



THE FUTURE IS QUEER:

On queer utopianism and
environmental justice



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	1
GLOSSARY	2
INTRODUCTION	5
RESEARCH OBJECTIVE & RESEARCH QUESTIONS	11
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	12
Queer theory and queer ecology	12
Queer utopianism	16
METHODOLOGY	20
Stage 0: Inspiration and auto-ethnographic research.....	20
Stage 1: Exploring the LGBT/Q political landscape	24
Stage 2: Exploring queer utopias	25
RESULTS & DISCUSSION	31
Chapter 1: The Dutch LGBT/Q political landscape	31
Chapter 2: Post-capitalist utopias	43
Chapter 3: Justice-driven utopias	53
Chapter 4: Utopias beyond all binaries	63
Chapter 5: Utopia exists in the quotidian	73
CONCLUSION	84
REFERENCES	86
APPENDIX A	95
APPENDIX B	99

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the ways in which more-than-human convivial futures are imagined in the utopian dreams and normative politics of queer people in the Netherlands. A 2018 study found that people self-identifying as LGB were over twice as likely as heterosexual people to participate in environmental movements, as cisheteronormative oppression can produce a stronger understanding of the need for political action (Swank, 2018). This, as well as the incompatibility of both queerness and environmental justice with capitalism, represents an important yet understudied relationship that could serve to inform the theory and practice of environmental justice activism and transformative politics.

In this thesis, I used queer ecology and the concept of queer utopianism as a framework through which to bridge the environmental and queer movements, and uncover the connections between queerness and more-than-human conviviality through collective imagination and idealism. I combined material from interviews and 'queer futures' workshops with personal experiences and online research to understand the LGBT/Q political landscape of the Netherlands, explore the ways in which queerness and queer utopias are congruent with more-than-human-conviviality, and begin to show the relevance of queer utopian thinking to academia and activism in the present.

Three main themes arose to structure the myriad of ways that more-than-human convivial futures were envisioned within queer utopian imaginations: post-capitalist utopias, justice-driven utopias, and utopias beyond all binaries. Given these similarities, I conclude that environmentalists with a beyond-human convivial approach to transformative change would benefit from a wider embracement of queer academia, as well as an intentional move beyond the man/woman binary. Further, the importance of queer utopian thinking and living should be more widely recognised and embraced in the fight for transformative change. Queer utopic stories enable people to, time after time, recognise their potential to question and deconstruct social norms, to push at the boundaries of convention, and to dream new ways into being.

GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Cisheteronormativity	The privileging of binary cisgender and heterosexual identities, practices, and cultures as 'natural', 'normal', and assumed.
Cisheterosexism	The discrimination and oppression of people with non-normative sexual or gender identities or expressions.
Cisheterosexual	People who identify with the binary gender that they were assigned at birth and are exclusively sexually and/or romantically attracted to people who identify as the "opposite" binary gender. This grouping of sexual and gender identity is often used to describe people who fit into the Western 'norm', and are therefore less likely to have experienced oppression based on their non-normative gender identity and expression, sexual and/or romantic attraction, and sexual and/or romantic relationships.
Environmental justice	A framework used by environmental movements and environmental policy makers that advocates for solutions to environmental problems that are in line with social justice: fair distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges regardless of identity (race, class, gender, sexuality, species, etc.).
Genderqueer	People whose attitude to, understanding of, and/or embodiment of gender is resisting or questioning the mainstream binary understanding of gender. Genderqueer is used in preference to non-binary, unless someone explicitly identifies as non-binary, as this term also encompasses people who identify as agender and do not want to uphold or acknowledge binary genders.
Homonormativity	The assimilation of cisheteronormative ideals and constructs into the values, cultures, and lifestyles of people identifying as LGBT+.
Intersectionality	The interconnectedness and interdependency of oppression based on, for example, race, class, gender, sexuality, able-bodiedness, or species. The understanding that people, groups, and social/environmental problems are impacted by multiple overlapping discriminations.

LGBT+	A shorthand acronym used for non-cisheterosexual identity categories, usually extended to LGBTQIA2S+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer/questioning, asexual/aromantic/agender, two spirit). Throughout this essay, I will try to take a non-essentialist approach to gender and sexual identity, for example by saying 'people identifying as LGBT+' rather than 'LGBT+ people'.
More-than-human conviviality	A post-capitalist approach to environmental issues that promotes structural transformation and environmental justice, whilst seeking to move beyond binary categories of nature/culture and human/nonhuman.
Queer	Non-normative ways of being that exist in resistance to, or question of, the mainstream or status quo (outside of both cisheteronormative and homonormative ways of being). The phrase 'queer people' will therefore be used to describe people whose lifestyles reflect this, although of course this exists along a spectrum.
Queer oppression	Discrimination based on non-normative ways of being, including those outside of sex and gender, as well as discrimination based on non-normative sexual acts and relationship structures. For example, the discrimination and oppression of polyamorous people and relationships (monosexism) can be seen as queer oppression.

The fairies know that the earth will not tolerate the men much longer. The earth, scarred and gouged and stripped and bombed, will deny life to the men in order to stop the men. The fairies have left the men's reality in order to destroy it by making a new one.

Larry Mitchell (1977) *The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions*



INTRODUCTION

In 2018, a study on the relationship between sexual identities and social movements found a positive relationship between lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) identities and participation in liberal social movements (Swank, 2018). Looking specifically at environmental activism, the study found that people self-identifying as LGB were over twice as likely as heterosexual people to participate in environmental movements. The researchers attributed this greater affinity for activism to LGB (and the same logic could be extended to LGBT+) people's stronger understanding of the need for political action due to shared experiences of cisheteronormative oppression, as well as (sexual) minorities often finding belonging, understanding, and kinship within these groups. Having been involved in environmental activism for over four years, and a student of environmental science and politics for more than double that, I have been aware of this relationship between people with non-heterosexual identities and environmental sensibilities for a long time. Only more recently, however, have I begun to understand and articulate the complexities of, and reasons behind, this relationship. A few months ago, I was sitting by the river Rhine in Wageningen, a small university town in the Netherlands, talking with a friend about gender. Both of us had, at this point, already been questioning the legitimacy of our assigned genders for some time, and had both recently started using non-binary they/them pronouns. During this conversation, they acknowledged that they would probably not have questioned their gender, and the construct of gender as a whole, to this extent if it weren't for their involvement in environmental activism and the influence of the people they met through this. For them, engaging with radical environmental activists opened the door to a deeper and more personal engagement with queer politics. This sparked my curiosity to look further into the ways in which these politicised identities intersect, interact, and shape one another.

My curiosity for this subject, however, is not entirely newly formed but rather developed over time in response to my experiences of navigating sexuality and gender, alongside my education in geography and environmental sciences. I grew up in a small coastal village in southwest England, where pro-environmental sensibilities and nature-connectedness were nurtured through exposure to, and care for, non-human nature. As a child, I was always outdoors, barefoot and muddy, and I remember from an early age being taught the importance of keeping the seas and beaches clean of pollution. LGBT+ identities, however, were far less nurtured in this cisheteronormative rural village. Throughout my childhood and adolescence, both the friends of my parents and the parents of my friends consisted entirely of monogamous heterosexual couples, most raising two or three children. I can only remember one person close to me 'coming out' in this period of my life: the mother of one of my friends, who was also a close friend of my parents, separated from her then-husband and came out as a lesbian. I remember this unprecedented turn of events being met with a slight tension and

awkwardness, which I read as discomfort towards this small yet unexpected crack in their previously comprehensively mirrored normative expectations. As for gender, to say that my parents were trying to raise us outside of its roles, norms, and expectations just because they encouraged me to play football feels too simplistic. I was sensitive to the way that my father's voice changed when he was speaking to me or my sisters versus our male friends, to the way my mother did most of the cooking, and the way that my sisters and I were always collectively referred to as 'the girls'. Gender, as usual, seemed to infiltrate and influence every aspect of our lives and the world around us.

