

# 1. Introduction

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An engagement with queer theories that integrates real formulae for how people actually live together enriches us far beyond the bounds of applied science. Such an engagement is also essential for a spectrum of professions, social work and psychotherapy being but two of many. In everyday culture, experienced and represented realities of genders and sexualities are becoming more diverse, but also more relevant to the political conversation. The central argument here is not that aspects of gender and sexuality represent themselves more dominantly in public discourses today than in previous centuries. On the contrary, these aspects continue to be potentially volatile issues for societies, and thus continue to be subject to pressure from norms, legislation, labels, and stigmas. The guiding thought of these deliberations relates to the increasing replication of experience and representational forms, and of gender-based interpretations, within a framework of recognized possibilities—whether actors apprehend these choices legally, accept them, or merely tolerate them. There are, in short, more possibilities today than ever before.

When, decades ago, Queer Theory named the *disorder* emanating from heteronormativity by using a scholarly meta-concept, many theoretical treatises of that period drew inspiration from daily experience. This socio-cultural force was and is omnipresent in its tangibility, but so is the inestimable force of the resistance against this violence: defending taboos and deploying whataboutism are successful strategies until this day for undermining insights and critiques arising out of queer theory. An appropriate space for visibility means, on an utterly basic level, that at least some people recognize a specific issue, and with it a specific reality,

which this recognition inaugurates as an element of human existence and/or of societal processes of interaction. In consequence, a discourse unfolds that's grounded in broad participation and informed by well-founded arguments and moral standpoints. Utilizing queer theory, and despite various forms of resistance, actors successfully established a broad discourse by the end of the last millennium, which featured political, academic, and cultural components. This development means it's now impossible to imagine away queerness as a lived reality.

For the current treatise, I consciously choose the applied perspective, and omit deliberately elaborate academic concepts in presenting forms of queer recognition as actual phenomena. The identification, presentation of, and analysis of the agendas identified all reflect this orientation toward concrete applications. That said, conceptional and theoretical impulses also complement this mix. Achieving a balance between the dimensions of application and the dimensions of theory is a welcome challenge in this process.

On the following pages, readers will encounter countless direct citations, which either supply concise impulses important for our theme, or serve as practical deliberations. Such excerpts are evidently always abridgments of the authors' further-reaching declarations. What's more, the excerpts drawn on here deliver clear statements, albeit in an abbreviated form, and deserve the space to replay some of their original impact. The challenge lies in how to embed these excerpts in the book's larger arguments. With that acknowledged, the standpoint presented in each case is intended to lead into discourse, or indeed provoke an alternative standpoint.

The refusal to lay claim comprehensiveness ought to be almost self-evident in the context of a queer publication. Neither the setting of agendas, nor the pointed emphases chosen, nor the references selected present a generalized picture. Instead, these can be read as fragments that have emerged as elementary in my own mind as author. No reader must concur with these without reservation, nor should readers necessarily identify with them. The focus selected, the argumentation strands, the interjections, or indeed the expressions chosen, are constantly a compromise at the expense of real, queer diversity. But the

compromise is necessary and right, because this is the only way that a form of scholarship oriented toward applications can develop. This is the sole way to make possible queer realizations and debates, which are thrashed out in sub-cultural and intellectual milieus, but also in political milieus. In line with this aspiration, substantiated critiques are welcome, grounded refutations are actively desired, and alternative interpretations are considered motivational.

One of the hardest conceptual lines to draw surely relates to the question of whether mental space for the verbalization of thoughts should be adduced as an example of the cognitive challenges faced here. Or to put it differently: where should we draw the boundaries in this exposition, which at least seems to be a global one? The definition of postmodern and virtually interconnected societies is an assisting construct, with which to detach oneself, genuinely, from geographical spaces, and with which to understand queerness as a socio-cultural phenomenon, which has been able to surface because of historical occurrences and virtual interconnections. It is precisely the multifariousness and openness of a queer approach that makes a setting of boundaries on a geographical or even social basis impossible. Queer realities are able to take in both virtual and real performances and spaces, conventions and trends, knowledge and truths, and much, much more, without being bound to a single location, person, or form of interpretation.

Many of the thoughts presented here have arisen from discussions and everyday altercations, scholarly and scientific studies, and theoretical immersions. All these animating and inspiring moments have helped shape the final book. Moreover, the questions of why this publication has been undertaken, and how its points of departure have been selected, are above all questions of personal standpoint, albeit accompanied by a necessary positioning in the scholarly-scientific landscape. Particularly in recent years, I've had new and more profound possibilities of participating in both a European and North American discourse sphere. In my scholarship and in my private life, the liveliness of New York and Graz in Austria genuinely make them spaces that influence my reflections. At the same time, I'm conscious that an individual life also always means geographical, social, and cultural limitations.

