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# Queering Development in Homotransnationalist Times

A Postcolonial Reading of LGBTIQ  
Inclusive Development Agendas

## SAMMANFATTNING

Artikeln behandlar det ökade intresset för LHBTIQ-rättigheter inom den så kallade "utvecklingsindustrin". Särskilt belyses den inflytelserika roll som EUropeiska LHBTIQ-organisationer och LHBTIQ-identifierade utvecklingsarbetare har spelat, och spelar, när det gäller att "queera" utvecklingssamarbete och utvecklingspolicyn. Genom att sammankoppla idéer från postkoloniala och "radikala" utvecklingsstudier (Baaz 2005; Kothari 2005; Kothari red. 2005; Kapoor 2008) med queera diskussioner om "imperialistiska" och "nykoloniala" implikationer för transnationell LHBTIQ-politik (Puar 2007; Haritaworn m.fl. 2008; Rao 2015), undersöker artikeln hur och på vilka sätt som "queera agendor" sammanblandas med "projekt" för utveckling, i synnerhet i deras rasifierade former. Genom att granska queera utvecklingsagendoras bredare politiska kontexter analyserar artikeln hur nya versioner av EUropeisk sexuell exceptionalism skapas och samverkar med homotransnationalistiska policyn och LHBTIQ-inriktade utvecklingsstrategier. Det framkommer att LHBTIQ-inkluderande utvecklingsstrategier således inte bara löper risk att medverka i skapandet av en ny temporal-spatial uppdelning i ett "sexuellt utvecklat" EUropa/Väst, som får bära "bördan" att "utveckla" och "modernisera" de sexuellt "efterblivna", och den "homofoba" resten. Dessutom beskrivs hur "queert" begär efter utveckling ofta präglas av "homonostalgiska" antaganden och narrationer. Genom att betrakta utveckling som en ytterst paradoxal process, fylld av såväl hegemoniska som oppositionella och subversiva praktiker, av sfärer av misslyckanden och "slirande" (Bhabha 1994) avslutar jag emellertid artikeln med att belysa hur (LHBTIQ-inkluderande) utvecklingsplaner kan användas, och faktiskt används, för dekoloniala och mothegegoniska syften.

**Keywords:** development, LGBTIQ rights, homotransnationalism, sexual modernization

**IN THE LAST** decade numerous development institutions in the Global North have undergone major organizational, legal and discursive shifts regarding the visibility and acknowledgment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer people (LGBTIQs<sup>1</sup>) as “target groups,” “recipients,” and “beneficiaries” of development programs and development aid (Lind 2010; Bergenfield and Miller 2014; Gosine 2015). Supported by the relative success of LGBTIQ movements in Europe<sup>2</sup> in improving the (sexual) citizenship status of (some) sexual and gender dissidents, as well as by major political changes concerning the acknowledgment of LGBTI(Q)<sup>3</sup> rights as human rights in the UN system,<sup>4</sup> substantive institutional policy commitments were made within a European context. An increasing number of national development agencies, such as those in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Germany, as well as development NGOs and private foundations have begun to deal more systematically with questions of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), particularly by promoting the human rights of LGBTI(Q)s in their core development strategies and by funding projects and initiatives supporting LGBTIQ rights on a bilateral or small scale level (Bergenfield and Miller 2014).

Even though LGBTIQ rights remain a contested issue within a number of EU member states,<sup>5</sup> in 2013 respect for LGBTI(Q) human rights has prominently entered European foreign policy as an integral part of the EU's external and diplomatic relations, including development cooperation (Council of the European Union 2013). With the drafting of the so-called Anti-Homosexuality Bill in the Ugandan parliament in October 2011 and with the unprecedented level of diplomatic interventions, international debates, protests and the (partial) aid cuts that followed the signing of the bill by President Museveni in February 2014, LGBTIQ rights have arrived at the of European development politics and institutions.

However, what is of particular importance with regard to this increased attention to LGBTIQ rights among European development institutions is the strong role LGBTIQ organizations and LGBTIQ identified development practitioners have been and are playing in mak-

ing development more “inclusive” for LGBTIQs, thereby shaping the meaning and implications of a “queering of development” (Lind ed. 2010; Gosine 2015). Some of the leading, most influential LGBTIQ organizations in Europe, such as the COC<sup>6</sup> in the Netherlands, the RFSL<sup>7</sup> from Sweden, the German LSVD<sup>8</sup> and LGBT Denmark<sup>9</sup> are therefore becoming increasingly involved in the configuration of development programs. Sexual and gender dissidents and queer activists from the Global South and East have likewise started to strategically engage with the “requirements” and “languages” of development institutions, most literally by seeking aid for the projects and initiatives (Lind ed. 2010). Development agencies have also strengthened their political ties and relations with LGBTIQ organizations and movements in the Global South, East and North and are in this way contributing to the formation of a new development framework that declares the promotion of and adherence to LGBTIQ rights as a goal and indicator for development (Klapeer 2016).

