

REBEKA PÕLDSAM

“Why are we still abnormal?!”  
History of discourses on non-normative  
sex-gender subjects in Estonia





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UNIVERSITY OF TARTU

Press

Department of Ethnology, Institute of Cultural Research, University of Tartu,  
Estonia

The Council of the Institute of Cultural Research has, on October 18, 2023  
accepted this dissertation to be defended for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
in Ethnology.

Supervisors: Professor Ene Kõresaar (University of Tartu)  
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The dissertation will be defended on December 11, 2023 at 15:00 at the Uni-  
versity of Tartu Senate Hall (Ülikooli 18-204).

This research was supported by the Estonian Research Council grant PRG1097  
("Practices and Challenges of Mnemonic Pluralism in Baltic History Museums").

ISSN 1736-1966 (print)  
ISBN 978-9916-27-407-1 (print)

ISSN 2806-2183 (pdf)  
ISBN 978-9916-27-408-8 (pdf)

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University of Tartu Press  
[www.tyk.ee](http://www.tyk.ee)

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## LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

- Article I.** Põldsam, Rebeka 2020. Otsides kvääre lugusid sõdadevahelise Eesti ajakirjandusest [*Looking for Queer Stories from Interwar Estonian Media: The Position of Eugenics in Discussions About Homosexuality and Transgender Issues*]. – *Mäetagused*, 76, 95–124. doi:10.7592/MT2020.76.poldsam.
- Article II.** Põldsam, Rebeka 2024. Homophobic Discourses and Their Soviet History in Estonia. – *Folklore. Electronic Journal of Folklore* (forthcoming).
- Article III.** Arumetsa, Sara & Põldsam, Rebeka 2023. Emergence of LGBT Movements in Late Soviet and Post-Soviet Estonia. – *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, (online first), 1–14. doi:10.1080/08038740.2023.2195207.
- Article IV.** Marling, Raili & Põldsam, Rebeka 2022. Affect and Queer intimate Entanglements in Nationalist-Neoliberal Estonia. – *Sexualities* (online first), 1–15. doi: 10.1177/13634607221112646.

### **The author's contribution:**

- Article III:** The author proposed the structure of the paper and developed the methodology. Co-author Sara Arumetsa suggested the theoretical framework based on Lotman and wrote the trans history research subsections based on her research. The other parts were written by the present author.
- Article IV:** The article is co-written with Raili Marling. The author gathered the ethnographic data during her fieldwork, collaborated in writing the methodological (adding input on queer ethnography) and theoretical part (agential realism), and co-wrote the empirical analysis. Raili Marling wrote the theoretical analysis of affect, nationalism and neoliberalism.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Doctoral studies have been the most creative and inspiring time of my life so far. Although there have been more than a few moments of despair and stress about starting and finishing parts of the dissertation manuscript, I have enormously enjoyed the intellectual environment which I have entered, coming across wonderful people, exciting ideas and discoveries.

I am indebted to my supervisors Professor Ene Kõresaar and Professor Raili Marling. With a background in contemporary art theory and curating I have been a newcomer to ethnology to which Ene has patiently and kindly introduced me to, in addition to providing constant support to this research project which often seemed chaotic to her. With her intellectual vigour and enthusiasm Raili has encouraged me to improve and advance my writing and thinking throughout my doctoral studies by always being available for critical feedback and discussions about any part of the dissertation. It was a true privilege and inspiration to co-write one article of the dissertation with Raili. Together Ene and Raili have always been available for me when I have needed help which I have been able to rely on and for which I am sincerely grateful.

I thank Associate Professor Elo-Hanna Seljamaa for the detailed and attentive preliminary review, the engaged and encouraging criticism. Your feedback was invaluable for re-thinking and finalising the text in a short period of time. Thank you Tuula Juvonen and Andrés Brink Pinto for the careful reading of the final version of this dissertation and for the pleasure and honour of having you as my opponents in the public defence of the dissertation.

I would also like to thank Associate Professor Jaak Tomberg for always supportive comments as the main reviewer in the progress reviews during my doctoral studies. As a newcomer to the field of ethnology and ethnographic methods, I thank all the lectures whose courses I attended – I learned a lot from all of you and enjoyed every moment in the classes and seminars that I participated in. I thank Janek Kraavi and Pihla Siim for inviting me to give lectures in their courses. Many thanks to Sille Vadi and Reet Ruusmann for their help in solving practical problems, which I came across as a junior research fellow.

In addition to supervision, Ene Kõresaar has supported my research by involving me in her research project “MNEMUS – Practices and Challenges of Mnemonic Pluralism in Baltic History Museums” within which I was honoured to contribute as a curator of an intervention to Vabamu museum’s permanent exhibition with an additional layer “From “such people” to LGBT activism. Stories from sexual and gender minorities in 20th century Estonia” that opened in June 2023. I thank Kirsti Jõesalu, who managed the majority of this project and has encouraged me as a researcher within the project. I also thank the Vabamu team, who welcomed the project and kindly contributed to it. The project helped me expand this dissertation and required me to look at the findings from yet another perspective.

I thank Professor Neda Atanasoski who welcomed me as a visiting scholar at the Department of Feminist Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz in spring term 2019. Neda's comments and recommendations helped me find several key texts about gender studies in post-socialist Eastern Europe. I sincerely thank Professor Karen Barad for their Feminist Science Studies course, which I had the greatest pleasure to participate in and where I was able to learn the agential realist theoretical model and its sources directly from the author. Karen provided initial supervision about what to read diffractively through my existing findings. I thank Dr. Dion Farquhar who taught Feminist Interventions in UC Santa Cruz and made me feel intellectually and emotionally at home by warmly including me to her circle of family and friends during my stay in Santa Cruz.

I have been lucky to have crossed ways with Finnish queer historian Riikka Taavetti whose work and, more importantly, her friendship and collegial support helped me to grow as a researcher. Riikka has created opportunities for us to collaborate, importantly for this dissertation to visit the University of Helsinki in 2022 to conduct archival research on the period 1980s–1990s gay and lesbian movement in Estonia and Finland. We have worked together on research and writing throughout these years, presented several papers, started two joint research projects, and she has always found time for reading my manuscripts and offering engaged and constructive feedback. Thank you, Riikka, for having so much hope in me and always encouraging me in the hardest moments.

In addition to the intervention in Vabamu, I had the opportunity to co-edit, together with Vahur Aabrams, Andreas Kalkun and Uku Lember, the popular history collection “Kalevi alt välja. LGBT+ inimeste lugusid 19. ja 20. sajandi Eestist” (*Bring back to light. Stories of LGBT+ people in 19th and 20th century Estonia*). I thank Uku and especially Kristiina Raud and Estonian LGBT Association for inviting me to join this project. I thank Vahur who kindly shared his exceptional skills of working with texts and deep engagement with the project. I thank all the co-authors Kai Stahl, Ken Ird, Hannes Vinnal, Bart Pushaw, Martin Rünk and others already mentioned above, the artists Jaanus Samma, Roven Jõekäär, and graphic designers Agnes Ratas and Marje Kask, who worked on making this book – you were my queer research community with whom I could discuss the source materials and get an understanding of the possible ways of writing about queer past.

I wish to thank Sara Arumetsa, who is the co-author of one of the four articles of this dissertation. Sara has the deepest curiosity about details and this has led her to significant new findings about trans history in late-Soviet and post-Soviet Estonia. I thank Professor Emeritus Jens Rydström from Lund University for digitising and e-mailing me an article about Estonian gays in 1981 published in Swedish gay activist magazine *Revolt*, an important reference for our article with Sara as well as at the exhibition in Vabamu. I thank Toomas Anepaio who helped me to find materials in the archives of the Supreme Court of Estonia. I thank Kaia Ivask, who was my contact person at



the Estonian National Archives as well as Ester Truss, who assisted me in the Rakvere department of the Estonian National Archives. I thank Taavi Koppel who helped me to navigate the LGBT special collection in Harju County Museum, established by him, and shared materials from his personal collection. I thank Ken Kalling who helpfully and quickly responded to all my emails asking assistance with questions about medical history of the twentieth century. Most of all, I am sincerely thankful to all the people who agreed to be interviewed for this dissertation.

I have felt accepted by a community of researchers of queer past at conferences, workshops, symposiums, seminars, summer and winter schools and I am truly grateful for all these encounters. Although writing is mostly a solitary activity, I have not felt alone in this process thanks to the group of people who have always encouraged, helped and pushed me to think and write. Particularly I wish to thank my colleagues and friends Ineta Lipša, Rasa Navickaitė, Tomas Vaiseta, Dan Healey, Kate Davison, Kārlis Vērdiņš, Katrin Tiidenberg, Kristiina Tiideberg, Anu Rae, Liisa Lail, Terje Toomistu, Liis Jõhvik, Mirjam Hinrikus and Mikk Madisson for stimulating conversations and follow-up messages sharing materials with me that have been relevant for this dissertation. I would like to specially thank Raili Uibo whose research on present day LGBT+ community in Estonia has provided essential means for analysing the time of writing this dissertation, and for recommending me for a post-doctoral research project. I thank writer and comrade Fer Boyd for English language copyediting and proofreading manuscripts of two articles and for their ever warm encouragement to all my endeavours.

Lastly, but most dearly I thank those closest to me. I thank Andreas Kalkun, whose research inspired me to become a feminist researcher when I was a bachelor's student, and whose friendship and openness in discussing and directing me in researching topics related to queerness in different fields is an important part of my everyday life. I thank Aet Kuusik who for several years has written queer social criticism that has been an example to me. Aet proofread the Estonian language parts of this dissertation and has been there for me during stressful periods. I also thank my beloved furry companions Murjel, Vassili and Krõpo for helping me to keep the perspective on what matters in life.

# INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines how public discourses have shaped the non-normative sex-gender subjects in Estonia during the interwar period (1920s–1930s), Soviet period (particularly in the 1960s–1980s), period of transition and restoration of national independence (late 1980s– mid-1990s) and the time of writing (2018–2023). This dissertation analyses the discourses that emerge in the representations of sex-gender minorities to create a foundation for a local queer history. I have proposed an analytical term ‘non-normative sex-gender subjects’ to emphasise the intra-active relations between public representations, labels and individuals negotiating the represented discourses during the past hundred years. My study is built on feminist and queer theory, most extensively on Karen Barad (2007) and Judith Butler (1990/2007), which I have employed for analysing a combination of media sources, laws, archival documents, print materials and oral history interviews that I have gathered during my fieldwork.

## Research background

In the past decade LGBT+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, asexual, non-binary, questioning) community and rights have gained increased public and political attention in Estonia, especially since the Estonian parliament passed the gender neutral Registered Partnership Act in 2014 as a substitute for equal marriage. The latter was adopted in June 2023. One of the most common arguments used by those opposed to LGBT+ people’s equal rights is that the concept of sexual and gender minorities is a Western import that does not belong to Estonian culture and history (Uibo 2021: 91; see Hint, Eelmaa 2011). Perhaps the endurance of this argument could partly be explained by the fact that the history of non-normative sex-gender subjects in Estonia has not yet been extensively studied. In 2021, in response to reading the phrase “non-normative sex-gender” from the research participant informed consent form, an interviewee asked me “Why are we still abnormal?! Couldn’t you use a different wording already?”<sup>1</sup>. She felt that LGBT+ people no longer necessarily oppose Estonian social norms. Therefore, the aim of this dissertation is to present insights into LGBT+ community’s past in Estonia by studying the past hundred years from a queer analytical perspective. This long timeframe permits me to identify changes in how non-normative sex-gender subjects have been discursively constructed. The findings of this dissertation might help to challenge the argument about the absence of a queer subculture in the local past as well as to discuss the local troubles with sex-gender norms and normativity.

During my studies I frequently came across people who doubted that there was anything to study about sexual and gender minorities in Estonia from

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<sup>1</sup> In Estonian: “Kas ikka veel oleme ebanormaalsed? Kas sa ei saaks kasutada teistsugust sõnastust?”

before the 1990s, when Estonia restored its independence. Yet, the same doubters often knew “someone like that” from their own community or had heard rumours about someone’s same-sex relationships from earlier periods. This contradiction puzzled me. This doubt in itself explains the need for this research: only fragments, often from a hostile perspective, about homosexual and trans people (for example criminal investigation folders) have been previously studied in Estonia (for example Kalkun 2018; Taavetti 2018; Samma et al. 2015). I have aimed to connect the fragments by identifying the turning points when dominant discourses on sex-gender normativity shifted along with meanings and use of the labels and other means of representing sex-gender minorities.

Following the footsteps of the previous researchers (Kalkun 2018; Taavetti 2018; Samma et al. 2015; Nõgel 1991) I started my dissertation by studying online media libraries, where I found a plethora of representations of non-normative sex-gender subjects from the interwar period, but fewer results from the following periods. Then I proceeded to the study of sexual education handbooks and the changing criminal laws regulating sexual and gender normativity. These sources helped me outline period-specific official and dominant discourses about people who were believed to participate in same-sex sexual practices, particular labels, identities, subject formations or absence of representation.

The dominant discourses changed with political shifts. In order to outline the construction of non-normative sex-gender subjects in each studied period, following the analytical method of Karen Barad, I diffractively read dominant discourses entangled with case studies of individual encounters with either legal or medical institutions (Articles I, II, III) or marginalising political powers (Articles III, IV). This helped me scrutinise how particular discourses functioned in relation to individuals and how individuals coped with the norms. This analytical method, particularly the entanglement of discourses and practices involving non-normative sex-gender subjects, enabled me to closely study a wide set of sources and to formulate research questions based on the empirical sources.

For example, the dominant Soviet discourse about non-normative sex-gender subjects prohibited the affirmation of homosexual and transgender identities. This can at least to an extent explain why the people who knew homosexual or trans persons from the Soviet period still doubted their existence. The discursive absence of homosexual and transgender identities was translated into an actual absence and repression of the existence of the unsayable. Yet in this period, like in all others, the dominant discourse intra-acts with other discourses and practices that, as the found materials indicate, provide at least hints of more affirmative practices. It is this tension between absence and presence that informs this thesis.

## Research scope and questions

Dominant discourses (i.e., most commonly expressed discourses in public sources) significantly shape individual experiences and perhaps whole lives by imposing a particularly marked framework around which individuals have to navigate. Yet, because of the long state-enforced silence on sexual and gender minorities, there is at best limited understanding of the shifting dominant discourses on sexuality from the Soviet period, not to speak of the voices of minorities themselves. While previous studies have identified important moments in queer past, they have rarely undertaken a systematic analysis of the dominant discursive frames that shaped these lives.

The central question of this dissertation is how non-heterosexual and gender diverse subjects have been constructed by dominant discourses in the past hundred years. In each article I have elaborated on this question with specific sub-questions that help me to arrive at the dominant discourses of the studied period and to analyse case studies that represent how individuals are subjected to dominant discourses. Each article of this dissertation focuses on a clearly stated period and a particular set of sources – print media, penal codes and criminal records, activist archives, oral histories and participant observations – which I have combined and diffractively read through one another.

In order to examine the functioning of the dominant discourses I have studied the intra-active meaning making of non-normative sex-gender practices and identities between public discourses and individual lives, the latter of which can vary considerably. The main reason for preferring public discourses to personal stories about identities is their overarching effect: they affect a large population and without an understanding of the dominant discourses we cannot understand personal stories. In addition, at least fragments of the public discourse can be found from archival sources while the majority of the personal stories from the period of enforced silencing have vanished with the people from the past (see Taavetti 2018: 4).

The most extensively available sources on public discourses of the interwar period are texts in print media. In order to outline the public discourses, I studied the words used for non-normative sex-gender subjects and the contexts where they were discussed in the interwar period (Article I). To closely analyse the impact of dominant discourses on individual life in the interwar period I cross-read these sources with a case study of a trans-person who was publicly framed within these discourses in 1929–1936. The questions that informed the study of the dominant discourses and construction of non-normative sex-gender subjects of the interwar period were: What were the words for non-normative sex-gender subjects in the interwar period? In which contexts were non-normative sex-gender subjects discussed in interwar period print media?

In the Soviet period male homosexual intercourse was criminalised, so that the media followed a strict moral code by hardly ever mentioning non-normative sex-gender subjects, except in short descriptions in various sexual education booklets published after 1960. To learn whether and how the

criminalisation of homosexuality impacted the dominant discourses on non-normative sex-gender subjects in the Soviet period, I studied the changes in the relevant criminal code articles and the archived criminal records of the investigations of male same-sex intercourse (Article II). By studying the Soviet period dominant discourses on homosexuality and trans subjects, I noticed that similar homophobic discourses continue to circulate at the time of writing. This led me to reflect on when dominant discourses lose their defining force in the construction of subjects and what can be learned from the circulation of these discourses that belong to the field of memory (Foucault 1972: 58). Hence, the analysis of source materials in Article II revolves around the following questions: How was the criminalisation of homosexuality in Soviet Estonia implemented and how did it contribute to the official discourse about non-normative sex-gender subjects?

The Soviet period ended and national independence started in Estonia with a transition period from the late 1980s to the early 1990s that was brought about by Soviet *glasnost*, freedom of speech in the media, and the national self-determination movement. The period can be characterised as an explosion of parallel discourses (Monticelli 2020; Lotman 2009: 57) and, as it put an end to the Soviet regime's censorship, of a diversity of voices. It was also a turning point in discourses about homosexuality and transgender identities (see Kurvinen 2007). In order to learn who the new voices were and what arguments were introduced to reconfigure the constructions of non-normative sex-gender subjects in that period, together with co-author Sara Arumetsa, we analysed print media sources, activist archives and oral interviews with the first activists of this period (Article III). The research questions were: What was the position of Estonian national human rights movement towards homosexual and transgender rights in the late 1980s? Which events contributed to the emergence of the first lesbian, bisexual, gay and trans activist communities in the early 1990s?

From the transition period to the time of writing, the mid-1990s until early 2020s, the discourses about non-normative sex-gender subjects have diversified, especially with the addition of numerous affirmative LGBT+ self-identities that were not available in earlier periods. Together with co-author Raili Marling we studied women's personal accounts, gathered through my field observations, in order to pose further questions about queer affects created by Estonian national neoliberal dominant discourse (Article IV). In order to closely analyse the gathered accounts we asked: What is considered to be queer beyond LGBT+ categories in present day Estonia? How are economic status, normative discourses and intimate life choices related to a person's self-identity?

While the sources that carry each period's dominant discourses can vary, along with access to these sources, I employed the same entanglement model for analysing non-normative sex-gender subjects in each period. My focus is on the moments when discourses significantly shift by introducing new constructions of subject formation, most recognisably through shifts in appearance and

disappearance of words and terminology used for representing sex-gender minorities.

## Terminology

Language and terminology pose some of the central challenges in writing about queer past since non-normative sex-gender subjects are marginalised through dominant discourses, which do not support alternative understandings. First, the discourses associated with non-normative sex-gender subjects are continuously changing, so that many past words have become outdated or the meanings of the words have shifted to such an extent that they need critical analysis. For example, before the Second World War homosexuality was primarily considered a medical notion and a social deviation in Estonia (see Kalkun 2020). In the Soviet period homosexuality was still considered a deviation but male same-sex acts were criminalised. Only since the late-1980s and more broadly since 1992, when male same-sex acts were decriminalised in Estonia, has homosexuality been viewed as a sexual identity in Estonian public discourse. The vocabulary used in Estonia has been strongly influenced by legal regulations, especially the Soviet criminal law and civil law that regulated medical, particularly venereal, care. At the time of writing, the civil code regulates cohabitation and child adoption of same-sex couples, and the Penal Code uses gender neutral language, but gender recognition is still over-medicalised (Arumetsa 2022b).

While working on this dissertation I have pondered about what could be called the queer history of Estonia. I mostly use *queer* as a position of resistance to heteronormativity in 2004–2020, when the word was introduced in Estonian critical theoretical thinking and as an example of an alternative to LGBT+ vocabulary and rhetoric in mainstream discourse (Allaste & Tiidenberg 2020: 309). According to linguist Aet Kuusik's (2023) research on LGBT+ community's language use and Estonian language corpora, in Estonian 'kväär' is interchangeably used both as a verbal means to critically disrupt heteronormativity and an umbrella term that includes a wide spectrum of sex-gender self-identities which do not conform to cis-heteronormativity. I have arrived at a more nuanced and distinct terminology in the writing process, especially with regard to the past. Still, I use 'queer past' and 'queer archives' when I discuss issues that I interpret as 'queer' at the time of writing (2018–2023).

In Article I I use the Estonian coinage 'kväär', derived from the English word 'queer', that stands for an interruption of heteronormativity in several contexts from everyday life to politics and aesthetic expressions. The word was first published in my article in Estonian gender studies journal *Ariadne Lõng* (Põldsam 2014) and has come to be used widely since then (Kuusik 2023).<sup>2</sup> As I have been one of the proponents of the word 'kväär' since 2010, I have

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<sup>2</sup> First mention on 'kväär' on September 30, 2010 in a blog <https://kiduviha.wordpress.com/tag/hu-kaars/> – Accessed on April 30, 2023.

attentively followed social media discussions and I have had several exchanges about the word which has provoked some opposition in the LGBT+ community who claim that 'kväär' connotes wrongness ('väär') and sounds pejorative because of its similarity to the word 'retard' ('väärakas') (see Kuusik 2023 for a longer discussion of the attitudes about 'kväär'). However, following Sara Ahmed's (2004: 166) and Jack Halberstam's (2008: 154) definitions of 'queer', the negative connotations are intentional as the Estonian 'kväär' seeks to evoke the same connotations as 'queer' in English and to follow the history of the Anglo-American queer reclamation and subversion of an abusive expression into an empowering word (see Põldsam 2014: 134, 140).

The introduction of 'kväär' does not solve the terminological challenges of this dissertation which I discovered after publishing Article I, where I only used 'kväär' as an umbrella term. While queer/kväär can be used for discussing twenty-first century subjectivities, earlier vocabulary about non-normative sex-gender subjects and practices followed different dynamics. According to historian of sexuality Dagmar Herzog (2011: 2, 31), sexual practices started to define sexual identities only in the twentieth century and thus the identitarian taxonomy of the 2020s would be anachronistic in other periods. In order to describe the queer positions from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present, I propose the term 'non-normative sex-gender subjects'. These are not self-identities but positions that are projected through dominant discourses that impose social normativity on any sexual identity or sex and gender practices that transgress cis-gendered heteronormativity. As social norms change over time, so do the meanings given to non-normative sex-gender subjects. Hence, 'non-normative sex-gender subjectivity' is not individual identity but an entangled position constructed with regard to dominant discourses and other circumstances which one has to temporarily negotiate.

