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Editorial

This second Queer-Feminist Science and Technology Studies Forum is based on inputs, thoughts and discussions rooted in a workshop about "Make Kin Not Babies": Discussing queer-feminist, non-natalist perspectives and pro-kin utopias, and their STS implications" during the STS Conference 2016 in Graz. With this workshop our working group Queer STS aimed not just at "queering STS conferences" methodologically, but we also chose a topic which was rather new to all invited speakers and participants equally.

Anita first stumbled upon the topic when in November 2015 Donna Haraway, Adele E. Clarke, Michelle Murphy, Alondra Nelson, Kim TallBear, and Chia-Ling Wu presented their points of view to a panel discussion with the title "Make Kin Not Babies: Toward Feminist STS Pro-Kin and Non-Natalist Politics of Population and Environment" at the 4S (Society for Social Studies of Science) meeting in Denver, Colorado. In their abstract they stated:

"Can we develop anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, anti-racist, STS-informed feminist politics of peopling the earth in current times, when babies should be rare yet precious and real pro-family and community politics for young and old remain rare yet urgently needed?" (quoting abstract,[1] session nr. 27).

Inspired by this quite provocative panel discussion, we read some more of Donna Haraway's articles on the very issue, and we want to share here some of her ideas as an introduction and frame to the very diverse and queer papers presented in this second edition Forum.

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1 The full abstract (ibid., p.28 f.) was: "Feminist STS scholarship has long and richly addressed biogenetic reproduction, focusing on race, region, sexuality, class, gender, and more. However, feminist STS has also largely been silent about reducing the human burden on earth while strengthening ecojustice for people and other critters as means and not ends. Can we develop anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, anti-racist, STS-informed feminist politics of peopling the earth in current times, when babies should be rare yet precious and real pro-family and community politics for young and old remain rare yet urgently needed? How can we develop collaborative politics recognizing that peoples subjected to (ongoing) genocides may need more children? How can we intervene in the relentless glut of attention devoted to problematic, costly 'rights' and 'needs' for (mainly richer) women to have babies as an individual 'choice'? Questions: How to nurture durable multi-generational non-biological kin-making, while humans everywhere transition to vastly less reproduction? What alternative ways of flourishing can be nurtured across generations and across cultures, religions, nations? How to deter on-going anti-feminist population control efforts while generating innovative discourses that legitimate non-natalist policies and choices? How to promote research on forms of contraception women and men want (and can use under diverse circumstances) and reproductive services that actually serve? How to build non-natalist kin-making technologies and sciences in housing, travel, urban design, food growing, environmental rehabilitation, etc.? Where are the feminist utopian, collaborative, risky imaginings and actions for earthlings in a mortal, damaged, human-heavy world? Why hasn't feminist STS taken the lead in such fundamental endeavors?", (http://4sonline.org/ee/files/program_w_abstracts.pdf,2017-04-13)

The Anthropocene (or Capitalocene, Plantationocene, or Chthulucene, as Haraway 2015 discusses it) can be seen as a boundary event rather than an epoch, where life on earth for everybody changes and nothing will be the way it was before. Haraway (2015, p. 159) refers to more than climate change, but "... extraordinary burdens of toxic chemistry, mining, depletion of lakes and rivers under and above ground, ecosystem simplification, vast genocides of people and other critters, etc. ...” Thus, she argues, the reserves and resources of the earth have come to an end, and we have to think about new ways of dealing with a "major system collapse after major system collapse after major system collapse” (ibid. p. 159).

One factor of the problem are the estimated 11 billion people at the end of 21st century, because already: "Right now, the earth is full of refugees, human and not, without refuge.” (Haraway 2015, p. 160). So Haraway created the slogan "Make Kin Not Babies!” (ibid. p. 161), and explicitly asks feminists to think about theories and actions "to unravel the ties of both genealogy and kin, kin and species. ... My purpose is to make ‘kin’ mean something other/more than entities tied by ancestry or genealogy.” (ibid. p. 161; see more about the rejection of biological reproduction as the ultimate prerequisite for kinship and alternative cultural models of kinship: Read 2001).

Some ideas Haraway proposes (2015, p. 164):

- to celebrate young people who decide not to have children,
- to create new cultural norms, like having three lifetime committed parents per child,
- to live in multi-child and multi-generational households,
- to establish adoption practices for elder people (and by elderly people),
- to acknowledge (and discuss) that nations who are "worried about low birth rates” actually engage in "racial purity projects” (need for "non-racist immigration”),

To sum up, we are to find ways to innovate enduring kin: to "kinnovate”.

We invited friends and colleagues to "kinnovate” with us in this edition of Forum:

Birgit Hofstätter opens the discussion with a personal reflection on what making kin by taking care of others could mean in everyday life and how non-biological aunt*hood or uncle*hood could be a model for that.

Boka En, Michael En, David Griffiths, and Mercedes Pölland take us deeper into the topic and focus on the aspect of intimacy. They make us witnesses of a discussion on what it means to live non-monogamous and queer relationships and thereby seem to look for visions of a ‘good life’ without creating a morality of how to be a "good queer”.

Daniela Jauk is inspired by both Donna Haraway's text "Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene" and "The Thirteen Original Clan Mothers" by self-identified Indigenous writer Jamie Sams. She reflects on this inspiration in regard to queer kinship and how her choice of sources taught her (and us) an important lesson.

Kirk John Fiereck approaches the topic from a different direction, takes a step back from kinship and starts by questioning personhood as something restricted to humans. He explores the political implications of non-human personhood by taking a look into the consequences of considering corporations persons in the USA and by tracing the story of a transgender creek in Australia.

Zoltán Bajmócy reflects with **Boglárka Méreiné Berki, Judit Gébert, György Málovics, and Barbara Mihók** on a joint project with a Roma community in Hungary. They propose a queer perspective on kinship as possibility to breach the gap between social classes and a differentiated understanding of poverty.

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Birgit Hofstätter

Making kin, or: The art of kindness and why there is nothing romantic about it

Birgit Hofstätter is an amalgam of researcher, queer activist, local politician, and yoga guide. They currently make a living as managing director of an institute offering extra-curricular activities for pupils and students interested in STEM.

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*This text is based on my contribution "Joys of Aunt*hood"[1] to the workshop "Make Kin Not Babies – Discussing queer-feminist, non-natalist perspectives and pro-kin utopias, and their STS implications," STS Conference 2016. I dedicate it to Fanni Gerlach, kindness in person, an artist of making kin.*

Prologue: There is nothing wrong with wanting and having children, I have to begin with. Maybe these words raise the exact same red flag I wanted to avoid. These words have to be said, though, because this reflection is based on the situation of not having children, be it intentionally or incidentally, and being fine with it. In my experience, being fine with not having children is often taken as an offence by parents, as if I considered my personal state superior to theirs. Being also a vegetarian and a queer feminist, I am used to this pattern of people being offended because I do something differently as a matter of principle. I am no missionary, though. I am a champion of diversity, as long as everyone gets their share to flourish. When I was younger, I used to generalise my love for children. Now I have to admit: Some kids I do love dearly, others I prefer to keep a distance to. With some of them I just do not click. And I do not want to be judged for that, just as I do not judge others in their urge to procreate through children. There should be children brought to this world, for sure, and they should be wanted, loved and cared for. That is just something I have not been able to do – at least as far as my life has taken me – and I want that to be accepted. This is all to say as a preface.

Being without children, maybe even additionally to being without a partner – the classic archetype of an 'old spinster' – is a marginalised state of existence in our society as it contradicts the hegemonic sentiment of an ideal life, not only in Western cultures. Being without a partner (in whatever sexual constellation) and not having children is reason enough to raise suspicion. The urge to procreate through children, however, may not be as innate as stories coming e.g. from Hollywood's dream factories would lead us to

1 I use * to indicate that gender is something fluid and that there are more than two distinct genders but that most languages – including English and German – have not yet developed a way to express this. The asterisk is to constantly remind us to think beyond male and female.

believe. Most recently, mothers (and less scandalously debated fathers) have come out with confessions of regretting to have children in the first place (cf. e.g. study by Orna Donath 2016). On the other hand, being shamelessly without children is often considered egotistic and antisocial: Who will do the work when there are so many old and frail who did not care to procreate? Who will be there to pay taxes for financing retirement pensions? Who gives you the right to enjoy the benefits of a childless life while others have to organise their daily routines, their finances around the safety and future of their offspring? Partly, I have heard these questions/accusations of egotism in debates with 'pronatalists' and 'non-pronatalists' ever since one of my best friends in high school insisted – already at the age of 15 – that he would never have children, that it would be careless to expose children to the world as it is. I have witnessed and participated in many of such conversations, been on one or the other side of the issue, wanted children myself badly until I figured that maybe this is just something I had learned to want. However, and this is disturbing, these questions and accusations started to emerged in my inner dialogues as a by-product of the feeling of shame I have developed throughout the years while watching many of my peers stirring their lives towards the bourgeois family ideal. Because I myself seemed to 'fail' in 'finding the right partner' for that.

As a queer-feminist single with academic background, living in a deeply rural area in an environment where like-minded people are not exactly to be found around the corner, the question of how to connect to others, how to establish nurturing and persistent relationships, is pervading my everyday life. Yet it is not only an essential question to people who do not have children of their own (with or without partners). Kinship – regardless of existing blood ties with succeeding generations – is an essential question of resilience and well being, a question even of health and healthcare (cf. Campling 2013). It is also a question we have to ask in regard to responsible and sustainable existence on this planet, as Donna Haraway points out in her text "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin" (2015).

This text is a reflection on how kinship develops out of KINdness, caring for and taking care of others (which explores into the aspect of health and resilience). I find the term "aunt*hood" or "uncle*hood" useful for expressing this kind of kinship because this form of relation seems less hierarchical than parenthood, although it comprises the aspect of taking on responsibility for someone. In some societies in certain periods (particularly unwed) friends were adopted to families by calling them "aunt" or "uncle". I remember my grandmother having such friends my mother would introduce to me as "aunt". As an aunt* to my oldest brother's children I am experiencing 'biological' aunt*hood and compare this to other, similarly structured relationships I have observed and experienced throughout my life so far. In this aspect, I will repeatedly touch Donna Haraway's aforementioned text, particularly her calling "to make the Anthropocene as short/thin as possible and to cultivate with each other in every way imaginable epochs to come that can

replenish refuge. Right now, the earth is full of refugees, human and not, without refuge" (p. 160). To me, being an aunt* also means to provide refuge: for my nephews* and nieces* when they seek it from their parents in times of disagreement, or in cases when their parents are not available at all, but also for those human and non-human beings who literally had to leave their home (or never had one in the first place). Still, with all the responsibilities dedicated aunt*hood bears, this state of kinship seems to offer more space for the individuals involved than this society's demands on parenthood would allow. Maybe this is also one of the reasons some people find themselves unfit to have children themselves. We have come to burden parenthood with way too high expectations and have created a culture of judging parental skills by which one can easily feel overwhelmed and insecure. In contrast, I feel that you practically cannot fail as an aunt*. Being an aunt* means to put forth one's hand, not to impose oneself on another. It is an offer of kindness.

My parents have a – you may call it pathological – urge care for other people. This is where I found strong models for the kind of kinship I am about to describe. They both had respective jobs: My mum was a nurse and my dad first was a child care worker in a children's home, later a manager of a boarding house, and a social worker in an assisted living facility for chronically ill psychiatric patients. My parents were always hosting and caring within and outside their jobs. One of my first childhood friends was Ronny, child of Czech refugees my parents helped through the first struggles after arriving in Austria, including Ronny's birth. Another one was Franklin.[2] When his mother was on prison leave to see him they spent the weekends with us. Christian moved in when I was in kindergarten. As a baby whose parents were not able to take care of, he was brought to the children's home in our village. When his psychological parent among the staff left the institution, he became my foster brother for quite some years. Only shortly after he moved out, my parents started to take care of a young couple who fled Hungary with their two small children before the fall of the Iron Curtain. My parents helped them through the transition from Austria to Canada. Suzanne and Judith were like siblings to me and we stayed pen pals after they left. In turn, they later supported me emotionally when I spent not-so-happy nine months as au pair in suburban Toronto. After that, my parents took care of a Russian family and a young Bulgarian mother who lost her husband in a terrible car accident. After my parents divorced, my dad started mentoring young Iranian refugees, two of them alternately stayed with him for a while. My mother, in turn, started to work in a palliative care unit – probably the job where she felt most useful and her care appreciated. Even now that they both have retired, my parents are still very active in taking care of others.

2 Name changed

Needless to say that taking care has also become part of who I consider myself to be. I am the oldest of four kids, in our younger days kind of a third parent to my siblings, and with my parents as role models, I could not help but become a care-taking-kind of person myself. Most recently I have come to take a critical look at this trait, though, and to realise how my own expectations of effective care-taking repeatedly takes me to the edges of my personal resources. Currently, 14-year old Mohammad from Syria is living with me and my dad, hoping that his parents will be able to follow from war-striken suburban Damascus to reunite with him. Similarly, 30-year old Samsur from Afghanistan has moved in with us after a year of being a frequent visitor to our home, helping my dad with the garden and being highly appreciated in the local community service. The gentle person he is, he manages to connect even with individuals who have been reluctant to converse with refugees in the first place. He very organically has grown part of our family. Yet, it also works the other way around: In our most recent work with refugees, some overheard me calling my dad "Papa" and started to call him "Papa", too. One day, 10-year old Faisal from a Syrian family came up to me and claimed, that my dad was his "Opa" (his grandpa). In all these cases some kind of mutual adoption into each other's families seems to have taken place.

