EDITED BY SALVATORE ZINGALE

DESIGN MEETS ALTERITY

CASE STUDIES, PROJECT
EXPERIENCES, COMMUNICATION
CRITICISM

ESSAYS BY
ANNA ANZANI
GIOVANNI BAULE
VALERIA BUCCHETTI
DANIELA CALABI
ELENA CARATTI
FRANCESCA CASNATI
GABRIELE COLOMBO
TOMMASO ELLI
SILVIA D. FERRARIS
VALENTINA FERRERI
LAURA GALLUZZO
BEATRICE GOBBO
VALENTINA MANCHIA
FRANCESCA MATTIOLI
MICHELA ROSSI
MASSIMO SCHINCO
VIRGINIA TASSINARI
RAFFAELLA TROCCHIANESI
FRANCESCO VERGANI
CRISTINA VOTO

DESIGN DELLA COMUNICAZIONE | SAGGI OPEN ACCESS | 05

Design della comunicazione

La collana Design della comunicazione nasce per far emergere la densità del tessuto disciplinare che caratterizza questa area del progetto e per dare visibilità alle riflessioni che la alimentano e che ne definiscono i settori, le specificità, le connessioni. Nel grande sviluppo della cultura mediatica la presenza del Design della comunicazione è sempre più trasversale e in continua espansione. La comunicazione richiede un sapere progettuale là dove la cultura si fa editoria, dove i sistemi di trasporto si informatizzano, dove il prodotto industriale e i servizi entrano in relazione con l'utente. Il Design della comunicazione è in azione nella grande distribuzione dove il consumatore incontra la merce, nella musica, nello sport, nello spettacolo, nell'immagine delle grandi manifestazioni come nella loro diffusione massmediale. La collana è un punto di convergenza in cui registrare riflessioni, studi, temi emergenti; è espressione delle diverse anime che compongono il mondo della comunicazione progettata e delle differenti componenti disciplinari a esso riconducibili. Oggetto di studio è la dimensione artefattuale, in tutti i versanti del progetto di comunicazione: grafica editoriale, editoria televisiva, audiovisiva e multimediale, immagine coordinata d'impresa, packaging e comunicazione del prodotto, progettazione dei caratteri tipografici, web design, information design, progettazione dell'audiovisivo e dei prodotti interattivi, dei servizi e dei sistemi di comunicazione complessa, quali social network e piattaforme collaborative.

Accanto alla dimensione applicativa, l'attenzione editoriale è rivolta anche alla riflessione teorico-critica, con particolare riguardo alle discipline semiotiche, sociologiche e massmediologiche che costituiscono un nucleo portante delle competenze del designer della comunicazione.

La collana si articola in due sezioni. I SAGGI accolgono contributi teorici dai diversi campi disciplinari intorno all'area di progetto, come un'esplorazione sui fondamenti della disciplina. Gli SNODI ospitano interventi di raccordo disciplinare con il Design della comunicazione.

FrancoAngeli

Il presente volume è pubblicato in open access, ossia il file dell'intero lavoro è liberamente scaricabile dalla piattaforma FrancoAngeli Open Acces (<http://bit.ly/francoangeli-oa>).

FrancoAngeli Open Access è la piattaforma per pubblicare articoli e monografie, rispettando gli standard etici e qualitativi e la messa a disposizione dei contenuti ad accesso aperto. Oltre a garantire il deposito nei maggiori archivi e repository internazionali OA, la sua integrazione con tutto il ricco catalogo di riviste e collane FrancoAngeli massimizza la visibilità, favorisce facilità di ricerca per l'utente e possibilità di impatto per l'autore.

Per saperne di più: <http://www.francoangeli.it/autori/21>.

Edited by Salvatore Zingale
Design Meets Alterity
Case Studies, Project Experiences, Communication Criticism

FrancoAngeli

Contents

VALENTINA FERRERI, LAURA GALLUZZO
Department of Design, *Politecnico di Milano*

The Queer City
Public Space and Alterity

1. Introduction

Which are the correlations and potential between the concepts of alterity and queerness? What does *queer* mean? What is a *queer space*? How and why the concept of queerness can be connected to cities? Through an exploration of the meanings contained in these powerful concepts and a brief overview of some interesting projects and practices, this chapter aims at suggesting how the reflection on otherness in relation to queerness intended as a way of *doing through acts of resistance* (Larochelle 2021: 137), can and should impact the way we design, in order to create future cities that are more queer, inclusive, hospitable, accessible, safe and flexible.

2. Queerness and alterity: points of contact

Looking at the numerous and historically widespread studies and debates on the philosophical and ethical concept of *alterity* (or *the Other*, or *otherness*), it is easy to instantly connection it with the concept of *queerness*. Alterity, stemming from the Latin word "alter" meaning "other", invites us to explore the realms beyond our own familiar realities. It challenges us to step outside our comfort zones, engage with the unknown, and embrace human diversity's richness. The term *queer*, originally used in Anglophone countries to indicate something odd, negatively weird, and then as a harmful slur for LGBTIA+ people, as the opposite of "straight", was then claimed by some activists in the USA at the beginning of the 1990s, such as the Queer Nation association, an LGBTIA+ activist organisation founded in March 1990 in New York City by HIV/AIDS activists from the group ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), after the escalation of anti-gay violence and prejudice on the streets and media, to encapsulate the experiences of those who exist beyond conventional norms.

