

MAKE IT QUEER[ER]



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08/10/2023
ACEX35 - MASTER'S THESIS COURSE 2023
Design Activism Beyond Borders
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ABSTRACT

Spatial design is intrinsically and mutually influenced by our current ideologies, beliefs, and aspirations, manifesting themselves in walls, roofs, volumes, and voids. Consequently, at a glance, our spaces also reflect power: formal or informal institutions, governments, persuasive private actors, and economical flows. Monuments, public squares and avenues all hold the traces of this materially articulated dominance.

However, as Michel Foucault states, “Where there is power, there is resistance”. How and where do we find traces of resistance in our existing spatial realms? Who is placed on the metaphorical outskirts of the city, left to adapt to the established built environment? And how does this very adaptation translate into resistance manifested in their own walls, roofs, volumes, and voids?

With questions such as these in mind, this thesis turns to answers in the world and word of “queer”. A complex concept with a variety of disparate and contradictory definitions, the term “queer” resists being pinpointed in just a couple of sentences. In most definitions, however, “queer” and “queering” seek to understand loci of power structures, to deconstruct and destabilize them. In this thesis, the word is used to examine a semi-public space in Gothenburg, by abstracting a set of tools for analyzing and reimagining space with a queer perspective.

The object of interrogation is the central shopping center of Nordstan, on which tools of queering extracted from literature and reference projects are tested. As a result, a visualization of the queer potentials of Nordstan is created.

As such, the role of the architect in the research is also recognized as different from the traditional role of the ultimate and sole designer of space, into more of a generator of ideas, inspiration, and disruption.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to...

My advisor Emilio Da Cruz Brandão, for your kind, empathetic and creative advice before and during the thesis process.

My examiner Marco Adelfio, for equal amounts of empathy during supervision and throughout the master's.

My dear friend Linda, for acting like a second advisor with the energy and enthusiasm I sometimes lacked myself.

My loving partner Henrik, for always being there through ups and downs.

All other friends and family, who have given me their support and encouragement throughout this intense, interesting and challenging process.

And finally, a wide, sweeping, and unclear acknowledgment to all the researchers, designers and writers who have ever taken the topics of feminist or queer architecture into their work, laying the foundations for my research, broadening my knowledge, and inspiring me to continue exploring and learning.

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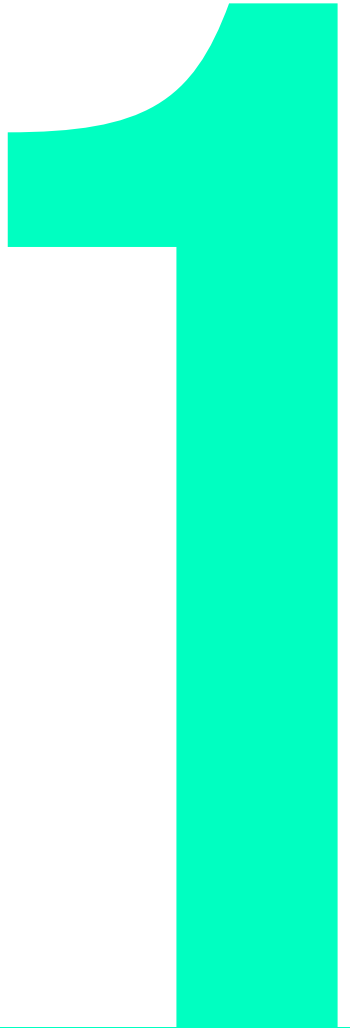
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INTRODUCTION



Figure 1. By author. Asserting my positionality before the task of the thesis.

My personal interest in the subject of queerness stems from years of discussion, lectures, and arguments with queer and non-queer people around me. These inputs have given me an increased understanding of the intricacies and vulnerabilities that many individuals are enduring, and a wish to find a way to apply my knowledge to a larger project.

Being in a position of privilege in an upper educational system (amongst other aspects of privilege), lifting this subject can hopefully bring a small relief to a part of the fatigue of explanation of the members of the community themselves.

During this research, I have been well aware of the difficulties in approaching a subject that deals with people in minorities or in socially vulnerable positions, especially given that I am by most definitions not part of those groups. In several ways, my lived experiences do not allow me to fully understand the struggles of the communities

that I am approaching in my thesis. It is therefore essential for me to come from a highly sensitive and empathetic place when doing research.

I am acutely aware that I might (unconsciously) engage in ways that are not helpful to the communities. Although the attempt at writing this thesis comes from a good place, the execution risks being more clumsy than wished.

Therefore, I am stressing that I humbly welcome and accept any criticism, opinions, or invitations to discuss. The thesis is not meant as a terminus, but rather as my own puzzle piece in the general discussion of queerness and architecture.

Researching and working with the subject allows me to learn and grow with the work and to develop my own sensibility towards queer, querness and queering. The wish to learn and to become better while acknowledging the risk of failure must be greater than the ego of the researcher.

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION:

How can an instance of queer(ing) space be summarized and visualized in one drawing?

SUPPORTING RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

What are the benefits of practicing “queer” space creation? What are the drawbacks?

How can a designer with no personal belonging to the LGBTQ+ community practice queer architecture? How is it productive / counter-productive?

URGENCY OF THE TOPIC

The need for larger & more mindful representation in the design professions and process

The benefits of alternative readings of space

The need for “allies” to step up and share the burden of the non-represented

[ONE] PATHWAY TO QUEERING

MAKING MY PATH

To stake out a logically evolving path towards a visualization of queering space, I created this pathway. The purpose of the pathway is to guide me from my learned knowledge about queerness and space, towards an final “product” of queer imagination and visualization. Along the process of writing, the pathway has evolved and changed to accommodate for changes and discoveries along the way.

READING THE DIAGRAM

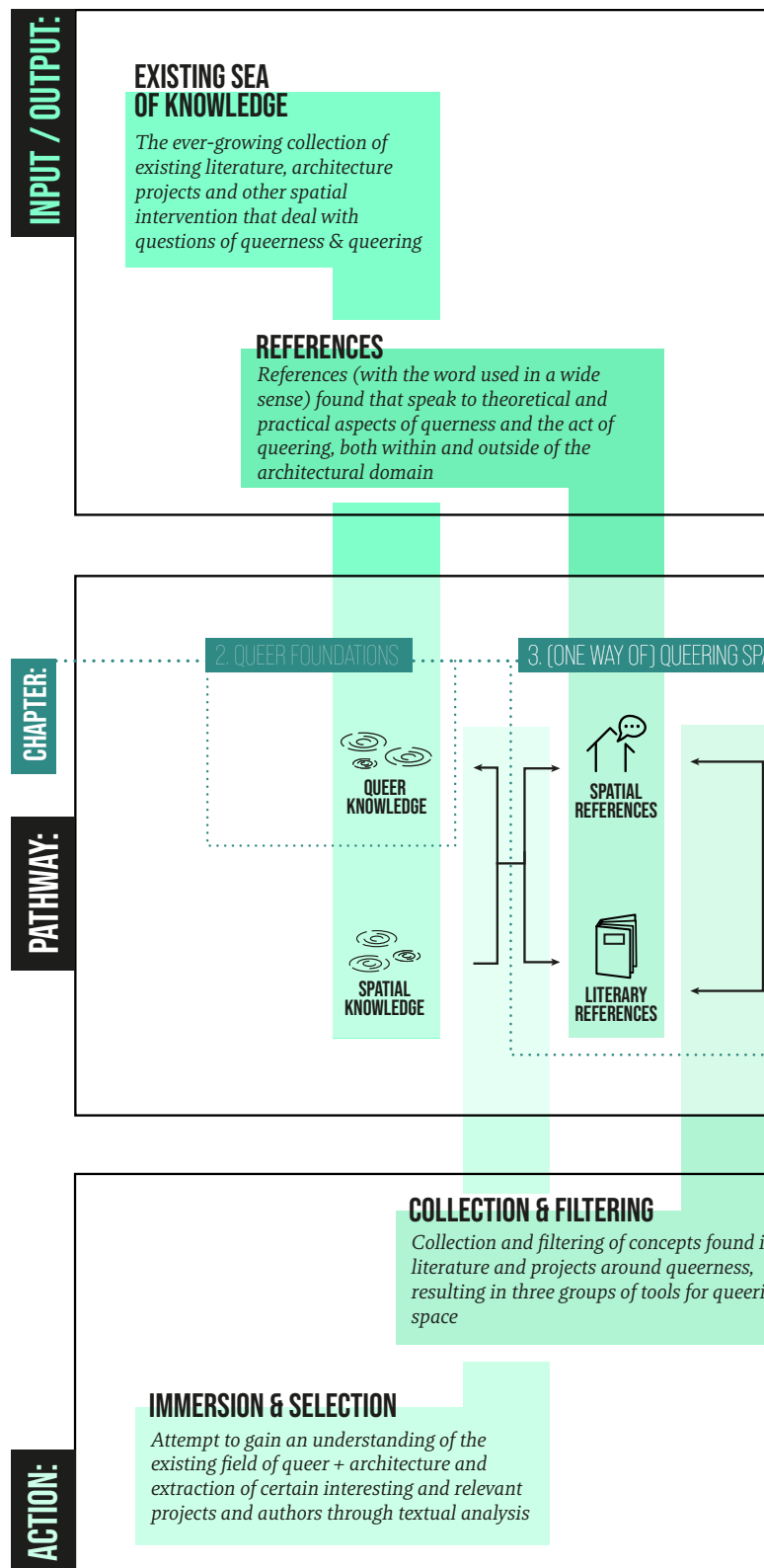
The pathway diagram is divided in three vertically stacked sections. In the middle is the pathway, showing each taken step in the upcoming parts of the thesis. Each step is connected either the top section “Input / Output”, or the bottom section “Action”. The inputs are processed by actions, resulting in new outputs, which are then used as input for the next step. In the middle section, a guide shows the chapters of each step.

Reading the pathway from left to right:

- In chapter 2, Queer Foundations, I set a base for our understanding of the word queer, foreshadowing some ways in which we will use it further along the path.
- In chapter 3, I enter the bulk subject of the thesis, the cross-section of “queer” and “space”. With the help of several chosen spatial reference projects and supporting literature references, three “spatial tools to queer” are extracted and explained.
- In chapter 4, my case study site of Nordstan is introduced. Nordstan is subsequently analyzed through the lens of one of the tools, the queer spatial analysis criteria.
- In chapter 5, I apply my findings from chapter 3 and 4 to create a visual representation of a queerly imagined Nordstan.
- In chapter 6, I reflect on my work and open for future questions and areas of research.

NOTES ON THE ANALYSIS

All filtering processes, that is all “actions”, have been carefully made by myself, using previous knowledge as spatial designer, my acquired knowledge of queerness and queering, and what I have deemed suitable and interesting as analysis points.



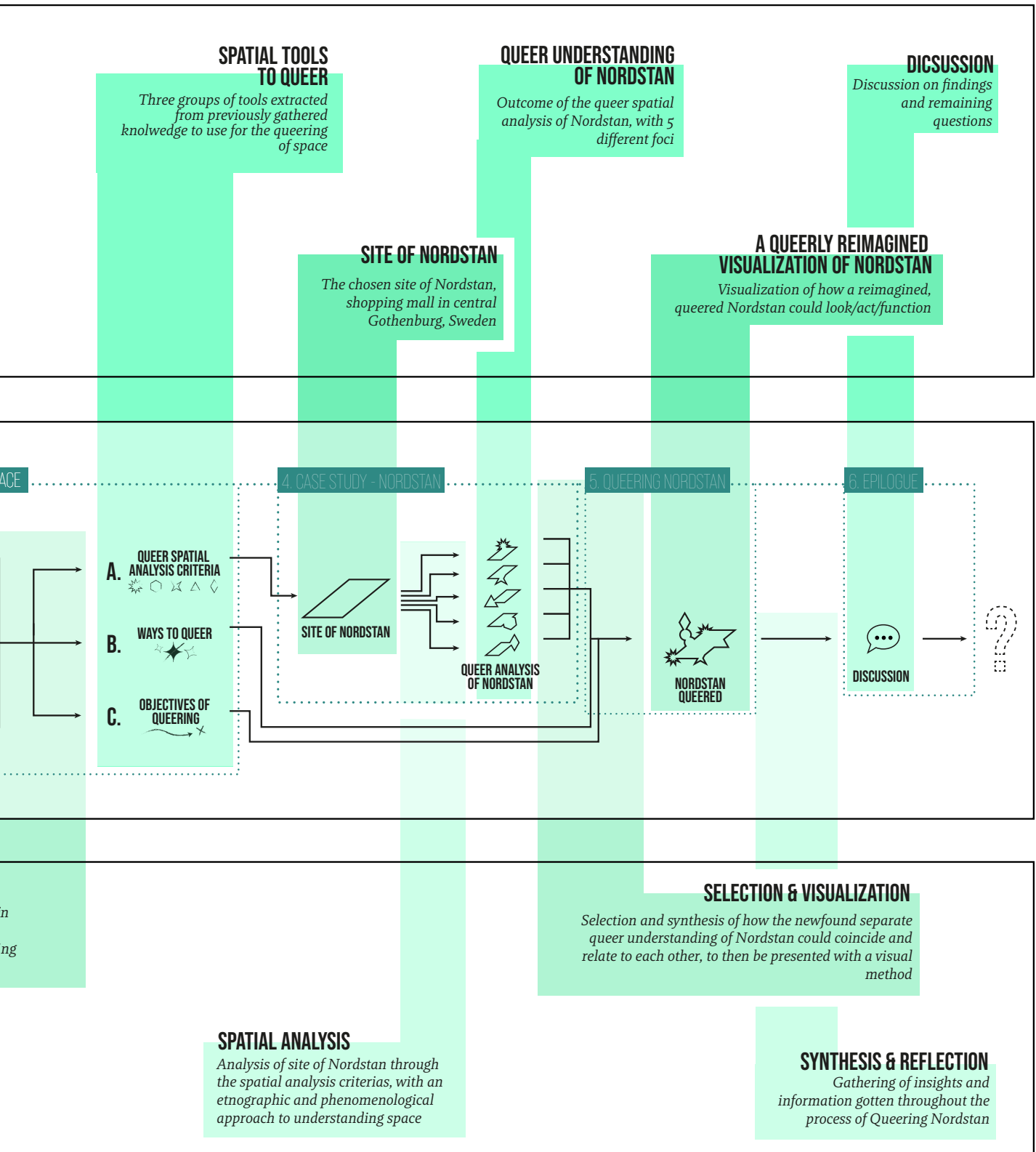
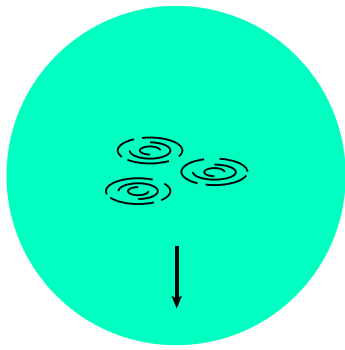
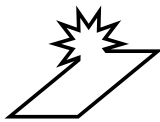
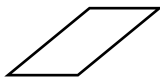


Figure 2. Diagram by author. [One] Pathway to queering.



*Follow along the pathway in
each chapter here!*



QUEER FOUNDATIONS

QUEER?

A SHORT STORY OF “QUEER”

The term “queer” has a long history, and has shifted and twisted a lot. Still today, it is being used with many different and sometimes contradicting meanings. It is sometimes a verb, a noun, or an adjective, to describe groups or individuals, with both positive and pejorative intentions.

While the initial word mainly meant “weird,” “odd,” or “illegitimate,” it quickly became a derogatory word to denote people with same-sex sexual preferences. It became a word interchangeable with the words “gay” or “homosexual”, which also held a negative meaning.

In the 90s, The gradual “reclaiming” of the word “queer” by the non-hetero population (mainly within gay/lesbian-queer activism) started, giving “queer” a powerful political resonance. Famously, the LGBTQ activist organization Queer Nation chanted “We’re here! We’re Queer! Get used to it!” (Barker & Scheele, 2016).

Since the 90s until today, the word has slowly, in certain parts of the world, lost its radical political edge. Reaching a more everyday vocabulary, it is today often used as a reference to LGBTQIA+ communities. However, many, for whom the word still connects to hurtful past experiences, still do not accept to identify with it.

At a similar time as Queer Nation was protesting in the streets, the movement of queer theory emerged - a subfield to post-structuralist critical theory with connections to women’s studies and queer studies (not to be confused with queer theory). It also sometimes associates strongly with queer activism, though they need not always be related.

Many queer theory theorists have debated the meaning, use, and necessity of the word “queer.” It is within queer theory that the usage of “queer” as a verb begins. To “queer” something or someone, to engage in “queering” takes on new meanings to the word, geared towards action and movement, rather than identity or static existence.

The slippery notions of “queer,” “queering,” and “queerness” do not help to find a stable definition for the word. Queer theorists are themselves at odds with what “queer” means and often resist the impulse to define it. To David Halperin, “queer” is: “whatever is at odds

with the normal, the legitimate, the dominate” (Sullivan, 43). whereas it to Cherry Smith is: “a strategy, an attitude” (Sullivan, 43). Many queer theorists also oppose the use of “queer” as an umbrella term for LGBTQIA+, as that definition creates rather than dissolves our “boxes” and delimitations of identity.

The discussion around the meaning of “queer” is ample and interesting. To follow the majority of queer theorists and do a first step in queering the thesis, I will not settle with one single definition of “queer”. Rather, the areas highlighted in green hereby are those in which the thesis will conduct exploration and research. Later on, I will engage in the intersection of queering with spatial practices, enriching ways in which queering can be practiced in space.

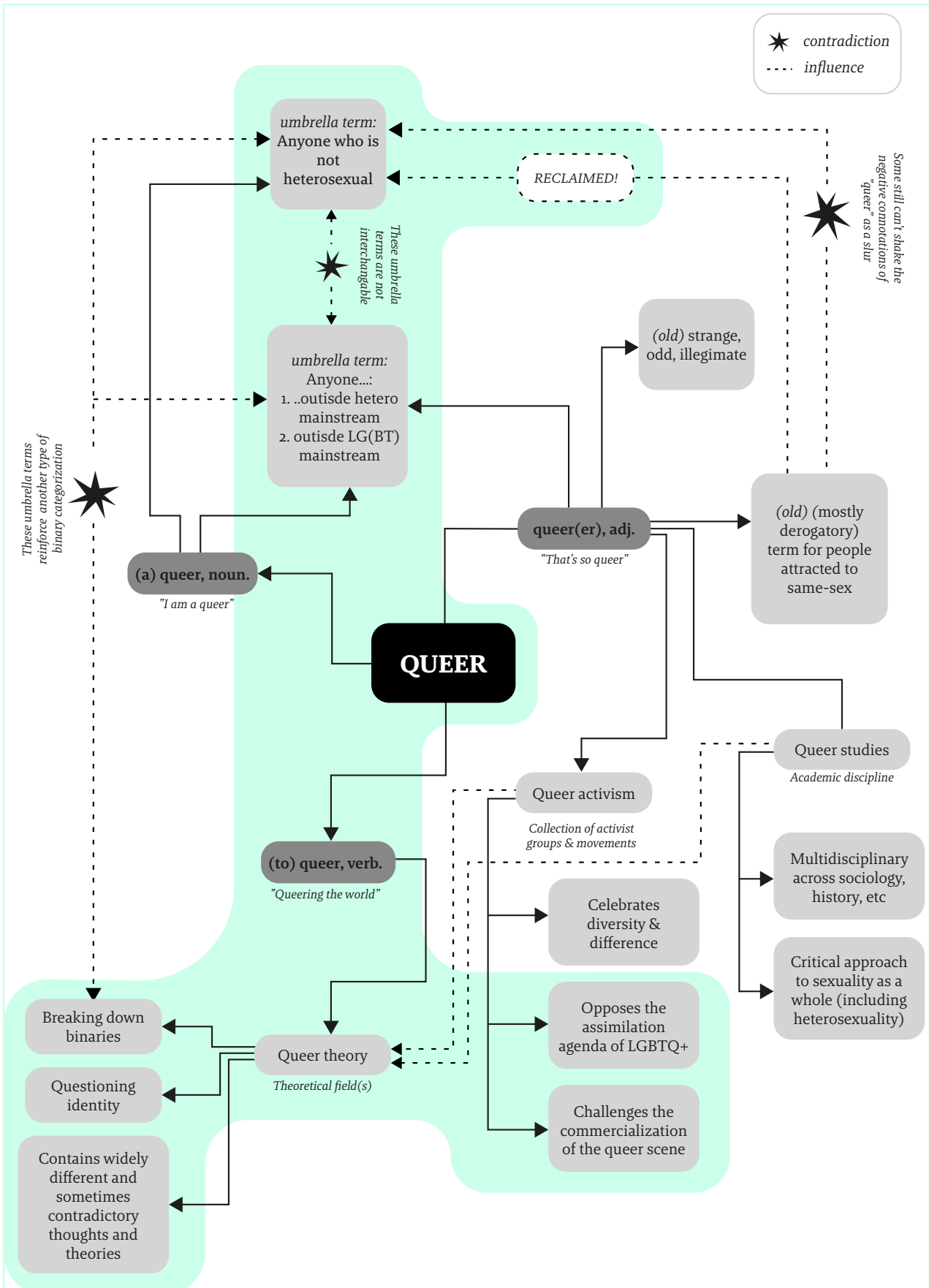


Figure 3. By author, with information from *Queer: a graphic story* (Barker, M.-J. & Scheele, J., 2016). Mapping and visualizing the various interpretations of the word “queer”, past and present. Contradictions of definitions are marked with a star symbol.

“NORMAL”, NORMATIVITY AND NORMS

NORMATIVITY - AN OVERVIEW

As mentioned previously, one definition of queer as given by David Halperin is: “whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominate”. Whichever definition one chooses to go with, the critique of the normal, or more specifically the norms, is essential to queer theory and its application.

Norms take the form of unwritten rules that most people in a society know and adhere to: “share your packet of snacks”, “put on a dress or a suit to a formal event”, “be quiet at the cinema” etc. Following the norms should guarantee “reward” and acceptance in the group while deviating from them brings on “punishment” and exclusion from the group. The reproduction of social norms across generations helps maintain social relations and hierarchies, and has existed as long as humans (UNICEF, 2021).

