Queering Security in Haiti: The Security Discourse of Local Advocacy Groups on Sexual and Gender Minorities

Lisa Voigt
Heidelberg University

Abstract
In recent years, sexual and gender minorities gained visibility through international activism. In Haiti, sexual and gender minorities became increasingly politicized and organized themselves in advocacy groups since the 2010 earthquake. Based on the concept of Queer Security studies, this article explores queer activism and the security of queer people in Haiti since 2010. It depicts the security discourse of local advocacy groups through interviews with representatives from Kouraj and Femmes en Action Contre la Stigmatisation et la Discrimination Sexuelle (FACSDIS). In a second step, the study compares the security depictions of the advocacy groups to the security discourse of elected officials in newspaper articles. The findings suggest that Haitian advocacy groups perceive an improvement in the security of sexual and gender minorities since their foundation. However, sexual and gender minorities experience elevated levels of insecurity that vary due to regional differences, economic inequalities and double marginalization. While the Haitian government has denounced attacks based on sexual orientation or gender identity, most elected officials portray homosexuality as a foreign threat and do not consider the experiences of gender and sexual minorities.

Keywords: Queer Security Studies, Advocacy Groups, Security Discourse, NGO-State Relations, Haiti

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to lisa.voigt@hotmail.de
Introduction

The growing global activism of LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) groups and organizations has led to an expansion of LGBT rights. At the same time, it evoked a rise in homophobia and polarization. This increased visibility and politicization means that “to be queer – that is, to be non-heterosexual and/or gender nonconforming – is to have an experience of in/security that is profoundly shaped by one’s sexual orientation and gender identity and expression” (Wilkinson 2017, 106). In Latin America and the Caribbean, there are many variances in the treatment of gender and sexual minorities. In Haiti, sexual and gender minorities have become increasingly visible in recent years. After the 2010 earthquake, their insecurity increased due to a rise in targeted violence. At the same time, international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) started supporting non-heterosexual and non-cisgender people, and activists formed local advocacy groups. Even though feminist authors have long practiced Queer Haitian studies by analyzing Vodou and art (Chapman, Durban-Albrecht, and LaMothe 2017, 146), social science research on persons deviating from heteronormative standards is still rare and mostly focuses on HIV and men who have sex with men (Rahill et al. 2019, 691-692). This study aims to begin filling this gap by focusing on local advocacy organizations for sexual and gender minorities and their accounts on security.

Classical security concepts have focused on the state. Even more critical approaches have often ignored the role of sexual orientation and gender identity in questions of (in)security. However,

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1 The term “voodoo” has various meanings. It can refer to the “the complex of indigenous African religions practiced in West Africa” (McGee 2012, 233), but also to the imagined religion popularized by colonial travel writers and still persistent in popular culture. Haitian Vodou are the African diasporic religious practices that evolved in Haiti between the 17th and 19th century (McGee 2012).
in recent years, Queer Security studies emerged as a new concept which addresses the security of sexual and gender minorities. These studies not only challenge classical security studies but also diverge from the rights framework and pre-defined identities of LGBT approaches. The article applies the concept of Queer Security to the case of Haiti by analyzing the question of how Haitian advocacy organizations depict the security needs of sexual and gender minorities in comparison to the official discourse since 2010. To answer this question, a discourse analysis compares the accounts of local advocacy groups with the official security discourse. In this study, telephone interviews with Haitian advocacy groups constitute the data sources for the security discourse of queer Haitians. This allowed me to generate comparable data on the depictions of security by gender and sexual minorities. To compare this data with the official security discourse, I used the statements of elected officials mentioning sexual and gender minorities in 21 media articles. This provided the opportunity to analyze how officials depict the role of queer Haitians in the security discourse. The empirical analysis shows that advocacy groups perceive security as important for their work. Contrary to political decision-makers who mostly focus on the construction of homosexuality as an abstract threat to Haitian traditional values and norms, the advocacy organizations depict specific insecurities of sexual and gender minorities, including aspects of physical safety, legal equality, and socio-economic security.

The article proceeds as follows: in the first part, I introduce the concept of Queer Security studies and discuss its limits and possibilities for further development from a post-colonial perspective. I then present the methodology of the study. The empirical analysis begins with an overview of queer activism and (in)security since the 2010 earthquake, proceeds with a comparison of the security discourse of local advocacy groups along with elected officials and concludes with a historical and political contextualization. Lastly, the conclusion sums up the results of the analysis and points out starting points for further research.
Queering security: the security perception of sexual and gender minorities

In the 1980s, feminist scholars were among the first to criticize the state-centric concept of security in mainstream security studies. They steered attention to the insecurity of subjects in gendered hierarchies and the connected understandings of gender in security studies. However, feminist security approaches at times ignored “gender or sexual identity outside a binary” as well as non-Western contexts (Bosia 2018, 94; Khalid 2018, 37-38).

In recent years, new approaches with a focus on sexual and gender minorities have emerged as a challenge to “[…] assumptions about heterosexuality as the default sexuality and kinship norm (“heteronormativity”)’ and the twin premise ‘of two “opposite” and complementary gender positions (“cissexism”)’” (Richter-Montpetit 2017, 224) in International Relations scholarship in general and security studies as a subfield. This critique includes the demonstration of theoretical gaps as well as the empirical exclusion of sexual and gender minorities in security policies. For instance, Jamie J. Hagen (2016) has shown the lack of attention on violence against sexual and gender minorities and the binary construction of gender in the “Women, Peace and Security” framework of the United Nations.

Within this strand of research, Richter-Montpetit (2017) distinguishes between Queer and LGBT approaches with a focus on LGBT as an empirical category and the implementation of LGBT rights within a citizenship framework (222-223). Queer theory takes on a more radical theoretical approach. It “draws from the field of literary criticism and post-structuralist philosophy” (Hagen 2016, 314). The term “queer” has its origins as an insult against sexual and gender minorities. It was reclaimed by the Gay Liberation movement following the 1969 Stonewall riots that started when patrons of a bar in New York’s Christopher Street fought back against a police raid (Ungar 2000, 74). In the 1980s, the activist group “Queer Nation” used “queer” as a performative critical term expressing nonconformity. In academia, Queer theory was developed as a critical concept in the
1990s. Today, “queer” constitutes an umbrella term, including different nonnormative genders and sexualities without understanding them as stable categories (González and Nordgren 2020; Richter-Montpetit 2017, 224-225). Consequently, Queer Security functions as a critical lens in opposition to state-centric security concepts. It “[…] challenges both notions of security and understandings of what sexual and gender minorities are and what they experience” (Bosia 2018, 102).

Academic Queer theory has often been described as elitist, academic and unsuitable for activism because of its focus on language and ignorance of material factors (Haritaworn 2008, 164). However, according to Richter-Montpetit (2017), Queer approaches are not limited to poststructuralism and can produce rich empirical work (223). The “Queer of Colour critique” by especially Black feminist theorists is particularly relevant. It highlighted the focus of Queer theory on a White, Western subject and stressed the importance of intersectionality (González / Nordgren 2020). Similarly, in security studies, post-colonial approaches have criticized the universal application of Western knowledge systems and interests. They questioned the dominant analytical categories in the field, especially the Eurocentric focus on the state as a research subject and related normative ideas on “progress” (Khalid 2018, 39-40). Instead, research in post-colonial times needs to consider “[…] unequal power relations in an era that goes beyond the world of colonialism but that has been (and continues to be) decisively shaped by the logic of coloniality” (Hönke / Müller 2012, 385). The consideration of power relations is important to understand empirical findings but also to avoid their reproduction in the research: “Often even well-meaning representations of the “South” repeat the power relations of colonialism through different, “modern,” yet insidious modes of violence and exploitation” (Stern 2006, 190).

