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Comparative Perspectives on Queer Studies in Denmark, Finland, and Norway

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AMONG THE MOST frequently repeated stories in queer scholarship nowadays are those concerning the social and spatial localization of queer. Narratives of how queer has occupied and inhabited specific language and cultural areas, and how it has been “domesticated” in different contexts, involve a plot line told time and again. This focus has also informed attempts at finding a queer “common ground” in the Nordic territory. Challenges related to the localization of queer in a Nordic context are also embedded in the framework of a Nordic-oriented journal, such as *lambda nordica*. At a meeting with the journal’s editorial committee in Stockholm last year, the “Nordic country representatives” were asked to prepare a response to the question: “What is going on in Denmark, Finland, and Norway?” It may be argued, and indeed is the contention of this article’s authors, that Sweden often functions as the default mode of and location for “Nordic queer,” for example in terms of citational practice, institutional visibility, and activist sensibility. The present authors – located in Denmark (Danbolt), Finland (Ilmonen) and Norway (Engbretsen) respectively – therefore wanted to explore these other narratives and locations of Nordic queer, comparatively and critically, and to outline certain key particularities and connections that might clarify and open up the field of Nordic queer beyond the dominant Swedish point of reference.

In her book, entitled *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (2011), Clare Hemmings analyzes feminist storytelling and its narrative habits. For Hemmings (2011, 5), “these stories describe and locate feminist subjects as well as events or schools of thought, of course, and this also makes them affectively saturated for both authors and readers.” Hemmings emphasizes that theorists need to recognize and pay attention to the stories we use, including their narrative constructs, grammatical forms and real-life political ramifications, if we want to disentangle ourselves from simply repeating internalized conventions (Hemmings 2011, 2). Academic queer studies are indeed also saturated with stories and storytelling contestations. It is an urgent task to map the grammatical forms of queer narratives, so as to become aware of how we, as queer scholars, are entangled in affectively saturated stories. Stories such as queer’s relationship to time and history, geopolitical temporalities, and the utopian future, queer’s engagements and dis-engagements with gender, the field’s contested myths of origin, and the rise and spread of queer in the 1990s – to name but a few, these might be among the affectively and politically charged narratives.

Given that telling stories is a central element in academic work, it remains important to consider queer modes of storytelling. An inspiring example in this regard is Ulrika Dahl’s essay “Queer in the Nordic Region: Telling Queer (Feminist) Stories” (2011), where she underscores the importance of asking, “why there is such a need to territorialize concepts and nationalize scholars” in telling stories of conceptual or disciplinary trajectories (154). Working against the “normative tendency to take nations or regions as given points of departure,” Dahl (2011, 146) suggests the need to tell research stories queerly; this includes examining “how geopolitical categories are used and naturalized in the telling of queer stories.” In this essay, we multiply this transnational perspective by including alternative stories to the “fairy tale” of Nordic queer.

In seeking to describe and discuss the status of queer studies across different geographies, it is tempting to plot our observations into critical narratives of progress or decline. In her recent book *The Limits of Critique* (2015), Rita Felski discusses the academic investment in a specific

set of critical repertoires, and asks why “critics are so quick off the mark to interrogate, unmask, expose, subvert, unravel, demystify, destabilize, take issue, and take umbrage” (5). This critical oeuvre, referred to by Felski as a “hermeneutics of suspicion” following Paul Ricour, often overshadows our intellectual enthusiasm. What about queer studies, then? We queer scholars have also been keen to “expose” and “take issue” with society, as well as with our own tools. In this essay we want to observe whether there is nevertheless still a potential enthusiasm for queer studies in the Nordic countries.

We have brought together three national stories, well aware of the limits of this approach and of the situated views of its storytellers, in the hope that it might act as a starting point for a broader discussion of differences and similarities within and across the study of genders and sexualities across the region. Beyond the “hermeneutics of suspicion,” our narratives can be said to be tracing a “post-misery” direction in queer research, connected to new forms of radicalism. This radicalism has brought with it more activist modes, celebrating an enthusiasm of doing and a politics of hope (Liinason and Cuesta 2016), instead of critical umbrage. While “queerness is not yet here” in Denmark, Finland or Norway, to borrow José Muñoz’s (2009, 1) words, it can still be felt as “the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality,” aiding the imaging and imagining of a different present and future for queer living.

