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Introduction

METHODOLOGY HAS RECENTLY become a hot topic in queer academia. How come? Is it simply a replacement of the concept "theory" in Queer Theory or does it signal that various empirical struggles with the latter has become a new focus for Queer Studies? In February 2009 the Queer Seminar at Stockholm University organised a session within the interdisciplinary colloquium "Feminist Research Methods – An International Conference" at Centre for Gender Studies, Stockholm University. We wanted to focus on the often silent but still central methodological aspects of doing queer research, taking depart in a simple but critically crucial question: "How do queer researchers do research?"

Researchers in Queer Studies use a wide range of data: from novels to government policies, from visual phenomena to sounds and smells, from historical eras to the present. Often the archives we search are silent or numb when we ask our questions. So, just how do researchers go about looking for possible queer subtexts and angles? What methodologies do we need to lay bare the workings of heteronormative regimes in all their manifestations and how do we recognize and reveal queer presences within those regimes?

Queer studies is a field full of scholarly challenges, particularly when it comes to intersectional approaches to different kinds of power regimes. For example, can the different modalities of power that produce queer subjects as classed, gendered, sexed, aged or racialised be subjected to similar methods of analysis? Or do they all demand different kinds of theoretical and methodological scrutiny?

Methodological approaches in Queer Studies are often based on theories from various disciplines which, in turn, demands a wide range of methods to apply to a certain material. But to what extent are different types of methodologies compatible within the frames of Queer Studies and how, if at all, can they be brought into productive combinations? For example, how do the text-based approaches that are favoured in much queer writings interact with sociological inquiry? To what extent is it productive to define methodology at all in Queer Studies?

The Queer Seminar at Stockholm University has been active since 1996. During these years an immense variety of queer scholarly work, mainly from the Social Sciences and Humanities but also from the Natural Sciences, has been discussed with respect to empirical contents and theoretical applications according to the traditions of the respective disciplines. While preparing the call for papers we realised that cross disciplinary methodologies within queer studies are seldom discussed in detail. Judith Halberstam has formulated what could be called a preliminary definition of the practice in *Female masculinity*, describing queer methodology as a “combination of textual criticism, ethnography, historical survey, archival research, and the production of taxonomies.” (Halberstam 1998/2006:10) This definition could be consid-

ered a plausible description of a typical interdisciplinary methodological approach. Trying to be more specific, we understand queer methodology as empirically based designs of questions and methods in order to scrutinize heteronormative regimes and expose presences of queer interpretive potential.

The interest for discussing methodological questions with respect to a number of diverse academic disciplines was impressive. An international crowd of queer scholars met up in Stockholm in February 2009. The session had the largest number of participating paper presenters in the conference on the whole, showing that Queer Studies is now included as an integral part of Gender Studies at Stockholm University. The visible and unquestioned presence of a queer theme must be noted as remarkable at a feminist conference.

The conference session was divided into one round table discussion and five sub sessions: Queer Street Theory, Queering National Concepts, Queer Archives, Queer Ethnography and Queer Narratives in Social Life. The round table discussion focused the problems and possibilities of conceptualising queer methodologies. Moderator was Dr. Kath Brown, Social and Cultural Geographer, University of Brighton and discussants on the panel were Anu Koivunen, Associate Professor in Film Studies, Stockholm University/Helsinki University, Mark Graham, Associate Professor in Social Anthropology, Stockholm University, Dr. Sara Edenheim, Senior lecturer in Gender Studies and History, Malmö University College and Lund University and Dr. Martin Berg, Senior lecturer in Sociology, School of Social and Health Sciences at Halmstad University and Department of Sociology at Lund University.

The issues discussed during the conference in Stockholm is

paralleled with other methodological initiatives in Europe. Dr. Kath Brown is publishing a British anthology on methodologies in Queer Studies and Social Science, and the e-magazine Graduate Journal of Social Science chose to call their issue on Queer Studies and Queer Theory “Queer Methodologies”. “Methodologies” has become something of a buzz word within queer studies.

This issue of *lambda nordica* (which is actually the first to appear mainly in English) is devoted to papers and contributions from the conference. As guest editors we wanted to publish papers from different disciplines and with different perspectives and takes on queer methodology. Furthermore, we decided to choose articles written by researchers active in a Nordic context, highlighting the vital and growing interest in queer studies in the Nordic countries. The outcome is a diverse and heterogeneous selection of texts, discussing queer and methodologies from rather different perspectives.

Anu Koivunen, Film Studies, Stockholm and Helsinki University, starts by criticizing queer theory for its neglect to engage in methodology. More specifically she problematizes the emotional turn in queer studies, asking for more straightforward guidelines on how to actually implement the theory in our research.

Trying to implement queer theoretical insights on empirical data is actually what Social Anthropologist Mark Graham from Stockholm University, sets out to do. Graham, who is currently working on an ethnography from the gay male scene in Sydney, Australia, is discussing how an extensive fieldwork and a close look at material culture (in his case the things people surround themselves with), is not only a way of getting information about

sexuality and sexual identification. It also renders insights in the ambivalences and imbalances that not seldom permeates everyday life; i.e. the queer nature of life.

Queer life is discussed in Irina Schmitts article “Do you have a boyfriend?”, a topic that several presentations in the queer sessions dealt with. Quoting one of her informants at a junior high school in Germany, Irina Schmitt, currently affiliated at Centre for Gender Studies, Lund University, highlights the problems of being queer in a heteronormative field. Through drawing on feminist as well as queer theoretical conversations about the researcher in the field, Schmitt nuances the ways we think about both ourselves as researchers and the field.

Another kind of (heteronormative) field is discussed by Patrik Steorn in his article “Queering the museum. Methodological reflections on doing queer in museum collections”. Steorn, who is an Art Historian based in Stockholm, critically examines the recent trend within Swedish museums to highlight queer thematics through special exhibitions. He stresses that, although good intentions, the museums have not actually achieved any norm-critical analyses, but rather handled the queer perspective rather superficially. According to Steorn, an alternative way of doing queer interventions into museum archives and exhibitions would be to think more carefully about the methods and theories we use. Museums should facilitate the production of queer meaning for their collections by “innovative display, ground-breaking research and encouraging subversive social events on their grounds”.

Making archives in alternative ways is what Mathias Danbolt, Art History at Bergen University, investigates in his article about queer activist archives and archival activism. With a starting

point in a demonstration against hate crimes organized during the Queer Festival in Copenhagen summer 2008, Danbolt discusses the recent queer theoretical interest in archives and historiography. Emphasizing the importance of embodied knowledge and memory in activist history, the author introduces the concept of archival activism to theorise how repertoires of activist emotions, actions and practice function as living archives.

Through the complexities discussed by these authors we hope that this issue will contribute to a continued and further detailed discussion of the role of methodology within interdisciplinary Queer Studies. This field that unites in examinations of heteronormative regimes and exposure of queer interpretive potential has now been deeply consolidated in its very diversity of empirical research. The elusive concept of Queer Theory will surely be further contested and expanded through empirical studies and struggles with methodological considerations.