These institutional, legal, and discursive changes in the arena of development politics and development cooperation, were authorized by a multi-faceted and polyphonic process of knowledge production generating new frames and argumentative figures, logics and discourses on the role and relevance of LGBTIQ rights for “successful” development. Particularly when analyzed from a postcolonial and intersectional perspective the growing attention to LGBTIQ rights in development institutions provokes critical questions considering how LGBTIQ inclusive development strategies have been made intelligible and how LGBTIQ rights have been inscribed into the project and logics of development. By interlinking my findings from a critical analysis of interviews and related European policy documents with insights from the field of radical development studies (Baaz 2005; Kothari 2005; 2006a; Kothari ed. 2005; Kapoor 2008; Escobar 2012; Wilson 2012) and queer and postcolonial research on transnational LGBTIQ politics and movements (Cruz-Malavé and Manalansan 2002; Puar 2007; Haritaworn et al. 2008; Ayoub and Paternotte 2014a; Rahman 2014; Lavinás Picq and Thiel eds. 2015; Rao 2015) this article sheds light on the implications, the “side

effects” and wider political context of LGBTIQ inclusive development agendas. Due to the fact that (queer/ed) development politics are still an under-theorized subject within transnational and postcolonial queer studies and also remain an under-researched topic within the growing field of LGBTIQ policy and movement studies, this article aims to examine in which way the “project of development” (Escobar 2012) became entangled with mobilizations that are currently discussed as “homo(trans)nationalism” (Puar 2007; Bacchetta and Haritaworn 2011; Laskar 2014) and “gay imperialism” (Haritaworn et al. 2008; Rao 2015).

The article is arranged in four sections: First, I will trace the wider political context and political foundations of a growing attention to LGBTIQ rights in the field of development. I will argue that LGBTIQ inclusive development strategies have not only been enabled by a “dangerous liaison” with homo(trans)nationalist norms and policies but are also at risk to reinstate tropes of an European sexual exceptionalism. Second, I will explore how LGBTIQ inclusive development strategies were shaped and influenced by established modernization frameworks and developmental ways of thinking and are thereby contributing to the formation of a queer/ed version of developmentalism – a process I define as “homodevelopmentalism.” Thirdly, I turn to a critical examination of the “desire[s] for development” (Heron 2007) exhibited by European LGBTIQ organizations inquiring possible benefits from a participation in the development industry. By drawing on Homi Bhabha’s (1994) conceptualization of colonial spaces as spaces of “failure,” “rupture” and “mimicry” this article concludes with a critical discussion of the possibilities for a decolonizing subversion or cooptation of development aid and development institutions.

### **Dangerous Liaisons: Homo(trans)nationalist Mobilizations and the Intelligibility of LGBTIQ Inclusive Development Agendas**

When exploring the wider political context and the historical conditions that enabled the recognition of LGBTIQs as “legitimate” subjects of development interventions it becomes evident that these recent changes

are an ambivalent outcome of the relative success of international and European LGBTIQ movements. A growing attention for LGBTIQ rights in the arena of development can therefore not be delinked from the problematic “side effects” and implications of this trajectory of success. While (some) LGBTIQs become increasingly recognized as “legible” citizens in many EU member states – at least on an *formal-juridical* level – these politics of inclusion and normalization come, as a number of critical queer scholars has already demonstrated, at the expense of new forms of racial and national othering, a sanitation and privatization of queer sex/ualities, a normalization and commodification of LGBTIQ identities and spaces, and a judicialization and juridification of (international) LGBTIQ politics.

LGBTIQ inclusive development agendas have been shaped and stimulated by a process of “homonormalization” in Europe (Roseneil et al. 2013). They are intertwined with the emergence of “homo(trans) nationalist” (Puar 2007; Bacchetta and Haritaworn 2011; Laskar 2014) mobilizations and the rise of a queer/ed version of a European “sexual exceptionalism” (Dietze 2010; Bracke 2011; Rahman 2014). Because of a number of public discourses and policy commitments in the EU, LGBTIQ rights and homotolerance have increasingly become linked to an idea of “Europeanness” and European (sexual) exceptionalism (Ayoub and Paternotte 2014a; Kulpa 2014; Sloomaeckers et al. 2016). Viviane Reding (2010), a Luxembourg politician and EU vice president and commissioner for justice, fundamental rights and citizenship from 2009 to 2014, for instance, declared in 2010 that “homophobia must be stamped out across Europe, east as well as west,” and that “homophobia is [...] incompatible with the principles on which the EU is founded.” Phillip M. Ayoub and David Paternotte (2014a, 2) therefore speak of the emergence of a “special relationship’ [...] between LGBT rights and a certain idea of Europe” that extends beyond strict institutional categories. This “special relationship” becomes particularly evident in the European enlargement process in Central and Eastern Europe, where “tolerance” toward LGBTIQs, and a protection of Pride marches in particular, was being established – at least on a symbolic level – as

a defining component of becoming “EUropean” (Slootmaeckers et al. 2016). However, as Ayoub and Paternotte (2014a; 2014b) have noticed, efforts to connect LGBTIQ rights with the formation of a united Europe were not only undertaken by EUropean institutions, but have also been promoted by a number of (pro) LGBTIQ rights activists and advocates themselves. “[B]y using ‘Europe’ as an argument for demanding LGBT recognition from their states and societies,” activists on the ground did, “subsequently, and indirectly, recreate the idea that Europe is united around the LGBT issue” but at the same time those activists were also contributing to the reinforcement of “problematic binary divisions within the continent and at its margins” (Ayoub and Paternotte 2014c, 239; cf., Kulpa 2014).