Beyond, Beside, or Behind Queer Institutionalization: Queer in Denmark

In Denmark, queer seems to be simultaneously everywhere and nowhere these days. The state of queer thus appears radically different depending on whom one is asking and how they use and understand the term. Over the last two decades, “queer” has seeped into everyday language in Denmark, within and beyond academia, as an anglicism usually connoting an inclusive but elusive identity position. This proliferation of the word alongside frameworks connected to theoretical, critical, or political projects is foregrounded in a recent special issue of *Kvinder, Køn og*

Forskning, under the title of “[kvæær]” – a transliteration of the Danish pronunciation of the word (Brade et al. 2013). In the introduction, the editors point out the lack of any proper genealogy of queer theory and queer studies in Denmark. In their brief attempt to outline the status of the subject, they suggest that over the last decade, in Danish academia at least, queer theory has become an accepted and well-received research perspective, after having being relegated for years to the margin (Brade et al. 2013, 4). But this acceptance of queer theory, the editors suggest, may have come at a cost. Referencing Don Kulick’s introduction to the Swedish anthology *Queersverige* (2005), they ponder whether queer in Denmark can similarly be said to have lost its critical edge due to the prevalence of queer feminist positions, which have been said to have cut queer theory’s ties to its history of sex radicalism (Brade et al. 2013, 4–5). Invested in mining these radical roots, the editors argue that queer theory remains an urgently needed tool in critiquing the heteronormative structures of neoliberal capitalism.

Not all researchers retain such hope in the potential for queer critique in Denmark. In a recent newspaper interview, the self-titled “first-generation queer theorist” Dag Heede (quoted in Cramon 2015) described the current state of Danish gender studies as “ingrown and famished.” One of the main reasons for the dismal state of gender research, Heede contends, is the lack of institutional support for and prioritization of studies of gender and sexuality across Danish academia. Heede argues that the mainstreaming of gender research has been instrumental in the defunding and closing of most centers for gender studies at universities across the country. The few academic positions in the field, and thus the limited opportunities for students to take degrees in gender and sexuality studies, has caused a detrimental “brain drain,” Heede argues, as the best researchers and students have left the country. Heede (quoted in Cramon 2015) thus sees “no proper enthusiasm” and “no political engagement” among researchers on gender and sexuality in the country today.

The numerous government-initiated reforms and economic cutbacks of the university sector in Denmark – the humanities in particular – eas-

ily lends itself to narratives of decline. And the precarious state of higher education institutions these days leaves little hope for sudden changes in the institutional conditions for studies in gender and sexuality. Yet, despite the lacking infrastructural support, it is far from difficult to find examples of enthusiasm and political engagement within and beyond academia pertaining to queer and other critical studies of gender, sexuality, and race. Take for instance the Centre for Gender Studies at the University of Copenhagen, which despite having only two faculty members has students in abundance attending its popular courses, such as “From Gender to Queer,” or “From Queer to Crip.” Among students, an interest in queer theory and perspectives is in short far from lacking, even though conditions for studying it are limited.

While the mainstreaming of gender and sexuality is not without its challenges and problems, queer perspectives inform the teaching and research methodologies of multiple researchers across faculties and departments at all Danish universities. A search for the keyword “queer” in forskningsdatabasen.dk, the Danish National Research Database, gives a long list of recent titles, using the term in disciplines as different as theology, musicology, pedagogy, and philosophy (see, for instance, Hoffmann 2010; Steinskog 2011; Pedersen 2013; Sjørup 2016). Yet, few of these research texts contextualize their findings in relation to the broader discipline of queer studies. While queer perspectives are invoked, queerness is rarely treated as an independent research field (exceptions include Løkkegaard 2011; Bissenbakker 2013; Petersen 2013; Stormhøj 2013). There are probably different and diverging reasons why there are few self-declared “second-” or “third-generation queer theorists” in Denmark these days. It might in part be due to a growing investment in intersectional or assemblage-oriented approaches that position queer theory as one critical perspective among others, including critical race studies, trans* studies, crip studies, and new materialism (see, for instance, Højgaard et al. 2012; Staunæs 2012; Brade 2015; Bissenbakker and Myong 2016). This can also be said to be the case with large-scale Danish-led research projects, such as “KinTra: (Trans)Formations of Kinship” (2011–), run by Charlotte Kroløkke at the University of

Southern Denmark, “NewMi: New Media, New Intimacies” (2015–), organized by Rikke Andreassen at Roskilde University, and “LOVA: Loving Attachment – Regulating Danish Love Migration” (2016–), led by Mons Bissenbakker at the University of Copenhagen. If researchers in Denmark rarely flag their queer credentials up front, this does not necessarily mean that the research itself is “ingrown” or “famished.” The lack of institutional backing seems rather to have propelled people to develop alternative networks and structures of support, theoretically as well politically, as indicated by the investment among quite a few younger scholars in setting up critical dialogues between queer politics and anti-racist and transgender politics.

