

## **QUEERING BODIES AND DESIRES: AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH TO GENDER AND SEXUALITY**

Stream Convenors

Lea Katharina Reiss, Vienna University of Economics and Business

Ebru Calin, University of Liverpool Management School

Emmanouela Mandalaki, NEOMA Business School

Anasthasios Hadjisolomou, University of Strathclyde

*Why is difference so shocking?  
Why should we all look the same,  
why should we be gender-polarized?  
Difference should make a difference.  
(Morris, 2002: 139)*

Despite the so-called mainstreaming of same-sex relationships and trans\* visibility, many of those who find themselves within the “liminal zones” of gender and sexuality remain monstrously unintelligible (Jones & Harris, 2016), existing somewhere outside of cis- and heteronormative relationships and institutions (Butler, 2004). Living in the periphery of societal norms of gender and sexuality is not only tiring but also dangerous for many, as queer repression and criminalization remain an everyday reality (Price, 2022). When other critical aspects of intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989), such as race, class, (dis)ability or religion, are added to this reality, queer bodies and desires become ‘sticky’ sites (Ahmed, 2006) of intersectional convergences and divergences. Thus, queerness is irreducible to sexuality alone and irrevocably denotes any deviation from other compulsory normalities (Ahmed, 2006). In these in-between spaces, identities are impossible to separate and/or disentangle from power dynamics shaping their materialisation (Taylor & Snowden, 2014). We therefore consider that paying attention to queer bodies and desires not only includes considering the matrices of cis/heteropatriarchy. It also accounts for white supremacy, colonialism, capitalism, as well as compulsory able-bodiedness, able-mindedness, and monogamy promoted by heteronormative discourses (Erevelles, 2011; Kafer, 2013).

Queer politics of bodies and desires are charged with affects, ranging from the emotional intensity seen in street protests to widely shared public consensus on particular affects attached to certain subjects. This might involve affects such as queer joy and pride, as well as disgust and fear directed towards individuals who do not comply with heteronormative spaces, such as queer ethno-religious minorities, asylum seekers and immigrants (Ahmed, 2006). In Sara Ahmed's (2015) words, these cultural figures become the objects upon which affects accumulate and 'stick,' producing social values attached to their particular signs and bodies. Non-normative bodies are consequently marginalised and classified as the *Other*, perceived as pathologically different, which (re)produces the fantasy of the "unified, original civilised human subject" (Blackman and Walkerdine 2001: 153). Particularly in times of severe backlash of liberal assimilation tactics and rise of conservatism and right-wing populism (Gabbat, 2022; Reuters, 2022; Sage, 2021; Walkers, 2021), politics of queer bodies and desires require (academic) attention.

Despite the major challenge that members of the LGBTQIA<sup>1</sup>+ community face in our societies, queer bodies and desires, particularly from intersectional critical Indigenous and postcolonial perspectives, have only received scant attention in organisation studies to this date. Queer organisational research (e.g., Burchiellaro, 2021; Gibson-Graham, 1996; Parker, 2002; 2016; Pullen et al., 2016; Rumens, De Souza & Brewis, 2019; Vitry, 2021) has (often simplistically) understood and used "queer" as a form of doing differently rather than a way of being in the world. Queering has thus mainly been discussed as a discursive practice of critical anti-establishment thinking (e.g., Parker, 2016) rather than as a conceptual avenue to deeply explore the actual struggles of LGBTQIA+ people's embodied experiences (Pullen et al., 2016). After all, the main commitment of queer scholarship is to disrupt binaries, deconstruct categories, and critique normalising processes of gender and sexuality that constrain agency and repress difference (Butler, 2004; Jagose, 1996; Parker, 2002; Warner, 1999; Wiegman and Wilson, 2015; Pérezts and Mandalaki, 2022). Thus, analysing queering practices without considering queer bodies' struggles against overt and covert forms of repressions and desires risks that "bodies, experiences and expressions of those (of us) who identify as queer get lost" (Pullen et al., 2016: 2). Furthermore, we acknowledge that due to the marginalisation of queer bodies and

---

<sup>1</sup> Short for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual/agender

desires, queer experiences may often require inquiry beyond the borders of traditional organisation research, as queer people are all too often pushed outside of cis- and heteronormative organisations and institutions (Butler, 2004).