To connect homo- and transphobia with a “backwardness” (and “un-EUropeanness”) has become a powerful, but at the same time profoundly contested tool of leverage and advocacy for LGBTIQ activists and movements. But at the same time, LGBTIQ rights have been established as a defining component of a perceived EUropean sexual exceptionalism (Rahman 2014). EUrope is being imagined as a “space where sexual freedom can and does take place and as a subject able to grant such freedom to others” (Colpani and Habed 2014, 81). LGBTIQ rights are thus boundary markers to identify countries or societies, which are (or would be) “able” to become “EUropean” or “EUropean-like” (i.e., “liberal,” “modern” and “homotolerant”) and others, which fail to comply with these “standards” (and goals of development). At the same time, the “exceptional” status of EUrope as a “model” for LGBTIQ rights is being established by such narratives and related policies. However, particularly because those boundaries are instable and volatile, EUrope constitutes itself through its peripheries, through its (internal and external) “others,” through those who are rendered as “backward” and “non-EUropean” and unable to perform “(homo)tolerance,” such as “migrants,” “Muslims” or “fragile” states (Haritaworn et al. 2008; Nichols 2012; Petzen 2012; Rahman 2014; Rao 2015).

A homonormative interpretation of “proper” respect for LGBTIQ rights (such as same-sex legislations) has therefore become a privileged

sign stabilizing the always contested and inherently ambivalent boundary between those “cultures” that consider themselves as (sexually) “modern,” “civilized” and “developed.” Global mappings of LGBTIQ rights, for instance the often cited “Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Map of World Laws,”<sup>10</sup> provided by the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), are contributing to the production of this narrative. They “rank” nation states with regard to their realization of a particular conceptualization of LGBTIQ rights thereby producing “a Western – more specifically, northern European – temporal narrative” of sexual modernization: A society/nation moves from “decriminalization” to “anti-discrimination” and finally to the institutionalization of “partnership rights,” preferably same-sex marriage (Rao 2014, 170).

The mobilization of a new “queer/ed” version of European sexual exceptionalism which positions, as Momin Rahman (2014, 279) has been arguing, LGBTIQ rights as *the* “apex” of civilizational exceptionalism, therefore contributes to the authorization of homo(trans)nationalist policies and interventions aiming to “promote” LGBTIQ rights and homo-tolerance *beyond* Europe. Or as Rahul Rao (2015) puts it:

[S]tates that fail to respect rights around sexual diversity are in retrieval of standard orientalist tropes, characterized as backward [and] uncivilized, with the internationalization of LGBT rights taking on the character of a modern-day civilizing mission. (Rao 2015, 354)

This rerun of a civilizing mission is particularly manifested in the growing importance of LGBTIQ rights in development politics and the way “queer/sexual development” is being constructed. However, what I consider as particularly important here, is that the project of development already has obtained a “special relationship” with discourses of Western sexual exceptionalism thereby reinstating colonial constructions of the “sexual underdeveloped,” “perverse” and “deviant” non-European others (Stoler 1989; McClintock 1995; Gosine 2009; Wilson 2015). Andil Gosine (2009, 26) and Kalpana Wilson (2012) are drawing attention to the fact that the “problematization” of Third World sexualities was provid-

ing an important “rationale and impetus for the pursuit of development” legitimizing for development interventions aiming to “modernize” or “discipline” the sexualities of the “underdeveloped” others. “[S]ex and sexuality” have, according to Gosine (2009, 26) “always been there, at the heart of development” and “[i]nternational development theory and practice have long been fixated upon [...] dissident sexual subjects.”

Accordingly, EUropean homotransnationalism is also based on the idea that national “accomplishments” with regard to LGBTIQ rights have to be “transnationalized” and that laws in “less” homotolerant countries (especially EUropean member states) should be “harmonized” with EUropean law. Also, more “developed” or “modern” nations have a “responsibility” to intervene in “homophobic” countries and regions in order to “protect” queer minority groups (Spivak 2004; Laskar 2014). Homotransnationalism is thus also being shaped as a necessary and humanist “burden of the fittest,” to use Gayatri Spivak (2004, 523, 563) in this context: “[T]he fittest [...] must shoulder the burden of righting the wrongs of the unfit” but thereby reinstituting an asymmetrical split “between those who right wrongs and those who are wronged.”

A EUropean homotransnationalism is, however, mutually intertwined with and promoted by national varieties of homotransnationalism and homonationalism, particularly manifest in the Scandinavian and Dutch contexts (Bracke 2011). These countries are not only at the forefront of inscribing homotolerance in their imagined national communities but occupy, often in mutual cooperation with national LGBTIQ organizations (such as the COC or the RFSL), a leading role in promoting LGBTIQ inclusive development agendas. In the late 1990s, the Dutch development NGO Hivos, *Humanistisch Instituut voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking*, was among the first development organizations in EUrope to include human rights for LGBTIQs systematically in their development work. The Swedish development agency, Sida, followed in 2005/2006 by adopting an “action plan” for its work on sexual orientation and gender identity in international development cooperation that considered LGBT rights as an important “human rights issue” (Sida 2006, 2). Sida represents, along with Hivos, not only the most important EUropean



donor for LGBTIQ issues in the Global South and East, both organizations spend the highest amount of money worldwide for the promotion of LGBTIQ (human) rights in the Global South/East (Sida 2006, 2).<sup>11</sup>

The (homo)transnationalization of LGBTIQ rights in the EUropean accession process, as well as the emergence of a certain EUropean homo(trans)nationalism with its national instantiations in the Scandinavian and Dutch contexts, thus paved the way for a more prominent and institutionalized recognition of LGBTIQ issues among EUropean development institutions. LGBTIQ inclusive development strategies have thus not only been enabled through a “dangerous liaison” with homo(trans)nationalist mobilization but are at risk of participating in the formation of a new EUropean sexual/civilizational exceptionalism by establishing a (EUropean) norm of “homotolerance” and LGBTIQ rights as a benchmark of “development,” “modernization” and “progress” for measuring all “others.”