Nowadays, we could try to define *queer* (even if the actual possibility and legitimacy of the action of defining it in a precise way are at the heart of a considerable debate that is still going on among researchers, scholars and activists) as an umbrella term, fluid and ambiguous, that describes any sexual orientation or gender identity that is not heterosexual or cisgender. Queer theorist Eve Kosovsky Sedgwick defined queer as «the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically» (Sedgwick 1993: 8). Indeed, the initial presupposition that originated the process of claiming the old slur is also to be identified in the strong desire of the LGBTIA+ communities and activists to overcome the too strong and limited definitions of the acronym, defying rigid categorisations, gathering the restlessness and rebellion of those who do not recognise themselves in the cages of binary and rigid sexual genders. From this presupposition stems the intrinsic opposition to a firm definition of the term. The term can also be used to indicate not only a person but also places, contexts and, more generally «whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant», in the words of Halperin (Halperin 1995: 62).

Therefore, the concept of queerness also has, apart from a notion related to sexual orientation and gender identity, a deeper meaning of going beyond definitions themselves, embracing fluidity, challenging and disrupting binaries and norms; citing Halperin again: «there is nothing in particular to which it necessarily refers. It is an identity without an essence. "Queer" then, demarcates not a positivity but a positionality vis-à-vis the normative» (Halperin 1995: 62). The term queer can be seen as «a polysemic term, or rather a floating signifier, which transfers its instability to the nouns it qualifies when used as an adjective» (Bernini 2017: 13). This characteristic is the very core of the concept of queerness and allows us to better understand what is meant by the notion of "queer space", which will be better explained subsequently.

This indefinability of the concept is at the foundation of the close relationship between queerness and alterity: in fact, according to Loidolt, also «alterity by definition always escapes the efforts of knowledge wanting to capture and explain it» (Loidolt 2018: 353). Another point of contact with the concept of alterity and the dialectic process that it intrinsically brings

with itself, as previously pointed out by Zingale (2022), is the development of the Queer Theory. Starting from the revolution operated by Teresa de Lauretis, who made the powerful and apparently contradictory act of combining the dirty and street-born term *Queer* to the term *Theory*, which instead belonged to the ivory tower of the Academia. She joined the two terms to go beyond the field of the Gender Studies, at the time more established, with a negative dialectic. This put in crisis the dominant cultural thesis of the "naturality" of the gender identity (Zingale 2022; de Lauretis 1990). The point of queerness is precisely its power to question, push limits beyond what is known and definite, and transgress into a negative and contradictory dialectic to open up to alternatives.

To be queer, though, can mean a lot of different things. Under the queer umbrella a plurality of subjectivities lie, one more marginalized than the other, according to an intersectional[1] approach. Moreover, considering the relationship between alterity and subjectivity, this is another evident point of contact with the concept of alterity: «the point of departure for an experience of alterity is the experience of a subjectivity» (Loidolt 2018: 354). We could say, relying to the thought of Hannah Arendt and citing Peg Birmingham, that in fact alterity is «at the very heart of plurality» (Birmingham 2006: 87).

The dimension of plurality, in the queer discourse related to otherness and sociality, is particularly interesting because of this dichotomy between me-you, I-we, which is the foundation of our sociality and about which, as Butler said, «one can reference an "I" only in relation to a "you": without a "you" my own story becomes impossible» (Butler 2005: 32). Therefore, to *do queer* implies embracing plurality, going past the self to reach a more communitarian "we-mode", to say that with Munt referring to Tuomela: «the impetus of queer theory during the 1990s, following in the footsteps of the feminist politics of the decade before, was deeply tactical and attuned, communitarian and utopian, representing the "we-mode" rather

---

[1]   Term coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989: «Intersectionality is a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood among conventional ways of thinking». To read more: Crenshaw and Kimberle, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Policies", University of Chicago Legal Forum 1989, 1 (1989): 139-167.

than the "I-mode"» (Munt 2013: 235; Tuomela 2007). This «ontological plurality of subjectivities» needs to be actualized «by engaging in certain activities: speaking, acting and judging. These activities disclose a "who", the uniqueness of a person's perspective, which becomes visible only in the equally realised togetherness of a "we". The architecture of the political space is built up by acting and speaking in public, which forms the closely intertwined ontological core domain of plurality» (Loidolt 2018: 367). This actualizing of plurality in the public space can provide individual subjectivities a place «to go beyond the intimacy of private relations» that «allows for worldly experiences of meaning, reality, and freedom that cannot be supplemented otherwise» (*ivi*: 369). The possibility to pluralize the social order and insert it into the sphere of the extra-ordinary, «opens a sphere of genuine otherness, or alienness» (Leistle 2016: 6).

To conclude, it is possible to claim that queerness captures the essence of alterity, with the understanding that the human experience is intricate and cannot be enclosed in predetermined categories. By erasing the boundaries of societal norms, queer perspectives disrupt the notion of a singular, unchanging reality and foster an inclusive appreciation of the extensive spectrum of human identities and self-expressions. By recognizing queerness as an integral part of alterity, it is possible to challenge the status quo, fostering dialogue as well as an understanding that transcends traditional boundaries and acknowledges the rich tapestry of human existence.

