

under review

Negotiating Postcolonial Solidarities: Conflicts around knowledge production on sexual minorities, repression & resistance

Abstract

Principles and practices of solidarity, linking metropolitan and marginal areas of former empires, increasingly diverge between postcolonial ideals and neo-colonial realities. A liability of queer critiques, even more problematic than futile efforts at censorship of books, is the effective obstruction of research initiatives necessary to obtain the empirical data to effectively build solidarity projects with communities of sexual minorities still at risk from repression and lack of infrastructure for security and health. In this vacuum, celebrity figures, based in former imperial centres such as London, who barely understand the political economies because they are rarely engaged in knowledge production, can undermine locally directed research and activism. Solidarity initiatives for sexual minorities at risk, spanning metropolitan and under-developed margins of former European empires, are increasingly being monitored, assessed, and critiqued. In turn, intelligence around solidarity projects is becoming more politicised extending to questions of research design, collection methods, accuracy, dissemination, confidentiality, and security. This essay explores modes of transnational knowledge production spanning three junctions in the former British Empire: theorizing in my home region of Vancouver with relatively unorganized protocols for queer critique but relaxed libel laws; exploring the limitations of global solidarity projects for sexual minorities that are based in London with UK legacies of nongovernmental organisation 'neo-colonialism' and the risk of formidable liabilities from libel laws that can contain debate; and a public beach in Dubai where male guest workers, many of whom are constructing new forms of intimacies and solidarity, continue to be at risk of persecution for both homosexuality and labour organising.

Keywords: sexual minorities, transnational solidarities, research methods, environmental planning, Dubai

There are many liabilities of queer critiques of the *realpolitik* of the disparities that often are still reproduced across coalitions of gay male, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities. One of the least of the obstacles to critiques, and related discussion, is book censorship and disruption in distribution of hardcopy. But even threats of attack can stimulate interest in and dissemination of digital version of respective works. A far more problematic peril of queer critiques is the lack of support for research and, in particular, the collection of empirical data

on a timely basis. In this essay, I explore the liabilities and resulting perils of queer critiques in terms of the difficulties of obtaining political and fiscal support for interdisciplinary research that could provide the basis for more effective forms of solidarity for sexual minorities at risk in the least democratic and most repressive countries that were once on the margins of the European empires.

How much do those of us in the wealthier portions of the former European empires know about the lives of sexual minorities in what were, just a half century ago, the imperial margins? How can those of us in privileged centres, such as London and Vancouver, build new kinds of solidarity with today's populations of sexual minorities, in what were the imperial margins, that are still suffering repression and effective denial of basic services for their gender identifications and sexualities? What are the roles of research, information, critique, and censorship in constructing and undermining transnational transactions and organisational relationships, that are terms here as forms of 'solidarity', that acknowledge and engage around persistent inequities? In an era a rapid and proliferating forms of information exchange, what kinds of responsibilities do activist and other nongovernmental organisations bear for requiring and supporting higher levels of more accurate field research and intelligence? What kinds of responsibilities do researchers bear for standards of accuracy, protection of informants, and debate around inequities where some respective relationships and flows could be argued to be maintaining dependencies and be 'neo-colonial'?

How can conflicts over research and publications be dissected in the context of discourses on incomplete phases of decolonisation¹? Why is there so much more international media attention allocated to the more obvious examples of state-sanctioned homophobia, in poor and formally colonised countries such as the many in Africa, in contrast to the growing achievements of local movements and organisations in more affluent but still repressive countries such as the United Arab Emirates that was formerly a British Protectorate? Does over-reliance on the accounts of individuals, at the expense of collection of empirical data, undermine knowledge production for sexual minorities at risk indirectly contributing to erasures of critiques? And are these renewed erasures part of a new phase of neo-colonial relationships as overall funding is rising for nongovernmental organisations for interventions in the name of sexual minorities at risk on the former imperial margins?