I mention these memories to illustrate my experience of a world that I felt to be, at times, constrictive and alienating. It wasn't until I went to university that I began to finally explore queerness through the world of LGBT+ identity politics. Although at first having the freedom to explore my sexuality felt liberating, I soon came to realise that going against the 'norm' meant being confronted by seemingly endless binary choices that I didn't want to have to make: what gender are you attracted to, and what does that make you? Are you masc or femme; are you a top or a bottom? It feels telling that the first term of the LGBTQ+ alphabet soup that resonated with me was 'pansexual', which is usually used to refer to attraction regardless of sex or gender identity (whereas bisexual is usually defined as attraction to more than one gender, and recognises sex or gender identity to play a role in that attraction). By dethroning gender in my sexual relationships, I began to question the extent to which I wanted it to define other aspects of my life. Whilst at university, I started to get involved with environmental activist groups such as Extinction Rebellion, where it is common to introduce yourself at the start of meetings with both your name and pronouns. This was the first time in my life that I was asked to introduce my pronouns, and having to do so on a regular basis created a space in which gender assumptions were avoided, or at least questioned, and where gender could be explored, played with, and altered from one meeting to the next.

Following this, and in line with the aforementioned study by Erik Swank about the relationship between sexual identities and social movements (Swank, 2018), it makes sense that my friend and I both found environmental activist groups to be safer spaces to explore queerness, reflect on our own identities, and try to understand the politics of identity as a whole. This is not to say that all queer or LGBT+ identifying people have an affinity for environmental activism, or even non-activist pro-environmental behaviours, but rather to begin to point to the complex and multifaceted relationship between queerness and environmentalism. Over time, the majority of my activist friends have changed their pronouns, with meetings and gatherings becoming a mosaic of people using they/them, she/they, he/they, any/all pronouns, or preferring no pronouns at all. Of course, the relationship between genderqueerness and participation in liberal social movements extends beyond environmentalism; whilst researching and writing this thesis, I was living in a squatted house in which all but one of the occupants

used pronouns that they were not assigned at birth, and where queerness was seen as another way to resist the status quo by questioning normative ways of being. Here, queerness and fighting cisheteronormativity had an affinity not just with environmentalism, but also with other struggles such as anti-classism, anti-racism, anti-speciesism, feminism, and anti-ableism. It is unclear whether most people in the house began to explore queerness through their involvement with other connected struggles, or if queerness was the starting point that led them to these struggles – for many, I imagine it was an intertwined and interrelated mix of thoughts and experiences. Regardless, there exists an important relationship between queerness and engagement with political activism, and understanding its relevance within the frame of environmental activism is a fundamental step towards building on intersectional understandings of both queer and environmental struggles.

When analysing environmental struggles, this thesis takes the position that capitalism is one of the root causes of climate change, biodiversity loss, animal abuse, and other ecological degradation. 'Capitalism' is used here to describe the current economic system in which economic growth for a human minority is prioritised at the cost of the majority of humans and non-human nature. Advanced capitalism extends beyond the economy, however, and serves to structure societies and social relations based on competitive individualism, alienation, consumption, commodification, and exploitation (Berg, 2016). This makes it incompatible with more-than-human conviviality, as it results in the alienation of humans from non-human nature (Bellamy Foster and Clark, 2020) as well as the continued exploitation and commodification of non-human nature. Many academics are becoming increasingly aware of the incompatibility of environmentalism and capitalism, and are advocating for a more radical form of environmentalism that recognizes the need for transformative change and critical thought within environmental justice and environmental justice scholarship (Büscher and Fletcher, 2019; Hammond, 2021; Spash, 2022). Convivial (which translates as 'living with') conservation, coined by Büscher and Fletcher (2019), is described as "a post-capitalist approach to conservation that promotes radical equity, structural transformation and environmental justice". The use of the word 'conviviality' in this text is therefore a reference to this approach.

Recognising the need for systemic change to achieve environmental justice highlights an important relationship between queerness and ecological ways of being from the offset, as queer discrimination can also be understood to be rooted in capitalism. Capitalism is dependent on the maintenance of categorized hierarchies (Sindzingre and Tricou, 2021), rules, and imbalances of power, which are needed to ensure that people conduct themselves in a manner that maintains the dominant culture of consumption and competition (Kirsch, 2006). Marx stated that in a capitalist society the existence of a powerful upper class relies on the maintenance of a larger lower class, which is sustained through systemic violence and exclusion (Bohrer, 2019). Although Neo-Marxists such as Foucault would argue

that this mechanism is not as simple as Marx first portrayed, a Foucauldian analysis of power and social order can also explain how capitalism has come to be reliant on the maintenance of hierarchies of gender and sexuality (Bohrer, 2019), through exclusion, othering, and the social restriction of non-normative identities and practices (Cover, 2006). Gender and sexuality are of course interrelated, since the very existence of heterosexuality (and by extension homosexuality) is founded on gender differentiation and inequality (Jackson, 2011). Hierarchies of gender, and their significance to capitalism, are more widely studied and understood than those of sexuality due to the acknowledged interrelatedness of capitalism and patriarchy within socialist feminist and radical feminist thought (Eisenstein, 1999; hooks, 2000); forms of queer oppression such as homophobia and transphobia are also understood to be the result of patriarchal and capitalist control (Barragán-Medero and Pérez-Jorge, 2020).

As gender theorist Judith Butler argued, the regulation of both gender and sexuality is due in part to the reliance of capitalist modes of production on upholding compulsory patriarchal heterosexuality (Butler, 1997) and selling the nuclear family model (which consists of a mother, father, and 2-3 children) in order to optimize the procreation of wage labour (Bosia, 2014). This means that the heterosexist rhetoric and culture that results from this is “systematically tied to the functioning of the political economy” (Butler, 1997). Gay and lesbian people were seen by those in power as a hindrance to the production of capital, as their non-heteronormative family structures were perceived to be outside of the reach of neoliberal self-governance and marketization (Peterson, 2011). The nuclear family structure was also seen as easier to control, and successful in isolating people from their wider communities, promoting cultures of individualism and competition over community and collaboration. Non-normative sexual and gender identities, expressions, and practices were therefore undesired within the capitalist system, and the discrimination, stigmatisation, and oppression of LGBT+ people, as second-class citizens, was allowed to proliferate.