### **Developing Modern Queer Subjects: The Emergence and Implications of a Homodevelopmental Framework**

Drawing on critical development studies, including postcolonial and postdevelopment critiques (Ferguson 1994; Baaz 2005; Kothari 2005; Kothari ed. 2005; Kapoor 2008; Escobar 2012), I conclude that the political project of development is still shaped by the following paradigms; that desirable social change (“development”) and the eradication of poverty can be reached or at least supported by “technical,” “epistemic” and “material” development interventions; that “development” is a spatio-temporal process of social change, a process of a more or less linear “modernization” with local and regional varieties; that institutions and epistemes, that are shaped by Western genealogies and norms are presented as universal “goals” and “tools” of development (e.g., constitutional democracy, free market economy, etc.); that there are “more developed” (“modern”) and “less developed” (“traditional”) or “developing” (“modernizing,” “transitional”) countries; that some people, particularly “white” people (or “educated” elites), embody or possess the knowledge and expertise regarding how to “develop” others. According to my research (qualitative interviews with

LGBTIQ identified development practitioners and development experts working in and for LGBTIQ related development programs; an analysis of policy documents from development and LGBTIQ organizations in the Netherlands, Denmark, Germany and Sweden), the above stated development paradigms also remain constitutive for LGBTIQ inclusive development agendas, even though some heteronormative presumptions and rationalities (regarding, for instance, notions of “proper” sexualities and relationships) are challenged and destabilized (Lind ed. 2010).

My findings illustrate that “social change” toward “more” rights for LGBTIQs and homotolerance is being imagined as a unilinear process development, an attempt of “catching up” with EUrope. EUrope is thus (again) positioned as the presumed goal and model for “progressive” LGBTIQ politics and the possible and desired future for the “anachronistic” or “backward rest.” This conceptualization of “sexual development” is also related to an evolutionary model of queerness and LGBTIQ identity formation – the transformation of “naïve” actors secretly practicing same-sex genital activities into “self-aware” queer political subjects (Hoad 2000; Sabsay 2012).<sup>12</sup> Or to quote from an interview with a LGBTIQ activist aiming to make development more “inclusive” for LGBTIQs in “partner countries”:

They [LGBTIQ organizations in Tanzania] are far behind in organizing [...] we had a workshop down there [...] so that we could learn how far are they and how we can help them [...]. We have knowledge about LGBT organizing. [...] They want the same things [gay marriage] as we [...] deep in themselves they want that, there is no difference [...]. The Danish model [of gay marriage] is a good model. (Interview with a LGBTIQ activist from Denmark, 2014)

This quote perfectly demonstrates that knowledge and expertise of LGBTIQ organizing and politics is not only geopolitically “located” in the West, but moreover, that Denmark is being perceived as the normative “model” and presumed goal of a process of a unilinear process of “queer” development. Supported by prominent (yet non-binding, soft law) in-

ternational sexual rights declarations, which often serve as an important source of reference for LGBTIQ inclusive development agendas, (homo-)sexuality is perceived as a trans-spatial, universal, ahistorical, natural, human condition/human force that can be “organized” in “modern” (“self-aware,” “visible,” and “included” political subjects who want to “marry” and live in stable relationships) or “traditional” ways (secretly performing same-sex activities, or through sex work) (Horn 2010; Klappeer 2013; Rao 2014).

Particularly because LGBTIQ inclusive development agendas are not only *drawing on* established developmental and modernization frameworks but are *actualizing* and adjusting them in a certain (homonational?) way one may speak of the emergence of a new development framework, which I term “homodevelopmentalism.”

Homodevelopmentalism is based first on an idea of “catching up,” implying that countries or societies move “forward” in (temporal) stages with regard to LGBTIQ rights and that they follow Western developments on a linear axis of “sexual modernization” (Nichols 2012). “Less developed” and, in this case, “homophobic” countries are located in an “anachronistic space” that can be “watched,” “measured” and “wronged” from a panoptical point of view (McClintock 1995; Spivak 2004). Ideas of stages of (sexual) development thus also mean to indicate the “sexual-temporal belonging” of societies or countries revealing if they “belong” to the “present” or the “past.” “Inherent in this shared geographical imaginary is,” as Rao (2014, 174) points out “a tight linkage between sexuality, place and legitimacy, in which particular attitudes toward sexuality (and indeed particular sexualities) become markers of belonging to particular places.” What we have then is, as Neville Hoad (2000), Rao (2014) and Anne McClintock (1995) demonstrated, a spatialization of time and a temporalization of space, whereby the Global South, particularly “Africa” or “the East,” are imagined as contemporary reenactments of Europe’s past: “[W]e were like them, but have developed, they are like we were and have yet to develop.” (Rao 2014, 174)