In the following sections, I begin with an rhetorical argument, that is currently more of a postulate, and that it is premature to try to prove in this essay. A large part of today's increasing liabilities of critique, around sexual minorities, is rooted in contests between postcolonial and neo-colonial modes of transnational solidarity that even in Britain and Canada have direct implications for the funding and direction of research. The problem statement that follows explores the need for research designs that could more directly support the formation of new kinds of solidarities, extending from privileged centres such as London and Vancouver, to communities of migrant workers, with individuals who sometimes enjoy Dubai's Open Beach at Jumeirah and who at various points may engage in homosexuality and labour activism while, under the continued threat of harassment, prosecution, incarceration, and deportation. I argue that the Open Beach is a strategic space, for males who engage in homosexuality and labour organising in the East of the Middle East, where "counterhegemonic consciousness is elaborated" (Scott 1990, 200). So as well as being part of an infrastructure of resistance, the shifting practices of male physical expression, interaction, and network formation, while appearing apolitical, constitute a significant juncture in what

¹ I use the term "decolonisation" (Ingram 2000) as an ongoing process where there are broad and unresolved legal issues from the colonial period have left persistent inequities experienced by the formerly colonised.

Scott termed "infrapolitics." The central argument of this essay is that effective research methods have yet to be developed and tested to provide the information to conceive of the kinds of solidarity necessary to significantly support such infrapolitics for the remaining populations sexual minorities in the world at risk from the repression of both the state and capital (as in private employers under globalisation). I then argue that a prerequisite for research designs that are necessary envision site-specific, postcolonial forms of solidarity is to revisit shifting and partially institutionalised notions of homophobia during and after the British Empire and to acknowledge contemporary contests between the views of homophobia as rooted in European colonialism and imperialism and those believing intolerance of sexual minorities to be rooted in non-Western cultures. I then argue that these divergent notions of the root of homophobia, imperial versus non-Western (that are often also civilisational and orientalist in nature), inform two equally disparate forms of solidarity that I term, rhetorically, the postcolonial and the neo-colonial. The underlying argument for this essay in this journal issue is that a more formidable set of liabilities of queer critique than book censorship is from the defensive neo-colonial apparatuses with necessities for accumulation of prestige and celebrity, along with donations, in order to mask low levels of actual support and flows of resources to locally directed initiatives. Effective research invariably exposes neo-colonial attitudes and unequal material relationships. Based on these arguments, I outline some principles and best practices for knowledge production to lay bases for conceiving of more effective forms of transnational solidarity for sexual minorities. These ideals contrast markedly with many metropolitan approaches to trying to understand dynamics of communities of sexual minorities at risk as well as those of local researchers in the Middle East who remain heavily constrained by outdated paradigms as well as repressive government apparatus. I then revisit Dubai's Open Beach at Jumeirah and explore how such re-imagined research agendas, designs, methods and human subjects safeguards could be applied. I conclude by arguing that while these populations continue to be under severe threat, there still is no consensus on the research practices and data necessary to lay the basis for forging the kinds of postcolonial solidarities where activists and researchers, from more privileged metropolitan centres such as London and Vancouver, could make negligible contributions to local initiatives.

Introduction:

Queer Liabilities of Critique as Part of Contests Between Modes of Transnational Solidarity

The 2009 withdrawal of *Out of Place: Silences in Queerness / Raciality* (Miyake and Kuntsman 2008) sparked international discussion though the details and legal issues appear to have remained confidential. The loss of some of the paper copies *Out of Place* is a symptom of the aftermath of empire and contests around divergent notions of solidarity, and respective knowledge, with populations of sexual minorities on the margins of globalisation who are still very much at risk. Vulnerability to liabilities for queer critiques are, in the large part, the result of an underlying crisis of substantiation of information for claims around sexual minorities exacerbated by a contemporary re-privileging of some groups, subjectivities, voices², and lines of scholarly inquiry. This crisis of substantiation undermines the intelligence necessary to develop effective solidarity goals, alliances, and operations and is brought on by a scholarly tendency, in work on sexual minorities, to over-rely on and inflate

² In perhaps a more extreme and divisive example of these re-privileging processes, Puar noted "the rise of a global gay right wing anchored in Europe and attaining credibility very pointedly through Islamophobic rhetoric" (Puar 2007, xiv & 17 – 22). Another example of contemporary re-privileging recently outlined by Leap where he described a growing conflation in popular media of gay men with white middle-class males (Leap 2010).

the value of subjective accounts and a more fundamental avoidance of collection of empirical data and the recombining of a wide array of primary and secondary data sets in manners that are sufficiently interdisciplinary for the conditions warranting assessment. And the fluidity of the recombination of the modes of research necessary go far beyond Haraway's early conception of "situated knowledges" (Haraway 1988) and anticipating surprises.