Gender and sexuality as categories are connected to and intersect with (post-) colonial power relations. Different constructions of gender, same-sex practices and expressions have “[…] existed in all times and places […]” (Durban-Albrecht 2015, 22-23). Through
Western colonialism, the gender binary and constructions of a dichotomy between hetero- and homosexuality were exported from Europe to other parts of the world. After decolonization, gendered and racialized discourses and the resulting construction of Others served to legitimize imperialist security policies. An example are Western interventions based on the concept of “failed states” (Khalid 2018, 41-42). As a consequence, Queer Security studies must take an intersectional approach and take the local context, dominant discourses as well as power relations into account (Bosia 2018, 97; Hagen 2016, 316). Amongst other things, intersectionality means incorporating trans* perspectives which are often neglected (Richter-Montpetit 2017, 236). With the help of Queer of Colour approaches, sexuality and gender can be conceptualized “[…] as part of wider relations of power and normalization” (Richter-Montpetit 2017, 224). This includes the study’s terminology: While “LGBT” is a well-known umbrella term including gender as well as sexual minorities, it is inherently connected to a Western rights paradigm (Hagen 2016, 315). Although it also derives from activism and scholarship in the West, the term “Queer” is wider and encompasses different types of non-normativity (Durban-Albrecht 2015, 179; Chapman, Durban-Albrecht, and LaMothe 2017, 148). It is not merely an empirical category and “[…] provides a reminder that race, nationality, class, ethnicity, and gender jostle in different and myriad ways against, within, and in coordination with sexuality” (González and Nordgren 2020). In addition to “Queer,” I use the umbrella term of sexual and gender minorities “[…] that encompasses lesbian, gay, two-spirit, bisexual, and transgender populations as well as those whose sexual orientation, gender identity and expressions, or reproductive development varies from traditional, societal, cultural, or physiological norms” (National Institutes of Health [NIH] Sexual and Gender Minority Research Office 2019, 1 in Rahill et al. 2019, 691). Thus, I use Queer Security studies as an intersectional concept which focuses on the lived (in) security experiences of sexual and gender minorities (Bosia 2018, 94).
In her study of Mayan women’s security perceptions in Guatemala, Stern (2006) finds that: “Mayan women’s experience of insecurity was drastically different from insecurity as it was conceived by the security elite in Guatemala, as well as by most theorists of security in IR” (175). Consequently, I argue that the security discourse of elected officials does not take these lived experiences into account. Thus, the constructed security discourse is likely to either ignore sexual and gender minorities or present them as a threat. On the contrary, as advocates for sexual and gender minorities, representatives of local NGOs aim to improve the situation of queer Haitians and are often even part of the group they are advocating for. Thus, they should concentrate on existing insecurities and needs of queer Haitians. In accordance with a post-colonial approach and Stern’s finding that “[…] responses seemed to be particularly coded within an already established discourse” (180), my conjecture is that global discourses and international actors influence the security discourse of both sides. Thus, I test the following hypotheses in the empirical analysis:

$H_1$: The security discourse of official authorities and local advocacy groups is likely to diverge.

$H_2$: Local advocacy groups are more likely to focus on the insecurities of queer Haitians.

$H_3$: International narratives on LGBT rights are likely to influence the discourse on the security of queer people in Haiti.

**Discourse analysis as a method of “uncovering” security depictions**

Discourse on security has become a central object of analysis in recent years. The Copenhagen and Paris School of Critical Security studies have developed securitization theory to analyze when issues become a part of the security agenda. Additionally, feminist, postcolonial and poststructuralist approaches focus on the role of power hierarchies in security discourse. From a critical viewpoint, discourses are constitutive of identities and the power relations between them (Peoples and Vaughn-Williams 2015, 6). According to Foucault, they
constitute regimes of truth: “discourse is understood as a series of practices, representations and interpretations through which different regimes of truth […] are reproduced” (Peoples and Vaughn-Williams 2015, 79). Critical approaches like the Copenhagen school only focus on speech acts by political elites (Khalid 2018, 38; Stern 2006, 181). My intention in this article is to analyze the security discourse from the perspective of gender and sexual minorities themselves. According to Hönke and Müller, bottom-up research with a focus on local agency and discourse- or practice-oriented methods are suitable for a postcolonial research agenda (Hönke and Müller 2012, 392 ff.). Due to the impossibility for me to establish contacts with sexual and gender minorities during field research, I focus on members of local non-state groups as advocates for queer Haitians.

According to Hansen (2006), researchers must make three choices when conducting a discourse analysis: “first, whether one or multiple Selves are examined; second, whether one makes a study of one particular moment or a longer historical development; and third, whether the analysis is based on one event or multiple events” (66). In my empirical analysis, I take the “Self” of advocacy groups for gender and sexual minorities as a starting point and contrast it with the constructed security discourse by elected officials. This comparison can be viewed as a discursive encounter (Hansen 2006, 68). Hansen contends that it is neither possible to analyze all relevant data, nor is there a quantitative standard for the number of texts that should be collected. Moreover, language knowledge and access to material often put constraints on data selection (Hansen 2006, 65, 69, 77). Most importantly, the selected material must correspond with one’s research interest.

My focus lies on how sexual and gender minorities depict their security. Thus, it is essential to include discourse from their perspective. As Hansen recommends, I focused on primary texts for the discourse analysis and added secondary texts for contextualization (Hansen 2006, 74). I conducted interviews with Haitian advocacy organizations which provide a more accurate representation of security
perceptions than political documents (Stern 2006, 181). I follow Stern’s (2006) suggestion of exploring the definitions of security from the interviewees’ perspective (180). However, it is important to note that interviews are always influenced by the interaction between the interviewer and interviewee. Haritaworn (2008) proposes integrating the “anti-racist feminist principle of positionality” into queer methodologies which “[…] urges us to reflect on where we stand, to define our speaking positions and how they relate to others, especially those whom we claim speak for” (163). Researchers must consider that the participant’s own interpretations compete with the researcher’s in an unequal power relationship (Haritaworn 2008, 163). Thus, the phrasing of questions and the dynamics during the conversation have an impact on what the interviewee says. It should also be acknowledged that statements from representatives of organizations are always shaped by their identity and professional role (Stern 2006, 187). For a Queer methodology, positionality plays an important role for every step of the research agenda: “How we arrive at our sample, what questions we ask of our participants, how they respond to these questions, which parts of our co-produced dialogue we extract, and how we edit and interpret them, are at least as much a function of our own positionings as those of our interviewees” (Haritaworn 2008, 165).

