narrative, a main operational aspect in the process of unifying Namibia, the new elites and former liberationists may also have subconsciously used an internalized

authoritarian mentality, stemming from the liberation struggle as well as from colonial oppression itself (ibid.). In this selective approach to decolonization, the ruling parties endorsed only those cultural and political decolonization projects that helped consolidate their own rule and rejected those that “lie outside the masculinist, heteronormative national imaginary”, all of which consequently produced exclusions (Currier 2015: 24). In many places, especially in the Global South, gender and sexuality have become contested subjects in the course of national liberation movements, which can be used to draw conclusions about the national discourse on cultural and *racial* authenticity (Currier 2012). To understand how the state constrains and regulates the lives of marginalized people, this section gave a short historical insight into the cultural construction and formation of the Namibian nation with special regards to its gender and sexuality concepts. By analyzing homophobic, biphobic and transphobic tendencies in society as just a result of failing democratization efforts or authoritarian rule, one easily partly excludes the very characteristics of these gendered and sexualized contours (Currier 2010). Also, it fails to acknowledge and name the material consequences for LGBT\*-Namibians. Just to name a few not yet mentioned, besides structural invisibility for example when it comes to HIV/AIDS prevention and education programs by state agencies additionally some even had to flee the country when political homophobia was rampant back in the years after 1995 (Lorway 2008; Currier 2010).

## Conclusion

Today’s post-colonial situation in Namibia is highly dynamic. Different conceptions of gender and sexuality have an impact on larger social struggles and debates over the conceptions of tradition and culture. Generalizing assumptions regarding the situation of LGBT\*-communities are barely possible. However, the increasing number and simultaneous diversification of different Namibian LGBT\*-organizations in recent years suggest an increased need for articulating the struggles and debates of the communities. In the course of my research, some key strategies of their work could be identified in the multidimensional political, cultural and legal campaigns: The visibility of non-heteronormative identity conceptions in Namibia helps to stimulate an alternative examination of gender and sexuality and is actually strengthened by many different events such as pride marches or non-heterosexual beauty pageants (Links 2019). The legal discrimination caused by the still existing sodomy laws stemming from colonial rule is not actively implemented, but continues to act as a stigmatizing factor and in some cases has real consequences in the daily life of especially Namibian male homosexuals. That is why law reform has been an integral part and requirement for many years, especially from LGBT\*-organizations, but also from various other NGOs.

In the rural regions of the country in particular, access to information on LGBT\*-related topics is often difficult, but there are education programs that teach non-heteronormative identity concepts and want to educate people about gender roles and sexuality. The movement is growing, and former rigid narratives and conceptions of gender and sexuality are becoming more and more contested.

Constructions of the Namibian nation and a Namibian identity are still subject to male traditions, that are a byproduct of colonial and apartheid domination and affect all other gender identities. Imaginaries are ideological constructs, interact with each other and are shaped by those in power by producing and maintaining their masculinist authority. They use homo-, bi-, and transphobic statements as a political strategy to maintain their power. Independence marked an important turning point because, since then, LGBT\*-people have organized themselves. From the beginning, feminist ideas played a central role in the organization of the LGBT\*-communities in Namibia. They started to contest the power over imaginaries and its transmission that the SWAPO party claimed for itself through the creating of an univocal, linear historic narrative of the liberation struggle and especially through the projects in the name of decolonization. From this point on these national, cultural and religious imaginaries of gender and sexuality have been questioned and renegotiated by the LGBT\*-communities on a social, cultural and institutional level.

## Bibliography

- Altman, Dennis (2001) *Global sex*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.
- Becker, Heike (2007) *Making tradition: A historical perspective on gender in Namibia*. In: La Font, Suzanne and Dianne Hubbard (eds.) *Unraveling taboos: Gender and sexuality in Namibia*. Windhoek: Legal Assistance Center: pp. 22-38.
- Becker, Heike (2010) *A concise history of gender, "tradition" and the state in Namibia*. In: Keulder, Christian (ed.) *State, society and democracy: A reader in Namibian politics*. Windhoek: Macmillan Education Namibia: pp. 171-199.
- Bhana, Deevia, Robert Morrell, Jeff Hearn and Relebohile Moletsane (2007) *Power and identity: An introduction to sexualities in Southern Africa*. *Sexualities* 10 (2): pp. 131-139.