Today, there is often insufficient information being produced by scholars to build effective and genuine postcolonial solidarities around sexual minorities at risk in the former imperial margins. This vacuum of data and theory is rendering neo-colonial relationships less contestable. Obstacles to making queer critiques, which extend to vulnerability of researchers and even theoreticians to loss of prestige, attack, censorship and reprisals, along with the erasure of local activist "voices and political agency" (Long 1989, 119), result from a diverse set of obfuscation processes. Containment of discussions on disparities between groups of sexual minorities, especially between former imperial centres and margins, can be understood in the context of multiple and often contradictory processes of decolonisation and neo-colonialism. We are also seeing the renewal of the metropolitan propensity of speaking for the formerly colonised subject or 'Other'. In response, this essay centres on three arguments.

1. Solidarity activities, including resistance to repression around gender and sexual dissidence, continue to take place within the constraints of overlapping envelopes of decolonisation, neo-colonialism, and , and forms of re-colonisation by privileged groups through globalisation of markets and consumer culture. Within this murky dynamic, that is often conflated as 'globalisation', ***divergent notions of solidarity and political support have emerged.***
2. Just as there are diverging notions of solidarity for sexual minorities, knowledge production is being revisited. ***Contestation of the interlocking roles of disclosure, celebrity, distraction, dissemination, censorship, and erasure are becoming increasingly important for certain actors engaged in solidarity work for new phases of decolonisation.***
3. ***Claims by metropolitan activists of having improved the lives of sexual minorities in poor and repressive countries, beyond contribution of specific resources to locally sustained programmes, are fallacious and unsubstantiated.*** What social gains that have been achieved are the result of local coalitions with the contributions of outside NGOs, activists, and funding having secondary and often negligible benefits.

Solidarity constitutes sets of verifiable transactions between particular communities. Transfers of resources to build social infrastructure and influence public policy on the margins of former European empires can be difficult to identify and quantify. In order to explore ways to construct a framework to evaluate impacts of these globalizing solidarities, I trace the recombination and mutation of new forms of 'Empire' (Hardt and Negri 2000, 133, 137 - 138) under globalisation and what is often labelled as "dependency." I also revisit the notion of "environmental planning" (Debord 1994, 119 – 127) as a theoretical framework for creating social sites of "dialogue" (Debord 1994, 127) for community development strategies that could include solidarity. And central to this project is finding new forms of reterritorialisation (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 112 & 133) for sexual minorities experiencing repression in order to better direct new solidarity initiatives. Articulated in the early 1960s as France's colonial period was ending badly, Debordian environmental planning is worth revisiting because of the fluidity implied in the relationships between political infrastructure, knowledge production and transformation of the biophysical and built environments as part of development including for communities of sexual minorities at risk.

In exploring knowledge production for a postcolonial trajectory, I theorise the limits of the use of individual disclosure, and subjectivities in particular, for guiding initiatives that confront structural inequities. Two decades ago, social theorists discovered the cognitive map, especially through a decade of potential uses tentatively articulated by Frederic Jameson (1984), that subsequently became part of understanding conflicts between social groups and sectors across communities and regions (Ingram 1995). For much of the more progressive queer research from those times, maps were grafted on to sketches of social spaces and communities via "telling sexual stories" (Plummer 1995). As I illustrate in the following section, the stakes are too high, for too many populations at risk, for more site-specific, interdisciplinary, and supple forms of combination of research designs to not be developed.

Problem Statement:

Constructing New Solidarities Around Dubai's Open Beach

Dubai's Open Beach, at the north end of Jumeirah and just south of the main port, is a strategic site for many. In contrast to most of Dubai's municipal beaches, this strip does not require an entrance fee and is less regulated. For many of the city's thousands of guest workers the Open Beach is one of the few points in the city allowing access to a beach and where swimming is possible. For the more affluent, the Open Beach is a strategic location directly adjacent to an elite residential and shopping area and near Dubai's financial district at the north end of Sheikh Zayed Road only a kilometre inland. In contrast, the Satwa neighbourhood, between those two enclaves of exceptional wealth, is a former working-class Arab neighbourhood now largely populated by South Asian service workers some of whom have overstayed their work visas and right to live in the United Arab Emirates. Along the Open Beach, males often expose their legs and torsos. And while there is a subculture of foreign women in swimsuits, most females on the beach stay largely covered. On Saturdays, the one day each week when many workers are free from long shifts, the beach is particularly crowded. And in the half of the year when daytime temperatures are oppressive, the use of this public space shifts to the dusk and night including considerable erotic contact between males in the shallow waters off the beach. But in such a homosocial environment of male guest workers in Dubai, with most being married or engaged back in their home countries, there are plenty of other opportunities for sexual contact. While intimacy with other men is clearly what many crave in coming to the Open Beach, comradery and peer support, including sharing information for surviving and resisting difficult working conditions, getting paid, participating in the growing number of collective actions, have been more important to many individuals.

As a university teacher and researcher employed in the region and whose responsibilities have extended to supervising postgraduate field work in Jumeirah and Satwa, I have observed a confluence of networks based on friendships, home areas, languages, cultures, and understated desires. While the local and governments have been remarkably restrained in the suppression of consensual homosexuality with few interventions at the Open Beach, within the United Arab Emirates there have been arrests at same-sex wedding in the neighbouring sheikhdom of Abu Dhabi with its more conservative politic and legal system. This avoidance of homosexuality by the state has contrasted markedly with increased policing of heterosexuals: both of foreigners getting drunk and cavorting in public and women and men engaging in public sex in the parking garages of shopping malls.

The strategic role of the Open Beach for both labour solidarity, and as what may be the most openly homoerotic and intercultural public site in the Middle East, compelled me to present a paper in San Francisco at a meeting on sexuality and space (Ingram 2007). The subsequent discussion at that meeting was striking in how few participants had interest in scholarship for

forging new forms of solidarity, either for sexual minorities or labour activists, in a time of intensifying neoliberalism and globalisation. One United Kingdom cultural geographer even expressed an aversion for research that could be used for international solidarity work by invoking critiques of certain London-based campaigners. Later in 2007, Joseph Massad published *Desiring Arabs*, a pioneering discussion of the West's fascination with and misreading of Middle Eastern homosexualities. *Desiring Arabs* has huge implications. However, the book is problematic in its avoidance of empirical data and its conflation of works of literature with diverse sexual cultures and a wide array of political economies. While too quickly dismissing the so-called "human rights industry" (Massad 2007, 41), the author began to provide a framework for considering neo-colonial forms of solidarity as part of an ongoing, Western "civilisational project" based (Massad 2007, 50 & 77 - 94). The author outlined how orientalist and neo-colonial forms of intervention, in response to state-sanctioned intolerance of increasingly visible and Westernised sexual minorities, have been used to justify a broader resurgence of "Western interventionist trends" (Massad 2007, 160). Is the situation with homosexual males who enjoy Dubai's Open Beach consistent with Massad's analysis, as globalisation of Western notions of gay identities as a form of re-colonisation, or some kind of postcolonial exception? To answer this important question, a decade of new field work would be necessary.

Homophobia after the British Empire

Over the centuries, there have been different kinds of hostilities directed at a range of sexual practices and identities; over small and large areas and over short and long durations. But the modern period and today's fading moment of queer coalition embody paradoxical combinations of accommodation with and challenges to residual systems of homophobia bound tightly to imperial projects nearly all of which, except perhaps for those of China and perhaps Iran and Indonesia, originated in Europe.³ Homophobia and empire have been further entwined through capitalist economic expansion and the formation of certain kinds of state apparatus that have facilitated, sometimes through violence, the accumulation of wealth that, no so long ago, flowed back, directly, to imperial centres. Until recently, notions of both the state and the lack of entitlement of sexual minorities for social programmes have been intertwined in the context of negligible and weak infrastructure. For neo-colonial notions of solidarity, the focus on state violence directed at a small number of individuals has been the only basis for engaging in local populations at risk. By contrast, a postcolonial notion of social risk warranting solidarity sees the localisation and re-inscription of homophobia agendas within the context of marginal states and failed infrastructure. In these political economies, the roles of nongovernmental organisations are increasingly problematic such as in Uganda in 2009 where a campaign of homophobia coincided with intensified competition between evangelical and Anglican churches.