In the English language sex and gender were conceptually separated in the 1940s by sexologist John Money in order to distinguish the characteristics of biological sex from socially expressed gender (Germon 2009: 16). In the Estonian language the distinction between sex (bioloogiline sugu) and gender (sotsiaalne sugu/soolisus/sugupool) is rather vague (Viik 2015; see Liljeström 2003: 114). By using sex-gender as a compound I follow Teresa de Lauretis (1987) among other English-speaking feminists of the 1970s–1980s who have employed it to emphasise that both physical sex and social gender are relative, for example, that biological characteristics that define female and male sex can vary widely and the social gender can transgress cultural binaries.

The non-normative sex-gender subjects are shaped through entanglements that consist of intra-active discourses on social norms and normativity that cross through each other in particular moments of non-conformity (see Barad 2007). For example, in Articles I and II the entanglement of non-normative sex-gender subjects helps me to analyse a situation where individuals who have had particular kinds of sexual intercourses are subjected to the dominant discourses according to which homosexual relations are considered deviant or criminal acts by the prosecutor, psychiatrist, or court physician who also have to and some-

times wish to act according to the legal procedures and to measure the seriousness of the subjected person's acts. In this analytical model each individual has agency that brings a particular discursive intra-action to the entanglement and thus makes the situation particular but also accessible for analysis. The notion of non-normative sex-gender entanglement thus enables to go beyond identity labels and to focus on the construction of otherness based on sex and gender in different periods by different agents.

## **Structure of the dissertation**

This dissertation consists of the introductory chapter and four research articles that present answers to different research questions based on sources found in each period. In the following subchapters I will discuss the theoretical framework, methods and sources that I used in this dissertation. I summarise the research articles and end with a discussion of the main results and findings of this research project.

First, I will outline the context of studying the past hundred years of Estonian queer past. In addition to local history, I will address outside influences. During the interwar period, the newly independent Estonia was culturally influenced by the long czarist Russian reign and Baltic German cultural dominance that shaped the period's discourses. The nearly fifty years of Soviet regime in Estonia make studies of Soviet queer history the most relevant context both conceptually as well as for the comparability of sources. Therefore, I have framed my research with the former Soviet countries and post-socialist Eastern European queer history research, particularly from Poland and Czechoslovakia. For the period from the 1990s to the 2020s I compare my findings with existing studies about sexual minorities in Estonia.

In the theoretical framework I discuss the entanglement model of the non-normative sex-gender subject. I start by defining the term discourse as used in my dissertation. Then I present queer feminist quantum physicist Karen Barad's agential realist model and revisit the theories from Niels Bohr, Judith Butler and Donna Haraway, which Barad has combined in agential realism. Finally, I describe how I have employed the diffractive reading of sources, the central method of the dissertation.

In the third subchapter I discuss the methodological framework and methods I used for gathering sources and characterise the found sources. There I introduce online media libraries, fieldwork on the archives, criminal records and legal regulations, field observations and oral history, and other sources that were very scattered and unsystematic but helped me in framing some arguments. Then I summarise the four articles separately. I conclude the dissertation with the main results of the research, the limitations and propose possible future perspectives.



## RESEARCH CONTEXT OF STUDYING ESTONIAN QUEER HISTORY

Lesbian, gay, or queer history—whether invested in identity or in the project of identity’s undoing—is as pleasurable as it is purposeful in sustaining political identities and communities; yet, [...] I have found myself increasingly troubled that identity history itself excludes and disallows in its bid for inclusion.

Laura Doan 2013: x

The history of Soviet homosexuality is largely unexplored territory [...]. We know very little about the Soviet state’s attempts to control and regulate homosexuality during this period, while the historiography on this topic is extremely scant.

Rustam Alexander 2021: 1

In this chapter I discuss the position of studying queer past in Estonia between Anglo-American queer historiography and theory and research on queer history in the former Soviet Union. Similarly to most work on queer past of the former Soviet Union, I have largely focused on representations of queer lives from the past, particularly on mapping the dominant discourses on sexuality and sexual morality of each period (see Stella 2015: 26–27). The limited research on gender dynamics of the past in Estonia has left gaps in the research that I have tried to overcome with the tools offered by Anglo-American queer theory and regional research into the history of sexual and gender minorities. At the time of writing this dissertation new research on sexuality and gender history in Estonia, the Baltic countries and Soviet Russia has emerged, helping me to find similar sources on queer past and to understand the Estonian situation in a wider context.

In the former socialist Eastern Europe and particularly in Estonia academic queer history research has started to emerge since 1990, but especially since the mid-2010s. The recent interest in queer history writing has been inspired by Anglo-American research which dates back to the 1960s but began to flourish only in the 2010s, according to queer historian Laura Doan (2013: 52). The diversity of Anglo-American queer historiography has evoked debates on the ethics and purposes of writing about queer past (Doan 2013: 23), for example, about whether scholarship should contribute to the collective memory by understanding the genealogy of the marginalised sexual identities of the present or study past dynamics of queerness that have vanished over time (Doan 2013: 162, 10). Wider discussions about the politics and theoretical models of writing queer history in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have not yet emerged (see Healey & Stella 2021: 242).

Doan (2013: 28) discusses the tensions between critical history, queer genealogy and gay and lesbian social history which for a long time focused either on theory or on empirical facts but not both equally. Until now queer history research in Estonia is largely in the phase of locating and collecting sources and

reconstructing the past on the basis of the new-found materials with the help of Anglo-American methodological and theoretical frameworks. The main difference between the Anglo-American and Eastern European queer history research so far is that the Anglo-American studies have more often had an access to individual life stories (for example see Hemmings 2018, Stryker 2018; Traies 2018; Woods 2016) and the Eastern European queer histories mostly focus on the collective oppression of sexual minorities, partly because individual stories have been less available (for example Alexander 2021; Healey 2018; Taavetti 2018; Lipša 2017; Moss 2015). In the Baltic countries, the most outstanding source about queer past are the diaries of a long time Latvian court official Kaspars Aleksandrs Irbe (1906–1996) that provide invaluable information about the gay scene and court cases from the 1930s to 1996 in Latvia (Lipša 2021). No comparably extensive first-person accounts have been found in Estonia. In this way, the Eastern European queer history stands in stark contrast with Anglo-American research and its numerous personal archives of queer individuals (for example Faderman 2018; Hemmings 2018).

I divided my research of queer past in accordance with the conventional periodisation of Estonian twentieth century history. Estonian interwar culture was closely bound to German language culture in Europe, where queerness became increasingly visible at the beginning of the twentieth century (see Herzog 2011; Kalkun 2020). The Soviet period was dominated by the general ideology of the Soviet Union, where homophobia was institutionalised as a moral value to oppose Western morals (Alexander 2021; Kurvits 2010: 273). The recent history since 1991 has brought about the dominance of global capitalist and neoliberal cultural patterns and, more recently, radical conservative populism that expands queerness to a wider range of anti-heteronormative subjects (see Velmet 2019). As the twenty-first century is the most studied period of LGBT+ community and politics in Estonian history (for example Uiibo 2020, 2021; Allaste & Tiidenberg 2020; LaSala & Revere 2011; Davidjants et al. 2010), I have only conducted one short-term case study on the period.

I have combined the historical perspective of the local and international developments in discourses on non-normative sex-gender subjects of each period with the existing research on queer subjects in Estonia. To a great extent, the discursive developments have been related to legal regulations of sex-gender practices. For this reason, I discuss the context of each studied period separately in the following subsections.

## **Interwar period formation of sexual identities**

In 1918, after the First World War, Estonia declared national independence. The end of the war brought a wave of liberal and social democracy across Europe, including Estonia, characterised by women's rights to vote, better working rights and broader access to higher education (Herzog 2011: 34). The changed social environment increased the visibility of homosexual and transgender

subjects in the public domain, most prominently in Weimar-era Berlin, but also elsewhere in Europe (Herzog 2011: 31). Estonia's strong cultural connection to German language culture brought German discussions into Estonian print media and cinema.

Folklorist Andreas Kalkun (2018, 2020, 2022) has studied the connections between German and Estonian public discussions of homosexual and trans subjects. The widest impact across Europe came from the German-Jewish sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, who started a movement for the decriminalisation of male homosexuality in 1897 (Herzog 2011: 38). Hirschfeld's campaign was interrupted by the Eulenburg affair, an international media scandal "over homosexuality of Kaiser Wilhelm II's cabinet and entourage" in 1907–1909 (Herzog 2011: 38). The Eulenburg affair was arguably one of the first occasions when Estonian language media tried to discuss homosexuality (Kalkun 2020). Reports of the affair introduced Hirschfeld and his argument for decriminalising homosexuality to the Estonian public (Kalkun 2020: 113; see similar study on Latvian media in Vērđiņš 2016). By the 1920s, Hirschfeld was the central reference in legal and medical debates on homosexuality in Estonian print media (Kalkun 2020, 2022) with his advocacy of sexual morality based on self-determination and consent (Herzog 2011: 52), as I show in Article I.

Dagmar Herzog (2011: 31) argues that the increased visibility of homosexuality and gender transition in media characterised interwar Europe. The visibility shaped how homosexuality was understood "in the mind of the public and the minds of self-identified homosexual men and lesbians" (Herzog 2011: 57). In interwar Europe, homosexual and transgender expressions were conflated under the label of the "third sex" (see Herzog 2011: 31). In Estonia, too, the word *meesnaine* (man-woman, androgyne, see German *das Mannweib*) was often used in the same meaning. Because of the prominence of the topic in print media, I study the representations of homosexual and trans people in Estonia in Article I. Similar studies of the representations of so-called *man-women* in interwar print media have been published on Latvia (Lipša 2016) and Lithuania (Andrijauskaitė 2014), relating the local print media to the same transnational discussions of sexology by Magnus Hirschfeld, Johanna Elberskirchen, Auguste Forel, all of whom were relevant in shaping public discourses on sex in interwar Estonian print media.

The strongest political opposition to interwar liberal discourse came from the eugenics movement, which had started a few decades before the First World War as a modern scientific means for solving social problems (Herzog 2011: 25). In the 1930s Germany, eugenics became an essential means of power for the Nazi regime, which in 1933 destroyed Magnus Hirschfeld's Institute for Sexual Science in Berlin, and drove him into exile not only for homosexuality but for his Jewish heritage (Herzog 2011: 52, 67). In Estonia, eugenicist ideas were predominantly promoted by radical pronatalist nationalists, who gained more power after the conservative turn of 1934 (see Kalling 2013: 63), which put an end to liberal discussions of sexuality in Estonia, informed by Hirschfeld's work.

It could be argued that the central issues related to non-normative sex-gender subjects in interwar Estonian print media were decriminalisation of homosexuality, visibility of homosexual and trans people, for example in cinema or on the streets, and the balance between biology and socialisation in sex-gender identity formation. The representations of non-normative sex-gender subjects in print media were mostly framed with entertainment: they were presented as sensational beings, positioned outside of everyday society both by the liberal and conservative pronatalist nationalist voices. In Estonia one of the key arguments for the decriminalisation of homosexual acts was the reduction of the possible blackmailing of men who were engaged in homosexual relations (Jõeäär 1926, see Kivisilla 2023: 18). This argument could also be found in other countries (Kalkun 2022: 70–72; see Moss 2015: 53). In 1935–1940 consensual homosexual relations between men were indeed decriminalised in the first criminal code of the Estonian Republic.

In Soviet Russia homosexual relations were decriminalised in 1924 until Stalin recriminalised them in 1934 (Mole 2019: 3–4). In Estonia, Soviet Russia was not presented as an example, but the West. Nonetheless, Soviet Russia was relevant in the wider discussion of decriminalisation, as for instance, when Magnus Hirschfeld visited Estonia in 1928, he gave popular public lectures on his way to a research visit to Soviet Russia (Kalkun 2020). Historian Irina Roldugina (2019) argues that in early Soviet Russia decriminalisation did not prevent the persecution of women or men who had homosexual relations if they were somehow undesirable for the regime. In Poland homosexuality was decriminalised in 1932, but this did not protect 11 000 homosexual men from repressions in the 1980s (Szulc 2018: 106). Homosexual men also faced discrimination in Sweden, where homosexuality was decriminalised in 1944 (Brink Pinto 2022: 182). These examples demonstrate the limitations of legal regulations and the extent to which their meaning depends on the political environment.

## **Soviet period and the Cold War**

The interwar period of national independence in Estonia lasted a little over two decades and was followed by nearly fifty years of Soviet occupation from 1944 until 1991 and the Cold War. The Soviet Union extended its laws to each Soviet republic, which meant that during the occupation male homosexual acts were recriminalised in Estonia. The history of homosexuality during the Second World War period in Estonia has not been studied yet, but preliminary research indicates that the Nazi German occupation in Estonia (1941–1944) did not systematically persecute homosexual and gender non-conforming people, as I argue in Article II. The Cold War era started a global turn towards heteronormative sexual politics, but the means differed on the two sides of the Iron Curtain (Herzog 2011: 100–102; see Moss 2015: 52). Historian of gender and sexuality Katerina Lišková (2018: 31) has argued that sexuality was one of the central issues in the socialist Eastern bloc, where binary gender roles were

reinforced after the war. In the Soviet Union reproduction of children was viewed as a contribution to and evidence of the success of the socialist project, as claimed by historian Mie Nakachi (2016: 297). However, when fertility rates in the Soviet Union declined, public debates linked desire for children and home-making with femininity, in opposition to the public sphere and masculinity (Nakachi 2016: 312–314). It could be argued that during the Soviet period, the interwar nationalist pronatalism was replaced by socialist state managed pronatalism (Hoffmann 2000: 48), which in Estonia was especially clearly manifested in the late-Soviet period (see Ainsaar 2001: 24, 26). In the context of this dissertation, the central issue that shaped the non-normative sex-gender subjects during Cold War period in Estonia was the criminalisation of male homosexuality and the dominant discourse that was produced around it.

The leading scholar of Russian queer history Dan Healey (2018) shows that homosexual lives were most repressed during the Stalin era (Healey 2018: xiv). Following Healey, historian Rustam Alexander (2021) has focused on Soviet regulations on homosexuality and examined at length the legal discussions of homosexuality in the central Soviet criminal code after Stalin, when the Soviet regime loosened considerably. In the 1950s and 1960s, Nikita Khrushchev repealed several of Stalin's restrictions, yet he and his successors decided against the legal scholars' recommendation to decriminalise consensual homosexual acts and, instead, encouraged arrests of homosexual men (Alexander 2021: 102). The hope of repealing the article in the Criminal Code that outlawed sexual acts between men was the highest during the Gorbachev era in the late Soviet years, but the decriminalisation was achieved only after the collapse of the USSR (Alexander 2021: 134; see Krickler 1990), in Estonia in 1992.

With few exceptions, male homosexuality was punishable by law on both sides of the Iron Curtain until the 1960s (Szulc 2018). Many Eastern European countries decriminalised homosexuality before Western countries, for example Poland in 1932, Czechoslovakia in 1961, Hungary in 1962, the United Kingdom in 1967, East and West Germany in 1968 and 1969 (Szulc 2018: 212), Finland in 1971 (Taavetti 2018: 26). At the same time, female homosexuality was mostly treated as a psychiatric issue until the 1990s (Alexander 2021; Borgos 2019). Homosexuality was in the International Classification of Diseases until 1990 (ICD-9) and transsexuality was removed only in 2022 (Dakić 2020). For some periods in the twentieth century female homosexuality was criminalised in Finland, Sweden, Netherlands, Austria, Bulgaria (Taavetti 2018: 23). Although several Eastern European countries decriminalised homosexuality, homosexual relations and transgender identities have been concealed during people's lives and posthumously.

Soviet ideologues labelled homosexuality a bourgeois trait that therefore needed to be criminalised and concealed from the public (Alexander 2021: 68–70; Mole 2019: 4). According to an interviewee of the sociologist Richard C. M. Mole (2019: 5), the Soviet ideology took away the “ability of the people to decide for themselves what should be considered normal or abnormal”. Soviet

ensorship, penal laws and isolation from the West marginalised sex-gender minorities, so that their lives were determined by rigid heteronormative gender politics (Moss 2015: 52).

Historian Arthur Clech (2019: 42) argues that the dominant Soviet gender roles created significant differences between homosexual men and women by allowing “greater sexual autonomy” to men and restricting women to the roles of wife and mother. Clech (2019: 32) has found that although in the Soviet Union female homosexuality was not penalised, women were still afraid of imprisonment, too. Clech (2019: 38) claims that because the dominant Soviet identity did not permit homosexuality, gays and lesbians were bound into an invisible community based on a shared fear of institutional repressions – legal or medical – and self-censorship in public spaces. As a result of the different official treatment of male and female homosexuality, it is more challenging to find any archival sources on homosexual women than men. My research confirms that there were clandestine communities of gay men but, in contrast to the findings reported by Clech (2019), lesbian women were not part of gay men’s circles according to the currently found sources on Soviet Estonia.

Heteronormative hierarchies were also present in Gulag prisons, to which Soviet discussions about the medicalisation and criminalisation of homosexuality were largely bound in 1956–1991 (Alexander 2021). Homosexual relations in prisons puzzled the prison officials who reported them to higher officials and demanded harsher punishments that would repress sexual relations among inmates, including women’s homosexuality (Alexander 2021: 15, 139). Queer history researcher Adi Kuntsman (2009: 316–317) has studied depictions of homosexuality in the Gulag memoirs and has argued that the prison memoirists described homosexuality as a means of creating class hierarchies between prisoners by shaming both men and women who had homosexual relations. A lack of shame about homosexual relations, especially among the intellectual class, was considered an expression of social inferiority (Kuntsman 2009: 309).

Homosexuality is also mentioned in Soviet Estonian prison memoirs, particularly those discussing the late-Soviet period (for example Hanni 2008; Niklus & Kukk 1983; Parek 2010). In these memoirs homosexual relations are never narrated as part of a first-person experience but from a bystander’s position. The prison memoirs disclose that sexual violence was widespread in these institutions (Kuntsman 2009), which is confirmed by my study of Soviet Estonian criminal cases. Similarly to Kuntsman (2009), I argue that homophobic discourses informed by the Soviet past continue to exist and create social distinctions between those who conform with sexual normativity and those who do not.

In this way Soviet heteronormativity made homosexuality a taboo topic that had to be covered up and silenced, which I would argue, is the main reason why the Soviet history of homosexuality is under-researched and source materials are sometimes hard to find. Because of the continuation of this taboo, often the first queer history researchers have come from outside Russia and the former

Soviet Union, with limited access to public archives (Alexander 2021: 1) and so far only few personal queer archives, diaries, letters have been found.

The taboo around homosexuality has until recently restrained research and establishing a broader understanding of the history of non-normative sex-gender subjects in the former Soviet Union. Recently there has been an increase in studies on the politics of regulating homosexuality in the Soviet Union (see Alexander 2021; Healey 2018), on lesbians in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia (see Roldugina 2019; Stella 2015) and on homosexual communities in Soviet Russia, Belarus and Georgia (see Clech 2019; Valodzin et al. 2016; Kuntsman 2009). However, these studies remain limited and do not permit broader comparative conclusions.

### **Queer history of the Soviet Baltics**

In the Baltic countries Soviet-period queer history writing has been spurred by an activist urgency so that popular, journalistic and artistic research has preceded academic scholarship and the two strands complement each other. So far, Latvian queer history of the twentieth century has been studied more than in Estonia or Lithuania. In 2014, Latvian journalist Rita Ruduša published a dozen interviews with gays, lesbians and a trans-woman discussing their lives in Soviet Latvia. Soviet Riga, because of the anonymity of a metropolitan city, enabled men to live double lives of combining marriage with children and homosexual relations found in the public cruising areas. At the same time, lesbian relations and trans identities were invisible in Latvia (Ruduša 2014). Historian Ineta Lipša (2017, 2021, 2023) has worked on Kaspars Aleksandrs Irbe's (1906–1996) diaries, which offer particularly interesting insights into the interwar, Soviet and independent Latvian gay community, vibrant cruising scene as well as his personal accounts of the court cases where gay men were accused of homosexual acts (Lipša 2017: 49). Irbe's diaries most importantly present a first-person account of sexual otherness in relation to the society and changes around him over several decades (Lipša 2021).

Queer historian Feruza Aripova's (2020) work on the criminal cases of consensual homosexuality in Latvia once more emphasises that the anonymity of metropolitan Riga attracted men from across the Soviet Union to cruise for sex. In comparison, only few investigations that I discuss in Article II were started in a public cruising area. Swedish Estonian gay activist and journalist Udo Parikas' (1981) interview with two Estonian gay men also shows that international homosexual networks operated in Riga, Leningrad, Moscow and outside the Soviet Union but not in Estonia. This suggests that the demographic conditions in Latvia, particularly in Riga, permitted a wider array of homosexual practices than in Estonia.

In Lithuania, Soviet queer history has been the focus of the queer archive 'išgirsti' led by queer film festival curators and activists Augustas Čičelis and Viktorija Kolbešnikova, who collaborate with artists and historians on pub-

lishing materials in queer history zines (Stankevičiūtė 2022). There have been discussions of recognised Lithuanian authors whose queerness was known by their close circles but not widely discussed in the Soviet and post-Soviet period. While in Estonia there is at least one similar case of so-called posthumous outing (Kangur 2022), academic discussions of this practice in the Baltic countries have not taken place yet. Because of the taboo about homosexuality, mentioning any person's relations with homosexual people in the Soviet period or later can continue to bring about sensitive tensions. Therefore, I have avoided using real names of most of the people I have come across in my fieldwork for this dissertation.<sup>3</sup>

Ineta Lipša (2022) and Lithuanian queer-feminist historian Rasa Navickaitė (2023) have studied a late-Soviet Latvian sexual education handbook *Mīlestības vārdā* (In the Name of Love) (1981) by a Latvian doctor Jānis Zālītis in the Latvian and Lithuanian contexts. Their work, along with Rustam Alexander's (2021: 63) research, shows that the sexual education handbooks in all Soviet Baltic republics and Soviet Russia presented the same discourse, mostly in the same short form, about homosexuality as a criminal act, often connected to paedophilia. At the time of writing this dissertation, both Lipša and Navickaitė are working on official regulations of homosexuality in Soviet Latvia and Lithuania, creating the opportunity for future comparisons.

In Estonia, contemporary artist Jaanus Samma has conducted interviews with gay men on the Soviet period (*Stories*, 2011) and developed the exhibition project *NSFW: A Chairman's Tale* (2015), where he re-imagines institutionalised repressions of homosexuality and challenges of living a gay life in Soviet Estonia on the basis of court files of a collective farm chairman and later rumours about the man. Art historian Martin Rünk (2022) studied the same materials but focused on the local context of the Chairman and his resistance rather than institutional repression.

