

## **INTRODUCTION QUEER(ING) (AND) THE SOCIAL SCIENCES: CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES**

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## INTRODUCTION TO THIS SPECIAL QUEER ISSUE

We are very happy to introduce this special issue on Queer theory, which seeks to explore the various ways in which queer perspectives intersect with and enrich the scientific discourse within the field of social sciences. Originally emerging from textual idealism and literary criticism, the concept of “queer” has undergone a significant transformation over time, evolving into a critical and disruptive framework useful for analyzing and reinterpreting the dynamics of identity, subjectivity, and social relations. The inherently fluid nature of the queer concept, characterized by an active resistance to rigid definitions, is evident through a constant commitment to critically deconstruct conventional labels. Far from being abstract or purely conceptual, this resistance deeply influences the studying of gender, sexuality and broader sociocultural dynamics. By effectively undermining conventional taxonomies, queer theory contributes to a redefinition of societal norms and expectations. Therefore, the queer approach goes beyond outlining new thought paradigms; it also promotes an inclusive perspective that emancipates itself from entrenched stereotypes, offering a more open and pluralistic view of society. Building on these premises, this special issue brings together a collection of contributions that investigate the ramifications, applications, and tensions of queer theory within the broad field of social sciences. The selected articles are from a wide range of disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, cultural studies, and legal sciences, offering a rich and interdisciplinary overview of queer methodologies and epistemologies. Each contribution examines how queer theoretical frameworks intersect with disciplinary traditions, drawing attention to both productive synergies and critical frictions. Adopting different perspectives, all the authors have emphasized the connection between queer theory and their disciplines, exploring synergies and tensions that arise, in a specific context like Italy as well as in other international contexts.

In her article, *Looking at polyamory through queer lens. Notes from a longitudinal qualitative studies*, Nicole Braida analyses the main results of a longitudinal study on relational forms inspired by the theory and practice of polyamory in Italy. Guided from a queer epistemological perspective, Braida highlights how the polyamorous discourse can foster the denaturalization of certain binarisms (Homosexual/Heterosexual; Man/Woman) that are foundational to sexual identity in the dominant order and of normativity that govern the social recognition of meaningful relationships. While acknowledging its political limitations, the article

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values as well the contribution that other activisms have made to poly-amorous discourse, pointing it in a more critical and (self)reflective direction.

Since the condition of homelessness in LGBTQI+ people often turn out to be invisible due to the reluctance of individuals to self-describe as such due to the fear of experiencing discrimination and violence from other guests and from the operators of dedicated shelters themselves, in *Between horizontal and oblique. For a queer approach to LGBTQI+ experiences of housing precarity*, Simone Schinocca and Raffaella Ferrero Camoletto reconstruct the experiences of a group of participants in the Tohousing project, inaugurated in Turin in December 2018 to provide precise responses to the issues of housing precarity and socioeconomic vulnerability of LGBTQI+ people. Using a mixed-methods approach, integrating together a creative methodology (a theater workshop with the creation of a podcast) and a more traditional qualitative research technique (semi-structured interviews), the article shows how the horizontality of the participatory approach adopted takes the form of an oblique (and in this sense queering) positioning with respect to other ways of doing research and intervention, including on the social policy level, with marginalized subjectivities.

Barbara Centrone and Elisa Costantino pinpoint the fact that the existing literature on Disability Studies has only recently begun to explore the sexual identity of disabled people from an embodied perspective. So, their article *Multiple discrimination: an intersectional study on the embodied experience of LGBTQIAP+ disabled people* is part of a broader and still ongoing research project that presents the results of an exploratory survey conducted with a self-selected sample of queer disabled people. The study builds on the authors' collaborative autoethnography and continues with a survey and discursive interviews.

The next article, *Queer Aesthetics: Reflections on the Queer through the Lens of Georg Simmel*, wants to outline some theoretical reflections about queer aesthetics. Luca Guizzardi wonders: who is a queer individual? How can a queer individual be imagined? The queer subject is the strange(r) of society and in society and, as the author shall try to show, queer could therefore be observed, from that Simmelian perspective, as a social form. In fact, the essential point of the article is about to make is that queer should be seen as a cultural form. The figure of the outsider and Simmel's social aesthetic theory will then be taken up in order to develop a possible link between the two – the perception of queerness and the individual's reaction to it. Finally, in the conclusions will mention

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various reflections on the meaning of queer as a cultural form of our modern life.