Modern homophobia began was part of an imperial project for bolstering a totalising system of hegemony. Today, violence towards and marginalisation of sexual minorities is embedded in a far less cohesive series of local and national projects. For roughly a century and a half, the homophobic and racialisation projects were constructed as part of total hegemonies. And while other European powers engaged in the regulation and privileging of many aspects sexuality and race, today's residual contours of homophobia, especially in former colonies and protectorates of Britain, was a specific project of Whitehall. London's extensive engagement

³ One instance of both the reach and localisation of imperial homophobia was the impact of the Oscar Wilde trials on the case law constructed in faraway British Columbia. From 1907 to 1928, case law for the criminalisation of consensual homosexuality between adults was established where at least of the individuals charged were South Asian (Ingram 2003).

in construction of state, in particular court, apparatus for regulating homosexuality and dissident assertions of gender contrasted, for example, with France's adventures in world domination. In recent decades, the older imperial systems of homophobia, racialisation, and cultural domination have been teased apart.

What remains of homophobia as a global system is an increasingly disparate set of local projects linked to transnational agendas such as the expansion of certain conservative Christian enterprises (Kopya 2009). The localisation of homophobia has also meant the outsourcing of conflict, away from political economies with functioning human rights protections, to actors on the former margins of empire, often eager for overseas funding, such as has been seen recently in persecutions in East Africa. Without fully confronting homophobia as part of broader system of imperial and post-imperial inequities, queer theory⁴, as the dominant paradigm for understanding gender and sexual dissidence over the last two decades, has made itself vulnerable to new forms of neo-colonialism. And where there has been an over-reliance on cultural theory⁵, for making sense of inequities and an avoidance of material relationships, there is a new myopia that undermines solidarity activities such as where Scott Long noted, "I see in gay and lesbian activism as it has emerged in the last decades an increasing turn toward claims rooted in the symbolic order and the cultural field, not in negotiations over tangible goods" (Long 2009, 120). And as is explored in the following section, the avoidance of assessment of material transactions, in solidarity projects, in favour of symbolism and media coverage often mask neo-colonial relationships that maintain dependencies and risk.

Divergent Solidarities: Information Flows in Postcolonial & Neo-colonial Alliances

"Reality is not dialectical, colonialism is."
Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000, 128)

Just as the older gay ghettos are being re-examined and re-theorised to challenge gender, ethnic, and cultural hierarchies, transnational solidarity operations can be viewed more critically as constellations of inevitably unequal exchange. The interests in participating in various transnational struggles can never be identical. In this sense, the term 'solidarities' is more appropriate as a more fluid and tentative sets of exchanges in response to the same episode of injustice or example of inequality. The concept of solidarities, as a framework for cooperation for supporting locally directed initiatives by sexual minorities on the former imperial margins, is predicated on an exchange of funds, information, expertise, and other resources involving various geographical and social locations, and political positions.

The now celebrated essay on the misuse of incomplete sets of information on executions in Iran, "Unbearable Witness" (Long 2009), defined a divergence in knowledge production between the factual and the "symbolic." Long sketched a troubling set of truncated flows of information exacerbated by lack of adequate translation and knowledge of political economy combined with Islamophobia. He sketched another even more pernicious kind of neo-colonial

⁴ *Epistemology of the Closet* (Sedgwick 1991) was the most influential methodological work of early queer theory and while pioneering in its confirming homoeroticism Sedgwick's framework de-emphasized contexts of empire, race, class (Shapiro 2005, 78), and gender while often exaggerating the roles of desire.

information flow: speaking for the abject Other. In another example, Peter Tatchell effectively spoke for two Malawians in mid-2010, of whom it appears he had never met and nor with whom he had communicated directly, stating,

'It is a tragedy that homophobic threats and abuse have forced this couple apart. They were deeply in love.' (Mapondera and Smith 2010)