On the one hand, as Rustam Alexander (2021: 12) writes, the relative unavailability of illuminating sources prevents scholars from engaging with the topic of homosexuality and transgender people to a satisfactory extent. On the other hand, as Jaanus Samma's art has inspired several scholars to research queer past in Estonia, it can be seen that there is material to be studied and questions to be asked to get a better understanding of the non-normative sex-gender subjects' history and the continued presence of past pathologisation. This positions my work in the context of studies that look into criminal investigations and statistics (see Lipša 2023; Vaiseta 2023, Aripova 2020; Valodzin 2020; Healey 2018), the homophobic discourses and their dynamics (see Clech 2019; Kuntsman 2009), and sex education and pathologisation of homosexuality (Navickaitė 2023, Alexander 2021).

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<sup>3</sup> I only use real names of a few activists who preferred it. The dissertation follows the research ethics practices, which have been granted an approval 323/T-20 from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Tartu.



## Late-Soviet period of transition

Until the mid-1980s, homosexuality was largely invisible in the Soviet media and culture. Mikhail Gorbachev's politics of *glasnost* (transparency) and *perestroika* (rebuilding) of the Soviet society and economy increased the freedom of speech, so that a wave of new topics entered the public discourse, and this permitted open discussion and criticism of the state, disclosure of Stalinist and later Soviet terror as well as violations of human rights (see Mälksoo 2019: 30), including gay and lesbian rights.

In the 1980s, the AIDS epidemic and the political lack of action shook the Anglo-American homosexual and trans community and heavily politicised these groups (Stryker 2018: 167). In the Soviet Union the first diagnosis of AIDS in 1987 also changed the discourse on sexuality: all of a sudden the existence of homosexuality, sex work and injection drug users had to be publicly acknowledged as the risk groups of HIV. The main AIDS prevention means in Soviet Estonia were testing, which started in 1987 (Laisaar et al. 2011: 842), and awareness raising through media and by medical doctors. According to my interviews (2021), Soviet doctors were obliged to report homosexual patients to the police and thus some men did not get tested because of the fear of imprisonment. This started new discussions about the decriminalisation of homosexuality as a HIV prevention measure.

Polish media scholar Lukasz Szulc (2018: 85, 183) argues in his study of transnational gay and lesbian movement in the 1980s that although travel was difficult during the Cold War, it enabled the circulation of information about homosexuality from one country to another on both sides of the Iron Curtain and throughout the Eastern bloc. The Estonian homosexual community's connections with the rest of the Eastern bloc before the national revival in the late 1980s have not been studied this far.<sup>4</sup> Notably Szulc (2018: 76–78) draws a connection between AIDS and a shift in the discourse on homosexuality: the publication of an explanatory article on homosexuality in response to the first AIDS diagnosis in 1987 in the Soviet central state owned media was followed by a row of similar articles in Polish media in the same year.

Finnish scholar Heidi Kurvinen (2007) has studied Estonian media representations of homosexuality in the late 1980s and early 1990s, showing how during the transition period the previously censored topic became commercialised. In the 1980s, the International Gay and Lesbian Association (ILGA) started organising conferences on the politics and human rights of sexual minorities across Europe, including the Eastern bloc but not the Soviet countries (Szulc 2018: 234). Internationally, the 1980s was the period when both sexual

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<sup>4</sup> At the time of writing a group of researchers and artists is studying the late-1980s queer subculture around the Baltic Sea, including Estonian-Finnish relations, under the title of Pink Submarine. <https://koneensaatio.fi/en/grants-and-residencies/pink-submarine-lgbt-siirtolaisuus-itameren-alueella-2/> – Accessed on August 26, 2023.

minorities and women's human rights advocacy started to gain attention of transnational institutions (Bunch 1990) and this created a division of individual or personal and collective or national human rights discourses (see Rhodes 2020: 4; Shannon 2012: 287). Importantly, the first international conference on homosexual rights in the Soviet Union, "Sexual Minorities and Society. The Changing Attitudes Towards Homosexuality in the 20th Century Europe", was organised in 1990 in Tallinn and Tartu by the Soviet Estonian Academy of Sciences Institute of History (Veispak & Parikas 1991). In 1991, there was a large-scale international conference on homosexuality in Moscow (see Baer & Fiks 2022), which, however, did not get the attention of Estonian activists. As I show in Article III, the conference in Tallinn contributed to broadening the social, historical and national contexts in discussions of homosexuality in Estonia.

The late-Soviet period supported the revival of Estonian national movement. It became a mass movement in 1988 and continued until Estonia's independence was restored in 1991 (Kasekamp 2010: 166). The same freedom of speech that encouraged the national movement towards democracy, created conditions for Estonian gay, lesbian and trans community organising and emancipation, as argued by queer activist historian Taavi Koppel (2022). While the queer community saw itself as a part of the liberalisation movement towards democracy, rather than as an opposition to nationalism, the Estonian national movement has constantly situated itself in opposition to sexual minorities and continues to do so.

### **Post-Soviet neoliberal context**

Restoration of national independence was followed by rapid changes in laws and economy, affecting all spheres of life. Historian Aro Velmet (2019) writes that the 1990s introduced Estonia to neoliberal capitalist economy and nationalist social politics, and since the 2010s, a further conservative turn has brought anti-gender discourses – i.e., conservative populism the central focus of which is to challenge gender equality – into mainstream politics (Pető 2016). In this environment, it could be argued that, similarly to the socialist period, sexuality continues to be one of the central issues in Estonian politics (see Lišková 2018: 33).

In a sudden shift in Estonian political landscape, on June 20, 2023 the parliament passed the law on marriage equality. This event put an end to three decades of debates about same-sex couples' cohabitation rights which has dominated the public discourse about LGBT+ community ever since. Already in 2021 a national survey on gender equality shows an increase in support to equal rights and treatment among Estonians (Gender equality 2022: 140–143). With the heightened visibility of the LGBT+ community sex-gender minorities have gained both conscious support and opposition, with a movable middle which questions the need of public attention to the LGBT+ rights (Raud 2022).

Over the past hundred years legal regulations and international relations have most significantly shaped the dominant discourses on non-normative sex-gender subjects. The period from 1991 to 2023 has seen a shift in legislation from prohibitions of particular sexual practices to the protection of sex-gender minorities. Since 1991 five laws and directives that directly protect sexual and gender minorities' rights have been passed,<sup>5</sup> most of them as a result of the European Union directives (Pettai 2006: 103; see Jakobson 1999). In 1992, consensual male homosexual relations were decriminalised in Estonia, and in 2001, the Pederasty Article that prohibited same-sex rape and child molestation by men was removed from the new gender neutral Penal Code. In 1999, as a result of trans-rights advocacy, the Ministry of Social Affairs signed a legal gender recognition directive that is still in effect (Arumetsa 2022a), yet it describes the process of gender affirmation vaguely, continuing to marginalise trans people (Rainbow Europe 2023). In 2004, the Gender Equality Act to secure equal treatment of sexual and gender minorities at work was passed as a prerequisite for joining the EU. Since then the Act has been extended step by step to other spheres of life (Soolise võrdõiguslikkuse seadus). The Gender Equality Act was at first publicly criticised as irrelevant (see Helemäe 2006: 57) but in recent years public opinion has shifted towards general support of gender equality (Gender equality 2022: 140–143). In 2014, the Registered Partnership Act was passed, taking effect in 2016, but it lacked nearly hundred implementation provisions and only a few provisions have been established in court (Viis aastat 2021). The implementation provisions passed along with marriage equality and will take effect on January 1, 2024.

In addition to the legal regulations in the past three decades LGBT+ organisations and community have been shaped by the quickly changing needs of Estonian LGBT+ people. In the 1990s one of the most urgent needs of the community was a meeting place, which was solved by opening gay and lesbian clubs Nightman and X-bar in Tallinn in 1998. Later there have been several clubs and community centres in Tallinn, Tartu and Pärnu. In the late 1990s and early 2000s internet forums introduced a new era in community socialising. Since online socialising became widespread among the community, LGBT+ organisations have focused on wider public awareness raising and monitoring inequality (for example Kotter 2002). The new community that met on the Internet and in bars started to organise the local versions of the global LGBT+ community and equal rights events, Pride parades in Tallinn in 2004–2007 – supported by ILGA-Europe (see Ayoub & Paternotte 2016). This tradition stopped for a decade after a violent backlash on the streets in 2007 and because

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<sup>5</sup> The laws contributing to equal treatment of LGBT+ community since 1991 are decriminalisation of male homosexuality with the 1992 Estonian Criminal Code; Gender Equality Act passed in 2004; Equal Treatment Act in 2008; Registered Partnership Act in 2014; and access to equal marriage and implementation acts of the Registered Partnership Act in 2023.

some politicians promised the activists to quietly change the laws that the LGBT+ community demanded (Uibo 2020; Kuusik 2017; see Kulpa 2014: 13). Leaving the streets led to no advances in the laws; instead, in 2005 marriage was defined as a union between a man and a woman in the Family Law (Allaste & Tiidenberg 2020: 309), preventing equal marriage until 2023.

History and social research on non-normative sex-gender self-identities since the 1990s, initiated by the Estonian lesbian and gay community activism (for example, see Kotter 2002; Veispak & Parikas 1991), has become an important source of affirmation and encouragement to the community. Estonian LGBT Association (former Estonian Gay Youth (2008–2012)) has published two popular history and cultural studies collections about Estonian queer past and present (Davidjants 2010; Põldsam, Kalkun, Abrams 2022), which have shifted the heteronormative paradigm of Estonian history. The research on the twenty-first century LGBT+ community has often explained local homophobia with the repressive social treatment of sexual and gender minorities in the Soviet period (see Aavik 2020; Allaste & Tiidenberg 2020; Uibo 2020, 2021; LaSala & Revere 2011). Perhaps the proximity to the Soviet period explains why there is still relatively little academic research on the 1990s Estonia in general, and LGBT+ communities and activism in particular (see Arumetsa 2022a; Koppel 2022).

In addition to community activism the 1990s created other kinds of public visibility of homosexual desires in everyday lives of the twentieth century, studied by historian Riikka Taavetti (2018) in her doctoral dissertation. The life stories from Estonia were collected in collaboration by Finnish sexologists and Estonian Life Stories Association (ELSA) with a special open call for life stories on love and sexuality in 1996 (Taavetti 2018: 75). ELSA has used the public call method since 1989, as a part of what ethnologist Ene Kõresaar (2005: 21) has called “renovation of memory” and “public remembering” of Estonian national past. ELSA’s nation-wide public calls include questions about generally known historical events in Estonia, but have not included direct references to minority groups based on race, gender, sexuality or sexual practices, with the exception of the 1996 call that mentioned *prostitution* (Taavetti 2018). This lack means that the ELSA calls do not extend the “right of biography” (see Kõresaar 2005: 29) to these minority groups. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the 1996 or other calls for Estonian life stories have attracted very little writing – only glimpses – about non-heterosexual subjectivities and practices, which thus have remained marginalised for the wider audiences.

The key issue of Estonian LGBT+ studies in the twenty-first century is the representation, visibility and labels of the LGBT+ community (for labels see Kuusik 2023). It could be argued that one of the biggest shifts in the past thirty years is that the labels have diversified both towards more detailed and more general terms. The non-abusive use of words for LGBT+ people in the media has been monitored by the Estonian LGBT Association since the 2010s. Both their website and online feminist platform Feministeerium.ee regularly add the

most recent definitions of terminology about sex and gender minorities. Until the second half of the 2010s the public discourse on LGBT+ people seems to have discouraged demonstrations as a too confrontational act. Whether changes came with the equal marriage act in the USA in 2015, the women's marches across the globe in response to conservative populism since 2016 or something else needs to be studied in the future.

The post-Soviet marginalisation of homosexuality in Estonia has been studied by sociologists Michael C. LaSala and Elyse J. Revere (2011) and Airi-Alina Allaste and Katrin Tiidenberg (2020). I would argue that both articles contribute to a problematic discourse that Eastern Europe lags behind the Western LGBT+ equality (see Szulc 2018: 8; Kulpa & Mizielińska, 2011: 17). Michael C. LaSala (2011) aimed to study Estonian gay and lesbian community formation in Estonia in 1991–2008, but he could not find an activist community that he had expected during the fieldwork period in 2007–2008. LaSala's methodological conflict in the field was created by his plan to seek respondents through the media, which was discouraged by his existing research participants for creating unwanted visibility and this severely limited the number of people he could study (LaSala & Revere 2011: 430). The limited visibility of Estonian LGBT community led LaSala and Revere (2011: 428, 433, 438) to assume that the political and social impact of the gay, lesbian and trans rights NGOs was insubstantial for creating any change for the communities. Furthermore, LaSala and Revere (2011: 435–436) considered the pace of securing equal rights for sexual minorities in Estonia to be too slow, while acknowledging that their middle-aged lesbian and gay respondents considered the period of research to be good enough in comparison to the social injustices of the Soviet period.

In alignment with LaSala and Revere (2011), Allaste and Tiidenberg (2020: 320) suggest that Estonia's political climate of the 2000s–2010s was too mild to encourage a strong movement and “not supportive enough” to create a collective demand for social equality. Based on interviews from 2012–2013, Allaste and Tiidenberg (2020: 320) explored how Estonian LGBT activists related to the labels ‘LGBT’ and ‘activist’. They concluded that Estonian LGBT community had a weak collective identity and ‘activism’ had a negative connotation in Estonian culture, because of the Soviet period (Allaste & Tiidenberg 2020: 308, 320). Despite contextualising their findings with a timeline of events from 1918–2018 that are relevant to Estonian LGBT people (laws, formation of activist groups and Tallinn Pride marches) (Allaste & Tiidenberg 2020: 309), they argue that Estonian activism was reminiscent of the 1960s–1970s USA. In this way they cancel out the meaning of the particular historical context of Estonia. The 1960s USA queer community fought against police violence, unlike that in Estonia. The particular dynamics of LGBT activism in Estonia continue to puzzle newcomers who have described it as strategic lobbying with the decision-makers to ethnographer Paulina Lukinmaa (2023), who studies Russian speaking LGBT+ activists who have moved to Estonia after the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

The political dilemmas of the Estonian LGBT+ community and its internal confrontations are the focus of gender studies scholar Raili Uibo (2020; 2021). One of her central arguments is that the majority of people in nationalism and neoliberalism driven Estonia live in precarious economic conditions, which discourages the explicit disclosure of queer identities to families and wider social circles (Uibo 2021: 27). This precarity could also explain why LGBT+ activist organisations have been hesitant about increasing public visibility (see LaSala & Revere 2011), and the weak collective identity that Allaste and Tiidenberg (2020) described gives little actual support to the public lobby work by the few activists working at the NGOs. Yet, activism has not waned and, since 2017, the Pride marches have returned to Estonia and received rather positive feedback in the media. As argued in Article IV, economic precarity can affect queer self-positioning. This aligns with both the emergence of anti-gender discourses in the mainstream media as well as with the increasing support of LGBT+ community's equal rights (Gender equality 2022: 140–143), so that more people explicitly oppose conservative heteropatriarchal cultural values.

In line with abovementioned scholars, I have noted that the twenty-first century Estonian discourses on sexuality are impacted by Soviet era homophobic discourses (Article II) and non-conformity to heteronormativity can be as involuntary as political non-conformism was in the Soviet period (Article IV). This means that struggles with social non-conformity remain an individual issue rather than a part of collective cultural or legal battle (see Uibo 2021). I would argue that the paradox of the period is that, on the one hand, the labels for non-normative sex-gender identities have multiplied but, on the other hand, public representations of queer/ed lives remain limited. That is, there still are nearly no autobiographical sources that would present accounts of gay, lesbian, bisexual or trans people's lived experience in Estonia and only very few publicly available means for analysing these experiences exist.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODS FOR STUDYING NON-NORMATIVE SEX-GENDER ENTANGLEMENTS**

While each period has a distinct research context that I have introduced above, in this subchapter I discuss the theoretical framework and methods for collecting and analysing the sources which I have developed for this study. The analysis is based on diverse sources that document situations where individuals have had to negotiate within the frames of dominant discourses. Feminist ethnography has a tradition of critiquing positivist approaches to empirical sources (O'Reilly 2009: 65). In this line I have employed a theoretical framework that supports a critical analysis of representations from more than one angle.

The central method of analysis has been diffractive reading of non-normative sex-gender entanglements. Diffractive reading as a method is rather novel in ethnographic research (see Gan 2021; Weiss 2020; Tamboukou 2015). I believe that it permits the analysis of contradictory discourses and notions in juxtaposition, to show how opposing discourses participate in mutual meaning making. This method has proved to be useful for creating an understanding of the social processes and shifts related to the social context of sexual and gender minorities in each period covered in the dissertation.

### **Entangled discourses on non-normative sex-gender subjects. Theoretical framework**

In this dissertation I have analysed representations of non-normative sex-gender subjects in the past hundred years in Estonia that are entangled through material-discursive intra-actions (Barad 2007). Culture theorist Stuart Hall (2018: 40) stresses that things and language obtain meaning through a constructed system of representations which Michel Foucault (1972) called discourse. Representations occur in texts or verbal statements some of which produce dominant discourses (see Tamboukou 2015) and, following Michel Foucault through Judith Butler, it can be argued that subjects are constructed through discourses (Barad 2007: 57; see Butler 2007: 44). For example, the meanings of sexuality are constructed through representations and discourses, since material practices do not have meaning outside discourses (Hall 2018: 41).

I follow several interpretations and modifications of Foucault's *discourse* to study normativity in changing social circumstances (Mills 2004: 15). Foucault (1972: 60) defined discourse as a "group of relations that constitute a system of conceptual formation" that can emerge "across a range of texts as the products of a particular set of power/knowledge relations" (Mills 2004: 21). In other words, according to Foucault (1972: 41–42), the discourses that dominate in society are produced with institutional support by the state and the general

public (Mills 2004: 17, 55), so that discourses have the power to construct what is meaningful and real in a society (Foucault 1972: 45; Mills 2004: 46). Although what constitutes the limits of discourse is rather unclear (Mills 2004: 55) and situation dependent (Foucault 1972: 46), exclusion of things from discourse makes some things “almost unsayable” (Mills 2004: 11), that is, dominant discourses can marginalise non-dominant groups to unintelligibility by denying it representation. In this way discourses connect power, knowledge and truth in an all-encompassing construction around which individuals have to negotiate their subjective positions by refusing and accepting its elements (Mills 2004: 87).

The aim of examining the discursive structures of a certain period, which Foucault calls epistemes, is not to uncover singular truths or origins of the epistemes, but to seek connections between discourses which deal with similar themes (Foucault 1972: 191). Thus, in Article II, I call the episteme about *homosexuality as a criminal practice* a dominant discourse, because this was the most common pattern of discourse as well as the context for discussing homosexuality in different public and institutional sources. Soviet Estonian dominant discourse shaped how homosexuality was publicly understood and through media censorship the power structures marginalised and hindered the emergence of other discourses and meanings of homosexuality, making certain ideas about homosexuality true and others false. This dynamic made affirmative homosexual and trans identities unintelligible and thus also inaccessible (see Butler 2007: xxv).

While dominant discourses are central means of analysis in this dissertation, the theoretical framework I applied throughout the dissertation for studying how non-normative sex-gender subjects have been entangled in different periods is derived from feminist theorist Karen Barad’s (2007) agential realism. Barad’s (2007: 57) theory critically binds together several post-structuralist, feminist and science studies methods with models of discursive structures and subjectivisation proposed by Michel Foucault and Judith Butler. I apply Barad’s theory at length in Article I and II for analysing the interwar period gender normativity as well as in Article IV. In Article II I draw upon Judith Butler’s analysis of how gender non-normativity is constructed in relation to public discourses.

In his archaeological analysis of discourse Michel Foucault (1972: 9) charted shifts in discursive structures over time (see Hall 2018: 42; Mills 2004: 23). Although a certain linearity of discourses is retained from one period to the next, when a dominant discourse loses its hegemony as a result of a social shift, this discourse can continue to exist in the next period but only as a field of memory (Foucault 1972: 58), which has less material force than before. Furthermore, different generations perceive dominant discourses differently and therefore it is important to take into account several co-existing discourses in a diffractive reading of non-normative sex-gender subject entanglements.



## Agential realist entanglements

In *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007) Karen Barad introduces and elaborates on a complex theoretical system that they call agential realism. Agential realism combines the visual model of diffraction derived from Niels Bohr's two-slit thought experiment on the wave-particle characteristics (Barad 2007: 103–104, 112) with Judith Butler's performativity theory that builds on Foucault's conceptualisation of discourse (Barad 2007: 57). Bohr's theoretical experiment demonstrates that what is visible depends on the position of the viewer, because the same thing (light electrons in Bohr's case) can look different (either a wave or a cluster) when looked at with a different measuring apparatus. This awareness of a partial perspective is called feminist objectivity by Donna Haraway (1988: 583) whose ideas are at the core of Barad's analytic model. Barad's model proposes a diffractive reading which emphasises that no identity or difference is a fixed essence but processual (becoming) and so changes within material-discursive circumstances and consequences can be noticed when studied from different sides (Barad 2014: 172). Accordingly, the perception of and actions with regard to a notion, for example homosexuality, are shaped by the context, for example the social politics of an era, in which the notion is given a name or a label, for example lesbian, queer, homosexual.

Barad (2007: 149, 184) proposes to study meanings as phenomena that are created by entangled intra-actions, defined as ethico-material-discursive practices. While interactions would “occur between already established and separate entities, [Barad uses] intra-actions [that] occur as relations between components” (Livholts & Tamboukou 2015), so that within entangled phenomena intra-actions have agency in making what is real. The key method for studying intra-active entanglements is diffractive reading, described as follows by posthumanist theorists Evelien Geerts and Iris van der Tuin (2021: 175): “[r]ather than employing a hierarchical methodology that would put different texts, theories, and strands of thought against one another, [diffractive reading of] texts and intellectual traditions means that they are dialogically read “through one another” (Barad 2007: 30)”.

While Foucault (1972: 115) attests to the materiality of discourse, he does not clearly define this materiality (see Hall 2018: 46). In contrast, Barad's (2007: 63, 66) agential realism underlines ethics and materiality in discursive constructions. While Foucault (1972: 66) distinguishes “discourse as a whole, which is the set of rules and procedures for the production of particular discourses, and discourses or groups of statements themselves” (Mills 2004: 55), diffractive reading in Barad's model is more nuanced and clearly defined than Foucault's idea of discourses as it brings attention to each agent of discourse and further emphasises the importance of a particular situation of analysis. While Foucault focuses on the means and carriers of discursive power, for example law, medicine, state, and acknowledges the reciprocity between the subject and the institution of power, Barad's model centres around reciprocal relations – the material-discursive intra-actions – between the examined agents,

where dominant discourses are as important as other agents and the particular context. Barad's model directs the researcher to study how dominant discourse is constructed in a particular situation where an individual can implement it on other individuals, how the individual subjected to the dominant discourse responds, and how a particular situation affects intra-actions between them. In agential realism, the material conditions determine the ethical context for conceptual understanding of phenomena and the discursive understanding determines the ethics of how activities are materially carried out (Barad 2007: 139). Therefore, I have diffractively read the dominant discourses of each studied period through fragments of information and case studies of particular persons or events to learn how non-normative sex-gender subjects have been entangled in different periods.