This perspective not only ignores the economic, political and epistemic effects of a (colonial) history of inequalities but also expects the “present”

and “future” to be the same for all, as if the “past” and “present” do not influence and shape the possibilities for “queer liberation” and identity formation processes. Transformations and improvements with regard to LGBTIQs and LGBTIQ rights can therefore only be interpreted as manifestations of a process of “modernization” and, moreover, LGBTIQ rights are presented as a “solution” to a lack of modernity (Rahman 2014). Within a framework of “sexual modernization,” a different (development) “outcome” with regard to LGBTIQ rights is rendered unintelligible. Homodevelopmentalism thus reproduces a geopolitical progress narrative (of queerness) and a new spatialized temporalization of homo- and transphobia (Rao 2014). Within this unequal geographies of time “failure is attributed primarily to local factors” while the international community and global entanglements remain absent, at least until the “sexually most developed” ones intervene as “heroic saviour[s]” (Rao 2014, 171). However, this “desire” for being a “heroic savior” might be satisfied by those to be “saved” but it may also be appropriated, subverted, and turned against itself.

Second, homodevelopmentalism implies a certain *developmentalization* of LGBTIQ movements and struggles in the Global South. They are perceived as only demanding “things” that have already been “achieved” in Europe and, in order to accomplish these things themselves, LGBTIQs in the Global South need to be “helped,” “activated” and “trained” from outside (Bracke 2012; Gosine 2015). New queer rescue narratives thus emerge within homodevelopmentalist discourses and practices, creating a developmentalized and sometimes also victimizing notion of Third World LGBTIQs. But because queerness, however, can only be read as “sign” of modernization, LGBTIQs are constructed as being inherently linked to the project of European modernity. Due to their (embodied) “queerness,” Third World LGBTIQs simply need to be “activated” and not completely “rescued” – unlike, for instance, Third World women (Bracke 2012).

Third, (homo-)developing countries or societies are rendered as being in need of external incentives (such as aid conditionalities) or expertise to “overcome” homo- and transphobia. Yet, on the other hand,

homo- and transphobia are “culturalized” and “depoliticized,” and not perceived as an outcome of complex and “glocal,” or rather “translocal” political processes or the result of a “triangulation” of homotransnationalist mobilizations in the Global North, the growing visibility of “local” LGBTIQ movements in aid-receiving countries, and “homophobic anticipatory countermobilization[s]” (Rahman 2014). Thus, not only are “local” and national specifics and transnational entanglements often marginalized, but these ambivalent mix of culturalizing, universalizing and modernizational tendencies of LGBTIQ inclusive development frameworks may also feed into the functioning of development as an “anti-politics machine” (Ferguson 1994). Because, when trans- and homophobia(s) are rendered as a “lack” of development, the complex political circumstances promoting violence and discrimination against dissident sexualities and genders remain undertheorized.

Homodevelopmentalism thus not only leaves the unequal architecture of the international system intact but also reinstates a new queered version of a spatial-temporal divide between a sexually “developed” and “homotolerant” Europe and the “barbaric” and “homophobic” rest in need of “sexual modernization” and “development.” As a consequence, a critical analysis of the manifestations and problematic implications of homodevelopmentalist practices and discourses does not mean that there should be no international support or solidarity for LGBTIQs and dissident genders and sexualities in the Global South but that we need to challenge the framings of the “problem” and “solutions” itself: That pointing to violence and discrimination against LGBTIQs always collapses into a conflict between “modern” and “traditional,” “enlightened” versus “backward” thereby temporalizing difference and global inequalities and marginalizing entanglements.

### **The White Queer’s Burden: Homonostalgia, the Occidentalist Dividend and the Desire to Develop**

Current aims of “queer” development can not only be considered risky due to the problematic political and historical context that rendered them intelligible, critical questions also arise when exploring the am-

bivalent role of European LGBTIQ organizations in these ventures. A number of European LGBTIQ organizations are increasingly important “development actors” distributing resources to LGBTIQ projects in the Global South/East. They have established international branches that, in raising funds from national agencies, foreign ministries and other donor organizations and arrange training and workshops for LGBTIQ activists from the Global South and provide other material or technical resources; development agencies appoint them as “experts” or “consultants” on LGBTIQ rights, actively participate in development networks and institutions. They publish handbooks and manuals on questions of SOGI in development cooperation.<sup>13</sup> LGBTIQ identified development workers are organizing themselves on internet platforms<sup>14</sup> and within established development institutions (e.g., by forming employee associations in big donor institutions such as the LGBTIQ employees’ group UNGLOBE in the UN, or GLOBE in the World Bank), thereby enhancing the visibility and awareness of LGBTIQ issues in these institutions.