I conducted semi-structured telephone interviews with the president of the organization Kouraj and a coordinator of the organization FACSDIS.² This type of interview allowed me to generate comparable data while avoiding the restrictions on interviewees’ responses in structured interviews. In preparation for the interviews, I constructed an interview guideline and a question guide with open-ended questions on the topics of the work of advocacy groups, the security of sexual and gender minorities and counter-responses to

² The interview sample was limited to Haitian advocacy organizations explicitly fostered towards sexual and gender minorities that have an international online presence and that I could contact via e-mail.
insecurities. To compare the discourse of the advocacy groups with the dominant security discourse of the state and government, I collected statements from political decision-makers in 21 news articles and one scientific journal article. The articles were gathered from the online websites of Haiti-based news journals. Due to my inability to read or speak Creole, the interviews as well as the selected news articles are in French. All translations into English are by the author unless otherwise specified.

Empirical analysis: Haitian security discourse on sexual and gender minorities

Activism and insecurity of sexual and gender minorities since 2010

The perception of sexual and gender minorities as a political category is a recent phenomenon in Haiti. While the first gay rights protest in the country took place in November 2008, the 2010 earthquake can be marked as a turning point (Durban-Albrecht 2015, 27; Migraine-George 2014, 21). The natural disaster which occurred on 12th January 2010 killed 200,000 to 300,000 people in Haiti. It caused a humanitarian crisis as well as renewed political and economic instability after the democratic elections in 2007 (Hauge, Doucet, and Gilles 2015, 260; Kolbe 2020, 47). Consequently, a wave of international governmental and nongovernmental organizations arrived in the country. The Security Council of the United Nations enlarged the peace mission “Mission des Nations Unies pour la stabilisation en Haïti” (MINUSTAH) and “Mission des Nations Unies pour l’appui à la justice en Haïti” (MINUSJUTH). However, the

3 The interview and questions guideline can be found in the appendix.
4 To sample the articles, I searched the terms “homosexualité,” “LGBT,” “M communauté,” and “gay” in Haitian news journals with French articles that were available through an open access online archive. With the exception of the scientific article, all texts were published in Haiti 24, Le Nouvelliste, Haiti en Marche, Alter Presse, Haiti Press Network or Haiti Progres.
international intervention was later deemed as unsuccessful and unsustainable, instead contributing to the militarization and exploitation of Haiti (Rahill et al. 2019, 692).

The earthquake sparked a wave of prejudice and violence against sexual and gender minorities who were, along with other minorities like Vodou practitioners, scapegoated and blamed for having brought God’s punishment to the country. Related to the increased presence of international NGOs, conservative Christian organizations, and missionaries from Europe and the USA played an active role in festering this belief. The scapegoating “[…] heightened sexual and gender minorities’ biopsychosocial vulnerability in the aftermath of the earthquake” (Rahill et al. 2019, 692). They were subject to harassment and stigmatization, especially in the camps for internally displaced persons (Durban-Albrecht 2015, 188; Migraine-George 2014, 9). Without means of protection, persons perceived as gender or sexual minorities were “[…] attacked with knives, machetes, cement blocks, rocks, or sticks in more than 47 separate incidents” (Nolan 2016, 2).

However, international NGOs advocating for LGBT rights began explicitly offering support to sexual and gender minorities. While some of those organizations had started working in the country shortly prior to the earthquake, the natural disaster functioned as an accelerator. NGOs like the “International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission” (IGLHRC) and the “International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association” formed partnerships with local actors and funded projects. The accompanying global rights discourse had a major impact on the politicization of sexual and gender minorities as the term “LGBT” gained prominence (Durban-Albrecht 2015, 20, 165, 167, 172). Azor (2017) describes this interaction after 2010 as follows: “There was a massive mobilization of the community because we were in a post-quake context. There were a lot of foreign organizations here. You sensed more money circulating as a result. More Haitians were rubbing elbows with foreigners. This friction led us to be more opened to the foreigners’ worlds” (249).
Correspondingly, reports by international NGOs such as the 2012 report filed to the “United Nations Human Rights Committee” were the main source of knowledge about gender and sexual minorities (Durban-Albrecht 2015, 184, 204-205). The foundation of the first local advocacy organizations contributed to an increased visibility of nonnormative genders and sexualities (Migraine-George 2014, 8). On the “International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia” (IDAHOBIT) in 2012, the “Congrès National de la Population LGBT” took place in Port-au-Prince. The conference formally united different queer Haitian advocacy groups like FACSDIS and Kouraj. It marked the emergence of a LGBT movement which aimed to counter the increased hostility against gender and sexual minorities and incitement to discrimination from neo-evangelical groups (Durban-Albrecht 2015, 21, 201; Migraine-George 2014, 9).

Several events in the following years illustrate the increased politicization of sexual and gender minorities after 2010. In 2013, the “Haitian Coalition of Religious and Moral Organizations” (Coalition Haïtienne des organisations religieuses et morales) organized an anti-gay protest with thousands of participants in Port-au-Prince and Jacmel. The event transpired in the context of international discourse on the legalization of same-sex marriage. Protestors used homophobic slurs, some attacking journalists and bystanders who they perceived to be homosexual. The next day, the murders of two assumedly homosexual men in La Saline were reported as connected to the march (Durban-Albrecht 2015, 214, 219; Nolan 2016, 2; Rochefort 2013). Furthermore, the office of Kouraj, Haiti’s most well-known advocacy group for gender and sexual minorities, was vandalized, and the organization received several anonymous threats and insults (Haiti en Marche 2013). Moreover, in 2016, the cultural center “Fondasyon Konesans Ak Libètè (FOKAL)” in Port-au-Prince cancelled the planned Afro-Caribbean queer arts and film festival “MassiMadi” due to threats from politicians and fundamentalists. Shortly afterwards, hurricane Matthew caused another upsurge in the scapegoating of sexual and gender minorities. A year later, the Senate proposed an
amendment to the Civil Code putting same-sex marriages under penalty and fining the “promotion of homosexuality.” This law was not approved by the Chamber of Deputies. Lastly, in 2020, President Moïse amended the Penal Code via presidential decree. Amongst other things, the newly added anti-discrimination clauses based on sexual orientation and gender were highly contested (Chapman, Durban-Albrecht, and LaMothe 2017: 145; Duvil 2020; Rahill et al. 2019, 692).

Security perceptions of advocacy groups

The foundation of Kouraj and FACSDIS is part of the described politicization of sexual and gender minorities since 2010. Alongside smaller organizations that were founded in recent years and SERovie which has advocated for gay men with HIV/AIDS since the 1990s, they represent two of the biggest local advocacy groups for sexual and gender minorities (Durban-Albrecht 2015, 199). Queer activists founded Kouraj as a grassroots organization in 2012. It was based on the self-help structure “Ami-Ami” which evolved as a reaction to homophobic discourse after the 2010 earthquake. Referring to the Haitian revolution, the organization declares societal change and the inclusion of queer issues in Haiti’s public discourse as its goal. Moreover, the group aims to bring together sexual and gender minorities, the so-called “communauté M” (“M community”) (Durban-Albrecht 2015, 200, 208, 211; Chapman, Durban-Albrecht, and LaMothe 2017, 149; Migraine-George 2014, 18, 21-23; Nolan 2016, 3). According to the president of the organization, Kouraj’s main activities are community mobilization, advocacy, and educational projects on human rights as well as gender and sexuality. It has multiple local and international partnerships. “Femme en Action contre la Stigmatisation et la Discrimination Sexuelle” (FACSDIS) is a women’s

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5 The term “M community” reclaims different words which are usually used as insults against different nonnormative gender and sexual minorities. In general, there is a multitude of terms for sexual and gender minorities in Creole, French, and English in the country (Durban-Albrecht 2015, 19).
advocacy organization which was founded in 2010 to work with sexual and gender minorities. FACSDIS evolved from within SEROvie with the goal to create a point of contact for marginalized, abused and especially lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LBT) women (Durban-Albrecht 2015, 170). The organization plans projects and activities to promote equal rights and to empower women to know and assert their rights.