If queer studies are less visible, although far from absent, from Danish universities compared for instance to Sweden, queer keeps being a visible orienting point for cultural work and political mobilization in Denmark. In the summer of 2016, the Copenhagen Queer Festival, an annual DIY activist event, took place for the tenth time since its start in 2006. The queer performance space Warehouse 9 is similarly running strong in its eleventh year, and recent initiatives such as the queer feminist magazine *FRIKTION* and blogs such as “Peculiar.dk,” “Killjoy.dk,” “Almindelig.com,” and “Queer Tider,” present queer-inspired analyses of cultural and political phenomena. Queer activist approaches also inform the organization of diverse activist initiatives, including the asylum-activist initiative LGBT Asylum. Some of most visible and politically potent activism in Denmark over the last few years, however, has been coming from the transgender community, where groups such as Transpolitisk Forum keep fighting against the degrading conditions of the state-controlled access to healthcare and rights (see Transpolitisk Forum 2017).

Meanwhile in Finland

In Finland too, the university sector in general has suffered from huge budget cuts by the Ministry of Education, causing general frustration and feelings of insufficiency around academia. The competition for outside funding is thus getting harsher, affecting queer scholars as well. It would be easy to claim that queer studies has fallen off from

its heyday fifteen years ago, when “queer” seemed to be the academic buzzword. That, however, would not be entirely true: there are still a number of current efforts, by many scholars, to maintain the inspiration of queer studies. Recently, at least two large research projects, involved in queer studies, have been funded by the Academy of Finland, led by Tuula Juvonen and Antu Sorainen respectively, and there are a number of scholars at the auxiliary and postdoctoral level working in the field. New MA theses and PhD dissertation projects appear every year.

The Society for Queer Studies in Finland (SQS), currently centered at the University of Turku, was founded in Helsinki in 2004. SQS actively maintains queer studies in Finland by organizing biennial national conferences in Turku, which have become something of an institution; the eleventh such conference took place in 2016. The Turku meetings are regularly visited by numerous Nordic queer scholars, as keynote speakers, panelists, and discussants. SQS also participates in organizing smaller seminars and workshops in collaboration with queer scholars working at different universities. In addition, SQS publishes a peer-refereed journal, likewise entitled *SQS*, currently in its tenth volume, thus ensuring a publishing channel for queer research.

Queer projects, collections and archives, events, and culture are included in a varied program celebrating the centenary of Finland’s independence in 2017. One of the biggest such projects is “Finland 100 – in the Colors of the Rainbow,” which aims on the one hand to encourage the arts and cultural institutions to include queer themes in their Finland 100-program, and on the other hand to collect new stories and archival material through the cooperation of several archives. The program also includes a number of events commemorating and celebrating the lifetime achievements of Tom of Finland (Touko Laaksonen, 1920–1991). The recent hype around this figure, whose homoerotic art currently appears on everything from sheets to coffee-packs, represents a shift in “institutional memory,” which can now include, or even embrace, queer history. The Finnish Labor Museum, Werstas, located in Tampere, started a collection archiving everyday LHBTQ life some fifteen years ago, and for example the National Gallery Ateneum, among

other museums, has organized special queer-themed guided tours of its exhibitions.

What, then, do queer studies currently look like in Finland? The clear impact of queer studies can be seen in many research areas, including girls' studies, intersectionality, trans* studies, and youth culture. Moreover, the strong period in queer studies in Finland in the early 2000s has added a rainbow stripe to many disciplines that are not queer studies *per se*, but that might include issues of queer interest. I am tempted to see a tendency in Finland toward the inclusion of queer studies in established disciplines, such as literary studies, musicology, sociology, gender studies, and not the least philosophy and (cultural) history (see, for instance, Linkinen 2015; Rossi 2015; Stang 2015; Välimäki 2015; Hyttinen 2016; Juvonen 2016; Taavetti 2016, to name but a few). This tendency may be related to the larger funding structures of scholarly work: is it perhaps the case, given existing disciplinary structures, that it is easier to obtain funding for example for literary studies than for multidisciplinary queer work? Or is it that, during these destitute times in the academic world, scholars cannot afford to restrict themselves to the niche of queer studies? Speculation aside, in a small country like Finland it is difficult to set up a research group consisting solely of queer scholars, each at a particular stage in their career path. This may be a place where Nordic co-operation is needed.