More recently, however, capitalist restructuring has enabled the assimilation of some LGBT+ identifying people into the neoliberal market (Sears, 2005). Within the framework of advanced capitalism, the relationship between capitalism and the oppression of these identities therefore becomes blurry, as LGBT+ people can be found amongst all socioeconomic classes and do not appear, as a whole, to be an economically oppressed group (Smith, 2001). For many people, although principally White, affluent, cisgender gay men, identifying as LGB(T+) no longer means inherently existing in conflict with the mainstream system. Instead, these people can become members of the capitalist elite without having to hide their identity. Late capitalism has birthed a new gay culture, known as ‘homonormativity’: a depoliticised culture that upholds traditional heteronormative values and is similarly rooted in domestication and consumption (Kanai and Kenttamaa-Squires, 2014). Identified as a group with high disposable income (Jeppesen, 2010), many academics have theorised that the recent wave of

acceptance of gay and lesbian people was facilitated by capitalist's realisation of how lucrative the "pink economy" could be (Kanai and Kenttamaa-Squires, 2014). As a result, alongside the acceptance of certain LGBT+ identities into the mainstream, LGBT+ culture itself has become co-opted into a capitalist framework to the extent that LGBT+ assimilation is now a widespread and well-documented phenomenon. Pride month, which occurs in June, and pride parades, which typically take place throughout the summer, have both become opportunities for corporations to engage in pinkwashing (DeGane, 2020), also known as 'rainbow-washing' (Johns et al., 2022), and rainbow capitalism.

As LGBT+ identities become increasingly assimilated into the hegemonic culture associated with capitalism, LGBT+ culture ceases to be queer – that is, to exist in resistance to or question of the mainstream or status quo. In the past, more so than today, radical queer activists fought for anti-oppression and responding to the needs of the most vulnerable or least privileged in the LGBT+ community, by demanding universal access to basic needs such as housing and healthcare (Berstein Sycamore, 2008). Now, radical queer activism has become relatively marginalized within the wider LGBT+ movement. Instead, as previously mentioned, the focus of mainstream LGBT+ activism has largely been on assimilationist goals such as the legislation of gay marriage, LGBT+ inclusion in the military, and enforcing fines and imprisonment as punishment for hate crimes (Bernstein Sycamore, 2008; Daring et al., 2012; Conrad, 2014), all of which can be said to exist in opposition to queer liberation due to their relationships with the capitalist economy and culture. As a result of this focus of the dominant LGBT+ movement on inclusion and equality, the resulting assimilation of LGBT+ identities into institutions rooted in the capitalist economy, and the subsequent depoliticization of some LGBT+ identities, the average political views and leanings of these groups have shifted. In her book *White Innocence*, Gloria Wekker (2016) documents changes to gay politics in the Netherlands. In answer to her own question: "Where Did All the Critical White Gay Men Go?", she explains how homonationalism, that is using the promotion of gay rights and liberation to justify racism and Islamophobia (Spierings, 2021), has been used in the Netherlands to push for and popularise racist and anti-migrant policies. In 2010, most gay men in the Netherlands voted for the Dutch Party for Freedom (PVV), a right-wing party led at the time by Islamophobe Geert Wilders (Wekker, 2016).

This shift towards gay conservatism should be of interest in the field of environmental justice, due to the association of environmental justice with traditionally left-wing politics, as well as the acknowledgement that environmental justice activism is typically undertaken by left-wing movements (Swank, 2018). Yet, as far as I am aware, these two phenomena have received little to no academic comparison to date. Similarly, the relationship queerness and environmental justice has been understudied in academia despite both being grounded in transformative politics. Given the extent to which academia has acknowledged the incompatibility of environmental justice and capitalism, as well as the

incompatibility of queerness and capitalism, it follows that a better understanding of the relationship between queerness and more-than-human conviviality could serve to inform the theory and practice of environmental justice activism. This study was undertaken as an explorative and iterative process, and the path it took was both informed and guided by interviews with LGBT/Q identifying people at the beginning of the process, as well as personal experiences, in accordance with the perceived needs of the queer community. This drove the exploration towards more constructive ways of analysing the relationship between queerness and more-than-human conviviality, through use of José Esteban Muñoz's theory of queer utopianism (Muñoz, 2009), which I explain in more detail later in this thesis. The concept of utopianism was used as a framework through which to bridge the environmental and queer movements, and uncover the connections between queerness and more-than-human conviviality through collective imagination and idealism.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The objective of this study is to understand the relationship between queerness and more-than-human conviviality through the theoretical framework of queer utopianism, and to answer the main research question: **How do queer utopias imagine more-than-human convivial futures?** The sub-research questions, used to guide this exploration, are as follows:

- What are the different groups within the queer movement in the Netherlands and how do they relate queerness to more-than-human conviviality?
- In what ways are queer utopias related to more-than-human conviviality?
- How can (queer) utopian thinking influence the ways we choose to be and act in the present?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Queer theory and queer ecology

This research is primarily grounded in queer theory, a theoretical approach that seeks to critically question and challenge the popular binaries, categories, assumptions, and essentialist identities upon which many academic works and non-academic understandings of the world are built (Barker and Scheele, 2016). In both academic and activist queer theory, the term 'queer' is usually used and understood as a verb (Barker and Scheele, 2016). This means that queer is something you do, rather than be, and all things can be 'queered' (even beyond the realm of relationships and intimacy). This understanding was developed in response to queer theory questioning and resisting fixed identity categories, and avoiding binary distinctions between those who are 'queer' and those who are not. In this report, the term 'queer' is therefore used to describe non-normative ways of being that exist in resistance to, or question of, the mainstream or status quo. The phrase 'queer people' will therefore be used to describe people that are 'doing queer' in this way, although of course this exists along a spectrum. Queer theory is rooted in the post-structuralist thought of critical theorists such as Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, and Michel Foucault, in its rejection of universal truths, embracement of contradictory narratives, and recognition of the role of power relations in shaping the world, showing identities to be culturally and materially constituted rather than fixed.

Foucault was especially influential in shaping queer theory due to his work on biopower and normativity. Biopower describes the process of people within a society regulating and controlling themselves without the need of a higher power or authority, due to feeling continuously monitored by other individuals within the society and under pressure to present themselves in a way that is deemed socially acceptable (Oels, 2016). Foucault explains how biopower, in Western societies, encourages people to strive for 'normality' in all aspects of life, including gender and sexuality, thus subconsciously policing themselves to conform to, and uphold, the status quo. By internalizing social norms, people begin to see their 'normal' identities as something intrinsic and fixed, which Foucault refers to as 'technologies of the self' (Kelly, 2013). In line with Foucault's 'technologies of the self', gender theorist Judith Butler argued that gender is not a fixed and essential identity, but rather a temporally unstable identity that is socially constituted through repeated 'acts' (Butler, 1988). Gender identity is therefore a "performative accomplishment compelled by social sanction and taboo" (Butler, 1988), rather than a naturalised result of one's physiology. Following the work of Black feminist critical thinkers, such as Audre Lorde's *Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference* (Lorde, 1984), Butler criticised mainstream feminist thought by pointing out that there are many intersecting factors beyond gender that constitute an identity, such as race and class, and thus it doesn't make sense to treat 'women' as a homogenous group (Butler, 1990). She then used this analysis

to critique the category of 'woman' as a whole and argue that gendered categories, and the stereotypes and assumptions associated with them, uphold gender-based oppression. Understanding gender through Foucault's 'technologies of the self' and Butler's theory of performativity, enables us to think beyond essentialist understandings of gender, and subsequently beyond binary ways of thinking about gender .