Some recent works explore queer bodies and desires from intersectional perspectives and beyond the borders of traditional work and organisation research, in spaces such as churches (Taylor & Snowdon, 2014), night clubs (Edelman, 2018; Misgav & Johnston, 2014), queer community encounters (Rice et al., 2020), family gatherings (Jones & Harris, 2016), dating apps (Raj, 2011), migration paths (Gorman-Murray, 2007), urban neighbourhoods and bars (Giesecking, 2020), and homelessness on the streets (Hail-Jares et al., 2021). Often enough, these studies criticise how the narrative surrounding the vulnerability of (white) queer individuals and the stigmatisation of queer bodies from racialized backgrounds are employed by queer liberalism to justify the detrimental consequences of increased policing, gentrification, and militarism, all while masquerading as efforts to secure state-sanctioned safety (Hanhardt 2013). Furthermore, the division of queer identities into opposing categories such as pride versus shame, joy versus pain, and happiness versus unhappiness has led to the exploitation of queer shame for neoliberal agendas and the broader context of heteronormative, white supremacy (Liu, 2017). Rather than embracing the complex interplay between these potential facets of queer experiences, neoliberalism fosters the creation of rigid, binary subject positions (ibid). Critics, for instance, elucidate how queer shame has become a subject adopted primarily by those identifying as white, male, and queer, prioritising unmarked experiences of gendered humiliation, and constructing queer bodies of colour as “shameful” (Halberstam 2005; Perez 2005; Puar, 2007). Whereas mainstream LGBTQ+ psychology attempts to assimilate the queer subject by reducing shame, the queer approach to shame aims to destigmatize and empower the queer subject by embracing shame and the position of antinormativity (Liu, 2017). Nonetheless, as highlighted by the queer Taiwanese scholar, writer, and activist Wen Liu (2017), both of these approaches continue to perpetuate the problem of confining shame to a singular subject, -whether it's the white queer male body or the ‘other’ queer individual who is marginalised on multiple dimensions- rather than recognizing and conceptualising shame as a dynamic process: One that considers the reciprocal gaze and interconnectedness of desires among different bodies.

With the above considerations in mind, this stream invites work that reconceptualises queer subjectivity by exploring alternative frameworks, narratives, and perspectives on queer shame, disgust, alienation, pain, joy and other affects associated with queer bodies and desires that challenge existing reductionist paradigms. Doing so, we seek to open new avenues for understanding the diverse experiences of queer bodies, involving their desires and feelings. We particularly focus on the embodied experiences of queer people within and beyond traditional work settings and forms of organising. Our aim is to highlight queer embodied experiences of gender and sexuality from intersectional perspectives, considering questions of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, spirituality, nationality, class, (dis)ability, body weight, (non)monogamy, im(migration) status, and other critical identifiers of difference in society and organisations. We particularly encourage writing that deconstructs how shame is socialised in academic writing about bodies and desires and welcome empirical, methodological and conceptual contributions from multidisciplinary perspectives, seeking to unsettle established standards of being and writing about queer embodiment in organisation studies. Submissions may address the following areas of interest (but are not limited to):

- Experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two-spirited, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual/agender people in the context of work, and organising in everyday life.
- Diverse ways of being in the world at odds with normal, legitimate, dominant ideas of gender and sexuality, especially from critical intersectional perspectives.
- Queer indigenous and Two-Spirit people's experiences of embodiment, sexuality, and sexualization in organisational spaces.
- Intersectional experiences of shame and pride, inclusion and exclusion, invisibility and visibility, voice and silence, sadness and joy in relation to queer bodies and desires.
- Intersectional queer experiences of workplace violence and alienation in organisational spaces across different geographical and sectoral contexts.
- Ethnographic and autoethnographic work on queer embodiment and alternative, non-conventional embodied narratives on queer embodiment.
- Explorations of queer phenomenology and subjectivity in society and organisations.

## GWO Conference 2024 – Stream Proposal

- Art-based work exploring intersections of art and academic writing in unveiling intersectional embodied experiences of queer bodies and desires.

To facilitate wide-ranging discussions at the crossroads of queer bodies, queer desires, and organisation(s), organising, and the organised, we warmly welcome an array of expressive and artistic endeavours in addition to conventional papers. These could include but are not limited to poetry, interactive performance art, visual storytelling, crafting and more. The first day of the stream is planned to start with the aforementioned more creative formats followed by more ‘traditional’ (yet not less creative) paper sessions. The hybrid format of our stream serves the purpose of broadening the sessions and make the discussions as inclusive and accessible as possible welcoming individuals onsite and online at the same time. Please state in your submission your preferred method of presentation.

