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Queering intersectionality: encountering the transnational

Zusammenfassung

Queere Intersektionalität: Begegnungen mit Transnationalität

Der Beitrag nimmt eine konzeptionelle Erkundung des queeren Potenzials vor, das aus einem Dialog zwischen Intersektionalitätsansätzen in der Geschlechterforschung, der Queer Theory mit ihrem Konzept des Queerings und der transnationalen Migrationsforschung hervorgeht. So bietet eine queere Intersektionalitätsperspektive Raum für Denkansätze, die sich über Normativitäten in intersektionalen wie auch transnationalen Forschungsagenden hinwegsetzen. Das Queering richtet sich dabei nicht ausschließlich auf Intersektionalitätstheorien und deren Forschungsgegenstand, sondern ebenso auf deren Status als Forschungsparadigma, das seine eigenen normativen Modi der Wissensproduktion hervorgebracht hat. Verschiedene kritische Interventionen werden hier auf eine Weise mit(durch)einander gelesen, dass sie in einer queer-intersektionalen Lesart dazu beitragen können, heteronormative Annahmen in der Migrationsforschung zu hinterfragen und die Verknüpfung von Intersektionalität mit als „anders" markierten Körpern aufzulösen.

Schlüsselwörter
Intersektionalität, Transnationalismus, Queering, queere Intersektionalität

Summary

This article is a conceptual exploration of the queering potential that emerges from a productive dialogue between the literatures on intersectionality in gender theory, on the notion of queering in queer theory, and on transnationalism in migration studies. It argues that the queering of intersectionality provides ways of thinking beyond the normativities residing in both intersectional and transnational research agendas. Queering thus not only engages intersectional theory and its subject matter, but equally its status as a research paradigm that has given rise to its own normative modes of knowledge production. Taking its cue from a range of related critical interventions, this article proposes that, read through one another as a queer intersectional lens, they have the potential to mitigate against heteronormative assumptions underlying transnational research as well as the tethering of intersectionality to particularly marked bodies.

Keywords
intersectionality, transnationalism, queering, queer intersectionality

1 Queer introductions

This article conceptually explores the queering potential emerging from a closer dialogue between the literatures on intersectionality, on the notion of queering in queer theory, and on transnationalism in migration studies. It reads the literatures it engages with as critical interventions into normative modes of knowledge production and suggests that reading them through one another mitigates against some of their individual limitations. Queer is commonly used as a catch-all phrase for various sexualities and

gender identities such as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. In this vein, the queering of intersectionality has predominantly challenged a normative emphasis on gender, race and class and demonstrated that sexualities merit inclusion in intersectional analyses (cf. Hines 2011; Taylor/Hines/Casey 2011; Dean 2010; Taylor 2010; Weston 2010). In Warner's rendition, however, queer defines itself against "regimes of the normal", that is "against the normal rather than the heterosexual, and normal includes normal business in the academy" (Warner 1993: xxvi). His definition encompasses the work this article puts queering to, both in relation to intersectionality, and to taking a scholarly orientation around transnational spaces as objects of study in queer directions. Queering is considered productive here precisely because it need not be limited to the study of non-heterosexual lives, but critically investigates how such normativities are deployed in objects of study and modes of knowledge production alike: "To make things queer is certainly to disturb the order of things" (Ahmed 2006: 161). In this vein, I use queer not as an additional category to be analysed intersectionally alongside others, nor as an attribute of spaces, subjects or methods, but queering as a critical scholarly practice that is disruptive of normativities and binary divisions such as male/female, hetero/homo or here/there (Sedgwick 1990; Butler 1993).

