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**“I am what I am?”  
Toward a Sexual Politics of Contingent Foundations<sup>1</sup>**

**Prelude**

Up until the mid-1990s, “queer” in a Danish setting largely remained a term that only Danes traveling in English-speaking countries, film connoisseurs, or translators needed to familiarize themselves with. To these initiates, “queer” was an American slur primarily targeting gay men. Precocious AIDS activists may also have looked to the U.S. and picked up on the stir caused by Queer Nation and hence the new meanings that the term was acquiring, but other than that the phrase stayed obscure to the majority of Danes. The ways in which “queer” finally came to denote a radical challenge to identity politics, a reading strategy, an academic theory,<sup>2</sup> and a way of life also in Denmark are too intricate for me to trace in this paper: I am neither a historian nor an etymologist. Suffice it to say that my compatriots were slow to adopt what sounds like a rustic pronunciation of the Danish word for heifers (“kvier”). By the time Judith Butler was admonishing her readers to be “critically queer” (Butler 1993: 223), I was still two years away from my seemingly incurable contagion. I contracted the queer perspective when I stayed a semester at SUNY-Binghamton in 1995 and never stopped preaching when I returned.

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<sup>1</sup> A far more informal version of this paper was originally given at the *Queer Questions to Representational Politics* symposium organized by the PPhiG (Politics of Philosophy and Gender) School in Berlin, May 11-12, 2007. The title of the paper was then “‘I am what I am?’ Toward a sexual politics of perspective and solidarity.” The feedback I received at the symposium, however, made me realize that phrases like “perspective” and “solidarity” imply ontological subjects: *Who* is looking and from where? *Who* is acting in solidarity and with whom? I thank the participants, notably Katriina Honkanen, for directing my attention to this pitfall. ‘Contingent Foundations’ is the title of an essay by Judith Butler in Scott & Butler (1992: 3-21).

<sup>2</sup> For a list of suggested reading relevant in a Danish – and, by extension, Scandinavian – context, please see my entry in the online encyclopedia *Leksikon for det 21. århundrede* (‘Encyclopedia For The 21st Century’): <http://www.leksikon.org/art.php?n=5013>.



## Word's Out

“Queer” is, as the call for papers for this issue of the Graduate Journal of Social Science states, a relatively empty signifier in non-English contexts. One might have expected that this lack of negative connotations would have *facilitated* the introduction of the term into the Danish academy and gay subculture, seeing that neither were forced to debate whether the term would be able to ‘overcome its constitutive history of injury’ (Butler 1993: 223) first. Somehow, however, this potential obstacle to absorbing what was now becoming a buzzword never seemed to play a significant role, although my allegation is hard to document because written material on the Danish genealogy of the concept of “queer” has been scarce so far. To a country in which gay men and lesbians had long been acting in concert, it was rather the feminist connotations that obstructed the adoption of “queer.” And indeed, the most prolific “queer” distillate today appears to have very *little* to do with feminism.<sup>3</sup> In the current discursive climate, I would venture the claim that to most Danes, “queer” means “permissive,” “promiscuous,” “boundless,” “avant-garde,” etc. Seasoned with anti-sexist and anti-racist awareness, I would have no objections to people embracing all these adjectives, but if the agents stay willfully oblivious to all other modes of oppression than those based on sexual orientation, this is a manifestation of the “queer” that I can certainly do without.<sup>4</sup> Regrettably, the prevalent scenery is also a far cry from the Butlerian non-identitarian theory that I became so enamored of in 1995. But then again, you can hardly expect society to resonate with the hopelessly understaffed and notoriously inadequately funded gender studies centers.<sup>5</sup> Finally, intellectuals in general are not too popular in Denmark at this historical moment and thus cannot really set the trend.

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<sup>3</sup> Tellingly, an event that took place on May 24, 2007 – organized by DJs affiliated with the self-proclaimed queer performance group *Dunst* (see [http://dunst.dk/dunst/about\\_us/index.html](http://dunst.dk/dunst/about_us/index.html)) in Copenhagen – was titled “Date Rape.”