Certain norms pertain to gender and sexuality, and are the first ones that were examined by feminist and LGBTQ theorists. Many of these norms are well-known. A young woman in Sweden in the 50s, for example, had to be good at cooking, cleaning, and taking care of children. She also needed to want a husband and children (Sjöström, 2010). If she deviated from any of these aspects, she might have been considered weird and undesirable, might not have been able to marry, and would have ended up “outside” of the normative society of the time.

Although these exact norms do not all persist in all of Swedish society today, some do. Some leave traces in economic and cultural aspects of our society that are difficult to erase. Importantly, the “disappearance” of one norm does not mean there is no norm anymore. Rather, norms evolve and replace each other. Today, the most common one for women in Sweden is to have a partner and a family, study and have a job, and balance these commitments well. That is also a norm.

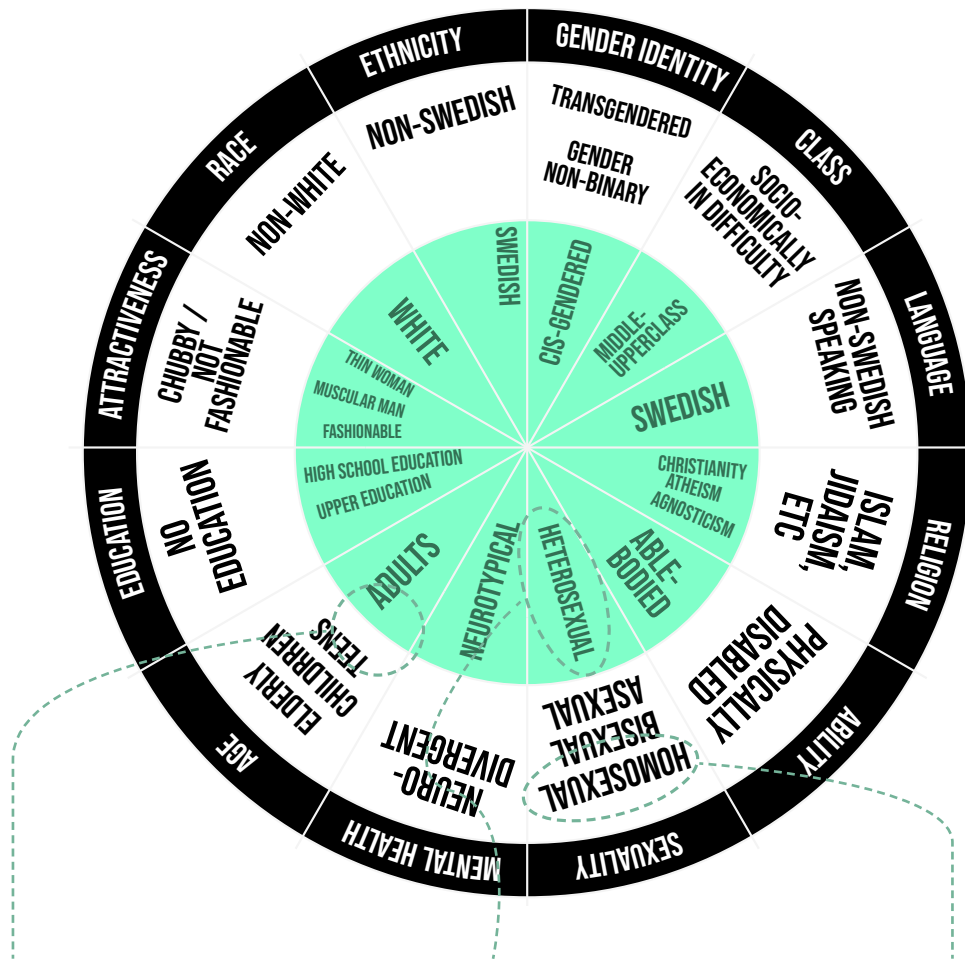
In Sweden, the normative body, that is the body considered as the most “normal”, is white, male, straight, middle class, etc. Although often not explicitly stated, norms can amongst others be “spotted” in language or statistics. Take for example our tendency to call male football players “football players” while we feel the need to add the prefix “female” when discussing women who play the same sport. Since “maleness” is the “normal”,

“femaleness” is the other, the abnormal, and must thus be specified as not to be confused with the normal.

Norms in themselves are perhaps not dangerous. The danger consists in when we collectively assume that the normative body in a certain setting is the only type of body there, or, even worse, is the only correct type of body. Issues arise in our inability to discover, scrutinize, and critique our own internalized and institutionalized norms. Queer theorists argue that many of our norms are historically produced by different forms of knowledge (religion, science, etc) and reproduced by discourses between individuals, groups, and institutions (Barker & Scheele, 2016).

An example of a dangerous situation relates to the “whiteness norm” - the idea that the white body is deemed so normal that anything other sticks out as “not white”, or even “abnormal”. This norm is highly prevalent in much of the Western world and has been reproduced beyond that with colonial practices. For example, researchers have shown that the prevalence of dark skin in photos of medical textbooks in the US only ranges from 4% to 18% of all images (McFarling, 2020), and similar discoveries have been made in Sweden (O’Mahony, 2022). This disparity puts lives at stake when members of the medical profession are unable to correctly identify and treat diseases on dark skin, from only being taught the symptoms on light skin. People with darker skin are at a higher medical risk because whiteness has been assumed as universally applicable. There is no active intention behind these issues - they are due to the inability to see the consequences of assuming the white body to be “normal” in an institutionalized profession.

On the following page, I have adapted a diagram made in 1984 by Gayle Rubin called the “charmed circle” (Rubin, 2011). Rubin describes a hierarchical valuation of sex acts that either are considered “normal” and fall within the “charmed circle”, or are seen as “abnormal” and thus fall outside of the circle. My revised version includes more than categories of sex and gender. I will use it to visualize and talk more broadly about norms, their malleability, and how queerness seeks to affect them.



NORMALITY CIRCLE

The inner circle, also known as the “charmed” circle. These identities are consciously or unconsciously considered “normal”, and all deviances are put in comparison to is

“NORMAL” CHARACTERISTICS

Different types of categories/ identities with which individuals can be identified as or can identify themselves with

“ABNORMAL” CHARACTERISTICS

The outer circle: what is considered “not normal”, or rather an exception to the normal - by extension “abnormal”

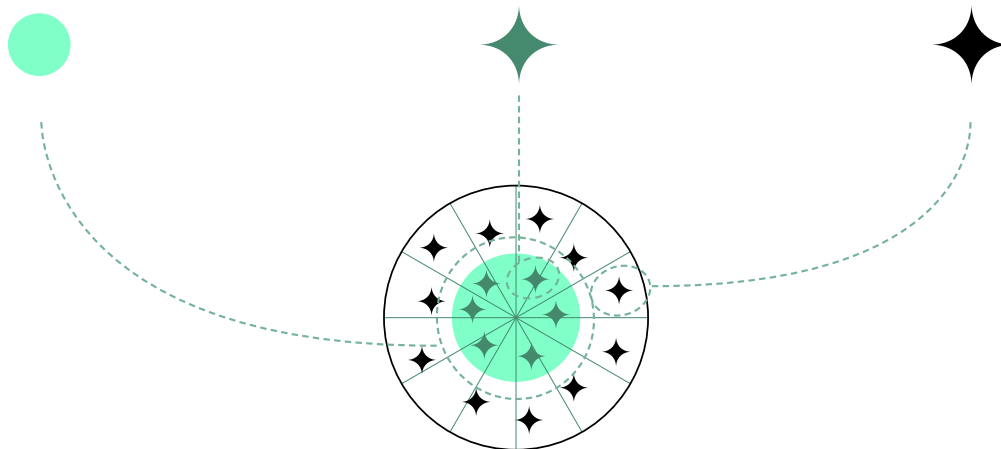


Figure 4. By author. Borrowed and adapted from Gayle Rubin’s *The Charmed Circle* (1984). While Rubin’s original diagram treats perceived normality of sex and sexual practices, this adaptation aims to highlight a plethora of other perceived normalities and the fragility of their categorizations. The bottom circle is a simplification to use in later stages of the thesis.

“NORMAL”, NORMALITY AND NORMS

LGBTQIA+ NORMALITY

Using the normativity circle to support our discussions of queerness and queering, we can see the range and difference in interventions from queer communities in Queer/LGBTQIA+ history.

Early gay rights movements, which initially mainly included white, homosexual men, took what is called an assimilation approach to the circle. By pushing on the “normal” parts of their identity (their gender, their race, their monogamy, etc), the movement was attempting to expand only one part of the boundaries of the circle to include them. The white, gay men fit (at least outwardly) the brief on the rest of the norms, and the step to include them in the circle became less of a leap (Barker & Scheele, 2016).

Without discrediting the progress that the first gay rights movements sparked, the assimilation approach left a large part of the LGBTQIA+ with just as little acceptance and protection as before. One could even argue that it intensified the division between the perceived “normal” and “abnormal”. Assimilation for a small group came at the cost of the larger one. A classic example of how certain identities have been erased from queer history is Marsha P. Johnson. A gender non-conforming person of color, Marsha stood on the frontlines of the Stonewall protest in New York in 1969 and is sometimes even said to have “thrown the first rock.” Her presence in the discourse surrounding Stonewall has, in mainstream media, largely been forgotten until recently (Rothberg, n.d.).

A similar process of partial assimilation has since often been repeated - white upper-class lesbian women started claiming rights, leaving behind women of the lower classes and women of color. Then, women of lower classes started claiming rights, leaving behind women of color.

Not even LGBTQIA+ organizations and spaces are spared from normativity. Many LGBTQIA+ youth of color have for example attested to being racially discriminated at queer community events (Wirström, 2018), forcing them to seek separate rooms for security and freedom.

NORMALITY IN QUEER THEORY

As previously stated, queer theory has a large focus on scrutinizing and critiquing norms. Theorists are often focused on the binarities that have been drawn up in gender (man/woman) and sexuality (homo-/hetero-).

Given that norms are a product of societal and historical processes, many argue the importance of breaking down norms and “breaking up” the division between the “normality circle” and the “abnormality circle” (Barker & Scheele, 2016).

One way of proving the instability of the norms is to take a look at other cultures and times in history. Pink was not always a girl color (Bhattacharjee 2018), and the man/woman binary is far from universal ((Interactive Map: Gender-Diverse Cultures, 2015). The boundaries of the charmed circle are always pushed, dragged, compressed, and expanded.

If norms, even regarding “biologically given” sex and gender, are not stable throughout history and continents, why should we believe that they are stable and intrinsic here and now?

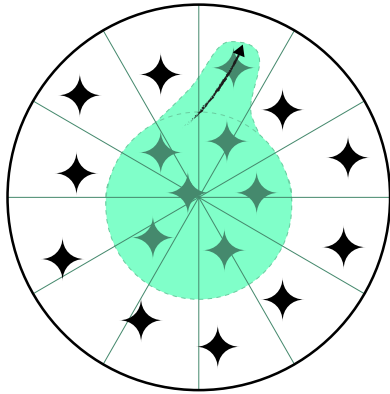


Figure 5. By author. The assimilation approach. Pushing for one “abnormality” to become a “normality”.

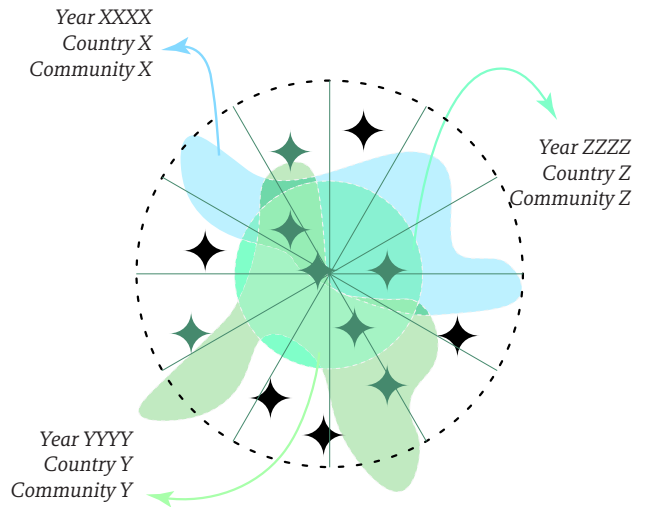


Figure 6. By author. Maleability. Norms vary over culture and history.

BREAKING THE BOUNDARIES

Queer theories state that the breaking of binarities and boundaries, and not to replace them with anything else. Is the diagram below then a representation of an ideal state of mind? What happens when no boundaries are set in place?

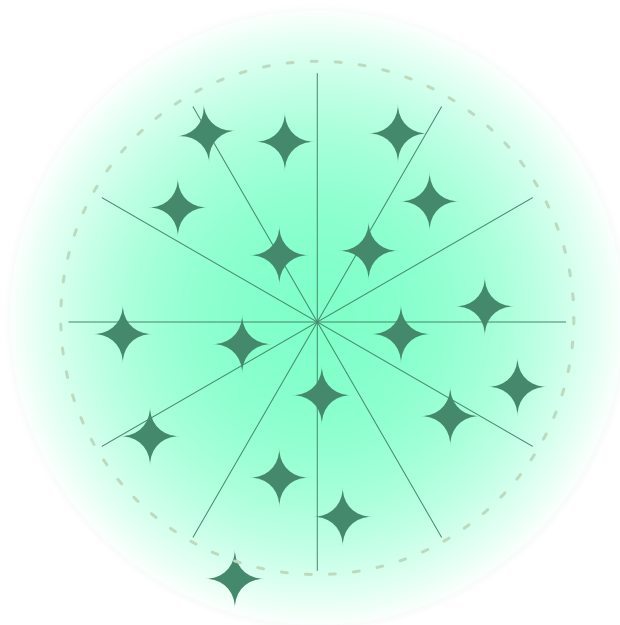


Figure 7. By author.

NORMATIVITY IN ARCHITECTURE

NORMATIVITY IN ARCHITECTURE

Norms are not necessarily a bad occurrence and can lend themselves to being efficient, intelligent, and culturally sensible. As previously stated, their destructive nature happens when they are so invisible and ingrained in our everyday life and thought that they resist being brought into the light and being questioned - so as well in architecture.

So, what are the norms in architecture? Being a field of theory and practice, speaking of norms in architecture can point towards a plentitude of aspects: the architect, the methods, the education, the architectural canon, etc. Most architecture students read the same books by the same authors and analyze the same buildings from the same architects. With such a uniform education and practice, a vast part of architectural knowledge gets lost and wasted, simply because it does not fit the norm.

Reproduced by everyday practice in architecture offices, architectural education, and architecture publications all around the world, new adherents to the field enter a seemingly stable world. But what happens when we question the status quo?

Consider interrogating the field with the following questions:

- Who designs? Who builds? Who gets the credit for the design?
- How are new projects represented? What buzzwords are being used?
- What [types of] buildings are being built? In what materials? With what construction methods?
- What is taught in architecture schools? Who is teaching? Who is learning? How is knowledge in the field (re)produced?

These questions can be posed on different scales, as in "the World", "Europe", "Sweden", "Gothenburg", and might vary.

Of course, there are always variations in the answers, but often patterns appear. Certain things are obvious - for example, the collection of architects that most architecture students learn about in school - are predominantly male and white. Until questioned, norms like these are invisible and treated as normal. It is when we bring them to light that we might understand the field, its limitations, and its potential better.

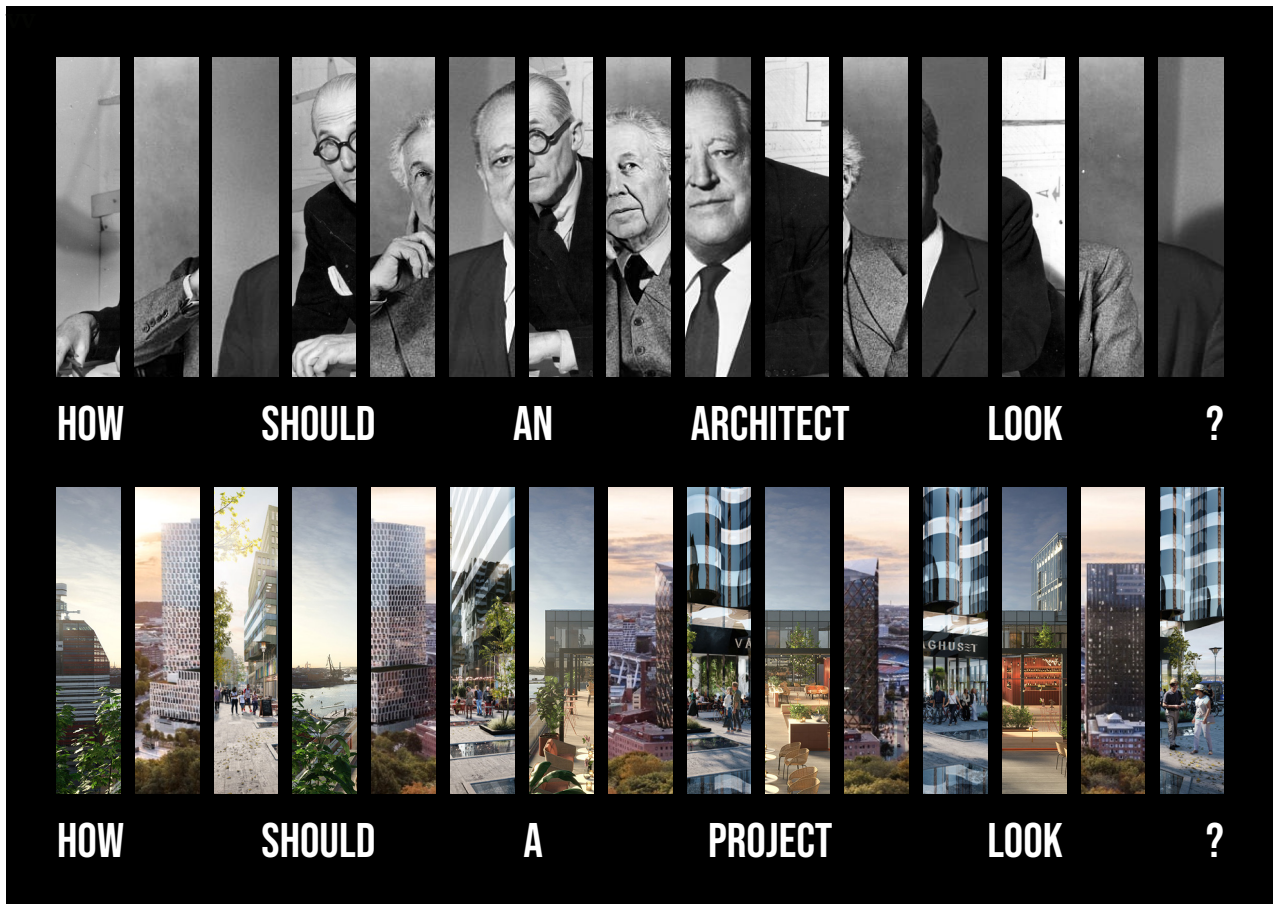
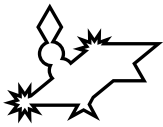
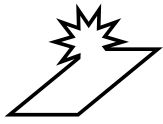
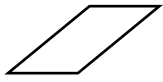
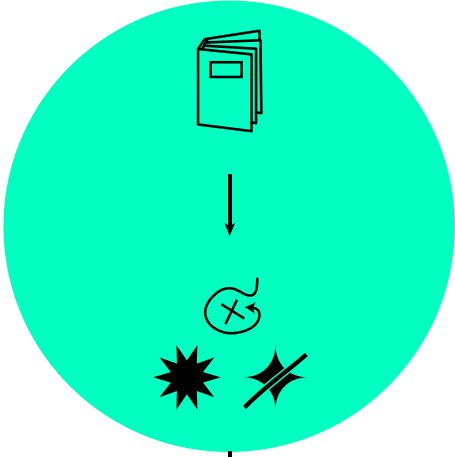


Figure 8. Collage by author. How “should” an architect look? How “should” a project look? Although there are no pre-defined rules or regulations, the answer tends to become the same - because of a repetition of the same thing, the understanding around us that certain things are correct and certain are not. With a visual juxtaposition of three of the most famous modern architects (Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Frank Lloyd Wright) we realize the resemblance and lack of diversity at the top of the architectural pedestal. Similarly, merging three Gothenburg architectural project makes us wonder if architects are obliged to have a sunset in their renderings. This type of collage has the power to show repetition and reinforcement of ideals. Images sourced from Getty Images, White Arkitekter, Nemo Lighting, Wikipedia.



3

[ONE WAY OF]

QUEERING SPACE

PREVIOUS SPATIAL QUEERERS

Before diving into this exercise of queering, I would like to acknowledge some of the work that has already been done within queer architectural research and practice.

At the start of the thesis process, I was in the dark about how much of queerness in architecture already had been explored. However, during the short duration of my research, Additionally, I was directed multiple times toward talks, interviews, and panel discussions on or closely related to the topic. Additionally, two large volumes of carefully collected projects and crafted essays on queer architecture were released. Both brought a lot of inspiration and excitement to my work and encouraged me to think that my chosen topic was well-timed and something others were also interested in. The two published books were:

- “Queering Architecture: methods, practices, spaces, pedagogies” (edited by Marko Jobst and Naomi Stead) published in 2023
- Queer Spaces: An Atlas of LGBTQIA+ Places & Stories” edited by Adam Nathaniel Furman and Joshua Mardell, published in 2022

It became increasingly clear that work on the topic had been done, and more is currently being done.

The volumes hereby already display a variety of ways in which spatial design is merged with queerness. Analysis of existing spaces, recollections of spaces gone, thoughts on queer methodologies in architecture education, and much more.

“Behind Straight Curtains” (2007) is a Swedish example on the subject. Katarina Bonnier merges queer theory with feminist theory and analyzes three different spaces through these lenses. Her book additionally presents the topic in a norm-breaking way: through the script of a play with multiple characters and a classroom setting.

These three are just examples of many other researchers who have dealt with queerness and space, but given their influence on my own research it felt important to mention them.