To make it clear: These relationships are not automatically always friendships (in most cases they are not), nor do they have to be particularly intimate. Just like 'biological' family relations are hardly ever always dearly and without frictions. On the contrary, some of them are quite challenging – Donna Haraway points out that neither "Make Kin" nor "Not Babies" are easy to accomplish but that "they both demand our best emotional, intellectual, artistic, and political creativity, individually and collectively, across ideological and regional differences, among other differences" (p. 164). Throughout our lives, we develop different languages, hold different views on the world – even among us 'biological' siblings as we have grown older. It is the feeling of responsibility for another being and a feeling of emotional connection that is the core of this kinship. It is kindness – the ability to recognise someone as kin, as of the same kind (cf. Campling 2013). Committing to these relationships can be exhausting and full of contradictions. When my dad started to take care of another Afghan family who came to our village, the process of connecting was particularly difficult and full of backlashes. It seemed that only part of the family was capable of opening themselves to this new place and its people. For instance, only the very young and one of the older sons would respond to me when greeting and talking to them. I knew that my offering kindness was undesired when another one of the older sons was sitting at our lunch table and would not respond – not even look me in the eyes – when I asked him if he wanted coffee. My attempt of kindness remained unacknowledged and at this point it is hard not to feel offended. I feel humbled by this experience because for the first time I consciously felt my racist

and colonial heritage. I had to take back the imaginary hand I had put forth and accept that making kin is not a one-way process.

As a white, female raised, queer feminist I think I also have to be critical of what lies underneath this 'obsession' with helping others, taking care of others, the urge to fix all the problems of one's fellow beings. On the one hand, caring can be considered as taking on a superior position towards the being to care for, taking control and establishing a hierarchical relationship. On the other hand, caring is connoted with femininity (equals downgrading) and with taking sacrifices – and there is nothing romantic about it. As I pointed out before: Caring can be exhausting, particularly if you pay too little attention to your personal limits. Both perspectives are little desirable, at least to me. Neither do I want to put myself in a superior position to those I care for, nor do I want to reproduce stereotypes of femininity. It takes another perspective on caring, a mindset that deconstructs hierarchies and makes caring a nurturing experience for both the giving and receiving part. Ideally there is no such binary at all. So to me, kinship on the basis of caring can only work by reciprocity: That something 'comes back', that the other side accepts and welcomes being cared for, that there is also care offered in return – maybe not from the very same individual and maybe not in the very same form. This is why kinship through caring requires a rather thickly woven network of beings who offer and accept. Kinship is supposed to nurture the parties involved, it is supposed to be transformative. So, even though many of the people we care for come and go in the course of our lives, and even though we have lost touch with many of them, there is an infinite connection, an impact we have had on each other. When I think of these encounters, I have this image of us being waves of some waterdrops that hit an ocean. On our ways across that ocean we meet other waves, changing each other's amplitudes. Some waves are gentle, some shake us like tsunamis. And we carry the information of every single encounter with us, even when we drift apart and go different directions.

Epilogue: As I revise this text for publication, I am in a sentimental mood, coming from the funeral of a person who I just now realise was the perfect model of an aunt* as I have described in this text. In my view, she was personified kindness, caring and open hearted to whoever came her way, without putting herself in a superior position, forcing herself on those supposedly in need. As an anxious child I felt safe with her, and whenever I met her in my adult life I could still feel this calming effect on me even though we were never as close again. At the funeral, words of how much she would be missed not only by her huge 'biological' family but also by the whole community hardly ever felt so true than with her. She did have children – plenty of them – but she still had so much to give, particularly to disadvantaged people like refugees and children who came from troubled families. Her example proves that no matter how extensive 'biological' kinship reaches, whether single, childless or quite the opposite: Making kin as truly connecting with another individual is vital and probably the only way humanity (as in humanness)

can survive these times, now that we become aware of the limitedness of this planet's resources. Kindness might be the only act preventing us from turning against each other just as Jane Goodall's chimpanzees in their fight for some bananas (cf. Campling 2013).

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Boka En, Michael En, David Griffiths, and Mercedes Pölland

Non-monogamies and queer kinship: personal-political reflections

Boka En enjoys mountain biking and being outside in general. To the dismay of their co-authors, they haven't baked pizza in months, but will definitely do so again. They are passionate about emancipatory pedagogy, e.g. in university courses on sexualities, relationships and intimacies, as well as the intersections between academia, art and activism.

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Michael En is a student, teacher and lover of language in its unlimited, colourand beautiful forms. He is wary of labels and boxes, but enjoys putting the former on things he collects and joining cats in sitting in the latter. He gets ridiculously happy and incredibly sad, trying to make the world a better place. Perhaps not surprisingly, he sighs a lot.

Website: michaelen.com

David Griffiths is a gender studies student interested in class, sexuality and the heterosexualisation of culture. He likes listening to BBC Radio 4 and runs on a minimum of 7 cups of tea a day. He claims not to be small, which is contested by his co-authors.

Mercedes Pöll would generally rather sit in the corner and read. Sometimes, they go for a swim. Sometimes, they teach on relationships and sexualities. It's nice.

So here we are. Four authors, one article.

Actually, when we started writing this, we started writing it from different perspectives and with different goals in mind.

When Mercedes wrote an introductory section that Boka disagreed with, Boka felt angry, for some reason.

The reason was that Mercedes had infringed on Boka's property. Boka had started this project – so, clearly, it was Boka's prerogative to say where it was supposed to go. Only they hadn't said anything, hadn't known much, really.

And then Mercedes came in and trespassed.

Because we wanted to *share* this contribution.

'Property is theft!', David shouted from the sidelines.

'Don't start that argument again!', Michael shouted back.

And thus, we non-monogamously ruminated about the meanings and potentials of non-monogamies for this elusive spectre called 'queer kinship'.

We are not of one opinion. None of us are, for we are many. Each of us is more than the sum of their parts (Foucault, 1998). This article itself is non-monogamous. Its cohesion (or lack thereof) is communally achieved, not given (or perhaps, it is given, but not by some supernatural entity). It is no one's individual property. Is this what non-monogamies can mean for understanding and developing queer kinship?

We have tried to pay tribute to the non-monogamy of writing this text by actively trying to speak with multiple voices – voices that may sometimes disagree with each other. Our apologies to Julian Anslinger, who will have had the dubious pleasure of layouting this.

Context

When one reads the term 'queer kinship', or perhaps 'queer relationships', it's not unlikely that one jumps right to understanding 'queer' as 'gay' or 'lesbian' (or 'bi', if one is really trying). That's not surprising (but it is!); after all, equating 'queer' with 'homosexual' is a broad stroke with which many people paint. However, this is not the kind of queer relationships that we want to highlight here. Our 'queer' is more strongly about disrupting the status quo and dismantling existing social orders to make space for alternatives.

Our 'relationships' can be anything from the (alleged) classic love-lust-trust or hate-distrust-disgust between (don't expect us to write 'two') people to all modes of relating to an/the other/Other in the world. You don't need to identify as objectumsexual to have a relationship with a stone … a book, a text, a song, a person you've never met in person, your dog, your neighbour's cats, yourself, yourselves. We cannot not relate; that -ship has sailed. If we think of and listen to 'queer as in gay' voices, we hear them call for 'same-sex marriage' or 'gays and lesbians in the military'. From a differently (truly? – Nothing can be 'truly' queer!) queer perspective, though, we'd rather get rid of both these institutions that end lives in oh so many different yet all violent ways (Conrad, 2010).

But isn't all this talk about disrupting the status quo just empty words? What's this 'status quo' supposed to be that everything 'queer', including queer kinship, is said to go against? Think of what we read in *Days of War, Nights of Love*:

> *'The bourgeois man depends upon the existence of a mythical mainstream to justify his way of life. He needs this mainstream because his social instincts are skewed in the same way his conception of democracy is: he thinks that whatever the majority is, wants, does, must be right. Nothing could be more terrifying to him than this new development, which he is beginning to sense today: that there no longer is a majority, if there ever was.*
>
> *In the last analysis, the so-called 'mainstream' audience most of them imagine they are dressing up for at their demonstrations and political events is probably just the spectre of their bourgeois parents, engraved deep in their collective sub-conscious as a symbol of the adolescent insecurity and guilt they never got over.'* (CrimethInc. Workers' Collective, 2001, pp. 50–51)

So maybe we really shouldn't make up this supposedly singular straight mainstream against which we define ourselves. Even – dare we use the word? – 'straight' realities can be more complex (than assumed, imagined, from a queer point of view), can't they? But they're fundamentally oppressive. Are they? Yes! I don't know …

But let's back up a bit first. Before we talk about queer, non-monogamous relationships themselves, or indeed any relationships, it serves well to consider the contexts in which they are embedded and that shape our perception as well as our practice(s) – our practicing? – of relationships. We do not relate to others in the oft-invoked political, social, etc. vacuum, but always in reference to social structures and customs that we have come to understand as 'normal' or 'the done thing' or 'just the way things are' over the course of our lives. And, by doing so, we contribute to their very re-/production. All statements, including statements of relationship style, have a performative aspect. This is not to say, as is often assumed, that they are simply a 'performance', that we could easily switch to a different role in the play of our lives if we so desired, but that they

enact what they're about, that they create the very things they supposedly 'merely' represent (Butler, 2006, 2011; Barad, 2007). In this sense, a 'mainstream' could be said to exist that has little to do with what the 'majority' 'actually' does or thinks or feels or is – instead, it lies rooted in our performatively, continuously, and imperfectly reproduced ideas of what we *should* do or think or feel or be. It is an imagined, unattainable ideal.

The institution of marriage may generally be viewed as something to strive for, something that provides the foundation for forming a nuclear family, which in turn can become the oft-cited smallest building block that allegedly makes up the very structure of our so very well-structured societies. If we marry because 'that's the way it goes', then by doing so, we pave this very way that 'it goes', and so many of us follow, then, in the first place.

Wrapped up in this example of marriage are many more concrete assumptions and implications: Even with the more widespread legalisation of so-called 'gay marriage', heterosexuality remains the expected mode (c.f. Fessenden, 2015, no pagination) for doing 'partner relationships' – which is further entangled with the expectation that marriage is supposed to lead to so-called 'family', which implies having children (c.f. Rindfuss and VandenHeuvel, 1990, p. 708), most preferably acquired through one's own sexual reproduction, which in turn is a very hetero thing, culturally and symbolically, if not always materially.

Coupled with an expectation of children as well as with pronatalism more generally (c.f. Morison et al., 2016, pp. 185–186) comes the 'understanding' that people who are married will have sex (with one another, that is, and also with nobody else) to fulfil this aim, and that they will generally want to, since sex within marriage is seen as (read: constructed as, made as) universally desirable and desired by 'all' (yes, even you, as you might be painfully aware). (Although it is worth noting that this may not hold true for the elderly, as they may very much be expected to *not* be sexual (c.f. Sandberg, 2013). But do the elderly even feature in 'mainstream' imagination? Who is 'everyone' that makes up this 'all' we think about? Similarly, the extent to which women are allowed to desire sex, even within marriages, is heavily policed.)

In order to ensure parentage and child-rearing responsibilities, monogamy is enacted as a feature to allegedly 'secure' the relationship and its outcomes. And in more recent history, the increased focus on marrying 'for love' (often even for the elusive, constantly sung about 'true love'; see Coontz, 2006) has introduced expectations of romantic affection for one's other, 'better' half in the marriage relationship, which has arguably added to the supposed primacy of 'the family' in people's lives. Marriage in general is very much tangled up with property rights and hierarchies: from 'owning' another person (e.g., the father who 'gives away' his daughter to the fiancé who declares to 'make you mine', or questions such as 'Is the child yours?'), to ownership of material property against 'the outside world' (I don't mind what you do in your bedroom, but that bedroom

better be in a single-family house, and that house better have a cute little fence around it.), to valuing one's family members more highly than that outside world (after all, 'We are family!', and 'I'm your father.').

What looking at the example of marriage emphasises is that there are a range of tenets for relationships – and we could never discuss or even list them all! These tenets have frequently been described under the helm of compulsoriness, such as 'compulsory heterosexuality' (Rich, 1980), 'compulsory monogamy' (Emens, 2004), or 'compulsory sexuality' (c.f. Gupta, 2015) – all driving at the idea that being 'normal' in relationships means adhering to certain, often very implicit but nevertheless extremely powerful standards, such as being in a heterosexual, monogamous, sexual-romantic relationship.

Adhering to these standards yields rewards such as social and legal recognition as well as certain perks that come with this kind of sanctioning (from inheritance rights to tax breaks to the simple fact that one can freely and openly talk about one's relationship in most social settings without having to fear odd looks or even hateful reactions). Such are some of the normativities that form the conditions for doing relationships in our social environments.

So why non-monogamies?