<sup>4</sup> The so-called Queer Festival (see <http://www.queerfestival.org>), however, is a welcome exception to this tendency. The festival attempts to embrace “feminism” as well as “queer” – indeed uniting the two under the rubric of “queer feminism.” The festival was launched in 2006 and is run in accordance with the DIY (Do It Yourself) principle.

<sup>5</sup> As of October 2008, only one gender studies department (actually only a “center” under The Department of Scandinavian Studies and Linguistics at The University of Copenhagen) can be said to exist in Denmark.



## Queer Questions – Round One

Fortunately, there is a vibrant alternative which I decided to introduce to an international audience when I happened upon a call for papers containing this sentence, ‘Putting together “representative” and “representational politics” and “the queer” [...] is a true challenge, and, for at least some of us, a contradiction in terms.’<sup>6</sup> The paradoxical nature of the task at hand was exactly what inspired me to submit an abstract for the conference. As an academic activist and activist academic, ‘queer questions to representational politics’ are indeed what I seem to be spending most of my waking hours posing.

As the organizers of the PPhiG symposium encouraged the contributors to treat the queer and the political ‘as radically historical phenomena, located in both time and place,’ (ibid.) my paper revolves around my concrete experiences as a political activist. If we – as I do – consider “queer” to signify a set of analytical tools for highlighting and challenging heteronormativity rather than just another identity category, what forms might our resistance take? How do we avoid practicing “representational politics,” i.e. speaking on someone’s behalf, while at the same time remaining sensitive to the needs of minorities with whom we may – at times – share certain political interests? What do we mean by representational politics? And how is our work perceived by the Red-Green Alliance?<sup>7</sup> What impact does founder of the German *Institut für Queer Theory* Antke Engel’s suggestion that “representation” may also denote meaning production and reality construction have on this discussion?<sup>8</sup> And who are “we?”

These are some of the main questions that preoccupy the Queer Committee – ØQ for short – of the Danish Red-Green Alliance. Since its formation in 2002, the members have been

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<sup>6</sup> To read the call for papers in its entirety, please refer to [http://www.jyu.fi/yhtfil/PolCon/coepolcon/PPhG/events/queer\\_and\\_politics\\_07.html](http://www.jyu.fi/yhtfil/PolCon/coepolcon/PPhG/events/queer_and_politics_07.html).

<sup>7</sup> According to the party website, ‘[t]he Red-Green Alliance was formed in 1989 by three left-wing parties: the Left Socialist Party, the Communist Party of Denmark and the Socialist Workers Party, and by independent socialists’ (<http://enhedslisten.dk/about-party>). The six seats out of 179 in parliament dwindled to four at the recent election in November 2007.

<sup>8</sup> A paraphrase of Engel’s German paragraph heading “Repräsentation als Bedeutungsproduktion und Wirklichkeitskonstruktion” taken from her personal website on which parts of her dissertation are published. See [http://www.antkeengel.de/diss\\_text.html#einleitung](http://www.antkeengel.de/diss_text.html#einleitung).



attempting to mainstream gender and sexuality into the party's general discourse as well as into relevant law proposals and implement a politics of what we still refer to as solidarity and perspective. One might argue that a more proper designation would be “the Intersectionality Committee of the Danish Red-Green Alliance.” Rather than hurriedly taking a stand and adamantly sticking to it – a strategy that seems most efficient for attracting media attention – we endeavor to levitate over the problem; postponing closure as long as we can. Our leisurely pace reflects our resolve to include race, class, religion, nationality, and physical abledness – as well as their mutual construction and interaction – in our provisional conclusions. Needless to say, bearing *all* these factors in mind at the same time is hardly ever possible, but even if we prove able to add only one more component to a particular case, it is still worth the effort.

### **Frustrated Independent Scholar Meets Queer Committee**

I will account for the historical background of the Committee by way of introduction.