How much could a London-based personality know about the relationship of Steven Monjeza and Tiwonge Chimbalanga when he did not know them personally? Did Tatchell really sufficient confirmation about the feelings of each individual, and for that matter their permission to act as their representative, in order to make public statements about intimacies that made each of those men further vulnerable? The various news reports, to which several Tatchell contributed, are inconsistent and inconclusive. Mapondera and Smith (2010) wrote that Tatchell "was in communication with the couple for more than four months via prison visitors he arranged" which suggests only being privy to very limited forms of expression about 'love'. An article by the same reporters three weeks earlier cites information from Tatchell (Smith and Mapondera 2010) suggesting an even more facile relationship as did a report from local activist George Thindra (Mapondera and Smith 2010). For many cultures, speaking publicly about the feelings of others, especially love, would be considered invasive, perhaps even libellous. So why would London-based figures have the freedom to speak for others living on a former imperial margin, while not even feeling obliged to convey exact statements from those individuals, and claim some kind of authority, prestige (Shapiro 2004, 80), and basis for requesting further funding for donors? And the logic of subsequently grafting on to Tatchell's speaking for Others the calling for "African liberation" (Tatchell 2010), vaguely nationalist rhetoric that has been well used to mask neo-colonial projects, remains murky except as part of a florescence of post-imperial narcissism. So in this rhetorically charged knowledge vacuum about the sexual minorities of one of the poorest and most isolated country on Earth, what are some kinds of practical approaches for collection of information that could be used guide the better identification of ways to support populations at risk and perhaps even desiring qualified forms of support?

Some Principles & Best Practices for Knowledge Production Around Transnational Solidarity For Sexual Minorities

In shifting back from Africa to the Middle East, the obstacles to researchers engaged around groups at risk at Jumeirah's Open Beach illustrates how under intensification of market globalisation, effectively catapulting some arcane and despotic political economies such as those of the United Arab Emirates into international prominence. Here we see an increasing duality around research on populations at risk on the former imperial margins: there is the "paradigm maintenance" (Broad 2006) of larger, 'self-researching' organizations. The following points represent modest beginnings in conceiving of research designs that could support new and more effective kinds of solidarity for sexual minorities at risk on the margins of former empires.

1. Knowledge for effective transnational solidarities with sexual minorities requires nuanced understandings of populations, stakeholders, cultures, local histories and political economies – as well as individual accounts.
2. Subjective accounts provide more knowledge when contextualized within communities, environments, and political economies.
3. Interdisciplinary research approaches are necessary for identifying locally defined priorities for solidarities. Knowledge production for such activist scholarship, filtered

through just one discipline such as cultural geography or even sociology or history, is shaped by particular constraints of funding and frameworks of academic prestige, with associated processes of censorship and erasure.

4. Research on sexual minorities is inherently trans-disciplinary and warrants construction of teams representing a range of expertise.
5. The need for discretion and for not irritating repressive apparatus is no excuse for not supporting research and the careful dissemination of results. In the case of Dubai's Open Beach, the state is well aware that same-sex intimacies go on in or involve public places. But any sensationalism and contortion of facts to fit Western prisms of sexual identity, might rightly be considered misrepresentation and malicious and could engender, for good reason, a negative response from the state.
6. Individuals who insist on the freedom of speaking for the feelings of individuals publicly while working for, and even attempting to speak for, less privileged Others have an obligation to be self-reflexive and to correct damage wrought through truth and reconciliation frameworks.
7. There is always more than one local organisation that can guide or jointly manage both local research and the use of the information that is produced.

How can these principles be applied for foreign and local researchers, in cooperation with activists, in countries, such as the United Arab Emirates, with large migrant populations and well functioning apparatuses for censorship, repression, incarceration, and deportation? The fluidity of the communities that enjoy the Open Beach, that defies many sets of stable categories, provide clues.

Revisiting Dubai's Open Beach: Research Agendas, Methods & Safeguards

The situation around the Open Beach represents less a crisis than an opportunity to partner with local non-governmental organisations and to establish dialogues with local government agencies, some of which are already supporting progressive social programmes that in turn warrant acknowledgement. While the country as a whole maintains huge disparities in treatment of groups such as women, workers, and migrants, the prism of human rights abuses may be less effective for constructing transnational coalitions for improving social conditions than working towards infrastructure and programmes in the context of nascent, locally based proposals for collective bargaining.