I have also perceived yet another tendency in recent uses of queer, in relation to activism and art. In a way, queer seems to be returning to its origins. Queer currently appears in urban subcultural scenes, whether club-nights, performance happenings, or anarcho-cultural events. Some queer zines, such as *QFemZine*, seek a balance between the activist and the academic scene. In a radical context, queer is not linked to the academic debate or to the critique of identity politics, but rather to the creation of a new kind of identity politics, focused not strictly on sexuality but on alternative life choices – in connection with such issues as veganism, animal rights, environmentalism, and human rights activism on a larger, international and intersectional scale, including migration, pacifism, or leftist politics. This kind of anarcho-queer politics has on some

occasions distanced itself from academic queer scholarship – although at other times the two strands have been united, for example in seminars organized side by side with other happenings, such as Pride events.

Activism and subculture practices, however, also seem to play a crucial role as topics of academic queer studies. Activist subcultures are studied, analyzed, mapped, and made visible. Studies dealing with subculture practices are not restricted to contemporary culture; a number of historical (sub)cultural habits have also “resurfaced” in the queer lamplight. One such focus has been on Russian studies and the situation of gender and sexual minorities in a Russian context. Intersectional points of views are highlighted in many studies. Health care, nursing, and medical practices have also played a role in recent queer studies in Finland, and queer scholars have also shown an interest in heterosexuality. Legislative issues, such as wills and inheritance in sexually marginalized groups, have been examined from a queer point of view, as have cultural practices concerning death, inequalities within intimate queer relationships, and new definitions of kinship (see, for instance, Kalha 2013; Sorainen 2014; Zhabenko 2014; Avdeeva et al. 2016; Ilmonen forthcoming).

The international academic current toward more (new) materialist paradigms is also pushing Finnish queer studies in new directions. If twenty years ago queer was seen as a poststructuralist phase of theorizing sexualities, that is no longer the case. Topics concerning biotechnologies and bioethics, bodies, interspecies comradeships and co-existences, or Anthropocene points of views seem to be displacing talk of discourses, constructions, genealogies, and identity constitutions. Trans* studies in Finland today is larger than ever, and quite a few of current trans* studies are drawing from more posthumanist ideas. Some fifteen years ago, when I started to write about queer, people in LGBT studies were talking about “Fake-T” (see Spade 2004). Today, the T is growing stronger; in current queer studies a wide spectrum of sexes/genders is being studied, with interdisciplinary approaches drawing on fields ranging from folklore to linguistics, and from medicine to the social sciences (see, for instance, Kähkönen 2013; Kondelin 2014; Honkasalo 2016; Irni 2016; 2017; Sariola 2016).

Queering Norway 2.0

In 2008 the *Journal of Homosexuality* published a special issue titled “Queering Norway,” containing articles on queer – or *skeiv* in Norwegian – issues across the humanities and social sciences. With contributions by some of Norway’s key researchers in this field, including Agnes Bolsø, Tone Hellesund, and Hans Wiggo Kristiansen, the issue constituted a “coming out” of sorts on the international queer publishing scene, where Norwegian perspectives had hitherto been next to invisible. In the “Introduction,” editors Pål Bjørby and Anka Ryall offered a Norwegian perspective on queer theory and research, appropriating central aspects of the theoretical writings of Judith Butler, David Halperin, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick; these included critical indeterminacy in theory, concept, and writing practice, crises of category and identity, and the queer challenge to heteronormativity in social democratic Norway. The publication as a whole attempted to dialogue between on the one hand particular Norwegian concerns and empirical case studies, and on the other the broader Anglo-American theorization about sexuality, in relation to academic disciplines, family constellations, and governmental policies alike. At the time, in Norway as elsewhere, queer theory was largely perceived as elitist, abstract, and theoretical, remote from the lives and concerns of “real” gays and lesbians. The dominant referencing of Anglo-American thinkers and the use of English language as a *lingua franca* also contributed strongly to this “anti-queer” sentiment (Bolsø 2008).