- Boyce, Paul, Elisabeth L. Engebretsen and Silvia Posocco (2017) Introduction: Anthropology's queer sensibilities. *Sexualities* 21 (5-6): pp. 843-852.
- Butler, Judith (1999) *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Cole, Jennifer and Lynn M. Thomas (2009) Introduction: Thinking through love in Africa. In: Cole, Jennifer and Lynn M. Thomas (eds.) *Love in Africa*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press: pp. 1-30.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé (1989) Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 140: pp. 139-167.
- Crenshaw, Kimberlé (1995) [1988] Race, reform, and retrenchment. In: Crenshaw, Kimberlé, Neil Gotanda, Gary Peller and Kendall Thomas (eds.) *Critical race theory. The key writings that formed the movement*. New York: The New Press: pp. 103-122.
- Currier, Ashley (2010) Political homophobia in postcolonial Namibia. *Gender & Society* 24 (1): pp. 110-129.
- Currier, Ashley (2011) Decolonizing the Law: LGBT organizing in Namibia and South Africa. Special Issue: Social Movements/Legal Possibilities. *Studies in Law, Politics and Society* 54: pp. 17-44.
- Currier, Ashley (2012) The aftermath of decolonization: Gender and sexual dissidence in postindependence Namibia. *Signs: Journal of Woman in Culture and Society* 37 (2): pp. 441-467.
- Currier, Ashley (2015) Transgender invisibility in Namibian and South African LGBT organizing. *Feminist Formations* 27 (1): pp. 91-117.
- Epprecht, Marc (2004) *Hungochani: The history of a dissident sexuality in southern Africa*. Montréal, Canada: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Epprecht, Marc (2013) *Sexuality and social justice in Africa: rethinking homophobia and forging resistance*. London & New York: Zed Books.
- Fanon, Franz (2004) [1961]: *The wretched of the earth*. New York: Grove Press (Orig.: *Les damnés de la terre*. Paris: Maspéro.).
- Farmer, Olivia and Sara Smock Jordan (2017) Experiences of woman coping with catcalling experiences in New York City: A pilot study. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy* 29 (4): pp. 205-225.
- Frank, Liz and Elizabeth Khaxas (1996) Lesbians in Namibia. In: Reinfelder, Monika (ed.) *Amazon to Zami: Towards a global lesbian feminism*. London: Cassell: pp. 109-117.
- Hipondoka, Rosalia (2019) Penelope Delaripoirto crowned Miss Transgender Ambassador 2019. <https://unwrap.online/penelope-delaripoirto-crowned-miss-transgender-ambassador-2019/> [accessed September 20, 2020].
- Hobsbawm, Eric (1983) Introduction: Inventing traditions. In: Hobsbawm, Eric and Ranger, Terence: *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 1-14.