Both the interviewee from Kouraj and the representative of FACSDIS use the LGBT term in their responses and emphasize their international partnerships in the beginning of the interviews. A reason for this could be my role as a European student. Thus, it must be considered that the interviewees’ positions and my position in relation to each other have a significant impact on the content of the conversations. Another example of an emphasis on international partnerships is a 2018 interview of Kouraj’s deceased president Charlot Jeudy with MINUSJUTH on a joined project in which he declared the importance of international partners for the implementation of international treaties and the protection of LGBT rights (Jeudy 2018). When asked about the importance of security for their work, the interviewed representatives from Kouraj and FACSDIS first refer to security on a state level as it is guaranteed by the constitution. They report a strong presence of international partners and security agents in the country. Moreover, they describe the security situation as “very insecure” and even “catastrophic,” a circumstance aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic at the time of the interview as well as the ongoing political crisis. In 2018, rising fuel prices led to violent anti-regime protests. Although the parliament’s mandate expired in 2019, the scheduled elections were cancelled because of civil unrest (Kolbe 2020, 50-52). In 2020, FACSDIS published a video on the IDAHOBIT in which the organization calls attention to rising discrimination and domestic violence during the pandemic (FACSDIS
Overall, the representatives perceive security as relevant for their groups' work. More specifically, the security of sexual and gender minorities is depicted as exceedingly difficult and signified by a high level of insecurity. The representative of FACSDIS even explains that “there is no security.” Concerning the development in recent years, both interviewees say that the conditions are still difficult for gender and sexual minorities. For example, the aftermath of the hurricane and the cancellation of the “MassiMadi” festival in 2016 increased the stigmatization of sexual and gender minorities. Especially the festival incited a lot of public debate and media coverage (Panos Caribbean 2017, 15). Moreover, the 2017 Senate’s decision against same-sex marriages and the 2020 decree on the Penal Code were connected to an upsurge of discriminatory rhetoric. However, the security situation is depicted as very dynamic. Furthermore, the interviewees emphasize that there have been visible advancements related to the work of advocacy organizations and the community. They state that “reality is not the same.” Even though “the state has become more homophobic, in general, there is much more tolerance, acceptance and respect.”

While physical safety or the absence of violence is not the only aspect of the interviewees’ understandings of security, it is a vital factor and remains a constant concern. One interviewee defines security as “a life without violence and threats independently from sexual orientation and gender identity.” In a 2013 interview, FACSDIS’ founder and

6 “Je crois que la sécurité des minorités sexuelles est quelque chose d’importance, oui” (Interview with president of the advocacy group Kouraj, Heidelberg/Port-au-Prince, 17 December 2020).

7 “La réalité n’est pas la même aujourd’hui […] C’est à dire, […] l’état est devenu plus homophobe mais il y a beaucoup plus de tolérance” (Interview with president of the advocacy group Kouraj, Heidelberg/Port-au-Prince, 17 December 2020).

8 “C’est à dire en quelque sorte de vivre sans violence […] et on ne sera pas menacé pour la sexualité de jur ce qu’on a” (Interview with president of the advocacy group Kouraj, Heidelberg/Port-au-Prince, 17 December 2020).
activist Marjorie Lafontant said that there is terrible violence, such as beatings, against sexual and gender minorities who stay amongst themselves to avoid danger in public (Lafontant 2013). The representatives report specific incidences of violence. An example is the disappearance of a homosexual man who was found dead after three months. The interviewees also talk about the death of Charlot Jeudy in November 2019 which was a big loss for the community.\textsuperscript{9} Jeudy’s family, friends and Kouraj as well as other human rights organizations still demand an investigation into the circumstances of his death (Saintus 2019 b). Those accounts can be contextualized with many more reports from various sources on attacks and murders of (perceived) sexual and gender minorities. A 2016 report by local and international NGOs to the United Nations finds that there is extreme hostility, violence, and discrimination against people because of their (perceived) non-normative gender or sexual identity in the country. In 2014, there were at least four murders of LGBT people and many attacks against gatherings of queer people (FACSDIS et al. 2016, 1-8). In 2018, Rahill et al. conducted focus group interviews with gender-nonconforming and trans* persons in Cité Soleil, a district in Port-au-Prince. In the focus group sessions, the participants described their experiences with stigma and ostracism, harassment, frequent violence, wide-spread sexualized violence, and robbery (Rahill et al. 2019, 691-699). Moreover, a news report from January 2019 reports the murder of a homosexual man and Vodou practitioner (“vadouisant”) who was killed on 28\textsuperscript{th} December 2018. According to Charlot Jeudy, the police found the man still alive but did not call for medical assistance (Saintus 2019 a). Impunity remains a problem in redressing abuse against sexual and gender minorities. For instance, in a speech on the 2013 IDAHOBIT, Jeudy recalls a complaint because of an uninvestigated attack on the basis of the victim’s gender identity (Jeudy 2013).

\textsuperscript{9}“On a perdu un membre de la communauté” (Interview with a coordinator of the advocacy group FACSDIS, Heidelberg/Port-au-Prince, 17 December 2020).
Alongside with prejudice against sexual and gender minorities, a reason for impunity is the stagnation of the judicial reform process due to budgetary constraints and the lack of will on the part of political elites to change the status quo (Baranyi 2019, 12-13). From the view of the organizations’ representatives, the specific insecurity of sexual and gender minorities is connected to the fight against discrimination and the implementation of equal rights for the community. As a minority that already does not possess the same legal rights and experiences stigmatization, insecurity adds another layer of vulnerability. The origins of this discrimination and stigmatization stem from the heteronormative society as well as the general taboo concerning sexuality in the country. Even among heterosexual groups, sexuality is rarely openly discussed. Thus, being an equal “citizen of Haiti” is included in the positive definition of security.

Another important aspect is socio-economic security. According to the coordinator of FACSDIS, the realization of fundamental rights, inter alia social security, is the most pressing issue in Haiti. According to the World Bank, Haiti is the poorest country in the Caribbean and ranks in place 170 out of 189 in the 2020 Human Development Index. The 2010 earthquake led to a 120 % decimation of the gross domestic product (GDP) and the 2016 hurricane led to a 32 % decrease in the country’s GDP (World Bank 2021). Especially the South of Haiti was destroyed by the hurricane. While FACSDIS does not have any big projects in the region yet, Kouraj reports being present in most parts of the country, including the South. The economy stabilized after the 2016 hurricane. Yet, fiscal and political instability since mid-2018 caused further economic deterioration and

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10 “[…] déjà nous sommes une communauté vulnérable […] et nous sommes minoritaires et on a trop de vulnérabilité par rapport […] au constitution”; “[…] nous sommes dans une culture très hétéronormée, des femmes et des personnes LGBT, ce n’est pas une chose qui est facile” (Interview with president of the advocacy group Kouraj, Heidelberg/Port-au-Prince, 17 December 2020).
the GDP declined by 1.7 % in 2019 and 3.8 % in 2020. Poverty currently affects about 60 % of the population, mostly in rural areas (World Bank 2021). For gender and sexual minorities, insecurity stemming from cis-heteronormativity is often exacerbated by socio-economic insecurity: “[…] being perceived as a “Masisi” can lead to additional socio-economic vulnerability” (Migraine-George 2014, 10). For example, queer young Haitians who are thrown out by their parents often must resort to informal work or prostitution as there is lack of state support (Jeudy 2018).