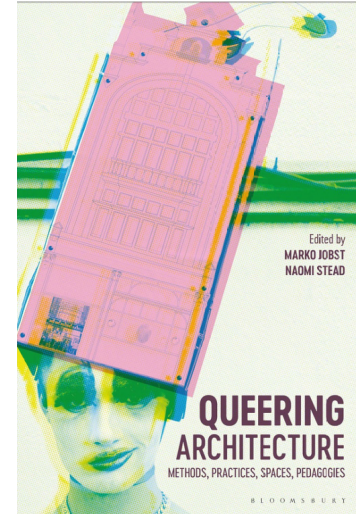


Figure 9. Front cover of “Queering Architecture: methods, practices, spaces, pedagogies”



Figure 10. Front cover of “Queer Spaces: An Atlas of LGBTQIA+ Places & Stories”



Figure 11. Front cover of “Behind Straight Curtains: Towards a Queer Feminist Theory of Architecture”

FUTURE SPATIAL QUEERING

[ONE] PATHWAY TO QUEERING

In the process of the thesis and my growing understanding of queer(ing), I soon understood that it would be naive, impossible and most of all undesirable to strive for an all-encompassing framework for how to do queer(ed) architecture.

Therefore, I would like to refute any claim to being comprehensive, or even to attempt comprehensiveness.

The outcome of this analysis is rather one way to look at one project at a time. The same exercise could be done again, with the same site, similar references, and even the same author, and give a different result. Eternal truths do not interest us in this context.

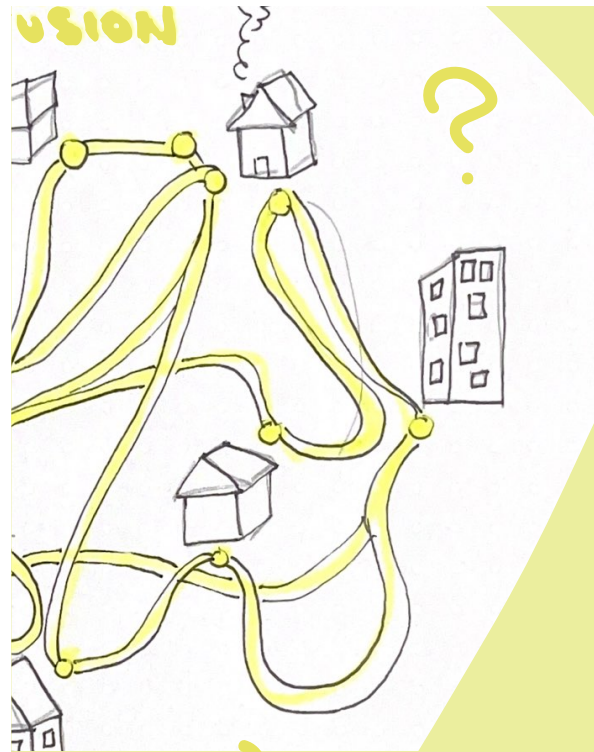
REFERENCES - PROJECTS

INTRODUCTION

When talking about “projects”, I am employing the widest of terms, not adhering to the classical architectural definition of a project. Rather, a “project” can be everything from a book, a photograph, a performance, or a recorded event. The act of collecting, documenting, or expressing oneself can all be a means of creating a project, big or small, and all hold value in their own way.

The projects I have picked are interesting for different reasons: their particular angles on queerness, queering and their relation to space. While one rather seeks spaces of safety, another manifests queerness as visibly as possibly. If one relies on performance and barrier-crossing activities to claim space, the other seeks to build stronger walls around its queerness. With a scope of different queer experiences, I hope to touch on a large variety of ways in which queerness meets space.

REFERENCE PROJECT 1: **GAYS IN ANGERED**



PROJECT TYPE: Physical interview / conversation between the author and the coordinator of the organization Gays In Angered. The conversation is supported by the pamphlet of the organizations own authorship “Gays in Angered: berättelser om att vara ung och HBTQ” as well as articles and interviews online about the organization.

DESCRIPTION: As one of the few organization in the city of Gothenburg catering towards LGBTQ+ youth of color, Gays in Angered stands as a pillar for intersectional work. The conversation sparked questions about inclusive exclusion, safety in communal privacy, internal discrimination and culturally disparate views on queerness.

REFERENCE PROJECT 2:
BOUDOIR BABYLON



PROJECT TYPE: Temporary installation at the Triennial 2020 at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. Project by Adam Nathaniel Furman and the office Sibling Architecture. I analyze the project through pictures and videos of it, supported by an essay written by Furman and Timothy Moore of Sibling Architecture in the newly published volume “Queering Architecture.” The installation was exhibited between December 2020 and April 2021.

DESCRIPTION: Boudoir Babylon is an intentionally queering project, which seeks to challenge normative architectural aesthetics by drawing on questions of good taste, color as activism, and historically significant queer spaces.

REFERENCE PROJECT 3:
TRAIN JOURNEY



PROJECT TYPE: A Chapter in the edited “Queer Spaces: An Atlas of LGBTQIA+ Places and Stories”, where Aila Ribas recalls, describes and documents their train journey from their home village to Barcelona.

DESCRIPTION: In this text and through its accompanying images, Ribas describes a way in which a place can be queered not through physical transformation, but with non-normative use of space. The project poses questions about the anonymity of the large city, the boundaries between private and public spaces / activities, and the eye of the other as a constructive or destructive tool.

REFERENCES - PROJECTS

GAYS IN ANGERED - INTERSECTIONAL SAFETY

In the early stages of research for this thesis, I got the privilege to sit down for a conversation with Andrea Mattson, representative and coordinator for the Queer youth group “Gays in Angered” (G.I.A.). Andrea also gifted me a first version of a pamphlet that G.I.A. was in the process of making, which included many individual testimonies from youths who had been or were currently part of G.I.A.

Gays in Angered is a youth center created year 2012 by Tanya Charif, after she realized an intense absence of queer presence amongst the youths in Angered, a socioeconomically disadvantaged and culturally diverse neighborhood of Gothenburg. The group slowly grew from the sole two students in the very beginning of the project, and now hosts the largest group possible for the organization's ability.

In our conversation, Andrea tells me that what sets the youths in G.I.A. apart from others, in Angered and in the city center, is their need for a safer space. All of the current GIA youths exist in environments in which they cannot fully be open about their gender or sexuality. Sadly, when some of them have previously sought shelter and like-mindedness in other groups for LGBTQ+ youths in the city, they have experienced racism and lack of understanding towards LGBTQ+ people with their norm-defying backgrounds.

Therefore, having a safe space that invites people with the combination of LGBTQ+ identities and cultural diversity has been crucial for many of the youth recounting their story.

Spatially, GIA also operates in a particular manner. The group has the highest status of protection out of all the youth groups in Gothenburg, due to the risks that its members are under. Because of that, GIA has decided to switch locations for meetings and gatherings regularly: there are never two meetings back to back in the same place, but rather every new meeting happens in a new location. In this way, the risk of bumping into someone they know on a regular basis lessens, which also diminishes the risk of acquaintances or family members to get suspicious.

During the summers, GIA often brings their youths to places where they can swim. Importantly, these places are always far away from the everyday life

in Gothenburg. By being away from family, friends and acquaintances, both mentally and physically, the youths have more freedom in exploring romances, gender expression etc... The safe space here is constructed not with four walls, but simply with a large distance from familiar social relations.

GIA also differs from other youth groups in the city when it comes to the recruitment of their members. Generally, recruitment to youth groups in Gothenburg is not necessary. The youths talk amongst each other, and bring a friend or a sibling, naturally growing the size of the group.

For GIA, however, word of mouth does not work. Rather, GIA seeks to be active in its recruitment process: talks in schools, presence at the Pride Parade and a semi-strong social media presence are all ways in which they try to make themselves visible, in order to find members that are in need of their space. This highlights the delicate balance between large visibility and the acute need for closed doors.



Figure 12. G.I.A leaflet, filled with stories from current and past members of G.I.A.



Figure 13. Page from GIA leaflet. Title reads “The only LGBTQ-person from the middle east”.

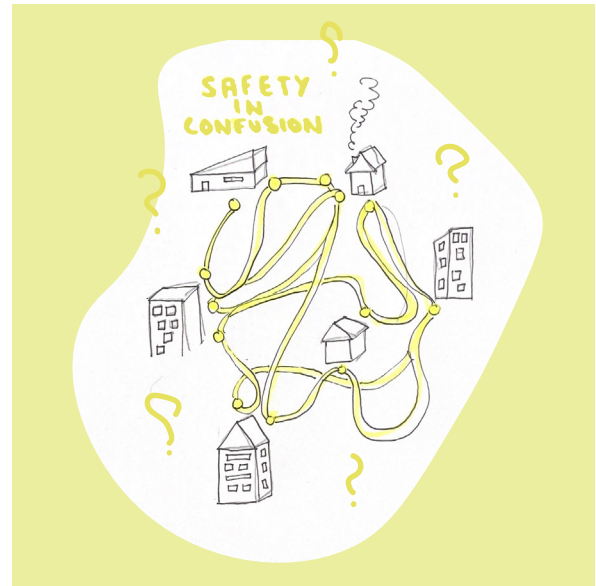
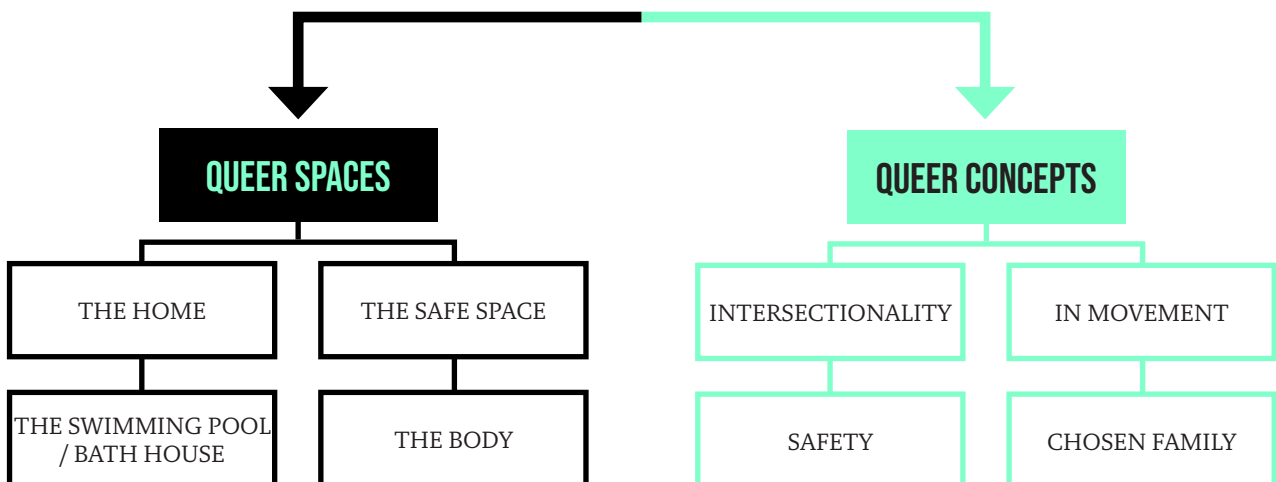


Figure 14. Sketch by author. Exploring safety in movement, safety in confusion. How is it, not to have one safe space, but many? Does it devalue the spaces, or does it enrich it?

MAIN TAKEAWAYS



REFERENCES - PROJECTS

BOUDOIR BABYLON - ADAM NATHANIEL FURMAN AND SIBLING ARCHITECTURE

In 2020 Furman and Sibling Architecture were asked to create a space with the prompt of “queering the café” for the NGV Triennale in Melbourne.

Thus this project, interestingly, is a fully aware and self-reflecting project of queering. In itself, it reflects on the meaning of queering, queer space and queer presence. It also stands in conversation with past and current queer theory and writings on queerness in architecture.

Furman and Sibling Architecture reference three spaces of importance for the development and survival of queer communities: the boudoir, the salon and the club.

Each space was represented in a different way: The boudoir was inspired by Katarina Bonnevier’s discussion of Eileen Grey’s Boudoir de Monte Carlo, where the boudoir occupied both the most public and the most intimate space of the building simultaneously (Jobst, 2023). The salon, a “theatre of conversation and exchange” (Moore & Furman, 2023, p. 128), was reflected in the ad hoc arrangement of sofas and chairs, to simulate the hierarchy-breaking nature of the space. The club materialized in the center-stage podium of Budoir Babylon (Moore & Furman, 2023).

Characteristic of much of Furman’s work, bright colors and bold volumes were used. The architects used the binary colors of pink (“for girls”) and blue (“for boys”), but rendered them meaningless in their use. No information in terms of gender could be drawn from the use of these colors in the installation.

Additionally, the designers clad their structure with symbols, which they admit to be referring to parts of the body, without them being fully obvious. Even some of the shapes that make up the seats, tables and walls vaguely resemble the human body.

It is not new to use the body as reference in architecture, but Furman and Sibling Architecture do it with classical queer ambiguity. The body is often central to queer existence - as queer people tend to fight against existing norms of how the body should look, act or whom it should be attracted to. The designers echo the importance of the body and the need of a non-normative view of it with their ambiguous, “multi-meaning” symbols.

MAIN TAKEAWAYS

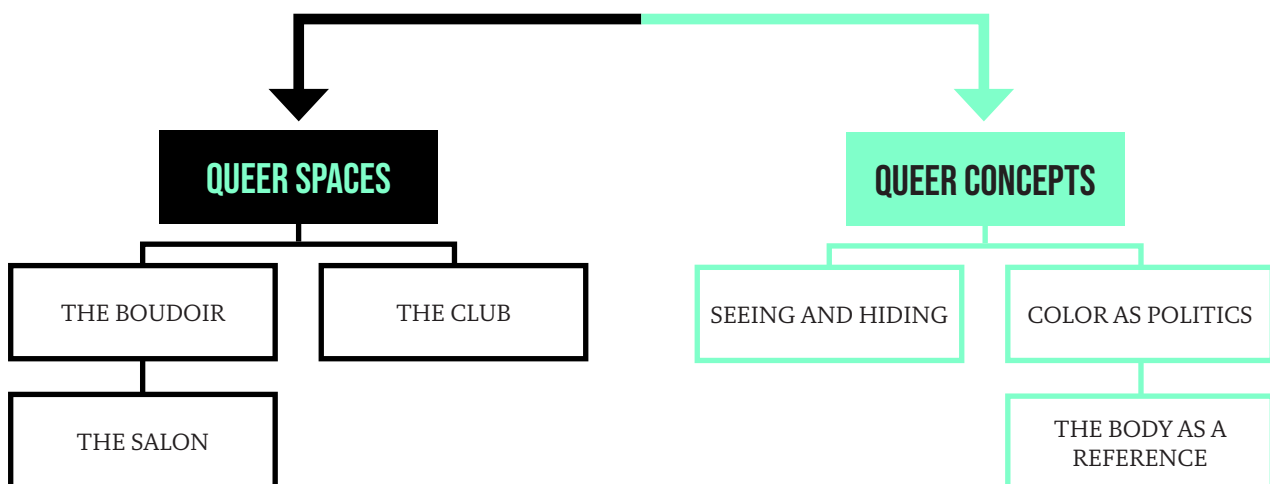




Figure 15. Image from Archdaily.



Figure 16. Sketches by author. Attempting to draw shapes and volumes with ambiguous body parts as inspiration.



Figure 17. Image from Archdaily. Collage by Furman and Sibling Architecture.

REFERENCES - PROJECTS

“TRAIN JOURNEY” - AILA RIBAS

In the large anthology “Queer Spaces” (2022), Aila Ribas “Train Journey” is one of the opening projects, interestingly enough placed in the category of “domestic”.

Being transgendered, Ribas describes how they were feeling observed and judged when in their home town and around family. In the city of Barcelona, however, they could be whoever they wanted to be, and felt a form of liberation when finally arriving there.

Therefore, Ribas uses the public train carriage to “transform” from their male-passing, small-town, suffocating self to their female-presenting, boob-wearing, truer self. Adding on breast, putting on make-up and fixing their hair while travelling to Barcelona became a ritualistic routine activity that she performed every train ride, each time in front of a different audience.

This small act of disruption - using the public train carriage as a private bathroom - makes an otherwise non-queer space significantly more queered. In this example, queerness comes from the appropriation of space with the purpose of carving out a moment in space and time where

the otherwise scrutinized body can rest and exist. The train wagon is not queer in itself, but with its usually fixed program (sitting and waiting, with the occasional phone scrolling or reading a magazine), using it in a different way than “normal” queers it for the time being.

Here, we might start posing questions on *who* can queer. Does the “intrusive” activity need to be performed by a person from the LGBTQIA+ community? Does it have to somehow have to do with the body? Or does it just need to be odd?

With a spatial eye, we can ask ourselves of the importance of scale & proximity. If performed in a completely empty carriage, would the transformation still be a queering act? And if the space was ten times bigger, would it lose some of its power?

Ribas does not themselves talk about this aspect, but the existence of the “eye of the other” seems important. In the anthology from which this experience is understood, the reader becomes one of those passengers who watches, sees and reacts to the scene. It is not only the act in itself that matters for queerness, but how the act affects its surroundings.



Figure 18. Collage by author. Exploring privacy in public on the train - how far could one take it?

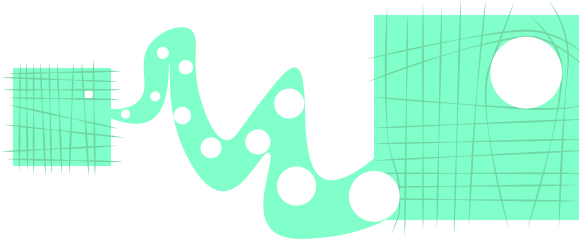


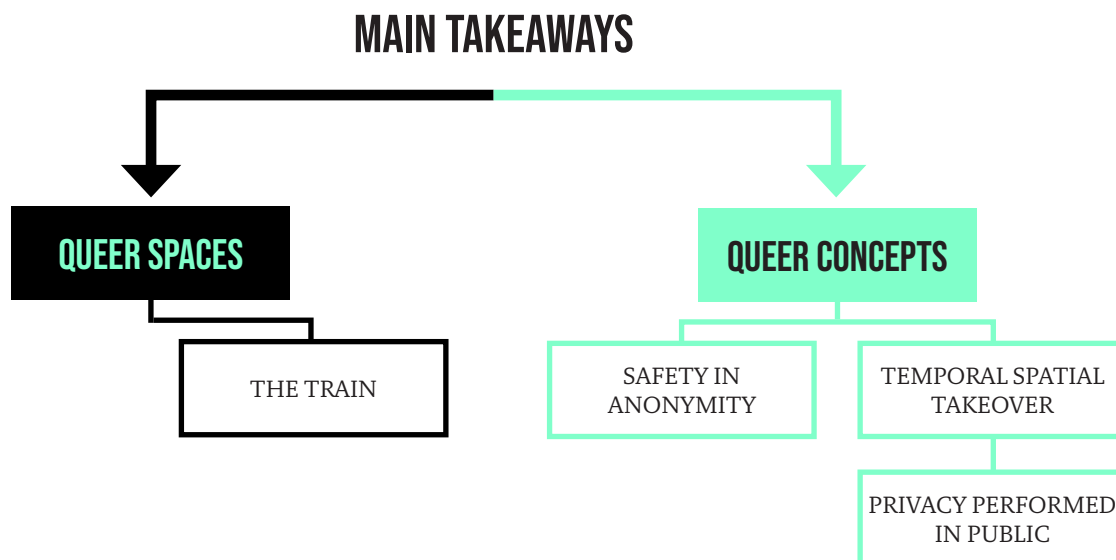
Figure 19.1. Sketch by author. Growing in transit.



Figure 20. Image from “Queer Spaces” (2022)



Figure 19.2. Illustration by author. How much does scale affect the effect of queerness on the space?



REFERENCES - LITERATURE

In the diagram below, I shortly detail the authors and corresponding publications and concepts that I have found useful when researching about queer, queerness and queering and space. These authors all operate under some form of queer theory / queer study umbrella, more or less explicitly. These theorists and thoughts help me ground my findings from the spatial references even more into existing theoretical queer framework.

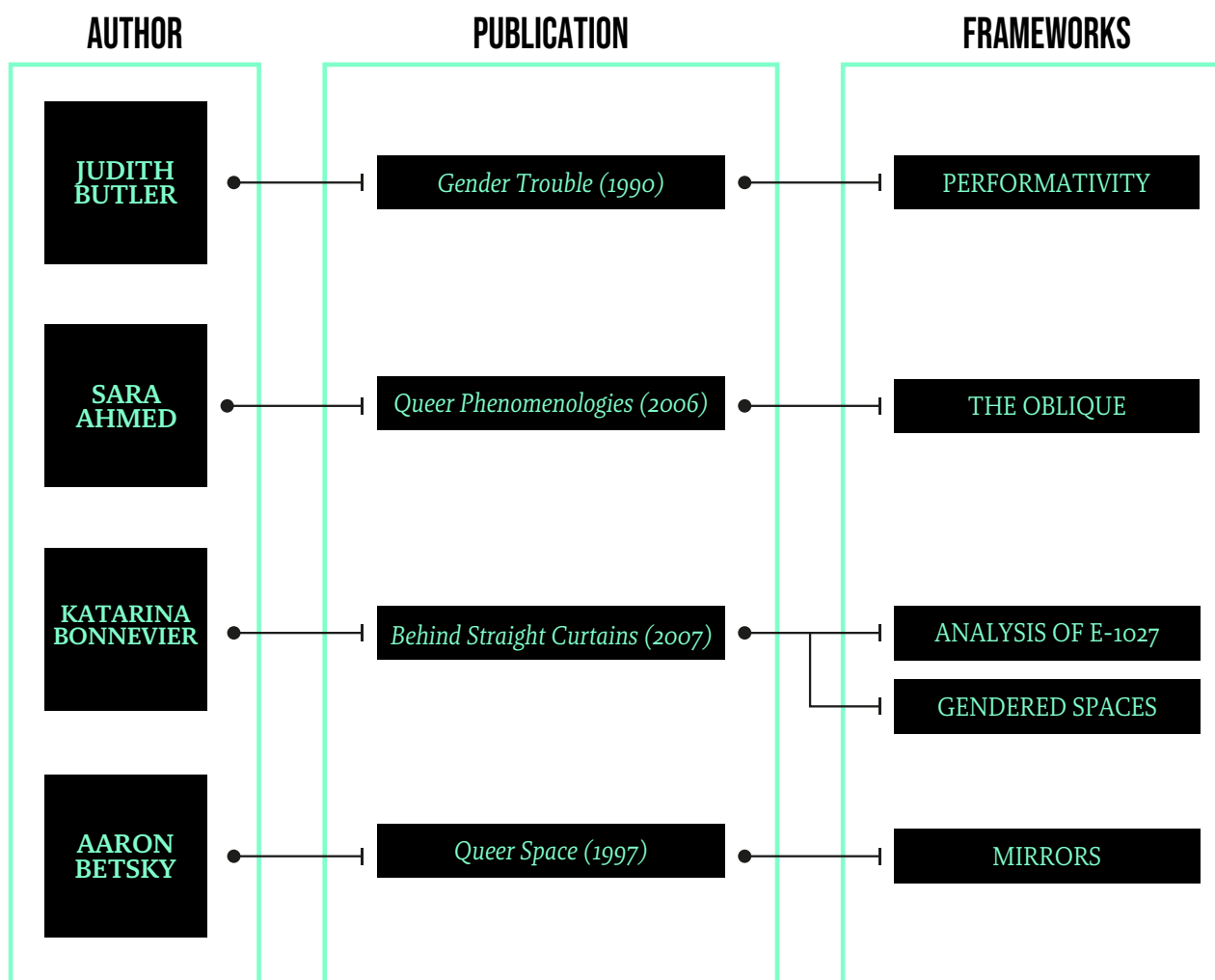


Figure 21. Diagram by author. Spatial concepts and their respective authors and publications.

