Queer Festivals

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Published by Amsterdam University Press

Eleftheriadis, Konstantinos.
Queer Festivals: Challenging Collective Identities in a Transnational Europe.
Amsterdam University Press, 2018.
Project MUSE. muse.jhu.edu/book/66422.

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Anti-identity, Politics and the State

Queer Challenges and Future Directions

A journey into the queer world

Pink Life QueerFest [...] is the first queer festival in Turkey. [...] First edition of the festival was held in 2011 in Ankara. [...] The 6th edition will be organized between 12-19 January 2017 in Ankara and 26-28 January 2017 in Istanbul. The festival aims to create new and fresh areas of (self-) expression, of LGBTQI individuals and artists and to raise awareness on LGBT struggle through the use of art; and it creates an opportunity for detailed discussions about queer theory.¹

The moment I started my fieldwork, the ‘first queer festival’ in Turkey was about to start. Some years later, the International Queer Festival DOTYK in Minsk, the Belarusian capital, would begin. Both looked extremely interesting in terms of workshops, films, and even psychological support for victims of homophobia.² Queer festivals seem to expand beyond Western settings. But how do they make it? What does lie behind a queer festival in a non-Western European context?

In this book, I focused on queer festivals taking place in Western European capitals. I argued that it is crucial to investigate the mechanisms of their production and the ways their actors seize the local and transnational opportunities in order to build their anti-identitarian identities, in a context of transnational LGBT activism that stands hegemonic as far as gender and sexual identities are concerned. Queer has historically and politically been built as an opposition, as a counter-hegemonic discourse and practice, against more institutional-oriented LGBT movements, but also against a public space regulated by hetero/homonormativity, commercialization and racism. This study showed that this is what Western queer festivals are for: create alternative zones, experiment on vocabularies and aesthetics, create links of belonging to an imagined queer community and sustain activist networks.

Queer festivals are empowering experiences, but they are difficult to organize. I showed in the book how a series of practices need to be implemented in order for these ephemeral events to take place safely and enjoyably for their participants. These practices are found everywhere: from the editing of the callout, its dissemination via social media, the contacts with the squats, the organization of the space, the organization of the collective kitchen, the collection of food, the workshops’ programmes, the performances, the organization of demonstrations, the organization of sex parties and safe spaces, the transnational networking, the digital communication. ‘To create a queer space that is free for all, it is important that we all try radically to confront some, if not all, of the structures existing in society today. We need to help each other to break free from structures and norms imposed on us by the capitalist, heteronormative, racist society.’

Why such an emphasis on togetherness? Without mutual aid, a common concern and collaborative work, no queer festival can ever take place.

The focus on Western European capitals has its own logic, inasmuch as queer festivals in these sites respond to common analytic questions and that their differences do not succumb their commonalities. Moving away from strict comparative frames, I opted for a multi-sited observation that looked at the emergence of a dynamics of pulling together transnational publics, against institutions as well as against the traditional LGBT movements. Having the queer paradox of the anti-identitarian mobilization as the departure object of the research, I wanted to check how it gets solved by suggesting a look at concrete situations. This epistemological move led me automatically to an inductive and rather pragmatic approach. The inductive parameter of the study is significant as far as it allowed me to investigate the object of study by adjusting it in the course of the research. In this respect, Rome followed Amsterdam, which followed Oslo, which followed Berlin, which followed Copenhagen. Nothing was precise from the very beginning. The festivals appeared in a logic of snowball sampling, similar to the one we follow when we look for interviewees. When it comes to the pragmatic parameter, this is embedded in studying the situation in which the object of the study occurs. My role of researcher was to put in discussion several points of view, by readjusting them during the empirical investigation (Werner and Zimmermann 2006: 47).

Another epistemological choice was to avoid overgeneralizations on how queer festivals could work in other parts of the world. I rather tried to

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generalize partially, to the extent that I attempted to make clear the combination of the various situations of queer festivals, focusing on the dynamics of the movement sustained and organized by practices that reappeared in every setting. I tried to make this sort of generalization as much as possible. This was not applicable, however, in all sites of investigation, and whenever needed, I was making it clear (for instance, the no-vegan policy in Rome). Finally, I avoided strictly comparative methods thanks to reflexivity. In fact, a strictly comparative perspective would imply an external point of view that would oblige me to build comparable objects and similar analytical questions that would equally apply to all festivals. This was not desired but also not possible. Not desired because of the proximity I had with my field. Not possible, because some practices were more stressed in some festivals than in others. Trying to identify the same exact mechanisms in order to compare them in the end would make me lose some specificities or some exemplarities identified in certain sites and not in others (for example, the ‘commons’ discourse in Queeristan). I will now present an overview of the book’s findings, and I will end by indicating some directions for future research that this study did not consider thoroughly.