Queer theory is always working to think beyond binaries, including those outside of sexuality and gender. Binary thinking upholds oppression due to the hierarchal structure of a dualism, in which one side becomes inferior to the other; as Diana Fuss (1991) explains, a binary has a superior 'original', which is seen as the norm, and an inferior 'supplement', which is then otherised. For example, 'female', 'homosexual', and 'emotional', are supplement to 'male', 'heterosexual', and 'rational'. To help us think beyond binaries, Gloria Anzaldúa describes identity as fluid like a river: "identity is not a bunch of little cubbyholes stuffed respectively with intellect, race, sex, class, vocation, gender. Identity flows between, over, aspects of a person. Identity is a river – a process." (Anzaldúa, 2009). The practice of thinking beyond fixed identities, analysing power dynamics within hierarchal binaries, and acknowledging the multitude of different 'norms' that binary thinking creates, enabled queer theory to expand beyond sexuality and gender. As Barker and Scheele (2016) explain in *Queer: A Graphic History*: "Gender, race, and sexuality therefore come together in terms of the "norm" of humanness against which others are compared: generally a White, heterosexual, cisgender man."

As such, queer theory has some commonalities with the non-dualistic turn in environmental thought, which argues that the nature/culture and human/non-human binaries dominant in Western scientific knowledge and popular culture are responsible for creating and upholding hierarchies that have resulted in the widespread destruction of non-human nature (Haraway, 2016). In viewing nature/culture and human/non-human binaries through the lens of queer theory, we can also begin to think beyond these binaries. In Western culture, the human identity is usually seen as fixed, however queer theory departs from this by exploring how humans are performed into certain identity categories. Both queer theory and some strands of environmentalism thus fall in line with posthumanist thought (Thompson, 2013; Özdolanbay, 2020), in that moving beyond these binaries enables us to think of ecology beyond human exceptionalism. In *A Cyborg Manifesto* (Haraway, 1991), Donna Haraway visualises a world of humans whose existence is shaped beyond binary gender, and also shows how there is no distinct line that can be drawn between what makes something human or non-human. Further, queer theorist Karen Barad draws on and reworks Foucault and Butler's notions of performativity, stating that:

"Nature is neither a passive surface awaiting the mark of culture nor the end product of cultural performances. The belief that nature is mute and immutable and that all prospects for significance and change reside in

culture is a reinscription of the nature/culture dualism that feminists have actively contested. Nor, similarly, can a human/nonhuman distinction be hardwired into any theory that claims to take account of matter in the fullness of its historicity.” (Barad, 2003)

In deconstructing these binaries, Haraway, Barad, and other queer and posthumanist theorists show a means of moving beyond anthropocentric ways of viewing the world, and towards an understanding of humans as part of, rather than separate to, the space and beings around them. In their book *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (2007), Barad describes how all matter is entangled in the sense that the individual self does not exist, and by extension nor does the individual or collective being that has been otherised in contrast to the self. They effectively queer traditional understandings of both humans and non-human nature by making the notion of performativity more inclusive of all matter; in their article ‘Nature’s Queer Performativity’ (2012), Barad poetically describes atoms as “ultraqueer critters with their quantum quotidian qualities (who) queer queerness itself in their radically deconstructive ways of being”. They use their knowledge of physics to explain the ways in which classical ontological assumptions do not account for the queer practices and fluid identities of beings such as atoms, lightning bolts, “dinoflagellate animalplant lifeforms”, and humans, and in doing so presents a radical reworking of the nature-culture binary which sees culture as something nature does, rather than as two separate entities.

This relationship between queerness and posthumanism is already academically recognised within the field of queer ecology, which the Institute of Queer Ecology (IQECO) describes as “an adaptive practice concerned with interconnectivity, intimacy, and multispecies relationality” (IQECO, n.d.). IQECO, a global “ever-evolving collaborative organism” founded in the United States in 2017, is a queer collective working to “overturn the destructive human-centric hierarchies by imagining an equitable, multispecies future” (IQECO, n.d.). Queer ecology works to rethink, or ‘queer’, the meaning of ‘human’ and subsequently the relationship between humans, other animals, and non-human nature. In *Strange Natures: Futurity, Empathy, and the Queer Ecological Imagination* (Seymour, 2013), Nicole Seymour illustrates how queerness has always been about questioning and rewriting the definition of ‘natural’, through the rejection of heterosexuality as the only ‘natural’ or ‘authentic’ sexual practice. Queer ecology has progressed from this to questioning and rejecting other aspects viewed as ‘natural’ or ‘authentic’ to the human, beyond sexual behaviour, and subsequently rejecting both the centrality of the ‘natural’ to the human experience, and the centrality of the human in the non-human natural world. As Seymour argues in *Strange Natures*, the post-identity culture and rejection of stable, essential identities sparked by queer theory could “lend itself most effectively to empathetic, politicized advocacy for the nonhuman natural world” (Seymour, 2013), by fostering multispecies relationality and empathy.

Queer theory, posthumanism, and queer ecology have all been drawn upon to inform the focus of this thesis on more-than-human conviviality. 'Conviviality' is reflective of Büscher and Fletcher's 'Convivial Conservation' (2016), which describes "a post-capitalist approach to conservation that promotes radical equity, structural transformation and environmental justice". The concept of conviviality alone, however, is not essentially posthumanist as it does not always work to deconstruct the meaning of the concepts of 'human' and 'nature', and abolish binary distinctions. In their recent paper van Bommel and Boonman-Berson (2022) describe how convivial conservation can be transformed by moving towards more-than-human participation in research. Inspired by this, as well as the work of queer theorists such as Haraway and Barad, I focus specifically on a more-than-human conviviality that seeks to move beyond these binary categories as well as the fixed identities and assumptions associated with them.

As well as guiding me towards a more-than-human conviviality, the above theories, arguments, and conceptualisations have also grounded and aided this exploration into the relationship between queerness and more-than-human conviviality in other ways. Firstly, the relationship between queer theory and posthumanism highlights the ways in which questioning binaries related to identity, such as those of gender and sexuality, could lead to people being more likely to question and challenge other binaries such as nature/culture and human/nonhuman, and even beyond this to animate/inanimate. This could, of course, have an impact on the ecological ways of being and acting that these people consciously adopt or subconsciously internalise. Further, understanding identity as fluid rather than fixed, and actively seeking to think beyond binaries in any/all aspects of life, represents a resistance to the 'normality' of which Foucault and other queer theorists speak. In this way, queerness can be seen as inherently living in conflict with the status quo, by challenging social and cultural norms through, for example, practice, performance, and expression. Following this, and given the compounding relationship between capitalism and environmental degradation outlined in the introduction above, this theory provides a potential mechanism by which queer resistance to social norms could extend towards action or resistance on behalf of ecology.