In Haiti, there is also a high level of socio-economic inequality. In 2014, the country had a GINI coefficient of 0.61 (Baranyi 2019, 13). The elevated levels of inequality impact sexual and gender minorities in a specific way. The general population views homosexuality as a “deviance of the rich” which is more acceptable if it concerns artists, White people or Vodou practitioners (Panos Caribbean 2017, 9). The participants in the focus groups organized by Rahill et al. (2019) were residents of Cité Soleil, one of the poorest districts of Port-au-Prince. They described difficulties seeking health care, for example in HIV testing centers, and they were often purposefully excluded from social support like food programs for their perceived gender identity or sexuality (695-697, 699). Added to this, they reported feeling alienated from local LGBT organizations due to differences in socio-economic status and a perceived “lack of leadership, solidarity and advocacy in their community” (Rahill et al. 2019, 701). This shows that while advocacy groups seek to mobilize collective claims and create solidarity, there are variances in the security situation. The ability to be openly queer depends on additional factors such as class, skin color and religion (Migraine-George 2014, 10). However, due to my outsider status as a White European and the privileges connected to this, I cannot re-tell the perspectives of queer Haitians in their daily lives. The

11 The term is a derogatory word used for (perceived) male persons who deviate from gender or sexual norms and “present feminine”. Advocacy groups such as Kouraj use the term in their activism to reclaim it.
representatives of Kouraj and FACSDIS explain that discrimination against different groups is very prevalent and not limited to sexual and gender minorities. Thus, certain groups are affected by “double-marginalization.” A concrete example is the repression of LBT women who experience discrimination through homo- and transphobia in conjunction with misogyny, especially in the private sphere.

Strategies to counter and prevent insecurities are depicted as part of the advocacy groups’ work of creating societal change and the implementation of rights through advocacy, partnerships, and community mobilization. More specifically, FACSDIS organizes workshops and projects to inform (queer) women about their security situation and their rights. Furthermore, FACSDIS seeks to help women who experience discrimination in their private lives, at the police station or in court (FACSDIS 2020). Kouraj is also a point of contact for people needing judicial accompaniment, for example if they have experienced an attack. The representative of Kouraj says that their mission is to advocate a common fight for tolerance and respect, putting the “members of the community at the heart of the debate.”

In the last few years, the advocacy work of the organizations has increased the media visibility of sexual and gender minorities (Panos Caribbean 2017, 11). Similarly, the representative of FACSDIS declares capacity-building and creating bonds between people as a future goal to combat insecurity. However, she also criticizes the present lack of coordination between diverse groups and proposes a greater synergy.

Regarding other important actors, both interviewees refer to official authorities, other civil society organizations, international

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12 “C’est pas seulement pour la communauté LGBTI, il y a des catégories de la population qui sont fortement discriminées. […] Mais quand on est d’un communauté marginalisé, on est double-discriminé. Et ce peut expliquer, notre rêve, notre objectif” (Interview with president of the advocacy group Kouraj, Heidelberg/Port-au-Prince, 17 December 2020).
organizations and NGOs. The coordinator of FACSDIS portrays the government as a central actor that could improve the situation of sexual and gender minorities in a “common fight” if greater awareness of LBT women existed. The president of Kouraj emphasizes that in addition to community groups and civil society organizations, state institutions are active. However, the interviewees also mention increasing state homophobia. In the 2018 interview, Charlot Jeudy more explicitly mentioned the instrumentalization of homophobia by political elites. He explained that conservative politicians use homophobia for their elections campaigns, such as the senators who introduced the 2017 amendments to the Civil Code and were well-known for organizing homophobic protests (Jeudy 2018). The role of the police is ambivalent as well. In the 2016 NGO report on the human rights situation of sexual and gender minorities in Haiti, there are reports of discrimination and abuse from the police and justice system. Thus, violence against LGBT people often remains uninvestigated and unsanctioned (FACSDIS et al. 2016, 1-8). This low confidence in the Haitian National Police, created in 1995, holds true for the full population. During the 1990s, the development of the institution was “undermined by incoherent Western influences and market-oriented socioeconomic policies, as well as President Aristide’s attempt to use the HNP to maintain power” (Baranyi 2019, 5). The trust in the police significantly decreased after the 2010 earthquake under President Martelly when bribes became common. After the ending of MINUSTAH in 2017, the Haitian police had even less capacities to provide basic services outside of the capital. Additionally, the use of excessive force by security institutions is common (Baranyi 2019, 7-8; Kolbe 2020, 48-51). Additionally, the police has tolerated the rising power and activities of criminal gangs particularly in the cities and the

13 “Et des organisations de la société civile et des organisations communautaires et même les institutions d’états sont actives” (Interview with president of the advocacy group Kouraj, Heidelberg/Port-au-Prince, 17 December 2020).
South of the country. The gang members are often from poor urban areas (Crisis Group, 2021). The repression against the 2014 to 2015 and the 2018 anti-regime protests are examples of high-level violence (Baranyi 2019, 7-8). The interviews include a case of police abuse a few years ago. However, they compare this with a more recent instance when the police were willing to take a complaint seriously and offer help. Even though international partners only play a minor role in the responses on the security of queer people, there are references to partnerships with international NGOs, for example in Canada, and international organizations like the European Union.

**Comparison to official discourse on sexual and gender minorities**

According to a media analysis of Panos Caribbean (2017) between 2005 and 2016, media and the rhetoric of policy-makers contribute to the stigmatization of gender and sexual minorities. They are underrepresented in media due to societal stigma, lack of awareness for queer issues among journalists, a lack of access to the community and fears of journalists of being accused of publishing “propaganda” (6, 21-28). Media articles that publish statements of elected officials on sexual and gender minorities since 2010 cluster around several main events in the country: the 2013 anti-gay marches in Port-au-Prince, hurricane Matthew and the festival “MassiMadi” in 2016, the proposed amendment of the Civil Code in 2017, Charlot Jeudy’s death in 2019 and the new Penal Code in 2020. Communications of the government mostly react to events but sometimes refer to the insecurity of gender and sexual minorities. For instance, the president and prime minister denounced the attacks on sexual and gender minorities after the 2010 earthquake (Nolan 2016, 2). In 2019, the “Office for the protection of citizens” (L’Office de protection de la citoyenne et du citoyen) demanded the protection of queer people (AlterPresse 2019).

However, most of the statements in media articles originate from different Senators depicting homosexuality as a threat. Two examples are the pastor and deputy of the constituency of the region
Gonaïves, Sadrac Dieudonné, and the former government commissioner Jean Rénel Sénatus who had become popular due to his work against youth deprivation in Port-au-Prince (Panos Caribbean 2017, 14). The politicians both participated in the 2013 anti-gay march.

In an interview, Dieudonné promised that for the “protection of Haitian values against the institutionalization of homosexuality,” no law on same-sex partnerships would be voted on as long as he remained deputy (Cadet 2013). However, he also declared that they could not “stop people from practicing homosexuality” (Rochefort 2013). Sénatus warned the elected officials against legalizing same-sex marriage. He claimed that the country would never be ready for it and called homosexuality the cause of societal conflicts (Rochefort 2013).