REFERENCES TO CRITERIAS

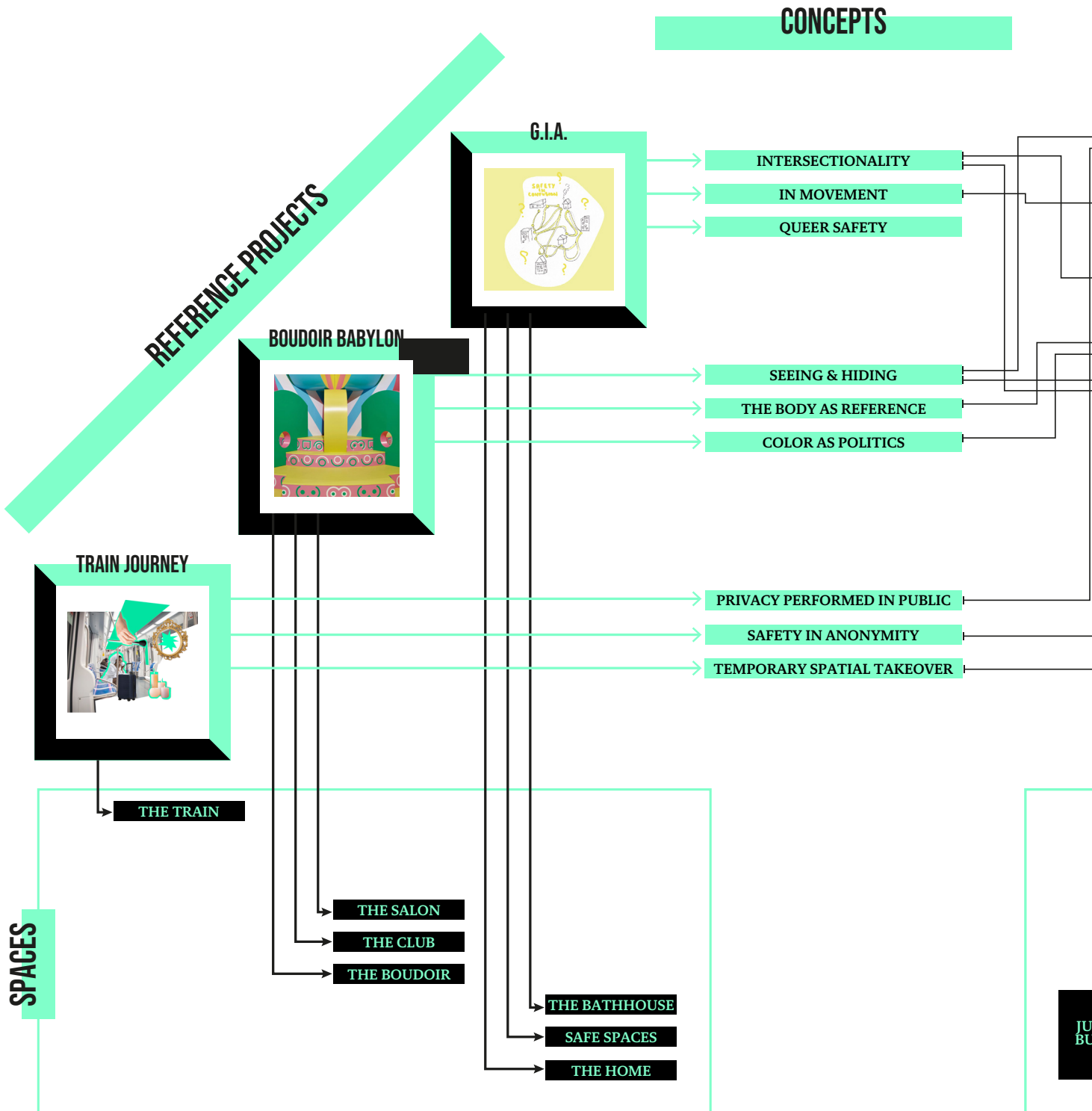


Figure 22. Diagram by author. Connecting reference projects and literature to spatial analysis criterias.

READING THE DIAGRAM

It is now time to merge together the information and knowledge extracted so far in this chapter on queering space. In the diagram hereby, I put together the extracted concepts from the reference projects and the reference literature. They all converge into on or multiple of five groups, called “spatial analysis criteria”. These criteria will be more specifically explained in the following pages.

To follow along, start on the left-hand side of the diagram, at the three reference projects. The previously extracted concepts and spaces are placed to the right respectively below each reference project. Concepts are then fed into one, multiple or none of the spatial analysis criteria. In the bottom right is the reference literature, which is similarly contribute to the spatial analysis criteria.

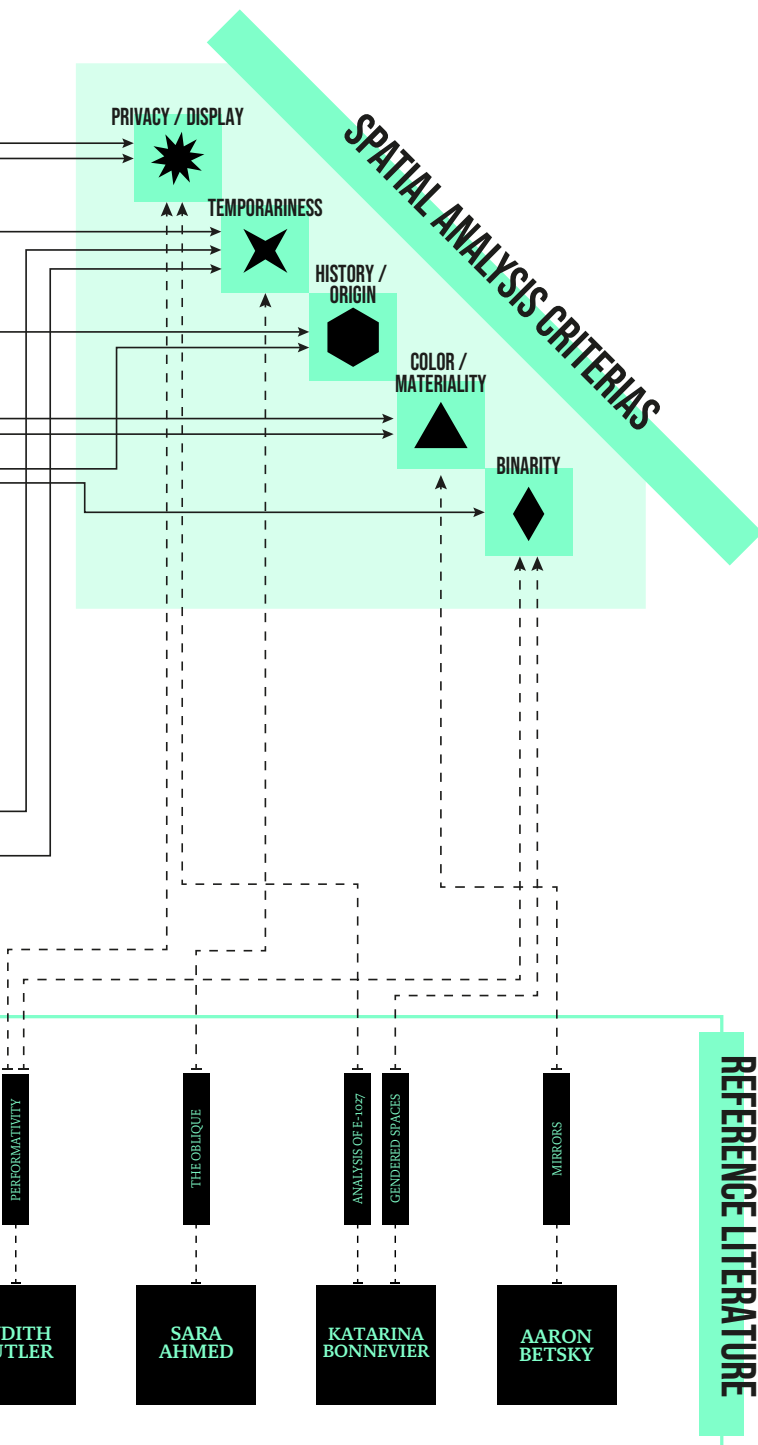
The extracted spaces are not yet used as input, but will come in handy in the final visualization in chapter 5.

NOTES ON THE DIAGRAM

Despite its linear appearance, the construction of the diagram was not straightforward or logically obvious. Criteria, extractions and references themselves changed during the course of the thesis, asking for constant updates of the diagram.

The linearity of the diagram might also obstruct the fact that there probably exists a conversation and connections between references, both projects and literature, that are not displayed here.

Additionally, we will further enrich the criteria in later chapters by showing their connection to each other - none of them operate on a different plane than the others, rather they are very much in conversation with each other.



TOOLS TO QUEER

TOOLS TO QUEER

In this chapter, three tools to queer are introduced:

- A) the queer spatial analysis criteria
- B) the ways to queer and
- C) the objectives of queering

The aim of the thesis is that all these three tools can be used separately from my own analysis of Nordstan, repeating a queer analysis on a different space. They can be used to understand queer or non-queer points of a site, and to a certain extent to guide the start of queering in that space. Although all three tools are helpful for analysis, the spatial analysis criteria are by far the most developed.

A. SPATIAL ANALYSIS CRITERIA

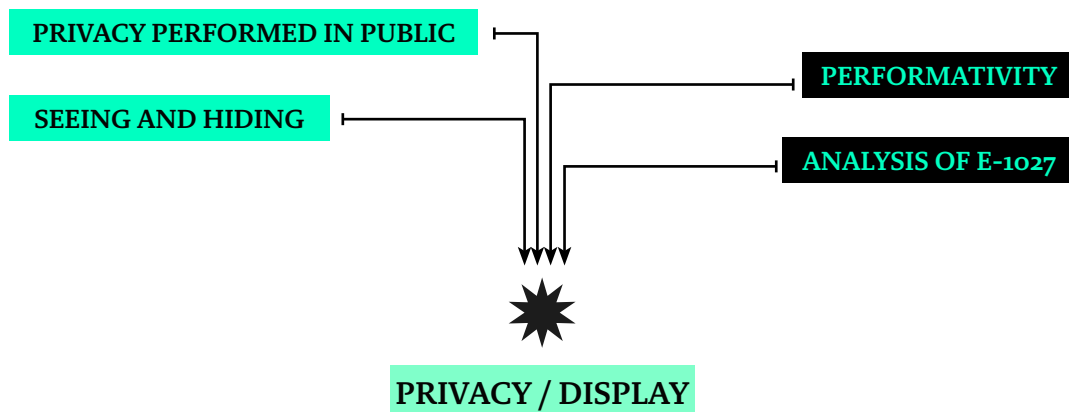


The spatial analysis criteria are topics or lenses through which one can analyze a space to discover its queerness.

Each criteria is based on information from reference projects and reference literature. They are by no means all-encompassing of queerness and queering space – they are just *one way* to take a step towards queering.

Each criteria starts with a series of questions to ask oneself about a space, and then dives deeper into the subject.

In chapter 4, I put the criteria to use and analyze Nordstan through them.



Supporting questions

- How is the visitor's privacy "taken care of"?
- Where is privacy encouraged/discouraged?
- How is the visitor "displayed" in relation to other visitors/workers etc?
- What is shown, what is not shown? Why?

Queer people and queerness have always existed and always inhabited space. However, the way in which the queerness of people has been perceived and displayed varies greatly.

Judith Butler's concept of "performativity" fits well into this thought (Gender Trouble, 1990). As a precursor to queer theory, Butler argues that we should not categorize gender as essential – that is, as something that exists in of its own, inherently and biologically undeniable. Rather, gender is something that we construct, repeat, and, most importantly, perform. "We're born naked and the rest is drag" RuPaul (Andre Charles) exclaims, American drag queen superstar and birth parent of the hugely popular reality show "RuPaul's drag show". RuPaul echoes Butler's claim that everything we say, do and wear contributes to how we are perceived and wish to be perceived by others. Societal norms have for example reinforced the clear-cut binarity of gender into male and female, which we inhabit and reinforce daily, "something that congeals over time to appear fixed and essential" (Smitherham, 2011).

In the context of architecture, Gender Trouble (Butler) mostly speaks to us in the context of the performance. For RuPaul's competing drag queens the performance is clear: a stage, music, judges and a international television audience. Here,

the performance is emphasized, exaggerated and sometimes even self-ridiculing. But performance need not be so literal and over-the-top, and can be found in our everyday life as well.

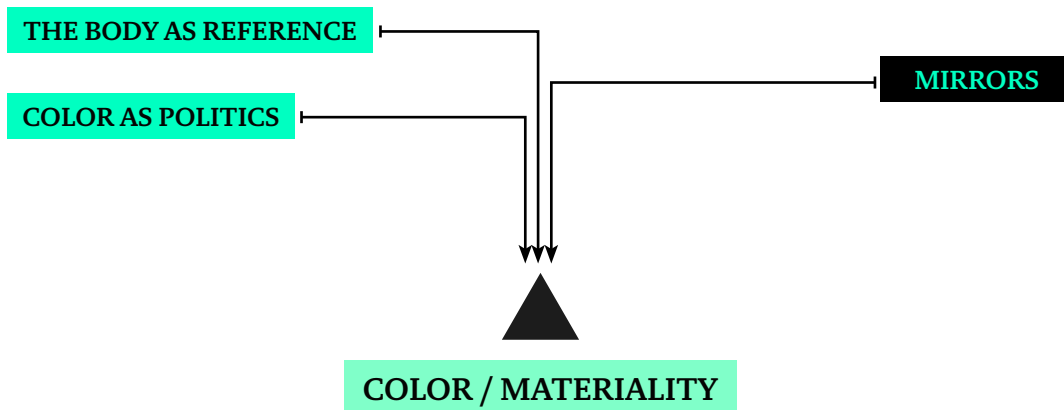
The performance happens in relation to other people, where the eye of the other constructs an image of either a "woman" or a "man". Therefore, our way to be perceived the way we believe we are or feel, is through the medium of clothes, makeup, movement patterns and character traits.

In the reference project previously mentioned of the train carriage, something rather provoking is happening. The traditionally private matter of "dressing up" into the performance, which normally happens within the walls of the home, is brought out into "daylight", in a public place of transit. The journey of "becoming" for the public eye, happens in the public eye, both disturbing a barrier of public/private and revealing an intimate process of becoming.

A similar nod is given in the "Boudoir Babylon", where the traditionally private space of the "boudoir" (usually reserved for domestic life) is turned both into a eye-catching exhibition space and a communally used café. Katarina Bonnevier explores the boudoir in a similar manner in her analysis of Eileen Grey's architectural project E-1027, where the privacy of the boudoir becomes a space of gathering between like-minded (Bonnevier, 2007).

Then and now, privacy for Queer people has been crucial for survival and for developing of the self, of the queer communit(ies) and of the multiple political movements that have generated change.

TOOLS TO QUEER



Supporting questions

- *What colors or materials dominate the space? Why?*
- *What are the differences in color and materiality between the inside and the outside of the building?*

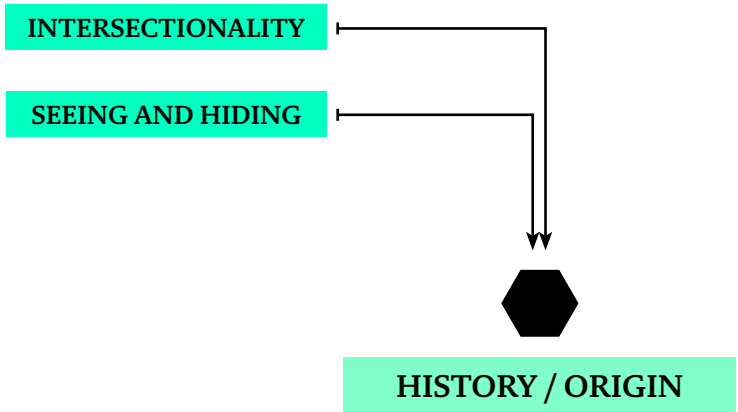
There is probably no such thing as a “queer aesthetic” when it comes to a specific style, materials or colors. These aspects vary depending on time and place, cultural background and available capital.

One should stay away from the pitfall of characterizing certain colors as “gay”, or assuming that queer aesthetics is about cladding walls and ceilings with the pride flag. Instead, queerness in color can be used in more subtle manners.

In Boudoir Babylon, for example, the architects introduce colors that we would traditionally associate with one gender or the other: pink and blue. However, instead of assigning these colors

to gendered spaces, they are rendered “useless” by cutting them up, and blending them with each other. In a way, perhaps, Boudoir Babylon brings to mind what one would stereotype as “gay” or “queer”: lots of color and over-the-top shapes that do not make any sense. However, what it does is deeper than that. It teaches us that colors do not inherently hold queerness, but the use of color in a particular time, context or room can either adhere to their normative uses or break from them.

Another material that could, in its specific context, queer space is the mirror. Aaron Betsky writes about it in his book “Queer Space” (1997). He says that the mirror acts as a space where one can see ones constructed self. However, that is also all it does: “The mirror is good for nothing else than appearing: as soon as you look away from it, it ceases to function.” (Betsky, 1997, p. 17) We can tie this together to the ideas surrounding display and performance - the material of the glass/mirror allows for self-performance, or perhaps catching a glance to reajust our performance towards others?



Supporting questions

- *Why was this space built/created?*
- *In what way were queer/non-normative people included in the planning/design/construction processes of the construction?*
- *Who was not part of the decision?*
- *Who was affected by the decisions surrounding this building?*

In a short online article about the necessity of the queer archive Author Hugh Ryan, self-defined “writer whose main subject is LGBTQ history”, states that “one of the biggest challenges I face is finding records of our communities, by our communities”(Ryan, date unknown). LGBTQIA+ people, not to speak of LGBTQIA+ people of color, often face the risk of historical erasure: their sexuality or gender identity are downplayed, reduced to stereotypes, villainized or completely removed. The saying goes “winners write history” - one might as well say that people in power write history, while marginalized groups are left searching high and low in said history for a hint of existences that echo their own.

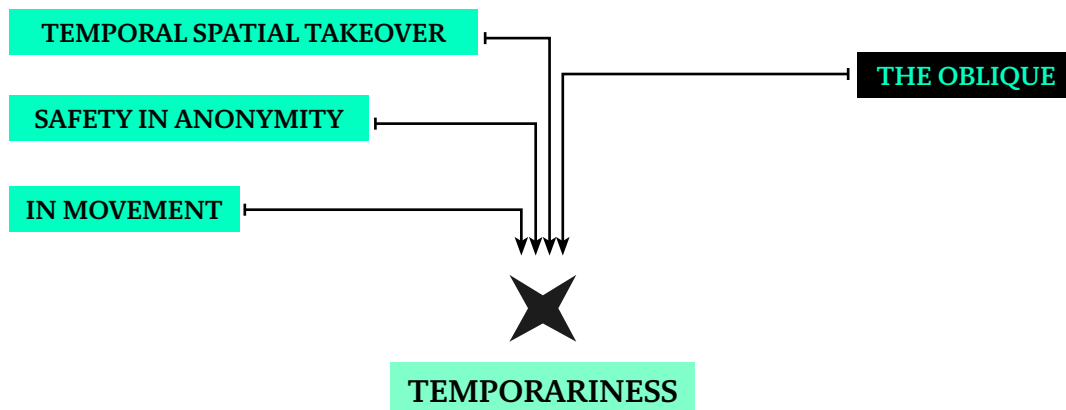
The historical aspect of queerness is thus both necessary and useful. Many queer researchers work this way: Katarina Bonnevier for example, reinterprets Eileen Grey’s architecture with the knowledge of her sexuality and romances (Bonnevier, 2007).

From our own references, Boudoir Babylon makes an excellent point on this subject. Furman and Sibling Architecture are not only giving a nod towards queer history – rather they reinterpret and bring to light a large part of past queer spaces and experiences (the spaces of the boudoir, club and salon). Their construction acts as a queer history lesson – projecting the user back in time and putting them in the shoes of a marginalized group of people. Simultaneously, it honors the hidden and secret spaces that were not talked about out loud back then, and not described in the “official” history books. A celebration of the historically hidden made proudly and loudly out in the open.