In developing research agendas about and for the groups that enjoy, and sometimes depend, on the communities that intersect at Dubai's Open Beach, questions remain around identifying motive, gain, and bias. Similarly, new strategies of disclosure to the stakeholders who support, engage with, and should benefit are necessary. The misuse of self-disclosure, as a means of distraction from, and a poor substitute for, both stakeholder analysis and self-reflexivity around personal agendas and biases, is increasingly less acceptable and prone to legal examination. In volatile constellations of urban environments such as in Dubai, higher degrees of precision around social conditions and environments are necessary than we see in most queer scholarship. Many of the individuals who use the Open Beach have limited commands of Arabic and English. Far more care in research with a wide range of languages will be necessary in order to avert more of the negligence and misinformation than we have seen with some Anglocentric solidarity research (Long 2009, 123 – 127).

How can we gather facts to forge new transnational solidarities that, while being vigilant around repression, engage with local organisations and governments on their own terms and in ways that respect sovereignties and jurisdictions? In the Annex to the "Toolkit to Promote and Protect the Enjoyment of all Human Rights by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) People" (Working Party on Human Rights, Council of the European Union 2010) is a rudimentary checklist for conducting background research largely, but not entirely, focused on questions of human rights abuses. While insufficient and bureaucratic, the guidelines effectively require more research than what we have seen conducted in many campaigns against persecution against sexual minorities. As requirements for conducting research, around the specificities of both repression and broader social inequality are further institutionalized, such checklists can be lengthened with greater focus on risk factors, such as health, and higher standards for information collection.

Conclusions:

Research & Information Necessary for Forging Postcolonial Solidarities

The effectiveness of transnational solidarity efforts, for a range of populations at risk including sexual minorities, is in large part a result of flows of information and the overall quality of knowledge production that in turn are engendering increased debate. Both claims of transnational solidarity and responsibilities in related knowledge production will increasingly be examined in legal arenas. In this essay, I have mapped a frontier for design of research methods as the intelligence for more postcolonial solidarities that could more effectively challenge inequities and continued repression experienced by sexual minorities on the margins of the former European empires. I have substantiated my first argument, that there we are seeing divergent notions of solidarity and political support for sexual minorities at risk on the former imperial margins, through describing an instance of the anemic engagement of scholars of sexual minorities and the postcolonial around the groups at risk at Dubai's Open Beach at Jumeirah as well as through contemporary literature describing intensifying debates around a number of contentious solidarity initiatives. My second argument, of the diverging approaches to knowledge production for sexual minorities on the former imperial margins, corresponding to postcolonial and neo-colonial material and administrative relationships around projects involving sexual minorities, was substantiated by number of recent essays, notably that by Scott Long, revisiting UK and USA-based initiatives along with my ruminations on the words of some of the associated figures. As for my third argument, that claims by metropolitan activists of having improved the lives of sexual minorities on the former imperial margins are unsubstantiated, I have illustrated how little verifiable data has been collected as part of solidarity project and how the focus on media-driven campaigns has often distracted from almost cultivate deficiencies in knowledge production.

Insufficient support for empirical research on sexual minorities at risk on the former imperial margins, and for data collection directed primarily by and for those communities, is hardly a 'liability'. But today's unravelling of 'market-based' notions of sexual minorities, and risk factors, suggests that global commodity exchanges will increasingly shift to services over goods that begin to have similarities to the ideals of solidarity so crucial to the dismantling of the European empires. So in this sense, there are more liabilities and liabilities, in the long-term, in obstructing queer critiques of neo-colonial forms of solidarity. In the shorter-term however, critiques can threaten and engender wrath in centres such as London in a nongovernmental sector rooted in Christian "missionary politics" (Puar 2010) based on the conflation of service to the colonised with imperial and neo-colonial enrichment.

Transnational solidarity operations can constitute forms of community development in the context of competing and globalizing populations, organisations, and markets. Engagement in the kinds of collaborative research necessary to support populations at risk from homophobia

and broader inequities requires monitoring, assessment and critique. Missing from this essay, due to lack of space, has been a discussion of a range of emerging ethical obligations of researchers: to collect accurate and timely information extending from subjectivities to health, political economy, environment, and risk; modernise human subject research practices around confidentiality, location and security of data especially for contexts such as the United Arab Emirates with draconian security apparatuses, and forms of moral interdisciplinarity that compel researchers to cooperate beyond their academic homes.

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Gordon Brent Ingram is a scholar and practitioner of environmental planning and received his doctorate from the University of California, Berkeley. Much of his work has involved the

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