Queer utopianism

This work is also more specifically grounded in a branch of queer theory called queer utopianism, which looks to queer futurity as a radical alternative to LGBT+ assimilation and reformist politics. Queer utopianism draws on the concept of ‘new normativities’, which shows how people, in escaping the confines of heteronormativity, find themselves being expected to conform to the stereotypes and assumptions associated with another group. David Halperin (2014), for example, describes the new normativities of gay male culture (homonormativity), in which clothing and body standards are set and policed in a similar way as they are for heterosexual women in a patriarchal culture. As Barker and Scheele point out in *Queer: A Graphic History* (2016), just because something is transgressive of (cis)heteronormativity, this doesn’t necessarily make it a transformative practice, or make it queer. Rather, queerness is about critically questioning social norms and assumptions, and rejecting those that are discriminating, oppressive, exploitative, or simply unwanted. As many authors, including Jack Halberstam and Sara Ahmed, have shown, heteronormativity is “intrinsically linked with neoliberal, capitalist notions of what makes a “successful” self: being productive, reproductive, forward-looking, upwardly-mobile, and wealth-accumulating; and striving towards happiness, consumption, and stability in the form of “the good life.” (Barker and Scheele, 2016). Queer utopianism provides a framework through which these normativities can be recognised and rejected.

Queer utopianism uses the rejection of neoliberal, capitalist notions of “the good life” to show that queerness should be about redefining success away from cisheteronormative ideals of the nuclear family, and the associated ideals of (re)production, consumption, and wealth-accumulation. Through reimagining, redefining, and experimenting with success, queerness is therefore intrinsically linked with the shaping of new futures. Queer utopian theorist José Esteban Muñoz argues that queerness is all about futurity; at the very beginning of his book *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, Muñoz writes:

“Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer. We may never touch queerness, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. The future is queerness’s domain. Queerness is a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present. The here and now is a prison house. We must strive, in the face of the here and now’s totalizing rendering of reality, to think and feel a then and there. Some will say that all we have are the pleasures of this moment, but we must never settle for that minimal transport; we must dream and enact new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds. Queerness is a longing that propels us onward, beyond romances of the negative and

toiling in the present. Queerness is the thing that lets us feel that this world is not enough, that indeed something is missing.” (Muñoz, 2009)

This exciting description of queerness as synonymous with utopia, and the understanding that queerness and queer futurity can be used as a tool or guide to stimulate radical imagination, highlights the relationship between queerness and transformative politics. If queer is “the self that is at odds with everything around it and has to invent and create and find a place to speak and to thrive and to live” (hooks, 2014), then queer utopianism embodies the invention and creation of new spaces in which people ‘at odds’ with the status quo can thrive, rather than shaping themselves to assimilate into pre-defined normativities.

The queer utopianism of José Esteban Muñoz is largely inspired by the philosopher Ernst Bloch’s theories on utopia, in which he distinguishes between ‘abstract’ and ‘concrete’ utopias (Bloch, 1995). Unlike abstract utopias, which can be understood as more akin to “banal optimism” (Muñoz, 2016) or daydreaming, concrete utopias are related to and grounded in historically situated struggles (Muñoz, 2016) and are more likely to fuel “a critical and potentially transformative political imagination”. In an article on Bloch’s concrete utopias, Dinerstein (2017) describes them as a “praxis-orientated activity”. She speaks to the ways in which the struggles of those excluded, exploited, displaced, and invisibilised by capitalism foster common grounds for “a global pluriversality of resistances”, and states that “any discussion of the meaning of ‘utopia’ must be necessarily rooted in the concrete struggles for the affirmation of life” (Dinerstein, 2017). Central to the work of both Bloch and Muñoz is the idea of hope and radical potentiality, intrinsic to concrete utopianism, as a force against political pessimism. As Dinerstein (2017) eloquently describes:

“Concrete utopia offers a critique of society that transforms hope from an emotion into a political problem for capital, for it drives people outwards, forwards, in the opposite direction, towards an encounter with their own humanity and against hopelessness, hunger and fear. Hope enables us to engage with the reality of the not yet” (Dinerstein, 2017).

With this foundation in mind, we can understand queer utopianism as concretely rooted in the struggles of queer people for liberation within a cisheteronormative landscape, and notably a cisheteronormative landscape encouraged and sustained by (near) global capitalism. Queer utopianism is, in this way, a methodology for generating queer critical hope, driving people outwards towards a queer horizon.

Ernst Bloch, and other utopian theorists whose thinking emerged from the critical philosophy associated with the Frankfurt School, expanded on and altered the idea of the utopian described in Thomas More’s famous book *Utopia* (More, 1949). Utopia is described as an island society founded by King Utopos and structured around maximising happiness; resources are shared, there is no private property,

and citizens enjoy, for example, representative democracy and six-hour working days (Boelens, 2017). In More's Utopia, however, there is an abundance of oppression, discrimination, and exploitation. The native people of the island are colonised and displaced, every household has two slaves, and women are subordinate to their husbands. As Boelens (2017) describes, "The discourse is tolerance, but without freedom of movement, customs or belief systems, just forced uniformity: everyone wears the same clothes and follows the same rules". Boelens, as many authors before, explains the close relationship between utopia and dystopia, describing the two as "mirror societies" and arguing that "utopia contains all the germs and building blocks for dystopias". He also points out that More describes Utopia as "the best country in the world" – the same words used by Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un to describe their countries. Clearly a utopia for one is not necessarily a utopia for all.

The utopianism of Bloch and Muñoz, however, is shaped more around the practice of hope and potentiality than seeking a universal prescription for how society should optimally function. Rather than searching for a uniform and 'harmonious' utopian future, queer utopianism seeks to create better futures by continuously looking to ways in which we can improve our lives in the present. In their paper *Living Beyond the End Times: An Argument for Queer Utopianism*, Kroon (2021) writes: "Queer utopias are a practice: not a noun, but a verb, always informed by a critical methodology of hope that evaluates the past to make sure that the future is worthwhile". By definition, or at least by the definition most commonly used in queer academic theory, queerness resists uniformity and conformity through an active and ongoing rejection of, or resistance to, the mainstream or status quo. In this way, queer utopianism is potentially more able to avoid the trap of falling into the realm of fascist dystopianism than some other forms of utopian thinking. From my understanding, queer utopianism has more in common with practicing radical political imagination as a means of fostering transformative change, and in this way is already aligned with conviviality. For example, in his book *From What Is to What If* (Hopkins, 2019) the co-founder of the UK-based sustainable Transition Towns movement talks about the importance of reclaiming and unleashing the power of collective imagination in response to climate change, biodiversity loss, food insecurity, and fractured ecosystems.

In highlighting the relationship between queerness, the radical imagination, and transformative politics, queer utopianism therefore also illustrates the link between queering the future and transformative environmental politics. The aforementioned collective *IQECO*, which is also inspired by the work of José Esteban Muñoz, describes itself as a project of futurism rooted in both queerness and environmental politics:

"IQECO is a project of futurism, demanding that we meet the climate crisis collectively with ideas that remake our relationships with nature. Queer communities are uniquely positioned to lead on climate adaptation through

embodied strategies already inherent or familiar to queer experiences. On an individual level, queer lives are mutable: we understand change and transformation in intensely personal ways. On a collective level, queer community is mutualistic: it is symbiotic, in-contact, relational; it is a space of eccentric economies and mutual support, of found families and utopian dreams, of care and connection and the net benefits species gift one another.” (IQECO, n.d.)

Queer utopianism, and its connection to both radical imaginations and queer ecology, inspires much of this exploration into the relationship between queerness and more-than-human conviviality, and the following results and discussion are grounded in and shaped by these theories.