For example, in Article III, the analysed discourse about homosexuality consists of two parallel discourses informed by human rights: one that supports equal rights of homosexual persons and another that marginalises sexual and gender minorities. Thus, Barad's non-binary and non-hierarchical analysis model supports reading fragmentary sources of marginalised groups through dominant discourses, while emphasising that in a different context the same sources could be read differently and that meaning-making is an intra-active process between co-existing agents.

The entangled phenomenon that I have studied in this dissertation under the name "non-normative sex-gender subject" is composed of labels of homosexuality and trans identities from different periods, the discursive contexts where and how these labels are used, and what practices have been considered to be non-normative in terms of sex and gender. The diffractive reading of this entanglement allows me to analyse how individuals – who subject themselves or are subjected to dominant discourses – negotiate the labels when confronted by dominant discourses implemented by public authorities, for example in the media, medical or police examination. Thus, in the dissertation I focus on the processes that have defined homosexuality and transgender identities in public discourse during different periods by taking into account the variety of dominant discourses and in case studies where individuals negotiate dominant normative discourses.

For example, in Article I, I have diffractively read interwar period media representations of homosexuality and trans persons through eugenicist ideas about sexual normativity of that period. This enabled me to trace how non-normative sex-gender subjects were entangled through dominant discourse that consisted of opposing discourses advocating the acceptance of homosexuality versus the pathologisation and criminalisation of homosexuality. In Article II, I argue that when the Soviet Estonian law defined certain consensual homosexual acts (*phenomenon* homosexuality) in the Pederasty Article, the persons who engaged in such acts risked being subjected (*intra-action 1*) to the Criminal Code by the police. Since 1992, no consensual homosexual acts are mentioned in the Estonian Penal Code and, therefore, homosexuality can be practiced without the fear of imprisonment (*intra-action 2*). Thus, at present, homo-

sexuality as a phenomenon is ethically, materially and discursively entangled through different intra-actions than the intra-actions of the Soviet period. According to this analysis, it could be argued that the meaning of homosexuality has shifted. In this way, Barad's model has assisted me in taking into account multiple ethical agencies and material-discursive practices that cross in my empirical material.

### **Diffraction reading of non-normative sex-gender labels**

Although Michel Foucault (1972: 65–66) discusses points of diffraction of discourse that enable particular analysis, Karen Barad develops diffractive reading into a central means of analysing entangled material-discursive intra-actions. Barad (2014: 171) writes that “[d]iffraction queers binaries and calls out for a rethinking of the notions of identity and difference.” The starting point of this dissertation was seeking identity category labels that have referred to sexual and gender minorities over the past hundred years in print media and in oral accounts discussed below in the section on sources. I have studied the meanings of the found labels by a diffractive reading. Identity categories carry normative power over subject construction (Butler 2007: 8) and subjectivity is performed through “forced reiteration of norms” constrained by power and knowledge (Butler 1993: 94–95). According to Foucault knowledge is a form of power, through which populations are controlled, surveilled and disciplined (Foucault 1995: 27–28). The disciplining institutions of power that Foucault (1978: 59) mentions include “justice, medicine, education, family relationships [–] the most ordinary affairs of everyday life”. Thus, in each article I have analysed how the non-normative sex-gender labels as representations in public discourses intra-act with the found individual stories, which always relate to the dominant discourses yet differ from them, and thus demonstrate the functioning of the dominant discourse in each studied period.

Judith Butler (2007: 157) argues that “[t]he “naming” of sex is an act of domination and compulsion, an institutionalised performative that both creates and legislates social reality by requiring the discursive/perceptual construction of bodies in accord with principles of sexual difference.” Thus, identity category labels that refer to sexuality and gender publicly regulate how a person's subjectivity is instituted in relation to society (Butler 2007: 185). The labels carry “words, acts, gestures, and desire” (Butler 2007: 185), which in the twentieth century were dominantly heteronormative (see Butler 1993: 232). The non-normative sex-gender subjects are formed in contrast to heteronormativity, not necessarily subverting the norms, but these shape their identity and practices in response to the normative order. While heteronormativity allows conforming heterosexual cis-gendered people to express their identities as the truth (Butler 2007: 186), non-normative sex-gender subjects have to negotiate labels that underline their non-conformity with and unsuitability for the social order and are, through marginalisation, distanced from access to dominant heteronormative truth. Over the past hundred years, the extent of marginalisation of non-

normative sex-gender subjects has depended on the political regimes, each with its particular sexual politics.

Diffractional reading of the labels and finding the intra-actions between dominant discourses and individuals subjected to them enabled me to speculate about how gender non-normativity was constructed in the 1920s–1930s (Article I), in the 1960s (Article II), in the early 1990s (Article III), and in 2019 (Article IV). Importantly, diffractional reading allows me to study the social environment where most people did not self-identify with the public labels but were aware of non-normative sex-gender marginalisation, being conscious of provoking the surrounding society by performing gender non-normativity with make-up and clothing (for example in interwar period decadent art) or practicing certain sexual acts and avoiding others that were criminalised.

The dominant discourses are defined in law, which is then distributed in popular sources that set the norms of a particular society. As I show in Article II, the marginalisation of homosexual and trans people through narrow and exclusive publicly distributed definitions was the strictest during the Soviet period. In this period the dominant discourse about non-normative sex-gender was established in the Criminal Code (see Rebane et al. 1962) which defined certain male homosexual acts as criminal. In 1970 an addendum to the Family Law (ENSV Ülemnõukogu ja Valitsuse Teataja) mentioned ‘hermaphroditism’ without a definition as legal grounds for changing one’s name. This formed the legal basis for gender transition in the Soviet Union about which there is very little research. The widely distributed sexual education handbooks defined male homosexuality in reference to the laws and added a short comment on female homosexuality, while not discussing non-conforming gender identities (see Kadastik 1963/1970: 37; Kahn 1970: 107–108). Dictionaries offered short medical definitions about same-sex attraction (see Estonian orthographic dictionary 1968: 164). Encyclopaedia of Soviet Estonia (1971, 1988) summarised what was written about homosexuality in the law, sexual education and medical manuals. From the Second World War to the mid-1980s, the Soviet Estonian media rarely mentioned homosexuality and the rare references presented it as something occurring outside of the Soviet Union and repeated the discourse presented in the encyclopaedia and other aforementioned sources. The most accessible sources from the Soviet period that give some insights into individual encounters with the dominant discourse were confessions in criminal investigation files, the format of which was also pre-determined but provides some information about personal negotiation with labels.

While the types of sources that establish dominant discourses have remained the same in the past hundred years, during some periods the definitions of non-normative sex-gender labels have not been that narrowly bound to criminal or medical definitions and, more importantly, there has been a wider variety of sources that discuss sex-gender non-normativity, such as art, cinema and nightlife in the interwar period, and biographies, oral history and internet in the past decades. In Article I, I discuss the fluidity and formation of non-normative sex-gender categories, while Article III focuses on the shifts in the meaning of

homosexuality in relation to national liberation and democracy. Article IV shows that non-normative sex-gender subjectivity is increasingly dependent on the socio-economic position of the individual. The identity categories that are publicly available allow certain subjectivisations, but the silenced categories prevent intelligibility of non-normative practices. This explains why it has been difficult to find information about transgender and lesbian lives from before 1990s – these identities and practices related to them were mentioned without a comprehensive definition in public sources.

While the categorising labels of sex-gender non-normativity have changed over time, there has been a continuous leitmotif in Estonian dominant discourse around sexual norms: a pronatalist nationalist dominant discourse which has contrasted with liberal and social democratic discourses. As I argue in Article I, in the interwar period pronatalist eugenicists presented their ideas as national political ideals (Madisson 1935: 5; see Kalling 2007: 257). While eugenics discourse had a significant presence in the media, for most of the interwar period it remained marginal in actual politics and contrasted with Estonian social democratic politics that aligned with liberal Europe. However, according to medical historian Ken Kalling (2007: 256) eugenics gradually gained power by advocating nationalist biopolitics from the mid-1930s to the Second World War which repressed and interrupted Estonian nationalist politics for several decades.

In Article II I discuss the Soviet occupation period in Estonia, when the public discourse was dominated by the project of Soviet patriotism, built upon challenging Western and capitalist morality which was depicted as more tolerant about homosexuality and sexual promiscuity (see Nakachi 2016: 207). In Estonia the Soviet discourse on sexuality narrowed exclusively down to pronatalist reproduction. While abortion was legal starting from 1956, it was discouraged and access to contraceptives was limited (Nakachi 2016: 307–308) as having children was declared the most important duty of Soviet women (see Healey 2018: 95). Sociologist Mare Ainsaar (2001: 26) has argued that particularly in the late 1980s the fertility of Estonians became a prominent issue supported by the national self-determination movement. The discourse that defined womanhood through motherhood was distributed through sexual education handbooks (Stella 2015: 29–30; see Kalkun 2006: 136).

The outcomes of the repression of Estonian national identities in combination with Soviet ideology (see Velmet 2019) became more visible in the glasnost era, as shown in Article III. In the late 1980s, lesbian, gay and trans community organising emerged in the midst of a large-scale revival of the Estonian nationalist movement which quickly positioned itself against sexual minorities' rights, defining the latter as a foreign issue. It can be argued that for the past hundred years pronatalism mixed with nationalism has encouraged marginalisation based on sex-gender practices and identities. Thus, every individual who does not conform with the dominant heteronormativity has also found themselves at odds with political and nationalist normativity. Although I have not encountered anti-normative self-identifications from before the 1990s, this does

not mean that there were none. This lack, however, confirms the force of the dominant discourses about sex-gender normativity.

## REFLECTIONS ON ETHNOGRAPHIC FIELDWORK. SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

When I began with this dissertation I had to decide where to start from: which period and what kinds of sources to focus on. I first decided to focus on the present day understanding of LGBT+ community that establishes non-normative sex-gender subjects as people whose romantic and sexual relations are based on mutual consent and whose gender identity is based on the human rights principle of bodily autonomy. Therefore, I have omitted other non-normative sex-gender subjectivities and practices from my scope. However, as in the Soviet period paedophilia and other forms of sexual abuse were strongly tied to homosexuality, it was necessary to include sexual violence in Article II. Throughout the dissertation I have focused on vocabulary about sex-gender identity categories, which started to develop towards their present-day understanding in the late nineteenth century German-speaking Europe and particularly quickly during the interwar period that I studied in Article I (see Kalkun 2020; Herzog 2011). This focus and timeframe have shaped the structure of this dissertation the sources and methods of which I will discuss in this subchapter.

A central method of this dissertation has been constructing and reconstructing discourses that are composed of fragments of non-normative sex-gender history in Estonia. I have followed in the footsteps of historian Riikka Taavetti (2018). For Taavetti (2018: 79) fragments are documents and material objects that carry traces of a queer past, the interpretation of which largely depends on the context; glimpses are interpretations of the past, told or written memories that can be based on fragments such as letters or diaries. Similarly to Taavetti, I have found that often the sources offer only brief glimpses of the queer past (see Taavetti 2018: 99) and different types of sources only seldom touch the same experiences or notions. Therefore, combining an ethnographic approach with diffractive reading has given me the flexibility to study and make intelligible so far untold histories and snippets.

Fragmentedness of sources is not extraordinary in ethnographic fieldwork. Anthropologists Patrice Ladwig et al. refer to Yael Navaro-Yashin to propose that archival materials on colonial history are often like ruins – “material remains [...] of past destruction [...] that continue to shape people’s visions, subjectivities, and affects in the present” (Navaro-Yashin 2007: 7 in Ladwig et al. 2012: 5). Particularly in Article I and II I discuss criminal investigation records that act as ruins – or fragments – of the past by materialising at once both the heteronormativity of former laws and by testifying to individuals who were gender non-conforming or practised homosexual relations. Yet, like ruins and fragments, these archival materials do not give much more knowledge about the train of past events beyond a testimony of their existence.

Because of the fragmented character of marginalised groups’ past, anthropologists have developed several ethnographic methods to study the silenced or tabooed groups and practices. According to E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1961: 5), a

social anthropologist “has to rely on documents, just as the historian does” and compare the documents with other ethnographic data. Anthropologist Caroline Brettell (1998: 517) furthers Evans-Pritchard's argument by asserting that historical anthropologists conduct “fieldwork among people whose history they study [...] to draw on the perspective gained from this ethnographic knowledge” to assess the written records in the archives. Therefore, I have used many archival materials like historians would, but my take on archival and print media sources is ethnographic: for creating an understanding of the patterns of past society and culture I link the past to the present (Brettell 1998: 531).

Scholar of lesbian oral history Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy (2002) argues that anthropology more than many other disciplines permits a critical study of queer identities and communities when it is supported by oral histories, archival studies, history and an array of feminist theories developed in cultural studies, philosophy and other disciplines. Kennedy seems to suggest a methodological bricolage which anthropologist George E. Marcus (2009: 181) proposes as the basis of multi-sited ethnography, combining diverse sources, methods and theories. Thus, this dissertation is based on a multi-sited ethnography as I have searched materials from print media, personal and criminal records, oral histories, literary and other sources through fieldwork in the archives, by conducting interviews and participant observation, juxtaposing and analysing the finds within theoretical framework discussed above.

Prior to starting my research for this dissertation, I studied and curated Estonian and Eastern European queer and feminist art. Therefore, the initial starting points of this study are art works that reflect on queer issues in Estonia, especially works by Anna-Stina Treumund, Jaanus Samma, Minna Hint and Liisi Eelmaa that I discuss in Articles I and II. The previous research on Estonian queer past suggests that there are people to interview (see Samma 2011), criminal records in the archives, news pieces in digital media libraries (see Kalkun 2018, 2020), and references to non-heterosexual relations in literature and biographies (see Kirikal 2021; Ross 2018; Taavetti 2018). I planned to write a dissertation that would balance archival sources for mapping the main issues that shaped the lives of non-heterosexual and transgender persons in each period, and oral history interviews. However, as one of the chief aims of the dissertation was to map the existing sources, it was expected from the start that the research methods and questions would change according to the found sources.

To analyse how non-normative sex-gender subjectivities were constructed in the interwar period and to have a basis for comparison with the following periods I studied representations of homosexual and transgender persons in interwar Estonian print media, focusing on a case study where I cross-read public sources with criminal records of A. Oinatski in Article I. When I continued my research with Soviet Estonian Criminal Code's Pederasty Article and its implementation in Article II, I found that studying the archival material along with other sources articulating the public discourse on homosexuality and transgender subjects was also supported by interlocutors to whom I spoke about



the period. In Article II and III the interviewees became consultants with whom I could confirm and elaborate my perspectives on the found archival materials or at times get directions to further archival sources (see Brettell 1998: 528). Article IV focuses on conversations I had written down in my field diary and participant observation of my own social environment in 2018/2019, which we analysed on the background of the sources found from previous periods. In the following I analyse the methodology in the variety of resources that I used in my fieldwork.

## Studying online media libraries

My first research concerned the terminology used for non-normative sex-gender subjects and homosexual and trans people in various decades of the past century. I started my study in online libraries of Estonian print media,<sup>6</sup> mostly newspapers but also scientific literature, criminal laws and legal studies. The search words that I used for Article I, II and III were *homoseks\**, *pederast\**, *lesbi\**, *transso\**, *transves\**, *hermafrod\**, *interseks\**, *intersoo\**, *meesnai\**,<sup>7</sup> and the names of queer persons mentioned in queer history research by other authors (for example Lipša 2017, Stryker 2018, Traies 2018, Beachy 2014). I identified some of the period-specific words while reading texts found using these search words.

The fieldwork in digital print media libraries yields a diverse set of results and sources in a relatively short time. The majority of the interwar period newspapers are digitised and can be analysed with the help of image reading programmes but this does not mean that the results would be exhaustive. Thus, despite finding over three hundred texts discussing homosexual or trans people in the interwar period, I cannot estimate how many texts I may have missed because of the limitations of the digital libraries. Still, the found materials from the interwar period are sufficiently representative of public discourses.

In comparison, at the time of writing nearly all exile Estonian newspapers from the Soviet period have been digitised, but only some local newspapers and magazines. Thus, the limited print media dataset from Soviet Estonia allowed me to pose some hypotheses, but it cannot be diffractively read on its own. In 1987–1992 media in Estonia revolutionised in the new political situation, resulting in the proliferation of commercial papers, some of which eagerly discussed gay and lesbian sexuality (for example Liivimaa Kuller, Nelli Teataja, see Kuningas 2021). As very few of these potentially interesting periodicals

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<sup>6</sup> I used digitised print media libraries Digar, Dea.digar, Etera, DSpace, which are publicly available online archives, with only some materials requiring personal identification through log in.

<sup>7</sup> The search words refer to homosexual and transgender related labels in Estonian. I used dozens of search words and combinations, however, the ones mentioned gave most results. The asterisk allows to look at any use of the word in different possible cases.

have been digitised, they require separate study in the future. In this dissertation I have used online media libraries for finding media texts that I study in Article I, but in other articles media representations of non-normative sex-gender subjects have been employed for constructing hypotheses and establishing the context.

The found texts also varied in form. For example, from the interwar period and the 1988–1993 transition period I found articles that discussed homosexual and transgender identities in long essays and even series of essays. In Article I I discuss a particularly diverse set of long stories which resulted from the attention given to homosexuality and gender non-conformity in German-speaking parts of Europe (see Herzog 2011: 31, 57). The German usages influenced Estonian ones as homosexual and transgender identities were often described as a so-called third gender phenomenon, labelled as man-woman (*meesnaine, naismees, androgiit* in Estonian, *Mannweib* in German) or gender fraud (*Geschlechtsfälschung* in German).

As argued in Article III, the arrival of AIDS in the Soviet Union in 1987 required awareness raising, achieved through long articles to de-stigmatise homosexuality in state owned media targeted to a young adult readership, that is, the age groups whom Soviet society considered sexually active and vulnerable. The topic of sexuality was taken over by privately owned media which emerged in late 1988 (see Kurvits 2010: 291). One of the first commercial newspapers, *Eesti Ekspress*, published an interview with an anonymous gay man (Veispak 1990) and continued to regularly cover gay and lesbian issues in subsequent years, when the general context had changed. From 1940–1986, the found media texts included laconic references to homosexuality, contributing to the dominant discourse that non-heterosexual behaviour was a criminal and condemned practice.

On the basis of the media study I would argue that male homosexuality was considerably more widely discussed than other non-normative sex-gender subjects. In the interwar period there were also articles about trans people, while female homosexuality was mentioned extremely rarely in the Estonian context and only in connection with sex work. During the Soviet period before glasnost, I located very few references to female homosexuality and trans identities were almost never mentioned in the Soviet media. In the past three decades discourses about LGBT+ people have multiplied and the dominant discourse about the community has centred around cohabitation rights.

The media sources suggest that for the large part of the twentieth century transgender people and female homosexuality were publicly silenced, which helps to understand why it is harder to find information about these identities and practices. Over time media representations of male homosexuality provided more ways of identification, making it more accessible for retrospective examination and critical engagement. Throughout the dissertation I searched the online media libraries to find dominant discourses of different periods and to formulate research questions. For in-depth analysis I diffractively read the print media materials through other sources of the same period, like archival sources,

legal regulations and oral histories that I discuss below, to include a wider context for establishing entanglements of non-normative sex-gender subjects and practices.

### **Fieldwork in the archives**

Similarly to Kalkun (2018), Lipša (2016) and Roldugina (2019) I juxtaposed the print media findings with archival records to diffractively analyse particular periods and case studies. For Article I, II and III, but most extensively Article II, I conducted archival fieldwork in the Estonian National Archives, Supreme Court of Estonia archives as well as in the Harju County Museum collection, Helsinki Labour Archives (Työväen Arkisto).

In the national archives I found the criminal investigation materials both for Article I, where I studied the case of a trans person A. Oinatski in the interwar period, and Article II, where I studied Soviet Estonian criminal records concerning the Pederasty Article. Since 2018, Harju County Museum (Harjumaa muuseum) holds a special collection of LGBT+ activist organisations from the 1990s, including correspondence with the local and global communities as well as book-keeping and meeting minutes. There I found a letter from 1993 in which a man wrote about being accused of homosexual acts in the late 1960s. I had already found information about this case from the archives. This was one of the few sources that shows the existence of a clandestine gay community in Soviet Estonia. In spring 2022, I visited the Helsinki Labour Archives to study materials related to Estonia in the Finnish LGBT+ organisation SETA (Sek-suaalinen tasavertaisuus) archives from 1990–1994. There I found a few copies of conference papers by Estonian gay and lesbian activists, organisational meeting reports and minutes that covered human rights issues relevant to the Estonian gay and lesbian movement that I discuss in Article III.

While I found criminal records that examine male homosexual acts, discussed in the chapter on the research context, I found no sources to confirm the assumption that trans people and female homosexuality would be discussed in a medical context (see Alexander 2021: 15, 139). The national archives keep some venereal disease records, which could be assumed to document the contacts of sexually transmitted disease patients, but I could not find such traces. In spring 2020, when I was still planning archival fieldwork, I consulted with the Ministry of Interior and Tartu University Hospital's archives to find out whether there is documentation about intersex and transgender patients from the Soviet period. It turned out that the hospital has not kept any records of intersex children or transgender patients. I found nothing in medical records about non-normative sex-gender people. In 2022, medical historian Liisa Lail shared with me files of a trans-person from another Soviet republic, who had died in a mental hospital in 1970 in Estonia. Nothing but their temporary work place in Estonia could be found from the archives, but their case merits further study in the future.

## Archives of criminal records

Anthropologists of colonial history Patrice Ladwig et al. (2012: 17) argue that a characteristic struggle accompanying doing “fieldwork between folders” is that the found archival sources are often destroyed or only a small portion is kept. These rare sources carry information about marginalisation as written by the oppressors, which by itself grants the archives a specific history and agency (Ladwig et al. 2012: 2–3). The inevitability of the top-to-bottom dynamics in the archives was especially evident in my search for homosexual men’s voices in the discourse on homosexuality by the Soviet police, lawyers, and doctors in court investigation documents and opinions published in books and media that I study in Article II.