However, by reading current queer “desires for development” (Heron 2007) against the backdrop of postcolonial and radical development studies the perspective shifts from proclaimed “intentions” and “motifs” to complicities with some of the most problematic implications of the project of development. Also, (emotional, political, financial) “benefits” from participating in the development industry are realized (Baaz 2005; Heron 2007). Critical development scholars, such as Barbara Heron (2007), Maria Eriksson Baaz (2005) or Ilan Kapoor (2008), have demonstrated that (white) desires to “rescue,” “help” or “develop” (non-white) “others” are not only utilizing a colonial archive (“civilizing mission”) but they are also inherently linked to racialized, classed and gendered processes of Othering, thereby constituting the “good savior subject” against the “poor victim.” Chandra Mohanty states in her famous piece “Under Western Eyes” (1984) that the interest of people from the Global North in the “fate” of people from the Third World has often more to do with themselves and their own (political) situation than with an interest in really changing the socio-economic circumstances producing

poverty and exclusion. Postcolonial and critical development scholars have therefore raised the question of whether desires for development, for practices of humanitarian benevolence, are rather a profound desire for the self, a desire for an “occidentalist self-ascertainment” (Dietze 2010; Brunner 2016). Kapoor (2008, 89), pointing to the “satisfaction” that derives “from offering help and winning symbolic returns” such as “world recognition and the acknowledgment and (presumed) gratitude of the recipient,” argues that giving aid has “auto-orgasmic” and “aphrodisiac” implications.

Particularly when it comes to questions of promoting a climate of homotolerance through development aid, LGBTIQ rights and “knowledge” of how to institutionalize them are presented as generous “political gift[s]” (Ahmed 2009). The (re-)production of the West (or in this case EUrope) as a site of (sexual) “modernity,” “progress,” “development,” and civilizational exceptionalism is therefore predicted to uphold and sustain a specific “occidentalist” (EUropean, white) identity, which needs the “other” to constitute her/himself as “developed” (or “liberated”) and holding the “authority” and “expertise” to develop “less-free” “others” (Baaz 2005; Kapoor 2008). Uma Kothari (2005; 2006a) has critically examined how the project and idea of development is therefore also sustained by a constant reproduction of racialized epistemic inequalities between those who “know” how and in which direction development “should” go and those who do not possess such expertise. Those who have successfully “achieved” homotolerance have not only the “authority” but also the “burden” of “saving” “brown queers from brown homophobes” or “activating” “brown queers to save brown queers from brown homophobes” (Brunner 2016). This “burden” again satisfies and empowers a certain (white) authority and “developed” queer identity.

Although transnational queer solidarity and *real* interest in fighting homo- and transphobia globally are the driving motives of many LGBTIQ activists and organizations engaged with development, they still present their transnational engagements somehow as a conflict free intervention taking place “in non-racialized spaces and outside of

racialized histories” (Kothari 2006b, 1). Even though most LGBTIQ organizations involved in development cooperation explicitly raise questions with regard to local sexual cultures and the importance of “consulting” with local organizations, development is rendered as a “shared” and “unquestioned” goal, ignoring the fact that EUropean (donor) organizations still dictate the conditions and distribution of aid and other resources. LGBTIQ inclusive development agendas are therefore widely infused by a notion of what Sarah Bracke (2012) called “homonostalgia” – the erasure of racialized and colonial genealogies and hierarchies, and the reality of white privilege when it comes the question of *why* some countries and regions have the (financial, economic, and/or epistemic) power to “give” and “develop” while others do not.

One may thus argue that a queer desire for development may be read as a profound queer desire for oneself. Queer engagements in development must therefore also be interpreted as a “self-legitimizing” endeavor, because they secure their own position by helping EUropean states to defend LGBTIQ rights in order to reinforce their “exceptional” position against “homophobic” states as “global threats” (Weber 2016). The development work of LGBTIQ organizations therefore serves “as one powerful justification for their continued existence” (Gosine 2015, 5). Rao (2014) and Jin Haritaworn et al. (2008) therefore argue that the participation of EUropean LGBTIQs in (transnational) racist projects may also help them to achieve a certain “inclusion” and “acceptance” in nationalist projects. An orientation toward those, who “need” development, is a moment of “queer regeneration,” it renders their political engagement as somehow meaningful and still important in a time of proclaimed “liberation” and “homotolerance” (Haritaworn 2015, 143). LGBTIQ organizations, which are engaged in development thus benefit from such complicities economically and symbolically, earning what Gabriele Dietze (2009) and Claudia Brunner (2016) call an “occidental dividend.” The performance of and compliance with homotransnationalist development politics may therefore be analyzed as a new homonormative condition of inclusion.



## **Spaces of Failure and the (Im-)possibilities of Decolonizing Development**

A critical engagement with racialized and homotransnationalist implications of queer “desires” for development does not necessarily imply a call for a complete end to aid and (queer) development cooperation in general, because that would first and foremost deny the agency of those (queer) subjects who are already utilizing, appropriating and reshaping the aid business through their critical engagements and subversive interventions (Lind ed. 2010; Abbas 2012). And more importantly, as for instance Hakima Abbas (2012) points out for the African context, questions regarding the use of aid “must be debated, discussed, and decided by the African Queer movement [...] [by] those directly affected.” Thus, it is highly important to notice that although LGBTIQ inclusive development agendas do have extremely problematic implications and effects concerning the reproduction of racialized and (neo-)colonial images of the “sexual other” while upholding a European sexual exceptionalism, they can still provide important resources for queer projects in the Global South and East thereby supporting counter-hegemonic, even decolonial, practices (Currier 2010; Lind 2010).