One point of entry:

Where queer relationships grate against the status quo of relating is on the level of normativities that are being rejected or not followed through with, out of circumstance, preference, or necessity. These areas of friction are also where we may see transformative potential – potential that sparks a process of becoming more conscious and aware of the structures that tend to guide and/or constrain our most intimate behaviours or desires. It is no coincidence that it takes encountering an exception to make a rule intelligible where before, we might not even have suspected a rule existed.

Another point of entry:

As indicated by the quote from *Days of War* above, while 'the mainstream' exists as an imagined ideal that we may un-/consciously aspire to, it does not exist, in its pure form, in actual practice. Much rather, we are surrounded by and enmeshed in smaller and larger infractions to the imagined norms of 'the mainstream' as well as smaller and larger ways of reproducing these norms. One cannot easily be disentangled from the other, just like one (person) cannot easily become disentangled from all of them.

There are a whole range of practices that one could apply the 'non-monogamies' label to: from what some might otherwise call cheating; to having three- and moresomes with someone whom you consider *your partner*; to polyamorous relationships where people are involved romantically with more than one person; to parents that are neither biologically related not romantically involved co-rearing ('their') children.

We could talk about each of these concrete forms of non-monogamy in great depth, and we could emphasise that all of these concrete non-monogamous practices have the potential to reproduce patriarchal, heterosexist, classist, racist, natalist etc. norms. But we won't be able to do that within the confines of this article (or our lives), and luckily, many others have discussed this already. For a few overviews and different perspectives, we'd like to direct your attention to, e.g., the following: Barker (2013); Barker and Langdridge (2010); Cardoso et al. (forthcoming); Easton and Hardy (1997); Griffiths et al. (forthcoming); Haritaworn, Lin and Klesse (2006); Nordgren (2006); Sheff (2015); Taormino (2013); The Thinking Aro (2013a, 2013b); Veaux (2010); Veaux and Rickert (2014).

Unencumbered by the complexities of lived reality, we can now proceed to lay out what we believe non-monogamies can bring to an ideal of 'queer kinship'.

But first, a diversion: In a paper on video games and their queer potential, Chess (2016) argues that while the 'traditional' (ideal, heterosexist) narrative is not complete unless it has 'an inciting event, rising action, leading towards a climax, and then ultimately a falling action' (p. 86), the queer narrative revels in the middle. The queer narrative may have no climax, or it may have many of them. It indulges in the pleasure of process and delay.

Transferring this train of thought to relationships, we can say that not only are our relationships an embodiment of the narratives we tell about ourselves, but the structure of the idealised relationships of our societies mirrors that of an ideal narrative (in which we are imagined to live happily ever after). Queer kinship could then be networks that indulge in relational middle spaces. They are not reproductive, they have no clear, singular climax and no epilogue. They have no end goal beyond their own process. Such kinship may find its most obvious expression in communities of equals (complex, shifting and public networks of interdependence, without fixed centre, and with no goal but the network itself), as opposed to hetero (sexual/-sexist) kinship which is typified by the family (stratified, hierarchical and private, and oriented towards personal and institutional reproduction).

Put in the simpler (but no less complex) language of everyday life, let's think about some examples of what it could mean to live in such a 'relational middle space' without a singular climax or epilogue, focused only – or primarily – on the process. There is always also a relationship between writer and reader (or, text and reader), and what kind of relationship would this one happening right here be if we only offered abstract concepts and forgot to fill our text with love (Cooke, 2011)? Therefore, an example:

If you meet the cute person you've been talking to online, and you chat and have sex and watch a film together, before one of you goes home to their partner(s), and you keep doing this without feeling the need to talk about 'where this is going' or what you

should call yourselves, you might be in a relationship with no clear climax. Maybe there wasn't even a build-up to anything similar, because you simply were honest from the very beginning and didn't feel the need to 'impress' one another. There is no marriage proposal looming, there can never be a scene where one is found out to 'have cheated' on the other. There is no 'family' to start as the teleological – climactic – goal of your relationship. And while there is definitely something there in this blossoming relationship, there isn't anything to 'break up', let alone any need to do so. Accordingly, there's no epilogue in the sense that instead of 'stopping seeing one another', you might simply start seeing one another less, or differently.

This – as one of many, many examples that might differ in basically everything but their potential to break free – is what we believe to be a possible understanding of queer kinship.

Interlude: Fear

More often than even I – that is, one or more of us – would think, when I read someone else's writing on relationships (and sometimes even my own), I find myself reacting with degrees of rejection. Not usually the disgusted kind, but the kind that says: *This is all well and good in theory, or if other people do it, but FOR ME? Ahahahahaaa … nope, kthxbye!* And I find that this happens mostly in cases where someone argues for a way of doing things from a perspective that does not take into account my existing accumulation of anxieties, worries, or other triggers. To be fair, it's a tall order to ask this from a random person I've never met who's not writing with me, personally, in mind. But it can still put me off getting more closely acquainted with new ideas.

If you, therefore, have made it this far into the text and tripped over a few things, that's ok. Reading the above paragraphs, I trip over a few things. I trip over the possible implication that having an (even preliminary) end goal in a relationship (like many people do when they are, for example, looking to build a long-term home and shared life with someone) could be seen as an undesirable idea in a queer utopia because goals often reflect a desire for eventual stability. I trip over the idea of having no 'fixed centre' in a network (like the one 'the couple' frequently provides) because it feels disorienting. I trip over the idea of 'public networks' because many of my conceptions of intimacy are intricately tied to experiencing shared closeness in heightened states of privacy, which elevates their specialness.

What I want to get at is that embracing non-monogamy, in whatever form, for one's own life, or even as a strategy for re-thinking/-feeling our social (or sociomaterial) worlds, does not come easy for a lot of people – sometimes even those who agree strongly with its principles. Queer (as in anti-heteronormative, anti-racist, anti-ableist, etc.) non-monogamy is not only a practical, but an ideological – and emotional – commitment,

and since most of us have been socialised into thinking about relationships and community in unqueer ways, this involves a reworking of, or change in, our own desires and preferences, previously unquestioned ideals, and ways of approaching and conducting relationships. Why do we so often yearn for stability? Why do we believe fluidity to be antithetical to stability? What is it that makes us feel safe if not situations in which we 'voluntarily' constrain ourselves – and what could alternative safety look like? Bringing dimensions of private and public closer together requires a lot of trust in people – is this trust warranted? Hurt is part and parcel of this process, but how far can we stretch ourselves, and how can we assess when we need protection?

These things are scary, at least for me. They are also painstaking work, often cumbersome, and they test one's flexibility. Queer ideas often promote incompleteness over utopian perfection, or emphasise the incoherent aspects of human experience. In this way, queer non-monogamies can be seen as the journey that supersedes its destination, where contradictory feelings, desires, and actions can coexist – and shift over time. But if we are allowed to be content with partiality, can we ever achieve a queer utopia? And does this thinking itself submit to a vision of queer utopia that's based on an individualised queer morality in which queer subjects strive to optimise themselves into good neoliberal yet somehow queer citizens?

Visions

The opposition, struggle, and conflict between family and community is the breach through which glimpses of queer kinship can be seen. And while there is scant queer potential in the family, communities with queer potentials in their future abound: LGBTQ quarters, local pubs, community centres, Trade Unions. And, of course, non-monogamous relationship configurations. There is so much that is possible in this world, and it pains us (Is that 'all of us'? And if yes, is it also 'all of you'?) to be trapped in the different but equally narrow corridors that so many of us call their lives while going from one end to the other, without ever looking out the windows or tearing down a wall.

Non-monogamous relationships, as we want to understand them in this contribution, undermine the expectations we have laid out above: monogamy, 'the family', children as the climax of our lives, but also patriarchy, white supremacy, class oppression, ableism, …

Within a non-monogamous framework, you are not required to have only one significant other that you care about (and maybe care for), but multiple others that can be openly significant for you. (#RelationshipAnarchy) In fact, this may be at the core of what we believe that this understanding of non-monogamy can contribute: an alternative to placing the value of one's partner, one's children, one's nation, etc. above that of all others. So, non-monogamies, as we understand them here, aren't just about people's interpersonal relationships, but about a more general stance towards the world. Don't just queer

your relationship with your immediate partner(s), but also those with all other people. Being in a relationship with someone does not only take place when we fall in love with one single person who reciprocates our feelings. Being in a relationship is something we all do, at all times, with all people, and with entities that are not usually seen as people. Being in a relationship means being affected. We cannot not be in relationships with others/Others, and the more we are aware of these relationships and how they affect us, the more we can take control of how we want to do them, how we want to interact with others/Others, how we feel about others/Others.

Employed in the appropriate manner (with the necessary vigilance directed towards intersecting marginalisation that may restrict access – see e.g. Sheff & Hammers, 2011), non-monogamy, centred on questioning the hierarchies between different people and between different entities in the world that we're so used to building, could have wide-ranging consequences for what it means to care (for others, for ourselves, for communities), and how that care is practiced. If we're not required or expected to love – and, by extension, care about – a narrowly defined group of people that we would focus on in monogamous formations, it's easier to appreciate the different ways in which different people matter in your life.

Non-monogamy, then, means blurring the boundaries between oneself – and extensions of oneself such as one's 'family' – and others/Others, as well as the boundaries between those that are hierarchically positioned in different places in relation to ourselves: 'friends' and 'partners' and 'family' and 'strangers' and 'immigrants' and 'the French', and so on. Instead of these neatly defined groups of people with their neatly defined positions and valuations, one might imagine a number of people whom you care about in different ways – some of whom might be emotionally important for you, some of whom you may have romantic feelings for, some of whom you might have sex with, some of whom you might only share a brief glimpse of compassion with on your ride to work. While it doesn't necessarily mean that you love the mail carrier equally or in the same way as the person with whom you cohabit, this understanding of non-monogamy does mean a change in how we distribute intimate value amongst others.

We shouldn't forget here that this isn't intended to be some sort of new age 'Love everyone' movement or a call for the total deconstruction or denial of difference. For example, we might 'care about' the transphobic youth who spit at us differently from the way we'd care about fellow victims of such attacks. And we might care about those whom we consider our partners differently from those we barely know. Sometimes, we might struggle to put these differences into words, and sometimes we might not even want to talk about them, if only to not give them the social power they already possess in so many people's lives. They might look and feel different for different people, and they might matter more or less – differently – for different people.

Non-monogamous relationships can help create new and ethical forms of relating, and help ameliorate the alienation of contemporary societies, but non-monogamous relationships can also be just as hierarchical, anti-community, heterosexist and misogynist as monogamous relationships. Non-monogamy by itself is not enough. A guiding ethico-political position must be fused to it. It must stand. It must stand *for*, and stand *against*. To make full use of the strengths of non-monogamy, it must stand for egalitarian communities of interdependent connection. It must stand against the private, stratified hierarchy of the family. At the same time, it must stand for a way of living that helps those affected – us – be okay in the end. We might end up a very different kind of okay than we could have ever imagined, but it is nevertheless crucial that we're okay.

And this is what we mean by the 'middleness' emphasised above. Non-monogamous relationships can allow us, open the space for us, to build communities where the priority is not on having a particular kind of life, reaching certain milestones, but on living (with others) itself.

Non-monogamy has another advantage, too, over other forms of community mentioned so far. Unlike trade unions, for example, communities based upon principles of non-monogamy carry a lesser risk of enforcing a private/public split that can reify certain forms of misogyny and class violence and damage the political efficacy of communal action. More traditional (are they really traditional? yes!) forms of community in the Western world rely upon a shadow consisting of the families of their members that carry this violence on their behalf. While communities based on non-monogamous relationships cannot be totally free of this violence, and may indeed be just as bad as monogamy-based families, applied properly, such relations can provide fewer places for oppressive structures to hide.

In offering these reflections, we don't want to contribute to building up a sort of queer morality where queerness is all about self-optimisation in the image of an imagined 'good queer'. This is not a call to optimise ourselves so we may boast to others and soothe ourselves that we're doing what's right. While the personal may be political – and the political personal –, we have no intention of insinuating that changing our individual relationship structures will change the world. Much rather, the way we understand non-monogamies in this contribution, they are an idea that refers to more than just one's personal predilections regarding sexuality, trust, or property.

Coming back to the overarching topic of this issue of the Queer STS Forum, non-monogamy need not be restricted to relationships between humans, but can extend to the ways we value human/non-human relationships as well. Not to mention that there are no neat borders to be drawn around 'purely' human relationships in the first place. 'The world' has always been part of us.

We are well aware that these are utopian visions, but we want to invite you, and ourselves, to think about these visions, and to reflect upon how we build borders and hierarchies in our intimate and non-intimate lives. Non-monogamies hold potential for queer kinship. Let's not leave it untapped.