I consulted archivists to learn about when and why most of the criminal investigation folders from the Soviet period were destroyed and the motive behind keeping some but not all the names of the men convicted under the Pederasty Article in online databases. According to the 2012 Estonian National Archives Act (4)<sup>8</sup>, the archival policy before the restoration of national independence was based on 1972 Regional/Town People’s Courts Example Classification, according to which a court’s archivist selected two to five per cent of each category of court investigation folders to be fully preserved. I have not been able to locate the 1972 Example Classification but it is unlikely to provide any additional information about the archival policy.

Before going to the archives for criminal records I studied how Soviet Estonian criminal law viewed homosexual acts by going through all the Soviet Estonian Criminal Codes and their annotations (Rebane et al. 1962, Rebane 1965, 1972, Rebane et al. 1980), discussed at length in Article II. The first few dozen court records I found by searching online Archival Information System (AIS) with the Criminal Article search words 154a (Pederasty Article in 1940–1941, 1944–1960), 118 (Pederasty Article in 1961–1992), *Pederast\**, *homo-seks\**. I learned only in the archive that the most effective method for finding such proceedings was through the People’s Courts’ annual alphabetic statistics. In Soviet Estonia there were twenty (and occasionally up to thirty) regional People’s Courts and the Supreme Court. At present the Supreme Court of Estonia holds the folders of the most serious crimes that were discussed in the Supreme Court of the Estonian SSR. To find the court cases under the Pederasty Article, I worked through the approximately 400 annual (sometimes biannual) indexes of People’s Courts across Soviet Estonia. In the national archives I located 100 and in Supreme Court archive 7 criminal investigations under the

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<sup>8</sup> Hindamisakt. Esimese ja teise astme kohtute juhtimis- ja põhifunktsioonide dokumentide hindamine arhiiviväärtuse väljaselgitamiseks [https://www.ra.ee/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/HO\\_I\\_II\\_astme\\_kohtud\\_26.11.2012\\_nr\\_128.pdf](https://www.ra.ee/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/HO_I_II_astme_kohtud_26.11.2012_nr_128.pdf) – viewed December 11, 2022.

Pederasty Article, which sentenced a total of 204 men to prison for same-sex acts.

For more than a half out of the located 107 Pederasty Article court cases only a court order of a few pages remains that sums up the accusation and a short biography of the defendants. These documents give nearly no hint of the defendant's own version, which is common in the general court practice. However, in the context of the history of homosexuality, this complicates finding the voices of the men who had consensual homosexual relations. Ten percent of the located cases investigated consensual homosexual relations, twenty percent same-sex paedophilia and the rest male same-sex rapes and group rapes, mostly in closed institutions (approximately ten percent of the rapes took place outside). Among these court orders and fully preserved investigation folders, I have located only one full folder discussing consensual same-sex acts outside detention institutions: the so-called Chairman's 1966 court-file that I discuss in Article II for it offers extraordinary snippets of a network of men who had sexual relations with each other.

During archival fieldwork, I found out that more criminal cases based on the Pederasty Article were processed in People's Courts that served areas where there was a prison, a youth detention facility, or a care facility than in courts in areas without these institutions. Moreover, in sparsely populated and rural areas, there were several People's Courts that never tried a single case under the Pederasty article. Tallinn and Harju region had two large prisons, while Tartu city and region had none, yet Tartu is a relatively large university city, which had military bases during the Soviet period. I decided to limit my research to the four People's Courts in Tallinn and the surrounding Harju Region People's Court, Tartu City and Tartu County People's Courts, to systematically compare the approach in two regions both of which had Pederasty Article court cases. However, I also studied cases that I found through archive information system AIS and by looking into various regions' People's Courts in years that I selected according to Soviet official statistics on men convicted under the Pederasty Article presented in a working paper by Belarus researcher Uladzimir Valodzin (2020).

The archival study showed that the official statistics and the number of men convicted under the Pederasty Article that I located did not match. According to the Soviet Ministry of the Interior statistics, from 1944–1992, 212 men were convicted for homosexuality in Estonia (Valodzin 2020). In comparison, between 1957–1991, I located 204 convictions and one acquittal. The official annual number of convictions was sometimes higher, sometimes lower and I cannot explain the difference. Perhaps more will be revealed when similar studies in Latvia and Lithuania will be conducted (Lipša 2023, Vaiseta 2023).

The archives gave only fragments of information about male same-sex relations as non-normative sex-gender subjects. Yet, I found an irregular case of a middle-aged man who had relations with teenage boys convicted not under Article 118 (Pederasty) but under Article 117 (Corrupted sexual activity with a minor younger than 16-years old) thanks to an interviewee, who remembered

rumours about a man with homosexual affairs losing his career in the 1960s. This directed me to conduct oral history interviews discussed below.

I stopped looking for further cases after I had located 107 cases, as data reached the point of saturation and allowed me to believe that the findings are representative of how the Article was generally implemented during the period. However, in the spring of 2023 Andreas Kalkun shared his new find, a rich KGB investigation folder that discusses three men's activities in relation to escaping from the Soviet Union and their homosexual relations in 1984. This demonstrates that locating all Pederasty Article cases from the Soviet period would require widening the scope of research in the archives. Also, finding sources that would give new information about clandestine queer networks, instead of repetitive summaries of acts of same-sex sexual violence, is also a matter of researcher's luck.

### **Oral history and field observations**

Ethnographic methods, most of all oral history and participant observation, have played a key role in queer history writing that started by documenting the gay and lesbian civil rights movement after the Second World War in the USA (Murphy, Pierce, Ruiz 2016: 5). According to queer oral historian Nan Alamilla Boyd (2008: 177) gay and lesbian ethnographers have taken over feminist methodologies of self-reflection and intersectional awareness of power dynamics between the researcher and the research participants. Nevertheless, as queer oral historians Kevin P. Murphy, Jennifer L. Pierce and Jason Ruiz (2016: 8) argue, oral history always remains partial, subjective and dependent on the specific relation between the researcher who guides the research participants by questions and reactions and vice versa. While I had planned to study oral histories of queer intimate lives from the Soviet period until the present, my interviewees preferred to share their memories about the gay and lesbian community, activism, and how they had experienced particular social norms during the Soviet period or in the 1990s. The interviews became the most important sources in Article III on the emergence of the gay and lesbian community; Article IV is a study of conversations and participant observation that I documented in my field diaries.

Initially I planned to interview over thirty people about their experiences of being queer and being surrounded by a community of queer people in line with the suggestion of oral historians Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeleine Davis (1993/2014) that in order to study oral accounts, the researcher has to juxtapose at least "five to ten narrators' stories" to start finding representative patterns. Since male homosexuality dominated in the print media and archival sources, and Jaanus Samma (2011; 2015) and Uku Lember (2018) had interviewed a dozen men on homosexuality in the Soviet period, I hoped to balance the history of non-normative sex-gender with women's stories.

During the preliminary fieldwork for finding research participants, I learned that nearly all the women to whom I talked started having same-sex relationships only in the 1990s and did not know any living women who had had homosexual relationships earlier and who would agree to speak to me. When I conducted the first interviews with lesbian and bisexual women, who participated in lesbian activism in the 1990s and early 2000s, conversations quickly moved from personal life to their affiliations with the lesbian community and a suggestion to speak to the leading activists. In addition to accounts about activism, these interviews provided me with first-person experiences of how homosexual relations were negotiated and navigated in the late-Soviet and post-Soviet periods in a variety of relations, for example family, work, community of friends, other people close to the person (see Murphy, Pierce, Ruiz 2016).

As a result of these conversations the focus of the dissertation shifted to the heavily under-researched written sources, because I felt that the few collected narrated accounts needed thorough contextualisation based on the written sources. Thus I discussed issues that surfaced in my archival findings with the interviewees (see Brettell 1998), for example, how they perceived homosexuality in the 1980s or 1990s, the key events for the interviewees or the reception of the decriminalisation of homosexuality in the community.

Between spring 2020 and 2022 I conducted eleven interviews with two gay men, six lesbian and bisexual women, a married lesbian couple one of whom had recently gender transitioned, and two separate consultant interviews with a man and woman, who had been allies to the gay and lesbian community in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The youngest interviewee was 35 years old, others were aged between 50 and 70. The interviews lasted from fifty minutes to two and half hours. During the second year of my research the COVID-19 pandemic broke out, preventing interviews for several months. In 2021 I conducted three online video interviews with members of early Estonian gay and lesbian community who now lived abroad or in remote areas of Estonia.

Before the interviews I prepared a set of open-ended questions to make the interviews comparable. The conversations started with a brief discussion of how we were acquainted, for example, about who had referred me to the interviewee. Then I proceeded to ask about their age and place of origin, their jobs and education, their involvement in and attitudes towards gay and lesbian community in the past and present and, if possible, about relationships that were significant for them. While most of the people I approached were happy to participate in my research, not everyone agreed to be interviewed. For example, one medical doctor refused because they did not want to remember the now unacceptable medical approach to homosexuality in the Soviet period.

As most of my research participants took part in lesbian community activities in the 1990s, I could consult them about the social context of the community and their memories about what was done together and when. I started writing Article III about the transition period by studying the online media libraries but added the gay and lesbian communities' perspective. My interviewees and the media sources led me to interview three people who had

organised the key event in the emergence of gay and lesbian movement in Estonia, the international conference “Sexual Minorities and Society” in May 1990 in Tallinn and Tartu. These interviews in the spring and summer of 2021 discussed the social context of the conference and how it was remembered, the importance of curiosity and mutual support, writing opinion pieces about homosexuality in response to a homophobic AIDS booklet (Rõigas 1988), and what they considered to have grown out of the event.

Article II and III are both informed by the interviews I conducted, but in Article II, the interviews functioned as background information for finding sources or confirming assumptions. One interview with an early 2000s activist helped me to contact some other interlocutors. I have pseudonymised all research participants with the exception of Lilian Kotter and Udo Dodo Parikas, whose interviews are referred to with their full name in Article III. These research participants also made amendments about details and consented to the arguments of the article.

In addition to interviews, I collected observations in my fieldwork diaries, where I noted my interactions with lesbian, gay, trans, heterosexual and queer acquaintances, friends and family members from 2018 until 2022. Over twenty people, whose ages range from 23 to 90, have told me about their encounters with gay and lesbian stories and rumours from their families (see Juvonen 2005), home towns and other social environments, about their coming out, community events and persons who have been significant for them, about their experience with the Soviet medical and legal system and present day marginalisation. The stories vary according to the age of the person as well as their sex-gender identity. These conversations also helped me to reflect on my own position in everyday life where I am mostly surrounded by queer women and men, non-binary people and queer-friendly straight people. It could be thus argued that all these conversations have significantly shaped my understandings of different time periods and have given me multiple perspectives on data that I have collected from other sources (see Adams 2009: 317).

In Article IV about today’s queer affects, I have analysed observations and conversations from my field diary from autumn and winter 2018/19. These conversations started when I introduced my new position as a PhD student studying the queer past of Estonia. In response, my interlocutors started telling me about their socio-economic position in relation to their intimate relationships and social standards. These conversations showed that, in addition to non-heterosexual women, some straight women also feel queered in the current society by not conforming with the neoliberal nationalist heteronormativity. Therefore, together with co-author Raili Marling we wrote a rather theoretical discussion of how queering and marginalisation are based on today’s sex-gender normativity. Narratives from the field notes inspired me to ask questions about the links between socio-economic position and intimate relationship choices.

The interviews and conversations in the field significantly informed Article II, III and IV. While the main analytical focus of the dissertation is on print media and archival sources, the conversations added details to the diffractive



reading model without which the dissertation would have lost parts of its anthropological dimension. In this way the dissertation contributes to the collective history of queer community (see Brettell 1998: 532).

## Other sources

Since the histories of marginalised groups are like ruins that only testify to the existence of previous events (see Ladwig et al. 2012), even the smallest snippets of information about sex-gender marginalisation and marginalised subjects can become informative. Although the dissertation mainly focuses on how individuals negotiated normative dominant discourses constructed in various print media and archival records, I have also found fragments and glimpses of non-normative sex-gender subjects from conversations with other researchers as well as from Estonian art, fiction and memoirs. These fragments and glimpses have informed my analysis of conformity and non-conformity with the dominant discourses in each period.

In 2019–2022, I was a co-editor of a popular collection of Estonian queer micro-histories “Kalevi alt välja. LGBT+ inimeste lugusid 19. ja 20. sajandi Eestist” (Eesti LGBT Ühing 2022, in rough translation *Bring back to light. Stories of LGBT+ people from 19th and 20th century Estonia*). We exchanged sources and approaches with a dozen co-authors. In autumn 2019 I co-taught a Tallinn University BA and MA laboratory course ELU, where several students mapped representations of homosexuality in the 1990s Estonian media and created a website.<sup>9</sup> This helped me to understand the shift in the Soviet and post-Soviet media landscapes for Article III. In 2021, we had an exchange with essayist Eero Epner, who published an article on gay and lesbian lives in late-Soviet Estonia. Epner’s (2021) paper was based on a 1991 Estonian Institute of History questionnaire to gays and lesbians in Estonia, which proved to be a rich source about how the participants described their social position and challenges. A small section of responses to this questionnaire have been studied in a diploma paper by Pille Pesti (2001) (Kotter 2002: 61). The questionnaires have been in the hands of historian Uku Lember for a planned future study. Thus, exchanges with other researchers throughout my doctoral studies have provided me with an essential dialogue on how to interpret findings when there is limited previous academic research.

While the dominant discourse about homosexuality and transgender identities is constructed in media, educational materials and laws, brief references to homosexual and trans persons can be found in Estonian literature. Symbolic references to homosexual and transgender persons appear already in early Estonian poetry (see Kalkun 2018) and in Baltic German literature (see Lukas 2016). An important impulse for searching interwar period media in online

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<sup>9</sup> Eesti LGBT ajaloo veeb <https://tlulgbt.wixsite.com/ajaloo veeb> – Accessed on August 29, 2023.

libraries for Article I was Estonian writer Johannes Semper's short story collection *Ellinor* (1926), which had a story about a queer woman Mrs. Liibeon (see Kirikal 2021: 254). Critical media reception of Semper's book informed me about non-normative sex-gender vocabulary (for example *meesnaine*) of the interwar period.

Snippets of queerness in Soviet period fiction were pointed out by literary scholar Johanna Ross (2018) in her dissertation on Soviet Estonian women's literature, for example a representation of a female couple in Aino Pervik's novel *Kaetud lauad* (Laid Tables, 1979) where the main character visits cohabiting women one of whom is strong-masculine and the other fragile-feminine. Aadu Hint's *Tuuline rand IV* (Windy Beach IV, 1966) discusses the interwar period, where a mother dies from devastation after finding out that her young, talented and handsome son has a homosexual relationship with a rich middle-aged actor. I have not come across first-person representations of homosexuality in Soviet Estonian fiction.

In post-Soviet Estonia there is a growing amount of fiction that deals with various kinds of sexual otherness, most prominently Tõnu Õnnepalu's whole oeuvre since the 1990s, which discusses homosexuality by using a particular opacity connected to Soviet period experiences of non-normative sexualities and Andrus Kasemaa's poetry and fiction which criticises homosexual identity politics and describes the impossibility of belonging (compare with Murphy, Pierce, Ruiz 2016: 15). While I have not analysed literary works in the dissertation, these have been part of my diffractive reading of non-normative sex-gender subjects in various eras.

Dan Healey (2018; see Alexander 2020; Kuntsman 2009) has highlighted that some of the central sources for studying homosexuality in the USSR are materials related to prisons. In addition to court investigations that revealed the prevalence of sexual violence in prisons, I came across a few memoirs that discuss prisons and briefly mention either male or female homosexual relations from a bystander's perspective, for example a sensational memoir by Pille Hanni (2008). A set of prison memoirs has been published by Soviet Estonian national dissidents and human rights advocates Lagle Parek (2010), Mart Niklus and Jüri Kukk (1983), the latter two of whom were involved in the Lithuanian Helsinki human rights watch group. The dissidents caught my attention because their Lithuanian fellow dissident Viktoras Petkus was convicted for his involvement in the Lithuanian Helsinki Group and for having sex with male minors (Niklus 1983: 74, 81). Mart Niklus (1983: 74, 134) was a witness at Petkus 1978 trial in Vilnius and notes in his memoir that the KGB had unsuccessfully tried to frame him for homosexuality, too. In Lagle Parek's (2010) memoir lesbian relations in prison are briefly mentioned twice as something characteristic to the prison environment, yet as something that was completely novel to the memoirist during the Soviet period. In Estonian dissident memoirs homosexuality was described as a tool of power of the state as well as something that took place between inmates, which resonates with the research of Healey (2018) and Alexander (2021) as well as with some rumours about

dissidents being pressured with accusations of homosexuality presented in interview materials of Jaanus Samma (2011).

Memoirs, diaries and blogs together with works of fine art have provided me with subjective imaginaries of how homosexual relations have been viewed in different eras and how they are contextualised. There are more memoirs and (auto-)biographies in addition to the ones mentioned here to be studied in the future to follow Riikka Taavetti's (2018, 2021) articles on life stories in Estonian Literary Museum collections. In this dissertation these materials constituted background knowledge which I read through dominant discourses.

Although each article is based on period-specific sources, the periods have to an extent become connected through the study of dominant discourses on non-normative sex-gender subjects. The period specific dominant discourses emerge in similar types of sources: legal regulations and medical understanding of sexuality form the basis of accepted truths for discussing the non-normative sex-gender subjects in other venues. The aim of this dissertation has been to uncover the functioning of the power dynamics of subjecting persons to non-normative sex-gender entanglements. I have diffractively read the dominant discourses of a period through case studies which document how individuals negotiated these discourses. This has revealed shifts in what labels like homosexuality or trans mean in dominant discourses and in individual practices.

## SUMMARIES OF ARTICLES

The dissertation consists of four articles: Article I was published in 2020, Article IV in 2022, Article III in 2023 and Article II is forthcoming in 2024. Each article focuses on a particular period in Estonia: interwar independence (I), Soviet occupation (II), perestroika and restoration of national independence (III), and the time of writing (IV). The articles are based on particular source materials which have required specific methodological approaches. However, the theoretical framework and research aims have remained consistent throughout the dissertation: to trace the meaning and social position of non-normative sex-gender subjects of each period. I have consistently tried to focus on the words used about non-normative sex-gender subjects as well as shifts in the meanings of these terms. It could be argued that all of the articles balance between public discourses, represented in the media and law, and individual stories that either emerge from archival documents or have been gathered through conversations during ethnographic fieldwork.

**Article I. Põldsam, Rebeka 2020. Otsides kvääre lugusid sõdadevahelise Eesti ajakirjandusest [Looking for Queer Stories from Interwar Estonian Media: The Position of Eugenics in Discussions About Homosexuality and Transgender Issues]. – *Mäetagused*, 76. 95–124. doi: 10.7592/MT2020.76.poldsam.**

In the first article I focused on finding and contextualising representations of non-normative sex-gender practices and persons in interwar Estonian print media in 1926–1936. By using online digital libraries, I identified over 300 references to homosexual and transgender persons or related issues in news stories, write-ups, essays, interviews, disputes, dating ads, reports of lectures and summaries of books. In addition, I found a few popular sexual health handbooks discussing sexual orientation as well as works of visual art and literature. The main aim of this article was to establish what constituted non-normative sex-gender subjectivity in public discourse and how to understand it from today's perspective.

As the sources were diverse in form and content, I first grouped the discussions according to the present-day logic: depictions of intersex, trans, homosexual or gay and lesbian persons, discussions of law and medicine, urban sexual subcultures and cultural history. Several persons were often mentioned in print media (for example Magnus Hirschfeld, Victor Barker, a trans-man from the UK, and Danish trans-woman Lily Elbe). The two most frequently mentioned Estonian queer persons in the period were A. Oinatski in Tartu (over forty articles) and Richard Valdak in Tallinn (approximately ten articles). The second part of the article reconstructs the life narrative of A. Oinatski – the first known gender non-conforming person who talked about it publicly in Estonia – relying on newspaper stories, on their criminal records from the Estonian

National Archives, and on the discussion in medical journal *Eesti Arst* initiated by court medical doctor and eugenics advocate Hans Madisson.

I used Karen Barad's (2007) model of agential realism for studying the empirical material. Barad's theoretical tools help to diffractively read processes and intra-active connections between representations that constitute phenomena, for example, discourses (like eugenics or temperance) that contribute to the definitions of non-normative sex-gender subjectivities and practices.

I found that, firstly, the definitions of non-normative sex-gender identity categories were rather vague. Male homosexuality had established a meaning of gay identity, whereas female homosexuality, trans and intersex identities were considered characteristic to the so-called third sex or as something that would pass over time. Secondly, I found that in these years the public discourse about non-normative sex-gender was framed by two processes: on the one hand, the new criminal code decriminalised homosexuality and, on the other hand, the vibrant Estonian eugenicist movement advocated for radical measures to build a heteronormative nation, for example by the forced sterilisation of the mentally ill, queer and poor as well as taxing childlessness. The interwar Estonian non-normative sex-gender practices were thus legally accepted yet their public image was uncertain from the perspective of the radical conservative nationalist groups that repressed all sexual otherness.

## **Article II: Põldsam, Rebeka 2024. Homophobic Discourses and their Soviet History in Estonia. *Folklore. Electronic Journal of Folklore* (forthcoming).**

In this article I focus on the criminalisation of homosexuality in Soviet Estonia and the homophobic discourses it contributed to. The main aim of this article was to examine the Soviet Estonian official discourses about non-normative sex-gender practices and subjects. I study the implementation of the Soviet period Pederasty Article with a special focus on Tallinn and Tartu city and county court archives from 1956 to 1991 that are kept in the Estonian National Archive and in the Supreme Court of Estonia. I analysed the archival fieldwork and systematised the found sources in a dialogue with Judith Butler's ideas about the construction of gender non-normativity. Because the discourses in these sources often resonated with homophobic discourses persistent to this day, I framed these with homophobic stories depicted in a video installation by Minna Hint and Liisi Eelmaa, *Heard Story* (2011).

The Pederasty Article was defined in the Soviet Union Criminal Code in 1934. While a similar Article was included in all Criminal Codes of the USSR republics, the punishments and definitions varied locally. From 1944 until 1960 the Pederasty Article was 154a, a subsection to 154 Rape in ESSR Criminal Code. From 1961 to 1992 Article 118 Pederasty subsection 1 defined consensual anal intercourse between male persons as forbidden and punished it with imprisonment of up to two years, and subsection 2 defined violent and abusive intercourse, including paedophilic relations between male persons, that was punished with up to six years of imprisonment.