Putting queering to work beyond queer subjects does not negate the continued importance of a queer scholarship and politics that continues to mobilise around queer as umbrella term for non-normative sexualities. Queer diaspora and queer migrations scholarship offer a case in point here. Scholarship that has issued explicit calls for the extension of queer work beyond queer subjects (cf. Luibhéid 2008; Manalansan 2006), for instance, continues to offer important critical insights on queer migrants and on the broader relationship between borders, migrations and non-normative sexualities. Neither is this decoupling of queer from queer subjects ever complete. The theorists I draw on to outline a queering practice beyond queer subjects (Butler 1993; Warner 1993; Sedgwick 1994, 1990) have all also contributed foundational scholarship specific to gender, sexualities and sexual norms. In addition, part of the work queering does in its outward spin is to draw attention to heteronormative assumptions that underlie both knowledge productions and objects of study. Butler highlights that by governing cultural intelligibility, heteronormativity shapes those situated within and without the norm alike: "To be not quite masculine or not quite feminine is still to be understood exclusively in terms of one's relationship to the 'quite masculine' and the 'quite feminine'" (Butler 2004: 42). In Sedgwick's terminology, this article takes a "universalising" stance on heteronormativity in that it is understood to affect "the lives of people across the spectrum of sexualities" rather than just sexual minorities (Sedgwick 1990: 1).

Following Sedgwick's foundational axiom that "people are different from each other" (Sedgwick 1990: 22), but that not everyone is different from everyone else in the same ways, non-normative logics extend beyond the sexual. Sedgwick suggests that "queer" work "spins the term outward along dimensions that can't be subsumed under gender and sexuality at all: the ways that race, ethnicity, postcolonial nationality criss-cross with these *and other* identity-constituting, identity-fracturing discourses" (Sedgwick 1994: 8). The dimensions Sedgwick lists, as well as her insistence on "and other" discourses, are pertinent. Queering intersectionality and transposing queer intersectionality across or sideways to knowledge productions on transnational spaces

constitute such an outward spin. To queerly orient around an object of study, in Ahmed's words, means to *dis*orient around it, "allowing the oblique to open up another angle on the world" (Ahmed 2006: 172). The work of queering thus involves reading, thinking and writing across boundaries – both disciplinary ones and identitarian ones – to trouble, to destabilise and, where necessary, to disrupt logics that rely on exclusions of the "and other" and/or result from disciplinary orientations rather than (dis)orientation (Ahmed 2006) around the object of study.

2 Intersectionally transnational

In what may be termed the transition from the "age of migration" (Castles/Miller 2009) to the "age of transnationalism" (Glick Schiller/Basch/Blanc-Szanton 1995: 59), the focus of migration studies underwent a transnational turn and shifted from investigating migration as a linear process geared towards assimilation into the majority society of a so-called receiving country to exploring migrants' transnational practices and connections across borders. Scholarship on transnational migration has subsequently emphasised the simultaneous links migrants maintain (cf. Vertovec 2009, 2004; Glick Schiller/Basch/Blanc-Szanton 1992), the political and social networks through which economic, cultural and social capital is organised and transformed (cf. Smith 2007; Kearney 2005; Levitt/Glick Schiller 2004), and the impact of migrant transnationalism on nation-states and vice versa (cf. Kearney 2005; Glick Schiller/Fouron 1998). While transnational practices and networks thus came to the forefront of scholarly interest, the transnational subject as such, despite its omnipresence as agent of transnationality, has remained somewhat opaque and essentially transnationalised in the sense of reducing it to its transnationality. The methodological nationalism that this scholarship set out to amend was partially reinstated in the process by retaining two (rather than one) nations as naturalised frames of reference (Amelina/Faist 2012; Wimmer/Glick Schiller 2002). In contrast to scholarship calling for a further conceptualisation and operationalisation of transnationalism and its component parts (cf. Amelina/Faist 2012; Pries 2008; Faist 2000), I follow Jackson/Crang/Dwyer (2004), who suggest extending rather than further delimiting the scope of the transnational space beyond normatively defined ethnic or national communities to encompass the heterogeneity encountered within such spaces. This transnational space is imagined as multiple and porous, decoupled from the act of migration as such to account for post-migrants and other unruly subjects in the same spaces (cf. Levitt 2011; Jackson/Crang/Dwyer 2004; Vertovec 2004; Brah 1996). Such an understanding emphasises the spaces transnationality takes place in, and what might emerge anew from them, rather than a narrowly defined transnationality that tethers closely to a here/there binary. Brah (1996) has described such spaces as "diaspora space", defined as "the intersectionality of diaspora, border, and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural, and psychic processes" (Brah 1996: 2015) where the "boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, of 'us' and 'them', are contested" (Brah 1996: 205).