METHODOLOGY

This thesis is based on six months of empirical research work (from September 2022 to February 2023). The findings were primarily gathered from eight semi-structured interviews (8 participants in total) and two three-hour workshops (14 participants in total). This was supplemented with findings based on personal experiences, including attendance of queer and Pride events as well as various queer/ecological workshops and skillshares.

Stage 0: Inspiration and auto-ethnographic research

Different personal aspects of my life inspired this project. My involvement in both environmental and queer activism in the Netherlands played a large role, and informed my judgement on the capitalist and patriarchal roots of both the oppression of nature and queer oppression. Further, as I have already mentioned, at the time of research I was living in a squat in which people intentionally tried to question and reject unwanted social norms and rules. Some examples of this include: using gender neutral pronouns and not assuming anyone's gender identity; rejecting private ownership by not paying rent; reclaiming wasted food by dumpster-diving; meeting people's basic needs regardless of income (through squatting and dumpster-diving); implementing weekly house meetings and consensus-based decision making; being openly anti-capitalist; and organising and hosting queer and anti-capitalist events. Despite wanting to maintain a healthy balance between thesis research and personal life, it quickly became clear to me that these two things were inescapably intertwined, as a lot of the time I felt as though I was doing research on my own life. It became difficult to draw a line between the things I was reading, doing, or talking about for research, and the things I was reading, doing, or talking about for my own interest outside of research.

As well as my involvement in queer and environmental activism, a lot of my inspiration for this thesis therefore also came from the books, zines, and other material that I was reading prior to undertaking this project. One of the books that inspired me most is *The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions* by Larry Mitchell (1977), illustrated by Ned Asta. Described as part-fable part-manifesto, *The Faggots and Their Friends* has become a queer utopian classic which describes the ways in which the non-men (faggots, women, women who love women, queer men, queens, fairies) survive and thrive in the (fictional) patriarchal society of Ramrod. Mitchell and Asta were both founding members of a radical queer commune in Ithaca, New York, called Lavender Hill. In an introduction to the 2019 publication of *The Faggots and Their Friends*, Morgan Bassichis, who adapted the book into a theatre play, describes queer communes such as Lavender Hill as alternative spaces of ongoing experimentation, who's constantly changing members and instability left them "always waiting to be tried again, modified,

perfected” (Mitchell and Asta, 2019). Bassichis also gives a quote from Mitchell on the radical anti-assimilationist gay political consciousness that he developed in the period following the Stonewall Inn uprising in 1969, stating that “...we were not about acceptance. We were about changing the rules.”

These quotes highlight the similarities between the themes in *The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions* and José Esteban Muñoz’s description of queerness as “the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality” (Muñoz, 2009). Both show queerness as a shake-up of the status quo, an experimental leap towards new worlds and ways of living, and quintessentially utopian. I first read *The Faggots and Their Friends* just after moving into the squat in Wageningen, and was both excited and inspired by the ways in which Bassichis’ descriptions of real queer communes such as Lavender Hill, and Mitchells’ description of the fictional queer communities in Ramrod, resonated with my experiences of queer squats and squatting culture. For example, in the 1970s members of the commune were playing with gender in a way that they described as ‘genderfuck’: combining beards with dresses, and referring to each other using the gender neutral pronoun ‘per’ instead of her or his. In the main narrative, Mitchell describes all the different faggot communities of Pansy Street in Ramrod: the communal sleeping room, filled with pillows, of the tribe of Angel Flesh; the homemade tables and funky kitchen of the Gay as a Goose Tribe; the Boys in the Backroom writing letters of protest to protect the community from the dangers of the men; and the lock-picking skills of the underground No-Name Tribe.

In this way, *The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions* became a staple inspiration of this thesis exploration. The book also has some environmental themes, as shown by the quote that I chose to put at the beginning of this thesis: “The fairies know that the earth will not tolerate the men much longer. The earth, scarred and gouged and stripped and bombed, will deny life to the men in order to stop the men. The fairies have left the men's reality in order to destroy it by making a new one” (Mitchell and Asta, 2019). In the book, the ‘men’ represent the patriarchy and patriarchal conditioning, rather than people of an essential male gender; the book states that “All men could be faggots or their friends. They once were”. The fairies are described as friends of the faggots, and are used throughout the book to dive into fantasy, radical imagination, and the dreaming up of new worlds. As a key relevant source of inspiration, *The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions* will therefore be referred to throughout this analysis.

As the above shows, the divide between researcher and researched, already a tricky binary, did not exist at all in this case. I identify as queer, and try to live in a way that reflects this, and the other participants in this research could therefore be seen as my peers and comrades. In noticing that my own thoughts and experiences were both impacting and adding to the research goals and findings, I decided that it was important to intentionally include the aspects of my life which have impacted my exploration of this topic. This includes:

- Attending a FLINTA* (acronym for female, lesbian, non-binary, trans, and agender, with the star representing non-cis-men who do not identify with these terms) activist skillshare in Utrecht, where discussions took place on topics such as ‘White feminism’ and ‘activism beyond the patriarchy’.
- Organising queer events at the SchimmelSchip (a squatted house in Wageningen), where I was living whilst conducting research, including: queer revolution movie nights; a donation-based dinner and poster-making evening to raise money for trans healthcare; a queer sharing circle; a queer Christmas sharing circle; and a workshop on queering intimacy (Figure 1).
- Attending an activist camp/skillshare on the theme of anti-speciesism, and another on environmental activism.
- Attending a workshop/lecture series on Utopias from the Wageningen-based organisation Otherwise.
- Living in a squatted house in which all but one inhabitant (during the majority of the research process) identified as genderqueer.
- Attending ADEV 2022 (Amsterdam Danst Ergens Voor) a dance protest for reclaiming autonomous and alternative spaces, in which the House of Extinction (a new drag house from Extinction Rebellion Amsterdam) had their first public performance.
- Attending a ‘beyond the binary’ workshop/skillshare day in Nijmegen, with the slogan “proud to be unsolvable”.

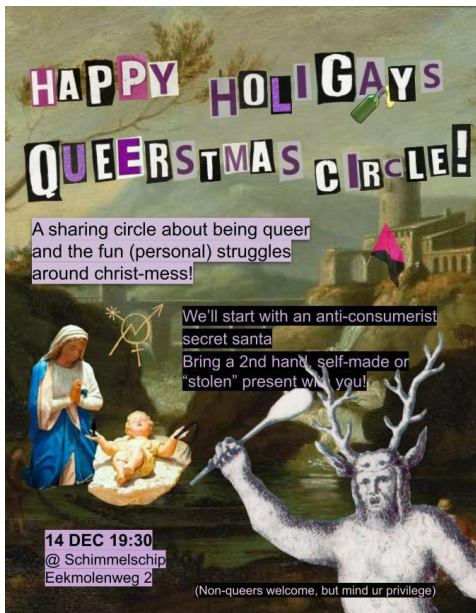
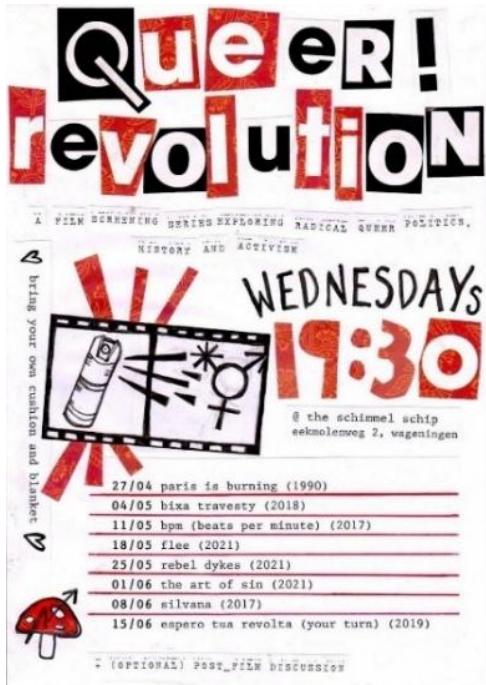


Figure 1 Flyers for queer events at the SchimmelSchip squat.