The history/origin criteria aims at looking at what was there before the building was erected, why the building was built, and who built it. Can traces be found of queer interventions or intentions? Were any queer (or queering) people around the decision-making table? If yes, were any queer perspectives brought to the table? How does that manifest in what we see and experience today? If we do find queer traces, can we employ our intersectional eyes and ask what parts of the queer community the involvement comes from?

Maybe even more importantly, was anyone actively left out in any of the processes? Whose voice was not heard? And how has the building been received and discussed through the years?

TOOLS TO QUEER



Supporting questions

- How stable/ustable is the architecture in & of the space? Does it change a lot? Why? Why not?
- Where can potential for sudden interventions be found? How would it disrupt? Who would it disrupt?

I have classified temporariness – as in the characteristic of being temporary, non-permanent - in two categories in regards to queer(ing): the spatial takeover, and the changing/hiding/surviving.

Spatial takeover: A temporary takeover of public space with the ambition to disturb everyday life, making collective thoughts and opinions visible, and in the end creating change in public policy or the collective mind.

Queer history is familiar with the act of protest. The most iconic queer protest of the Stonewall riots in New York in 1969 created waves of queer rage over the world, prompting many to fight for their rights to exist openly and be proud. Today, the pride parade, with all its flaws and complications, is also a temporary spatial takeover, fighting with the weapon of visibility to create acceptance in wider society.

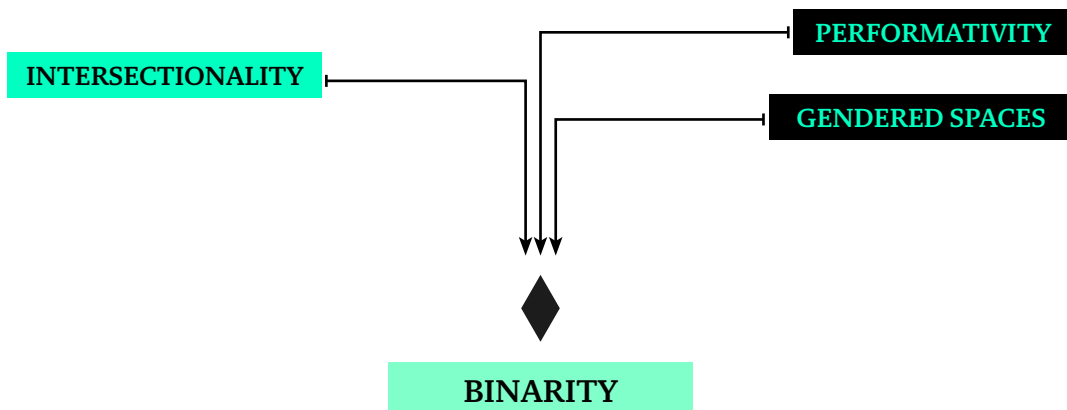
However, spatial takeover also operate on much smaller scales. Consider for example Aila Ribas' train journey, during which using only makeup and a pair of fake boobs creates a full performance

and small act of (mis)use of space.

In her philosophical text “Queer phenomenologies”, Sara Ahmed also talks about temporality, through the concept of the “oblique” in a straightly defined space. She argues that the appearance of the oblique creates disorientation, “bodily experiences that throw the world up, or through the body from its ground” (Ahmed, 2006, p. 157). We should embrace those moments of disorientation, she continues, as they can help us see how to “give ‘support’ to those whose lives and loves make them appear oblique, strange, and out of place” (Ahmed 2006: 570). To be temporary disoriented in a straight world is thus a way to empathetically support the non-normative, and a way to queer space.

Changing / hiding / surviving: Historically, spatial temporariness has been a strategy for many queer groups. Secret gay bars that change location every night and volatile meetings in a bathroom stall both operate with the benefit of only existing in a specific moment and time, effacing traces of them ever existing. The G.I.A. organization has a similar way of being, where safety exists in the constant switching of meeting place, and only temporary inhabitation of one “home”.

In the first aspect of temporality, the takeover and sudden appearance is the main aspect - being in the eye of the observer, of society. In the second aspect, the opposite is the case, where temporariness rather acts as disguise and safety, powerful in not being graspable.



Supporting questions

- *How are gendered binaries displayed/enforced/encouraged in this space?*
 - *Can the architecture itself be deemed gendered? How? How can it be subversed?*
- *What other binaries can be found in the place?*

The concept of binarity and the attempt to destabilize it is central to many queer readings, and is one of the main points of Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990). Firstly, destabilizing the binarity touches on the separation between the genders. Queer theorists state that gender might not be divided into purely male and female, and that gender does not necessarily derive from sex (biological factors such as hormones, genitals etc). The gender binary in turn entails many other concepts, such as the heteronormative mind, gender hierarchies, erasure of trans existences, aesthetic "boxes" - all of these concepts have the effect of classifying people: within or outside the "normal" (Barker & Scheele, 2016).

Bringing these ideas into architecture, we must be careful with how we reinforce ideas of binarity. The classical example is the question of gendered or non-gendered bathrooms. Do we need to

separate bathrooms into man and female? Why? What happens if we do not? Who feels comfortable with the division, and who does not?

In addition to certain spaces in the home having traditional gendered roles (kitchen and boudoir are female, garage and office are male), feminist authors have also pointed out how disciplines of architecture themselves have been gendered through time. In the times of modernity, for example, ornamentation and interior design was considered rather female, and devalued and seen as less intellectual than the architecture of structure (Bonnevier, 2007, p. 17-18).

Binaries appear in architecture all the time in terms of dualities: inside/outside, right side/upside down, open/closed, vertical/horizontal, low/high, etc. We can also see them in the people that are using architectural spaces: poor/rich, young/old, educated/non-educated, etc. How do we queer these? Can we complicate these black and white images?

If we employ an intersectional eye and see the combined works of these binaries on each other, we can even further complicate and enrich questions of destabilizing the binary.

TOOLS TO QUEER

B. WAYS TO QUEER



The second outcome of my research is what I call the “Ways of queering”. The ways of queering are three broad strokes with which I believe it is possible to queer, both within and outside of a spatial context. I have drawn them with the help of the normality circle from chapter 2, to show in what way they act in correlation to norms and normality.

These three ways are not comprehensive to all the ways in which queering can be done. They do however, give a hint of how to queer, which can guide me in my upcoming chapters, and other people who wish to learn how to queer.

The three ways of queering found here are also connected to my three reference projects, which happen to match, to give examples of how these ways of queering can manifest themselves.

The ways of queering help me in the creation of my visualization of queering Nordstan in chapter 5.

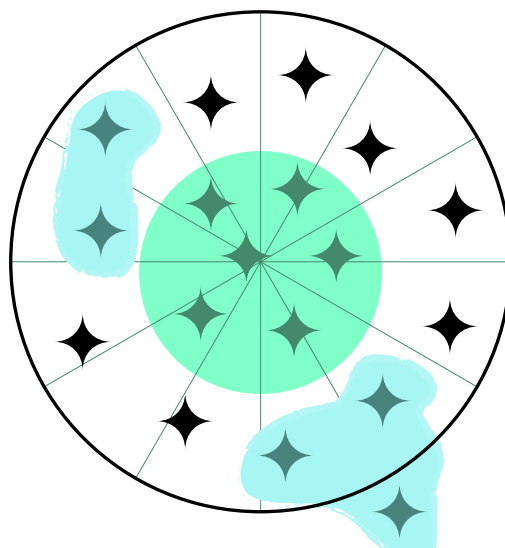


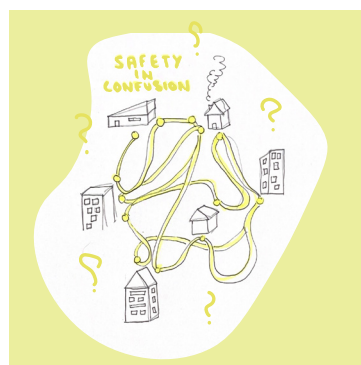
Figure 23. Diagram by author.

SEPARATING

Queer individuals creating their own separatistic groups within the walls of which they set their own normativity rules and most often resrepresent the norm themselves.



*This way corresponds well with the separatistic nature of **Gays in Angered**.*



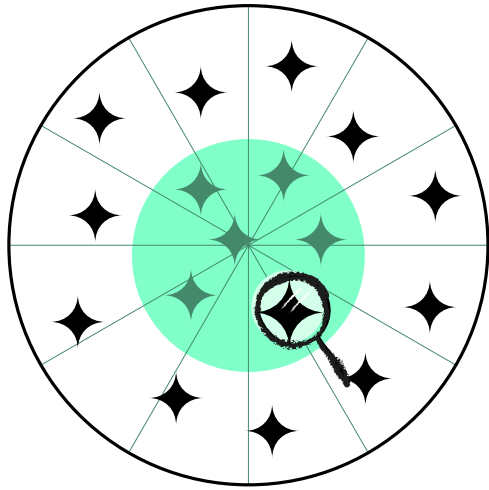


Figure 24. Diagram by author.

SEEKING

Finding queerness or traces of queerness in the existing normative society, both present and historically. Seeking to show the every-existing queerness in the world, in things loved and in the taken-for-granted as “normal”.



*Before taking a look at this reference, we might not have seen anything queer with the space boudoir. However, with the help of the seeking way of the architects of **Boudoir Babylon**, we can now make the connection.*

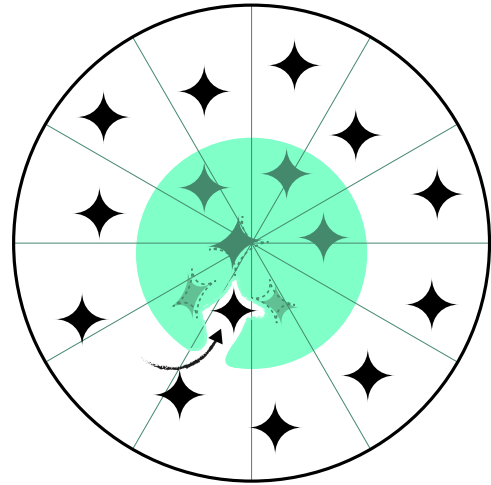


Figure 25. Diagram by author.

INTRUDING

Placing a queer element / person / object / concept within the walls of the “normal”, to see how the “normal” reacts and is affected by it.



*In **Train Journey**, Ailas Ribas introduces themselves and Ribas own “shapeshifting”, within the walls of the normatively coded train carriage.*



TOOLS TO QUEER

C. OBJECTIVES OF QUEERING



The third tool gained from the analysis seeks to understand the aims of queering. When going through different references and projects, questions regarding the purpose of queering space presented themselves: Why queer? What is the purpose? Is there any goal in itself of doing, or is there a larger end goal? Below, I have gathered some of the common denominators found as aims for queering space. The most common denominator seems to be the wish to “shake up”, or at least to affect someone or something – be it spectators, passersby or even institutions. Often, the final aim is a reflection, which hopefully leads to a change in mindset or practice.

Once again, I do not claim any comprehensibility in this diagram, and I invite anyone to suggest more objectives of queering.

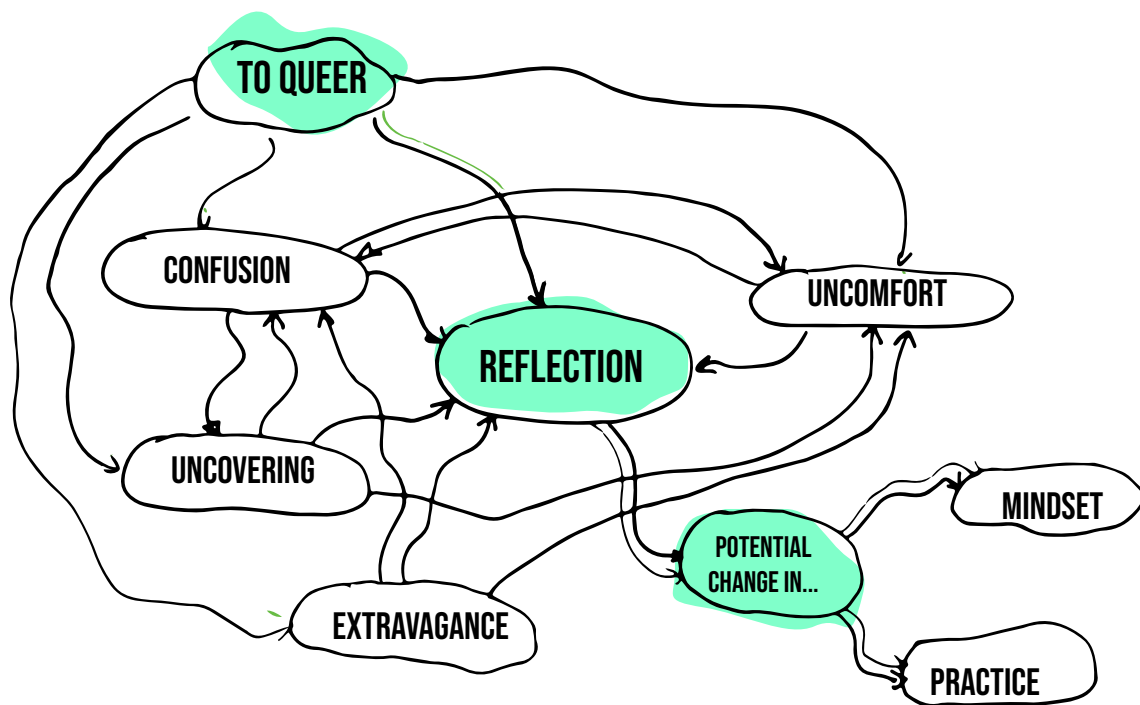
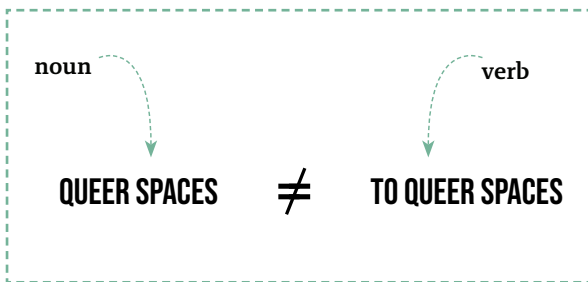


Figure 26. Diagram by author. Mapping out in large strokes the aims of queering.

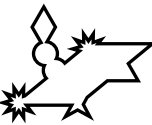
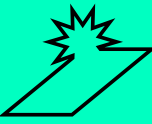
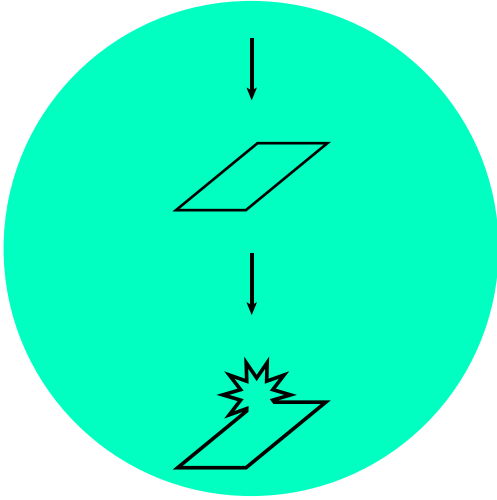
CONCLUDING THOUGHTS ON QUEERING SPACE

In this exploratory work of extraction, I have sometimes a bit carelessly jumped between the noun, adjective, and verb versions of the word “queer”, cruising through the diverse definitions laid out in the second chapter. After our analysis, we can, however, start to make a distinction between the noun “queer spaces” and the verb “to queer space”. Queer spaces are spaces dedicated to queer people (where the definition of said group is purposefully left untouched). These spaces can be closed or open to non-queer people, but have as a goal to be catered first and foremost towards people of a particular group.



“To queer space” has a different meaning. Granted, to create a queer space where there has previously not been one, should often be considered an act of queering space. However, that is not the only way in which one can queer space. The work in this chapter has pointed at the many different shapes, forms, methods, and goals of queering space - some of which do not necessarily involve people from the group “queer people”.

Separating noun and verb opens up a larger possibility for everyone to queer, even non-queer people. With this in mind, we can confidently engage in our upcoming process of queering Nordstan.



4

THE CASE OF NORDSTAN

INTRODUCTORY COLLAGE

In the following chapter, I will give a brief introduction to the case study site, the shopping mall of Nordstan. This collage, playing with a perspective section, interprets Nordstan as a sum of its commercial parts, making the buyable goods and their display the main purpose of the whole building.





Figure 27. Collage by author.

NORDSTAN THE SITE

SITUATING NORDSTAN

The site chosen for the case study of this thesis is the shopping mall of Nordstan. Nordstan is the most centrally located shopping mall of Gothenburg, has a total area of 306 000 m², and, according to their own website, hosts around 30 million guests every year (nordstan.se). Other than stores it also contains a large hotel and many offices.

The complex was built between 1967 and 1973 as an effort of “urban sanitation” of the so-called “slum-quarters” of Östra Nordstaden. Since then, the buildings have gone through many changes, but still function today as the shopping mall it was intended to be 50 years ago. It is comprised of 8 formerly freestanding blocks with now covered walkways. (Fritz, 1997)

As seen below, Nordstan is located between some main location in the city. With direct connection to the two biggest transportation hubs of Gothenburg (Brunnsparken and the Central Station) it also borders Gustav Adolfs torg, with its municipality buildings to the west, and the Gothenburg opera to the North.

NORDSTAN FOR THE THESIS

In my mind, Nordstan is a place of complexity and contradictions, just like the word “queer”. Both public and private, both inviting and hostile, breathing and suffocating all at the same time. A couple of things more importantly distinguish themselves for the type of queer study that I am conducting:

- The large amount of people that traverse and exist in the building makes the target group of the “customers” or “users” of the space diverse and varied. Diversity and multitude of people are a core theme in discussions of queer communities and norms, making a large group of strangers better than a small one.
- A sort of sanctuary of Swedish commercialism, one could also see Nordstan as a firm opponent of queer and gender-bending ideals. However, following Foucault’s exclamation “Where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault, 1978), its heavy emphasis on commercialism and binarity makes Nordstan a perfect place for resistance.
- An alternative reading and queer reimagining of Nordstan, I am making a Gothenburg local addition to the queering space.



Figure 28. Scale 1:1000. Map over a portion of the city centre of Gothenburg.



Figure 29. Photo by author. North western corner, on Östra and Norra Hamngatan.



Figure 30. Photo by author. North western corner, towards Norra Hamngatan.



Figure 31. Photo by author. Western side, Spannmålsgränd.



Figure 32. Photo by author. Eastern side, Köpmansgränd.



Figure 33. Photo by author. Eastern side, Nils Ericsonsgatan.



Figure 34. Photo by author. South-eastern corner, on Nils Ericsonsgatan and Norra Hamngatan.

NORDSTAN THE SITE

The parts of Nordstan accessible to the public are divided into three floors, all interconnected with escalators and elevators.

The main artery of the building consists of Götgatan (see image 7) that traverses the entire building, which is then cut perpendicularly by smaller streets. All along Götgatan and its perpendicular streets stores of various sorts display their merchandise: Clothes, shoes, electronics, furniture and more. Cafés and restaurants are also distributed on the site, mainly inbetween stores in the street of Postgatan and on the balconies of the second floor.

In the middle of the street level floor is Nordstadstorget, a larger open space that often hosts a variety of events. In the northernmost part of the building, a large parking is located.

Nordstan is always bright, and more or less busy. Although most users are there for shopping, it is also used as a throughfare to get to the transportation hubs of Brunnsparken and Nordstan.

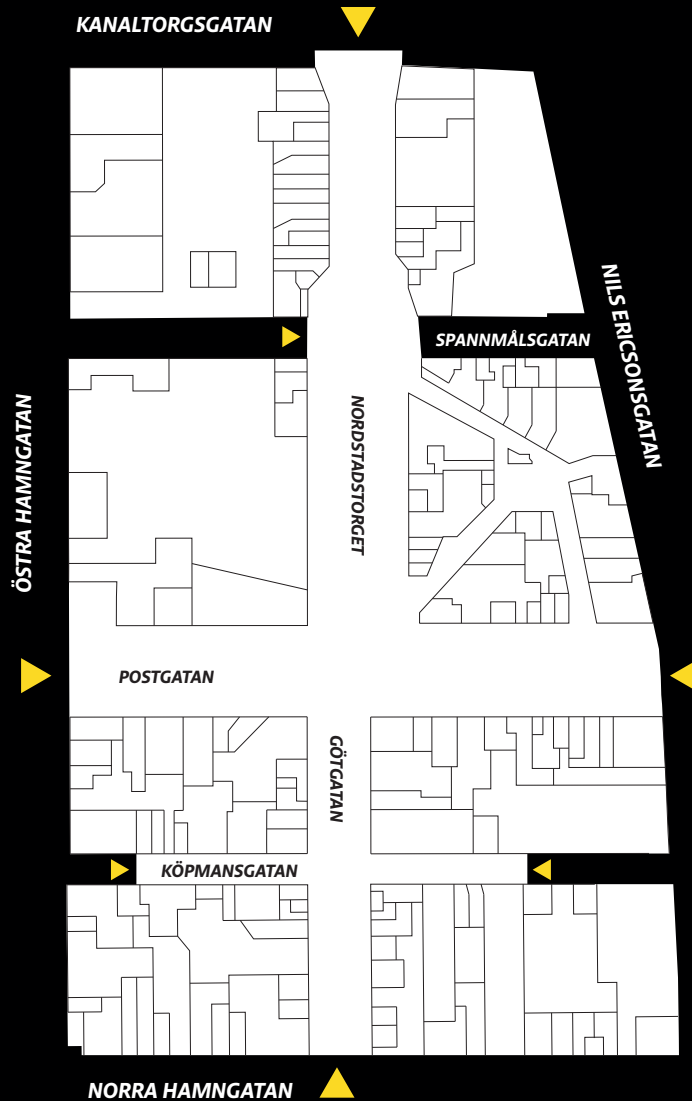


Figure 35. Drawing by author. Scale 1:2500. Plan of the ground floor of Nordstan.



Figure 36. Photo by author. View from main southern entrance.