3. The Queer City

What is the relationship between queerness and space, in particular urban public space? And why is it interesting to study queerness in relation to cities? A reflection by Pavka is interesting to make this connection explicit: «though queerness may not be a place, it is inescapably spatial. [...] Whether through a terrorist act or police intervention, the goal was to destroy a certain physical place in an attempt to destroy the communities who used them. Here space was inseparable from queerness itself» (Pavka 2020). Moreover, as the 1990s Queer Nation Manifesto reads, «being queer is not about a right to privacy; it is about the freedom to be public, to just be who we are». Furman and Mardell also wrote that «for those unable to mingle, love and connect with the people they desire in private spaces, often the public sphere – in the interstices and gaps of cities, and at times of day

when the rest of the population might be absent – is the place where their queer lives can be lived most freely» (2022: 155). Therefore, starting from this and the typical metaphor of being *in or out the closet*, the dimension of public space has always been intrinsically connected to the LGBTIA+ community and the concept of queerness, also because we should not forget that «queer theory was initially street-thinking» (Munt 2013: 234), and, specifically, it was born in city streets: «the metropolis has been positioned as a constitutive part of queer identity» (Vickers 2010: 59).

Furthermore, the dimension of the *agora*, of the public space, as reported in the previous paragraph, has been connected to alterity thanks to its ability to allow individuals to interact through discussion, favouring the encounter with the Other and the discovery of their identity in comparison with otherness (Arendt 1958). Hence, space can be seen «as the sphere enabling multiplicity. Space, then, is always under construction – it is never complete, never closed» (Misgav 2015: 1209). This powerful concept of possibility and openness can be linked to the queer vision of the world.

Following Lefebvre's famous idea of producing space using the body that constitutes the space and is constituted by the space – «each living body is space and has its space: it produces itself in space and it also produces that space» (Lefebvre 1991: 170) – let us think about the city and its inhabitants in their physicality as a combination: humans are bodies that meet with the "urban body" of the city. Both cities and humans are a combination of different bodies: indeed, people inhabit public spaces mainly when meeting other people. The relationships between humans and their bodies are part and parcel of urban life and public spaces: therefore, it is important to understand, from this perspective, how being in the public urban space happens, and how people and their bodies meet and inhabit the urban space (Pasqui 2022). Therefore, in this sense, what about the queer bodies, all the bodies that are different from the "neutral standard" which, canonically, according to the androcentric view of the "male as norm" (Kotthoff and Wodak 1997), has as its reference the cis-gender heterosexual able white man? Public spaces are not neutral: they have historically been created and designed to support and facilitate the traditional roles of the male gender, with the perspective of the male experience being universally identified as the "norm" (Kern 2021). As a consequence, in the absence of a different perspective, when designing something (not only public spaces), the designed

outcome will be suited to men: «when planners fail to account for gender, public spaces become male spaces by default» (Perez 2019: 65). This issue has been central since the 1990s in the studies of Sexualities' Geographers such as Binnie, Bell and Valentine, who stated that space is actively produced as heterosexual and heteronormative (Binnie 1997; Bell and Valentine 1995). This issue has led to the suppression of non-normative sexualities, to governing and silencing queer desires and embodiments in space through various overt and covert mechanisms of spatial control (Valentine 2000). Puwar defined non-normative and "other" bodies as "space invaders": the status of invaders «highlights how privileged positions have historically been "reserved" for specific kinds of bodies» (Puwar 2004: 144). Those that are instead perceived as "invisible", without corporeality, own a place of power. «The ideal representatives of humanity are those who are not marked by their body and who are, in an embodied sense, invisible» (Puwar 2004: 58). This may represent a paradox, since queer subjectivities and queer lives also suffer from the phenomenon of "invisibilisation" in the public space, but this is caused by the suppression of otherness, which does not produce privilege as a result but only oppression. «Queerness then, is like a ghost, at the border of the visible and the invisible, disturbing the certainties of social reality with disordered desires, perhaps even enchanting us with possibility» (Munt 2013: 232). On this topic of possibility, I will expand subsequently, in the conclusion paragraph.

Hence, we have seen how public space often represents a rationalisation and organisation of the experience, in which sometimes the bodies are seen as something to control, govern and unify according to a "norm": this limits freedom, flexibility and queerness. Urban space should be able to take charge of the plurality of life forms, facilitating social cohesion between its inhabitants, by being accessible, versatile, inclusive and safe. Instead, now, the street remains one of the most dangerous places for the LGBTIA+ community: Italy, according to the *Rainbow Map & Index* of 2023, is 34th out of 49 in Europe in terms of security level and rights for the queer community, with just 25% of LGBTIA+ human rights achieved. Moreover, 48% of hate-motivated attacks in Italy happen in streets, parks, squares and parking lots (2019 data from LGBTI Survey Data Explorer).