Abstracts of approximately 500 words (excluding references) must be submitted to the GWO 2024 submission system hosted by FourWaves. The link is available on the GWO conference 2024 website as of November 6th, 2023. No independent abstract submissions (i.e., an abstract submitted to someone’s personal email) will be considered for acceptance or presentation at the conference. Stream convenors will be conducting a blind review process and redirecting abstracts to the GWO organising committee for consideration in the open stream if and when appropriate. The abstract itself should then not have any author details to ensure this blind review process. Abstract formatting specifics are available in the submission system. Abstracts are due by December 22nd, 2023, with decisions on acceptance to be made by stream convenors by the end of January 2024. No extensions to this deadline will be possible as some participants will need time and justification documents to secure visas to attend the conference onsite. Enquiries can be directed to any of the convening team: Lea Katharina Reiss (she/her/no pronouns), [lea.reiss@wu.ac.at](mailto:lea.reiss@wu.ac.at), Ebru Calin (she/her/no pronouns), [Ebru.Calin@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:Ebru.Calin@liverpool.ac.uk), Emmanouela Mandalaki (she/her), [emmanouela.mandalaki@neoma-bs.fr](mailto:emmanouela.mandalaki@neoma-bs.fr), Anastasios Hadjisolomou (Tasos) (he/him), [a.hadjisolomou@strath.ac.uk](mailto:a.hadjisolomou@strath.ac.uk).

### References

Ahmed, S. (2014). *The cultural politics of emotion* (2nd ed.). Edinburgh University Press.

- Blackman, L., Cromby, J., Hook, D., Papadopoulos, D., & Walkerdine, V. (2008). Creating subjectivities. *Subjectivity*, 22(1), 1-27.
- Burchiellaro, O. (2021). Queering control and inclusion in the contemporary organization: On 'LGBT-friendly control' and the reproduction of (queer) value. *Organization Studies*, 42(5), 761-785.
- Butler, J. (2004). *Undoing Gender*, Routledge, New York, NY.
- Carla Rice, Karleen Pendleton Jiménez, Elisabeth Harrison, Margaret Robinson, Jen Rinaldi, Andrea LaMarre, and Jill Andrew (2020). Bodies at the Intersections: Refiguring Intersectionality through Queer Women's Complex Embodiments, *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 46:1, 177-200.
- Christensen, J. F., Reiss, L. K., & Andrighetto, G. (forthcoming). *Queer(ing)*. Encyclopedia of Gender and Management. Edward Elgar Publishing, MA.
- Crenshaw, K. W. (1989). "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics." University of Chicago Legal Forum 1989: 139–67.
- Edelman, E. A. (2018). Why we forget the pulse nightclub murders: Bodies that (never) matter and a call for coalitional models of queer and trans social justice. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 24(1), 31-35.
- Erevelles, N. (2011). Disability and Difference in Global Contexts: Enabling a Transformative Body Politic. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gabbatt, A. (2022, April 07). 'Unparalleled in intensity' – 1,500 book bans in US school districts. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/apr/07/book-bans-pen-america-school-districts>
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. (1996). Queer (y) ing capitalist organization. *Organization*, 3(4), 541-545.
- Giesecking, J. J. (2020). Mapping lesbian and queer lines of desire: Constellations of queer urban space. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 38(5), 941–960.
- Gorman-Murray, A. (2007). Rethinking queer migration through the body, *Social & Cultural Geography*, 8:1, 105-121.
- Hail-Jares, K., Vichta-Ohlsen, R., Butler, T. M., & Byrne, J. (2021). Queer homelessness: The distinct experiences of sexuality and trans-gender diverse youth. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 1-25.
- Halberstam, J. (2005). Shame and white gay masculinity. *Social Text*, 23(3-4), 219-233.
- Halperin, D. M. (1997). *Saint Foucault: Towards a gay hagiography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Jagose, A. (1996). *Queer Theory: An Introduction*, New York University Press, New York, NY.
- Jones, S. H. & Harris, A. (2016) Monsters, desire and the creative queer body, *Continuum*, 30:5, 518-530.
- Jones, S. H., & Harris, A. (2016). Monsters, desire and the creative queer body. *Continuum*, 30(5), 518-530.