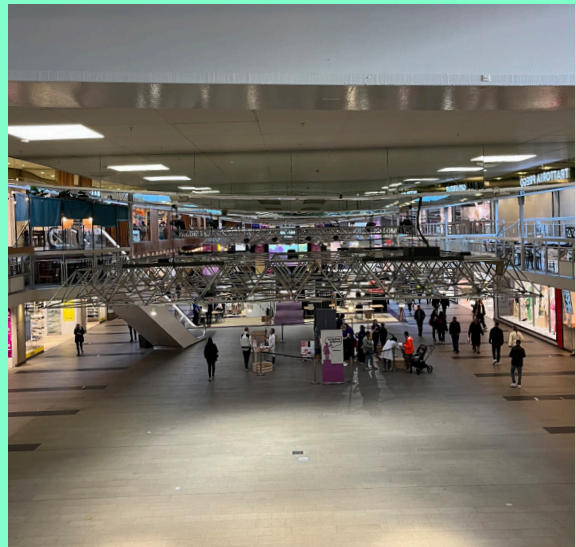


Figure 37. Photo by author. View over Nordstadstorget from upper, northern balcony.



Figure 38. Photo by author. Interior, ceiling.



Figure 39. Photo by author. Interior, corner in store.

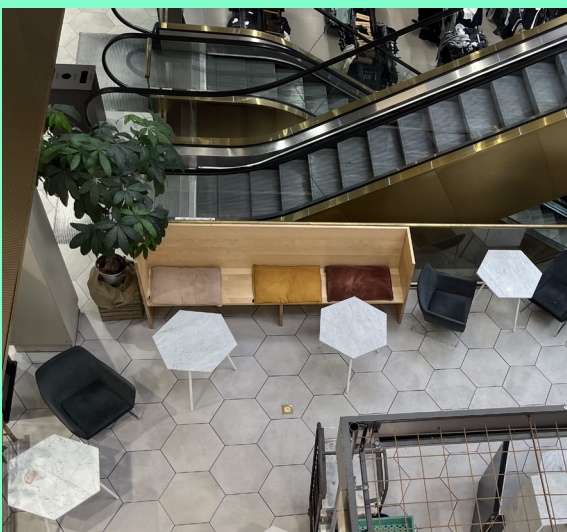


Figure 40. Photo by author. Interior, café in Femman.



Figure 41. Photo by author. Interior, Köpmansgatan.

QUEER ANALYSIS OF NORDSTAN

INTRODUCTION TO THE QUEER ANALYSIS

To analyze Nordsta with a queer perspective, I have applied one of the acquired tools - the spatial analysis criteria - to Nordstan.

To correctly perform the analysis, I needed to get a better understanding of what the place looks, sounds, and feels like, but also to understand what kind of place Nordstan is in the eyes and memories of its users. My gathering of information has been done in three ways:

- **Ethnographic and phenomenologic study**

I have spent as much time as possible in the public areas of Nordstan - in the shops, the restaurants, the corridors, and the plazas. During this time, I have photographed, taken notes, and sketched what I saw and experienced. Obviously, this type of study becomes one of subjectivity. Rather than dismissing this subjectivity as unscientific, I consider it a strength. If someone else did the same exercise with the same criteria, they might get a different result than mine - and therein lies the strength. A collection of subjective understandings of a place is stronger than a single understanding that claims to be the only true one.

- **Critical consumption of written and visual records of Nordstan**

For certain criteria, I have relied on other people's narrations and photographs of Nordstan. A critical consumption rather than a thoughtless ingestion is necessary, especially when working with queerness, to notice what is written, what is not written, and who has not been presented with the chance to write.

- **Previous personal knowledge and perspective of others**

This aspect is last in the trio, as it plays the smallest part of the analysis. It is impossible, however, as a Gothenburg native, not to have a relationship to Nordstan preceding this thesis. Similarly, in an informal manner, I have also asked around about other people's views of Nordstan. This knowledge, although the smallest in this context, must be recognized and valued.

QUEER ANALYSIS OF NORDSTAN



TEMPORARINESS

When first laying eye on Nordstan, not much would suggest temporariness or malleability. Facades, floors and roofs are made of stone, brick and concrete, all stiff materials that do not allow for potential movement, or even the suggestion of movement. Nordstan feels static - somehow like it has existed in this shape and form since forever, and will stay that way forever. For the regular visitor, Nordstan is not a place to go to for new happenings or events. Rather, it acts like a stable entity that will supply its user with necessities of clothes, decor, food and other. Sure, the contents of certain shops can change yearly, monthly, or even weekly, but the point is that there should always be something for you to find in the commercial category you are looking for. Nordstan is not a destination for surprise.

In the middle of the building, however, a space for temporary change has been carved by Nordstan themselves. Nordstadstorget (The Nordstan Square) sits in-between some of the biggest stores of the mall, essentially working like a public square. During the year, Nordstan makes sure to fill the square with activities and events that range all the way from a temporary cinema to an oversized chess-board or a parkour competition ground.

There is nothing overwhelmingly rebellious about an organized, carefully managed event, with a published time schedule and a moderator. One might argue that there is nothing queer nor queering with this. However, it does spark an interest in what the potentials of a space dedicated to temporarily in Nordstan can create.

Also, even these organized events in Nordstan can, if analyzed a bit more, be considered anti-establishment or anti-Nordstan. For example, in August 2023, the mall organized a week for "slow fashion" - something that goes against a lot of the commercial ideals that Nordstan otherwise exudes. Earlier in 2023, during the city's Science Festival, the research project THINGSTIGATE invited people to their "Protest Banner Lending Library". Here, visitors could make their own banners, help with collective ones and bring them home or donate them to the library (Vetenskapsfestivalen, 2023). One of the displayed banners read "TO CUTE TO BE

BINARY". Although the event was completely legal and encouraged by Nordstan itself, "too cute to be binary" is a bold statement to make, in, arguably, the sanctuary of binarity of Gothenburg.

Here, a discussion could be made whether branding the flag is an act of resistance or not. On one hand, the statement is bold and provoking, poking at the gender binary. On the other hand, the event is accepted by the institution, and perhaps this level of quiet and calm resistance is what the organization of Nordstan wishes to show to the world, to appear more progressive than they are. Either way, a piece of queerness is shown to the world, and could affect people positively.

If we look at protests in themselves, we find historical clues in "Mitt Queera Göteborg", a map, audio guide and city tour of queer instances in Gothenburg curated by the artist Sam Hultin. Out of many, two beautiful testimonies relate to the surroundings of Nordstan: Brunnsparken and Gustav Adolfs Torg. The first recounts seeing a group of women protesting in Brunnsparken, "with signs and hairstyles and clothes that I really had never seen before", to continue saying that these strangers somehow felt like the narrator's friends, compatriots, "people" (Mitt Queera Göteborg, <https://izi.travel/sv/ac3e-mitt-queera-goteborg/sv>, date unknown). The temporary visibility of these women in a public space influenced the narrator in a positive and joyful way, opening up some queer aspect in her.

The second testimony describes how the narrator was present the first time that the pride flag was raised on Gustav Adolfs Torg, with all the excitement of being part of that event, and the knowledge of the push-back that it had. When something so small as a flag has such a big impact, both in affirming and dissenting ways, there is a strong indication that queer(ing) isn't far away (Mitt queera Göteborg, date unknown).

This discussion raises questions of queer(ing) and normativity - how accepted can something be or become before it is, in fact, part of the normative?

"Before I moved to Gothenburg me and a couple of friends where down there to see a concert with the Stones. When we were on the tram on our way to Ullevi, we passed Brunnsparken and I saw something that must have been a protest. 20 women with signs and hairstyles and clothes that I really had never seen before. But the feeling I got was "well THERE you are!". It was like suddenly seeing ones compatriotes. And I felt that whatever was on those signs, I wanted to jump off the tram and join them. This was probably and important reason why I then moved here." - Anonymous, from "Mitt Queera Göteborg"



Figure 42. Photo by author. Protest Banner Library by research project THINGSTIGATE.

QUEER ANALYSIS OF NORDSTAN



HISTORY / ORIGIN

In my own research, few traces of LGBTQ+ people have been found, neither in the planning nor construction phase of Nordstan. However, the mall's whole history is characterized by ideas of clean modernity, sanitation and keeping out unwanted people – something that can be quite interesting with a historical queer perspective.

The full project of constructing Nordstan was initially described as a project of “urban sanitation”. In the 60s, the neighborhood of Östra Nordstaden was described as “the quarter of the emigrant hotels, warehouses and beer shacks” (Fritz, 1997, p. 7), with plenty of houses considered to have been “turned into slums” (“förslummade hus”). From private initiative and with the green flag from the municipality, the idea of a new, fresh, America-inspired mall started. The slum quarters were to be replaced with a profit-making warehouse (Fritz, 1997).

The project was clearly profit-seeking, with very little attention given to the inhabitants of the neighborhood. Additionally, the procedures of the project seem to have been taken with the least amount of democratic spirit as possible. Jeff Werner describes in an essay entitled “The square of Democracy” how the entire Nordstan sanitation process, just as for other sanitation projects in Gothenburg, was kept hidden and far away from public opinion – a cooperation between private industries and the municipality to avoid arguments and obstacles from unhappy citizens (Werner, 2020). The sanitation did not primarily aim to build better, sturdier buildings, but rather to chase away the “wrong” people and attract the “right” (rich, consuming) people. The use of the word “sanitation” gives the underlying ethics away: evoking sickness and dirt, thus calling the eviction of more than 50 inhabitants some sort of “clean-up” – an efficient act of dehumanization.

Even after the construction of the mall in the 70s, monitoring of the users of the space has been prevalent. The big indoor fountain was removed as it was considered to attract “unwanted individuals”, closing times were changed to avoid drug-dealing activities and benches were modified to avoid homeless people from lingering (Werner, 2020).

Here, the question arises: can we count the old inhabitants of Östra Nordstan as queer? How about the drug-dealing individuals, who roam the building after closing hours? In the eyes of the municipality, private building companies, and Nordstan executives, they clearly did or do not fit the mold for “good citizens,” and are or were at the fringe of society. If we use the definition of queer as “other”, we might. If we consider the activity of “queering” to be an act of radical inclusion, of acknowledging the non-normative, acknowledgment towards these groups of people also seems legitimate.

In 1964, Lars Ulvenstam created the documentary “Dom spränger i min stad i mitt hjärta” (“They blow up in my city in my heart”). This 30 minutes short film documents the life and architecture of Östra Nordstaden before and during the demolition of the neighborhood (Ulvenstam, 1964).

To honor the characters in the documentary as well as those that were not shown nor heard, the gallery hereby shows screenshots of some of the people featured in Ulvenstam's documentary.



Figure 43. Image compilation by author, with images pulled from Lars Ulvenstam's documentary "Dom spränger i min stad i mitt hjärta". Made as a tribute to the people that directly or indirectly were the target and victims of the so-called "sanitation" of Östra Nordstaden, which resulted in the Nordstan we know today.

QUEER ANALYSIS OF NORDSTAN



COLORS & MATERIALITY

When it comes to colors in Nordstan, not much stands out. The facades are grey, white or beige, and the interior offers a mishmash of metal, concrete and white stones, all illuminated by bright lights. In the “Femman House” (one of the 9 original blocks), some wood and fake plant details have been added in later years. The modern style of the building, devoid of ornamentation, leaves little space for colorful material explorations and imaginations. Granted, the interiors of the stores display color palettes of clothes, books and other objects, but the structure itself is mostly flat and limited in color.

What strikes me during my visit and visual analysis of Nordstan, is how materiality and color occasionally is used to distinguish the gender of costumers it would typically cater to. While a majority of the clothing stores in Nordstan offer clothes for men, women and children, there are multiple that only sell clothes for women. Two clothing stores in the beginning of Götgatan cater to men only: Brothers & VOLT. They stand out from other stores around them with the choice of material and color palette used in the interior. While most shops in Nordstan that only offer women’s clothes are incredibly bright, with white walls and strong lighting, these two stores are different.

VOLT, with an air of sophistication and classiness, has an eye-catching entrance with high ceilings and walls covered with beautifully embellished dark wooden panes. From the ceiling hangs a large chandelier, the wallpaper prints faint beige roman letters and the load-bearing pillars have been clad to look like neat piles of books. The sum of these elements give the thought of a gentleman’s club at some fancy english university. The Brothers store goes a similar direction with the darkness, but here in a “cooler” manner, where the black ceilings and walls are paired with slightly dimmed lighting and exotic green plants.

One could argue that too much is read into the colors and materials in these stores. However, even in a store that sells clothes for both men and women, the furniture looks different in the two categories. In H&M, the women’s section’s shelves are white, while they are black in the men’s section. The difference could be supported if the content

they were displaying were different: black shelves could, for example, make light-colored clothes pop more, and wood-paneling might be the warmth needed to sell warm winter coats. However, the color palettes of the clothes displayed at the time of the visit were awfully similar and could not possibly have influenced the choice of furnishing (see pictures hereby).

It goes without saying that the differences in color setting are gendered, in all three stores mentioned. Perhaps the different colored shelves in Nordstan are used as a way for the consumers to orient themselves quickly and unconsciously in the store – where we’ve internalized the binary so well that we automatically seek ourselves towards our “own” gender. God forbid that a woman would come strolling through the shelves for men’s jeans!



Figure 44. Photo by author. The Brothers store.



Figure 45. Photo by author. The VOLT store.



Figure 46. Photo by author. H&M, Women's section.



Figure 47. Photo by author. H&M, Men's section.

QUEER ANALYSIS OF NORDSTAN



BINARITY

Binarity is the division of things or concepts into two separate and opposite entities. In queer theory, the most blatant one is that of gender: male and female.

As I have repeated, much of queer theory seeks to destabilize the concept of gender - arguing that they are not essential and unbreakable, but rather a product of societal norms (Barker & Scheele, 2016).

In Nordstan, this is quite blatant. All clothing stores are riddled with labels of “men” and “women”, some stores are dedicated only to one of the categories, and images of the perfect binary bodies are branded everywhere. Even stores that sell makeup and candles, things that do not even have to fit a certain body, feel gendered to the feminine, while stores that focus on electronics and power tools tend to display as more masculine.

Extending the idea of binarity beyond the sex/gender binary is productive for showcasing more ingrained economical and ideological norms.

We have already considered Ahmed’s idea of the oblique in the section on temporariness. When Ahmed introduces the oblique, she is working on destabilizing the binary between straight and non-straight – where the straight one is obviously the “good one”. One could also look at it as going against the simple binarity of vertical/horizontal – allowing for all the angles in between there with diagonal lines. Modernist architecture does work a lot with the straight, vertical, and horizontal lines and 90-degree angles, which shows in Nordstan. Not only are all the walls and ceilings straight – not a single curve is to be found in the interior corridors. The only non-perpendicular line in the whole plan is the outer wall towards Nils Ericsonsgatan, one that visitors would rarely experience.

We can also look at the binarity of “inside / outside”. All spaces in Nordstan are quite clearly defined as inside or outside. In fact, there is even a demarcation between inside and inside – inside. The space has changed from being 8 freestanding blocks with streets in between them. Now, those streets are indoor corridors instead – they are heated and sheltered from the rain. Nordstan does not either in any way “spill out” on the street, with outdoor markets or booths connected to the façade

out on the streets of Östra or Norra Hamngatan. Rather, it is incredibly clear when you’re outside of Nordstan, and when you are inside. There are no ambiguities to be found in where Nordstan is and is not. There is also a clear-cut one-directional binarity between what is “public” space and not – a shopper has absolutely no access to the office parts of Nordstan, whereas the office workers are fully welcome in Nordstan.

If we venture a bit further out from our straightly architectural binaries, we can direct our attention towards the visitors of Nordstan, and how they are catered towards by the shopping mall. The target audience of Nordstan is adult people. All advertisement is directed towards adults, and there are no children’s playgrounds or youth spaces embedded in Nordstan, inviting younger people into the space. More than just being for adults, Nordstan is for adults with purchasing power.

Although outwardly, Nordstan seems to be suited for shopping as well as other stuff: a space where anyone can come and hang around, no matter age, socio-economic background, or where you live in the city, with its open space and well-connectedness to the rest of the city. Even Nordstan itself organizes cute events to invite the public in to join them!

Well, one could argue that the organized programs are there to draw people to Nordstan, where they end up spending their money. All the events happen at Nordstadstorget – sure, it is a large space with little furniture that allows for all kinds of stands and makeshift designs to happen – but it is also located in the very center of the building, at the heart of the mall. There is no way to get to the “square” from outside of the building without passing at least a couple of stores, in most cases over a dozen. Additionally, standing in the middle of the square, thirteen different stores and five restaurants are “available” to you within seconds of walking. Even if the events surely have a purpose on their own, their existence certainly comes with benefits for the commerce of Nordstan.

A display of the consumerist nature of the very architecture of Nordstan is in the distribution of seating. Although it is a semi-public space, there are barely any ways to relax in the space without

purchasing anything: benches and chairs are only available inside coffee shops and restaurants – for those who need to buy a small piece of coffee or food between shopping sprees. Sure, there is seating in the public squares outside of Nordstan, at Gustav Adolfs Torg and the newly renovated Brunnsparcken. These are, however, a bit outside of Nordstan. As we mentioned in the binarity of “inside / outside”, they are also clearly outside, making them feel separated and far away from the rest of the mall. They are also obviously outside, something that makes them useless during a large portion of the winter months in Gothenburg. Here, the architecture helps establish one of the binarities of the space: if you are here to consume (that is, if you have agency, and money and wish to indulge in the liberal economy): welcome. If not: please leave.



Figure 48. One side of the binary displayed as early as in children's toys.

QUEER ANALYSIS OF NORDSTAN



PRIVACY & DISPLAY

Privacy in Nordstan is almost an illusion. The vastness of the open corridors creates long lines of sight, glass walls, and doors expose shop interiors to the busy interior streets, and vice versa, bright lights make every shopper's every movement detectable. As the cherry on the cake, cameras in every corner remind us of the watchful eyes of the building.

Even when seeking the utmost privacy – changing from one set of clothes to another, passing through the vulnerable stage of nudity – one is not alone. Many changing rooms only demarcate the individual cells with a thin piece of fabric, or with sturdy wooden doors whose size only hides the bare minimum. Signs all over the inside of the booth beg you to scan QR codes or sign up for email lists, and all sense of privacy is lost when a retail worker screams out “If anyone needs any help...!” standing right on the other side of the thin door.

Using Butler's performativity concept and extracting out of it a performer and a performance, Nordstan is a main stage with thousands of performances and performers every day. Clear lights and mirrors illuminate and reflect your image, placing you in relation to others, as well as placing all your deficits in relation to the perfect bodies displayed everywhere. Neither walls nor changing booths protect you from the fact that everything in Nordstan is a performance.

The most theatre-like space in Nordstan is located on the upper floors around Nordstadstorget: the restaurants. From here, one can easily peer down on passersby while inhaling a burger or a plate of noodles. Visitors at the restaurants become spectators of the display of the people downstairs. But the roles are just reversed for a moment – until the lunch eaters are down on the floor again, now even more aware than ever of the observing crowd upstairs.

In conclusion: privacy is nowhere and display is everywhere in Nordstan. This opens up two avenues of queer potential.

The first is to use the potential of display and perform in an exaggerated, thought-provoking manner. If individuals who challenge the gender binary (or any binary or power imbalance for that sake) exist and act in this open and highly visible space, the performance is put to good use. Instead of reiterating the same patterns as everyone else, this “other” existence disrupts it. The stage-like potentials of the architecture of Nordstan are somehow turned on themselves.

The other queer potential lies in the power of a room for privacy - what could it look like, and how would it work? How would be invited, how would they be invited, and how will be kept outside?

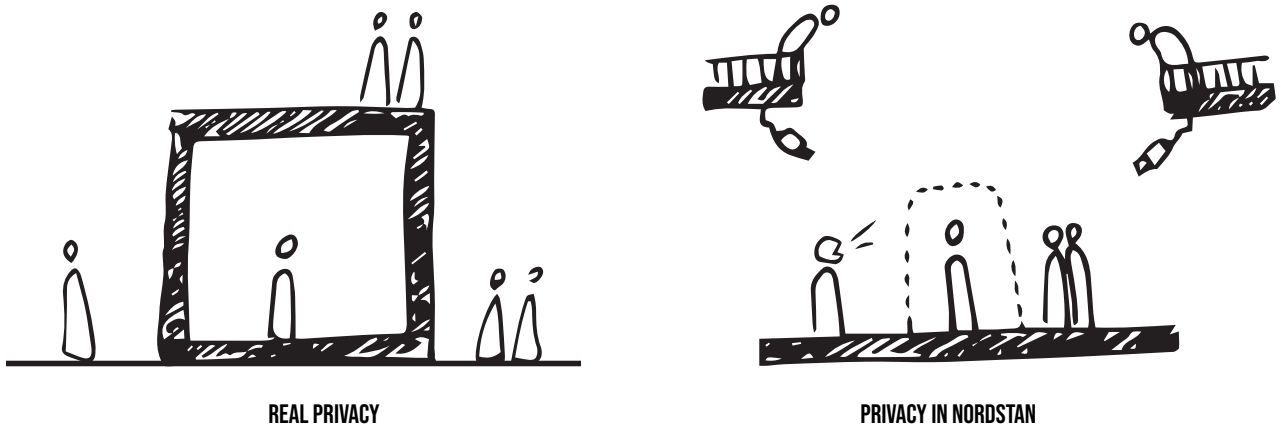


Figure 49. Sketches by author. Real privacy as compared to the alleged privacy of Nordstan.



Figure 50. Photo by author. Fitting room in a store in Nordstan, with much left to wish for when it comes to cover and privacy.

QUEER ANALYSIS OF NORDSTAN

CRITERIA RELATIONS

As a way of summarizing the findings in the previous pages, a diagram was made visualizing the main ideas found in the analyses.

None of the spatial analysis criterias work in a vacuum. Rather, many of the analyzed aspects of Nordstan play off and enrich each other. Therefore, the connections within and between the criterias are shown.

Other than showing the more obvious connection between the analysis points, the diagram also helps identifying points that might not initially have been of great interest, but that appear to have a lot more to give.

The question of safety, for example, is one that I do not deal with at length in the textual analysis. The diagram, however, shows that queer safety in relation to the lack of privacy and modernist ideals of Nordstan could be a topic worth examining all on its own.