In a television interview with the news journal “Le Nouvelliste,” he said: “We are marching today to say no to this affair of immorality. The struggle that we started fighting long ago continues. Today many inquiries, many proposals are being made so there will be homosexual marriage in the country” (translation by Durban-Albrecht 2017, 252-253). Additionally, he claimed that same-sex marriage was a danger to children (AlterPresse 2019). The president of the lower chamber, Jean Tolbert Alexis, called same-sex marriages an “abomination” (Rochefort 2013). Deputy Danton Léger also took part in the 2013 protest. He called for the criminalization of homosexuality because of its alleged incompatibility with Haitian culture (AlterPresse 2013; Rochefort 2013).

In 2016, the announcement that the “MassiMadi” festival would take place in Haiti for the first time led to backlash among elected officials. The president of the Senate, Ronald Larêche, promised a resolution banning homosexual practices on national

14 “Tant que je suis député, a-t-il fait savoir, aucune loi sur la légalisation des couples homosexuels ne sera votée” (Sadrac Dieudonné, in: Cadet 2013).
15 “Il n’y a pas un tel projet déposé au parlement, qui a qualifié d’« abomination » le mariage entre deux personnes de même sexe” (Jean Tolbert Alexis, in: Alter Presse 2013).
territory and spoke out against the festival for which Haiti was supposedly “not ready.” The politician justified his plans with the protection of the family and the alleged lack of legal protection for sexual minorities (Haiti en Marche 2016 a). In a radio interview, Sénatus called the “MassiMadi” festival illegal, claiming that it promoted homosexuality and went against Haitian morals. The commissioner’s statements led to the escalation of a long-standing conflict between him and Senator Steven Benoît. Deputy Léger finally banned the festival. He implied that Kouraj had not announced the event to the authorities. Furthermore, Léger denounced practices that could “undermine social morals, good morals and public order.” However, he assured that every individual could determine their own body and “choose” their sexuality if it did not violate “public morals” (Haiti en Marche 2016 c; Louis 2016). Afterwards, the Ministry of Justice and Security transferred Léger to the province Jacmel which led to his resignation. Ten senators supported Léger publicly, suspecting his opinions on the “MassiMadi” festival as the reason for his transfer. The Ministry of Justice rejected the allegations and called them a “campaign of disinformation” (Haiti en Marche 2016 b).

Shortly after the cancellation of the festival, hurricane Matthew created an upsurge in homophobic rhetoric. Senator Carl Murat Cantave said in a 2016 interview that homosexuality was responsible for the hurricane and legitimized this claim with biblical phrases (Baptiste 2017; Darius 2016). Moreover, he repeatedly called homosexuality an “abomination” and proclaimed himself as the “bearer in the fight against lesbians and gays.” Cantave explicitly framed sexual minorities as a threat to the youth and the grace of God towards Haiti (Darius 2016). In 2017, the senator issued another statement on sexual minorities in the Senate Debate on the new Civil Code. He demanded the protection of the country “against any deviance from foreign sources.” Again, Cantave claimed that his

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position was not a sign of homophobia but of love for the Haitian youth. During the debates before the Senate’s decision, the senator of Artibonite called sexual and gender minorities “abominations” who should be “chased away” (Baptiste 2017). There were only few elected officials expressing contrary opinions. An example is Senator Kédelaire Augustin who remained absent during the vote. He stated that he did not support same-sex marriage but voiced concerns about the Civil Code violating human rights law and inciting violence because of a “natural inversion of many Haitians against lesbians and gays.”¹⁷ Only Senator Patrice Dumont voted against the proposition (Baptiste 2017).

On 9th October 2020, artist and well-known member of the LGBT community, Pierre Édouard Rosier, was found dead at his apartment. The Minister of Culture Pradel Henriquez offered his condolences and said that Rosier’s death was an enormous loss for the country and its cultural scene. He promised an investigation into his death (Hervé 2020 b). In the same year, many members of the Senate presented the anti-discrimination protections in the new Penal Code as a threat. Article 208 now stated that crimes like robbery, assault or insult were aggravated if they are committed because of the sexuality of the victim. It was the first time a Haitian law mentioned sexual orientation. The president of the Senate, Pierre François Sildor, criticized the lack of prior consultation with the Senate. He called the sections on abortion and sexual orientation “irritating points” and demanded further debate so that the Penal Code could “reflect the reality of the society” (Hervé 2020 a). Senator Sénatus called the Penal Code a foreign import that did not belong to Haitian culture (Pierre-Louis 2020 a).¹⁸ Among churches and political parties, there were rumors that the new Penal Code would legalize same-sex marriage.

¹⁷ “La psychologie même de la loi peut inciter à la violence” (Kédelaire Augustin, in : Baptiste 2017).
Thus, protests against the alleged legalization of homosexuality were organized, even though same-sex relations had never been criminalized in Haiti. President Moïse and his government assured that there were no mentions of same-sex marriage nor an institutionalization of homosexuality in the Penal Code and that “the hypocrisy must end” (Pierre-Louis 2020 b). The authors of the Penal Code ascertained that non-discrimination were universally recognized as the defense of human rights and that provisions against the discrimination of sexual minorities were included in the regional human rights treaties Haiti had signed (Le Nouvelliste 2020).\(^{19}\) However, Moïse’s legitimacy was already impaired by his decision to rule the country by decree since the cancelled parliamentary elections.

Hence, in contrast to the security discourse of Kouraj and FACSDIS on sexual and gender identities, elected officials mostly painted queer people and especially homosexuality as a foreign threat. This corresponds with the global development of the securitization of homosexuality by states. In recent years, some states have justified the criminalization of homosexuality or hateful rhetoric by constructing homosexuality as a social danger and a threat to sovereignty, constituting state homophobia (Bosia 2018, 95-96). In Haiti, particular officials like Jean Rénel Sénatus and Carl Murat Cantave, are well-known for their homophobic rhetoric (Baptiste 2017). Their statements, for instance in the 2013 protest, in their campaign for the 2017 Civil Code amendment and their criticism of the 2020 Penal Code centered around same-sex marriage although there had never been a

\(^{19}\) “Il est fondamental de comprendre que la non discrimination à raison de l’orientation sexuelle est conforme à la doctrine et à la jurisprudence des systèmes interaméricain et onusien des droits humains, auxquels nous avons adhéré en ratifiant la Convention américaine et le Pacte International relatif aux droits civils et politiques. Il n’est pas possible de les ignorer. Quand on parle d’orientation sexuelle, en la détachant du contexte général des causes de non discrimination, on se met en porte à faux avec les avancées et la dynamique de la promotion et la défense des droits humains qui sont devenues une règle universelle” (Le Nouvelliste 2020)
legal proposition for its legalization. The official security discourse exclusively referred to “homosexuality” and “lesbians and gays,” leaving any other sexual minorities and especially gender minorities invisible. Exceptions were the government’s denouncements of attacks and condolences after the death of well-known activists. In addition to this aspect of physical security, Senator Augustin’s criticism of the 2017 Civil Code and the President’s defense of the 2020 Penal Code both used human rights arguments, similarly to FACSDIS and Kouraj when talking about strategies against insecurities. As the representative of FACSDIS mentioned, the public debates on those legal decisions were accompanied by a wave of homophobia. This fits the global development of more states implementing LGBT rights into human rights regimes while simultaneously increasing homo- and transphobia (Richter-Montpetit 2017, 227).