But what can be defined as a *queer space*? What are the components of a truly *safe space* for the LGBTIA+ and women community? In history, the queer

space does not have much to do with the physicality of the space (or, at least, not only with that), and neither does the sense of belonging and security that the queer community could possibly feel: as George Chauncey argued, there is «no queer space, there are only spaces used by queers or put to queer use» (1995: 224). Maybe «queer space is space in the process of, literally, taking place, of claiming territory» (Reed 1996: 64). Indeed, taking space, metaphorically and physically, in the political debates as well as in the media, arts and, of course, cities, is a crucial topic for the community: it is important to obtain space, to exit from the closet of heteronormativity and binary gender system in which queer people feel invisible. The public dimension is a historical issue in this sense. For years, indeed, the queer public spaces were "normal" places that were adopted bottom-up from the community with a different purpose and made "queer", historically often by the practice of *cruising*:[2] public urinals are an example of this (Zarzycki 2022), but also other public spaces such as parks – Central Park in NY is a historical example, as we can read on the website "NYC LGBT Historic Sites Project" – or public transport, like in the case of the last wagon of the metro in Mexico City or, still in Mexico, the case of "La Glorieta de los Insurgentes", a public square with an important metro station some areas of which have been occupied by queer people and which is now is the most important cultural, social and urban meeting point for the LGBTIA+ community. (Furman and Mardell 2022). When instead there is a top-down initiative, like in the case of some recent public interventions, such as the rainbow street crossings, a phenomenon happens called "*usualising*" (Arup 2021), which is aimed to make the existence of the queer community known and usual to the general public in order to reduce hate-crimes, but without any imposed conformity (Zarzycki 2022). According to more radical opinions, these kinds of surface gestures are not enough, because they are in dissonance with the true living conditions of queer and trans people, who often face widespread violence that also involves the institutions, and because it is difficult to claim that increased visibility means less homophobia (Zarzycki 2022).

---

[2]   Cruising for sex can be defined as the act of looking for casual sex in specific public spaces known as "cruising grounds". This practice has a longstanding place in LGBTIA+ history as a radical act, even if in most cases it only involved gay men. To better expand the topic connecting it to placemaking, it is possible to read "Cruising Place. The Placemaking Practices of Men who Have Sex with Men", *The Journal of Public Space*, 4(4), 179-186, <https://doi.org/10.32891/jps.v4i4.1240> by Bezemes, J. (2019).

It should be noted that the notion of queer space is different from that of "gay/lesbian spaces"; this was shown by several pieces of Urban Geography research that aimed at going beyond the study of the "gayborhoods", which still rely on and uphold a distinct binary between heterosexuality/homosexuality, to focus instead on «the diversity of experiences and the multiplicity of sites and situations in which "sexual dissidents" create spaces of safety and visibility» (Davis 1995: 287). Indeed, citing Larochelle, «the simple fact that non-heterosexual or non-cisgender people are present in a given location does not in and of itself render it queer – rather the space becomes queered through action and negotiation» (Larochelle 2021: 137). The point is seeing queer spaces as spaces that are not fixed but are rather «something rooted in the continuous breaking down of cis-heteropatriarchal, white supremacist, colonial, classist, and ableist structures» (*ibidem*), thus mainly focusing on of *doing queer,* with a queer approach rooted in action, rather than on *being queer* in a codified and fixed way.

In the next paragraph, some projects or practices taking place in urban public spaces that adopt this queer approach will be commented.

4. Queering the urban space: practices and reflections

Interesting projects or practices about Queer spaces in the city usually revolve around a number of recurring themes. One of them is mapping. Mapping is a way to make visible the invisible, to tell the unknown and invisible stories related to queer people that make those spaces queer. In most cases, queer public spaces are not just spaces expressly identified and presented as specifically designed for LGBTIA+ people for commercial purposes such as gay neighbourhoods and bars. Historically queer public spaces have always have been spaces without any connotation, spaces that are also lived and used by all other inhabitants of the city but maybe at other times of the day or with different modes or codes of communication. Another common topic is the ephemerality of these places and practices, and this is the case of common everyday experiences of people, or of radical activism interventions, or performances, such as ballroom shows or drag queen walks. This topic is connected to another important dimension (discussed below with other examples) that is the physical re-appropriation and occupation of space. The projects lie at the border between activism actions, participatory arts, web-design, performances, storytelling, graphics and communi-

cation, and physical installations. The projects chosen and described in the following paragraphs are shown following the order from the more digital/ephemeral to the most tangible/permanent ones.

Queering the Map by Lucas Larochelle
<https://www.queeringthemap.com/>

As Lucas Larochelle explained (2021: 134-135): «Queering the Map is a community generated counter-mapping platform that digitally archives queer experiences in relation to physical space. The interactive map provides an interface with which to collaboratively archive the cartography of queer life – from park benches to the middle of the ocean – in order to preserve queer histories and unfolding realities. From collective action to stories of coming out, encounters with violence to moments of rapturous love, Queering the Map functions as a living archive of queer life across the world».
The project was first launched in 2017 and then relaunched in 2018, and since then over 86,000 stories of queer existence and resistance – in 23 languages – from across the world have been shared through it. According to its creator, «Queering the Map is not simply a map of queer stories, it is itself a queer map, a queer space» (Larochelle 2021: 142).
The focal points of the project are:
–   the desire to move away from thinking queer space as fixed, toward an approach to queer placemaking (*doing* queer) that is rooted in action, in acts of resistance;
–   the connection to the concepts of ephemerality and lingering of queer performance of José Esteban Muñoz (Muñoz 2009) and on queer phenomenology of Sara Ahmed (Ahmed 2006);
–   the absence of algorithmic control of the platform, allowing for free and chaotic wandering, without privileging some contents in spite of others;
–   the focus on the aspect of opening spaces of possibility thanks to the grassroots participation of the users, with full freedom of expression: «To post on Queering the Map constitutes a kind of giving, sharing one's own experience of finding, if only briefly, a space of queer possibility. These experiences might then allow others who come into contact with them to also "find" themselves—reflected back, though only in fragments, in another's story» (Larochelle 2021: 146);

Figure 1. A heart-wrenching message written by a person living in Gaza. Source: <http://www.queeringthemap.com>.