According to the official Soviet statistics from 1956–1991 there should have been 200 Pederasty Article convictions in Soviet Estonia. During my archival fieldwork I learned that some cases had been hidden behind other Articles by lawyers and courts, which meant that the Article only partly defined how homosexuality was legally treated in this period. During my archival fieldwork I located 107 cases, where 204 men had been convicted under the Pederasty Article and one case was dismissed. For fewer than a half of the court investigations a full folder has been preserved in the archives. Only a few pages of court orders remain about the majority of investigations. This was especially limiting in learning about how the cases had started and evolved.

From the found cases only 11 investigated consensual intercourse, 20 paedophilia and the rest same-sex rapes, 66 of those in prisons and other closed institutions. This suggests that there was a significant amount of sexual violence in detention institutions, which were strictly surveilled environments. The inmate rapes increased the sentences of the prisoners, while the people investigated for consensual cases outside closed institutions could also be discharged, put on probation or the punishments could be shortened significantly.

In addition to locating the Pederasty Article investigations, I also looked at the representations of homosexuality in Soviet Estonian print media. These were limited in digital libraries of print media, but the few findings suggest that officially homosexuality was established as an amoral behaviour that was foreign to the proper Soviet people. Since the 1960s a growing number of widely available sexual health booklets described male homosexuality in connection to the Pederasty Article and as something deviant and dangerous for the youth. It can be generalised that sexual education books for youth emphasised the importance of recognising and reporting paedophilia, while books for adults simply defined homosexuality as a criminal deviation. It can be argued that the sexual education handbooks were the main distributors of the official discourse about homosexuality in the Soviet period, as these informed a wide readership about the existence of the Pederasty Article and were the most articulate public descriptions of homosexuality.

In the last part of the article, I revisit a court investigation of consensual homosexual relations from 1966, which Jaanus Samma has used for his art project *The Chairman's Tale* (2013/2015). Revisiting the case helps me learn about the whole process of how a consensual homosexual relationship could be investigated, how the investigators studied a network of men having sex with men, the course of medical examinations, questions asked from witnesses, what the investigated men had at stake and how the official and alternative discourses about non-normative sex-gender were expressed in the process.

In this article I concluded that the Soviet Estonian official discourse contributed to and materialised in homophobic discourses. For example, the Pederasty Article conflated homosexuality and paedophilia; the court archives show that the Article was most frequently used in prisons; and in order to escape the legal and social threats the Soviet gay men very probably had clandestine networks where they could meet partners. Distributing homophobic information

and threatening with imprisonment in the Soviet period generated fear and helped to gain control over the intimate lives of the entire population. Its lasting effects can be felt until now.

**Article III: Arumetsa, Sara, Põldsam, Rebeka 2022. Emergence of LGBT Movements in Late Soviet and Post-Soviet Estonia. – *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*. 1–14. doi: 10.1080/08038740.2023.2195207.**

Together with gender studies researcher Sara Arumetsa we studied the emergence of the Estonian lesbian, gay and trans equal rights advocacy in the context of Estonian national liberation movement from 1988 to 1993. Based on debates on AIDS and homosexuality in print media, on interviews with some of the first activists, and on archival materials about conferences discussing homosexual rights relevant in Estonia we tried to reconstruct the chronology of events that led to LGBT activism in Estonia. Arumetsa contributed with her research on trans history of Estonia, while the rest of the research was based on my fieldwork. This time period is considered the most transitional era in recent Estonian history. We framed the period with semiotician Juri Lotman's model of cultural explosion, where previously unattainable public discussion about homosexuality could temporarily materialise. The aim was to study the emergence of homosexual rights discourse alongside homophobic and heteronormative nationalist discourses.

*Glasnost* abolished media censorship and the new freedom of speech in Soviet Estonia of the 1980s opened novel debates about human rights, autonomy, democracy, nationalism and sexual emancipation. The latter topic gained additional prominence when AIDS arrived in the USSR in 1987, and in the ESSR in 1988. AIDS awareness articles started a debate about the decriminalisation of homosexuality. The first public defenders of the human rights of homosexual people in the media were scholars at the Institute of History at the ESSR Academy of Sciences who in May 1990 organised an international conference "Sexual Minorities and Society" in Tallinn and Tartu with about twenty speakers. Through numerous news stories that covered the event, the conference established an informed discourse about homosexual rights in the Estonian media. In 1990 a delegation of Estonian national human rights activists participated in the pan-European Helsinki Citizens' Assembly in Prague, where the Eastern European delegates took a rather marginalising position towards the homosexual minority, briefly covered in the Estonian media by one of the delegates. The juxtaposition of these two international conferences helps us to show the division of human rights discourses into opposing groups: national advocacy focusing on collective human rights and sexual minorities advocacy focusing on individuals' human rights.

The trans rights advocacy started separately from the gay and lesbian rights debate and organisation, but they merged at the beginning of the 1990s after the official founding of a lesbian community group that organised meetings and provided phone counselling. Sara Arumetsa outlined the late-Soviet options of

gender transition and the emergence of transgender rights advocacy by studying the case of Kristel Regina, the first public trans-rights advocate in Estonia. Whereas the newly independent Estonia decriminalised male homosexuality and thus significantly improved the social position of the homosexual community, the state-level marginalisation of transgender people only deepened. While in the USSR gender transition followed strict, yet secret, procedures, in newly independent Estonia trans people were deprived of access to the legal and medical transition until 1999, when an official transition process was established that continues to shape the transition process until present day.

The media analysis showed that the first informative articles about AIDS, homosexuality and gender transition were published in central Soviet print media before similar articles were published in ESSR state owned media between 1987 and 1990. In the 1990s these topics moved to the privately owned media, often presented from contrasting and sensationalist perspectives. The nationalist movement was concerned with the reproduction of Estonians, which meant that in newly independent Estonia, sexual minorities continued to be marginalised since there were no equal rights measures beyond the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1992.

**Article IV: Marling, Raili, Põldsam, Rebeka 2022. Affect and Queer Intimate Entanglements in Nationalist-Neoliberal Estonia. *Sexualities*. 1–15. doi: 10.1177/13634607221112646.**

In this article, co-written with one of my supervisors, Raili Marling, we analysed queer entanglements and affects in present day Estonian nationalist and neoliberal society. We analysed a section of my ethnographic fieldwork observations from autumn 2018 to winter 2019 through Karen Barad's agential realism and Lauren Berlant's criticism of neoliberal affects. We examined accounts of five women who spoke about the links between their economic position and intimate relationship choices and their struggles with heteronormativity. Our chief aim was to outline the affective entanglements characteristic of queerness in a nationalist-neoliberal society.

The first part discusses the affects created in a nationalist neoliberal society. We argue that in post-socialist Estonia at least for women queerness is not only defined by belonging to the LGBT+ community but also by living against strictly heteronormative reproductive expectations (see Kulpa 2020; Sculz 2018). In Estonia neoliberalism is considered a defining principle of the nation-state. Distinctively, Estonian nationalist pronatalism is not related to Christianity, but New Age spirituality (Uibu 2016). Nevertheless, some of the observed narrators were also impacted by Christian values and gender normativity. Our article studied how these material-discursive practices intra-act with each other and impact individual lives.

In the second part we analysed the individual narrators' accounts about their struggles with heteronormativity. None of the women felt content, regardless of their relationship status. Three of the women were married: one identified as bisexual and she was married to a queer man, two other women identified as



straight and had children with their spouses. The married women stated that income instability affected their intimate relationships. The other two women defined themselves as bisexual or queer, although they had not disclosed their non-heterosexuality to their families or outside their friendship circles. All of these women felt nonconformity with heteronormativity.

In our analysis we found two sets of affective queer entanglements characteristic to present day Estonia. The first was involuntary nonconformity that is rooted in Soviet past where everybody had to conform with the official norms or at least perform conforming in the fear of unpredictable punishments. The involuntary nonconformity characterises the individuals who feel oppressed by subjection under the politically loaded yet narrow category of LGBT community as well as those who struggle with pronatalist heteronormativity even when seemingly conforming to it.

The second affective intra-action that creates entanglements of queer intimacy characteristic of nationalist neoliberalism is a certain apathy or detachment from oneself. The narrators used neoliberal language in conceptualising their whole lives as a cycle of emotional investments, profit and time-management. The neoliberal rationality had failed the narrators who felt increasingly detached from themselves. In response they sought spiritual or self-destructive ways to re-establish a better sense of self. It could be claimed that neoliberal intimacy is affectively queer: the promise of neoliberal happiness will always necessarily remain unfulfilled.

## CONCLUSION

This dissertation studied the history of discourses on non-normative sex-gender subjects in Estonia from the 1920s to the 2020s. To identify the construction of dominant discourses on non-normative sex-gender subjects I have diffractively read public sources and personal accounts through one another. For doing this I have proposed an analytical term ‘non-normative sex-gender subject’, based on Karen Barad’s agential realism. Barad’s theory supports the close reading of fragmented sources while keeping ontological, particularly temporal, and epistemological, particularly discursive, layers in sight. This is especially relevant in the context of this research as the long public silence about non-normative sex-gender subjects in Estonia, particularly during the Soviet period, has resulted in even the dominant discourses about non-normative sex-gender subjects being preserved only in the form of fragments. The entanglement model of ‘non-normative sex-gender subjects’ is designed for studying queer phenomena from regions and periods where the concepts of queerness have not been available or have been substantially different from those used in the 2020s. To my knowledge, Barad’s method has not been used in researching queer past in Eastern Europe. This is my key theoretical and methodological contribution to the field that, I believe, could be extended beyond the Estonian research context.

The period studied covers four eras that align with changes in the political regime of the state: the interwar period (1920s–1930s), the Soviet period (particularly in the 1960s–1980s), the period of transition and restoration of national independence (1987–1993) and the time of writing (2018–2023). My research shows that the history of sex-gender normativity has been largely shaped by discourses determined by legal regulations of sexual practices, medical views of sexuality, and media coverage of international and local individuals who have not conformed with period-specific norms. The discourses on sex-gender normativity have been influenced by developments on the topic across Europe.

The first main finding of the dissertation is that, despite the attempts of erasing sex-gender minorities from public discourse, traces of individuals and, in the case of homosexual men, of clandestine communities can be found from each studied period, under all social and political regimes. It can be argued that it was primarily the Soviet-period dominant discourse that systemically punished, threatened and silenced homosexual and transgender people. It did so not only during the occupation from 1940 to 1991, but muted the queer past of the interwar period and continues to influence the discourses on sexual and gender minorities until today. Indeed, the majority of the found sources, including individual stories from the interwar and Soviet period, place the first-person accounts only into a hostile media or repressive legal framework. However, despite this limitation, these accounts testify to the existence of wider queer networks and sociality in Estonia, invalidating statements about the absence of a LGBT+ past in Estonia.

While I was able to find traces of male homosexual networks in Soviet Estonia, women and transgender people often did not express their sexual and gender preferences or made sure not to leave any traces. This shows a strong social unevenness between men and other genders in the Soviet period, a topic that deserves further analysis in the future. Furthermore, it can be argued that the Soviet Estonian dominant discourse on non-normative sex-gender subjects was severe and posed greater challenges to homosexual and transgender people than the dominant discourse of the late-1930s when homosexuality and gender transition were not criminalised or solely associated with dangerous social behaviour.

The second main finding of this research is that discourses about non-normative sex-gender subjects are strongly influenced by pronatalist discourses and politics of each studied period. In short, dominant discourses have continuously described the non-normative sex-gender subjects as a threat to national heterosexual reproduction. The dominant discourse in interwar Estonia balanced between social democracy and nationalist eugenicist policies on the reproduction of Estonian population. In the Soviet period sexual politics focused on women's reproductive function, although in a different ideological framework. What stayed the same was the attention to pronatalist measures. Pronatalism has continued to be the focus of all shades of conservative politics in Estonia after the restoration of national independence. The legal rights of same-sex nuclear families with children have been discussed since the 1990s, while in the previous periods such demands were not made by any group.

The third main finding of this study is that the local Estonian discourses were informed and shaped by international developments on the topic. The interwar-period discourses on sex-gender normativity in Estonia were parallel to the wide discussions of the diversity of sexual and gender identities in Europe, particularly in Germany, while the Soviet period discourses were largely shaped by the USSR as well as the Eastern bloc. While across the Soviet Union male homosexuality was prohibited starting from 1934, in 1961 many Soviet states introduced local criminal codes and court practices that often differed from each other. Since the late 1980s, the dominant discourses about sex-gender minorities have been informed by transnational European institutions that seek to improve the legal equality of these groups and, in parallel, the equally wide-ranging anti-gender movement.

In the 2023 general elections marriage equality was in the election programmes of three political parties (Social Democrats, Estonian Green Party, Eesti 200). In reaction to the election success of some of these political parties, the local anti-gender movement started a campaign against gender minorities in the election night (Viik 2023). The anti-gender discourse can be used for instrumentalising minorities' rights in creating confrontations between social groups who are otherwise divided by income and social inclusion (Avaliku arvamuseuring 2023: 14). Marriage equality will probably significantly change the discourses on non-normative sex-gender subjects, a topic that merits further study. As this study is among the first research projects on the past of LGBT people in

Estonia, throughout the dissertation I have pointed out several research gaps and questions to be examined in future research. While each non-normative sex-gender subject emerges in a particular time and place, diffractive reading with transnational case studies could provide yet new layers to the meaning of fragments from Estonian local queer history.

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## ARTICLES

## SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

### **„Kas ikka veel oleme ebanormaalsed?“ Uurimus Eesti normivälise soolisuse ja seksuaalsuse kohta käivate diskursuste ajaloost**

Doktoritöö keskmes on küsimus, kuidas on Eestis eri ajastutele omaste diskursustega loodud normatiivsusega vastuolus olevat seksuaalsust ja soolisust möödunud saja aasta jooksul. Kui 21. sajandi teisel kümnendil seostub normivälise seksuaalsuse ja soolisusega avalikus diskursuses LGBT+ silt ning laiad arutelud samast soost paaride abieluvõrdsusest, siis varem on seksuaalsuse normid seostunud teistsuguse sõnavara ja teemaderingiga. Töö üks tõukejõud on nõukogude aja järgne stamp, mille kohaselt homoseksuaalsuse ja transsoolisuse teemadel pole kohalikku ajalugu, vaid need on Läänest imporditud. Samas, kui 2021. aastal üks uuritav naine enne intervjuud teadliku nõusoleku vormi luges tööpealkirjast sõnu „non-normative sex-gender“, küsis ta minult: „Kas ikka veel oleme ebanormaalsed?! Kas sa ei saaks kasutada teistsugust sõnastust?“ Need kaks paralleelset mõtteviisi on kujundanud minu esmase uurimiskonteksti ja -küsimused, millega olen olnud seda tööd kirjutades pidevas dialoogis. Niisiis uurin väitekirjas tänapäevase Eesti LGBT+ kogukonna minevikku, keskendudes möödunud saja aasta neljale perioodile, mida eristavad kehtinud riigikorrad ja ajastule omased arusaamad normidest: sõdadevaheline aeg (1920.–1930. aastad), Nõukogude aeg (eelkõige hilisnõukogude aeg, 1960.–1980. aastad), taasiseseisvumise aeg (1987–1993) ja doktoritöö kirjutamise aeg (2018–2023).

Dissertatsioon koosneb katuspeatükist ja neljast artiklist. Katuspeatükis tutvustan uurimiskonteksti ja artiklite asetumist senisesse uurimislukku ning allikate analüüsiks kasutatud teoreetilist ja meetodilist raamistikku. Iga artikli eesmärk on esiteks sõnastada seksuaalsuse ja soolisuse normatiivide kohta käivad domineerivad diskursused. Need tulevad kõige paremini esile vastavalt perioodi spetsiifikale seaduste kommenteeritud väljaannetes, ajakirjanduses, seksuaalkasvatuse käsiraamatutes, teatmeteostes ning minu tehtud intervjuudes ja vestlustes – kõiki kogutud allikaid omavahel kõrvutades. Teiseks keskenduvad artiklid lugudele isiklikest või ühiskondlikest sündmustest, mis on juhtunud domineerivate diskursustega seatud normatiivsuse kiuste. Juhtumiuuringute analüüsimine aitab nüansseeritumalt mõista, kuidas diskursused toimivad, inimeste elukäiku sekkuvad ja arusaamasid mõjutavad. Saja aasta jooksul on nii seksuaalsuse ja soolisuse kohta käivad arusaamad kui ka normid korduvalt teisenenud, mis muudab perioodispetsiifilise lähenemise kõige otstarbekamaks.

Kui doktoritöö uurimuse alguses kasutasin läbivalt seksuaal- ja soovähemustesse puutuvate teemade kohta sõna „kväär“, mida olen pakkunud eestikeelseks tõlkest ingliskeelsele sõnale „queer“, siis töö käigus jõudsin konstruktsioonini „normivälise seksuaalsuse ja soolisuse subjekt“. Inglisekeelne „queer“ kannab Suurbritannia ja USA kvääriteoreetikute Sara Ahmed (2004: 166) ja Jack Halberstami (2008: 154) sõnul erinevate perioodide tähendusi solvangutest kuni



allasurumisele vastuhakuni, normide tahtliku häirimise ja võimestava solidaarsuseni. „Kväär“ uudissõnana lubab tõlgendust läbi „väära“ ja solvava „vää-raka“, mida omakorda võib kasutada võimestava sõnana normatiivsusele vastu-haku märkimiseks. Uurimuse põhjal sobitub „kväär“ paremini 21. sajandi sünd-mustega Eestis ning rääkides kvääriminevikust või kvääriarhiividest, vaatlen neid nähtuseid tänapäeva arusaamade kaudu, riskides kohatu anakronismiga. Nüansseeritumalt lubab iga ajastuspetsiifikat uurida normivälisest seksuaalsust ja soolisust reguleerivate diskursuste kujundatud subjekti mudel, mis on vähem hinnanguline ja rohkem kirjeldav. See mudel aitab analüüsida, kuidas normi-väliseid seksuaalsuse ja soolisuse subjekte luuakse, kui vaadelda ristamisi juhtumiuuringuid ja seksuaalsuse ja soolisuse kohta käivaid domineerivaid dis-kursuseid.

Väitekirjas kombineerin kahte kvääriajaloo uurimislugu, ühel pool 1960. aastatel alanud angloameerika gei- ja lesbiajaloo uurimus ja 1990. aastatel kuju-nenud kvääriteooria (Doan 2013) ning teisel pool 21. sajandil postsotsialistlikus Ida-Euroopas hoogu koguv homoseksuaalsuse ajaloo uurimine (Healey, Stella 2021; Alexander 2021). Angloameerika LGBT+ mineviku uurimist kujundavad üha enam arutelud uurimiseetikast ja identiteedipoliitikast, samas kui endistes sotsialismimaades on akadeemiline uurimistöö alles allikate otsingul. Otsingute peamisteks takistusteks on ühiskondlikud seksuaalsuse ja soolisuse kohta käi-vad tabud ja arhviivimaterjalide leidmisel esile kerkivad mitmesugused takis-tused, Venemaal ka ligipääsupiirangud (Alexander 2021: 1). Nende tõkete üle-tamisel on toeks Nõukogude Liidu ja Baltimaade kvääri mineviku uurimused, kus analüüsitakse ja tutvustatakse allikaid, mida ka Eestis leidub (Lipša 2017; Lipša 2022) või mis Eestit on mõjutanud (Alexander 2021).

Väitekirjas uuritud igal ajalõigul on omakorda eraldi uurimislooline kon-tekst, sest sõdadevahelist Eestit mõjutas kõige enam saksakeelne Euroopa kul-tuur, Nõukogude Eestis kehtisid Nõukogude Liidu seadused ja rohkem info-vahetust käis idabloki maadega, taasiseseisvunud Eestit mõjutab korraka mitu globaalset suundumust. Igale perioodile on omane seksuaal- ja soovähemus-gruppide vastandamine rahvuse taastootmisele, mille diskursus on omakorda igal uuritaval perioodil mõnevõrra erinenud.

Domineerivad diskursused normivälisest seksuaalsusest ja soolisusest ilm-nevad, kui kõrvutada ja kontekstualiseerida normivälise seksuaalsuse ja sooli-suse representatsioonid. Uuritud saja aasta representatsioonid on aga tihtipeale vaid fragmendid – vähemusse kuuluvate inimeste hääl ja arvamus on haruldane ning raskesti leitav, ent siiski olemas. Saja aasta jooksul on seksuaalsuse ja soo-lisuse normide kohta käivaid diskursusi kõige enam kujundanud seadused, millega reguleeritakse soolist väljendust ja seksuaalpraktikaid, arstiteaduslikud arusaamad seksuaalsusest ja soolisusest ning ajakirjandusartiklid, kus räägitakse nii Eesti kui ka teiste riikide inimestest, kes ajastuspetsiifiliste normidega ei sobitu. Neid valdkondi on omakorda mõjutanud rahvusvahelised suundumused ning neil on mõju kohalikele seksuaalsuse ja soolisuse normatiivsetele diskur-sustele.

Sõdadevahelises Eestis dekrimaliseeriti nõusolekupõhised meestevahelised seksuaalsuhted 1929. aasta karistusseadustikuga, mis hakkas kehtima 1935. aastal (Kalkun 2018). Kuid juba 1924. aastal leiti vähemalt ühes kohtulahendis, et selliseid suhteid ei peaks tingimata kriminaalkorras karistama (Kalkun 2022). Karistused kehtisid siiski militaarinstitutsioonides (Kalkun 2018) ning sõdadevahelise Eesti kriminaalseadustikus (Jõeäär 1929: 51) oli paragrahv 479 Pederastia, millega karistati meessoost lastepilastajaid ja vägistajaid, kelle ohvrid olid meessoost. Nõukogude Liidus kriminaliseeriti meeste homoseksuaalsed suhted 1934. aastal, mis laienes teise maailmasõja ajal ka Nõukogude Eestisse. 1992. aastal võeti vastu Eesti Vabariigi kriminaalseadus, kus – nagu ka sõdadevahelises Eestis – nõusolekupõhised meestevahelised suhted dekrimaliseeriti ja tahtevastased vägivaldsed juhtumid jäid „pederastiaparagrahvi“ nimetuse alla. 2001. aastal võeti Eestis vastu soonetraalne karistusseadus, kus seksuaalvägivalla toimepanija ja ohvri sugu karistust ei muuda. Trans-inimesi Eestis kehtinud seadustes ei mainita enne 1970. aastat, kui perekonnaseaduse lisas (ENSV Ülemnõukogu ja Valitsuse Teataja) sätestati soolise isikut tõendava dokumentatsiooni muutmise protsess. 2004. aastal võeti vastu soolise võrdõiguslikkuse seadus, mis keelab diskrimineerimise soolisuse alusel ja 2008. aastal võrdse kohtlemise seadus, mis keelab diskrimineerimise muu hulgas seksuaalse sättumuse pärast.