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Daniela Jauk

Thirteen Grandmothers, Queering Kinship and a "Compromised" Source

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I am approaching the call to write up the results of the "Make Kin" Workshop at the STS Conference with mixed feelings and a lot of time spent in critical self-reflection since then. In the workshop I pointed out the striking parallels between Haraway (2015) and a self-identified Indigenous author, Sams (1993), in regard to the broad concept of kinship and the transgression of human/non-human boundaries in these authors' ways of knowing. I was taken by the notion to "make kin" with "nature," with animals, with resources, with abiotic actors in order to minimize harm for all beings. Donna Haraway (2015) shared some neologisms as clues to explore the field of queering kin (e.g. "clanarchist "derived from clan+anarchist, or "kinnovation" out of kin+innovation, cf. Haraway 2015: footnote 15), so in the workshop I proposed to add "kinimize-kinimizing" (make kin + minimize harm) to the list in an attempt to honor and learn from indigenous approaches to life and death. A few emails later I found myself stigmatized with the labels "colonialist," "violent" and even "Nazi" because I (unknowingly) had used a "compromised source." This short reflection then, is not only an attempt to convey my original idea, presented in the allotted five minutes, but also an opportunity to deal with the sadness and the anger these labels have caused. It is thus not only a personal reflection on the misrepresentation of Indigenous knowledge, but also a reflection on academic feedback culture.[1]

Setting the stage: What the Thirteen grandmothers would say about queering kin

"*Where are the feminist utopian, collaborative, risky imaginings and actions for earthlings in a mortal, damaged, human-heavy world?*" asked Anita Thaler and Birgit Hofstätter as organizers of the queer STS workshop. They offered Haraway (2015) as inspiration, who proposes the slogan "make kin, not babies," to point out the need for a non-

1 I am indebted to Anita Thaler and Birgit Hofstaetter for valuable discussions during and after the workshop, as well as to my co-presenters of the panel who brought a wealth of sources and inspiration to my attention. Many thanks also to Heather Laube and Brigitte Kukovetz for comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

natalist perspective on human life in order to decrease overpopulation of the planet and make space for an anti-racist and queer social project in which we "make kin" with immigrants and non-normative, creative formations of sexualities. Haraway (2015) suggests we make kin *sym-chtonically* — as opposed to auto-chtonical/self-relianty and thus make kin with non-human, even abiotic actors, because all life and abiotic actors are connected: "No species, not even our own arrogant one pretending to be good individuals in so-called Western scripts, acts alone; assemblages of organic species and abiotic actors make history, the evolutionary kind and the other kinds too." (Haraway 2015: 159).

Even more path breaking is her invoking of energies and methodologies of female goddesses (e.g. Naga, Gaia, Tangaroa, Medusa, Spider Woman) for her utopian imagination of the *Chthulucene*. Haraway (2015, 2016) proposes *Chtulucene* as a supplementary concept to *Capitalocene, Anthropocene, and Plantaciocene,* which are all labels for the present state the destruction of the planet by humans, capital, plantation industry, toxins etc. "Cheap nature" with unlimited resources is at an end, we are overpopulated, and we will kill this planet unless we change the story and assemble in a "thick kind of ongoingness" that "entangles myriad temporalities and spatialities and myriad intra-active entities-in-assemblages — including the more-than-human, other-than-human, inhuman, and human-as-humus" (Haraway 2015: 160).

As a sociologist and gender scholar I was struck because I imagine my more "traditional" sociology colleagues asking me which medication I am on, if I discussed these concepts in a normative academic setting familiar to me. When I thought through Haraway's ideas here I was suddenly reminded of a book I studied with a multiracial group of women — including a First Nation Canadian — during my grad school years in the Northeast Ohio area. It was also recommended to me by a Native American therapist, healer and founding president of an NGO engaged in transnational peace and anti-violence work. The book, *The Thirteen Original Clan Mothers, is* by Jamie Sams (1993), a non-academic, Indigenous author. I was intrigued by the non-elitist, open format of the STS workshop that allowed me to bring in this "esoteric" non-academic source by a woman who conveyed concepts through stories. I was interested in bringing in these "stories" since Haraway (2014) emphasizes that the power of storytelling and collecting up peoples human and non-human really matter to her. Sams' (1993) representation of indigenous knowledge seemed to directly link to Haraway (2015) and I demonstrated these links in the workshop by means of juxtapositions of quotes, like the following:

"No species, not even our own arrogant one pretending to be good individuals in so-called Western scripts, acts alone; assemblages of organic species and abiotic actors make history, the evolutionary kind and the other kinds too." Haraway 2015: 159).

***Chthulucene*: "…entangles myriad temporalities and spatialities and myriad intra-active entities-in-assemblages – including the more-than-human, other-than-human, inhuman, and human-as-humus"** (Haraway 2015: 160)

"In Native American culture, we see everything as being alive. Each living thing has a specific role as a teacher and family member. Everything on Earth, whether stone, tree, creature, cloud, sun, moon, or human being, is one of our relatives. We capitalize the names of each part of our Planetary Family because they represent the sacred living extensions of the Great Mystery who were placed here to help humankind evolve spiritually. We capitalize Traditions and Teachings because these words represent the equivalent of another faith's holy books." (Sams 1993:viii)

"Kin-making is making persons, not necessarily as individuals or as humans." (Haraway 2015: 161)

"The Tree People, Creature-teachers, Stone People, Cloud People, and all other life forms are our Sisters and Brothers. Our aunts and uncles are the Four Clan Chiefs of Air, Earth, Water, Fire. Our Mother is the Earth, our Father is the Sky, and our Grandparents are Grandmother Moon and Grandfather Sun." (Sams 1993:31)

I posed the question: "What would the Thirteen Grandmothers say about queering kin?" and answered it hypothetically with "We are doing it, ever since, in a way that transcends human, non-human boundaries." I added in my concluding remarks that while Sams seems to work with a heteronormative framework, I think we should be careful to ascribe "gender" to the entities she is working with and remain gender-playful. Grandfather Moon could be a butch Lesbian choosing to use masculine pronouns today. Most Native Communities have concepts of gender that transcend the Western "two-box-system" and Two-Spirit, cross-gender identities have been documented in over 155 tribes across Native North America (Roscoe 1988). Sams structures the Grandmothers according to the Seneca Medicine Wheel, and added a 13th Cycle of Truth. The Thirteen Grandmothers then are also representing women's solidarity as they unite women in (moon related) bleeding cycles (flow of Moontime). This is not *necessarily* pro-natalist and could include trans women: "Every woman has the potential to birth the dreams of the Sisterhood whether she can birth babies or not…Women who have their wombs removed can give birth to their dreams and projects without having the physical organs" (Sams 1993: 21).

The flaw enters the scene: The spoiled identity of Jamie Sams

A person approached me in the discussion part of the workshop (I will henceforth call them "the commentator") and pointed out to me that the source I was using might be "compromised." They had heard the name Jamie Sams connected to notions of a fraudulent sellout of Native knowledge, and that the Indian background Sams claims for herself might be made up. I thanked the anonymous commentator for this valuable comment in my final remarks to the workshop and pledged to follow up on this important critique. I confessed again publicly that I am not an expert in the field and had used the open format of the workshop for some experimental thinking instead of my usual business of presenting empirical data. I added that I am principally cautious about questions of authenticity (a problematic term I chose to use despite its shortcomings) because it reminded me of processes of inclusion and exclusion I had observed in my own field work in transgender communities in the US and the realm of the United Nations (Is someone queer or trans enough to be part of a particular in-group? Who can and cannot participate in policy making qua "authenticity"?). Until then I had no reason to question Sam's background. Sams identifies as Native American (in her books and her website) and states that she received the teachings of these Thirteen Grandmothers from Kiowa Grandmothers in the early 1970s, yet (parts of) the teachings are common to many tribes. Somewhat naively, and influenced by queer understandings of identity labels (which we should be able to choose and alter for ourselves), I had not considered in a general way what it means to allegedly pose as a "Fake Indian."

But it was suggested that Jamie Sams might be "fake," when shortly after the workshop an email reached me (and the rest of the workshop presenters) by the commentator. The commentator situated themselves as white settler scholar critically engaged with Native American and Indigenous Studies and with deep and ongoing collaborations with tribes and indigenous scholars, and shared some political context and analysis pertaining to the compromised source I had been using. They pointed out that they are not intending to rule on Jamie Sams' "authenticity" (because no white settler should do so and only tribes and First Nations have the right to determine membership) but there is a long history of people claiming Native American, Alaska Native, or First Nation identities who are misrepresenting and colonizing Indigenous scholarship in order to gain benefits, to profit by selling spiritual traditions, or to gain power or prestige within indigenous academia. The commentator stated that Sams apparently curated her online persona very carefully; however they found some evidence of her questionable background. The commentator closed with the words "scholarship that cites sources like these perpetuates colonialist erasures of indigenous voice, sovereignty, and self-determination."

I was shocked. First, my shortcoming and ignorance was now "public" through the gesture of directing the email to the entire panel of presenters. Second, I had been called colonialist. I have identified as a feminist since age 13, when I was fighting for my own education against my father who did not approve of my schooling. I grew up working class and am the first one in my family to attend college. As a fat kid I have always felt a bond and identification with people less privileged. I feel that I have always been open to being called out by women of color, queer and migrant folk, and old and disabled folk for my blind spots as a white, able-bodied, female-bodied, cis, queer person who is read as straight and normative most of the time. I have worked thousands of hours as a volunteer in women's and queer organizations and have worked to nearly burnout during my years as independent women representative for the City Council of Graz, with love, much love for the cause and the goal of social equality. I turned to transnational feminism in my dissertation in order to become more self-critical about my white feminism. I do not want to be a colonialist from the bottom of my cis, queer, and pansexual heart.

My first impulse was to "substitute" another source for Jamie Sams. I did not want to be marked as colonizer because I was using a compromised source. Second, the idea of connection to all matter and the idea of vitality of the nonhuman are not specific to Jamie Sams. Clearly, among the several hundred indigenous cultures in North America alone there exists a pluralism of worldviews and lifeways, and there is no generic Native American spirituality or a monolithic Indigenous cosmology. Yet, the basic idea that nature, non-human, non-vital matter is kin and teacher, is common in many Indigenous traditions (Hirschfelder 1995) and has been described as "kincentric ecology" (Salmon 2000). The idea is inscribed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) that honors the "distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands" and indigenous spiritual and medicinal relationships with plants, animal, and minerals. More recently also Rebecca Adamson of the Eastern Cherokee Deer Clan contrasted the "*kinship-based sense of enoughness" of Native economy with the violent, predatory, exploitative economic and government forces that support* DAPL/Dakota Access Pipeline. In my quest to replace Sams I also learned that the human/inhuman relationship has been taken up in queer studies recently by a special issue of *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* taking up the idea that "many indigenous thinkers, in particular, show that various indigenous ontologies not only consider "inanimate" entities to be alive, sentient, and agential, but also have relational capacity "akin to personhood" (Luciano and Chen 2015: 195). Also Kim Tallbear (2016) powerfully challenges us to think through making love and relations beyond settler sexualities, addressing the colonialization of indigenous kin making.

At second glance replacing Sams as my key frame did not sit well with me from a feminist perspective. I had not fact checked accusations against Sams and I was already

willing to silence her and make her invisible, as many women authors before her had been silenced in a white supremacist capitalist patriarchy. And if it is true that Sams is a "fake Indian" wouldn't it be important to spark a discussion and make other people aware that her background and thus her ability to speak on behalf of Indigenous folk might be compromised? So I followed up on the "evidence" given by the commentator. One of the two given links is a dead link but under the title "Don't Get Burned by Fake First Nations" a list of fake Indian authors is reposted on several occasions in the web that all link back to this source. This list does indeed contain the name Jamie Sams, but everyone posting and reposting the list claims they did not compile it, so a proper source of the list is not identifiable. The second source leads to an online forum with a short thread on Jamie Sams containing nine anonymous postings. A person named "Epiphany" states that Sams had two white parents and grew up in Waco/Texas. One given link is dead, the other one links to Sams' mother's obituary. In fact the obituary does not identify Sam's father and contradicts the statement that Sams grew up in Waco. It states that her mother moved to Waco after she married 1969, yet Jamie Sams was born 1951. In the same forum a person named "Yells At Pretendians" states that Sams changed tribal affiliation several times (no source given) and goes on to say that "despite Sams's changing backstory, the newage white women love her. It's very common for hippie enclaves to have a women's group that use her books as gospel."

The flaw blows up: *My* spoiled identity

I had no genuine interest in finding out if Sams' claims to her Native heritage are true or untrue, and I am not in the position to evaluate anything indigenous as I am lacking indigeneity myself and any scholarship in the area. I do not speak any indigenous languages. But this now felt personal, beyond being political. True,I had learned about Jamie Sams in a women's group. It was neither in the context of a hippie enclave, nor was it a white women's group, and we certainly did not use her book as gospel. It was a multiracial women's group in Northeast Ohio reading Sams' book together through monthly meetings over the course of one year during 2013-14. A First Nation Alaskan friend and member of the reading circle picked a (Native) name for the group, let's call her Dee. Dee said she felt very validated through this book and our gatherings. Her mother language and her Native spirituality had been beaten out of her during Catholic school in Canada after she was ripped away from her parents living on a reservation. I did not question whether Sams is a "fake" Indian because my friend Dee embraced and thus validated Sams' approaches. I was not completely unaware of the politics of Native identity. This was Northeast Ohio after all, and the red-faced mascot of the "Cleveland Indians" thus a much contested symbol. I had been following closely a friend's fieldwork among the protesters of the logo, and stood in the streets of Cleveland shouting "This is not an honor!" while what seemed like a stream of thousands of yelling, drunk, white men walked by wearing feathers on their heads (see e.g. Michelle Jacobs 2014 for an

examination of this issue). From this work I also learned that there are distinct pathways to urban Indian identity—reclamation and relocation—and that accomplishing "Indianness" in personal and public realms is particularly challenging for reclaimers, however, because they lack tangible evidence (e.g., brown skin, government issued identification cards) to support their Indian identity claims. Questions of Indian identity are not easily sorted out in relation to the colonizers but also within urban Indian communities (Jacobs 2015).