As mentioned earlier, the Queer Committee was founded in 2002 by members of the Red-Green Alliance who felt that the age-old and still existent Women's Committee suffered from a heteronormative and essentialist bias when dealing with gender and sexuality. After asking for permission to form an alternative committee, the founding members posted an ad in *Panbladet*, the monthly bulletin of the National Association of Gays & Lesbians (known as LBL in Danish). The magazine was distributed to all gay venues throughout the country and thus also reached a public outside the Association.<sup>9</sup>

At that point, i.e. a couple of months after right-wing Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen – re-elected for the third time in November 2007 – had taken office for the first time, I had given up on parliamentarism entirely. Besides, I found it hard to imagine how Judith Butler's vision of a politics based on contingent foundations rather than on political subjects might be realized. I read the ad for the Queer Committee thinking, ‘Hmm... These guys are actually going to give it a try! As revolutionary socialists and feminists, they wish to overturn the

<sup>9</sup> For financial reasons, however, the magazine had to close down in November 2007. An online version remains available at <http://www.panbladet.dk>.

existing social order!?! Kindly asking for permission to be included on the terms of the establishment doesn't seem to be their thing? Might the master's tools be able to dismantle the master's house after all?'<sup>10</sup> After pondering these questions for some time, I decided to embark on their experiment, although I was not even a member of the party.

Contrary to most other committees within the Red-Green Alliance, this one immediately attracted a relatively large number of non-party members. Some of them were academics like myself or academics-to-be who had been identifying as socialists all along, but who had no experience working within the framework of a political party. Others were LGBT activists, while others yet were affiliated with radical left-wing initiatives like *Ungdomshuset*<sup>11</sup> or feminist grassroots groupings... or all of the above. In short, the Queer Committee is the closest I have ever come to witnessing and participating in 'the mutual interdependencies of social movements and academic theories'<sup>12</sup> – to the point where the definitional boundaries between the two dissolve. Thanks to ØQ, I have often left the Red-Green Alliance's gigantic first floor apartment contemplating academic theories that had been *refined* rather than simplified in the course of my evening there. And characteristically, my sporadic academic output is very often prompted by discussions and experiences shared by my ØQ comrades.

We spent the first years basically justifying our existence within the Red-Green Alliance – often wondering if we should just call it quits and form our own faction independent of any political party. When the Swedish *Feministiskt Initiativ* was launched in April 2005, some of us seriously considered whether the Queer Committee should copy their concept and do something similar. For several reasons, however, we decided not to. Denmark badly needed – and still does – a strong opposition rather than increased sectarianism, and being socialists we failed to grasp how FI would make “feminism” rhyme with “conservatism,” having outspoken right-wing

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<sup>10</sup> I owe this phrase to Audre Lorde's famous essay by the same name.

<sup>11</sup> Activists were evicted on March 1, 2007, and the building demolished a few days later, causing massive riots to erupt. Please see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ungdomshuset> for a thorough recapitulation of events. At the peaceful *Aktion G13* demonstration on October 6 later that year, several marchers from the Queer Committee joined the Yellow Queer Feminist Block and were subsequently arrested for unlawful entry onto municipal property as they tried to squat an empty building. The truck transporting the sound system for this particular block was decorated with banners such as 'Not gay as in happy, but queer as in critical.' See <http://aktiong13.dk/index.php>. See also overleaf photo of the front banner, 'Normalize this.'

<sup>12</sup> A quote from the call for papers for this special issue of GJSS on queer studies: methodological approaches. See <http://www.gjss.org/index.php/cfp>.



members on their board. Finally, our rejection of the belief in a universal female subject played an important part in this decision.

### **National Association of Gays & Lesbians Meets Queer Committee**

I will return to the obstacles encountered by the Queer Committee *inside* the Red-Green Alliance. First, however, the battles in which we have participated vis-à-vis various developments and events *outside* of the party deserve mention. Consisting of a large number of non-party members, the Committee spends a great deal of time and energy operating on “street level.” We are extremely committed to consciousness-raising efforts in the LGBT and anti-fascist communities, and predictably these efforts often lead to sword-crossings with the National Association of Gays & Lesbians (LBL).

One symptomatic public disagreement was over the inclusion of transgendered individuals in the Association in 2006. Although the Association’s name does not yet reflect this change, bisexuals *were* in fact included a few years ago. Hence, LBL made it to the LGB stage. Advancing to the *T*, however, seemed premature to the majority of the decision-makers, who moreover expressed their concern that the Association would have nothing to offer transgender people – the ‘categorical difference between homosexuals and transsexuals’ (Hinge 2006: 13) considering. The Queer Committee had the audacity to point out that even on the Association’s own terms – identity politics – this exclusion made no sense: There is living proof that the categories “gay” and “transsexual” are not mutually exclusive. Antke Engel’s words on representation as “meaning making” and “reality construction” are sadly applicable: The National Association of Gays & Lesbians performed a speech act and *made* the categories mutually exclusive by questioning transgender inclusion.