- Hornscheidt, Lann (2012) Postkoloniale Gender Forschung. Ansätze feministischer postkolonialer Studien. In: Reuter, Julia and Alexandra Karentzos (eds.) Schlüsselwerke der Postcolonial Studies. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften: pp. 215-228.
- Hubbard, Dianne (2000) Why the law on sodomy should be repealed. Unpublished.
- Hubbard, Dianne (2007) Gender and sexuality: The law reform landscape. In: La Font, Suzanne and Dianne Hubbard (eds.) Unravelling taboos: Gender and sexuality in Namibia. Windhoek: Legal Assistance Center: pp. 99-129.
- Kangootui, Nomhle (2020) Trans woman face daily stigma. <https://www.namibian.com.na/197158/archive-read/Trans-women-face-daily-stigma-harassment-SHE-is> [accessed September 20, 2020].
- Kim-Puri, H. J. (2005) Conceptualizing gender-sexuality-state-nation: An introduction. *Gender & Society* 19 (2): pp. 137-159.
- LaFont, Suzanne (2007a) An overview of gender and sexuality in Namibia. In: La Font, Suzanne and Dianne Hubbard (eds.) Unravelling taboos: Gender and sexuality in Namibia. Windhoek: Legal Assistance Center: pp. 1-19.
- LaFont, Suzanne (2007b) Decolonising sexuality. In: Melber, Henning (ed.) Transitions in Namibia. Which changes for whom? Uppsala, Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet: pp. 245-260.
- Links, Dwight (2019) Namibia hosts Pride March. *The Namibian*. <https://www.namibian.com.na/196207/archive-read/Out-Right-Namibia-hosts-Pride-march-Out-Right> [accessed September 20, 2020].
- Lorway, Robert (2006) Dispelling “heterosexual African AIDS” in Namibia: Same-sex sexuality in the township of Katutura. *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 8 (5): pp. 435-449.
- Lorway, Robert (2008) Defiant desire in Namibia: Female sexual transgression and the making of political being. *American Ethnologist* 35 (1): pp. 20-33.
- Melber, Henning (2003) Re-examining liberation in Namibia: Political culture since independence. Uppsala, Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.
- Melber, Henning (2014) Understanding Namibia – The trials of independence. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Miyanicwe, Clemans (2019) Miss Trans urges LGBTQI community to vote wisely. <https://www.namibian.com.na/195812/archive-read/Miss-Trans-urges-LGBTQI-community-to-vote-wisely> [accessed September 20, 2020].
- Namibian Press Agency (2019) First Miss Trans Ambassador pageant slated for Saturday. <http://www.nampapr.com.na/?p=7180> [accessed September 20, 2020].
- Oliveira, Yokany (2019) Same sex rights still taboo ... activists push for broader representation. <https://www.namibian.com.na/190216/archive-read/&pamp39Same-sex-rights-still> [accessed September 20, 2020].



- Ossome, Lyn (2013) Postcolonial discourses of queer activism and class in Africa. In: Ekine, Sokari and Hakima Abbas (eds.) *Queer African reader*. Pambazuka Press: pp. 32-47.
- Republic of Namibia (2020) Namibian Constitution. [https://laws.parliament.na/cms\\_documents/namibian-constitution-e77d13246a.pdf](https://laws.parliament.na/cms_documents/namibian-constitution-e77d13246a.pdf) [accessed September 20, 2020].
- Pauli, Julia (2019) *The decline of marriage in Namibia. Kinship and social class in a rural community*. Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.
- Risman, Barbara J. (2004) Gender as a social structure. *Theory wrestling with activism*. *Gender & Society* 18: pp. 429-450.
- Sauer, Tobias (2019) LGBT in Namibia: Flagge zeigen für Gleichstellung. <https://taz.de/LGBT-in-Namibia/!5560874/> [accessed September 20, 2020].
- Saunders, Christopher (2007) History and the armed struggle: From anti-colonial propaganda to patriotic history? In: Melber, Henning (ed.) *Transitions in Namibia: Which changes for whom?* Uppsala, Sweden: Nordic Africa Institute: pp. 13-28.
- Shikongo, Arlana (2019) LGBTQ+ urged to do more. <https://www.namibian.com.na/196289/archive-read/LGBTQ+-urged-to-do-more-OMBUDSMAN-John-Walters> [accessed September 20, 2020].
- Spronk, Rachel (2012) *Ambiguous pleasures: Sexuality and middle class self-perceptions in Nairobi*. New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- Steinmetz, George (2007) *The devils handwriting: Precoloniality and the German colonial state in Qingdao, Samoa and Southwest Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Tamale, Sylvia (2015) Homosexuality is not un-African. <https://www.boell.de/en/2015/03/20/homosexuality-is-not-un-african> [accessed September 20, 2020].

---

Moritz Gemmeke is a master's degree student at the Institute of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Hamburg. He holds a BA of African Studies of the University of Leipzig. His main research interests are Queer and Gender Studies, critique of ideology and Antisemitism.