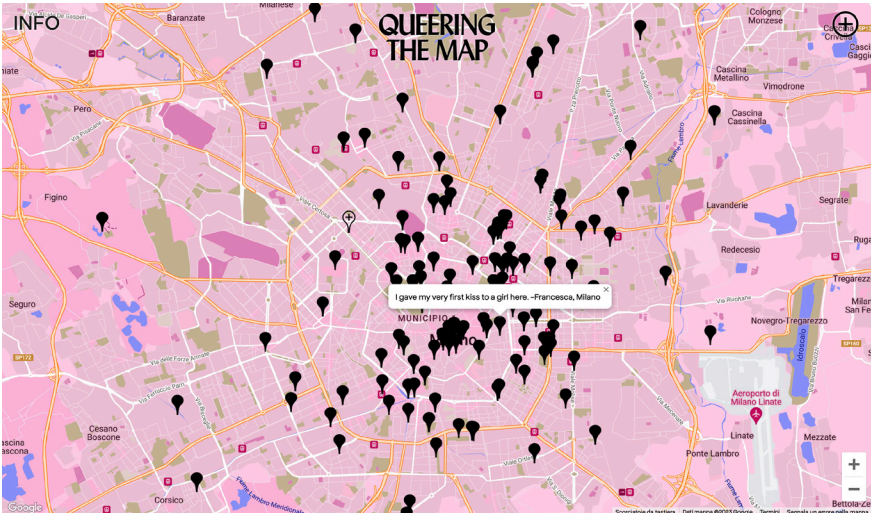**Figure 2.** A girl maps the location of a very important moment of her life as a queer person. Source: <http://www.queeringthemap.com>.

– the anonymity and lack of user profiles, due to a refusal of fixed self-definitions and to departure from «the stability of the digital individual towards the cacophony of collectivity» (*ivi*: 144).

"No le tenemos miedo a la noche" (*We are not afraid of the night*)
by Comparsa Drag
<https://www.instagram.com/comparsadrag/>
&
"Milano Queer Tours" by Nina's Drag Queens
<https://www.ninasdragqueens.org/drag-evolution/tutta-mia-la-citta/>

In these two cases, the main topic involves drag queen arts and performances in public space as a means of re-appropriating of the streets and conveying messages through ephemeral walks and performances.

Comparsa Drag is a collective of drags in Buenos Aires, born in 2018, while Nina's Drag Queens is a Drag and Drama group established in 2007 in Milan. The topic of making visible what is apparently invisible in the city is also present in these two projects – as we can read on the Instagram account of Nina's Drag Queens, «we draw lines, we invent geographies where they are not available» – thanks to their queer tours of the city, which through performance and physical re-appropriation of public space, allow to share stories with participants and show them public spaces under a different light. Their projects and actions are powerful acts of resistance, queerness and otherness in the public space, because, as we can read in the book *Queer Spaces* about Comparsa Drag's performances, «their queer wandering and excessive behaviour is the radical disruption of normative city manners, an urban practice that explores territories of sensuality and passion within ordinary spaces» (Furman and Mardell 2022).

In particular, "No le tenemos miedo a la noche" was a nocturnal city tour to show a group of foreign artists the city Buenos Aires, including the disadvantaged neighbourhoods that the media describe as dangerous but are actually dense with the coexistence of otherness and differences.

"Milano Queer Tour" also takes place at night. Marching together as a group guided by a Drag Queen during the first hours of the night is a powerful act. As a participant, you feel you are perceived (sometimes well, sometimes with curiosity, other times less well) by other people passing by. With a catchy and dense storytelling that also involves audio recordings, videos and collective performances (such as little dances in the public space), Nina's Drag Queens guide the group of participants in a travelling, informative and ironic show about LGBTIA+ historical places, important

Figure 3. People discovering the queerness of Milan during the Milano Queer Tour by Nina's Drag Queens. Photo by Gianfranco Falcone.

Figure 4. A drag performing and guiding the participants of Milano Queer Tour. Photo by Gianfranco Falcone.

events and people of Milan, trying to collectively find an answer to the questions that are at the basis of the tour and that are written on their website: "is Milan male? Is Milan female? Is Milan queer? And, while we're at it, what's queer?"

Serigrafistas Queer
<https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/lumbung-members-artists/serigrafis-tas-queer/>
&
fierce pussy
<https://fiercepussy.org/>

Serigrafistas Queer, a "non-group" as they define themselves, and the art collective *fierce pussy* are two projects made by queer women that use graphic design to convey radical queer messages in the public space. The first one is Argentinian and was born in 2007, while the second one is older, it was launched in 1991 in New York City, at the time of the ACT UP fight against AIDS, and was one of the first groups of artists to tackle the topic of lesbian visibility in public space. They are both still active. Their approach is based on the collective making of queer graphic communication, such as posters, banners, pamphlets, T-shirts, flags, etc., with low-tech methods, to be then distributed with guerrilla actions in the public space or during manifestations and parades.