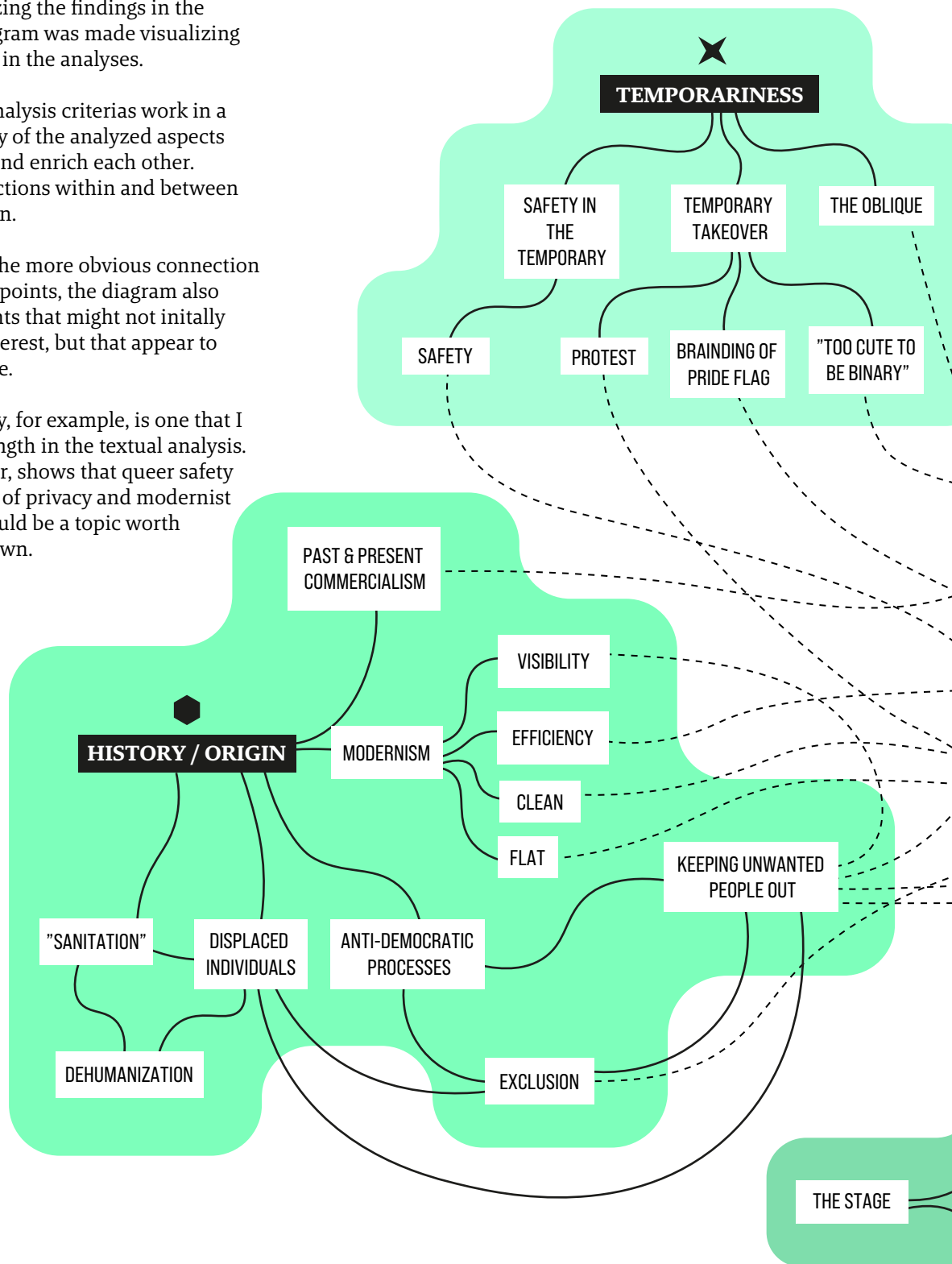
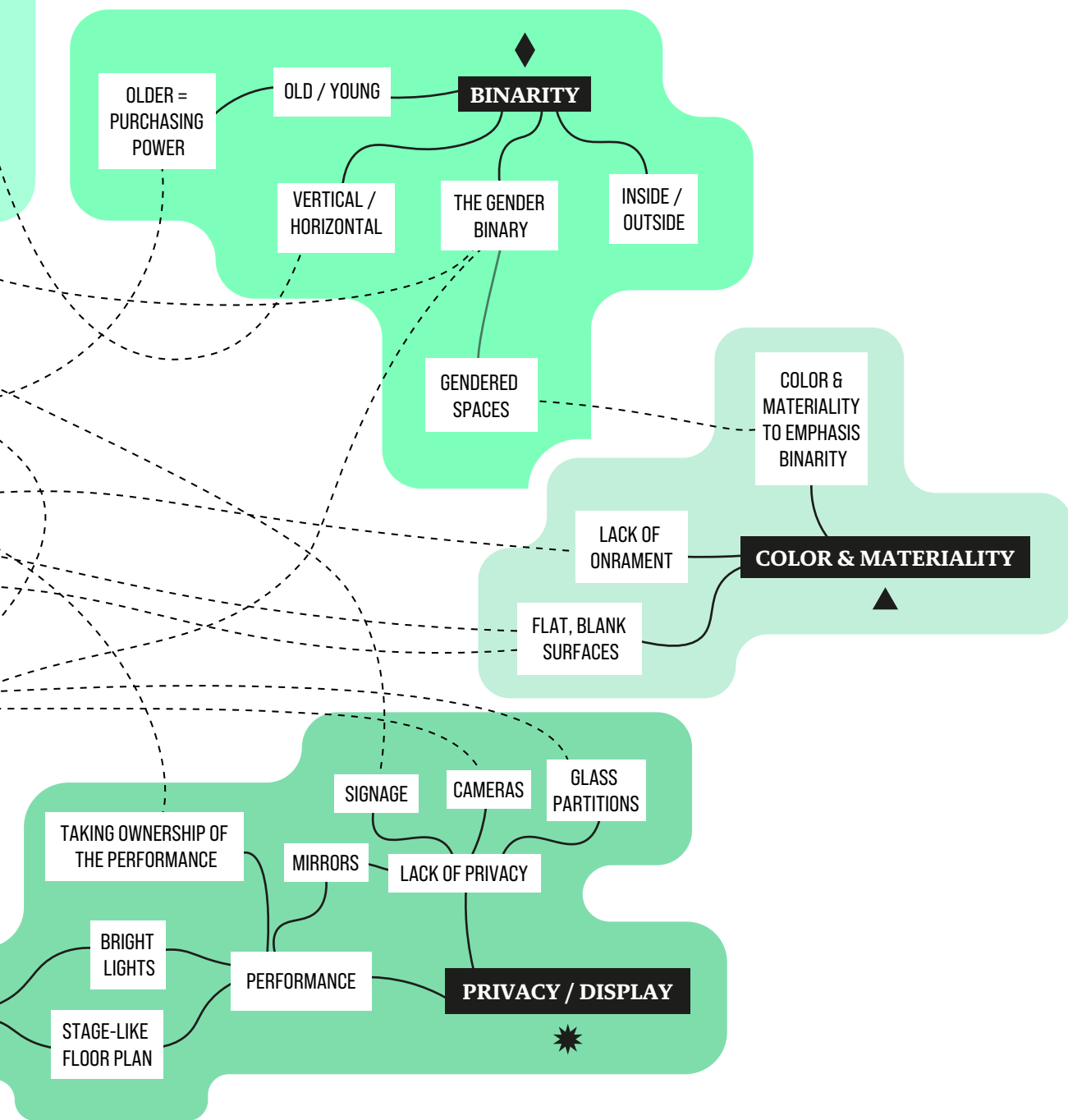
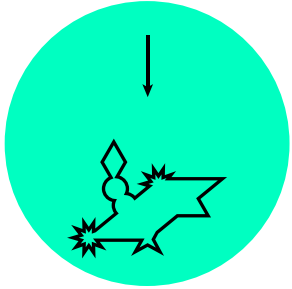
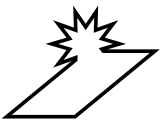
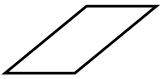
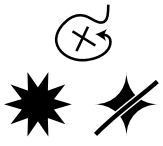


Figure 50. Diagram by author. Displaying connections within and between findings in the separate spatial criteria analyses.





5

QUEERING NORDSTAN

QUEERING THROUGH COLLAGE

THE COLLAGE

To finalize the thesis, I have created a visualization to display some of how a queering of Nordstan can be imagined. The resulting collage is based on:

- A) Nordstan analyzed queerly through the spatial analysis criteria,
 - B) Ways to queer, and
 - C) Objectives of queering
- (see diagram hereby)

My newfound understanding of the existence and lack of queerness in Nordstan, combined with a generalized understanding of how to queer and what the aim of that queering is, has allowed me to reimagine the space and visualize it here.

The choice of a collage as a final drawing is based on multiple reasons:

- Flexibility of representation
- Possibility of blending media – classical drawings, photos, line drawings, illustrations, text
- Possibility of bending the rules of the classical drawing
- Possibility of including multiple ideas in one frame
- Story of collage and zines within queer and disruptive history

QUESTION OF SIZE

For best effect, this collage should be seen printed in A1 format, *see page 93*.

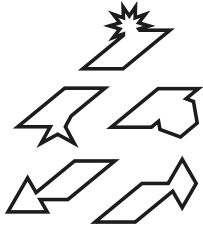
PURPOSE AND INTERPRETATION

The collage works as a graphical summary, where the knowledge I have found in the analysis is applied in different layers on Nordstan. A visualization has more power in hooking in an external viewer, capturing their attention in a world of short attention spans.

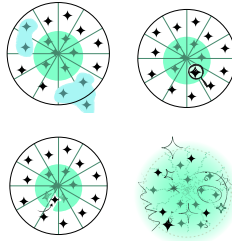
The collage is not intended as a proposal for Nordstan. Rather, it should be seen as a document to spark interest and curiosity, with the ultimate purpose of reflection, and self-reflection not least.

After the presentation of the collage itself, you will find a couple of zoom-ins with explanations, to point out my intentions and wishes with the image. However, I also invite the reader to look at the image before reading the text. What comes to mind to you? How would you interpret this as queer? What could be “queerer” about the image? Hopefully, you can find more aspects of queering that I had not even thought about, and continue the discussion.

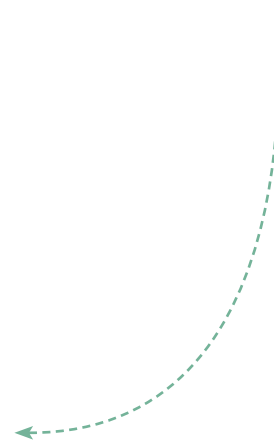
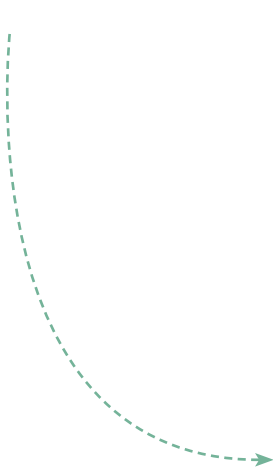
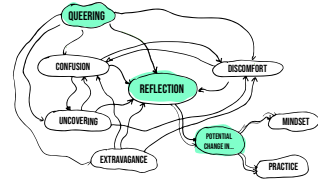
A. QUEER ANALYSIS OF NORDSTAN



B. WAYS TO QUEER



C. OBJECTIVES OF QUEERING



THE COLLAGE

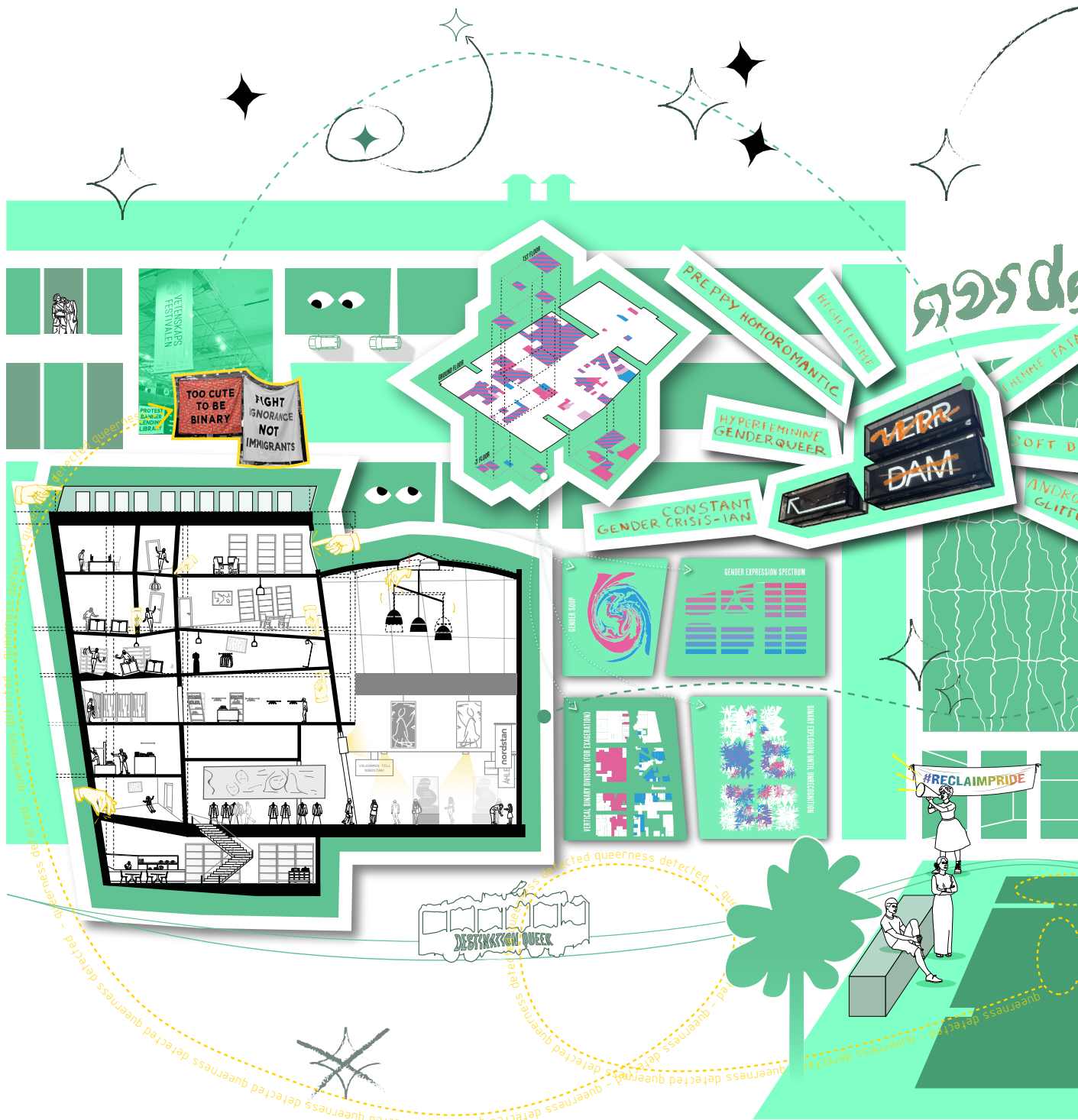
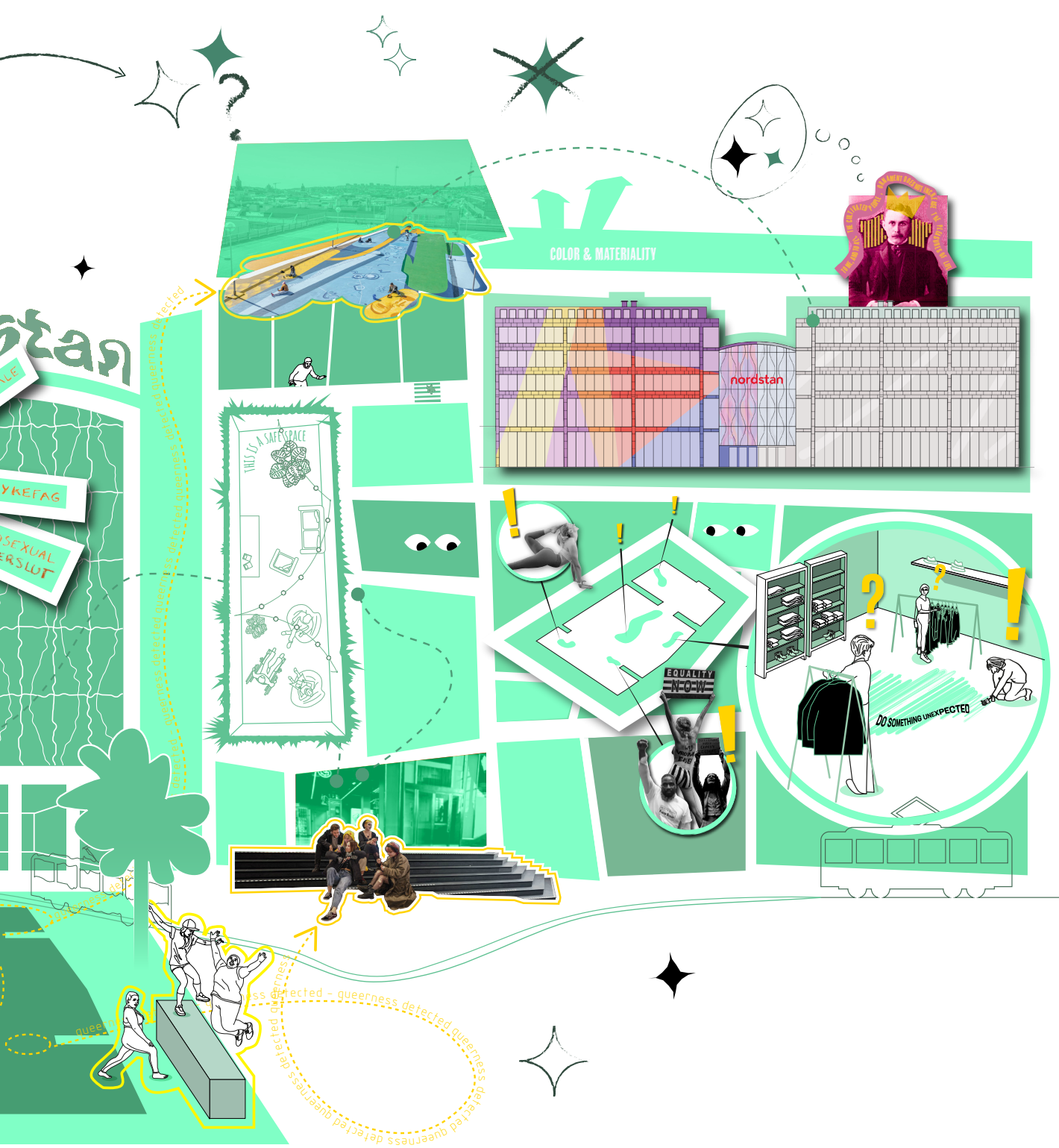


Figure 51. The collage.



For best effect, this collage should be seen printed in A1 format, see page 93.

THE DETAILS

In the following couple of pages, I zoom in on parts of the collage and give an explanation of what my goal with those sections were. These details hold varying and sometimes contradictory meanings of what queerness in architecture and space entails. To each zoom-in I have attached a quote, which embody parts of what the detail stands for or tries to achieve.

THE BACKGROUND

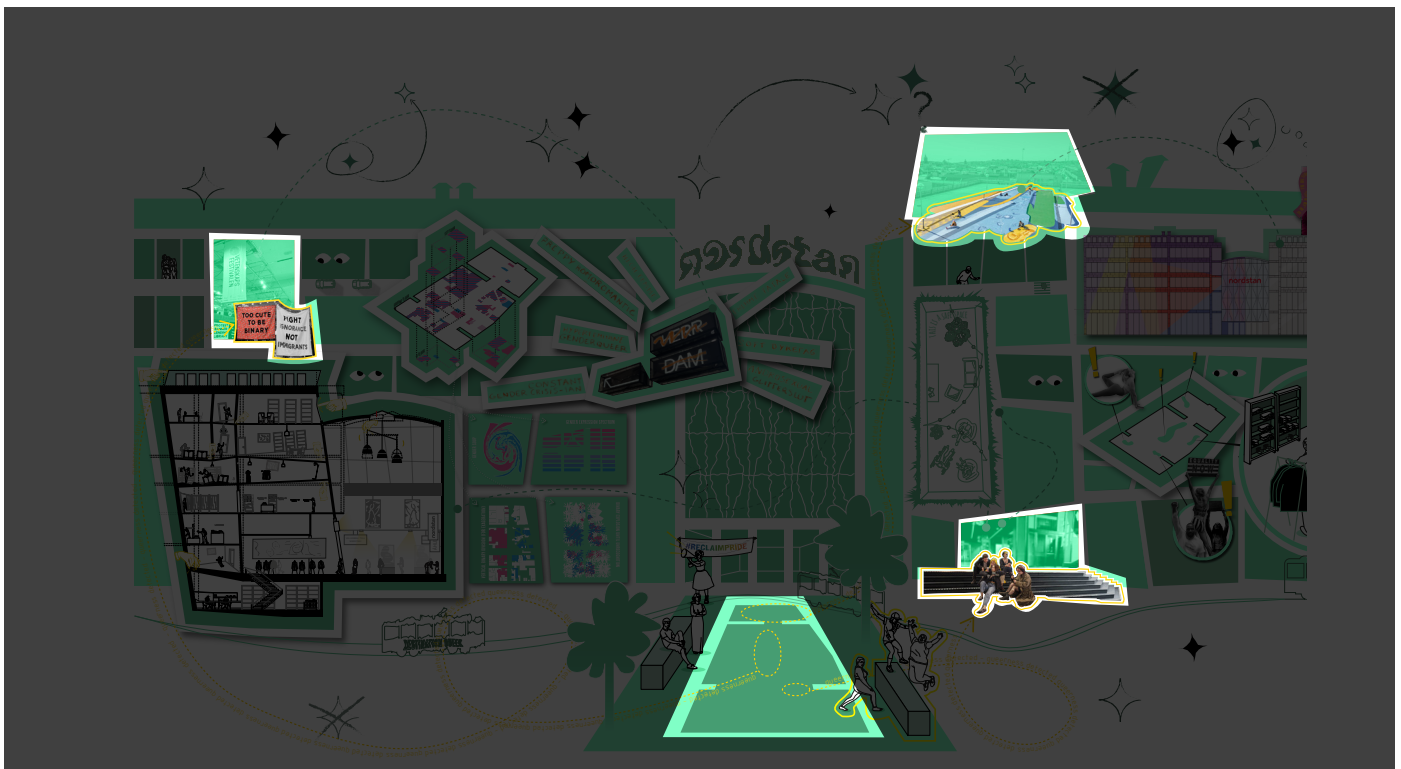


The background might not at a first glance seem important. However, it ties together the full image a gives it its overall look and logic. The power of the background lies in its multiplicity of identity and possibility to hold many different meanings simultaneously.

