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Editorial for Queer STS Forum #8 2023: Queer-Feminist Inclusion and Visibility – Overcoming Stories of Exclusion and Invisibility in Science, Education and Technology

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In our last Forum #7 we opened a discourse around "academic kindness" as queer-feminist intervention in contemporary violent and hierarchical working cultures and actualization of a feminist ethics of care (Jauk-Ajamie & Thaler 2022). By looking closer at different levels of application of academic kindness, in pedagogical settings and research practices, we stumbled upon the notion of inclusion, and wondered why even in equity driven settings some (non-)human actors are excluded.

Noticing practices of exclusion and making (non-)humans invisible, we find that especially now in time of multiple crises, we need to overcome traditional dichotomies and the delegitimization of certain forms of knowledges. We need to change our discourses of socio-eco-technological transformation by telling stories together and valuing situated knowledges (Haraway 2016, Rohracher 2022).

When we published our call for contributions, we had so many questions and points of discussion:

- How inclusive are participatory research projects actually?
- How can we reach out to vulnerable groups in our communities in citizen science activities?

- How can we overcome boundaries and limitations and be truly welcoming in our educational settings?
- How can we overcome learning practices, which cultivate "epistemological assimilation" and move towards "epistemic diversity" (McNeill et al. 2022)?
- How can we offer save spaces and brave spaces (Arao & Clemens 2013) for LGBTQIA+?
- Which roles play architecture, infrastructure and technologies (Boys 2022)?
- How can we engage in multispecies activities (Haraway 2016; Petitt & Brandt-Off 2022)?

In other words: How can we overcome stories of invisibility (Leyva et al. 2022)?

Of course, we realized, we were not the first ones asking these questions. We know that there is a lot of valuable knowledge and practical experience in the world already. Therefore, we invited our queer STS community, colleagues and friends to combine these questions, maybe think even further, and acknowledge previous work: What can we learn from disability studies, from critical race scholars and practitioners working inclusively for decades and helping us with our vision of a queer-inclusive science and technology? What can we learn from feminists and artists thinking and doing museums queer inclusively (Grácio et al. 2020)? What can we learn from multispecies ethnographers working on multispecies communities of social learning (Petitt & Brandt-Off 2022)? What can we learn from educators who broaden up participation in STEM fields among students minoritized by race, gender, and/or sexuality (McNeill et al. 2022)?

Beside theory and discourse based contributions, we explicitly invited practical and empirical implementations of queer-feminist inclusion and visibility. With this eighth Queer-Feminist Science & Technology Studies Forum we wanted to open our multi-media open access publication for our community in terms of content as well as format as much as possible. And we received six wonderful contributions – one of them comprising several students' works, which resulted from a seminar by Queer STS working group members Susanne Kink-Hampersberger and Lisa Scheer. We are very thankful for all of them, and we learned a lot again, not only about theories and feminist practices, we were not aware of before, but also for us as publishers of an online journal. It really needed this very issue on queer-feminist inclusion that we finally thought about adding alternative texts or descriptions to images in our journal. We will embed this in our template for future Queer-Feminist Science & Technology Studies Forums, as we also constantly think about the layout and accessibility of our open access only journal.

Eleanor Armstrong and Anna Danielsson actually sent us a separate file with ALT texts, and we blushed immediately. Why can it be that we internalised to describe images on social media, but did not think about including this practice in our own online journal. We are so glad to have these kind academics in our community who help us to grow.