However, central aspects that the advocacy groups emphasized were missing from the official discourse. Elected officials did not consider the security and experiences of sexual and gender minorities, such as their socio-economic security, the double marginalization of certain groups but also the improvement of sexual and gender minorities’ living situation in recent years. This can be explained by the fact that sexual and gender minorities themselves were rarely discussed, especially not as subjects of (in)security. Thus, the official discourse also did not include further strategies against their insecurity. Nonetheless, the statements from Kouraj and FACSDIS imply that the cooperation with the state is part of the improvement of the situation of sexual and gender minorities. It also must be considered that the media articles only show public and often controversial statements with the intention of catching the readers’ interest.

*The (post-) colonial and global context of Queer Security in Haiti*

When studying queer experiences in the Caribbean, it is necessary to acknowledge how they are embedded in broader political, social and economic structures (Grey and Attai 2020, 250). The prevalent belief
that homosexuality is a foreign import is mirrored in the security discourse of elected officials. Additionally, prejudice against same-sex relations is connected to historical legacies of Western colonialism and post-colonial Euro-American interventionism (Chapman, Durban-Albrecht, and LaMothe 2017: 146; Nolan 2016, 1). Those legacies are tied to different forms of structural violence, including colonial homophobia and racism (Migraine-George 2014, 11, 17).

The French colonial rule of Haiti from 1697 to 1791 led to the enrichment of the colonizer through plantation based on the West-African slave trade. Colonization ended with a successful revolt of self-liberated slaves in the Haitian revolution (McGee 2012). The country became independent in 1804 but had to pay an annual “compensation” to former plantation owners. This colonial legacy resulted in imperialist influences until today, including imported norms on gender and sexuality (Durban-Albrecht 2015, 16-17). From 1915 to 1934, the US marine occupied Haiti, followed by “different kinds of transnational flows from the United States to Haiti: foreign aid to Cold War dictators, North American tourism, evangelical Christian missionary work, post-Fordist production, and humanitarian intervention” (Durban-Albrecht 2015, 17). In the 1990s, the US Center for Disease Control blamed, among others, Haitians and homosexual men for allegedly having brought AIDS to the USA (Migraine-George 2014, 11, 17). Haiti, often termed as a “failing” or “failed state,” experienced a wave of international NGOs coming to the country to “rescue” its population (Durban-Albrecht 2015, 18). Furthermore, the country experienced international interventions via programs of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank as well as the UN missions MINUSTAH which lasted from 2004 until 2017 and the MINUSJUTH which ended in 2019 (Hauge, Doucet, and Gilles 2015, 261-263; Kolbe 2020, 44). After the 2010 earthquake, international dominant discourse painted Haiti as a “failed state” with “exceptional homophobia.” As described, global LGBT organizations took up their activities in Haiti and shaped ideas of what LGBT rights are and how they should be implemented (Durban-Albrecht 2015, 24, 27, 164). This
becomes clear in the way local advocacy groups and some political decision-makers referenced international terminology and standards in their security discourse on gender and sexual minorities. However, different local groups have different stances towards international LGBT organizations and terms (Durban-Albrecht 2015, 200). For example, Kouraj uses Western terminology such as “LGBTI” with foreigners but not for its activities in Haiti where the organization perceives it to create further divisions in society.

The relationship with Western LGBT organizations is ambivalent for several reasons. Their universalist rights framework is often tied to assumptions of a progressive West and sexual and gender minorities in the Global South as “Others” in need of saving (Grey and Attai 2020, 249; Richter-Montpetit 2017, 227). Moreover, it creates the danger that practices or identities that do not fit in the framework are further marginalized (Nolan 2016, 4). Grey and Attai (2020) argue that the legal rights discourse “[…] privileges those identities that coalesce at axes of power, specifically race, class, gender and citizenship” (250). In addition, there are only limited funds for local NGOs (Migraine-George 2014, 23) and access to funds is heavily influenced by the relationship with international partners: “the grant application process favors those in Haiti who are not only from middle and upper-classes, but that have some connection to the United States” (Durban-Albrecht 2015, 182). Lastly, there are controversies about the role of the state when it comes to the security of sexual and gender minorities (Kramer 2017, 123). On the one hand, homophobic elected officials frame LGBT advocacy as a threat to sovereignty (Bosia 2018, 98, 101) and sexual and gender minorities as a danger to Haiti’s families, youth, and societal values. Bosia (2018) criticizes alliances with the state because it requires the consolidation of some accepted identities: “To claim security is to normalize and denude queerness, making sexual hierarchies an object of state action […] within a sovereign apparatus that is constitutionally indifferent to the security of sexual and gender minorities” (96). On the other hand, “[…] the nearly universal discourse of LGBT rights (as human rights) has
structured the fight against very real bodily insecurities in terms of the restrictions on the state or invocations of state action embedded in the notion of rights” (Bosia 2018, 97). This understanding is mirrored in the reference of the government and advocacy groups to human rights treaties.

However, this does not mean that local advocacy groups are only passive actors. Instead, they possess agency and present goals and strategies in their security discourse. In addition to activities of advocacy, education, and networking, they see their work as a reason for the improvement of the situation of sexual and gender minorities in the country. Beyond that, they formulate strategies of countering insecurities. This finding challenges the notion that there is “exceptional homophobia” in the Caribbean and that “[…] LGBT people are at the mercy of homophobic governments, church organizations and citizens in the region” (250). Correspondingly, transnational and Caribbean feminist research with a focus on agency has shown that, in addition to LGBT rights activism, there are everyday practices of resistance and community-making (Grey and Attai 2020, 251-252, 259; Richter-Montpetit 2017, 235). Those everyday security practices cannot be explored in this study. Other studies find that spirituality and Vodou is depicted as a source of support and a space for gender fluidity and queer practices. Moreover, the artist Azor describes private gay parties in Port-au-Prince as a safe space with a sense of mutual respect and acceptance (Azor 2017, 250, 257; Migraine-George 2014, 8, 16, 20; Rahill et al. 2019, 697). More generally, the influence of global discourses on the security discourse of both sides cannot be fully evaluated from an outsider’s perspective.

**Conclusion**
The security of sexual and gender minorities has increasingly gained scholarly and public attention due the politicization of sexual orientation and gender identity. The concept of Queer Security studies provides a starting point to analyze the “complex lived experiences and insecurities of sexual and gender minorities” (Bosia 2018, 94) which
have been neglected in classic and even critical security studies. While discourse analysis has been criticized for neglecting material factors, it can still produce rich empirical analyses by exploring the perspectives of non-elite actors, such as local advocacy groups.

In this study, the empirical analysis explored the security situation of sexual and gender minorities through interviews with representatives of the advocacy groups Kouraj and FACSDIS in comparison with the public security discourse of elected officials. The interviewees’ depictions showed that while there was improvement in recent years, the everyday lives of sexual and gender minorities are still affected by experiences of insecurity concerning their physical safety, legal rights, and socio-economic situation. The effect of political and economic crises on security has exacerbated since the interviews. In addition to poor management of the pandemic, President Jovenel Moïse extended his presidential powers and proposed an unconstitutional referendum to prolong his rule in February 2021. However, he was assassinated in July 2021. Due to international pressure, Ariel Henry became the interim president in the same month. In August 2021, another devastating earthquake and a following tropical storm caused over 2,200 deaths and displaced hundreds of thousands (Crisis Group, 2021). Kouraj condemned Moïse’s assassination and a rise of violence against journalists and activists in the country (Kouraj, 2021).