It's queer not just the message they spread but is also their course of action: for example, in the case of Serigrafistas Queer, «the workshops move silk-screening away from its status as technique or from printing as the final aim, and instead concentrate on everything that happens in the process: collaborations, sharing, carrying out specific tasks, the ideas that generate new projects». In their 2022 project "Rancho Cuis" for the German art festival Documenta Fifteen, they also tackled the topic of place-making «through collective learning and intersectional healing with local organisations and collectives working on issues from gender violence to land rights», as we can read on the Documenta Fifteen website.

To sum up, the main characteristics of the project are: «the commitment to the use of screen printing and graphic experiences as poetic-political tools that enable the creative production of critical statements towards a hostile present, the choice of a technique that allows a high possibility of reproduction at very low cost and that can easily be socialised allowing the incorporation of multiple actors into the action, the construction of a silk screen production workshop in the public space and the transfor-

mation of the street as the primary scene of critical intervention through visual devices and the close relationship with social movements» (Cuello 2013: 6).

Among the projects realised by *fierce pussy*, especially interesting for the presence of public space are "Bathroom Project at Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center" (1994) and "Bathroom Project at the LGBT Community Center" (2009). These are site-specific installations in public toilets, which are a core space for queer people who still suffer from gender binarism related issues. The messages were spread on all the surfaces of the site, such as mirrors, hygienic paper and, of course, walls, according to an approach that the group itself defined as «bombing the wall» (Favorite and Lerer 2020: 32). Similarly interesting is the project "Re-naming the Streets" (1992), in which using spray paint, stencils and cardboard, they re-named the streets along the Pride Parade in honour of some famous queer women, as a way to denounce their scarce representation in the toponymy of the city, an issue that is still very relevant as we can see in the project "Mapping Diversity" (<https://mappingdiversity.eu/>).

Their first series of posters, which the collective named "list posters", are interesting because of the concept of queer identity fluidity and the re-appropriation of slur language. In an interviewed to Favorite and Lerer, fiercepussy explained: «The early "list" posters were about reclaiming language. Taking what was derogatory and homophobic and misogynist and owning it, turning it and putting it back out, and using the power of that (poster insert). For example, the word "queer" was a word that was negative and used against us. So "I am a _____ and proud" was a provocative thing to be saying. One of the things that's interesting about the "list" poster is that we chose multiple terms to identify ourselves. It was never, "I am a one thing", it was always seven or eight different things and three different versions of it because, on one hand, there was no language with which to describe ourselves except for some derogatory language, or language that we claimed, like "amazon". But there was also the desire not to be defined in one way or another. To be all of these things. You can be all these things, you can be many things. It isn't static – it's a spectrum. The poster still works because it's inclusive».

Queer installations – Babs Baldachino, Proud Little Pyramid, Boudoir Babylon – by Adam Nathaniel Furman

These are three recent examples of physical installations made by Adam Nathaniel Furman, a designer that is currently basing his works and research on the topic of queer spaces and how to translate queerness into shapes, materials and colours.

"Babs Baldachino" was created as a monument to LGBTQ+ people of Birmingham for the city's contemporary arts festival Fierce Festival, and was then disassembled and relocated to various public spaces in Birmingham. Aaron Wright, artistic director at Fierce Festival, explained: «We really wanted to commission an artwork that we could take to suburbs of Birmingham to act as a queer beacon, in places that might not be thought of as queer». The author describes it as «a little temple to the queer spirit of the West Midlands, a small but loud offering to the camp brilliance that is always so present in the city, one of the great anchors of queer culture in Britain» (Peacock 2022).

"Proud Little Pyramid" was created to celebrate the reopening of King's Cross in London following the coronavirus lockdown, so the idea of the designer was to create something very joyful, «an anti-monument monument. It's ridiculously fun, over the top, camp»[3] (Ravenscroft 2021). Furman took inspiration from the recent queer history of the area, but also from the dramatic and decorative tradition of Victorian Age's monuments in public spaces.

"Boudoir Babylon" was designed in collaboration with Australian practice Sibling Architecture as part of the National Gallery of Victoria's NGV Triennial and creates various spaces for gathering: it «strategically divides the space to create areas for togetherness and solitude, for watching and being watched. In this way, it pays homage to three distinct spatial typologies – boudoirs, salons and clubs – which toe the line between public and private and have historically acted as safe spaces for marginalised groups in society» (Hahn 2020).

---

[3] As we can read on Oxford Advanced Learner Dictionary online, camp aesthetics has always been connected to the queer world: «deliberately behaving in an exaggerated way that some people think is typical of a gay man», «having a style that is exaggerated and not in good taste, especially in a deliberately humorous way», <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/camp_3>.

Also this project celebrates queer and camp aesthetics, incorporating stereotypical colours (pink and blue) but re-contextualizing them and challenging traditional notions of binary genders, also thanks to the «queeroglyphs – symbols that playfully nod to different body parts and gender markers» but in ambiguous and non-binary way, as Furman explained (Hahn 2020).