Thank you Ellie and Anna, not only for this intervention, which will improve our journal in the future, but also for your article, which is queer STS through and through. We will share and quote your paper for years to come. But what is it about that makes it queer-feminist and how are the authors discussing inclusion and exclusion? First of all, Eleanor Armstrong and Anna Danielsson compose their mind-opening 'Science Butch Blues' based on existing educators' and scholars' work, who were broadening participation in STEM fields among students minoritized by race, gender, and/or sexuality. Then the authors analyse acts of epistemic diversity and ask which theoretical and methodological innovations are made possible by including female masculinities in research. With their 'butch science identities' Armstrong and Danielsson "aim to 'camp up heteronormative knowledges and institutions' (Sullivan, 2003, p.vi) of science by making visible butches and their participation in science". (Armstrong & Danielsson 2023, p.1, in this Forum). They unmask the often-heard claim of 'wanting more females in STEM fields' as a rhetoric expressed through visuals and narratives in campaigns, emphasizing the "respectable hetero-femininity (very acutely illustrated by the high criticized campaign 'Science: it's a girl thing', launched by The European Commission in 2012)" (Armstrong & Danielsson 2023, p.7, in this Forum). The notion of a queer knowledge theory of the science butch broadens the epistemology of science by a greater plurality of possible genders in science, Armstrong and Danielsson strongly argue.

Susanne Sackl-Sharif, Sonja Radkohl and Lea Dvoršak contribute an article about empirical implementation of inclusion which acts on the philosophy of participatory research to not study (young) people, but to do research with them together. The authors describe how they pursued their double goals, to research three case studies while achieving goals within the three approached youth communities: German-speaking LGBTQIA+ online spaces, Fridays for Future (FFF) activists and the skateboarding community in Graz in Austria.

Sackl-Sharif, Radkohl and Dvoršak discuss critical points in their research and recommend four crucial elements to do this kind of participatory research within and for communities:

- Enough time and financial resources – even more so than in other qualitative research projects
- Empowerment through co-determination or decision-making power – this calls for method training sessions and reflection loops
- Interdisciplinary research teams – this creates a broader understanding and range of opportunities for collaborative research
- Open research questions – broad and open research questions make it possible to address different interests and needs of participants and communities

The next article brings us to the topic of virtual communication. Sybille Reidl, Sarah Beranek, Julia Greithanner, Anke Schneider and David Sellitsch offer us a field report around the question: How to address diversity in research on and co-creation of online meetings?

Studies show that virtual communication can exacerbate existing inequalities; for example, women are more likely to be overlooked or ignored in online meetings (Armentor-Cota 2011; Connley 2020). In addition, age and education level may negatively influence receptivity to technology (NeXR 2020; Buchebner-Ferstl et al. 2020; Reidl et al. in this Forum). Therefore, the importance for the researchers was to further develop online meeting technologies to facilitate inclusion and belonging in digital spaces. Within a research project which was funded to include a gender perspective, the researchers aimed to contribute to the development of inclusive online meeting solutions – in terms of both inclusive software development and the facilitation of online meetings. The objective was to develop ideas within a participatory process and co-creatively reflect with users on how to make online meetings more inclusive through technological and social/group dynamic processes. The authors give insights in the research process and address the following questions:

- What kind of diversity and exclusion mechanisms might play a role in online communication?
- How to consider diversity dimensions in selecting a sample for the needs assessment?
- How to consider diversity dimensions in selecting participants for co-creation?

Our second half of this year's Forum are contributions from art, students of a gender seminar and a feminist intervention. Let's start with the feminist intervention. Our Queer STS working group member Susanne Kink-Hampersberger shows us the story and her thoughts of turning a semi-public space – for one afternoon – into a women*'s space, and what controversies the organizing group had to not only face in the course of the organisation. Susanne also writes very openly about the discussions within the organizing group of who should be included, who are 'socialized females'?

As we progress through the Forum, let's continue with four contributions by students which were developed in the course of a gender seminar "Equality policies from affirmative action to intersectional mainstreaming" at University of Graz in the summer term 2023 led by Susanne Kink-Hampersberger and Lisa Scheer. Both share a briefly description of the course and their observations and reflections as an introduction for the contributions of the students:

- Meike Steinberg and Stefanie Reinthaler talked to sociologist Eva Taxacher, who has been working at the WomenService Graz for ten years. They talk about defining visible queer-feminist inclusion and challenges and goals of "Gender Werkstätte", a network of experts from various professional fields.
- Moving from one interview to another one: Lea Ostendorf interviewed herself and questioned overcoming invisibility alongside a permaculture perspective. The central theme of her work is the question how we can enter into healthier relationships with ourselves, others and our environment.
- Katharina Wesselkamp and Kerstin Brysch show us a portrait "Diversity@WKO", based on an interview with a teacher of the Diversity-Working group at the Wilhelm-Kaisen-Oberschule in Bremen.
- And Jakob Fesca, Jacqu Schöttler, Carla Santasusana write about the documentary mama bears, which was made by Emmy award-winning director Daresha Kyi and followed mothers of the mama bears movement for over six years. The documentary accompanies people who have exchanged and networked via the Facebook group mama bears and have since been leading the fight for the rights of their queer children together with other members of the group.

Finally, our Queer STS working group member Daniela Jauk-Ajamie interviewed Nicole Pruckermayr, an artist, curator, scholar, and art facilitator (currently Executive Director of the Styrian Cultural Initiative) creating in public spaces in Austria. They talk about how people could participate in the art production and how people influence it. In this interview deeper experiences and insights are shared regarding the project GINA loves! A 6,5/7m large heart tattooed on a wall of a newly emerging housing development in Graz. Nicole Pruckermayr tied the 40,000 knots of the heart with about 100 people of all ages while engaging them in conversations about love.

With this Forum, we originally also wanted to explicitly address issues of multispecies justice, to include all animals, not just human animals, and nature as a whole. This topic has been in focus of the working group Queer STS for a longer time, for instance in 2015 Thomas Menzel-Berger and Magdalena Wicher discussed issues of "Queer Ecology" in a lecture series[1] at University of Klagenfurt in Austria. Anita currently reflects on the issue of multispecies justice in the frame of a project on biodiversity[2], where she worked

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[1] The original title of the series was „Que(e)rschnittsmaterie! Queer-feministische Technik- & Wissenschaftsforschung".
[2] https://planet4b.eu

on a co-created methodological approach to do biodiversity case study with an intersectional lens for a transdisciplinary group of researchers and practitioners. In a report Anita Thaler and her colleague Sandra Karner explained guiding principles of doing biodiversity research from an intersectionality viewpoint to understand power relations, especially when it comes to inclusion and exclusion processes in knowledge creation (Thaler & Karner 2023). Lea Ostendorf brought permaculture and nature into this year's Forum #8 on "Queer-Feminist Inclusion and Visibility", and we think animals, nature, biodiversity could be a very interesting topic for our queer STS community in one of the coming journals. For this year, we are happy with the huge variety in contributions and the discussions initiated by them.

Just as a reminder, this is a publication without financial support whatsoever (which is a hindering factor in terms of inclusion itself). The working group Queer STS writes, organizes, reviews, designs, publishes, networks unpaid, and also contributors receive no remuneration for their work from us (Thaler & Hofstätter 2022). So, we want to thank all colleagues and friends, who helped us publishing this open access, online journal on "Queer-Feminist Inclusion and Visibility – Overcoming Stories of Exclusion and Invisibility in Science, Education and Technology", our working group, reviewers, and especially our contributors, who gave us so much food for thought and fruitful discussions.

Speaking of food for thoughts. How can a specific – some may argue narrow – queer-feminist perspective, and like Susanne Kink-Hampersberger writes, even excluding a privileged group of people, contribute to more inclusion? This journal brought theoretical and empirical insights into the mechanisms of queer-feminist interventions (academically, artistically and from an activist's point of view). By increasing the visibility of science butch identities or limiting a (semi-)public space to a variety of women*, the ongoing informal practices of exclusion (by privileging a very limited group on the intersections of gender, *race*, sexualities, class, ability etc.) are highlighted. This is one of the examples of how queer-feminist STS – however narrow this field seems (although we interpret it very broadly ;-)) – can have an important impact to our society, if we could help contribute to this effect with our Queer-feminist STS Forum #8, we are very happy indeed.

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