We then urged the opponents of the inclusion to subject their own rhetoric and logic to the so-called “Jew test:” A criterion of political correctness (in the good sense!) contrived by the Danish anthropologist and newspaper editor Anne Knudsen. Although the assumption that different instances of oppression and marginalization are immediately translatable across time



and place is questionable, this maneuver does work to illustrate by way of analogy whether an argument has fascist connotations. Inserting “Jew” instead of the minority you are discussing will sometimes yield quite startling results. In an article published in *Panbladet* in November 2006, one of the executive members writes, ‘Acknowledging that a small group of people feels and thinks differently does [not] entail that we have to give up our own gendered identity’<sup>13</sup> (Hinge 2006: 13). If that sentence were about Jews, my guess is that it would be considered paranoid. The argument would go something like, ‘They don’t believe that Jesus was the Messiah, but that doesn’t mean that *we* can’t continue to think so.’ One is left to wonder what made Hinge think that including gender non-conformists *might* have necessitated a renunciation of his own gendered identity?

Although we do have members identifying as transgender, the Queer Committee is not criticizing the Association *in the capacity of* a transgender organization asking for admission and taking offense because they refuse to let us in. Rather, what we protested was the Association’s disavowal of any connection between sexual desire and gendered self-perception and expression. The allegation that gender trouble and homosexuality are in no way related seems like a weird version of internalized homophobia – and overt transphobia. The Association’s logic seems to be something like, ‘We homosexuals are *real* men and women! Not the *false* ones getting gay-bashed for expressing gender ambiguity! Don’t come any closer lest it’s contagious!’

First time round, a decision on unconditional inclusion of transgender persons was postponed for two years. The Association’s annual convention did *allow* its members to take transsexuals into account when dealing with a gay-political issue which might affect transsexuals as well, but that was as far as they were willing to go. On the Association’s extraordinary general meeting on February 16, 2008, however, a proposal to rank transgender persons among the identities whose interests the Association should work to serve was finally passed.

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<sup>13</sup> One must assume that the author (or possibly the sloppy editor?) accidentally left out the “not.” Readers subscribing to psychoanalysis might be tempted to call it a “Freudian slip?”



## Pride and Prejudice

The Queer Committee's relation to the annual Gay Pride Parade is similarly strained. The Copenhagen Pride (at one point – in 2003 – actually called “Danish (Mermaid) Pride”) purports to be apolitical. However, we find it highly political that Pride Week concludes in a church service, signaling normative assumptions of a shared religious background. Truth to be told, the organizers *did* officially invite the Queer Committee to contribute to the program. If we wanted more politics, we were informed, *we* could be it! Thus, we were more than welcome to, as they put it, ‘show up, be angry, and shout “Fuck you!”’ Needless to say, we declined.

Instead, we handed out flyers<sup>14</sup> to the cheerful marchers on the day of the actual parade, i.e. August 13, 2005. The flyers featured four headlines: 1) ‘Diversity is only for those rich enough to pay for it’ – addressing the galloping consumerism characteristic of a Pride sponsored by expensive champagne brands and exclusive hotels, 2) ‘Homophobia wasn’t invented by Muslims’ – encouraging marchers to acknowledge that hate crimes against Muslims and homosexuals follow the same logic, namely hatred of deviation from the norm, 3) ‘No oppression can be understood isolated – the struggles are connected’ – refusing inclusion as “just as normal” and calling for a subversion of the system that privileges certain groups of people at the expense of others, and, finally, 4) ‘Does this make you feel normal?’ – summing up how economic inequality, racism, and discrimination in terms of gender and sexuality intertwine and that a queer perspective will reveal and combat this mechanism. The organizers would probably have preferred the ‘Fuck you’ contribution.<sup>15</sup>

As should have become apparent, a politics of contingent foundations is not only a potential alternative to business-as-usual representational politics – it is already being

<sup>14</sup> Visible at [http://queer.dk/galleri/plakater-flyers/10.jpg/image\\_view\\_fullscreen](http://queer.dk/galleri/plakater-flyers/10.jpg/image_view_fullscreen).