Sexual and gender dissidents and LGBTIQ identified activists from the Global South and East have started to strategically engage with the “requirements” and “languages” of development institutions, most literally by seeking aid for the projects and initiatives, thereby also challenging (asymmetrical) logics of development and providing intersectional critiques of Western normativities from the start (Currier 2010; Lind 2010; “Statement on British ‘Aid Cut’ Threats” 2011). Aid and resources provided through development cooperation are thus not only used to fight against discriminating state policies and different forms and manifestations of violence against queers, but are also offering the opportunity to participate in transnational debates that counter and challenge (neo-)colonial policies and rhetoric in these fields, including development politics (Lind 2010; Abbas 2012). For instance, in 2011, shortly after Prime Minister David Cameron was considering making aid conditional upon adherence to human rights for LGBTIs,

several social justice, human rights and LGBTIQ organizations and activists (of which a number receive resources, although very limited, from development institutions) released a statement opposing aid conditionalities and donor sanctions in order to “support” LGBTIQs in the Global South:

The imposition of donor sanctions [...] does not, in and of itself, result in the improved protection of the rights of LGBTI people. Donor sanctions are by their nature coercive and reinforce the disproportionate power dynamics between donor countries and recipients. They are often 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. [...] The history of colonialism and sexuality cannot be overlooked when seeking solutions to this issue. The colonial legacy of the British Empire in the form of laws that criminalize same-sex continues to serve as the legal foundation for the persecution of LGBTI people throughout the Commonwealth. In seeking solutions to the multi-faceted violations facing LGBTI people across Africa, old approaches and ways of engaging our continent have to be stopped. (“Statement on British ‘Aid Cut’ Threats” 2011)

By pointing to the colonial histories of homo- and transphobia as well as the problematic neocolonial implications of aid conditionalities, they demand a decolonization of the project of (LGBTIQ inclusive) development itself. These critiques are paralleled by the insistence, that this “new” awareness for LGBTIQ rights in the international development agenda is being characterized by a marginalization of questions of economic justice, the effects of neoliberal structural adjustment policies and the functioning of the global capitalist economy. Or in the words of Abbas (2012):

The language of human rights has been lauded by liberal western democrats who assume that they must coerce Africa into understanding notions of equality and justice without acknowledging the devastat-

ing effects of globalized neo-liberal economic policies [...]. Aid [...] is therefore not sufficient to redress the conditions that maintain the levels of poverty in Africa despite the continent being one of the richest in raw materials. Rather the aid and debt crisis is a reflection of the historical and present relationship that Africa and the rest of the world maintain. In short, it is about power – a relationship based largely on dependence and exploitation. (Abbas 2012)

The effort to bring LGBTIQ rights into development therefore has, according to Amy Lind (2010, 7), necessarily to be seen as “a paradoxical process from the start, one that is imbued with hegemonic as well as oppositional forms of knowledge, consciousness and experience.” By interpreting development as an ambivalent project I follow the critique of Bhabha (1994), who argues that a postcolonial perspective which is mainly focused on “hegemonic” (or in his words “colonial”) discourses and practices, ignores spaces of “resistance,” “hybridity” and “mimicry,” which poses the risk of reproducing and upholding the idea of an unchallenged (neo-)colonial hegemony. The desire for a “reformed, recognizable Other” that should take part in development projects produces multiple “slippages” and “ruptures” that open up spaces of “ironic compromise[s]” and practices of queer mimicry (Bhabha 1994, 86). In particular, when a universalized queer subject position is being claimed and performed *by* those who are being constructed as “the others” (those who receive aid) this also implies a critical intervention, an “immanent threat” to racialized and orientalized ideas of “cultural difference” and processes of sexual othering (Bhabha 1994, 86). Notions of difference are themselves destabilized, because of the claim that to *really* be “queer” is to become “the same.” The menace of this enactment of queer mimicry therefore points to the ambivalence of developmental project, since the appropriation of queerness, which is being perceived as located in the “west,” therefore disrupts its authority.

By pointing to decolonizing and subversive practices and possibilities on the part of “recipients,” I am, of course, not suggesting that everything should be left unchanged or unchallenged on the donors’ side. On

the contrary, I think it is worthwhile to engage critically with the field of development from a race-critical, queer, and postcolonial perspective. Donor policies and donor institutions should be radically infiltrated, queered, and decolonized. Drawing on Kapoor's (2004, 640) engagement with Spivak's work, I am arguing for an active involvement in discussions on queering development and a "negotiation from within" trying to transform conditions of impossibility into possibility. This would also include, however, an engagement with (our/my/EUropeans) queer "desires for development," the effects and implications of rescue narratives for the legitimization of (LGBTIQ inclusive) development agendas, as well as critical engagement with the genealogy of racial privileges, complicities and colonial (dis)continuities in and beyond the field of development and LGBTIQ politics. Hence, I am ending with the suggestion to ground a queer/ing of development frameworks and politics on a more radical, anti-linear, anti-teleological, intersectional and probably also "anti-modern sexual politics"<sup>15</sup> (Petzen 2012), which radically breaks with and dismantles (white) "homonostalgia" (Bracke 2012; Haritaworn 2015), precisely because racialized and civilizational imaginaries of modernity and sexual modernization are constantly actualized when LGBTIQ rights are being integrated into development frameworks.