Transnational feminist scholars define transnational spaces as inherently intersectional (Nagar/Swarr 2010) and point to multiple differentiations and power relations

that "articulate and disarticulate" (Brah 1996: 205) such spaces. The ensuing feminist transnationalism(s) have predominantly been concerned with transnational feminism(s) in terms of contestations, solidarities and movements (cf. Alexander/Mohanty 2010, 1997; Nagar/Swarr 2010; Puar 2007; Mohanty 2003). In Grewal/Kaplan's use, the transnational refers to the "need to destabilize rather than maintain boundaries of nation, race, and gender" (Grewal/Kaplan 2000: 2). Such a multi-facetted understanding of transnationality that never loses sight of the ways in which power circulates, translates well from feminist movements to transnational migrations, spaces and subjects. This shift in registers from transnational feminism(s) to knowledge productions on transnational spaces and subjects is ever so slight but important. From a transnational feminist perspective, applying an intersectional lens to transnational subjects seems self-evident. In Nagar/Swarr's definition, for instance, a transnational feminism is always already intersectional, attentive to multiple power relations and the ways in which they inform the production of subjectivities, and always already situated and reflexive (Nagar/Swarr 2010: 5). This illustrates how different literatures concerned with transnational subjects have evolved in parallel rather than in dialogue. As Hondagneu-Sotelo notes, "feminist-inflected migration research has been more enthusiastically received by those working in gender studies, in race, class, or gender intersectionalities […] than it has by those working in mainstream migration studies" (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2000: 119). Transnationalism, itself a critical intervention into migration studies, initially displayed a similar neglect of the ways in which transnationality intersects with gender and other differentiations.

The decentring of "woman" as the universal feminist category of reference (Lorde 1981; hooks 1982; Spelman 1988) and growing awareness of gender as intersecting with class and race (Hill Collins 1990; Crenshaw 1989) had shifted the focus of feminist migration scholars to gendered patterns of migration and their impact on gender relations. Literature seeking to "bring gender in" (Pessar/Mahler 2003: 812) emerged, once again, as an intervention into ongoing debates on transnational spaces (Fouron/Glick Schiller 2001) and has tended to use gender primarily as a binary variable to disaggregate transnational practices. Research that made an important contribution by recognising that transnationality is not the only relevant category of analysis in transnational spaces by including gender, indeed by successfully showing how gender is relevant to all transnational processes, in turn re-inscribed binary categories in terms of reducing gendered analyses to a naturalised male/female dichotomy. Knowledge productions on transnational spaces and subjects have thus not always been attentive to the fluid and multiple intersecting dimensions that Nagar/Swarr (2010) and Brah (1996) theorise as inherent in such spaces. At the same time, some transnational feminist scholarship has been less attentive to transnationality as an (intersectional) category of analysis in itself than to power relations within transnational capitalism, post/neocoloniality, or transnational social movements.

Scholarship concerned with queer migrations extends gendered interventions into transnational migration research to sexualities and makes its underlying heteronormative assumptions explicit (Kosnick 2010; Cantú 2009; Castro-Varela/Dhawan 2009; Manalansan 2006; Luibhéid 2008, 2004). Feminist scholarship on gender and migration has at times conflated sexuality with gender "which in turn is often conflated with wom-

en – a triple erasure meaning that only women have sexuality, sexuality is gender, and gender or sexuality is normatively heterosexual" (Luibhéid 2004: 227). Mai/King, in contrast, highlight the critical confluence between "mobile persons and fluid and multiple sexual identities: both are on the move and challenge the fixedness of sedentary national and sexual citizenship" (Mai/King 2009: 297). Despite a growing body of queer migration scholarship exploring the intersections between sexualities and migration (cf. Kosnick 2011; Thing 2010; Cantú 2009; Mai/King 2009; Kuntsman 2009; Manalansan 2006) and queer diaspora critique (cf. Gopinath 2005; Eng/Halberstam/Muñoz 2005; Manalansan 2003; Eng 2001), mainstream transnational migration research remains curiously untouched by these insights from the margins. As Cantú has argued, "migration research is framed by heteronormative assumptions that not only deny the existence of nonheterosexual subjects but also cloak the ways in which sexuality itself influences migratory processes" (Cantú 2009: 21). Heteronormativity not only excludes non-heterosexual subjects, but also regulates those living within its norms and boundaries: "the regulation of gender has always been part of the work of heterosexist normativity" (Butler 2004: 186). It on the one hand makes the social world intelligible to its subjects (and vice versa) by imposing not only normative sexuality and sexual practice but also normative ways of life and legitimate forms of relationships (Jackson 2006: 107, 110). Manalansan (2006) shows how heteronormative assumptions around kinship, reproduction and care work structure which research questions are asked and what answers become (im)possible. He advocates rethinking approaches in gender and migration research beyond queer migrants "by utilizing the tools of queer studies as a way to complicate and re-examine assumptions and concepts that unwittingly reify normative notions of gender and sexuality" (Manalansan 2006: 226). Luibhéid calls upon migration scholarship to analyse

