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WHAT

A Transdisciplinary

Journal of *Queer*

Theories and Studies

EVER

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## A preface to the first issue of *Whatever*

From its very beginnings, queer has again and again proved its unpredictable productivity, its irrepressible vitality, its unconditional refusal to be circumscribed, defined, tamed. Queer is, of course, well established in the field of LGBTI studies, where it has quickly achieved the worldwide recognition it deserves; in addition, today, scholars and activists the world over are spinning queer outwards in a range of new and exciting directions, such as (to name but a few) neuroqueer, animal queer, queer economies, queer pedagogies, or the queer politics of migration. Their daring and original work is a powerful testimonial to the productivity and vitality of a cluster of theories which deserve to be more widely known and applied, both in scholarship, teaching, and research, and in activism, advocacy, and policy-making.

However, scholars working in queer studies, both in and out of academia, are still often marginalized; one of the aspects of this marginalization is the dearth of publishing venues, which discourages potentially original and creative researchers from pursuing their interest in queer studies, and from contributing to the development of the field. This has a negative impact on both the queer studies community and on scholarly, social, and political discourse in general.

The purpose of *Whatever* is to host, facilitate, and promote a conversation among scholars working with queer theories, whatever their research interests, methodological allegiances, and disciplinary affiliations. We hope that this will not only contribute to the growth of queer studies as an ever more diverse and imaginative field of enquiry, where original, daring, and relevant work is conceived, produced, and shared, but that it will foster a diverse and mutually respectful community where people reflecting within the framework of queer theories will be able to to share their work, to reach like-minded readers, to initiate collaborations, to make things happen.

At its most abstract, queer's research programme hinges on the questioning of categories and the deconstruction of performances. Thus, a truly

queer approach to scholarship and research cannot but begin by questioning the categories and performances which define normal and normative scholarly identities as they are constituted, exacted, and rewarded. Two of the most fundamental constructs in the production of academic normativity are the system of the disciplines, with its definitions, boundaries, and hierarchies, and the opposition between specialists and laypeople, which entails the systematic devaluing of the latter's experiences and forms of knowledge, and the distrust of their abilities to achieve insight into their own predicament, and to elaborate viable solutions to their own problems.

The forms and devices of normativity and oppression overlap and strengthen one another. This makes any faith in a reductionist epistemology of separate disciplines not only intellectually simplistic but politically futile. Queer theory is not an idle pastime but a basic and effective tool to achieve change: it can accommodate any disciplinary perspective because the world is bigger than any possible description; it can accommodate any methodology because the world is more complex than any possible model. Questioning the disciplinary and methodological categories on which scholarly work is based does not mean to be disciplinarily incompetent or methodologically naïve: it means to have a lucid and sober vision of the limits of any method and of the arbitrariness of all disciplinary boundaries. As well as celebrating the affective roots of queer (with an allusion to Maria Bello's 2016 book, *Whatever. Love is Love*), *Whatever* aims to emphasize the difference between the lack of methodological and disciplinary awareness of "anything goes" and the responsible and self-reflective eclecticism of "whatever works". Which can, of course, be read both as an act of all-inclusive acceptance and as an affirmation of the strengths of flexibility.

In its refusal to let issues be defined and hemmed in by disciplinary boundaries, and in its aim towards the co-production of a form of situated, embodied, methodologically aware and politically active knowledge, where not only "specialists" of different fields, but also laypeople are involved, listened to and honoured, transdisciplinarity should be acknowledged and celebrated as a vital and fundamental part of any intellectually and ethically responsible project to engage and disseminate queer theories.

*Whatever* is double-blind peer-reviewed, online, open-access. Contributions are accepted in English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish.

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