Overview of the findings and theoretical contributions

My departure point was located in a paradox: that of building a sustainable repertoire of action based on an identity which pretends not to be one: an identity that sets as its aim to deconstruct any possible identities. Following the trend of previous research on ‘emerging transnational “micro-publics”’, such as the European Social Forums (Doerr 2009: 235), the book continues the study of the transnational coalitions that have been built at the European level over recent decades, particularly after the establishment of the global justice movement. Part of the broader Europeanization process, which affects not only institutions but also mobilization, everyday lives, and the formation of identities (Ayoub 2016), even marginal forms of contention, such as queer festivals, are participating as well in the building of new transnational identities.

The analytical part of the book focused on the discourses and the practices which build queer festivals as political arenas at the transnational level. I demonstrated how participation in these arenas first brings confrontation with new rational vocabularies, which challenge the dominant understandings of gender and sexuality. Second, participation becomes a means by which actors invent new ways of performing and addressing the
political. Queer festivals’ identity is not just the result of actors’ calculations and rational decisions. It is rather the (contested) product of the practical mechanisms and processes which are activated and put in motion once the events start. Festivals’ ‘anti-identitarian’ identity is mainly promoted through discursive practices (callouts, texts, zines, etc.). It is translated, however, into a ‘real’ collective identity by its members.

Queer festivals’ ‘anti-identitarian’ identity has discursive as well as practical dimensions, and their memberships are sociologically, if not determined, situated in specific social and educational structures. This does not mean that working-class, racialized or undocumented migrants can never enter such a place. All people are welcome, and through affective relationships or political engagement, individuals belonging to subaltern groups can be occasionally part of festivals.

The anti-identitarian identity: Social movements beyond the state

I started this study based upon an empirical observation: the gradual establishment of queer festivals across Europe. I knew that queer was synthesized in the postmodern phrase: ‘beyond identities’. Although moving beyond identities has been adequately scrutinized in queer theory, the lack of empirical understanding of queer as a political identity has constituted for several decades a fundamental barrier to sociological explorations in queer studies (Seidman 1996). I thus developed a curiosity to analyse the ideological frames of queer festivals from a sociological perspective, to see their degrees of distinction from queer theory, and to answer the question of why queer festivals succeed in mobilizing actors, many of whom make cross-border journeys in order to attend them. Scholars have stressed movements’ fear of ‘strong collective identities’ (Jasper and McGarry 2015; Flesher-Fominaya 2015). These are based on the ‘identity politics’ model, challenged both in the academic and the political arena. This challenge has occurred because of the emergence of a rival paradigm of ‘multiple, tolerant identities’, supported massively by the global justice movement of the early 2000s (Della Porta 2005b). This paradigm came to be complemented by the anti-identitarian model.

Sociology of practice and social movements

The main approach of this research consisted in the systematization and analysis of collective practices, as crucial parameters for the building of queer festivals and of their identities. Based upon Dufour’s and Bourdieu’s
theories, I explored how activists put in motion a set of specific practices in order to build their identities. It became obvious, however, that the conceptualization and implementation of these practices is far from consensual. Oppositions within the spaces reveal the degree of clashes between actors. Following Bourdieu's line of thought, however, I did not see these oppositions as part of a rational-choice debate among actors. The educational and political socialization of each participant accounts largely for her position in the festival. Thus, social practice does not start from zero, but is rather built through interactions of individuals, with delimited, yet dynamic, horizons of possibilities.