> "how migration regimes and settlement policies contribute to producing not only those who become variously defined as 'queer', 'deviant', or 'abnormal' but also those who become defined as normative or 'normal' within a binary structure intimately tied to racial, gender, class, cultural, and other hierarchies." (Luibhéid 2008: 171–172)

Queer migration scholarship offers an open invitation to complicate heteronormative assumptions underlying theorising and research on gender and transnational migration and can be read within a broader call for the queering of social research "to bring [queer theory's] conceptual and theoretical apparatus to the study of heterosexuality and its relationship to gender and other axes of social difference" (Valocchi 2005: 762). At the same time, "queer diasporas have also become a concerted site for the interrogation of the nation-state, citizenship, imperialism, and empire" (Eng/Halberstam/Muñoz 2005: 7). While queer migration and diaspora scholarship thus (rightfully) first and foremost concerns itself with queer migrants and the exclusion of non-normative sexualities from migration research, the contribution of these critical literatures is much broader – both in terms of what queer diasporic subjects signify and the extension of queer modes of inquiry to a wider arena of subjects/objects of study.

3 Queering intersectionality

Intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989; 1991) has been celebrated as "the most important theoretical contribution that women's studies […] has made" (McCall 2005: 1771), but remains a contested scholarly, political and activist paradigm (Russo 2009: 309). Questions around which axes of difference should be considered for intersectional analysis, and whether or not to agree on a conclusive list of categories for analysis have been central to intersectional theorising. Quite likely most extensively Lutz/Wenning (2001), while noting that the list might nevertheless not be comprehensive, have identified fourteen specific categories of difference that require intersectional attention: gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, class, health, age, sedentariness, property, geographical location, religion (or secularism) and societal development. Ludvig, on the other hand, problematises this kind of listing: "[intersectionality's] implications for empirical analysis are, on the one hand, a seemingly insurmountable complexity and, on the other, a fixed notion of differences. This is because the list of differences is endless or even seemingly indefinite" (Ludvig 2006: 246). Both, the lack of a finite (check)list of intersections to consider, and the potentially diffuse and infinite nature of such a list, have equally been considered weaknesses of intersectionality. While necessary in quantitative research designs, from a critical theoretical perspective such lists invariably raise questions about what is left out of the frame. Butler (1993) highlights the empirical impossibility of categories conceived as a list of discrete entities. She shows how, instead of offering insights into complexity, they divert attention from the ways in which categories work through one another in/on the subject. She writes that when categories "are considered analytically as discrete, the practical consequence is a continual enumeration, a multiplication that produces an ever-expanding list that effectively separates that which it purports to connect" (Butler 1993: 116). She not only argues for an open-ended take on intersectional categories, but also highlights the failure of identity categories at grasping complexity as such. Elsewhere she suggests that the customary "etc." at the end of enumerations of potential intersections signifies an embarrassed confession of failure to complete the ambitious task of doing justice to a "situated subject" (Butler 1990: 196). Villa likens the "quest for categories" within intersectional theory to a Foucaultian "will to knowledge". What Ludvig terms the "Achilles heel of intersectional approaches" (Ludvig 2006: 247) becomes not only a strength but a necessity: "the 'etc.' we all know from theoretical, political, and everyday discourses is much underrated. The analysis of embodiment processes […] can make quite clear that the etc. is necessary" (Villa 2011: 183) and conceptually obliterating it operates to mask intersectional complexities. Villa asks whether it might not "make more sense to use the intersectional approach in a processual […] sense, meaning that we look at how exceedingly complex interactions are gendered, racialised, (hetero-) sexualised, classed" (Villa 2011: 177). While I might add an open-ended "etc." to her question, it reflects how intersectionality is in need of critical interrogation to avoid the pitfalls its strong reliance on identity categorical thinking masks when complex spaces and subjects are the objects of study. Different transnational spaces provide different social, geopolitical, spatial, and temporal contexts for subjects to become in and through. Transnationality, gender, sexuality, class, race, ethnicity, religion, culture and other points of reference will not always all be mobilised equally (or at all). To return to Sedgwick's