More generally, there is no consensus about what "indigenousness" or "cultural authenticity" actually is, what it entails, or how to judge it. Claims for indigenous authenticity have historically been tied to nationalist, colonialist, and racist projects. "Indigenous" and "cultural authenticity" are concepts that have been, and continue to be, unstable and multiple in their meanings. They continue to shape State policies and colonial practices that regulate the everyday lives of Indigenous people and contribute to their alienation of their land and resources (Harris et al. 2013). While I was thinking through all this another email from the commentator arrived. In this last feedback the commentator forwarded an anonymous quote from another person with whom they had been in touch. It reads:[2]

> "he was so outraged about the violence of erasure [by works like Sams, and in citing such work, which he sees as like] the Nazi schutztruppen who complete the final violence of erasing of what little there is of native lives and culture. Important to remember that Europe lacks this whole debate about first nations (put in a very generalising shorthand, there is good stuff coming out of scandinavia on sami e.g.). there is the violent romanticism about "Indians" specially that we German speakers (but interestingly also czechs) grew up with through the winnetou films - karl may - you probably never heard of him, but *hugely* popular. ask people in austria about winnetou; films were shot in Yugoslavia, so you might literally transverse this.. . all this to say, this is not an innocent error but something much more interesting..."

I had felt curiosity, interest, and maybe a little sadness and confusion until now. When I read this feedback, anger and sheer revulsion crept up. So far I had been thanking the commenter kindly for every input, but confronted with all these labels I felt violated. I have never read Karl May or seen a Winnetou movie, and I also do not believe in a homogenous entity of "we German speakers," yet there is a collective history we share. A friend who specializes in Indigenous studies tells me that they watched Winnetou films and this indeed sparked their interest in indigeneity and colonization. Being a

2 Lacking a source for this anonymous quote I was unable to ask for authorization to cite it. Since the author remains anonymous and unbeknownst to me and the readers I sensed no ethical conflict using this direct quote.

(neo)Nazi or in any way promoting these beliefs is a statutory offence in Austrian criminal law (Prohibition Act, 1947). Why would someone accuse me of being one behind my back because I used a "wrong source"?

This kind of criticism is paralyzing and destructive and, quite honestly, the violent language and assumptions make me angry. As an Austrian I live with the fact that "we," my kin, were perpetrators of genocide. I remain painfully aware of my history and share a probably pretty typical ancestry for an Austrian: One set of great-grandparents migrated from the Balkans by foot to the area in order to survive and work as day laborers for farmers in Styria. They managed to buy a little house after a while and my great grandfather was picked up by Nazis and almost got shot because he wouldn't raise the flag for Hitler's birthday. I learned from my other grandfather that he was in the Hitlerjugend. He apparently enjoyed the vacation camps and the community with other youth, which his mother, a single mom who had given birth to him at 15 and was expelled by her parents, could have never afforded. I have given countless presentations on Hitler in school, I have visited several KZ's in Europe, and I have used what we call the "Nazi club"[3] myself on plenty occasions. I am well aware that the Nazi club comes easier to people from non-German speaking countries, but it had just hit me for the first time. I have close friends who lost parts of their families in the Holocaust and I cry with them. I see "Identitaere," neo/right wing agitators, climbing college stages in Austria as I write this in June, 2016, protesting everything I have ever fought for. I reject that I or my behavior is comparable to the Nazis'.

Dealing with the flaw: Calling for a respectful discussion...and a reading list

Summing up, I learned that I have a lot to learn in the field of technoscience, indigeneity, and questions around politics of authenticity. So many questions were raised that I could by no means do them justice in the tight time frame given for the write up. The outcome of the workshop is manifold for me: I do owe apologies and I do have a reading list for the fall. I owe an apology because it is true that I used Jamie Sams as a singular source for a (presumed generic) indigeneity in my presentation. I did not sufficiently point out the diversity among indigenous thought and I should have substantiated the kincentric ecology I sought to compare to Haraway with more sources. I could have done my homework better. Secondly, I should discuss indigenous kincentric ecology only if I simultaneously point out the violent and problematic history and presence of land-grabbing from indigenous populations around the world. Each feminism that does not question the systematic destruction of the cultural practices of indigenous peoples remains limited and exclusionary (John 2014). Last but not least, I was not aware of any false identity claims of Jamie Sams (that I am unable to dispute and unable to confirm on the base of information available) and remain grateful for that part of the commentator's input and

3 The "Nazi Keule" is the accusation of someone as a Nazi, which usually silences the person immediately

the questions they raised. Despite all these shortcomings and flaws of my five minute presentation in the workshop, I reject the form and words that have been used to point them out to me — the assumptions about me, the anger, the negativity and the violent speech I do not take on — it is theirs.

A possibly comparable case to learn from is that of Andrea Smith, as Cleo Woelfe-Erskine kindly pointed out: Andrea Smith is an American academic, feminist, and activist against violence. In July 2015, Smith was outed as having claimed Cherokee identity without proof or acceptance by the community. In an open letter by indigenous women scholars it becomes clear that "Smith's self-acknowledged false claims and lack of clarity on her own identity perpetuate deeply ingrained notions of race—black, white, and Indian—that run counter to indigenous modes of kinship, family, and community connection. When she and others continue to produce her as Cherokee, indigenous, and/or as a woman of color by default, they reinforce a history in which settlers have sought to appropriate every aspect of indigenous life and absolve themselves of their own complicity with continued dispossession of both indigenous territory and existence." The letter also criticizes that Smith has often served as singular representative of indigeneity in a variety of academic and activist social justice contexts. Erica Lee, a Nēhiyaw student at the University of Saskatchewan and Idle No More organizer writes in the context of Andrea Smith, "If you are 1) a reporter who has never bothered to do a story on Indigenous issues until today, 2) a white settler, 3) a white scholar of Indigenous studies, or 4) an Indigenous male scholar who has rarely/never engaged with Indigenous feminism except to crap on it, I implore you to go away and do something productive, rather than throwing tomatoes at a woman whose work has likely made more impact in the lives of Indigenous women than yours ever will." This statement resonates with me right now also when it comes to Jamie Sams.

I stand with my friend Dee (and true to myself and other women and friends) whose life was positively impacted by Jamie Sams' work and our collaborative exploration of queering kin: Dee has since returned to her home Canada to go to college with the goal to work with Indigenous youth in the future, a task she never thought possible before as a shift factory worker. I also stand for a commitment to a fair and respectful academic feedback culture. Anonymous chatter is not part of that for me. The Nazi club isn't either. Along these lines I want to end with a Twitter quote from Mouthy Michif Todd (@ZoeSTodd), an urban metis scholar I have encountered during the reflective journey of this write up. It is a great inspiration for life but also for dealing with academic feedback: "Speak truth. Move with love. Forgive. Move on. Be gentle. Fight for justice. Make this time matter. Love."

Start of a Reading List...

Joseph Massad's work on the eliteism around indigenous identity and queer sexualities and ("Massad, Joseph A. Desiring arabs. University of Chicago Press, 2008, Massad, Joseph Andoni. "Re-orienting desire: The gay international and the Arab world." Public culture 14.2 (2002): 361-385.

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Kirk J Fiereck

The Queer Custom of Non-Human Personhood

Kirk J. Fiereck, Ph.D. is a medical anthropologist specializing in queer and economic anthropology. He is currently a Visiting Researcher Fellow at the University of Amsterdam in the Department of Anthropology. He examines how subjects inflect and are constituted by local gender and race relations while giving rise to new, global forms of sociality by indexing biofinancialized calculations of abstract risk, through the circulation of cosmopolitical categories such as "men who have sex with men (MSM)" and "transgender."

My input for the "Make Kin, Not Babies" session was to consider whether we might think about texts as kin, thus validating the work that academics, filmmakers, actors, etc. do as reproductive labor in the same vein that children have become understood as the fruits of similar labors. That has since turned into a longer meditation on the changing distinctions between human, non-human, and legal personhood, and for which I have been lucky enough to find a home for elsewhere (Fiereck Forthcoming). However, that text raises a number of questions that remain unanswered regarding Donna Haraway's suggestion that we make kin in place of biological children in conditions of the Anthropocene (Haraway 2015). One of these questions is how we might think politically about non-human personhood. For example, if we increasingly consider texts are people, what implications does this have in our current political moment? To put it more precisely: What are the political effects of developing and legitimizing forms of non-human personhood?

Obviously such speculative questions beg incomplete answers. There is no way to actually know precisely what the political effects of this process will be. However, to consider their implications is as important as ever. The point from which I begin is that whether one agrees with or not that non-human personhood implies the agency of non-human entities is beside the point. Most pointedly, this is because the politicization of non-human personhood has already begun. Even if one disagrees with granting agency to non-human entities, to pretend that non-human entities are endowed with agency in our advanced liberal societies is to pretend they are not a part of our societies, which is a false and untenable position to take. Further, such a position denies ones own participation in the economies and social processes that have produced these agencies in postcolonial societies globally, which is to undermine one's own position on the matter altogether. I want to take two examples from current legal jurisprudence in two advanced liberal societies where the legal recognition of non-human personhood has become a form of political change and agency both in putatively conservative and liberal directions.

The first concrete example is that of the United States, where political conservatives have stacked the Supreme Court of the United States with conservative justices during the past half century. In 2010, in the case *Citizen's United v. FEC* these justices agreed in a 5-4 majority that corporations are people too. They were granted legal recognition with the same rights as individual citizens. This paved the way for corporations to donate unrestricted amounts of money to political candidates whereas before the ruling there were limits on corporate contributions to political campaigns. The second example comes from New Zealand, as well as India, and is the culmination of 160 years of political and legal pressure by members of the Maori community to have the New Zealand nation-state recognize the Whanganui River as a person. As Attorney-General Chris Finlayson of New Zealand put it "I know the initial inclination of some people will say it's pretty strange to give a natural resource a legal personality. But it's no stranger than family trusts, or companies or incorporated societies." (*BBC* 2017). Days after the New Zealand court granted legal rights to the Whanganui River, an Indian court, invoking the Whanganui settlement, made the Ganges and Yamuna Rivers people too (*The Economist* 2017).

Finlayson makes the comparison between corporations and rivers for me. However, despite the exchangeability that has been legally produced between corporations and natural resources like rivers, Elizabeth Povinelli has recently considered whether the granting of personhood to a transgender estuary in Australia, might have undue political effects (2015). Specifically, she brings up the personal history of a transgender creek named Tjipel and how the creek's historical narrative might be unpalatable to the neoliberal Australian government. For example, Povinelli tells the story of how Tijpel came to be. She cites Aboriginal informants' stories of a "beautiful teenage girl" who wanted to dress as a young man. While traveling down the coast, Tijpel went about spearing a wallaby. After spearing the wallaby, a bird tells Tijpel that an old man was coming so she lay down in the creek to hide the parts of her body that would reveal her gender to the old man. The old man took her to be a young man and told Tijpel to cook the wallaby, but she didn't want to. As he walked away, another bird told the old man Tijpel was a teenage girl. He went back and fought with her and, as the story goes, he won and she remains there. Not near the creek. Rather, Tijpel is the creek.

It is this personal narrative of non-human persons like Tjipel's that worries Povinelli. She tells us that in 2011 "a national sex panic erupted about alleged child sexual abuse in Aboriginal communities and town camps" (Povinelli 2015, 176). There was no comparative statistics among child sexual abuse among settler populations within Australia, which means there is no way to tell whether the child sexual abuse in those communities was abnormal. Despite the lack of evidence regarding whether child sexual abuse was more pronounced in Aboriginal versus settler communities, the sex panic rhetoric was used as a pretext for the federal government to withdraw funding from rural and remote

Indigenous communities. The government then seized control of community infrastructure in a number of instances. Now, given the similarity of Tijpel's narrative to this sex panic, Povinelli worries how the granting of personhood to this estuary in Australia might be interpreted in a legal battle over who has rights to the development of conservation of this transgender ecological entity. Specifically, might the Australian state feel that Tijpel's potentially abusive past legitimates the state's seizure of Tijpel from Aboriginal communities?

In other words, Povinelli is concerned about how existing inequalities will haunt the personhood of natural resources as they are inevitably evaluated in various legal systems. Especially when the histories of these ecological subjects are unpalatable to state legislatures that have a history of objectifying and effacing cultural experiences in the name of a multiculturalism. It is the cunning of this multicultural recognition that Povinelli has warned against in the Australian context (Povinelli 1999; Povinelli 2002), which works to denigrate customary social life in lieu of a preoccupation with "authentic" ethnic performances. What this means is that the Australian multicultural state has become less interested in the actuality of lived customary life than it is in cultural authenticity in order to de/legitimate the redistribution of land taken from indigenous groups during colonization (Povinelli 2002).