**Anti-identity, discursive and non-discursive practices**

The continuity of the legacy of the queer movement, as it emerged in the 1990s, in contemporary queer festivals is obvious. It is sustained through the links between queer festivals and queer theory, links which are mostly enacted by activists who have studied gender and queer studies. At the practical level, this anti-identitarian critique translates into an open call for people to identify with any form of gender and sexual orientation, attempting to create a space of radical inclusivity. The discursive strategy builds on the idea of including people subject to various forms of discrimination, economic, linguistic and regarding disability, while queer festivals demonstrate a discursive sensitivity for migration and race issues. Moreover, the queer legacy is continued through a celebration of abnormality: queer identity is imagined as a deviation from the mainstream, and this imaginary links queerness to an alternative lifestyle. Radical inclusivity does not imply, however, a quantitative enlargement of festivals' publics. Radical inclusivity itself is bound to various forms of boundary demarcation. Through the promotion of specific cultural codes, the number of potential attendees in the events becomes automatically restricted. People from racialized backgrounds, for instance, are not very visible in the festivals.4

Performance and theatricality constitute other basic components of the attempt to build a queer collective identity. Based on the legacy of older queer and gay politics, but also on the performative character of the global justice movement, queer festivals utilize a performative repertoire of action when they engage in public demonstrations. In addition, organized or spontaneous performances are an essential part of the agenda of a queer festival. Finally, queer festivals make attempts to cross-fertilize their own

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4 With the exception of the Queeristan festivals in Amsterdam.
discourses with those of other alternative social movements. The gradual introduction of the anti-capitalist politics of the commons is an illustrative example of how queers imagine their identities into the field of left-wing scenes in Europe. The links between sexuality, gender and capitalism are not yet thoroughly acknowledged and elaborated, and they have not become a fundamental point of reference for participants.

Organization and anti-identitarian ethos

At the organizational level, I demonstrated how the siting of the festivals within squats provides their ideological and material frame. The proclaimed horizontality of the events, embodied through daily assemblies, plenaries, workshops, safe spaces and other similar organizational rituals, are largely linked to the squatting, anti-authoritarian scenes of European capitals. Moreover, the specific way of organization brings us back to the global justice movement and the European social forums of the early 2000s. The organizational level is the one on which this global justice legacy is the most visible.

The empirical findings on queer festivals’ organizational practices confirmed the establishment of new forms of ‘listening-oriented’ consensus that occur when actors meet at the transnational level, as other scholars have identified in their studies on transnational movements in Europe (Doerr 2009: 243). Actors learn how to be more careful listeners, and at the same time the festivals’ mode of organization encourages further deliberative forms of decision-making. Traversed by feminist ideas on communicative democracy, queer festivals continue the legacy of the attentive perspective. Moreover, festivals present another specificity to the extent that they opt for a DIY mode of organizing, which promotes an even more radical form of engagement and participation, albeit a mode which does not always function as successfully as imagined. I suggested that festivals’ organizational logic follows a more complex pattern of communication than just a simple rational exchange of arguments. Safe spaces and guidelines on how to respect them, attentive listening and other similar practices reveal the importance of emotional understanding and of affective deliberation in queer spaces.

Performing cultural conflicts

I showed also that cultural practices have their own place within queer festivals, largely contributing to the construction of the anti-identitarian
queer identity. Starting with the observation on the extended use of *queer vocabulary*, borrowed by queer and gender studies, I showed how people with academic education hold a certain degree of authority in the events. This advantage in cultural capital is mainly reflected in the terminology used in the workshops, during discussions and plenaries but also in the everyday discussions among participants. The establishment of collective cooking and eating, combined with the promotion of veganism, constitutes another main component of the construction of the alternative identity of these queer events. This tradition, mostly observed in the queer festivals of Northern Europe, is the product of historical and contextual custom, reinforced through the embeddedness in the squatting scenes in which the festivals take place. Finally, a specific stylization reflected in dressing codes constitutes another non-discursive aspect of the queer identity-work, although dressing is certainly not homogenized and several styles are observed. These practices have their own significance in the building of queer identity, and often produce oppositions within the spaces, among actors who fully embrace them but others do less.

**Queer transnationalism: Self-identifications beyond the state**

Finally, I demonstrated how actors use specific practices in order to build queer festivals as transnational arenas. Beyond state-oriented approaches, according to which transnational social movements target at least one institutional polity, a country or an international organization, I showed that for queer festivals, what is important in their transnationalism is the building of identities that extend national (but also other) borders, a sort of post-national identity. For queer festivals, borders are therefore to be found everywhere, in nation-states, in race, in gender and in sexuality: all people are defined and determined by the cross-cutting of these borders, produced beyond single nation-state regimes, and diffused through transnational norms. Challenging borders becomes possible for queer festivals through a series of practices, physical and digital cross-border ones, which not only construct festivals as transnational spaces of collective identity, but also help sustain them over time, through the networks and the social bonds they establish. Queer transnationalism does not deny, however, local specificities. Queer festivals take into account their local contexts when they address their politics. But they rather see the local existing in interaction with the transnational into a dynamic relationship which produces its own effects. This can be visible in the framings of their politics, but also in the networks they establish among local, foreign and ephemeral participants. Queer transnationalism does not,
however, escape criticism. The location of the spaces in Western European ‘creative capitals’ (Peck 2005: 740) translates into limited outreach to Eastern European publics, or people with migrant backgrounds.