recognition, people are (not so) simply different from one another (Sedgwick 1990: 22). To make prior assumptions about which categories of analysis are pertinent in a particular transnational context, or to presume a pool of discrete categories to assemble an intersectional model from, however, "violates the normative claim of intersectionality that intersections of these categories are more than the sum of their parts" (Hancock 2007: 251). Barad similarly points out that "identities are not separable, they do not intersect" (Barad 2001: 99), and argues that geometrical analogies of lines inadvertently lead to an understanding of gender, race or class as separate. Normative (check)lists of categories that are presumed to intersect "as if they were fully separable axes of power" (Butler 1993: 116) thus fail to grasp complexity and run counter to intersectionality's aim at transgressing unidirectional and additive approaches, returning to an additive model where "race + gender + sexuality + class = complex identity" (Nash 2008: 6), with however many addends.

Imagining complexity in linear terms furthermore reveals little about "what takes place at the intersections, what is moving, emerging, disappearing or perhaps even changed by the encounter" (Staunæs/Søndergaard 2011: 50) and the intersection remains a black box (Lykke 2011). Ahmed pertinently problematises the ways in which categories of analysis imagined as lines operate to exclude what is out of line and becomes besides the point.

> "The lines that allow us to find our way, those that are 'in front' of us, also make certain things, and not others, available. What is available is what might reside as a point on this line. When we follow specific lines, some things become reachable and others remain or even become out of reach. Such exclusions […] are the indirect consequences of following lines that are before us: we do not have to consciously exclude those things that are not 'on line'." (Ahmed 2006: 14–15)

Only certain objects, not others, thus become available to intersectionally orient oneself around. While an intersectional approach defined by a list of intersections raises questions about what is left out of the frame, it raises further questions about how such a frame over-determines who becomes eligible for intersectional analyses. Barad concludes that it leads to a reduction of complexity to the extent that it prevents intersectional approaches from fully addressing the critique at their very core, i.e. that race is not only relevant to people of colour, and that not only women are affected by gender or that sexuality does not only matter to queers (Barad 2001: 98). As a consequence, only the specific (identity) categories deemed to apply to particular subjects are considered, focusing all attention on "certain specifically marked bodies" (Barad 2001: 98). In other words, intersectional approaches risk paying exclusive attention to particular racialised, gendered, sexualised etc. bodies. The more succinct a list of lines/intersections, the smaller the potential range of who becomes subject to intersectional analysis. When including sexuality as an axis of difference in this sense, for instance, the focus on "black women as quintessential intersectional subjects" (Nash 2008: 89) might shift to lesbian women of colour instead, retaining the problematic conflation of a particular kind of identity category (gendered identity, racialised identity, sexual identity, transnational identity) with intersectional categories of analysis[1]. Thinking of intersectionality as a research

1 But see Yuval-Davis 2006, Brah/Phoenix 2004 or Staunæs 2003 for intersectional scholarship that disentangles the two and references multiple differentiations, contextuality and entanglement, thus demonstrating that alternative intersectionalities are indeed possible.

paradigm rather than a content-specialisation on the exclusion of minorities (Hancock 2007) allows for a conceptualisation of intersectionality that does not a priori attach categories such as race, gender or ethnicity to minorities, but attends more generally to who is produced as un/marked and non/privileged (Staunæs 2003: 105), and a growing body of scholarship has begun to extend intersectional analyses to privileged subjects (cf. Erel 2012; Staunæs/Søndergaard 2011; Taylor 2010; Russo 2009; Nash 2008).