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, a reflection is proposed on the role of designers in all the concepts touched in this chapter. A shift must be fostered in mindset that implies the recognition of the concepts of subjectivities and Otherness in the design process: even though the topic of queer spaces has been studied by geographers, anthropologists, historians and other scholars in the field of queer social studies, still to be explored are the possible connections and possibilities of this link with Design Studies. However, the grounds are favourable, if we think of alterity and queerness as something that is not here yet but will have the possibility to be here in the future. That vision has a strong link with the very essence of designing: designers know well, since the very first day of university, that the word "project" comes from the Latin "pro iacere", to throw forward in time. To imagine possibilities and futures, to access something that is still not perceivable or accepted but that will eventually be. This philosophy of ideality and queer optimism is the one promulgated by Muñoz, who wrote: «Queerness is not here yet. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer. We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality... The future is queerness's domain» (Muñoz 2009: 1).

Citing Zingale, from his previous book about Design & Alterity: «Otherness is all that is not here yet, but yet has the possibility of being: what is not known or recognised, what is not accepted, what is discordant, what is not cognitively accessible. What is foreign but possible. It is Other that which is not yet part of our feeling and conceiving, but whose presence we can feel» (Zingale 2022: 21). This indefiniteness, ambiguity, openness to possibilities and fluidity around the concept of queerness may be perceived as something too vague that is not compatible with the act of designing. Instead, as Larochelle said, «while I agree with the notion that there is no

fixed queer space, I do think there are gestures that can be made to anticipate or design for the possibilities of queer use, or of use by a queer constituency»: investigating this is one of the main challenges. Also, experimenting with queer processes and methodologies, designing *with* queers or designing "queerly", instead of trying to design *for* queers, is one of the main challenges. Alterity, otherness, queerness are concepts that are already implicitly present in design when it offers services rather than consumable goods, produces actions of care rather than strategies of obtaining, invents artefacts capable of bringing out issues to reflect on rather than an aesthetics that encourages consumption, and also when a design method adopts dialogic and collaborative procedures, renouncing the advantage of authorship, says again Zingale (2022).

Design has not only the capabilities but also and mostly has the ethical responsibility to tackle issues related to inclusivity, coexistence, alterity, otherness, differences and queerness, since it influences the contexts, cities, places and, more generally, the entire World in which we live.

References

Ahmed, Sara
2006   *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press.

Arendt, Annah
1958   *Vita activa. The Human Condition*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Arup
2021   *Queering Public Space. Exploring the relationship between queer communities and public spaces*, London, University of Westminster.

Bell, David; Valentine, Gill
1995   "Introduction: Orientations", in Bell, D. and Valentine, G. (eds.), *Mapping desire: Geographies of sexualities*, London, Routledge, 1-27.

Bernini, Lorenzo
2018   *Le teorie queer. Un'introduzione*, Milano, Mimesis.

Binnie, Jon
1997   "Coming out of geography: Towards a queer epistemology?", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 15, 223-237.

Birmingham, Peg
2006   *Hannah Arendt and Human Rights: The Predicament of Common Responsibility*, Bloomington, Indiana, IN, Indiana University Press.

Butler, Judith
2005   *Giving an Account of Oneself*, New York, Fordham University Press.

Chauncey, George
1995   *Gay New York: The Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*, Uitgever, Flamingo.

Cuello, Juan Nicolás
2013   "Serigrafistas queer (2007-2012): subjetividades deseantes en permanente vibración", *IX Jornadas Nacionales de Investigación en Arte en Argentina* (*La Plata, 2013*).

Davis, Tim

1995　"Diversity of Queer Politics and the Redefinition of Sexual Identity and Community in Urban Spaces", in Bell, D. and Valentine, G. (eds.), *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities*, 284-303.

de Lauretis, Teresa

1990　"Eccentric Subjects: Feminist Theory and Historical Consciousness", *Feminist Studies*, 16, 1 (1990), 115-50.

1991　"Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities An Introduction", *Differences. A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 3(2), III-XVIII, <doi.org/10.1215/10407391-3-2-iii>.

De Leo, Maya

2021　*Queer. Storia Culturale Della Comunità LGBT+*, Torino, Einaudi.

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

2022　"LGBTI Survey Data Explorer", June 29, <https://fra.europa.eu/en/data-and-maps/2020/lgbti-survey-data-explorer>, online on 4 January 2024.

Favorite, Jennifer K.; Lerer, Marisa

2020　"Out In the Streets: An Interview with fierce pussy", *Public Art Dialogue*, 10:1, 29-40.

Furman, Adam Nathaniel; Mardell, Joshua

2022　*Queer Spaces: An Atlas of LGBTQIA+ Places and Stories,* 1st ed., London, RIBA Publishing.

Hahn, Jennifer

2022　*Adam Nathaniel Furman and Sibling Architecture Design 'Super-Camp' Boudoir Babylon Installation*, Dezeen, March 31, <https://www.dezeen.com/2020/12/20/boudoir-babylon-adam-nathaniel-furman-sibling-architecture-ngv-triennial/>, online on 4 January 2024.

Halperin, David M.

1995　*Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Kern, Leslie

2021　*La città femminista. La lotta per lo spazio in un mondo disegnato da uomini*, Roma, Treccani.

Kotthoff, Helga; Wodak, Ruth

1997　*Communicating Gender in Context*, Amsterdam, John Benjamins Publishing Company.

ILGA Europe

2023　"Rainbow Europe | ILGA-Europe", ILGA-Europe | We Stay on Top of What LGBTI Activists and Organisations in Europe and Central Asia Need and Prioritise, May 11, 2023, <https://ilga-europe.org/rainbow-europe/>, online on 4 January 2024.