Today, the categorical split and occasional feuds between academia and activism, theory and practice persist (as they must). At the same time, the second decade of the new millennium is seeing considerable transformations in the reach and visibility of queer issues and politics in Norway. This is especially evident in the popular media and in the work of activist movements. The organization Skeiv Verden [Queer World] focuses on queers with an ethnic minority background and often challenges white mainstream LGBT politics. OsloQueer is a queer-feminist collective challenging homonormativity in the LGBT movement and mainstream society alike. In 2016, the national LGBT organization

formerly known as LLH (Landsforeningen for Lesbisk og Homofil Frigjøring) adopted a new name, FRI [FREE], to emphasize a multifocal thematic agenda and alliance over the traditional single-issue identity politics. A new magazine, *Melk* [*Milk*], focusing on queer culture and history, recently published its first issue, made possible in part by crowdfunding. Also in 2016, Norway passed a law allowing legal gender recognition based solely on self-determination, the fourth European country to do so. A Queering Sápmi (Sami) initiative, to create awareness and knowledge about gender/sexual diversities among Sami people, ran during 2010–2015, based in Sweden. Funded by government agencies, including Norwegian governmental sponsorship, the project produced a travelling mini-exhibition that is coming to Oslo's National Folk Museum in 2017, as well as a book publication in several languages.

Regarding academic research, the situation in Norway is similar to that in Denmark and Finland: a lack of sustained funding, no institutionalized or collective home in any department, and minimal dedicated teaching programs/courses on queer studies. Queer research and teaching is by and large undertaken by individual researchers, who are usually queer themselves. The national Nettverk for Homoforskning [Network for Gay and Lesbian Research], which was a key-coordinator of conferences, support networking, and publications for over a decade, was sadly discontinued in 2011, and no similar initiative has emerged since.

Part of the problem regarding queer research in Norwegian academia is the continued dominance of a mainstream gender/women's studies and a policy-driven agenda. Themes centering on gender equality, welfare and mainstreaming initiatives, with the heteronormative family as principal unit, are the ones that receive particular institutional support and funding. Key to upholding this dominance is the principal national funding agency Forskningsrådet, the Research Council of Norway (RCN) and its policies. In 2011, the RCN discontinued its gender research program, with the aim of having gender perspectives integrated as part of all projects (defined as a mainstreaming approach). In practice, this often amounts to ticking boxes as to whether there are women participants or a statement of impact to benefit gender equality;

the importance of gender and/or feminist studies as an interdisciplinary field in its own right, with its diverse subfields such as queer and trans* studies, is completely ignored. A few exceptions do exist, including the ongoing research project, “Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation in International and National (Norwegian) Law” (2017) based at the University of Oslo’s Department of Public and International Law, and sponsored jointly by the RCN and the University. Participating sub-projects centrally include a focus on legal protection for those defining as intersex, transgender and/or transsexual (Sørli 2017). Despite – or perhaps because of – the structural marginalization of queer, there is a growing body of research actually taking place by individual researchers, sustained and supported by semi-informal networks of “peers and queers.” In this brief presentation, I will identify three thematic areas in this regard – 1) the misery/problem-solving approach, 2) excavating queer in history, 3) a post-misery intersectional and transnational queer research focus.

The first and most dominant is the state-sponsored “misery” approach, which seeks to identify and rescue minorities from stigma, suicide, and other perceived tragedies that come with the homosexual territory. The major focus has long been on producing statistical data on health challenges (STDs, HIV, etc.), suicide and drugs (Bolsø 2008). An (in)famous example is the 1999 Social Research Agency (NOVA) report on gay and lesbian life quality, where one finding was that one in four respondents has attempted suicide. This “truth” circulated extensively in the media, was taken up by the national LGBT organization, LLH, and was used to justify policy priorities and funding allocation (Lindstad 2009). Positive shifts, however, are appearing within the research coming out of state-sponsored initiatives, as a younger generation of gender researchers, sympathetic to and literate in queer theory and activist sensibilities, are beginning to influence research practices and agendas “from within” the system. For example, a recent report, *Skeiv på Bygda* [*Queer in the Countryside*], demonstrates evidence against the common perception that being queer and living outside urban centers is either impossible or marked by overwhelming misery and suffering (Eggebo et

al. 2015). More recently, interest in migration, refugee and asylum issues has produced research on same-sex desiring ethnic minorities – especially those of Muslim background – and asylum seekers and refugees arriving in Norway (Akin 2016).