What this seems to boil down to is questions and distributions of authenticity of various forms of personhood as well as questions of violence. For example, if Tijpel's personhood is considered authentic, yet too violent to be recognized by the late capitalist multicultural Australian state, the Aboriginal communities who care for her may not be legally allowed to retain their entitlement to her. So it would seem that while a non-human person is culturally authentic, it might be interpreted to inhabit contexts of excessive violence so that the state must intervene in order to ensure the rights of the entity and the persons it is related to. The paternalistic connotations this traffics in are clear, dangerous, and have a long, sordid history across all settler societies.

Shifting gears to consider a corporation as the non-human person, it is comparatively quite useful to inquire about questions of violence. It seems almost redundant to inquire about the authenticity of a corporation. Such an entity has only ever existed as a person in a representational space of an ostensibly inauthentic capitalist culture. That a person-corporation is "inauthentic" is a self-evident truism riven with contradictions. What is cultural authenticity anyway and who decides what is authentic, indigenous, or true? Further, a person that would recognize indigenous groups' granting of personhood to rivers and estuaries yet withhold recognition of late capitalist granting of legal personhood to corporations is engaging in the very hypocrisy they claim to refute. What is more, they do so in a way that undermines indigenous agency by paradoxically using

cultural authenticity and multiculturalism as a false chimera of truth and reality. The liberal undermining of indigenousness through a racist multiculturalism is clearly violent in ways that are hard to identify.

However, if we are to treat corporations like rivers, like Tijpel, the attendant question of what forms of violence the entity is responsible for and/or promulgates might also provide a legal strategy of redress by the state. All this is to say that the political implications of non-human personhood are many and the ecological and ethnic politics that will ensue as a result will have queer resonances since the norms of personhood will be made and remade as these politics unfold. Thus, questions around queerness, indigenousness and the customary must be engaged with anew and from a position of immanent critique of non-human personhood. Non-human person is neither a reality for the "left" or the "right" traditionally conceived. It is a norm that is inhabited already by both ostensible "sides" of the political spectrum. There is no outside to these processes except a false outside. We are all implicated. We are all responsible to varying degrees for the human and non-human; life and non-life; for their normative and antinormative instantiations. Further, this situation of shared responsibility across the political spectrum shows that the antinormative turn in queer theory is an inadequate paradigm for developing a politics of non-human personhood as it positions itself as a point of critique that is outside of (or in direct refutation to) some norm. It does so without acknowledging the norms of personhood that its antinormativity is secretly based upon (Wahlert and Fiereck 2016). This form of critique is, by definition, not immanent. Thus, the type of critique that is called for is a queer immanent critique of the ecologico-ethno politics that new forms of non-human personhood require.

An immanent critique of non-human personhood in late capitalism can be conducted in many ways. One example is to analyze the various ways that non-human personhood is constructed and construed in particular sociocultural and historical contexts. One could do this by understanding how the component parts of personhood (i.e., self, subject, psyche, personal and public personae, and body) fit together. One could then analyze the secret normativities that produce *both* the norm and the margin of each form of personhood. Given the examples above, the forms of violence that are produced and implicated by each form of non-human personhood could be analyzed and compared, thus allowing a comparison of the attendant violence of both "normative" non-human personhood (corporations are people too) and "non-normative" non-human personhood (ecological entities are people too). In this way, neither rivers nor corporations are inherently "bad" or "good" forms of personhood, but rather are productive of historically particular forms of sociality. Such social relations include both human and non-human persons and are productive of forms of violence and domination that can and must be evaluated on their own terms and in relation to their shared norms.

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Zoltán Bajmócy *in conversation with*
Boglárka Méreiné Berki, Judit Gébert, György Málovics & Barbara Mihók

Connecting different life-worlds: Transformation through kinship

(Our experience with poverty alleviation)


Zoltán Bajmócy


Boglárka Méreiné Berki


Judit Gébert


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The contributors of this paper are researchers and activists with different disciplinary backgrounds. Zoltán, György and Judit hold PhDs in economics. Judit also has MSc degrees in philosophy and in political sciences. Boglárka is a PhD student in economics and holds MAs in sociology and economics. Barbara holds a PhD in ecology. They are members of the Community-based Research for Sustainability Association (CRS) in addition to their academic positions. They are committed towards the values of sustainability, solidarity, citizen participation and open-minded discourse. They work together with unheard, marginalized groups, to help them to make their voice heard.

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The contributors of this paper take part in a participatory action research (PAR) process with the local Roma community in Szeged, Hungary. Although we do not have our backgrounds in feminist theorizing, we believe, our paper can be relevant for the discussion taking place in the Queer-Feminist STS Forum. Being action researchers we are committed to an approach very similar that of "queering"; an approach which is "never contented by simply depicting the mechanisms of oppression, it also calls for irritation and interruption" (Hofstätter & Thaler 2016).

PAR is a cooperation of trained researchers and the members of the local community in order to generate knowledge that is relevant and useful for the stakeholders (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller 2015). It is an approach that has its roots in the critical theories, therefore it aims to give voice and overcome oppression. Action is a vital element of the PAR process. On the one hand, it is a workability test for the created knowledge; on the other hand, it is the way to bring about social change, to make the research process useful in this sense.

In present paper we would like to put forth a story that draws attention to heteronormativity in the field of poverty alleviation. We would question the basic assumptions and behaviour, which on the one hand make poverty "the problem of the poor"; on the other hand make poverty a discourse taking place among middle class people. We would also like to interrupt and show that there is an opportunity to overcome the lack of personal relations between the underclass and the middle class and to connect these two different life-worlds by kinship. And finally we would like to "queer" the way knowledge is usually put forth, and show that there may be a place for talking about feelings and emotions in a paper.

Our PAR process with the local Roma underclass people was initiated in 2011 as part of an EU FP7 project (Public Engagement with Research and Research Engagement with Science – PERARES). During the past six years, it developed from the initial project-based cooperation, into a more general collaboration aimed at the support and empowerment of the local underclass Roma. It is a cooperation of researchers, citizen activists, civil society organizations, the local Roma self-government and Roma people, most of whom live in the segregates (the so called gipsy yards) of the city[1]. By now the PAR process involves numerous local actors, including both middle class Roma and non-Roma, and underclass Roma families, who are committed to maintain cooperation for social change and local poverty alleviation on the long run. Our activities embrace capacity building (e.g. setting up and running afternoon schools) and anti-oppressive activities (e.g. political activism, empowerment of Roma representatives, community organizing, awareness raising).

1 You can find detailed information about this process on the website of the Community-based Research for Sustainability Association (www.crsassociation.org) and in Málovics et al. (2012, 2016).

In 2014, a new kind of activity was introduced, the so called patronage programme (later we started to call it patronage network), as an element of the wider PAR process. By this time we had already learnt a lot about the diverseness of the local underclass Roma families and their problems. It had become clear that contributing meaningfully to local poverty alleviation demands much more resources than those of a few small local NGOs; and that bridging social ties between the underclass Roma and middle class non-Roma are basically missing locally.

The patronage network attempted to address these issues. It focuses on personal relationships among underclass Roma and middle-class non-Roma families. Families, who are interested in participation, are introduced to each other with the facilitation of the "core" PAR group. The aim is to set up long term relationships and this way to build bridges between these two life-worlds. The patronage relationship embraces a small amount of material help and various forms of non-material assistance (e.g. education and health issues of children; reducing social poverty; job seeking; joint social programs). The patronage network has affected the lives of approximately 20 underclass families so far. Many of them live in either of the two Roma segregates of the city under extremely poor housing conditions. All the involved Roma families live in severe income poverty.

The expression we use to denote this relationship (patronage) is not necessarily the most appropriate, since it suggests a strong hierarchical relation between patrons and the assisted families. However, we think this is an honest expression, since the asymmetry in these relationships is inevitable. The question is how to reflect on this, and how to mitigate or overcome this.

Purpose of the paper

Poverty alleviation cannot succeed without the detailed understanding of the situation of the people living in poverty. A large deal of our activities also serve this purpose: we attempt to generate knowledge on the situation of the local Roma community, to synthetize this knowledge by building on theoretical insights such as the capability approach of Sen (1999), and to evaluate this knowledge through workability tests. However creating a discourse about poverty that solely deals with the poor, may suggest that poverty is "their problem".

The contributors of this paper take part in the PAR process as researchers (and also as citizen activists) and all of them are participants of the patronage network. These roles led us to the understanding that the people we cooperate with face systemic oppression. In other words poverty in not "their problem": it is our common problem. In order to tackle poverty we must also deal with those who do not live in poverty, those who benefit the status quo – ourselves.

Present paper attempts to serve this purpose. It would like to draw attention to the importance of transformation within the majority. We think that our participation in the patronage network provided us an experience that is gradually leading to an internal transformation. We would like to share bits of this journey (dilemmas, difficulties and joy) with the reader.

So this paper is about the patrons of the patronage network. It does not intend to provide a scientific evaluation about the operation of the patronage programme. It could not serve this purpose anyway, since all the inputs of this paper came from the patrons. What it attempts to do is to depict how the patronage relations, which started as goal-oriented hierarchical relations, gradually changed into something else (perhaps kinship), and how this affected us and built bridges between fellow citizens.

Genre and structure of the paper

This paper does not intend to be a conventional academic paper in its genre. However, during its preparation we applied the fundamental rules of scientific inquiry (after all we are social researchers).[2] The paper would rather like to draw attention to aspects that are so often neglected by academic works. It attempts to talk about feelings, emotions, doubts and joy. All in all, it tries to shed light on the enormous power of kinship: looking at each other as fellow people; transform and being transformed this way.

The paper is written in the form of a conversation, which is narrated by the corresponding author (Zoltan).[3] The main body of the text consists of (mostly, but not in all cases, word for word) quotations[4] from the conversations among the contributors. This is supplemented by connective and interpretive parts written by the corresponding author.

The first part of the conversation depicts the outlines of the situation: who are the families we are in contact with, how did it begin, what did we think about them then and now? The second part refers more to the internal transformation we have been going through: where are our limits and are we able to transgress them, what did we gain and what did we provide? Finally we arrive to some kind of conclusions.

2 In this sense the paper can be interpreted as an element of the reflection phase in a PAR process (this is a reflection on our roles in the patronage network).
3 We decided not to indicate who said a given paragraph, and we also did not use the names of the Roma people we cooperate with, since the issues in question are very sensitive, and the messages remain understandable without the names.
4 The conversation took place in Hungarian (the quotations were translated later to English). The corresponding author selected and structured relevant parts of the conversation to appear in the text. The quotations from the conversations are based on notes; hence they are not in all cases word for word quotations. Then the text supplemented by the connective and interpretive parts was shown to the participants, who could suggest changes.

"So we started to cooperate"

Some of us had already had some kind of relationship with the families and children by the time the patronage programme was launched, while others contacted the families just because of the launch of the programme. Nevertheless, the motivation to run a programme we thought was worth running, was vital in all cases. So *how did it all begin? Who are the families we cooperate with?*

> I first met them 4 or 5 years ago. We made a photo-voice project in the gipsy yard, and they were the family who offered their house for the discussion of the photos and drawings. The little girl was the one who made the drawing we always recall. They had to draw something they would really like to get, and she drew a bathroom, and coloured the tiles one-by-one. When the patronage programme was launched, Gyuri suggested me to help them. The mother was very sympathetic for me, also the little girl of course (6 years old at that time), and her older brother as well.
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> I help a teenager girl and her boyfriend, and of course I also have a relationship with their families (mainly with the mothers). I think we met first in 2012. Then in 2013 we organized a summer camp for children from the gipsy yard at Lake Balaton. Since then I have been in contact with her. Her life is really touching; even within the yard she lived under the most adverse circumstances. But, just because of this (because no one cared about her), she was very independent. She wanted to learn hip-hop dancing and I arranged it for her. Then I looked for a tutor for her.[5] She lives together with her boyfriend who also became interested. He was also there in the summer camp but I lost track of him for a while: he had drug problems and staff. They started to come to our office in the Faculty building regularly, where they meet the tutor. When the patronage programme began, I thought let's call this a patronage relationship.
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> I was a volunteer in the Roma afternoon school, where I started to teach two boys how to play the guitar. They live in the larger Roma segregate, which is closer to the city. Once I took them to the cinema and the little sister of one of them also joined us. After the cinema we went to the university library, where the boys could use the computers, but the little girl (8 years old) asked me to show her the library. She said she wanted to learn here someday. A few days later her brother wrote me a message that she was in hospital. I met her father and his partner there (the mother of the girl didn't come to visit her). I thought they were nice, and that there is a chance that I can intervene and it would make sense to put energy into it. So we started to cooperate.

5 Helping children in learning is a very important element of most of the patronage relationships. Tutors are either paid or voluntary teachers or university students, or the patrons themselves.