**Queer festivals and anti-identity in the world**

The book suggests that studying the formation of movements that put in the core of their identity-building the critique of traditional identitarian categories through discourse and practice is important for scholars working on transnational mobilization. European queer festivals allow us to reconsider contention as not already contained within the state, but as looking for autonomy from it, trying to build distinct spaces and create counter-hegemonic cultures. It allows also social movement studies to pay more attention to the variety of contentious forms of social movements at the local, the national and the transnational scale. Moreover, queer festivals recognize the importance of agency in gender and sexual destabilization as long as this makes part of collective action. Can we escape from gender and sexual models that we are assigned to? Impossible as it seems at the first place, queer festivals embody this desire for expressivity and for autonomy on the gender performance, as a collective endeavour.

Furthermore, queer festivals shed light on issues of membership and social movement participation. Do people participating in political events incorporate and agree on all the codes that circulate inside? Why some of them return and some other not? This ‘membership identity’, defined as actors’ participation and attachment with queer dispositions, takes several forms and is located in a continuum of looser to tighter bonds. ‘Membership identity’ is a concept which can make us rethink the identity relationships of occasional participants in the social movement sphere, be it a physical activist space or/and a digital one. In this respect, queer is not only a matter of quality, ‘Am I queer or not?’, but also a matter of quantity: ‘How much queer am I?’ In fact, in their attempt to politicize their identities, queer activists build festivals as arenas that do not aim only at ‘internal consumption’, but they are oriented towards unknown publics, attempting to spread queerness onto new individuals, too. These new individuals participate in the spaces, not always through a ‘complete involvement’, but to multiple degrees and with extreme variations, depending on different perceptions and affects that these actors develop once they become members of these arenas. ‘Membership identity’ can reveal these tensions that different degrees of involvement and thus attachment in ephemeral political events raise.
Do queer festivals in Western Europe share any commonalities with queer festivals in other parts of the world? Although many could consider queer as a purely Western, if not a US-based project, queer has been expanding and appropriated in different national and local settings all over the globe. This diffusion relates both to queer as an artistic, rather than political, project and also on its travelling and its translation around the world.

First, and as indicated in the introduction, many queer festivals that take place in Europe, in the USA and elsewhere are in fact film festivals. These festivals usually display a rich international filmography of LGBTQ short and long feature films, and they often take place in art cinemas, fine art schools or independent spaces. Naming them queer does not necessarily imply that they are different from LGBT. The term ‘queer’ has been appropriated by some film festivals for several reasons. First, it is a way to depoliticize the cause, since ‘queer’ does not sound aggressive in the ears of a non-English mainstream audience. Second, it can estheticize sexual politics, by insisting only on the destabilization of gender and sexuality, and ignoring the social dimensions of heteronormativity and gender binarism. Third, it can be also used as a strategy of existence in strongly homophobic environments. For instance, some cities use the term ‘queer’ to describe their festivals in order not to display the more visible term ‘LGBT’. In this respect, ‘queer’ is used more as an umbrella term than a distinct identity. This is the case of the Beijing and the Mumbai International Queer Film Festivals. On Mumbai’s platform, we can read that the festival accepts films relating ‘to LGBT stories (Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender),’ but ‘queer’ is not used apart from in the title. Regarding the Beijing Queer Film Festival in China, this has been a significant actor of diffusion of LGBT sexualities in the Chinese public sphere (Bao 2017). So, even if ‘queer’ is used as an umbrella term in these settings, people are getting acknowledged in the queer perspectives of gender and sexuality. We see, therefore, that for non-European contexts, ‘queer’ is often making its move through art, and mostly through cinema. Film festivals are significant producers of non-normative and probably non-identitarian forms of gender and sexuality. Furthermore, I strongly believe, although a sociological study misses in this point, that queer film festivals serve also as spaces where their publics communicate, exchange and elaborate on the local and global specificities of queer collective identities.