Stage 1: Exploring the LGBT/Q political landscape

The first stage of this exploration was based around identifying sites of 'friction' or 'conflict' in the LGBT+ scene in the Netherlands, and interviewing people who were present at these sites. The aim of this was to explore an overview of different groups in the Netherlands, as well the political opinions and interests of people within these groups. The Utrecht Pride parade was identified as such a site early in the research process. During the main Utrecht canal Pride parade, a queer feminist Utrecht-based collective called Niet Normaal* hosted a party called 'no no to the popo', which was presented as an alternative, anti-capitalist, and anti-police alternative to the main Pride parade. Additionally, a number of activist groups did an anti-capitalist banner drop protest from one of the bridges going over the main canal parade. Sites of friction were used to identify interviewees because their attendance or non-attendance at certain events represents an individual choice that could already be indicative of personal politics and opinions. This was done as an alternative to approaching a range of different organisations, as I felt that the individuals interviewed could not be representative of the organisation and vice versa. Further, I believe these sites of friction, and the currents of resistance within them, are illustrative of a heterogeneous movement that is constantly changing and growing. I was therefore interested in understanding the sites as well as the individuals within them.

The sites of interest within the Utrecht pride event therefore included the main canal parade, the anti-capitalist banner drop, and Niet Normaal*'s "no no to the popo" party. The people interviewed included: a person who watched the pride parade who is also part of the Radical Faeries; a person who was part of the pride parade on the boat for the Staatsbosbeheer, two people who attended Niet Normaal*'s 'no no to the popo' party, and one of the people who did the anti-capitalist banner drop and is also part of the Elektra TINFA* (similar to FLINTA* above, but putting trans identities first and removing 'lesbian', due to this being a sexuality rather than a gender) squatting group. Amsterdam Pride was also identified as a site of friction. The people interviewed included: a person who was involved with the organisation of the Reclaim Our Pride march; a lecturer from the University of Amsterdam who gave a talk on pinkwashing at the student hotel; and one of the organisers of the No Pride in Capitalism campaign which targeted the student hotel. In total, eight people were interviewed across the two sites. A more detailed description of how these organisations and events fit into the wider LGBT+ scene and queer movement in the Netherlands can be found in Chapter 1: The Dutch LGBT/Q Scene. The interviewees were selected in a way that ensured I was reaching LGBT+ and queer identifying people with vocal opinions or expertise on the topic of queer or environmental politics, ensuring rich and interesting interviews, but I will not be analysing individual interviews according to their political leanings. These interviews were semi-structured, and gave space for people to talk freely and take the conversation into different directions.

Following undertaking interviews, and transcribing the recordings using Microsoft Teams, the transcripts were coded in order to break down and draw meaning from the interviews. To code the interviews, I developed wider 'themes' through thematic analysis and then categorized the data according to these themes (Ngulube, 2015). The codes that I established were: anti-racism, anti-pride, assimilation, Dutch queer 'groups', environmental issues, environmental visions, political rationalities, queer issues, queer/environmental intersections, and queerness & anti-capitalism. Data analysis was facilitated through the use of Atlas.ti software, in order to maintain an organised approach, compare links between interviews and other documents, allow for easy alterations and iterative analysis (Adams et al., 2007). This exploration into the different LGBT/Q groups in the Netherlands was also aided by online research, including Instagram accounts, Pride event pages, website archives, online manifestos, and online protest material such as signs and speeches. Large bodies of text such as speeches and manifestos were coded according to the codes established from interview analysis, and other material was primarily used to understand the timelines of different groups and events.

Stage 2: Exploring queer utopias

Upon analysing interviews, identifying key themes, and reading further into queer theory, my research developed to focus on queer utopias. I wanted this stage of the research to be more of an exploratory and collaborative process, and also conduct it in a way that could be valuable and meaningful to the people participating. After learning about scenario planning workshops as a methodology (personal communication, anthropologist Esther van de Camp, online interview, 7 November 2022), I decided to adapt this and create a workshop for exploring queer utopias. The workshop was designed to guide people through a journey from dreaming about utopia into thinking more practically or strategically about what they can do, or what is needed, to help realise this dream. There were three overarching questions, which then translated into the three main activities. These were: What does a queer utopia look like to you?; In what ways are you already embodying/building/living this utopia in the present?; and What can you do to help further realise this utopia?

I first did a pilot workshop at the Superette, a social centre close to where I live in Wageningen, in order to practice it in a familiar setting with some more familiar people. The Superette hosts multiple volunteer-run events, workshops, and classes, including art, improv comedy, kickboxing, band nights, jam sessions, and donation-based dinners. The workshop, which took place on Thursday 1st December 2022, was promoted in four online chat groups: Extinction Rebellion Wageningen (an active environmental activist group in Wageningen with 200 chat members); Callisto (a decentralised LGBTQ+ network, for meeting new people in and around Wageningen, with 106 chat members); Droevendaal (an alternative

and queer-friendly student accommodation, with 347 chat members); and Shout (a centralised LGBT+ association in Wageningen for students and non-students, number of chat members unknown). Those interested in attending the workshop were asked to fill in an online sign-up form made using Google Forms, which asked people's (chosen) name, pronouns, age, allergies, and to confirm that they identify as genderqueer. People were also informed that to take part in this workshop, they should be comfortable with their input and responses being used for this research, and this consent was confirmed during the workshop. 10 people signed up to the pilot workshop, and 8 people attended. I did not record any conversations during the workshop, but did collect all written material and took note of observations made during the workshop.

The following details the workshop as it was run for the pilot session at the Superette. Before the main activities, the workshop started with a short check-in round, in which participants were invited to share their (chosen) name, pronouns, and their thoughts behind why they chose the object that they brought to the workshop – prior to the workshop, all participants were asked to bring an object that in some way represents a future that they want to see. This was done as both an icebreaker exercise and a means of getting people to start thinking about the future before coming to the workshop.

The first activity, 'Exploring Utopia', was shaped by the question 'What does a queer utopia look like to you?'. This activity was divided into two phases: a critique phase followed by a fantasy phase. This structure was inspired by Involve's 'Future Workshop' method, in which a critical analysis phase is followed by a visionary phase, in which future visions are built upon the critical analysis (Involve, n.d.). During the critique phase, participants were asked to brainstorm in small groups the things that they want to change about the current world that they are living in. After this, during the fantasy phase the same small groups use the themes and issues that arose during the critique phase as a starting point to start imagining and vocalising their queer futures. The brainstorm was divided into two phases in order to help guide and structure the perhaps overwhelmingly daunting task of dreaming up a utopia. Further, if participants were struggling I tried to make the exercise less abstract by asking people to imagine how they would like the future to look in a concrete time or place (such as their neighbourhood in the year 2050). This was inspired by the 'Imagine a preferred future' section of the Futures Frequency handbook from Poussa et al. (2021). Both phases were discussion-based, although the groups were given paper and pens to use if they wished to write, or otherwise visualise, their ideas.

