



ACACIA-LGBTQI+ and Street-level bureaucrats: Assessing Motives, Violence and Possibilities for Collective Advocacy in East Africa

Principal Investigator:

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International partners:

NGO Lesbian, Intersex and Other Extensions (LITE in Malawi), the Forum for Africa Studies at Uppsala University (Sten Hagberg), and the Department of Development Studies at Makerere University, Uganda (Dr. Emmanuël Benon Turinawe).

National laws in Sub-Saharan Africa do not tell us what is happening on the ground. In most Sub-Saharan African countries, formal laws threaten long prison terms for LGBTQI+ persons, but in practice this rarely happens. **How local authorities make informal decisions is a major factor in the well-being of stigmatized groups around the world.** Surprisingly, little is known about how and why these actors interact at the street level.

ACACIA examines the everyday interactions between LGBTQI+ persons and local authorities in three cities in East Africa (Dar es Salaam, Tanzania; Kampala, Uganda; and Lilongwe, Malawi). We ask: 1) How, when and why do local-level authorities diverge from formal rules when dealing with NCGSs, and

what are the motives and logics behind these practices (including violence and predation)? Using David Graeber's (2012) theory that bureaucrats use violence to avoid having to interpret those demanding alternate conceptual schemas, we ask: 2) what are the reasons why local bureaucrats are not willing to undertake interpretation of NCGSs? Is violence part of the interpretation and if so, how to theorize this violence? 3) In what ways do the practices of local authorities impact NCGSs' capacities for self-advocacy?

Our data, 450 qualitative interviews, will be used to answer these questions. We will also use visually innovative methods to elicit narratives and explanations. Sara Ahmed's (2006) phenomenological concept of 'the stop' will be used as a *methodological lens* for data collection. Stopping devices ask 'Who are you? Why are you here? What are you doing?' and reshape the city as spaces where NCGS bodies do not belong.

This project contributes to the existing research knowledge on this topic by refining my theoretical concept of *adaptation to multivocal public authority*. Multiple demands are now made on police, security guards and local government officials to 'filter out'

perceived threats to local communities and at the same time adapt to new public authorities. The effects of this adjustment on stigmatized groups have not been studied.

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has much experience in struggling for LGBTQI+ rights. We will interview its leaders about their experiences and observe their day-to-day operations, and invite them to talk to LGBTQI+ advocacy groups in Finland. With these partners we will map out how to go forward with this topic after the project has ended.

The project will give clear policy recommendations.

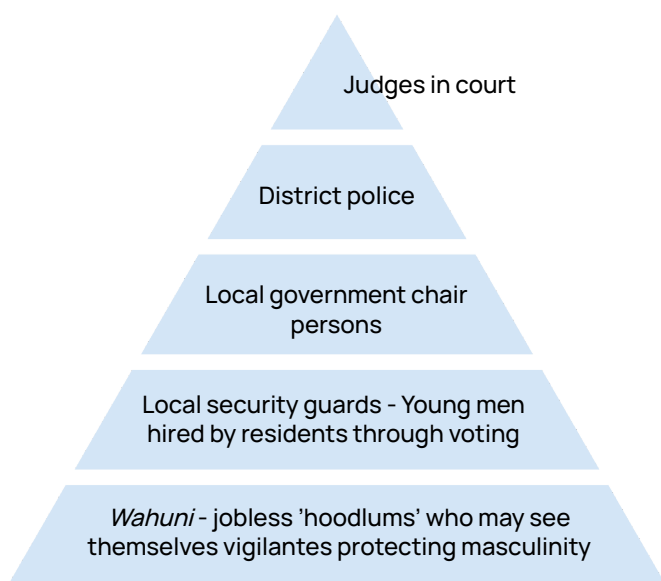


Figure 1. Security actors in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania who deal with non-conforming genders and genders and sexual ranked by authority and social status.



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