In the article *Queer(er) Sociology: Innovations and Implications for Social Research*, Salvatore Monaco highlights the transformative potential of queer theory to unsettle some established paradigms within Sociology, and to foster innovative modes of knowledge production. He argues that queer theory should not be viewed merely as an object of academic inquiry, but rather as a critical tool for analyzing social structures, power dynamics, and the processes of normalization that often underpin social research. The author places particular emphasis on the theoretical and methodological challenges involved in integrating queer perspectives into the social sciences. His work aims to broaden the scope of sociological inquiry by promoting a practice of knowledge co-creation—one that actively engages with the diversity and complexity of social realities.

With their article *Nature's Queer Nexus, Reclaiming Spaces and Identities*, Udisha Singh and Anurag Anand explore the intersection between queer theory and ecology, arguing the need to deconstruct the heteronormative dichotomies that permeate people's relationship with nature. The authors claim that designating nature as heteronormative has led to the marginalization of queer communities and the denaturalization of homosexuality. Through the analysis of works by American queer writers such as Adrienne Rich and Minnie Bruce Pratt, the paper highlights the close association between the queer community and nature, as well as the need for conservation practices that protect both nature and queer communities.

In her article *Challenging Neoliberal Normativities: Making Space for Queer Urban Theory and Radical Practices*, Anna Liliana Arlotta engages with key strands of queer theory, urban studies, and critical geography to theorize the concept of the "marginal city" through a queer lens. To this end, the paper explores the political and theoretical potential of adopting radical queer approaches in the analysis of urban space, reflecting on both the convergences and frictions between queer theory and critical urban studies. Arlotta offers a critical examination of the notion of the "inclusive city" and the dynamics of LGBT+ assimilationism, exposing the contradictions these frameworks present not only for sexual and gender minorities but also for a broader range of subjects who occupy the symbolic and material margins of contemporary urban environments. The article culminates in the articulation of a visionary model of the "not-yet-here" city, inspired by bell hooks' conceptualization of the margin as a space of radical openness. This model challenges prevailing urban

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imaginaries and proposes alternative spatial configurations grounded in resistance, multiplicity, and emancipatory potential.

In their contribution, *The Impact of Queer culture in gender affirmation pathways: the case of desister people*, Marianna Coppola and Giuseppe Masullo propose a completely different interpretation of the possible outcomes of the assessment process within gender affirmation processes for binary and non-binary transgender people. The authors emphasize that the much-discussed and controversial phenomenon of “desisting” that is, people who begin a gender affirmation journey and then discontinue it after a short time - must be viewed from a holistic and “queering” perspective in order to appreciate the complexity and composite reality of life stories and processes of identity self-determination.

In his contribution, *A brief history of modern and contemporary theories of the subject: universal, binary, queer. From olympe de gouges to paul b. Preciado in the dialectic between equality and difference*, Nit Nahum offers a historical and cultural analysis of modern theories on the queer dimension, analyzing the main contributions of influential authors in the contemporary debate, crossing different historical phases and paradigms of thought on the composite reality of the queer world.

The work of Alessia Ale Santambrogio and Richard Bourelly entitled *Youth Resistance in Cavour High School, an Italian Case Study* presents a timely and complex reflection on the forms of resistance implemented by transgender and non-binary students who highlight a difficulty with the social democratization mechanism of the “alias career” both in terms of application and in terms of the dissemination of knowledge and training by the “social actors” involved in the process: from school administrators to teachers, school staff, and the parents of other students.

Micol Pizzolati, in her contribution entitled *Queerness and collective care within University: insights from memory work with student groups*, explores the theme of “queerness” in the university system through ethnography and analysis of life stories that examine the ways in which queer students co-construct the coordinates of meaning by negotiating tensions and the need for meaning in social reality.

Finally, two book reviews are presented by authors who highlight important reflections on the theme of feminism and queer theories.

Gabriele Oliva offers a comprehensive analysis of Judith Butler’s book *Who’s Afraid of Gender?*, outlining the historical and cultural context in which the philosopher proposes keys to interpreting the dynamics of power/oppression of gender identities that are “other” than the cis-heteronormative male domain. In addition to his analysis, Oliva offers reflections for future research and for the actualization of Butler’s theory in

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relation to the new challenges of contemporary society in terms of identity self-determination, issues that are intersectional with other forms of social oppression.

Miriam Matteo reviews the book *Femminismo Terrone* by Claudia Fauzia and Valentina Amenta, offering an analysis of the very interesting intersectional aspect: the aspects of the feminist struggle with the struggles and demands of the southern question, which is still very much felt in Italy between the social and economic divide between the north of the country and the south and the islands.

Matteo outlines the keys to analyzing the phenomenon of female emancipation among the populations of southern Italy without, however, identifying the critical issues and practical implications of the authors' thinking.

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