Despite a critical affinity between intersectionality and queer theory (cf. Haschemi/Michaelis/Dietze 2011), their relationship is far from simple and their "parallels remain fraught and disconnected" (Taylor/Hines/Casey 2011: 2). While both contribute critical epistemologies and pay attention to the multiple and shifting processes at work in subject formation, they are separated by an implicit double erasure. On the one hand, when intersectional theory has catered to queers, it has often been as an additional axis of difference, thus reducing queer to sexual orientation or non-heterosexual identity and as a consequence render queer into the service of intersectionality as an increasingly normative and depoliticised mode of inquiry (cf. Erel et al. 2008). Queer theory, on the other hand, has been hesitant in taking a reflexive stance towards the privileged whiteness of its theorising (Ferguson 2004; Perez 2005). Where queer and intersectional have indeed been used in productive dialogue, it has been to highlight the need for queer critiques that do not single out sexualities/normativities to the detriment of attention to racism. Haschemi/Michaelis/Dietze identify a range of critical scholarship that keeps "the work of normalisation and the production of binaries" as well as "asymmetrical power relations and privileges" (Haschemi/Michaelis/Dietze 2011: 90) in check, for instance queer of colour scholarship, queer diaspora critique (cf. Gopinath 2005), queer assemblages (Puar 2007) or Muñoz's (1999) work on disidentification. Queer of colour critique (cf. Douglas/Jivraj/Lamble 2011; Erel et al. 2008; Kuntsman/Miyake 2008; Puar 2007; Perez 2005; Ferguson 2004; Eng 2001; Muñoz 1999; Harper et al. 1997) has been invested in interrogating complicities between queer and racism. Enriched by postcolonial scholarship and critical race theory, queer becomes "a point of departure for a broad critique that is calibrated to account for the social antagonisms of nationality, race, gender, and class as well as sexuality" (Harper et al. 1997: 3). Intersectionality, from this perspective, has the potential "for building spaces and movements that are committed to interrogating gender and sexuality norms, whilst simultaneously identifying, challenging, and countering the overt and embedded forms of racism that shape them" (Douglas/Jivraj/Lamble 2011: 108). Queer theory and intersectionality in closer dialogue can provide control mechanisms towards avoiding one another's blind-spots. In this vein, Haschemi/Michaelis/Dietze (2011) suggest understanding queer theory and intersectionality as mutually destabilising "corrective methodologies", where queer theory undermines binaries like male/female or here/there inherent in intersectional (and transnational) research while intersectionality keeps multiple and simultaneous positionalities in focus.

Queering intersectionality operates in three related ways. First, queering is attentive to heteronormative undercurrents not only in the object of study, but equally in the modes by which knowledge is produced. Second, the queering of intersectional approaches refers to shifting the focus from identity categories (whether to argue for or against them) to the ways in which normativities are deeply implicated in the context of

the transnational space. This move from identity categories imagined as intersecting lines to processes, doings and becomings is a strategy to prevent intersectionality from turning into "an intersectionalism which objectifies complexity for the sake of order and orderly theory" (Villa 2011: 183). Puar warns of the dangers inherent in encasing difference "within a structural container that simply wishes the messiness of identity into a formulaic grid". Intersectionality then easily becomes complicit with "the disciplinary apparatus of the state" as "a tool of diversity management and a mantra of liberal multiculturalism" (Puar 2007: 212, see also Bilge 2012). When intersectionality is used as an approach to transnational subjects rather than to legal and political mechanisms of exclusion, the focus needs to shift with the object of study. To interrogate how transnationality, gender, race or sexuality become entangled, the black box takes centre stage rather than discrete categories. Queering intersectionality, then, complicates the neat onto-epistemological cosiness identity categories seem to offer and shifts from describing particular intersections to the normativities at work in constructing those categories.