At first sight it might look like a rough outline of an elevation – the well-known Nordstan entrance with its new wavy glass/plastic decorations etc. However, with an architect eye, parts of the drawing could be interpreted as a plan – green neighborhood blocks and white streets and

avenues. The bottom part of the drawing also alludes to a perspective, yet another type of architectural drawing.

Ambiguity of the background alludes to general queer ambiguity and invites to further encourage ambiguity in the rest of the drawing. It also gives power to the reader/viewer to find its own interpretations.



SCANNING FOR QUEERNESS

In the bulk of the thesis, I analyze Nordstan from a historical perspective, seeking traces of queerness. Here, I am focusing on the present, and have found three instances of queer activity. None of these examples are publicly or explicitly queer in their nature, however I, with my semi-clear definition of queering, would to some level classify them all as queer in some way.

The image backgrounds are integrated in the green collage background to showcase their belonging to the whole of Nordstan, while the queer elements are highlighted for clarity.

1) EMOTRAPPAN

Most natives of Gothenburg have heard of, seen, or visited “emotrappan”, “the emo stairs”. These stairs don’t look like much, only consist of a couple of steps, and are placed in a space with heavy traffic. It got its name in the 2000s from the emo subculture young people who used to sit there and hang out. One of these subculture youth, in a interview with GP says: “Where do you go when you don’t fit in in the yard? You go to the city.” (Karlén, 2020).

The people of emotrappan do (and mostly did, as the stairs are less frequented now) stick out. They break the norm of the regular visitor: they don’t go to Nordstan to shop, but to meet their friends. They appropriate a space that was never designed for social interaction, and they use it as their extra living room. To me, their otherness and their spatial reclamation represent queerness in Nordstan.

2) THE ROOF

In July 2023, an enormous floor-mural was inaugurated on the rooftop parking lot of Nordstan. A collaboration between the artist Larson Bervoets, students from Göteborgs konstkola (The art school of Gothenburg), and the European Creative Rooftop Network, the artwork seeks to use otherwise largely unused spaces in the city for public art and activation (nordstan.se).

This art piece represents queerness in a number of ways to me. It uses underused space that has a different intention than art – activating and reclaiming it. It brings in color, speaking of colors and materiality in the space. It encourages the appreciation of art, in a space that is mainly focused on consumerism and money flows.

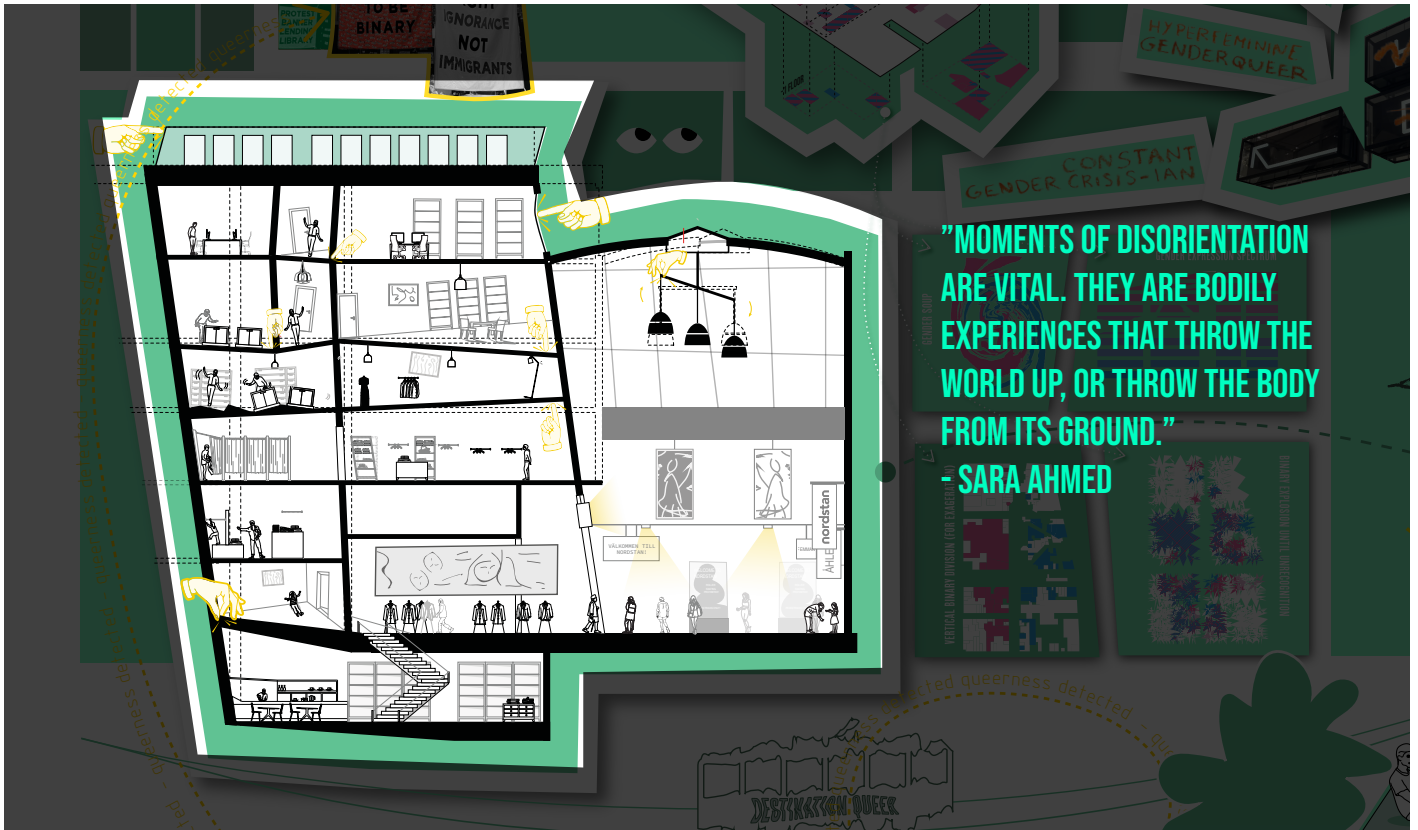
3) TOO CUTE TO BE BINARY

Nordstan frequently holds events on the so-called Nordstadstorget. These range from chess games with enormous boards and pieces, to parkour competitions and Christmas markets.

In April 2023 the city-wide Vetenskapsfestivalen took place in Nordstan, and one of the booth had a Protest Banner Lending Library. One of them, which you have already seen in the previous chapter, said “Too cute to be binary”. Queer in itself, the banner increased its queer impact by being placed in one of the most binary spaces of Gothenburg.

THE DETAILS

THE OBLIQUE



In this part of the drawing, I play with Sara Ahmed's notion of the "oblique" (Ahmed, 2006). While Ahmed's ideas of the oblique first and foremost operate on a philosophical and phenomenological level, I wanted to translate the concept spatially in my drawing. Speaking of architectural norms – walls are often straight (for reasons we all understand). The oblique, both philosophically and in terms of space, is a form of disruption to the norm – what do we do with that? What happens if the disorientation that Ahmed talks about happens in real life, due to a leaning floor or a crooked wall? If we one day walk into our office, and all the furniture has slid into a pile in one corner of the room? Would we end up confused, irritated, angry? Or will we take advantage of the new conditions to find new perspectives on our spaces? Can we, as Ahmed proposes, embrace these moments of disorientation, and even make them intentionally part of our everyday lives?

FIGHTING THE BINARY



As written about in the sections of “binarity” and “colors and materials” (p. 60), the gender divide in Nordstan is sometimes clear with colors, signage, and materiality. In this section, I visualize the current gender disparities in Nordstan – with the very normatively interpreted colors of pink for girls and blue for boys. Using these colors in a thesis like this one despite their gendered meanings is an attempt to parody the use of those colors. Four alternative plans put gender in the mall into question, either by exaggerating the divide, or completely turn it on its head. These thought experiments give us a chance to question the way we create gendered spaces.

Next to the plans, is the “identity cloud”. It is inspired by an advertisement poster from Lex, an American queer community app (<https://www.lex.lgbt/>). As examples of dating app entries, the ad wrote out several different identities, with ranges in sexuality, gender identity, fashion style and race. With this poster as inspiration, I put together and extracted a couple of these different labels.

How do bodies that do not see themselves in either category feel when entering these spaces? Should there be a dedicated space for them? But also, should we even continue to support the male/female binary in general? Would it be so bad to let it go?

THE DETAILS

COLOR & MATERIALITY

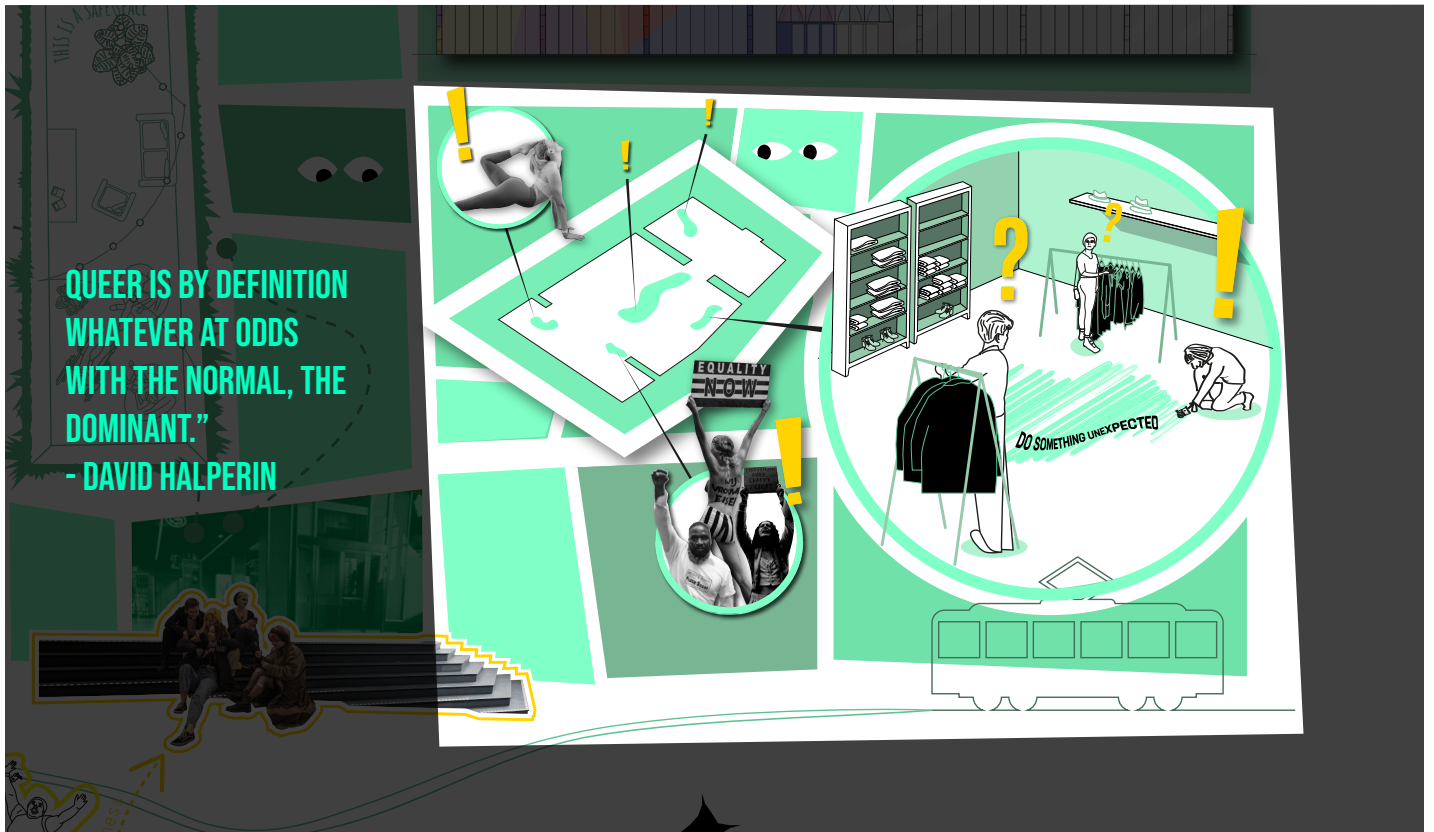


In this part of the drawing, I wanted to challenge the impact of modernity on the building: facades of white and gray, stone and concrete as the main materials...

What types of reactions could one get if proposing a large "de-modernification" of the materials and colors of Nordstan?

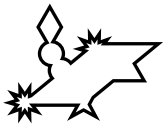
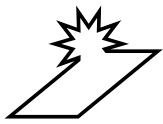
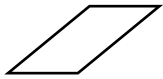
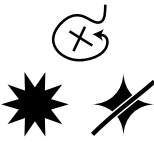
Importantly, color is not queer or non-queer in itself – however, rebelling against the modernist ideals of cleanliness, sturdiness, and purity with opposite materials of feathers, fluff, and soft fabrics – that I would consider to be queer. Therefore, architect Mr. Adolf Loos, with his wonderfully modernist quote on ornamentation (Loos, 1913), gets a small, queer ornament-friendly makeover.

TEMPORARITY



In my section on temporality, I talk about the strength of taking over spaces and using them in unconventional ways. In the collage I am proposing a system where just a splash of paint on the floor and an encouraging sign could elicit unexpected use of space.

What would happen? A demonstration in a clothing store? A yoga session between TVs in the electronics department? And once again, how does that affect the people around?



6

EPILOGUE



DISCUSSION

WHAT HAS BEEN DONE

Let us look at the thesis question posed at the beginning of this process:

How can an instance of queer(ing) space be summarized and visualized in one drawing?

I have responded to this question by first fleshing out what queer and queering can be, stating that the fluidity of the term holds a strength in its variable uses. After that, I have used existing references in terms of reference projects (one architectural installation, one organization, and one performance) as well as literary references, that all deal with queerness in space in different ways. The references have been used to extract tools to queer. Finally, I have applied the tools in a theoretical analysis of the site of Nordstan, and a visualization of some of the findings from that analysis.

In conclusion, the possibilities of visualizing queer(ing) in space are endless. As stated in many instances along the way, the steps I have taken do by no means guarantee the same result and conclusions every time. The open-endedness of the pathway allows for different results every time it is used, which I believe to be one of its strengths. In a topic like this one, we can happily strive for a multiplicity of views, rather than one final, comprehensive one.

The two things that I, nonetheless, find crucial in a conversation about queer architecture are the following: first, a discussion about one's positionality regarding the subject, and the ways one's own biases play into attitudes and norms. Second, a large amount of empathy and openness, as a way to truly try to understand how queerness as an identity affects one's relation to space, and queerness as an action affects one's relation to others.

RESPONDING TO MY SUPPORTING QUESTIONS

Can a person not part of the LGBTQIA+ communities practice queer spatial practices?

I have personally gained more and more confidence in my understanding of queer(ing), although I am far from done. The main reason for my increased confidence stems from realizing that I believe that queering, in some ways, can be practiced by everyone.

The strength of the verb "queering" is that it does not necessarily lead to LGBTQIA+ people. It is of course of utmost importance not to erase the huge amounts of work that LGBTQIA+ individuals and groups have contributed to the creation, development, and spread of queer theory and knowledge. However, using their findings while crediting their work, and using it with the intent of enriching the field and spreading understanding about queer(ing) does not in my opinion pose an ethical threat to the discipline.

Can queer(ing) become the norm? What happens to it then?

This question has arisen multiple times in the final steps of the thesis: If a queer(ing) architectural proposition is made, that architecture is effectuated, and then turns out to be loved and embraced by everyone - can it still be considered queer?

My answer to this question is still indecisive. In one way, the queer intentions of the proposition will always lay behind the work and the reason why it became. On the other hand, almost all work we have touched upon has been filled with an intensity created in the meeting of space and its surroundings, in the intensity of being at odds with the normative. Would that intensity disappear, if it came to appeal to the norm? Or could it still hold on to its original idea - despite it being publicly accepted?

I will leave the answer to this question to the reader, or to the thesis question of a future master's student.

SITUATING THE THESIS IN THE DIRECTION OF DESIGN ACTIVISM BEYOND BORDERS

BORDERS

The borders dealt with in this thesis are less physical than they are psychological and social. I have tried to break boundaries in forms of norms that are sometimes not visible, but that affect us daily and continuously throughout our lives. This thesis has had the objective to visualize those borders with design and discussion, showing us a way to push and break them.

BEYOND

In this thesis, the idea of beyond is largely one of finding what is not shown and listening to what is not shouted. It is going beyond the first sight, and celebrating what lies under or behind.

ACTIVISM

In my approach, I have tried to amplify the queer activist voices of others, as well as giving new tools to those wishing to queer architecture in the future. Hopefully, queerness incorporated into space can give a stronger voice to queer people, theorists, and activists, but also a new activist approach for those not initially involved in queering and queerness.

DESIGN

This thesis has approached design in the broadest way possible - as space that we inhabit, affect and get affected by. I have denounced design as embodying ideals and power structures but also encouraged design to be subversive and reactionary. Queering of design has the potential to open up some of the locked-in structures, ideas, and ideals in the design professions.

WHAT HAS BEEN CONTRIBUTED

This thesis adds to a current trend of publications on queer(ing) architecture, continuing the ongoing discussions and thought processes. It adds a Swedish localized aspect and offers a method of analysis that can be used on any existing space.

Many tools presented in the thesis are reusable in a different context: the pathway (p. 12-13) and the tools to queer (p. 42-50) can both be used for different projects of queering space. Even elements of the final collage can be reproduced or used as inspiration for future projects.

Moreover, this thesis continues the path of attributing the architect and the architectural researcher to a different role than the one-man-show genius designer that has long been the norm.

WHY SHOULD WE QUEER?

For some, the question might remain:
So... why should we queer?

After making a distinction between “queer spaces” and “queering space”, we have established that with the appropriate amount of respect and self-understanding, anyone can queer. Queering can help us amplify the voices of others, visualize hidden power relations and start conversations about norms and normativity in disciplines that need them.

By spreading tools and intentions of queering, we can encourage people in privileged positions or positions of power to help destabilize those privileges and power structures. Doing that in architecture can help us create more spaces designated for everyone, not only for those whom have traditionally been considered the normal.

So what are you waiting for? Pick up your courage, your voice and your pen, and GO QUEER!

POSITIONALITY EVOLVED

Finally, with a revisitation of my initial positionality, I am closing this chapter and this thesis. It has become a personal process and a very personal product. It has made me look inwards to question myself and my meaning as an inhabitant, actor and architect in the world. I hope that some of these thoughts and drawings might have inspired something similar in you.

I AM NOT QUEER.

- 2 I HAVE MUCH LEFT TO LEARN AND I AM EAGER TO LEARN
- 3 I ACKNOWLEDGE MY MANY PRIVILEGES
- 4 I WANT TO LIFT INEQUALITIES OF DIFFERENT SORTS TO THE LIGHT
- 5 I WANT TO CARRY SOME OF THE ACCUMULATED FATIGUE FROM QUEER PEOPLE'S SHOULDERS
- 6 I AM AFRAID AND AWARE I MIGHT TURN INTO A "STRAIGHT SAVIOR"
- 7 I AM AFRAID TO SAY THAT I WANT TO "LEARN HOW TO QUEER"
- 8 I SOMEHOW ALSO WANT TO SHOUT VERY LOUDLY TO EVERYONE TO START QUEERING EVERYTHING
- 9 I WILL TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY MISSTEPS AND APOLOGIZE FOR MY MISTAKES
- 10 I AM NOT AIMING AT BEING ALL-ENCOMPASSING, BUT RATHER TO SHOW A SLIVER OF QUEERNESS IN A SLIVER OF THE WORLD
- 11 MY LEARNING WILL NOT BE OVER WHEN THE DEADLINES ARE OVER

Why did I get myself into this?



I don't understand anything

This is way too complex for me

I definitely cannot queer



Figure 52. Diagram by author. Revising the original positionality (left) to the new one (right).

Will this anger someone?



I AM A QUEERER.

2 I AM NOT QUEER - BUT I AM A QUEERER

3 I HAVE QUEERED, I CAN QUEER

**4 I SEEK THE OBLIQUE AND
MOMENTS OF DISORIENTATION**

5 I INVITE DISRUPTION, INTERVENTION, RECLAMATION

**6 I AM FRUSTRATED AND ENCHANTED
BY QUEERNESS AND ITS SLIPPERINESS**

**7 I AM IN AWE OF EVERYONE AND ANYONE WHO MANAGES TO
BE IN IT, WORK IN IT, AND LIVE IN IT EVERYDAY**

8 I AM NO LONGER AFRAID OF SAYING I WANT TO QUEER

9 I AM NO LONGER AFRAID TO TELL OTHERS THEY SHOULD QUEER

**10 I AM PROUD OF MY ACHIEVEMENTS AND
HUMBLE BEFORE MY SHORTCOMINGS**

11 THE DEADLINES ARE OVER, BUT MY LEARNINGS ARE NOT

Is it really my place to be doing this?

I'm not doing anything new

*This will
never
work*

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THE ENVELOPE

Space for envelope with big version of collage

This drawing is made for you, the reader, to look at and analyze, but also to interact with. Feel free to sprinkle it with post-it notes, add scribbles or notes, cut and rip it!

Find your inner queerer and continue the conversation!