Arstiteadus hakkas soolisuse ja seksuaalsuse kategooriatega tõsisemalt tegel-ema 19. sajandi lõpus ning 20. sajandil kujunesid välja üldtuntud kategooriad, mis lähtuvad inimese seksuaalpraktikatest ja soolisest eneseväljendusest (Herzog 2011). Sõdadevahelisel perioodil tekitas kõige enam kõneainet just sooline eneseväljendus, kus sünnihetkel naiseks määratud inimene elas mehena või vastupidi. Üleilmselt kuulus ning Eesti avalikkuseski tuntud saksa seksuoloog Magnus Hirschfeld, kes nõudis homoseksuaalsete suhete dekrimaliseerimist juba 19. sajandi lõpus, seisis sõdadevahelisel perioodil homoseksuaalsete ja trans-inimeste õiguste ja heaolu eest nii laiemalt ühiskonnas kui ka meditsiinisfääris kõikjal maailmas. Nõukogudeaegne meditsiiniteadus püüdis normatiivsusega vastuolus olevat seksuaalset ja soolist käitumist n-õ välja ravida konversiooniteraapiaga (Alexander 2021), millest Nõukogude Eestis seni märke pole leitud, kuigi teada on see, et suguhaigustega töötavad dermatoveneroloogid pidasid nimekirja homoseksuaalsetest patsientidest ning pidid neist ka miilitsat teavitama. 1988. aastal diagnoositi Eestis esimene HIV-positiivne mees ning aidsennetuse teavituseks ilmus ajakirjanduses ridamisi artikleid, mis kutsusid üles riskirühmadesse kuulujatasse ehk homoseksuaalsetesse meestesse, seksitöötajatesse ja süstitavate uimastite sõltuvusega inimestesse neutraalselt suhtuma. 2023. aastal ei saa meestega seksivad mehed HIV-ennetuse nimel jätkuvalt doonorina verd anda. Trans-inimeste ligipääsu soolise ülemineku meditsiinilistele sekkumistele reguleerib 1999. aasta sotsiaalministeeriumi määrus ja arstlik komisjon, mida trans-kogukond peab düsfunktsionaalseks (Arumetsa 2022b).

Ajakirjanduslike tekstide leidmiseks kasutasin valdavalt digiteeritud trüki-meedia veebiandmebaase, kus saab märksõnaotsingu abil leida meediatekste

alates intervjuudest ja reportaažidest kuni uudisnuppude, reklaamide, arvamusaluste ja järjejutteni, lisaks leidub ülikoolide digitaalarhiividest ka teaduskirjandust kõigist uuritavatest perioodidest. Kõige paremini on digiteeritud sõdadevahelise perioodi ajakirjandus, mis hõlmab päevalehti, perioodilisi teemalehti (nt abielu-, spordi- ja politseilehed) ning maakonnalehti. Sõdadevahelise perioodi ajakirjandusest leidsin üle kolmesaja artikli, kus kas mainiti või arutati pikemalt homoseksuaalsete meeste ja naiste ning soonormidega vastuolus käituvate nn meesnaiste üle, kes võisid olla 2020. aastate mõistes trans-inimesed, st asoolised, intersoolised, transsoolised, mittebinaarsed, transmaskuliinsed, transfemiinised inimesed jne, või homoseksuaalsed inimesed, kelle käitumine ja riietus soonormidest irdus.

Nõukogude Eestis ilmunud perioodika on seni digiteeritud pisteliselt. Kuna Nõukogude Eestis oli homoseksuaalsus defineeritud meestevaheliste kriminaalaktina, oli moraalnormide kohaselt tsenseeritud ajakirjanduses sellest juttu vaid haruharva. Kõige kehvemini on digiteeritud 1990.–2000. aastate ajakirjandusväljaanded, kuid Harjumaa muuseumi LGBT+ aktivismi erikogus on digiteeritud valik LGBT+ inimesi ja kogukonda käsitlevaid artikleid taasiseseisvunud Eestis ajalehtedes ja ajakirjades. 2010. aastatest alates on suurem osa eesti-keelsest ajakirjandusest paralleelselt veebis ja paberil, peamisi LGBT+ kogukonnaga seotud sõnu ja nende kasutamist analüüsib keeleteadlane Aet Kuusik (2023).

Isiklikud lood ja ühiskondlikud sündmused, mida domineerivate diskursustega kõrvutan ja üksteise kaudu loen, olen leidnud sõdadevahelistest ja nõukogudeaegsetest politsei-, miilitsa- ja kohtutoimikutest Eesti Rahvusrhiivist, gei- ja lesbiorganisatsioonide arhiividest Harjumaa muuseumis ja Helsingi töölisarhiivist. Gei- ja lesbiorganisatsioonide arhiivimaterjali moodustavad MTÜde protokollid, kirjavahetused, Soomes ka konverentsiprogrammid, ettekannete ära kirjad ja reisiaruanded, mis puudutavad mõnel puhul ka Eestit. Peale arhiivimaterjalide kasutasin ka suulise ajaloo meetodeid: tegin kaksteist intervjuud Eesti esimeste gei- ja lesbiaktivistidega ning nende toetajatega, ning kasutasin neid kontrolli- ja taustainformatsioonina, analüüsides taasiseseisvumisaja diskursuseid normivälise seksuaalsuse ja soolisuse kohta. Oma kaasaja uurimiseks analüüsisin viit lugu 2018.–2019. aasta talvest, mis põhinevad välitööpäevikutesse üles tähendatud vestlustel. Lisaks kasutasin taustateadmisenä ilukirjandust, memuaare, kus on juttu homoseksuaalsetest meestest ja naistest, ning uurimistöö jooksul peetud vestlusi teiste uurijatega, kes on oma valdkonnas homoseksuaalsusega seonduvate teemadega kokku puutunud.

Allikmaterjali kogudes ja analüüsides jätkan Eesti ja Soome 20. sajandi teise poole kvääriminevikku uurinud ajaloolase Riikka Taavetti (2018) pakutud raamistikuga, mille kohaselt on kvääriajaloo allikateks fragmendid ja vilksatused. Taavetti (2018) määratleb fragmendid kirjalike dokumentide ja materiaalse esemetena, mis kannavad jälgi kvääriminevikust ning mille tähendus sõltub kontekstist, ning vilksatused kui jutustatud või kirjutatud mälestused ja minevikutõlgendused, mis omakorda võivad toetuda fragmentidele nagu kirjad ja päevikud.

Etnograafilises uurimises on allikate fragmenteeritus üpris tavaline. Sarnaselt koloniaalajaloo arhiivides leiduvate materjalidega võib ka seksuaal- ja soovähemuste minevikku kandvaid arhiivimaterjale võrrelda varematega: kunagiste repressioonide materiaalsete säilmetega, mis jätkuvalt kujundavad inimeste arusaamu vähemusrühmadest (vt Ladwig *et al.* 2012: 5). Samas kui arhiividest ja ajakirjandusest leitud fragmendid ja n-õ varem annavad vaid kinnitust, et tänapäeva mõistes homoseksuaalsed või trans-inimesed on ka varem olnud ja elanud.

Normatiivsusega vastuolus oleva seksuaalsuse ja soolisuse kohta käivate domineerivate diskursuste ülesehituse sisuliseks analüüsimiseks olen loonud analüüsimudeli, mida nimetan „normivälise seksuaalsuse ja soolisuse subjektiiks“ (*non-normative sex-gender subject*). Analüüsimudel toetub feministliku teoreetiku Karen Baradi (2007) agentse realismi teooriale, mis omakorda koon- dab kvantfüüsik Niels Bohri laineosakeste vaatlusmudeli (*measuring apparatus*), kvääriteoreetik Judith Butleri performatiivsuse teooria ning jätkab feministliku teoreetiku Donna Haraway difraktiivset representatsioonikriitilist analüüsimetodit. Barad rõhutab teoreetilise mudeliga, et millegi tähendusel on alati nii eetilise-materiaalne kui ka diskursiivne külg (*ethico-material-discursive*) ning iga nähtuse tähendus kujuneb intra-aktiivsetes protsessides (*intra-actions*) ristudes seostevõrgustikeks (*entanglements*). Niisiis kujundavad normiväliseid seksuaalsuse ja soolisuse subjekte intra-aktiivsed seostevõrgustikud (*entanglements*) avaliku diskursuse ja indiviidide kogemuste vastastikmõjus. Selline analüüsimudel laseb vaadelda normatiivsuse mõju üksikisikutele ning andmeid lähilugedes keskenduda just konkreetsete olukordade tähendusloomeprotsessi uurimisele.

**Artikkel I. Põldsam, Rebeka 2020. Otsides kvääre lugusid sõdadevahelise Eesti ajakirjandusest: Eugeenika rollist homoseksuaalsust ja transsoolisust puudutavates aruteludes. *Mäetagused*, 76, 95–124.**

**doi:10.7592/MT2020.76.poldsam.**

Esimese artikli eesmärgiks oli välja selgitada, kuidas loodi sõdadevahelise Eesti avalikkuses normatiivsusega vastuolus seksuaalset ja soolist subjektsust ning leida viis, kuidas seda mõtestada 21. sajandil mõistete abil. Selleks uurisin, kuidas kujutati normivälise seksuaalsuse ja soolisuse kaudu isikuid ja praktikaid sõdadevahelise Eesti trükimeedias, keskendudes aastatele 1926–1936, kui arutelu neil teemadel oli kõige elavam. Leidsin digiteeritud perioodika veebi- raamatukogudest üle kolmesaja artikli, kus mainiti homoseksuaalseid või trans- inimesi uudislugudes ja -nuppudes, ülevaadetes, intervjuudes, arvamusalustes, kohtingukuulutustes, loengute ja raamatute kokkuvõtetes. Lisaks vaatasin reklaamitud seksuaal-tervise käsiraamatuid, kus arutati seksuaalse orientatsiooni teemasid ning analüüsisin representatsioone visuaalkultuuris ja ilukirjanduses.

Kuna materjal oli äärmiselt mitmekesine, grupeerisin kõigepealt arutelud tänapäeva loogika alusel intersoolisuse, trans-inimeste, homoseksuaalsete inimese kujutisteks, seaduste ja meditsiinaruteludeks ning linnades levinud seksuaalsete subkultuuride ja nende kultuuriloo käsitlusteks. Lisaks teema-

kordustele kordusid tihti ka mainitud isikud, nt Berliini seksuoloog Magnus Hirschfeld, Suurbritannia trans-mees Victor Barker ja Taani trans-naine Lily Elbe. Perioodikas kõige enam mainitud kväärid inimesed olid A. Oinatski Lõuna-Eestist – kellest kõneleti üle neljakümnes artiklis –, ja umbes kümme artiklit mainisid homoseksuaalsete meeste pidusid korraldanud Richard Valdakut Tallinnas. Kuna A. Oinatski oli esimene seni teadaolev trans-inimene, kes andis sel teemal 1929. aastal Postimehele intervjuu, mis avaldati koos fotoga, siis keskendusin artikli teises pooles tema eluloo rekonstrueerimisele, toetudes ajalehtedele, politseitoimikutele ning meditsiiniajakirjas Eesti Arst ilmunud arutelule, mille algatas kohtuarst ja eugeenikaedendaja Hans Madisson.

Empiirilise materjali analüüsimiseks kasutasin Karen Baradi agentse realismi mudelit ning lugesin difraktiivselt eugeenika ja karskusliikumise tekste seksuaalsuse ja soolisuse normidest, ristates neid muude kujutistega normivälisest seksuaalsusest ja soolisusest. Nii selgus, et normivälise seksuaalsuse ja soolisuse identiteedikategooriad olid sõdadevahelisel perioodil üsna hägusad: meeste homoseksuaalsete praktikatega seostati teatavat identiteeti, samas kui naiste homoseksuaalsust, trans- ja intersoolisust peeti nn kolmanda soo omaduseks, mis võis aja jooksul mööduda. Teiseks selgus, et avalikku diskursust normivälise seksuaalsuse ja soolisuse teemadel raamisid kaks suundumust: ühelt poolt homoseksuaalsuse dekriminaliseerimine Eesti Vabariigi karistus-seadustikus, teiselt poolt jõudu koguv eugeenikaliikumine. Viimane nõudis äärmuslikke meetmeid heteronormatiivse ühiskonna ehitamiseks, näiteks vaimse puudega, heteronormatiivsusest erinevate ja vaeste inimeste sundsteriliseerimist või lastetuse maksustamist. Võib öelda, et sõdadevahelises Eestis olid normivälised seksuaalsed ja soolised praktikad seadustega lubatud, kuid avalik positsioon oli väga ebakindel, kuna äärmuskonservatiivsed rahvuslikud rühmad surusid maha igasugust seksuaalset mitmekesisust.

## **Artikkel II. Põldsam, Rebeka 2024. Homophobic Discourses and their Soviet History in Estonia [Eesti homofoobsed diskursused ja nende nõukogudeaegne ajalugu]. – *Folklore. Electronic Journal of Folklore* (ilmumas).**

Selles artiklis keskendusin homoseksuaalsuse kriminaliseerimisele Nõukogude Eestis (1944–1991) ja homofoobsetele diskursustele, mida see lõi. Artikli analüüs on raamistatud Judith Butleri ideedega võimust kui soolise ja seksuaalse eneseväljenduse normide seadmise vahendist. Kõigepealt uurisin, kuidas ENSV kriminaalkoodeksis ja selle kommenteeritud väljaannetes homoseksuaalseid suhteid defineeriti ja karistati. Nõukogude okupatsiooni algusest kuni 1960. aastani kehtis paragrahv 154a Pederastia, mis oli vägistamisparagrahvi lisa ning keelas nii nõusolekupõhised kui ka tahtevastased meestevahelised suguaktid viie- kuni kaheksaastase karistusega, 1961–1992. aastani kehtis ENSV kriminaalkoodeksis paragrahv 118 Pederastia, millega karistati nõusolekupõhiseid seksuaalsuhteid meeste vahel kuni kaheaastase vabadusekaotusega ja vägivalda kasutades kahe- kuni kuueaastase vabadusekaotusega. Artikli teises pooles keskendun juhtumiuuringule konsensuaalseid homoseksuaalseid suhteid käsitle-

vast mahukast toimikust, et paremini mõista homoseksuaalsete suhete kriminaliseerimise mõju sellistes suhetes olevate meeste eludele.

Ametliku Nõukogude Liidu statistika järgi karistati Eesti NSVs „pederastia-paragrahvi“ alusel 212 meest (vrd Valodzin 2020). Minu uurimistöö näitab, et statistika ei pea paika: karistatud mehi oli rohkem, kuid statistika vea põhjus on teadmata. Paragrahvi kasutamisest selgema ülevaate saamiseks võrdlesin Tallinna ja Harju rajooni rahvakohtute kaasuseid (kokku 76 kaasust) ja nende hulka Tartu linna ja rajooni rahvakohtute kaasustega (kokku 13 kaasust) vahemikus 1956–1991. Lisaks leidsin 18 kaasust teistest rahvakohtute ja ülemkohtu arhiivimaterjalidest. Kõigist kaasustest säilitab rahvusarhiiv vähemalt kohtuotsust või -määrust, kuid vähem kui pooltest on säilitatud kohtutoimikud, sealjuures nõusolekupõhistest kaasustest on säilinud vaid üks, nn Esimehe toimik (vt Samma *et al.* 2015), mida pikemalt analüüsin. Kokku leidsin 107 „pederastiaparagrahvi“ alusel uuritud kaasust, millega 204 meest süüdi mõisteti ja üks kuriteo koosseisu puudumise pärast uurimisest vabastati. Nendest kaasustest umbes 10% käsitlesid nõusolekupõhiseid homoseksuaalseid suhteid, 20% pedofiiliajuhtumeid ning ülejäänud vägistamisi ja grupivägistamisi, millest omakorda 90% juhtusid vanglates.

Kohtutoimikutest leitud materjale analüüsisin, kõrvutades mitmesuguseid avalikus käibes olnud materjale, kus räägiti homoseksuaalsusest. 1960. aastatest alates ilmus mitmeid suureтирааžilisi seksuaalkasvatuse käsiraamatuid, mis käsitlesid vähemalt ühes-kahes lõigus homoseksuaalsust. Sarnaselt defineeris homoseksuaalsust Eesti Nõukogude Entsüklopeedia (1971, 1988) loomuvastase sugulise käitumisena, mis meestevahelisena on kriminaalkoodeksi alusel karistatav. Nõukogudeaegsetest vanglamälestustest joonistus välja üsna kitsas diskursus, et homoseksuaalsed suhted on normaalsusest irduvad ning omased vangide nn põhjakihile, mida nn tegijatel tuleb häbeneda, varjata. Sellised narratiivid resoneerivad hästi Minna Hindi ja Liisi Eelmaa 2011. aasta videoinstallatsiooniga „Kuuldud jutt“, kus toona avalikult homofoobsete ütlemistega tuntust kogunud seitse meest ja üks naine räägivad kunstnikele antud lühintervjuudes, kuidas nad mõistavad homoseksuaalsust. Intervjuudes korduvad diskursused, milles kajavad mineviku domineerivad diskursused normivälisest seksuaalsusest ja soolisusest, mis on minetanud oma reaalse jõu (vt Foucault 1972: 58), kuna taasisesisvunud Eestis kehtivad teistsugused seadused ja ühiskondlikud normid.

Artikli teises pooles analüüsin 1966. aasta kohtukaasust, mille põhjal Jaanus Samma on teinud kunstiteose „NSFW: Esimehe lugu“ (2013/2015). Erinevalt kunstnikust, kes keskendus ühe mehe loole, uurisin kohtumenetluskäiku, paralleelseid kaasuseid, karistusi ja leidsin ühe homoseksuaalsetes suhetes olevate meeste võrgustiku, mis ühendas kolme Nõukogude Eesti linna ja rajooni. Et Esimehe toimik on ainus täielikult säilitatud ja ainult nõusolekupõhiste homoseksuaalsetele suhetele keskendunud kriminaaluurimus, mis on seni leitud, annavad sealsed tunnistused aimu meestevaheliste seksuaalsuhete dünaamikast, mille kohta muid allikaid seni pole.

**Artikkel III. Arumetsa, Sara, Põldsam, Rebeka 2023. Emergence of LGBT Movements in Late Soviet and Post-Soviet Estonia [LGBT liikumiste tekkimine hilisnõukogude ajal ja nõukogudejärgses Eestis]. – *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 1–14. doi: 10.1080/08038740.2023.2195207.**

Koos soouurija Sara Arumetsaga uurisime Eesti lesbi-, gei- ja trans-õiguste liikumise tekkimist Eesti rahvusliku liikumise kontekstis aastatel 1988–1993. Rekonstrueerisime sündmuste kronoloogia, mis viis LGBT aktivismi tekkeni. Uurimist alustasime aiasi- ja homoseksuaalsuse teemalistest ajakirjanduslikest artiklitest, samuti tegime intervjuusid esimeste aktivistidega ning analüüsisime kahe 1990. aastal toimunud konverentsi arhiivimaterjale, kus arutati homoseksuaalsete inimeste õiguseid ka Eesti kontekstis. Artikli eesmärgiks oli uurida, kuidas arenes homoseksuaalsete inimeste võrdõiguslikkuse diskursus paralleelselt homofoobse ja heteronormatiivse rahvusliku diskursusega.

Uuritavat perioodi peetakse Eesti lähiajaloo kõige suuremaks murranguks, mis algas nõukogude ühiskonna perestroika ja glasnostiga ja kulmineerus Baltimaade iseseisvumisega. Raamistasime uuritava perioodi Juri Lotmani kultuurilise plahvatuse mudeliga, mille kohaselt varem võimatud avalikud arutelud homoseksuaalsusest ühtäkki ilmusid. Glasnost viis ajakirjandusvabaduseni ning perestroika ettevõtlusvabaduseni, mis muutis ülikiirelt ajakirjanduse kui valdkonna toimimismehhanisme, teemasid ja esitlusviise. Kui 1987. aastal diagnoositi esimest korda HIV-positiivne inimene Nõukogude Liidus, Moskvast ja aasta hiljem Eestis, hakati mujal maailmas juba epideemia levinud haiguse ennetuseks homoseksuaalsusest rohkem rääkima ning nõudma selle dekriminaliseerimist. Eestis vedasid homoseksuaalsete inimeste õiguste debatti ENSV Teaduste Akadeemia ajalooinstituudi töötajad, kes 1990. aastal korraldasid Nõukogude Liidu esimese rahvusvahelise homoseksuaalsusele pühendatud avaliku konverentsi „Seksuaalvähemused ja ühiskond“ Tallinnas ja Tartus. Konverents kujunes Eestis suureks meediasündmuseks ning välisesinejad julgustasid kohalikke lesbisid ja geisid kogukonnana organiseeruma. Samal aastal registreeriti Eesti Lesbiliit ja 1992. aastal, pärast homoseksuaalsuse dekriminaliseerimist, registreerisid ühinguid ka geiorganisatsioonid. Arutelud trans-inimeste õigustest ja vajadustest algasid ka 1990. aastal, kuid organisatsioonina registreeriti see alles 2011. aastal. Trans-inimeste õiguste eest võitles kogu kümnendi Kristel Regina, keda Sara Arumetsa korduvalt intervjueris. Aktivist Kristel Regina töösaavutuseks on 1999. aastast seni kehtiv käskkiri, mis reguleerib soolist üleminekut.

Lisaks konverentsile „Seksuaalvähemused ja ühiskond“ peeti 1990. aastal üleeuroopalist inimõiguste konverentsi Helsingi Kodanike Assamblee (HKA) Prahast. Sel konverentsil positsioneerisid Ida-Euroopa delegaadid end ühtselt homoseksuaalse vähemuse suhtes üleolevale positsioonile, pidades neid muude inimõiguste kõrval väheoluliseks. Konverentsil tekkis konflikt Ida- ja Lääne-Euroopa inimõiguslaste vahel, kus kumbki pool ei saanud teise positsioonist ja eesmärkidest aru. Võib öelda, et see sündmus märgib ka Eestis inimõiguste jaotumist kaheks vastanduvaks diskursuseks: rahvuslike ja kollektiivsete, sh

majanduslike õiguste suund ja ühiskonna vähemusgruppide, sealhulgas seksuaalvähemuste õiguste ja individuaalsete vabaduste suund.