The transnational dimension of queer film festivals has been evidenced by other scholars who have showed how circulation of movies are accompanied by media constructions in our supposed ‘post-gay’ era (Loist 2015). Media remove queer film festivals’ gay character, claiming that these festivals go beyond sexuality, that they are ‘post-gay’. This ‘post-gay’ identity has been seen as defining oneself by more than sexuality, to disentangle gayness with militancy and struggle, and to enjoy sexually mixed company’ (Ghaziani 2011: 102; also Warner 2000). But is queer really ‘post-gay’? Although we see some common points in Ghaziani’s definition between queer and post-gay, for instance, the need to escape from sexuality as a primary characteristic of identity, the major difference between post-gay and queer lies in the latter’s insistence and persistence on militancy and activism.

Central and Eastern European experience, in particular, is important in this point because it reveals the limits of ‘post-gay’ identity, and the ongoing conflicting character of gay and lesbian identities in the public space. In some contexts of the Balkan region, claiming collective identities of gay, lesbian, or transgender, might be a dangerous task. In Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina) or Belgrade (Serbia), LGBT prides and queer festivals are seen as antagonistic with local understandings of heteronormativity and masculinity, and they often lead to violent clashes among the participants (Kajinic 2010), but also between the queer organizers and external, usually far-right nationalists or hooligans (Bilic and Dioli 2016). Activists, however, identifying either as LGBT or queer or both, keep organizing activities in the public space in an actively militant way, challenging constraining factors due to public heteronormativity. Therefore, a focus on European queer festivals make us understand the role of activism for queer identities.

For activists in European queer festivals, queer is not just a word to hide their non-normative sexualities or gender expressions behind catchphrases. Queer is linked with local and transnational activist scenes and movements. For these festivals, the embeddedness in other left-wing cultures is as important as their non-normative sexualities and genders. Left-wing ideas on queering the commons, for instance, illustrate how queer festivals see their activism through a broader global justice perspective. Moreover, their identifications with radical left positions, as shown in the survey, adds to this argument. The links between left-wing and queer in Europe is a very important point that I stress in the book because it builds the specificity of European compared to other appropriations of queer in Asia or the USA. For the USA, in particular, queer has long been associated with radical militancy, but it seems that this is not the case, anymore. Queer has lost part of its activist legacy, and it is common now to use ‘queer’ as
a synonym for ‘gay’, in popular culture.\textsuperscript{6} I believe that the decline of the USA radical queer legacy lies in the lack of left-wing movement scenes and infrastructure, compared to European cities that still provide opportunities for anti-institutional activism. Infrastructure and networks with other social movements in this sense are extremely important for queer activists in Europe, because it is often upon their spatial and human networks that queer movements become part of a dynamic left-wing culture. Although anti-institutional movements of the left have lost a large part of their power compared to the 1960s and the 1970s, they still play an important role in queers’ political socialization. As we saw in the book, it is very often the case that European queer activists have been part of other left-wing social movements or they have participated in one or more movements or subcultures of the left-wing scenes of the cities they live in or in the cities they originally come from. Transnationalism in this extent is a differing parameter, since in Europe it is part of queer identity-building, much more than in the USA. In this respect, queer movements profit from freedom of movement within the borders of the EU, like other transnational LGBT movements (Ayoub 2016). Queer festivals demonstrate the capacity, despite difficulties, for alternative public spheres (and the public sphere itself) to be no longer linked inextricably to the nation-state. They finally prove that grassroots democracy does not require culturally and linguistically homogenous settings, but rather political visions, and the motivation to put them in practice.

European queer festivals can be also located in a global cycle of contention, which coincides with the Arab Spring, the anti-austerity protests, the Occupy movements and the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul. Despite their differences, all these movements share some characteristics, especially in the actors participating in them. Workers, youth, students, women, LGBTQ, racial, ethnic and religious minorities, environmentalists, they all found space within this global contentious wave that shook the world since 2009. Within these global ‘multiple identity’ movements queers found their space too, such as inside the Occupy movements (Jaleel 2012), or within the Gezi Park protests (Zengin 2013). Queer collectives found the opportunity and the space to become part of these movements through intersecting their queerness with larger political goals, aiming at social change, not only in terms of recognition of minoritarian identities, but also in terms of redistribution and socio-economic equality. These broader movements revitalized

\textsuperscript{6} E.g., \textit{Queer as Folk}, \textit{Queer Eye for the Straight Guy}, etc.
queer identities, linking them back to their roots in radical activism and anti-institutional logics, diffused in queer festivals’ mobilizations.