## Conclusion

By examining the wider political and historical context of LGBTIQ inclusive development agendas I have demonstrated their entanglement with homo(trans)nationalist policies and their promotion of new versions of a EUropean sexual exceptionalism. I have further illustrated how the growing attention for LGBTIQ rights is being legitimized and shaped by established developmental paradigms and modernization frameworks. The idea of a unilinear sexual development thereby establishes a new "queer/ed" development framework, which I termed "homodevelopmentalism." I have analyzed how LGBTIQ-inclusive development strategies are therefore at risk of participating in the production of a new temporal-spatial divide between a "sexually

developed" EUrope/West, which has to carry the "burden" to "develop" and "modernize" the sexually "backward," the "homophobic rest." I have further discussed how queer "desires for development" are not only shaped by "homonostalgic" postures but in what way they might also be read as a desire for an "occidental self-ascertainment." However, by interpreting development as a highly paradoxical process that is imbued with hegemonic as well as oppositional and subversive practices, spaces of "failure," "mimicry," and "slippages," I concluded this article by showing how (LGBTIQ inclusive) development agendas can be utilized for decolonial and counter-hegemonies purposes. The task, rather than rejecting queer development strategies, is therefore, as Spivak (1993, 284) puts it, to "engage in a persistent critique of what one cannot not want."

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## NOTES

1. By taking my point of departure in critical queer and postcolonial theory (Butler 1990; Cruz-Malavé and Manalansan IV 2002; Mohanty 1994; Stoler 1989; McClintock 1995), I am aware that terms like queer or the abbreviation LGBTIQ have been, and still are, debated, contested and challenged from very different angles and viewpoints and that these terms are particularly problematic when being used beyond the Euro-American context (Massad 2007). When I use the term "LGBTIQ" I am therefore not assuming that LGBTIQs are a group that can be discerned "everywhere" but that the terminology is related to specific historical, political or institutional contexts and movements that are operating with these

“definitions” while at the same time fabricating (new) social identifications based on these terms.

2. I use the term “EUropean” to indicate a predominant position of the European Union (EU) in defining the notion of Europe and what is being considered as “European.”
3. The majority of development organizations and public policy bodies use the abbreviation LGBTI or LGBT. I have added the Q (which stands for *queer* and *questioning*) in order to point to the normative implications of these terms as well as to a wide range of dissident sexualities and genders, which do not identify as LGBTIs.
4. Such as, for instance, the groundbreaking resolution 17/19 on “Human Rights, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity,” adopted by the UN Human Rights Council in 2011.
5. For instance, in October 2016 Paris’ streets were filled with thousands of demonstrators (the media speaks of more than 100,000 participants) protesting against same-sex marriage, which was legalized in France in 2013. The protesters were said to be conglomerate between Roman Catholics, conservative nationalists, and supporters of rights-wing organizations (BBC News 2013).
6. COC originally stood for *Cultuur en Ontspanningscentrum* [Center for Culture and Leisure] and was founded 1946 in Amsterdam. The COC is one of the oldest and still existing LGB(TIQ) organizations in EUrope. The organization has also special consultative status with the UN.
7. The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Rights [*Riksförbundet för homosexuella, bisexuella, transpersoners och queeras rättigheter*, formerly *Riksförbundet för sexuellt likaberättigande*] is the most prominent and oldest Swedish LGBTIQ organizations. The RFSL was founded in 1950 and it gained consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 2007.
8. The Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany [*Lesben- und Schwulenverband in Deutschland*] was originally founded as the Gay Men’s Federation in Germany (SVD) in the East German city of Leipzig in 1990. In 1999, the organization expanded to become the LSVD, which aims to represent the issues facing lesbians as well as gay men. In 2007, the LSVD erected the Hirschfeld-Eddy Foundation, which intends to fight and lobby for the human rights of LGBTIQ people globally. LSVD also holds a consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).
9. LGBT Danmark, the Danish National Organization for Gay Men, Lesbians, Bisexuals and Transgender persons. LGBT Danmark, formerly known as *Kredsen af 1948* [Circle of 1948], *Forbundet af 1948* and *Landsforeningen for Bøsser og Lesbiske*, was founded in 1948 and is therefore also one of the oldest European LGBTIQ organizations. LGBT Danmark holds a consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

10. The ILGA world map: [http://old.ilga.org/Statehomophobia/ILGA\\_World-Map\\_2015\\_ENG.pdf](http://old.ilga.org/Statehomophobia/ILGA_World-Map_2015_ENG.pdf).
11. In 2010 Sida provided around \$5 million for the promotion of LGBTIQ rights in the Global South/East, Hivos around \$3.5 million.
12. My argument here is not, thereby also troubling the work of Joseph Massad (2007), that there *is* necessarily such a unilinear movement from “behavior” to “identity” in aid receiving countries, nor that such a process can solely be interpreted as an “imperial” effect. Such an interpretation would completely deny the agency of LGBTIQs and other sexual and gender dissidents, and their power to appropriate and rework such identity categories actively (Rao 2015).
13. LGBT Denmark, for instance, published a handbook “Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Development Cooperation,” available online: <https://goo.gl/9gBsx1>.
14. See, for instance, the platform <http://lgbtdevworkers.com>.
15. Due to the increase of racialized constructions of “sexual backwardness,” particularly with regard to Muslim populations in Europe, queer theorist Jennifer Petzen (2012) calls for an “anti-modern sexual politics” critiquing the fact that racialized notions of sexuality and gender are particularly reproduced and maintained through new discourses of being “modern” and “European.”