<sup>15</sup> Two years later they avenged our impudence by printing the accusation that ‘the Red-Green Alliance had organized demonstrations on account of the parade on several occasions.’ This libel – among others – was reprinted in the online version of the official Pride publication *CPH Proud* at <http://www.copenhagenpride.dk/files/cphproud.pdf>. The Queer Committee responded by issuing a press release (see <http://queer.dk/presse/29-08-2007>) and asking an MP to make the Pride organizers publish a retraction. Much to our chagrin, this never happened.



successfully realized. One need not *be* poor, Muslim, or culturally unintelligible as a gay person to subscribe to the headlines mentioned above.

### **Dyke Attack – Theorizing Homophobia and Unequal Pay after Dark**

So far it may seem as though the Queer Committee picks most of its fights with groupings that might have been our allies. However, we are just as vigorously involved in activities directed at heteronormative institutions and developments.

We feel particularly proud of a happening we organized in September 2004 called Dyke Attack<sup>16</sup> – simultaneously thematizing unequal pay, camouflaged prostitution, and homophobia.

Earlier that year, a member of the committee had been kicked out of a mainstream straight disco for kissing another woman. The two women were told that this behavior did not appeal to the patrons, largely consisting of – one must assume? – heterosexual men paying an entrance fee *six* times as high as the one asked of their female counterparts. Once the admission had been paid, all guests could drink for free. As the reader might imagine, it makes it considerably harder to insist on a rejection of his advances knowing that the guy beside you just bled 40 Euros whereas *you* got in by paying a modest 7.

The grapevine made sure that at 1 a.m. sharp that night, the approximately 40 women we had summoned were ready to take over the dance floor and kiss. At first, some of the audience seemed to find this rather titillating, but after about 2 minutes – which is when they realized that the scene was solely for the purpose of satisfying the hungry participants’ own deviant desires – they clearly felt threatened. Some of the crowd even fled to the rest rooms to seek refuge from the hordes of what was clearly perceived to be a menace. Forty women were more than the two bouncers could handle so we managed to stay till closing time and literally emptied the bar! Having smuggled in a journalist from national public radio, we subsequently added insult to injury as she “outed” the owner’s homophobia in her commentary a couple of days later. A

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<sup>16</sup> See the flyer here: [http://queer.dk/galleri/plakater-flyers/8.jpg/image\\_view\\_fullscreen](http://queer.dk/galleri/plakater-flyers/8.jpg/image_view_fullscreen).



feature article<sup>17</sup> by one participant was moreover circulated nation-wide in the Danish newspaper *Politiken*.

### **Right-Wing Majority Meets Queer Committee**

Although I have aired a certain discontent with the Red-Green Alliance, the Queer Committee also works *for* the party. During the election campaign in January 2005, we produced three flyers saying,

- 1) 'Stop homophobia in school – stress hampers learning!'<sup>18</sup> – hinting at the ongoing attempts to cast second-generation immigrants as the pupils both experiencing and causing learning difficulties,
- 2) 'Who's throwing stones? Fight racism and homophobia!'<sup>19</sup> – a comment on the “stone-throwing episode” in 2001, when a couple of teenagers – allegedly of an ethnic minority background – threw stones at the Copenhagen Pride Parade (and what was referred to as “the Muslim countries” received a homophobia prize). This incident paved the way for a discursive shift in Denmark: All of a sudden, xenophobic political parties joined forces with mainstream gays and lesbians, alleging that homophobia was an import from Muslim countries, and
- 3) 'Stop the heterofication of public space – you have a right to choose for yourself'<sup>20</sup> – a caustic remark on the then-recent removal of shrubbery in the famous gay male cruising area H C Ørstedsparken. Local politicians had argued that the park should be accessible to “ordinary citizens,” thus revealing that cruising men were not considered part of this category. As a response, some of us went on a nocturnal expedition to protest against the shrubbery removal putting up flyers everywhere in the park; another happening intended to criticize heteronormativity.