- Kafer, A. (2013). *Feminist, Queer, Crip*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Liu, W. (2017). Toward a queer psychology of affect: restarting from shameful places. *Subjectivity* 10, 44–62.
- Misgav, C., & Johnston, L. (2014). Dirty dancing: the (non) fluid embodied geographies of a queer nightclub in Tel Aviv. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 15(7), 730-746.
- Morris, M. (2002). "Young Man Popkin: A Queer Dystopia." In *This Bridge We Call Home*, edited by G. Anzaldúa and A. Keating, 138–139. New York: Routledge.
- Parker, M. (2002). Queering management and organization. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 9(2), 146-166.
- Parker, M. (2016). Queering queer. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 23(1), 71-73.
- Perez, H. (2005). You can have my brown body and eat it, too! *Social Text* 23(3–4 84–85): 171–191.
- Pérezts, M, & Mandalaki, E (2022). Queering Organizational Appearances through Reclaiming the Erotic, in *The [Oxford] handbook of phenomenologies and organization studies*, François-Xavier de Vaujany, Jeremy Aroles, and Mar Pérezts.
- Price, C. (2022, November 29). *Map of Countries that Criminalise LGBT People*. Human Dignity Trust. <https://www.humandignitytrust.org/lgbt-the-law/map-of-criminalisation/>
- Puar, J. (2007). *Terrorist assemblages: Homonationalism in queer times*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Pullen, A., Thanem, T., Tyler, M., & Wallenberg, L. (2016). Sexual politics, organizational practices: Interrogating queer theory, work and organization. *Gender, Work and Organization*, 23(1), 1-6.
- Raj, S. (2011). *Grindr Bodies: Racial and Affective Economies of Online Queer Desire*. *Critical Race and Whiteness Studies*, 7 (2). 1 -12. ISSN 1838-8310
- Reuters (2022, October 27). Russia to ban sharing LGBT 'propaganda' with adults as well as children. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-63410127>
- Rumens, N., De Souza, E. M., & Brewis, J. (2019). Queering queer theory in management and organization studies: Notes toward queering heterosexuality. *Organization Studies*, 40(4), 593-612.
- Sage, A. (2021, July 01). Woke leftists are ruining France, claims Emmanuel Macron. The Times. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/woke-leftists-are-ruining-france-claims-emmanuel-macron-8zmx7k8lc>.
- Taylor, Y. & Snowdon, R. (2014). Making Space for Young Lesbians in Church? Intersectional Sites, Scripts, and Sticking Points, *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 18:4, 393-414.
- Vitry, C. (2021). Queering space and organizing with Sara Ahmed's Queer Phenomenology. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 28(3), 935-949.
- Walkers, S. (2021, July 21). Hungary's Viktor Orbán will hold referendum on anti-LGBT law. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jul/21/hungarys-viktor-orban-will-hold-referendum-on-anti-lgbt-law>

Warner, M. (1999). *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life*, The Free Press, New York, NY.

Wiegman, R. & Wilson, E. A. (2015). "Introduction: antinormativity's queer conventions", *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, Vol. 26 No. 1, pp. 1-25.

## **Biographies**

*Lea Katharina Reiss* is a queer feminist postdoctoral researcher at the Interdisciplinary Institute for Management and Organizational Behavior at Vienna University of Economics and Business. Lea's research revolves around questions of how social inequalities unfold in working lives and organisational settings. In her most recent projects, Lea investigates phenomena related to feminist organising, queer activism, embodied vulnerability, and collective forms of resistance. Lea has been an active GWO member since 2020, participated in the annual meetings, is member of the Editorial Review Board of GWO, and was part of the convening team of Stream 17 "Queer(ing) activism in organizations: Voicing experiences of queer bodies, allyship, and alliances across intersectional marginalization" at the GWO2023 Conference in Cape Town.

*Ebru Calin* is a Muslim Queer Feminist Doctoral Researcher exploring Organisational Behaviour and intersectional organisational inequalities at the University of Liverpool, Management School. Ebru's research particularly illuminates the intersection between affect, bodies and discourse, delving into lived experiences of Queer individuals of faith at the workplace through a Queer Phenomenological Framework. Ebru's most recent ongoing project was recognized with an Award for "Best Developmental Paper" within the track "Gender in Management" at the British Academy of Management Conference (2023) and delves into the challenges in exploring the sensory body and cognitive mind, with a specific focus on elucidating the affective resonance between researchers and participants in phenomenologically inclined interviews. This exploration employs disruptive and creative methodologies, such as poetry, reflexive autoethnography, vulnerable storytelling, stream of consciousness narratives, and visual arts, to capture and convey the qualitative richness and texture of such embodied narratives.

*Emmanouela Mandalaki* is Associate Professor of Organizations at NEOMA Business School and coordinator of the Research group Inclusion, Diversity, Equality for the



## GWO Conference 2024 – Stream Proposal

research area of excellence 'The World We Want'. Trained in arts and social sciences, in her research, Emmanouela engages with feminist thought, (auto)ethnographic, qualitative methodologies and creative forms of academic writing to explore alternative ways of engaging with questions of embodiment, ethics, gender, diversity, inclusion, social inequalities and affect in organizations. Emmanouela serves as Co-Editor for the Feminist Frontiers section of *Gender, Work and Organization*, as member of the Editorial Review Board for *Organization Studies*. She also guest-edits special issues for critical journals such as *Gender, Work and Organization*, *Culture and Organization* and *PuntoOrg International Journal*. Emmanouela's work appears in international book volumes and internationally recognized academic outlets.

*Anastasios Hadjisolomou* (Tasos) is a Senior Lecturer (Associate Professor equivalent) in Employment studies at University of Strathclyde, Scotland. His research interests include service employment, service triangle, customer misbehaviour, customer abuse, sexual harassment and violence in the workplace, (sexualized) aesthetic labour, LGBT+ issues in the workplace, employee voice and labour process theory. His work has been published in journals such as the *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *Work, Employment and Society*, *Gender Work and Organization* and *Industrial Relations Journal*.