

Institute for Queer Theory – in founding process

concept

The Institute for Queer Theory provides a space for research, theory building and international exchange with the aim of advancing sex/gender- and sexuality studies and instigating public debate and social practice. Committed to social change, the institute aims at transforming a normative order, which relies on the sex/gender binary and on dominant heterosexuality. It is its goal to develop non-hierarchical and de-normalizing ways of organizing gender and sexuality. In these as in other fields of social difference, it supports non-normative forms of cultural representation and political participation.

context

Queer Theory is a recent field of academic inquiry – studying cultural images, social practices and the institutionalizations of sex, gender and sexuality. From a queer perspective sex/gender and sexuality are perceived as neither naturally given nor anthropologically fixed. Rather, queer theory asks which processes and mechanisms constitute sex/gender and sexuality as effects of historically specific socio-cultural and geo-political power relations. Simultaneously, sex/gender and sexuality also function as productive moments of creating subjectivity and society. It questions how sex/gender and sexuality are woven together to ensure the normative privileging of heterosexuality and the sex/gender binary. Intersecting with other categories of social differentiation, they form, inform and secure relations of power and domination. By analyzing these relations queer theory seeks to enforce political transformations.

aim

The Institute for Queer Theory aims at denaturalizing and deprivileging the sex/gender binary and heterosexuality. In accordance with queer approaches it furthermore seeks to challenge normalizations, hierarchies, and relations of domination and violence in all areas of culture and society. It strives to develop forms of acknowledging difference without fixing categories or norms, which in turn are criticized for affirming processes of exclusion or coercive inclusion. Therefore, in a more specific sense, the Institute for Queer Theory fosters the heterogeneity of gendered, sexed and sexual ways of existence, while in a wider sense it proposes the socio-political perspective of a controversial and agonistic pluralism.

modes of working

The institute works transdisciplinarily; it connects academic, cultural and political fields of knowledge production and communication, thereby promoting mutual and productive exchange between their different subjects and formats. Practices of queering – as they are developed sub/culturally, in social movements as well as in the academy in order to inspire socio-political change – feed into research, inquiry and theoretical reflection. Apart from queer knowledge production and its epistemological reflection, the institute's work relies on discourse analysis and deconstruction as well as on the critique of systems of power and domination. Furthermore, the institute proposes new forms of scholastic endeavour as well as cultural representation and public articulation.

format

The Institute for Queer Theory coordinates its projects and activities from its two local offices in Hamburg and Berlin. The projects of research, theory production and exchange, of study and of the promotion of innovative and critical thinking rely on transdisciplinary, transregional, and transnational cooperative networking. Accordingly, the institute organizes its own events, develops projects with partners and partner organizations and participates in projects initiated by others.

Activities of the institute take the following formats:

- research projects
- working groups
- symposia and conferences
- seminars and workshops
- talks and public presentations
- exhibitions
- publications

fields of research and practice

- sex/gender and sexuality as categories of the formation of subjectivities, social relations, cultural imaginaries and symbolic representations as well as social discourses, practices, and institutions
- intersections of sex/gender and sexuality, particularly in their overlap with other categories of social differentiation and hierarchization
- socio-cultural and geo-political significance of normative heterosexuality and the sex/gender binary and its historical continuities and changes
- sexual politics – of the state, of public institutions, organizations, parties, of social movements as well as subcultural interventions
- critique of heteronormativity as a form of queer, intersectional critique of domination
- modes of political organization: democracy, citizenship, participation, social dissent, hegemonic consensus in societies, which encourage or discourage a plurality of sex/genders and sexualities
- interrelations of sexuality and economy under conditions of neoliberalism and globalization
- media and media critique
- academic, cultural and artistic representations of sex/gender and sexuality
- development of transdisciplinary, multi-media approaches

director

Antke Engel is a philosopher focusing on feminist and poststructuralist theory, on conceptualizations of sexuality and desire, and on the critique of representation. She received her Ph.D. in Philosophy at Potsdam University in 2001. In her dissertation she analyzes the use of concepts of sex, gender and sexuality in queer theoretical approaches and she proposes a 'strategy of equivocation' as a means of queer/feminist politics of representation. Between 2003 and 2005 she held a visiting professorship for Queer Theory at Hamburg University. During this time she organized three workshops, which provided for queer theoretical and political exchange of European, including many Eastern European, queer scholars. Apart from extensive teaching experience and public lecturing, Antke Engel has also been

engaged as an activist, a cultural worker, and a magazine publisher for many years – believing in the mutual inspiration of theory and politics. Typical of her academic work is a readiness to confront and connect social and cultural theory, particularly affirming deconstructive approaches in the critique of systems of domination. She is interested in cultural representations, especially visual representations in media, film, and art, focusing on queering practices and their socio-political effects.

advisory board

An international board provides support, advice, and a pool of possible networking opportunities for the institute and its members. Individual board members may be called on to act as referees. The board is purely advisory, and has no decision-making function. It watches over, contributes to, and assures the institute's academic excellence; and inspires it by connecting to a wide range of topics and debates.

- Tomasz Basiuk Director of the American Studies Center, University of Warsaw
- Judith Butler Maxine Elliot Professor in the Departments of Rhetoric and Comparative Literature at the University of California, Berkeley
- Lisa Duggan Associate Professor of History, American Studies, Gender and Sexuality Studies, New York University
- Judith Halberstam Professor of English and Director of the Center for Feminist Research at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles
- Sabine Hark Visiting Professor at the „Zentrum für Interdisziplinäre Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung“, Technical University Berlin
- Cornelia Klinger Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna and Professor of Philosophy, University of Tübingen
- Andrea Maihofer Director of the „Zentrum Gender Studies“, University of Basel
- Tuija Pulkkinen National Center of Excellence in Political Thought and Conceptual Change and Professor of Women's studies, University of Jyväskylä
- Ailbhe Smyth Director of the Women's Education, Research and Resource Centre, University College Dublin

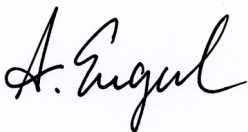
Contact

Institute for Queer Theory

Dr. Antke Engel

Harkortstrasse 79b
D- 22765 Hamburg
++49-40-430 04 29

or
c/o Bürogemeinschaft
Taborstr. 6
10997 Berlin



Antke Engel
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