**Artikkel IV. Marling, Raili, Põldsam, Rebeka 2022. Affect and Queer Intimate Entanglements in Nationalist-Neoliberal Estonia [Afeektsed ja kväärid intiimsed seostevõrgustikud rahvuslik-neoliberaalses Eestis]. – *Sexualities* (ilmunud veebis), 1–15. doi: 10.1177/13634607221112646.**

Juhendaja Raili Marlingiga koos kirjutatud artiklis analüüsisime tänapäevase Eesti rahvuslikus ja neoliberalis ühiskonnas levinud kvääre seostevõrgustikke ja afeekte. Empiiriliseks materjaliks võtsime minu etnograafilise välitöö vaatlused 2018. aasta sügisest 2019. aasta talveni. Välitöö päevikust valisin viie naise lood, kes rääkisid mulle, kuidas nende intiimsuhete valikud sõltuvad majanduslikest oludest, ning oma probleemidest heteronormatiivsusega. Analüüsisime neid lugusid Karen Baradi agentse realismi ning Lauren Berlanti neoliberalsete afeektide kriitika raamistikus. Artikli eesmärgiks oli kirjeldada rahvuslik-neoliberaalses ühiskonnas kvääriks peetavaid afektiivseid seostevõrgustikke (*entanglements*) ehk püüdsime mõista, mis ja kuidas defineerib praegusaja Eestis kvääri mõistet.

Artikli esimeses osas arutleb Marling, kuidas rahvuslik neoliberalne ühiskond sekkub isiklikku intiimsfääri ja muudab kõik normatiivsusega teadlikult sobimatud kvääriks. Väidame, et postsotsialistlikus Eestis defineerib vähemalt naiste jaoks kvääri mitte vaid kuulumine LGBT+ kogukonda, vaid igasugune eluviis, mis ei vasta rangelt heteronormatiivse reproduktiivse elu nõudmistele. Marling näitab, et Eesti kui rahvusriigi alusväärtuseks on neoliberalism, mis on omane ka Eestis laialt levinud uusvaimsete praktikate aluspõhimõttele. Niisiis erinevalt paljudest riikidest pole Eesti pronatalistlik rahvuslus seotud niivõrd kristlusega, vaid neoliberalisusega.

Artikli teine pool keskendus narratiivide analüüsile, kus naised väljendasid sobimatust heteronormatiivsusega. Uuritavad naised tunnetasid enesest võõrandumist, sõltumata sellest, kas nad olid abielus, avatud suhtes või üksikud, sest tundsid, et nende elu domineerivad rahamured. Kolm uuritavat naist olid abielus: üks neist identifitseeris end biseksuaalsena ning oli abielus kvääri mehega, teised kaks identifitseerisid end heteroseksuaalsetena ning olid abielus oma laste isaga. Abielus naised kirjeldasid, kuidas ebakindlus sissetuleku pärast mõjutab tugevalt nende seksuaalsuhteid ning et nad tajuvad abielu piiravana. Ülejäänud kaks naist defineerisid end biseksuaalse või kväärina, kuid polnud oma mitte-heteroseksuaalsusest pereringis ega väljaspool lähimate sõprade ringi rääkinud. Üks naine oli otsustanud end pühendada karjäärile ning otsis seksuaalpartnerit, kuid mitte elukaaslast, sest püüdis ülemäärast emotsionaalset tähelepanu. Teine naine oli tahtnud oma protestantidest perele küll n-õ kapist välja tulla, kuid ta polnud selleks piisavalt tavalises suhtes olnud, et võtta lähedaste pereliikmete silmis stigmatiseeritud LGBT+ kogukonna liikme roll.

Lugusid analüüsisid joonistusid välja kahte sorti afektiivsed kväärid seostevõrgustikud. Esiteks soovimatu sobitumus (*involuntary nonconformity*), mille



juured ulatuvad nõukogude aega, kui inimesed pidid sobituma ametlike normidega või vähemalt näima nagu nad sobituks, kartes ootamatuid karistusi, mida rõhuv režiim sobitumatutele pani. Soovimatu sobitumatus iseloomustab nii inimesi, kes tunnevad end rõhutuna poliitiliselt laetud kitsas LGBT kogukonna kategoorias, sõltumata nende seksuaalsetest ja soolistest praktikatest, kui ka inimesi, kelle jaoks on pronatalistlik heteronormatiivsus vastumeelne ka siis, kui nad sellega pealtnäha sobituvad. Teine rahvuslikku neoliberaalsust iseloomustav kvääride intiimsuste seostevõrgustik on teatav eemaldumine iseendast. Uuritavad kasutasid oma elust rääkides neoliberaalsusega seotud mõisteid nagu emotsionaalne investeering, kasutegur ja ajajuhtimine. Neoliberaalne loogika vedas uuritavaid aga alt, sest raha teenimine võttis neilt nii palju aega, et nad kaotasid sideme iseendaga. Et end paremini tunda, otsisid naised tuge uusvaimusest või enesehävituslikest tegevustest. Selle põhjal võib öelda, et neoliberaalne intiimsus ongi afektiivselt kväär: neoliberaalse õnne lubadus jääb alati täitumatuks.

## Kokkuvõte

Uurimistöö põhjal teen väitekirjas kolm üldistavat järeldust. Esiteks, hoolimata püüetest seksuaal- ja soovähemusi avalikusest tõrjuda, võib igas uuritud ajajärgus ja poliitilises režiimis leida jälgi homoseksuaalsetest ja transsoolistest inimestest Eestis. Nõukogude aja domineerivate diskursustega põhjendati ja julgustati seksuaal- ja soovähemusrühmade süsteemset karistamist, ähvardamist ja vaigistamist. Nõukogude repressiivsete diskursuste mõju ulatus nii eelneva perioodi kvääri mineviku allasurumisse ning on jätkuvalt paljude arusaam seksuaalsuse ja soolisuse normidest.

Teine üldine järeldus on see, et normivälise soolisuse ja seksuaalsuse kohta käivaid diskursuseid on igal uuritud perioodil tugevalt mõjutanud pronatalistlikud diskursused. Nimelt on domineerivad diskursused kirjeldanud normivälise seksuaalsuse ja soolisuse subjekte ohuna rahvuse heteroseksuaalsele taastootmisele. Sõdadevahelise Eesti domineeriv diskursus eestlaste rahvusliku taastootmise teemal balanseeris sotsiaaldemokraatlike ja rahvusliku eugeenika liikumise ettepanekute vahel. Nõukogudeaegne seksuaalpoliitika keskendus naiste reproduktiivtöö kohustusele, kuid teises ideoloogilises raamistuses kui sõdadevahelises Eestis. Pronatalism on püsinud kogu konservatiivse poliitika-spektri ühe peateemana ka pärast Eesti iseseisvuse taastamist. Seadustest, mis tagaks õigusliku raami samast soost vanematega tuumikperekondadele, hakati esmakordselt rääkima taasiseseisvunud Eestis 1990. aastatel.

Kolmandaks võib üldiselt järeldada, et Eestile iseloomulikke diskursuseid normivälisest seksuaalsusest ja soolisusest on alati mõjutanud rahvusvahelised suundumused. Sõdadevahelise perioodi diskursused seksuaalsuse ja soolisuse normatiivsusest olid äratuntavalt dialoogis Euroopas, eriti Saksamaal käinud aruteludega seksuaalsete ja sooliste väljendusvõimaluste mitmekesisusest. Nõukogude aja diskursuseid kujundas eelkõige Nõukogude Liit aga ka idabloki riigid. Nõukogude Liidus olid meeste homoseksuaalsed suhted kriminaliseeritud

alates 1934. aastast, ent 1961. aastal võeti paljudes nõukogude vabariikides vastu kohalik kriminaalkodeks ning ka kohtupraktikad erinesid piirkonniti (vt Lipša 2017). Eesti kohtupraktika viitab sellele, et nõusolekupõhiseid homoseksuaalseid suhteid üldjoontest sõdadevahelises Eestis ei karistatud ja need suhted ka dekriminaliseeriti. Nõukogude Eestis olid „pederastiaparagrahvi“ alusel määratud karistused leebemad kui Lätis, Leedus ja Venemaal, võimalik, et siin võeti eeskujuks need idabloki sotsialistlikud riigid, kus 1960. aastatel homoseksuaalsus karistusseadustest välja võeti. 1980. aastate lõpus hakkasid seksuaal- ja soovähemuste kohta käivaid diskursuseid mõjutama ühelt poolt riikideüleised Euroopa institutsioonid, mille eesmärk on parandada vähemusrühmade võrdseid õiguseid, teiselt poolt üha laienev nn *anti-gender*’i-liikumine.

Dissertatsioon on esimene põhjalik uurimus, mis püüab luua tingliku kronoloogia Eestis levinud seksuaalsust ja soolisust normeerivatest üldlevinud diskursustest. Sel viisil pakun uurimuses välja normivälise seksuaalsuse ja soolisuse ajaloo käsitluse, proovides täita seni ajaloouurimuses haigutanud tühiküsimusi. Olen püüdnud luua raamistiku iga uuritud perioodi kohta, mis võiks edaspidi olla abiks, et konkreetse diskursuse kontekstis lähemalt uurida elulugusid, ilukirjandust või muid kitsamalt ja isiklikumalt piiritletavaid juhtumeid. Ka diskursuste uurimist võiks laiendada, et vaadelda, millised tähenduslikud seostevõrgustikud normivälise seksuaalsuse ja soolisuse kohta käivate diskursustega veel intra-aktiivsete protsesside kaudu seostuvad. Doktoritööle punkti panemise ajal, 2023. aasta suvel, kui abieluvõrdsus on seaduseks välja kuulutatud ja teema kaotab tähtsust, algab normivälise seksuaalsuse ja soolisuse kohta käivate domineerivate diskursuste loomes uus periood. Seda ennustavad rahvusvahelised soolist üleminekut vaevavad ja vaenavad debatil, mis Eestis potentsiaalselt võimenduvad, kuna soolise ülemineku protsess ei vasta transkogukonna ootustele.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

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### Education

2018–... University of Tartu, PhD studies in Ethnology  
2019 April–June visiting scholar in Feminist Studies at UC Santa Cruz with Dora Mobility grant  
2011–2012 Goldsmiths, University of London MA in Contemporary Art Theory  
2008–2011 Estonian Academy of Arts, BA in art history  
1996–2008 Tallinna Reaalkool

### Employment

2022–2023 University of Tartu, Department of Ethnology, Junior Research Fellow  
2022– ... Ariadne Lõng, editor  
2012– ... Estonian Academy of Arts, visiting lecturer  
2012–2017 Centre for Contemporary Arts, Estonia, project manager and curator  
2009– ... independent art critic and curator

### Publications

Põldsam, Rebeka; Taavetti, Riikka 2024. Sisters Across the Gulf: Transnational Connections and Frictions in Estonian-Finnish Lesbian Network of the early 1990s. – *Lambda Nordica* (forthcoming).  
Põldsam, Rebeka 2024. Homophobic Discourses and their Soviet History in Estonia. – *Folklore. Electronic Journal of Folklore* (forthcoming).  
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Põldsam, Rebeka 2020. Otsides kvääre lugusid sõdadevahelise Eesti ajakirjandusest [*Looking for queer stories from interwar Estonian media: The position of eugenics in discussions about homosexuality and transgender issues*]. – *Mäetagused*, 76, 95–124. <https://doi.org/10.7592/MT2020.76.poldsam>

- Pöldsam, Rebeka 2019. Why Are There No Great Artists In The Baltics? – Šelda Pukite (ed.). *Survival Kit 10.1*. Latvian Center of Contemporary Art.
- Pöldsam, Rebeka 2019. 1,4 Men for One Woman. A gender perspective in Estonian Art of the 2000s. – Johannes Saar, Andreas Trossek, Rael Artel (eds.). *Estonian Art of the 00s*. Center for Contemporary Arts, Estonia.
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- Pöldsam, Rebeka 2014. Kväärid kunstipraktikad Ida-Euroopas [Queer art practices in Eastern Europe]. – *Ariadne Lõng*. XIV, 1–2, 133–143.
- Pöldsam, Rebeka, Taavetti Riikka 2015. Rumors and other stories about lesbians and gays behind the Curtain and beyond. A conversation between historian Riikka Taavetti and art writer Rebeka Pöldsam. – Jaanus Samma, Eugenio Viola, Martin Rünk & Rebeka Pöldsam (eds.). *Not suitable for work. A Chairman's tale*. Berlin: Sternberg Press & Tallinn: Center for Contemporary Arts.
- Pöldsam, Rebeka 2010. LGBTQI identiteedid Eesti kunstis. – Brigitta Davidjants (ed.). Kapiuksed valla: Arutlusi homo-, bi- ja transseksuaalsusest. Eesti Gei Noored 2010.

### **Selected creative work**

- 2022–2023 curator and researcher for audioguide *From “such people” to LGBT activism. Stories from sexual and gender minorities in the 20th century Estonia* at Vabamu museum. MNEMUS project
- 2018–2022 editor of Estonian popular queer history collection “Kalevi alt välja. LGBT+ inimeste lugusid 19. ja 20. sajandi Eestist” (Eesti LGBT Ühing 2022, in rough translation *Bring back to light. Stories of LGBT+ people from 19th and 20th century Estonia*)
- 2020–2021 co-curator with Andreas Kalkun of exhibition *Vanda Juhansoo. Artist or an eccentric woman?* (Estonian Museum of Design and Applied Arts 18.01–08.03.2020; Tartu City Museum 19.06.–26.09.2021)
- 2020 editor of Feminist crosswords booklet *Feministik*
- 2019 curator of group exhibition *Anu Põder. Be Fragile! Be Brave!* at Pori Art Museum
- 2019 co-curator of TOKSI-LINE arts festival at EKKM
- 2017–2018 Roosa Müts (Pink Hat) columnist at cultural weekly *Sirp*
- 2017 curator and catalogue editor of international group exhibition *Anu Põder. Be Fragile! Be Brave!* at Kumu Art Museum
- 2017 coordinator of Helena Keskküla solo show *Sandgrain's Ballad* at Avangard Gallery, Pärnu

- 2014–2017 co-editor of Contemporary Art Weekly Newsletter by CCA, Estonia
- 2016 curator and project manager of international symposium “Art in the Era of Digital Capitalism” May 5–6, 2016 at Tallinna Arhitektuurikeskus organised by CCA, Estonia
- 2016 curator of exhibition *I Just Don't Know What To Do* at Vaal gallery
- 2016 co-curator with Andreas Kalkun of exhibition *Woman With A Covered Head* at Seto Talumuuseum, Värskä
- 2016 editor of Raul Meel “Apocrypha” (Potato Books no 2, CCA, Estonia & Lagemik Imprint)
- 2015 editor of Marge Monko “Right/Wrong” (Potato Books no 1, CCA, Estonia & Lagemik Imprint)
- 2015 co-editor of *NSFW. A Chairman's Tale* exhibition publication together with Eugenio Viola and Martin Rünk
- 2014 host of EKKM Theory Club radio programme on Estonian National Broadcast Klassikaraadio
- 2014 curator of international group exhibition *Feeling Queezy?!* at EKKM, and editor of a queer art theory reader accompanying the exhibition
- 2013–2015 voluntary assistant for Nancy Nakamura Shelf of Ideas [nancynakamura.tumblr.com](http://nancynakamura.tumblr.com)
- 2013 curator of triple exhibition of LadyFest Tallinn 2013 at galleries Draakon, Hobusepea in Tallinn and Y-galerii and Tartu
- 2012–2017 curator and project manager at Center for Contemporary Arts, Estonia [www.cca.ee](http://www.cca.ee)
- 2010–2011 co-curating exhibition project *Untold Stories* together with Anders Härm and Airi Triisberg at Tallinn Art Hall
- 2010 organising together with Airi Triisberg international youth seminar „Problems and Possibilities of LGBTQI communities in Eastern Europe“

### **Associations**

2013 Estonian Society of Art Historians and Curators

### **Awards**

2018 Estonian Cultural Endowment Annual Prize for innovative art history writing and curating exhibition *Anu Pöder. Be Fragile! Be Brave!* at Kumu Art Museum

2018 The Best Writer of the cultural weekly Sirp in 2017

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## Haridus

2018–... Tartu Ülikool, Kultuuriteaduste Instituut, doktoriõpe  
etnoloogia erialal;  
2019 aprill–juuni UC Santa Cruz, feminismi uuringute osakonna külalisteadur  
2011–2012 Goldsmiths, University of London, kaasaegse kunsti teooria  
MA  
2008–2011 Eesti Kunstiakadeemia, kunstiteadus BA  
1996–2008 Tallinna Reaalkool

## Teenistuskäik

2022–2023 Tartu Ülikool, etnoloogia osakond, nooremteadur  
2022–... soouuringute ajakirja Ariadne Lõng toimetaja  
2012–... Eesti Kunstiakadeemia külalislektor  
2012–2017 Kaasaegse Kunsti Eesti Keskuse projektijuht-kuraator  
2009–... vabakutseline kunstikriitik ja kuraator

## Publikatsioonid

Põldsam, Rebeka; Taavetti, Riikka 2024. Sisters Across the Gulf: Transnational Connections and Frictions in Estonian-Finnish Lesbian Network of the early 1990s. – *Lambda Nordica* (ilmumas)  
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Marling, Raili; Põldsam, Rebeka 2022. Affect and queer intimate entanglements in nationalist-neoliberal Estonia. – *Sexualities* (online), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13634607221112646>  
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- Põldsam, Rebeka 2019. 1,4 meest ühe naise kohta. Sooperspektiiv nullindate eesti kunstis. – Johannes Saar, Andreas Trossek, Rael Artel (toim.). *Nul-lindad eesti kunstis*. KKEK.
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- Põldsam, Rebeka 2018. Decolonising post-Soviet selves with untold stories. – Kati Kivinen, Saara Hacklin (toim.). *There and Back Again: Contemporary art from the Baltic Sea region*. Kiasma.
- Põldsam, Rebeka 2014. Kväärid kunstipraktikad Ida-Euroopa [Queer art practices in Eastern Europe] – *Ariadne Lõng*, Estonian gender studies journal XIV, 1–2, 133–143.
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- Põldsam, Rebeka 2010. LGBTQI identiteedid Eesti kunstis. – Brigitta Davidjants (toim.). *Kapiuksed valla: Arutlusi homo-, bi- ja transseksuaalsusest*. Eesti Gei Noored.

### **Valik loometööst**

- 2022–2023 Vabamu näituse „Niisugustest“ LGBT aktivismini. Lugusid seksuaal- ja soovähemustest 20. sajandi Eestis“ kuraator ja uurija. MNEMUS
- 2018–2022 populaarteadusliku kogumiku “Kalevi alt välja. LGBT+ inimeste lugusid 19. ja 20. sajandi Eestist” (Eesti LGBT Ühing 2022) toimetaja ja koostaja
- 2020–2021 näituse „Vanda Juhansoo.Kunstnik või kummaline naine?“ (ETDM 18.01–08.03.2020; Tartu linnamuuseum 19.06.–26.09.2021) kaas-kuraator koos Andreas Kalkunga
- 2020 Feministeeriumi mõistatustevihiku „Feministik“ tegevtoimetaja
- 2019 näituse “Anu Pöder. Be Fragile! Be Brave!” (Pori kunstimuuseum) kuraator
- 2019 kunstifestivali TOKSI-LINE (Eesti Kunstiakadeemia, EKKM) kaas-kuraator
- 2017–2018 Sirbi kolumni Roosa Müts autor
- 2017 näituse kuraator ja kataloogi toimetaja „Anu Pöder. Haprus on vaprus“ (Kumu kunstimuuseum)
- 2017 Helena Keskküla näituse „Liivatera ballaad“ (Avangard galerii, Pärnu) koordinaator
- 2014–2017 KKEKi Kaasaegse Kunsti uudiskirja toimetaja
- 2016 rahvusvahelise sümposiooni “Art in the Era of Digital Capitalism” (5.–6. mai 2016, Tallinna Arhitektuurikeskus) kuraatori ja korraldaja

- 2016 näituse „Ära ole see, kes sa oled, ole ilus“ (Vaal galerii) kuraator
- 2016 näituse „Kaetud peaga naine“ (Seto Talumuuseum, Värskas) kaaskuraator koos Andreas Kalkuniga
- 2016 kunstikuraamatu Raul Meel “Apokriivad” (Potato Books no 2, KKEK & Lugemik) toimetaja
- 2015 kunstikuraamatu Marge Monko “Õige/Vale” (Potato Books no 1, KKEK & Lugemik) toimetaja
- 2014 „EKKMi teoriaklubi“ hooaja kaasautor, Klassikaraadio
- 2014 rahvusvahelise grupinäituse “*Feeling Queezy?! /Kõhe tunne?!*” (EKKM) kuraator ja kvääri kunstiteooria lugemiku koostaja-toimetaja
- 2013–2015 Nancy Nakamura Ideederiuli vabatahtlik assistent  
nancynakamura.tumblr.com
- 2013 LadyFest Tallinn 2013 (Draakoni galerii, Hobusepea galerii Tallinnas, Y-galerii Tartus) kolmikäituse kuraator
- 2010–2011 näituse „Sõnastamata lood“ (Tallinna Kunstihoone) kaaskuraator koos Anders Härmi ja Airi Triisbergiga
- 2010 rahvusvahelise nädalase seminari „Problems and Possibilities of LGBTQI communities in Eastern Europe“ kaaskorraldaja koos Airi Triisbergiga EKKMis

### **Tunnustused**

- 2018 Eesti Kultuurkapitali preemia kunstiajalugu mõtestava Kumu kunstimuuseumi näituse ja kataloogi “Anu Pöder. Haprus on vaprus” eest
- 2018 Sirbi aasta laureaat 2017. aasta artiklite eest kolumnis “Roosa müts”

### **Erialane kuuluvus**

- 2013 Eesti Kunstiteadlaste ja Kuraatorite Ühing



## DISSERTATIONES ETHNOLOGIAE UNIVERSITATIS TARTUENSIS

1. **Ene Kõresaar.** Memory and history in Estonian Post-Soviet life. Stories private and public, individual and collective from the perspective of biographical syncretism. Tartu, 2004, 299 p.
2. **Indrek Jääts.** Etnilised protsessid Vene impeeriumi siseperifeerias 1801–1904. Komi rahvusluse süünd. Tartu, 2005, 316 p.
3. **Людмила Ямурзина.** Обряды семейного цикла мари в контексте теории обрядов перехода. Тарту, 2011, 219 с.
4. **Ester Bardone.** My farm is my stage: a performance perspective on rural tourism and hospitality services in Estonia. Tartu, 2013, 253 p.
5. **Marleen Metslaid.** Between the folk and scholarship: ethnological practice in Estonia in the 1920s and 1930s. Tartu, 2016, 195 p.
6. **Kirsti Jõesalu.** Dynamics and tensions of remembrance in post-Soviet Estonia: Late socialism in the making. Tartu, 2017, 246 p.
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