> It began with the patronage programme. Gyuri introduced us to each other. They live quite far from the city centre in a house, but not in the gipsy yard. The children actually go to school (6th and 7th class in the elementary school), but they have severe difficulties there. It is quite usual that they have fail marks from one or more subjects at the end of the year, so they have to take comprehensive exams in the summer to allow for entering the next class. Formerly, they attended the Roma afternoon school, and their mother was also active there, but she thought that the children from the gipsy yard (who also attended the afternoon school) had bad influence on her kids, so they stopped going there. The parents usually have jobs, so they are able to satisfy their basic needs. So Gyuri took me to their house when the programme was launched, and since then we meet there. I visit them regularly. At first it was quite hard to know what to talk about and what are the issues to be avoided, especially with regard to financial matters.
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> Mine is a relatively new patronage relationship. It began a bit more than a year ago. The leader of the local Roma self-government introduced us to each other. They live in a block in the city centre not far from us. They rent a one-room apartment from the city council. Three children and the parents. Most of the time the parents have at least part-time jobs, but it's quite uncertain. The older sister and her brother (both young teenagers) go to school and have very good marks there. The little girl (4 years) was abandoned by her mother and now lives with them. This was the first thing I ran into. Something that was really hard to grasp emotionally. At the beginning I thought this relationship would be about helping (and thus being in touch with) the children. Then I realized this would only work in conversation with the mother. On the one hand, if I did not let the mother decide which forms of help were the most adequate, I would question her as a mother. How would someone dare to do so? On the other hand, her kids are young teenagers; they have better things to do than spending time with a stranger. The smallest kid is an exception. She likes playing with me when I visit them. So we are in the middle of a long process of building trust and getting to know each-other. I am also a person who takes steps slowly, and I always question myself if I have the right to interfere in their lives.

It is vital to understand for the reader that on the one hand we had a clear desire to launch the programme and go beyond the usual forms of poverty alleviation. We wanted to build personal relationships, we wanted to provide some kind of "channel" of resources from our world to their world through these relationships and believed (and still believe) it is the right thing to do. On the other hand, we did not know what this would imply exactly. It is impossible to be prepared for situations that derive from the enormous differences between life-worlds (e.g. experiencing famine, child abandonment, children working instead of going to school, children experiencing or committing crime;

or living in a world where the institutions such as schools, health care, social care or the police are not designed for you; and also to experience that you are basically unable to solve these problems).

"I thought they needed help"

So we jumped into the patronage relationships. At this time the PAR process had been going on for a few years, and as social researchers we also had theoretical knowledge on poverty and associated phenomena. Still it is totally different to experience and get involved. We were of course sensitive to social justice issues, and I think people would say we are not prejudiced. But prejudice mainly derives from the lack of knowledge and experience. And certainly we had deficiency in this respect. It became very clear for us that if you want to help and in return you expect people to behave in certain ways, than you will build hierarchical relationships and they will have a good reason to unwelcome you. But also, if you try to help and in return you expect them to be happy or grateful, than you miss the point. But it is not always easy to act according to these considerations. So *what did we think of the families and people we cooperate with in the beginning? And how did it change?*

> I thought they saw their situation fairly well, and they wanted to change it, but they lacked the resources for this (or did not even know what would be needed for this). I also thought I could help them in this. Now I think the same, it has not changed. Of course I got acquainted with many of their strength and weaknesses. For example, sometimes I think they consume irresponsibly. But this phenomenon was something I was aware of and I could accept that. After all they bought chocolate for the children and not drugs. I felt I did not have the right to interfere. In the meanwhile I really got to like the little girl. I feel responsible for her. If things go haywire it really distresses me, but then success cheers me up. She won a competition in math at the school and I was on cloud nine for two days. I was really proud. Or when she invited me and her father's partner to the mother's day school ceremony that was really great.
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> I thought they needed help. Now, I think, they have a lot of skills and competencies, and also bad and good qualities, just like everyone. It is not easy for them; and perhaps in certain cases I would make different decisions than they do; but this cannot really be compared (because I am not in their place). I also think the Roma people have much more realistic conception of the non-Roma than vice-versa.
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> They were very sympathetic for me. I thought she was a really nice woman, but her relationship (with the kids' father) and this whole ambience tore her apart. She and her daughter tried to fix what was messed up by the males in the family. Now I think basically the same, I just see them in a more sophisticated way. I have

learnt a lot about their situation. Now I see the mother to be more potent. Not necessarily because she has changed, I just see how she meets challenges in life.

Just like in your case, my opinion has not changed too much either, just become a bit more detailed. They are a family, who would really like to be integrated into the middle-class society. That is why they differentiate themselves from those living in the gipsy yard. For me it is very sympathetic that she wants her children to get on better than she did. I think they really strive for this; they just lack the skills and resources. For example, to help the children to prepare their home-work, or to understand what does a mark the children get means with respect to their overall school performance. And of course they cannot afford a tutor for the kids.

When you see a child with a life like that, it makes you want to cry. They put her here, there, to residential care. In spite of this, she is astonishingly sweet, optimistic and cooperating. I thought I should help her somehow, especially that she also wanted it (e.g. to learn hip-hop dancing). I got to know her and her problems gradually: difficulties with reading, low IQ, special needs in learning (which had not been discovered before, although she was 15), not to mention the horrible things she had gone through as a child. I feel responsible for her, and I'm often desperate when I think about how she will get on in the world. It was a bit different with regard to her boyfriend. I was quite distrustful towards him. I remember he often complained he could not come to meet the tutor, because for him it was too difficult to get into the city. I thought this was just a lame excuse. Then I went to the waste disposal yard he worked at (instead of attending school) and I realized he was right. Now I really like and fully trust him. He is very autonomous and intractable. It's not always easy with him. Very often he goes into a direction and cannot be diverted. And I often think that is not the good direction. I try to be there for him. I do not think of this relationship with these two young people as "patroning". These are personal relations, and I am a supporting adult. Sometimes I experience success (e.g. she learns swimming now) and I feel happy about it.

So these relationships implied a shift in the focus: in the beginning we realized "being poor" or "needing help" to be the main qualities of the people we cooperated with. Throughout the process of patronage this has changed into a large set of good and bad qualities; and we also realized a number of skills and coping strategies.

"I always try to take the next small step"

So we started to build up relationships, which is not always easy. What makes it even more difficult in our case is that we come from very different life worlds, with very different experience, and the relationships started with an asymmetric initial setting. As it is the case in all relationships, we give and receive, and it's more likely to work out if these two are balanced. So let's start with the first one. *What have we put into these relationships?*

> The relation is evidently asymmetric to an extent, but of course I try to offer some kind of friendship. I think what they gained is that the children's approach to learning has changed. They always took it for granted that they won't succeed. I think the greatest result is probably the change in their mind-set. Now they say "it's gonna work out, I should come and learn with them, and together we'll make it". Of course if I spent more time with them the results could be more pervasive. Recently their mother said she also wants to finish elementary school (she finished only 4 classes).
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> Evidently a lot of emotional and material energy. Also in the sense that I try to come to grips with the inconceivable differences that separate our lives. I try to provide a supportive and tolerant ambience, where she can talk about her problems. This may have an effect.
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> We should ask them about this in the first place. I think I have put a lot into this relationship. Lots of energy, care, money. But this is natural, because they are important for me.
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> I always try to take the next small step at the given points, and to remind myself that what I see and do not understand probably has its reasons. I tried to keep in touch even when thing have really piled up. Of course, I have also put material resources into the relationship, but that is the easy side, you don't really have to make effort for that (of course when my friends altruistically give money for either the patronage or other issues with regard to our PAR process, that is a great thing). I am truly concerned about them and interested in their experience. This is something I also receive from this relationship when they let me in on this.
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> I think I have received more than I have given. What I have given is first of all my time. But this is not a burden any more. Of course, I pick up the little girl each morning and take her to school (otherwise she would not go), but this has already become a part of my everyday life. Sometimes I give money or do the shopping for them, so it cannot occur that the children have nothing to eat. So I am there. It seems to me that the mother likes to chat with me. She does not need my advices, she is just happy to be listened to. I think the little girl may be able to get the most out of this relationship in the long run. She really means a lot to me. For

example, I'm taking her to my mother's summer house next week. She has never left the town before. She gradually gets acquainted with the spaces that are self-evident for my children but not for her (e.g. cinema, confectionary).

"I have gained a relationship"

The relationship that is based on only giving will remain a helper-assisted relation. In order to go beyond the asymmetric "patron" role and to build up a symmetric relationship both sides must receive. How did we experience this? *What have we received from the relationship?*

It has completely changed my life (basically the whole PAR process). With them it is not working anymore. They have become parts of my life and probably will also remain. At first I was a bit frustrated, when they came to my office almost each day. I had my way of living, working till the evening, and now I had to put it down in the afternoon. Then I realized that this is much more important for me than fiddling with the power point. I have learnt a lot from them. He is a very reflective teenager (or young adult). I have learnt how the childhood experience (being abandoned, looking for food in the garbage, the constant necessity to prove you being worthy) affected the mind-set of this sensitive boy. His girlfriend is different. More like a child yet. She is very lovable. It is very pleasant to spend time with her. I have received that there is someone to care about.

I have received lots of things. In the beginning it was very interesting in the professional sense as well. I have gained deeper understanding about my research topic. But today this is not the major motivation anymore. They are rather friends to me. It is great that they listen to me, my problems, and tell me good advices. The asymmetry in the relationship is gradually dissolving. I spend a lot of time with their daughter, but they also look after my kids occasionally. I have re-evaluated a lot of things in my life; I got rid of many of my prejudices. For example, they are very much oriented towards the present, or distrust social institutions. These imply things that people usually condemn (e.g. do not turn up at the fixed appointments at the offices or at school; do not pay the fines). But in their position I would probably do the same. In the offices they really look down on them (which suddenly changes if they come with me) and they do not explain things for them in a way they could actually understand.

Basically, I like spending time with people who provide intellectual inspiration for me. I know this is elitist. My relationship with her has mitigated my "elitism". Of course we do not talk about philosophy or staff, but we can talk about some fundamental things of life (e.g. who is a true friend, who can you trust or count on). I can talk about these things with her, and actually almost solely with her. We talk

> a lot about everyday life, and I am surprised at myself how I enjoy it. So, for example, this is a thing I have gained. The relationship also made me more sensitive to social problems (I know this sounds trivial, but that really is the case). It made me realize my blind-spots. Of course I have long been interested in social justice issues, but being in touch with them taught me a lot about the meaning of having temporary jobs and a huge mortgage loan on your house at the same time, or how they experience going to school, and what leads to bad marks or school leaving.
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> First of all, I have received trust. They let me into their world to an extent. When you don't know something you necessarily think in stereotypes, pre-fabricated categories. Certainly, your principles and past experience give you the feeling that there must be something beyond these stereotypes, but you simply don't know what. So an unknown world has opened up to me (at least bits of it). This allowed me to transgress my boundaries, to overcome my (formerly unrealized) prejudices. And of course I have received positive feedbacks as well. It is the most valuable when coming from the children.
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> What have I received from this relationship? Well, I have gained a relationship. Sometimes positive feedbacks as well, they seem to be grateful, but I try not to pay too much attention to these ego-boosting things. And I have received the feeling, that I am somehow connected to their world.

While we cannot deny that the patronage relationships are still asymmetric to an extent, this asymmetry is gradually melting, and every one of us experience both giving and receiving. This resulted in gaining understanding; more empathy and the realization and overcoming of blind-spots. And of course we have gained new relationships.

"Closing down cannot be a good answer"

Gaining new relationships also means that we have to manage them. And relationships have their ups and downs, they may also be demanding sometimes. So *have you ever felt that you are at the end of your tether?*

> Of course. Actually not because of them. In the winter, with the help of my entrepreneur friend, we bought them 1.5 tons of firewood. They ran out of it within a month… So I called my friend again but he turned me down, which made me feel angry at him. I found myself begging, throwing in my lot with them. Then I tried to be a bit more reflexive, and reminded myself that I must be happy that my entrepreneur friend had helped a lot. Or another case is when we tried to motivate the boy to go to school (after his father was taken into prison he stopped going to school). I tried to come up with a motivation system for him, which worked for a week… I feel that his problems are beyond my tether. And I also reached my limits emotionally. The difference between our worlds is just too vast.

We were sitting here in our fancy suburban house, and 5 kilometres from here, their life was just falling apart. This is the worst feeling, but then I think about my possibilities. And I think all the possibilities are better than closing down the bridge between these two worlds again. And this makes me tick. Probably all of us have something to learn from this, and probably what we should learn is not closing down. But this also means we must cope with this inconceivable chasm between our lives. I must accept my inability and also joyfulness. Because that is tough as well, to rejoice at my things when they are in such a situation. So what makes me tick is the principle that closing down the borders between these two worlds cannot be a good answer.

When he started to go to school again and came to see the tutor almost each day, and also her girlfriend was preparing for the secondary school; that was a tough period. That was very demanding and time-consuming. And sometimes it is hard to cope with the enormous stress and aggression accumulated in these children.

The problems of the three children jointly exceed my possibilities. And all this is not just about the children, but also their parents. I just simply cannot take the problems of the mother. That would be too much. That is where my boundaries are now.

"It is getting easier to transgress"

We do not want to suggest that facing our boundaries and being at the end of the tether are delightful experience. Nevertheless, it helped us in many cases to exceed the limits and to transgress ourselves. What do you think of this? *Have you ever felt that you have managed to exceed your boundaries, to transgress yourself?*

Prejudices work in a strange manner. We say that we do not have any, but they are still there. On the other hand, they can be overcome. Once I went to visit them. It was evening, almost dark. I entered the garden and saw that there is some kind of get-together there. Eight Roma men were sitting around the table drinking alcohol. I though "no way, I'm not coming here". But what to tell them later, why I turned back. Eventually I entered, and had a nice chat with the house-wife as always.