What challenges are queer festivals facing right now? The lack of spaces and the decline of left-wing movement activity, due to harsh effects of real estate speculation and increased policing, seem the most important. After the end of this study, many of the squats where queer festivals had taken place were shut down by local authorities as a result of aggressive neoliberal policies around urban planning. ‘Creative cities’ try to accommodate squats as a form of speculating in the housing market. This was the case, for instance, with the Teatro Valle in Rome and the De Slang squat in Amsterdam. The squatting tradition that has significantly influenced the flourishing of European queer festivals is now threatening their political independence, and even risks the possibility of the privatisation of queer activity, identities and sexualities, by dragging them into more mainstream spaces, with all the consequences that this might have for festivals’ radical orientations. Moreover, the decline of transnational inclusive movements, such as Blockupy, the global justice or the Indignados movements that have given significant room to queer activity, might also influence queer activists’ identity-building and collective actions. Finally, another crucial aspect is festivals’ ephemeral character. Without minimizing any of the importance of queer festivals for the activists’ and the participants’ lives and identities, queer festivals face the problem of temporality. Members’ fluctuating participation and organizers’ mobility are contingent variables upon which festivals depend to survive. This was the case of the Da Mieli a Queer; despite holding a successful festival in 2013, it did not take place again.

In a more positive note, some queer claims, especially on gender destabilization, seem to have gained ground within LGBT movements. The case of the Queer Committee of the Danish Party Red-Green Alliance is illustrative. One of the successes of this group was the introduction of transgender rights in the legislative arena. This group did not, however, manage to move beyond the policy implementation paradigm, and challenge the institutional norms, which create the basis for the rights-claiming process.7

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7 In Denmark, queer groups had already attempted to mix with institutional politics through elections. The Queer Committee of the Red-Green Alliance, Denmark’s left-wing party, is an illustrative example of such an engagement. As Liv Mertz, one of its members, described: ‘[The Queer Committee] immediately attracted a relatively large number of non-party members. Some of them were academics like myself or academics-to-be who had been identifying as socialists all along, but who had no experience working within the framework of a political party. Others were LGBT activists, while others yet were affiliated with radical left-wing
And although it seems positive that LGBT movements have started taking into account queer claims, what happens in countries which provide few rights to their non-normative sexual citizens? How does the lack of a common LGBT rights policy across the continent affect queer discourses in different countries? I attempted to make a short introduction to this question by addressing the case of the Rome queer festival. The Romans were very sceptical about their Northern European counterparts, who see the ‘gay rights’ issue as an ‘old-fashioned’ claim. I believe that queer activists in Western European festivals have a lot to learn by looking at Eastern and Southern European experiences (and beyond, of course). As Kulpa and Mizielinska remind us, the temporal disjunction of LGBT and queer politics (2011) might minimize the hostility some queer movements display against institutional representation. In contexts where strong homophobia is still very present in the institutional arena, and this influences ‘ordinary’ people’s lives, how can queer become a dynamic social movement and a strong oppositional pole against heteronormativity and gender binarism?

Queer Festivals: Challenging Collective Identities in a Transnational Europe is a step towards the analysis of all these questions by linking social movements and the state, sexuality, gender and politics, activist practices and transnationalism. This book demonstrates the sociological need to examine festivals’ mobilizations at the transnational scale, and to shed light into cultural and social dynamics developing within. Beyond postmodernist ideas on queer ‘moving beyond identities’, the book showed that collective identities are not dead, and this is not for bad. It is rather the identity models which change across time. Actors keep conducting identity-work both at the discursive and the practical level. European queer festivals have brought a revolution in the way actors think about gender and sexuality, and the identities that accompany them.

initiatives like Ungdomshuset or feminist grassroots groupings [...] or all of the above. In short, the Queer Committee is the closest I have ever come to witnessing and participating in “the mutual interdependencies of social movements and academic theories” – to the point where the definitional boundaries between the two dissolve. Thanks to ØQ [the Queer Committee], I have often left the Red-Green Alliance’s gigantic first floor apartment contemplating academic theories that had been refined rather than simplified in the course of my evening there. And characteristically, my sporadic academic output is very often prompted by discussions and experiences shared by my ØQ comrades’ (2008: 23). The Queer Committee did not function without barriers and without discursive misunderstandings. It managed, however, according to Mertz, to introduce legislation on transgender rights in 2007, while its popularity was attested through reportages published on the party’s bimonthly bulletin.