<sup>17</sup> Nordentoft, R.J. (2004) 'Forbudte kys' ('Forbidden Kisses'). *Politiken* October 22, 2004: 9. My translation.

<sup>18</sup> [http://queer.dk/galleri/plakater-flyers/2.jpg/image\\_view\\_fullscreen](http://queer.dk/galleri/plakater-flyers/2.jpg/image_view_fullscreen).

<sup>19</sup> [http://queer.dk/galleri/plakater-flyers/4.jpg/image\\_view\\_fullscreen](http://queer.dk/galleri/plakater-flyers/4.jpg/image_view_fullscreen).

<sup>20</sup> [http://queer.dk/galleri/plakater-flyers/3.jpg/image\\_view\\_fullscreen](http://queer.dk/galleri/plakater-flyers/3.jpg/image_view_fullscreen).



Although the Prime Minister remained in office, the party gained two additional seats in parliament that year. Of course we would be kidding ourselves if we were to believe that *we* caused this progress. However, our so-called “queer battle of politicians” did attract an impressive amount of people – the place was packed – so at least we made a decent contribution in the Copenhagen district.

### **Queer Questions – Round Two**

Taking a stand on equal opportunity initiatives is one of the most interesting dilemmas the Queer Committee has ever faced: How can you be *for* affirmative action and *against* representational politics at the same time? At the annual convention of the Red-Green Alliance in 2004, we proposed that the statute sentence ‘each gender occupies at least 40% of the seats in the governing body’ be replaced by ‘the two conventional genders each occupy 40% of the seats in the governing body. The remaining 20% are distributed between those left.’<sup>21</sup> Our motivation ran as follows,

The original wording does not consider the individuals who are not identified as and/or do not identify as “men” or “women.” The phrase “the two conventional genders” serves to emphasize that we do not subscribe to the supposition that biology implies certain qualifications. Regardless of which proposal will be passed, we wish to submit the following amendment: “Proposal xx on affirmative action shall be accompanied by concrete initiatives on local division/committee level – for instance presentations on master suppression techniques and subsequent discussion – and similar initiatives aiming at dismantling traditional gender structures and power distribution. To ensure a diverse recruitment base, change must be brought about bottom-up. Challenging gendered power structures is a responsibility that we all share. In other words, it is not the obligation of

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<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, the text below is the only English translation of the proposal. The Danish original is accessible at the following URL: <http://queer.dk/politik/uddybende/forslag-om-konskvotering>.



the underprivileged to “fight their way up” on their own (non-paginated gender quota proposal).

As to why the Queer Committee supported gender quotas as such, we explained to the delegates that

even if we did not feel that women by definition represent particular values, continued inertia with regard to the current unequal distribution of seats would be tantamount to maintaining inequality and democratic deficit. The status quo reflects an invisible gender quota favoring men. We believe in making this distribution of power visible in order to change it. We are working toward reducing the significance of gender in the long run, but the current social order<sup>22</sup> does not allow us to ignore the fact that – as of yet – men and women respectively are not given the same opportunities to act (non-paginated gender quota proposal)

At first glance, this may look like a conventional representational stance – indeed, this was the framework we were offered to work within. However, promoting a governing board mirroring the percentage of women and gender non-conformists in society at large was not the sole purpose of our intervention. Bearing Antke Engel’s definition of “representation” in mind, we were also hoping that a side effect of our proposal might be an increase of discursive alternatives to future generations. To cut a long story short: Our ambitions exceeded *reflecting* diversity; we were also trying to *facilitate* it by means of role models. Equal opportunity means distributing opportunity equally, but it also means enabling subjects with unpredictable skill combinations to come into existence in the first place. Only this way may affirmative action render itself superfluous in the long run.

Ironically, our proposal was interpreted – by the party itself as well as by the indie media present – as a wish to reserve 20% of the seats for *homosexuals*. In this instance, Butler’s question ‘whether social strategies of regulation, abjection, and normalization will not continue

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Swedish feminist Nina Björk that ‘[a]ny cultural analysis disregarding gender will only be relevant in a society similarly disinterested in gender. That description does not fit our current society’ (Björk 2000: 267).



to relink gender and sexuality such that the oppositional analysis will continue to be under pressure to theorize their interrelations' (Butler 1993: 240) proved painfully pertinent.