The third way in which I use queering simultaneously follows from the above, and moves beyond the untethering from identity categories. Queering unfolds its most disruptive potential in its disorienting (Ahmed 2006) capacity to render oblique what is conventionally thought along straight lines. Staunæs has foregrounded the doing of intersectionality and suggests analysing "this 'doing' in situ, where concrete intersections, hierarchies and elaboration are not predetermined" (Staunæs 2003: 102). This understanding of intersectionality in terms of an active notion of doing offers a way of looking at multiple categories as relational, simultaneous and fluid dimensions of transnational becomings, while highlighting the importance of the specific context that the object of study is situated in. Like Valocchi, who argues that understanding "intersectional subjectivities as both performed and performative" (Valocchi 2005: 766) already forms an integral part of queering, Staunæs places the focus on the intersectional subject, where "the doing of the relation between categories […] results in either troubled or untroubled subject positions" (Staunæs 2003: 105). While Staunæs re-calibrates intersectionality on a subject level and suggests that subjects are *doing* intersectionality rather than *being* intersectional, I suggest extending this notion of doing to intersectional modes of producing knowledge as part of a queering move. Translating the doing of intersectionality from subjects to queer intersectional research and theory acknowledges the work that a particular mode of knowledge production does in relation to its object of study. In the doing of queer intersectionality, the queer operates to trouble not subject positions as such, but the normative assumptions that underlie the approach to the becoming of subjects and what that might in turn do to the knowledges it can produce as well as to the critical disciplines producing it.

4 Concluding remarks

An intersectional approach productively complicates the ways in which transnational subjects can be approached, particularly in considering transnationality as one of potentially many differentiations in transnational spaces. Whether adhering to the classic

trinity of gender, race and class, or further extending the list of intersections to consider, however, normative lists of intersections presuppose what is sought and in turn limit what an intersectional approach might find. They virtually prescribe what differences become available as subjects/objects of study and limit who becomes "eligible" for intersectional analysis to bodies that are racialised, gendered and sexualised in particular ways. In conversation with transnationality and queer migration and diaspora critique, intersectionality encounters a point of convergence on the nexus between racism and homophobia. The "orientalist constructions of non-Western traditions, coded as inherently homophobic, surface in narratives of migration to produce tales of individual liberation aided by the enlightened Western state" (Kosnick 2011: 127). The resonance is particularly salient where queers and women are similarly positioned in progress narratives that presume a trajectory of liberation to coincide with an orientation away from cultural practices that are constructed as inherently patriarchal and/or homophobic. Such narratives are "underpinned by a powerful conviction that religious and racial communities are more homophobic than white mainstream queer communities are racist" (Puar 2007: 15). Intersectionality in its hegemonic incarnation[2] seems to facilitate rather than thwart such instrumentalisations of women and queers. Erel et al. thus propose that its failure to intervene against these racist and Islamophobic shortcuts is the "clearest testament to the shortcomings of 'intersectionality' theory" (Erel et al. 2008: 278).

In arguing for the queering of intersectionality I have put the notion of queering to work in three closely related ways: to attend to heteronormative undercurrents in knowledge productions and objects of study; to untether intersectionality from identity categories in favour of doing/becoming/process and disrupt checklist-like approaches to differences that (are presumed to) matter; and to extend the doing of intersectionality from the subject level to knowledge productions. Read alongside and through one another, the critical literatures this article has revisited reveal that singular modes of knowledge production inadequately capture the entangled nature of transnational (and other) subjects. While arguably concerned with comparable critical projects – anti-racist, anti-homophobic or feminist, for instance – they risk reproducing whichever "-ism" happens to be situated just outside of the frame. In this sense, queering not only engages intersectional theory and its subject matter, but equally its status as a research paradigm that has given rise to its own normative modes of inquiry. This shift allows for queer intersectional inquiry to untether from a priori (intersectionally) marked bodies and subjects that all too readily become the objects of intersectional research. Finally, queering as a critical practice across disciplinary boundaries also speaks to the ways in which critical perspectives such as the ones this article has engaged with reside not only in isolation from one another but get listened to predominantly by audiences left of their respective mainstream(s). Queering intersectionality might be understood as never quite finished nor fully achievable (dis)orientation (Ahmed 2006) around an object of study, one that holds the potential to *do* something to normative politics of knowledge production in the process.

2 Puar has likened intersectionality to an often single-minded mandate of feminist knowledge production (Puar 2013: 372) and an instrument in the hands of liberal diversity management and multiculturalism (Puar 2007: 212).

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