I have also managed to overcome a lot of prejudices. In the everyday sense I was not prejudiced, but still, due to the unknown I used stereotypes in my thinking. This means, that I was surprised to see their responses to certain situations. For example, how self-evident it was for them to take in the abandoned little girl, while they could hardly make ends meet. Or to see how worried she is about her children going to the bad, due to the neighbourhood. Or to see how employers take advantage of them and how the schools and kindergartens are totally blind

to their situation, and still they want to live up to the expectations in the work-place or at school. Of course, I guess, I still have prejudices to overcome.

I have reached my limits pretty often, but it is getting easier to transgress. For example, when I understood that the only way to make the girl going to the school was to pick her up each morning and take her to the school, I though no way, this would be too much for me. But then it turned out to be all right and became natural. Or when the school started to contact me with regard to official cases; that was very strange. But this led to the possibility for her to take a comprehensive exam at the end of the year and continue her studies (otherwise she should have been dismissed because she was absent from school too much). Or when she first came to us and stayed over, that was a point when my husband crossed his boundaries. Of course there will probably be boundaries I will not cross, but I don't know yet what are these.

I constantly have this feeling. For me the crossing of boundaries is paradoxically in connection with keeping the boundaries: to learn to say no, to admit that I am at the end of my tether in certain situations. That is needed to keep my integrity and to do this in the long run.

Well, I still have a way to go in unconditional acceptance... We put a lot of efforts in education. He started to go to school again and really wanted to have a profession. But then he had to stop it again due to an eye disease. That was really hard, and I felt really sorry for him. But this made me rethink my role. And I'm not sure that my role is to make him finishing a school.

"Now I visit them because I would like to see them" (conclusion)

What we would like to emphasize about our experience with the patronage relationship is that, on contrary to how it is called (patronage), its ambition is to build up a long-term, consistent, symmetric relationship between people who otherwise would probably have nothing to do with each other. We have experienced that this kind of engagement has an enormous potential in transforming those taking part or affected. Our ambition is not to transform those living in poverty in order to "fit the society". We would like to transform and being transformed in the same time, which could be a small step in diminishing the systemic oppression the people we cooperate with face.

We think donations, development programmes and subsidies may all be important, but they are just one side of the coin. They can easily make us think that poverty, deprivation and exclusion are "their" problem, the transformation has to occur at their side. Our ambition was to go beyond this and put an emphasis on the transformation of "our side" as well – so that eventually we can eliminate concepts such as "their side" and "our side". We do not claim that patronage will surely have a long term effect on the opportunities and well-being of the Roma people we cooperate with (though we hope so). We

do not claim that this is a panacea, or this is a way for everyone. But we claim that when poverty alleviation relationships turned into kinship that brought about sea-change. So *what would you conclude from all of this?*

> Balance is very important. The gist is to build up a long-term, consistent relationship, which is not easy in any sense. Sometimes you have to hold yourself back in order to maintain your integrity; at the same time you see the enormous acute problems, and this makes you have a bad conscience. I think this is the most difficult part.
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> I am a bit worried about the future. On the one hand about my responsibility, on the other hand about the little girl choosing a life for herself that I do not have a place in, or I cannot make my peace with. But we'll cross that bridge when we come to it.
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> In the beginning I visited them because I believed in the patronage programme, now I visit them because I would like to see them.
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> I also think this is the most interesting. It had been launched as a goal-oriented relationship alongside middle-class norms, and it turned into a relationship where we just keep in touch. Perhaps this is kinship.

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Malovics Gy. – Mihók B. – Szentistványi I. – Juhász J. – Nagy M. – Méreiné Berki B. (2016): Ideal versus actual participatory action research (PAR): the consequences of radical egalitarianism and present orientation. Manuscript under review.

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What we tweeted about ...

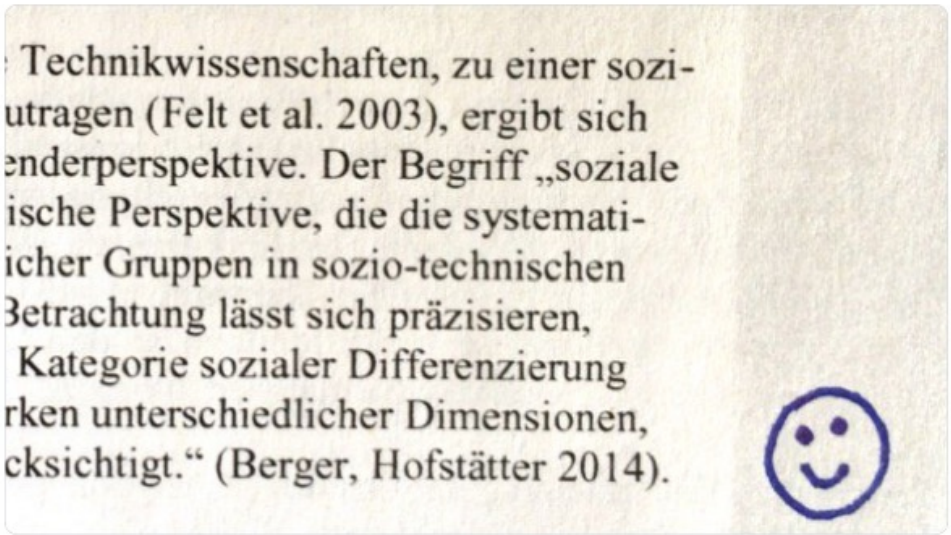
Queer STS @QueerSTS · 20.05.16

Did you already read our first Queer-feminist STS Forum? queersts.com/wp-content/upl...

1 13 15

Queer STS @QueerSTS · 05.07.16

Happy moment to see #queerSTS members' work (@BiHofstaetter & @ThomasBerger42) quoted by Brigitte Ratzer. :-)


Technikwissenschaften, zu einer sozi-
utragen (Felt et al. 2003), ergibt sich
enderperspektive. Der Begriff „soziale
ische Perspektive, die die systemati-
icher Gruppen in sozio-technischen
Betrachtung lässt sich präzisieren,
Kategorie sozialer Differenzierung
rken unterschiedlicher Dimensionen,
cksichtigt.“ (Berger, Hofstätter 2014).

2 3

Wolfgang Luef @wluef · 08.09.16

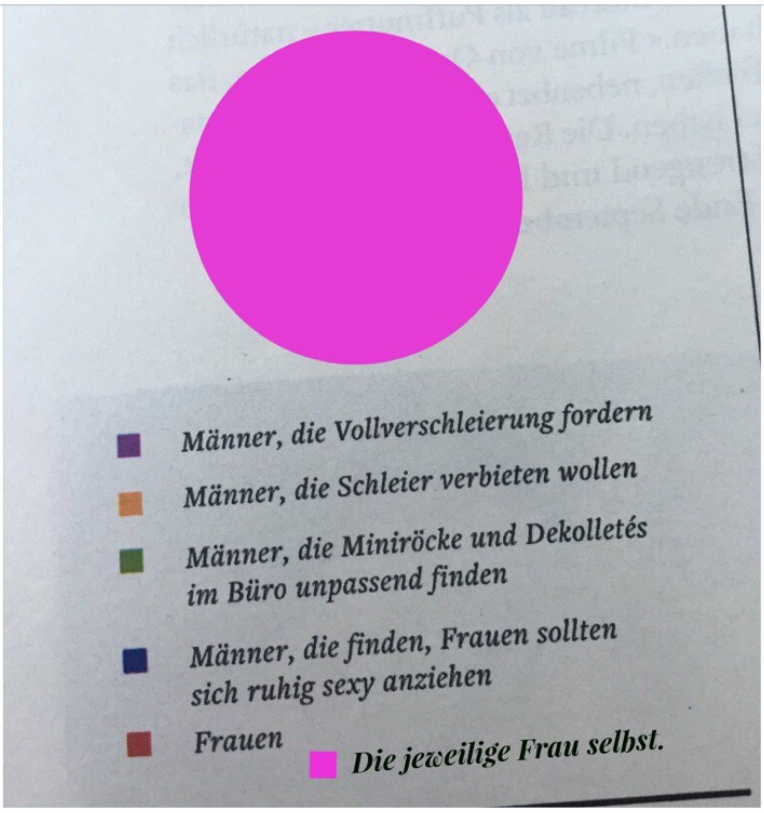
Diesmal haben wir echt lange überlegt, wie groß die einzelnen Tortenstücke sein müssen. Morgen im SZ-Magazin.

19 600 857

Queer STS
@QueerSTS

Antwort an @wluef

.@wluef Wir haben da noch ein bisschen nachgebessert:



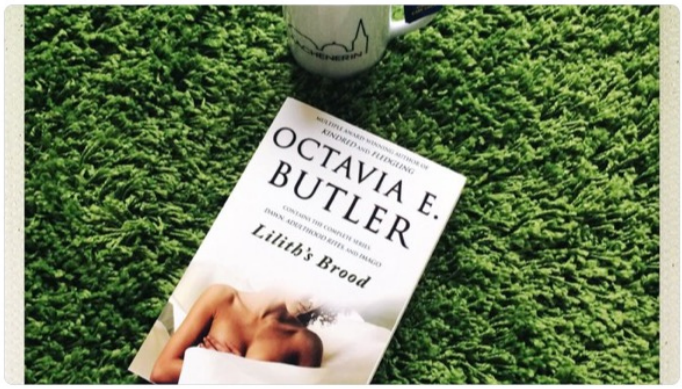
09.09.16, 18:21

TWEET-AKTIVITÄT ANZEIGEN

10 RETWEETS **28** „GEFÄLLT MIR"-ANGABEN

Queer STS @QueerSTS · 29.10.16

Weekend read. Octavia E. Butler, yeah!
#feminist #AfricanAmerican
#sciencefiction
Thanks @ThomasBerger42! :-) AT



6 10

Queer STS @QueerSTS · 28.11.16

Discussing
trans-
post-
anti-
meta-
humanism today.
(Greetings to our 9th member
@FreitagDaniela in #Bangkok!)

1 4

Queer STS @QueerSTS · 31.12.16

We had a great year! According to our #queerSTS motto:
Make kin and babies! ;-)

See you hopefully in May @ #STSGraz2017!

7

Du hast retweetet

Elevate Festival @elevatefestival · 04.03.17

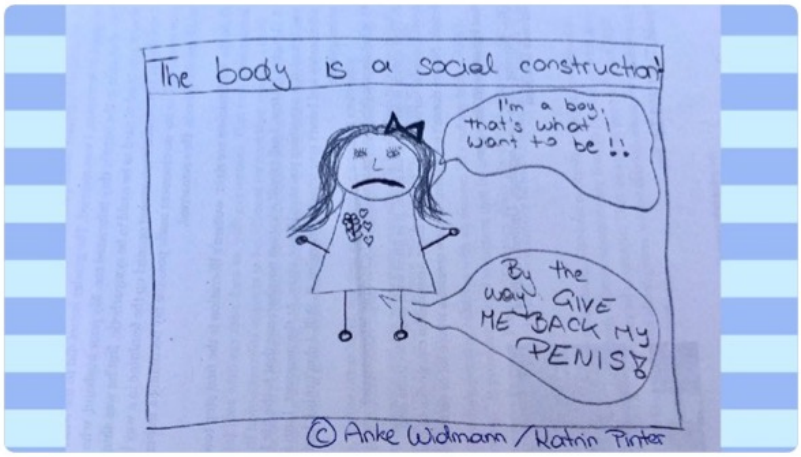
#e17wikipedia

> **Queer STS** @QueerSTS
> #queerSTS beim Edit-a-thon @elevatefestival : Input zu Gender und queer in STS 💫 Demokratische Bildung, offenes Wissen 💫
>
> 
>

1 4

Queer STS @QueerSTS · 29.03.17

Our students made these awesome cartoons fr. @Fausto_Sterling's interview ab. intersexuality mobile.nytimes.com/2001/01/02/sci...

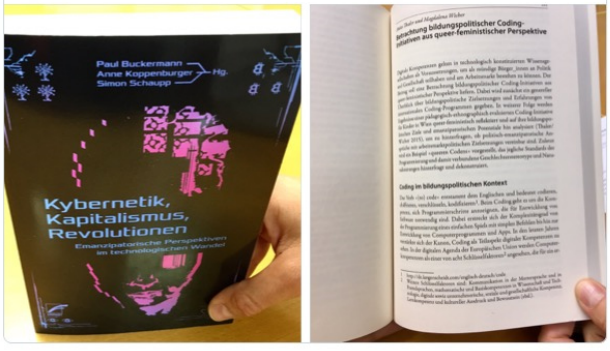


1 4

Queer STS @QueerSTS · 30.03.17

We wrote about queer coding in a book about emancipatory perspectives of technological transitions: Kybernetik, Kapitalismus, Revolutionen

> **IFZ Graz** @IFZ_Graz
>
> Neuer Buchbeitrag von Anita Thaler & Magdalena Wicher (@QueerSTS) über bildungspolitische und queere Perspektiven von Coding-Initiativen.



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Queer Science
& Technology Studies