This rather unexpected interpretation illustrates that although great pains may be taken when devising *expressions* of political thought, the *reception* of these expressions can prove very difficult to predict, let alone control. Hegemonic discourse does not always allow recipients to recognize what all the effort is about. Quite possibly, this problem ranks among the most severe impediments to getting queer points across: Normative reception may cast our political message as unintelligible, counterproductive, immature, or something entirely different that in no way reflects our intentions.

The paradigmatic misunderstanding of the gender quota proposal provides a nice transition to my concluding remarks on what is often experienced as the repressive tolerance of the party to which the Queer Committee belongs. For instance, the Red-Green Alliance chose to describe us as their 'network for gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transsexuals' in the day planner distributed to all party members, even though it says loud and clear on our index page [queer.dk](http://queer.dk) that we are not. On top of this, we had to put up with the description in the 2006 organizational analysis of all committees in the party that *our* committee 'also attracts persons whose interest is of an identitarian nature' (as opposed to all the other committees mentioned, presumably?) We plan to react by referring the authors to the presentations on master suppression techniques offered by the Queer Committee.

### **Parliament Meets Queer Committee**

To end on a much more optimistic note, I will conclude with a story of success and embrace. In January 2006, the Queer Committee organized a hearing on transgender legislation. We invited all the transgender associations we could think of to provide feedback on our draft of general



principles that should inform a law proposal<sup>23</sup> on the issue. Subsequently, an MP incorporated our recommendations and put forward the proposal in parliament on March 30, 2007.

This proposal, by the way, is our prime accomplishment when it comes to devising a politics of contingent foundations rather than one of identity. As is the case in many other countries, the Danish Personal Identification Number (a.k.a. PIN) reveals whether “male” or “female” was assigned to the holder at birth. Instead of settling for transsexuals’ right to change their PIN prior to sex reassignment surgery – although we strongly support this right! – we propose that the PIN lose its gender specificity entirely. We are not staking this claim *as or for the sake of* neither transsexuals nor women. Rather, it rests on our conviction that PIN numbers help discursively *produce* subjects as men and women respectively.

We can only guess whether the MP actually grasped the anti-identitarian implications of adopting a paragraph phrased by the Queer Committee. Be that as it may, our popularity within the party all of a sudden increased dramatically. For instance, the editors of the bimonthly party bulletin *Rød-Grønne Linjer* devoted an entire page to the proposal in mid-April of 2007 and confessed that they had been trying to “sell the story” to one of the free daily newspapers with a circulation of 500,000 copies.

In other words, I am starting to wonder if the recurring misinterpretations of Queer Committee ideology and operations will *remain* paradigmatic. Will repressive tolerance eventually give way to curiosity and the willingness to learn, as we like to fantasize about? Only time will tell. To quote from Butler, ‘fantasy is not the opposite of reality; it is what reality forecloses, and, as a result, it defines the limits of reality, constituting it as its constitutive outside’ (Butler 2004: 29).

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<sup>23</sup> The proposal (in Danish) is available at the official website of the Danish parliament: <http://www.folketinget.dk/doc.aspx?/Samling/20061/beslutningsforslag/B142/index.htm>. The Queer Committee's input can be downloaded as a Word document at [http://queer.dk/politik/uddybende/Udkast til personnummerpolitik.doc](http://queer.dk/politik/uddybende/Udkast%20til%20personnummerpolitik.doc).



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Front banner of the Yellow Queer Feminist Block. Photo by Andreas Jensen/Monsun ([http://www.modkraft.dk/spip.php?page=nyheder-artikel&id\\_article=6345](http://www.modkraft.dk/spip.php?page=nyheder-artikel&id_article=6345))



'Stop the heterofication of public space – you have a right to choose for yourself!

Red-Green Alliance – we want more than marriage and kids!'

Cyber advertisement from the election campaign in 2005.

The Queer Committee's logo is on the left, the Red-Green Alliance's opposite.