A second major thematic priority is that of excavating evidence of queer life, identity, and culture in Norwegian history, including literature, the arts, the law, and political life. The national Skeivt arkiv [Queer Archive] opened in 2015 at the University of Bergen's Library, with the mission of collecting, documenting, and communicating Norwegian and Scandinavian queer history. Recently, the archive received governmental funding in excess of five million *kroner* to develop its resources further, including analysis of the archive's vast collection of materials, conducting oral history interviews, and collecting materials from elsewhere in Norway. The related academic research has been concerned with tracing, documenting, and making visible non-normative lives and subcultures in Norway's past, thereby providing a critical commentary on the "straight" time and place of hegemonic history and archival politics, and offering alternative perspectives on modern sexual histories, gender norms, and the building of a welfare society in Norway (Jordåen 2015; Wolfert and Jordåen 2015; Hellesund 2016).

A final and third thematic focus is "post-misery" interdisciplinary queer research that embraces globally circulating, intersectional theory and politics. Norway resembles Denmark and Finland in that queer-informed thinking is increasingly shaping teaching, publishing, and research, despite the continued lack of institutional support and funding. However, it is fair to say that these initiatives are situated very much at the margins. For example, an independent research collective, the Forskerkollektivet, was established fairly recently, consisting of a number of researchers whose work is centrally shaped by a queer perspective (see Forskerkollektivet 2017 for information). Some of its members, who hold university positions in addition to being members of the collective, teach queer topics in their courses. The gender and women's studies centers at Norway's major universities in Oslo, Bergen, Stavanger, and Trondheim do currently engage in queer-informed research and

teaching initiatives, and a younger and more internationally focused generation of scholars work across feminist, queer, and more traditional women's studies areas. This corresponds to a marked upsurge in student interest in gender studies courses in Norway more generally; in such courses, queer and trans* issues are very popular areas of teaching. The phenomenally popular Norwegian web TV series *SKAM*, is, I think, a symptom of what seems to be a generational shift in terms of an interest in gender and sexuality that traverses established domains and identity categories.

One further issue bears mentioning. Given Norway's close proximity to Sweden, one might have expected more collaboration between the two countries, and more queer influence, than is actually the case. In my own estimate, the overarching national framework in Norwegian research and policy, coupled with Norway's oil-fueled wealth and the heteronormative equality and welfare dogma of state-funded women/gender research, may well have prevented more collaborative Norway-Sweden academic engagement in the past. Given current developments and collaborative, cross-border research efforts, together with the emergence of a younger generation of students, researchers, and activists informed by globally circulating knowledge and politics, as well as the growing importance of international collaborative funding schemes, I predict that we will see a greater degree of divestment in maintaining nation-specific frameworks, and the cultivation, rather, of critical cross-border, multi-issue, and queerly framed academic and activist alliances.

Conclusion

In telling stories of Nordic queer, there is one foundational narrative that we have to consider: the story of Nordic specificity in terms of welfare and gender equality, which have played a central role in modernizing these societies. They have ensured certain liberties in terms of developing alternative thinking and politics, inside and outside academia; however, at the same time, we can certainly discern a very strong moral grounding in conformity, based on conjugal heterosexual living stan-

dards. This creates a certain paradox, to say the least. One would think that queer research would be thriving in such an environment, and have found a (relatively) secure institutionalized identity. It seems, instead, that state funding entices only certain kinds of diversity research – those that “fit” particular readings of “minority.”

To conclude: We would like to address this strong Nordic welfare narrative of equality and conformity as helping certain kinds of queer perspectives in research and advocacy to emerge and flourish – but at the same time also instilling a conformity that violates others alternatives, considered “too queer.” While this essay concentrates on queer perspectives, the narrative of the cultural homogeneity of Nordic societal cohesion needs critical scrutiny in order not to lose sight of alternative voices, including a variety of national minorities and transnational migrants. In the Nordic region, many scholars have developed gender and queer studies across borders and boundaries, whether national, methodological, or disciplinary. As Hemmings (2011) emphasizes, feminist storytelling can be amenable to its repeated narratives, or alternatively these narratives can be told anew. The most important thing – if history is not to repeat itself – is that we become aware of the embedded plotlines of our stories. The stories of queer in the Nordic can be told in several ways, each demanding critical scrutiny.

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