Larochelle, Lucas
2021   "Queering the Map: On Designing Digital Queer Space", in Ramos, R. and Mowla-bocus, S. (eds.) (2021).

Lefebvre, Henri
1992   *The Production of Space*, Hoboken, NJ, Wiley-Blackwell.

Leistle, Bernhard
2016   "Responsivity and (Some) Other Approaches to Alterity", *Anthropological Theory*, 16, 1 (1 March 2016), 48-74.

Loidolt, Sophie
2018   *Phenomenology of Plurality. Hannah Arendt on Political Intersubjectivity*, New York, NY, Routledge.

Misgav, Chen
2015   "With the Current, Against the Wind: Constructing Spatial Activism and Radical Politics in the Tel-Aviv Gay Center", *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies*, 14(4), 1208-1234. Retrieved from <https://acme-journal.org/index.php/acme/article/view/1160>, online on 4 January 2024.

Muñoz, José Esteban
2009   *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, New York, NY, New York University Press.

Munt, Sally R.
2013   "Queer Sociality", in Feenan, D. (ed.), *Exploring the 'Socio' of Socio-Legal Studies*, London, Macmillan Education UK.

Pasqui, Gabriele
2022   "I corpi e lo spazio urbano: proposte per favorire i buoni incontri", *cheFare*, August 30, <https://www.che-fare.com/almanacco/societa/corpi/i-corpi-e-lo-spazio-urba-no-proposte-per-favorire-i-buoni-incontri-2/>, online on 4 January 2024.

Pavka, Evan
2022   "What Do We Mean By Queer Space?", *Azure Magazine*, June 8, <https://www.azuremagazine.com/article/what-do-we-mean-by-queer-space/>, online on 4 January 2024.

Peacock, Amy
2022   "Adam Nathaniel Furman Designs 'Queer Monument' to Celebrate Commonwealth Games", *Dezeen*, August 12, <https://www.dezeen.com/2022/08/10/adam-nathanial-furman-queer-monument-commonwealth-games/>.

Perez, Caroline Criado
2019   *Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men*, New York, NY, Abrams.

Puwar, Nirmal
2004   *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies out of Place*, Oxford-New York, Berg.

Ramos, Regner; Mowlabocus, Sharif (eds.)
2021   *Queer Sites in Global Contexts: Technologies, Spaces, and Otherness*, Abingdon New York, NY, Routledge.

Ravenscroft, Tom
2022   "Adam Nathaniel Furman Unveils 'Monumentally Joyful' Pyramid at King's Cross", *Dezeen*, February 11, <https://www.dezeen.com/2021/06/24/adam-nathaniel-furman-proud-little-pyramid-kings-cross-london/>, online on 4 January 2024.

Reed, Cristopher
1996   "Imminent Domain: Queer Space in the Built Environment", *Art Journal*, 55(4), 64.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky
1993   *Tendencies*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press.

Tuomela, Raimo
2007   *The Philosophy of Sociality: The Shared Point of View*, Oxford (UK)-New York, Oxford University Press.

Valentine, Gill
2000   *From nowhere to everywhere: Lesbian geographies,* Binghamton, NY, Harrington Park Press.

Vickers, Emma
2010   "Queer Sex in the Metropolis? Place, Subjectivity and the Second World War", *Feminist Review*, 96, 58-73.

Zarzycki, Max L.
2022   "Wild Public: Queer Spaces for Radical Ways of Being and Becoming – Architectural Review", *Architectural Review*, August 11, <https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/books/wild-public-queer-spaces-for-radical-ways-of-being-and-becoming>, online on 4 January 2024.

The **QUESTION OF ALTERITY** has become fundamental to understanding contemporary societies, which are increasingly multicultural, multi-ethnic and intersectional. That which is **OTHER** poses questions that one is not used to answering, poses itself as a term of contradiction, questioning established certainties and beliefs.

Alterity is a field yet to be explored, especially when one wants to move from theoretical reflection, inevitable and necessary, to transformative praxis.

Reflection on alterity leads to the **ABANDONMENT OF ALL FORMS OF CENTRALISM**. Acceptance of a culture based on the recognition of alterity and mutual responsibility requires overcoming anthropocentrism and androcentrism, but also Eurocentrism and logocentrism, that is, the domination of some forms of communication and signification over all others. Today, it is legitimate to think that the design dimension can also undertake research paths that highlight **THE NEED TO RECOGNISE THE OTHER**: from migratory flows to gender cultures, from social fragility to mental health, from cultural distances to the difficulties of social integration, etc. This is the direction in which the essays in this volume are heading. Design culture has the right tools to promote innovative and open visions of relations between people, peoples, and languages.

SALVATORE ZINGALE

Salvatore Zingale is Associate Professor at the Department of Design of the Politecnico di Milano and teaches Design Semiotics at the School of Design. He is particularly interested in the cognitive and inventive processes of design activity and dialogicity in cultural interactions.

On the relationship between design and alterity, he has edited *Design e alterità. Conoscere l'Altro, pensare il Possibile* (FrancoAngeli, 2022) and the volume *Relazioni dialogiche. Un'indagine sulla comunicazione e la progettualità* (FrancoAngeli, 2023).