The local advocacy groups also perceived the security of queer people living in Haiti and their work to have a reciprocal effect on each other. On the one hand, insecurities affect the activities of organizations and the everyday lives of their members. But on the other hand, the representatives of Kouraj and FACSDIS presented strategies against insecurities and pointed out positive results from their past work. As expected, elected officials and especially some Senators did not depict the security of sexual and gender minorities in public statements but painted homosexuality as a foreign-imported threat to Haiti’s society and values. However, members of the government denounced attacks against activists and defended the
implementation of legal rights, for example those mentioned in the 2020 Penal Code. Despite the homophobic rhetoric of elected officials in the media, the interviewed representatives of Kouraj and FACSDIS included the cooperation with the government as an important strategy for improving security, next to community mobilization, education and sensibilization of sexual and gender minorities.

There are a number of limitations to the empirical analysis conducted in this article. First of all, my inability to conduct and read interviews in Creole put constraints on data generation. Furthermore, I only conducted interviews with representatives of advocacy groups over the telephone. Face-to-face field research might have given me the opportunity to access government officials and other members of sexual and gender minorities. It is also important to note that the statements in news articles and telephone interviews essentially went through several steps of distortion. Thus, the results should be interpreted with caution. A connected point of criticism is the limited number of interviews. The generated data could be supplemented by interviews with other advocacy groups but also activists and first-hand accounts of Haitian sexual and gender minorities. It is also important to note that the statements in news articles and telephone interviews essentially went through several steps of distortion. Thus, the results should be interpreted with caution. A connected point of criticism is the limited number of interviews. The generated data could be supplemented by interviews with other advocacy groups but also activists and first-hand accounts of Haitian sexual and gender minorities. For this purpose, it would be useful to revise the interview questions and to focus more on the lived security experiences of sexual and gender minorities. Furthermore, more insight could be gained by acquiring knowledge of Creole or working with an interpreter to minimize language barriers. In addition, conducting longer interviews would make it possible to gather more details on counterstrategies, the cooperation with other actors and perspectives for the future. In this regard, the increased volunteering of personal information and experiences could ensure a more consequent application of positionality during interviews (Haritaworn 2008, 166). This would also achieve the generation of a more unfiltered discourse. In general, Queer Security studies offer possibilities for future research on previously neglected subjects of security and perspectives on what security is. In addition to the study by Rahill et al. (2019), examples of this kind of research are Kramer’s (2017) in-depth interview on
insecurity with a representative of the Queer Cyprus Association as well as Von Boemcken, Boboyorov and Bagdasarov’s (2018) analysis of the security scapes of LGBT people in Kyrgyzstan.

This article contributes to this rich field of Queer Security studies. An important finding that should be further explored is variances in the security of sexual and gender minorities. The representatives of the advocacy organizations drew attention to regional differences in the country as well as double marginalization because of socio-economic status, race, religion, or gender. This finding, along with the embeddedness of security discourses in broader contexts and existing power relations (Khalid 2018, 37), demonstrates the importance of an intersectional approach. Post-colonial security concepts and Queer / trans* of Colour critique make valuable contributions to the further development of Queer Security studies. This includes the incorporation of the concept of positionality which “[…] can enable us [as researchers] to directly ‘touch/interact/connect’ with our subjects, in ways which are less exploitative, less objectifying, and more politically relevant” (Haritaworn 2008, 168).
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Appendix

**Interview guideline**

**Introduction**

Bonjour, madame. Comment allez-vous? Merci beaucoup de prendre du temps pour parler avec moi. Je suis très reconnaissante / je me réjouis que je puisse faire un interview avec vous. Pour recupérer: je fais cet entretien pour un petit projet dans un cours universitaire traitant la sécurité. Je m’occupe du sujet de la sûreté en Haïti. En particulier, je m’intéresse à la situation des minorités sexuelles et de genre / de la communauté M. Je parle avec vous pour apprendre d’un groupe locale et pour savoir plus sur vos expériences et votre travail. Concernant l'entretien: la durée de la conversation sera environ 30 minutes mais ça depend à vos réponses et votre temps. Tout ce que vous me racontez restera anonyme. Avant de commencer: Est-ce que vous me permettriez d’enregistrer notre conversation? L’enregistrement est pour que je puisse me rappeler à toutes les informations. Avez-vous encore des questions? Si vous avez des questions ou commentaires pendant l’entretien, n’hésitez pas de m’interrompre. Maintenant, je vais vous poser des questions et vous pouvez me dire tout ce que vient à l’esprit. Il n’y a pas de mauvaise réponse.

**Translation**

Hello, madam. How are you? Thank you very much for taking the time to talk to me. I am grateful that I get to do an interview with you. To reiterate: I am conducting this interview for a small project for a course in university on security. I am researching the subject of safety in Haiti. More particularly, I am interested in the situation of sexual and gender minorities / the M community. I am talking to you to learn / gather information from a local group and to get to know more about your experiences and your work.

Concerning the interview: the duration of the conversation will probably be about 30 minutes but it depends on your responses and the time you have for the interview. Everything you tell me is
anonymized. Before we start: do I have your permission to record our conversation? The recording will be used for me remembering all the information. Do you have any other questions? If you have any questions or comments during the interview, do not hesitate to interrupt me. Now, I will ask you some questions and you can tell me whatever comes to mind. There are no wrong answers.

**Question guide / checklist:**

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<th>Follow-ups</th>
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<td>Can you describe a typical day at your organization to me? (Pouvez-vous me raconter une journée typique / normale à votre organisation?)</td>
<td>Foundation When was the organization founded? (Quand est-ce que votre organisation était fondée?)</td>
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<td>Tasks What are your organization’s goals? (Quelles sont les buts de votre organisation?)</td>
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<td>Security of sexual and gender minorities</td>
<td>What importance does safety have for your work? (Quelle importance a la sûreté / sécurité pour votre organisation / travail?)</td>
<td>Definition How would you define security? (Comment définiriez-vous la sûreté?)</td>
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<td>Insecurities for NGOs Can you think of an example when security was important for your work? (Avez-vous un exemple?)</td>
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<td>Questions</td>
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<td>How would you describe the safety / security situation of gender and sexual minorities in Haiti? (Comment décrivez-vous la situation sécuritaire des minorités sexuelles et de genre / des personnes qui font partie de la communauté M?)</td>
<td>How would you describe the development since the foundation of your NGO? (Comment décriviriez-vous le développement depuis la fondation de votre organisation?)</td>
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<td>Responses to insecurities</td>
<td>In your opinion, what are possible strategies to minimize risks / insecurities? (A votre avis, quelles sont les stratégies pour minimiser les risques / les inécurités?)</td>
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<td>What does your group / the community do? (Qu’est-ce que vous faites avec votre groupe?)</td>
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<td>Empowerment &amp; sensibilization</td>
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<td>Which influence does empowerment / sensibilization have? (Quelle est la portée de la sensibilisation sur l’autonomisation des femmes LBT / des personnes M?)</td>
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