The second activity, 'Postcards from the Future', was largely inspired by a workshop of the same name from the Reimaginary alternative research methods resources (Reimaginary, n.d.). In this activity, which was designed to help answer the question 'In what ways do you embody this utopia in the present?', participants were asked to write short postcards to themselves from future generations (human or non-

human), thanking them for the work they are doing in the present that is shaping the utopic future of these beings. They were also invited to draw a picture that encapsulates this utopia on the front of the postcard. This was done as an individual exercise, in which participants worked separately and without discussion for the entire activity.

The final activity of the workshop was a post-it note brainstorm, guiding the question 'What can you do to help further realise this utopia?'. Prior to the workshop, I placed sheets with questions on around the room (for example: What are the drivers helping you realise this utopia? What are the obstacles holding you back from realising this utopia? What gives you hope?). Participants were encouraged to move around the room, write their answers to the questions on post-it notes, and stick them on the corresponding sheet of paper. This gave them the opportunity to discuss with others as they walked around the room, and also see and be inspired by other people's answers. The workshop ended with a short check-out round, in which participants were invited to share how they felt about the workshop and a take-away insight from the workshop, before having the opportunity to share contact details if participants wanted to stay connected or join new groups together.

I decided to offer the workshop exclusively to people identifying as genderqueer (including gender questioning). The decision to do this was made following analysis of interviews, and subsequently questioning the use and definition of the word 'queer' – which many people understand as an umbrella term for anyone identifying as not heterosexual and/or cisgender. Being interested in the ways in which queerness, as a lifestyle rather than as an identity category, aligns with more-than-human conviviality, I wanted the workshop attendees to be those who see themselves as 'doing queer' – that is critically questioning and dismantling social norms – rather than 'being queer' (by identifying as LGBT+). This is a difficult thing to ask for on a small event poster or flyer, however, and so I decided that 'genderqueer' was sufficient in fulfilling this need, due to extent that questioning and uprooting binary and prescribed gender norms remains a societal transgression in comparison to homosexuality. This was in line with the theory of new normativities, as described above in the theoretical framework.

Following the pilot at the Superette, I then adapted the workshop and repeated it in Utrecht, on Sunday 29th January 2023. It was important to me to repeat the workshop outside of Wageningen, which is a small student town with a lack of diversity in queer spaces. I chose the city of Utrecht due to its relatively large size, its proximity to the capital city of Amsterdam, the fact that I already had contacts there in queer spaces, and my prior knowledge of potential host spaces. I hosted the workshop in ACU, an anarchist social space in the centre of Utrecht. ACU hosts regular donation-based dumpster-dived dinners, music events, and queer games nights, as well as irregular activist talks, workshops, and film screenings. As a

volunteer-run space, they do not ask for money to use the space. Adaptations to the pilot workshop included:

- The online sign-up form for the workshop was made using Cryptpad, as a more secure and less exploitative version of Google Docs. This was done on the recommendation of one of the participants of the first workshop, who explained that some people feel uncomfortable giving data that identifies them as queer to large corporations. Further, we agreed that a non-Google alternative would be more appropriate for a workshop on alternative, and often anti-capitalist, futures.
- The online sign-up form included a space for people to mention any accessibility needs, such as bringing a guide dog or audio/visual needs (the previous form only had space to mention food allergies/intolerances). This was done following an email from one of the participants requesting to bring their assistance dog, which made me realise that I should have included accessibility needs on the form.
- The workshop was promoted much more widely amongst LGBT+/queer/environmental activist groups based in both Utrecht and Amsterdam, and attention was given to ensure that it was sent to BIPOC queer groups and organisations. This was needed due to a lack of diversity and representation in the first workshop, and a recognition of the importance of imagining the future from the perspective of people with intersecting identities and experiences. The workshop was promoted in activist groups to invite people 'doing queer' and disrupting the status quo in multiple ways.
- Prior to starting the workshop activities, I gave a small presentation detailing my research process and the academic theory that had led to the creation of the workshop. This was to give the workshop participants more academic context, especially regarding the definition of 'queer', to shift people's consciousness toward thinking of queer as a verb.
- During the critique phase of the pilot workshop, I asked people to brainstorm things that they would want to change, or things that they do not like, about the current world. This question was too vague for the purpose of my research, as things that people 'do not like' could include, for example, broccoli or thunderstorms. In the second workshop, I instead asked the question 'what is unjust about the world we are living in'.
- More time was given for the first activity, especially for the fantasy phase (15-20 mins for the critique phase and 45 mins-1 hour for the fantasy phase). This was following advice from the participants of the pilot workshop, who said they'd have liked to spend longer discussing and exploring utopia together, especially as it takes some time to start thinking deeply about such an abstract concept.
- In the interest of time, I did not encourage discussion as a whole group (and instead gave more time to small group discussion). This was because during the pilot workshop, group discussion following the critique phase and the fantasy phase took up a lot of time, and often moved the conversation

towards personal stories and experiences of queerness (such as coming out or transitioning). Although it is important that there are spaces for this, I wanted the workshop to stay directed rather than becoming more of a sharing circle.

- The second workshop took place on a Sunday afternoon (14:00-17:30) instead of in the evening. This was partly due to the availability of the space, and partly to make time for longer discussions without having to go too late into the evening.
- In the second workshop, I recorded the group discussions during the first exercise (both the critique phase and the fantasy phase. This was to aid my research, as groups got into deep discussions and did not write much down, so I did not want to miss this rich and important information.
- The promotion flyer for the second workshop was different to the promotion flyer for the pilot workshop (Figure 2). The second flyer was designed to have a more typically 'activist' feel to it, with the image of the fist, the lino cut text, and an illustration from the book *The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions* (Mitchell, 1977). This was done to, again, encourage an active 'doing queer' crowd, as well as to discourage the sharing circle atmosphere of the pilot workshop.

10 people signed up to the second workshop, and 6 people attended. The big difference in sign-ups and attendance was partly because the day before the workshop there was an environmental protest from Extinction Rebellion, during which over 750 people were arrested (Van Aarsen, 2023). Prior to this action, the police had arrested multiple organisers from Extinction Rebellion, so the protest on Saturday 28th January was also widely attended by other political groups in solidarity with resisting police oppression. At least one of the workshop no-shows was recovering from this action and their arrest.

The recordings from the second workshop were transcribed using Microsoft Teams, and then coded alongside all written material (from both workshops) using Atlas.ti. The codes that I established were:

(anti)capitalism; (anti)cisheteronormativity; (anti)racism/colonialism; (digital) technology; ableism; autonomy; beyond human; binaries; care; children and childhood; communication; contradiction; education; experimental; free time; health and mental health; hierarchy; imagination, creativity, and storytelling; individualism and community; intersectionality; labour/work; nature, environmentalism, and speciesism; patriarchy; political reform; power; prison abolition; property; representation; self-determination; self-expression; sex; and transphobia.



Figure 2 Promotion for the workshop at the Superette (above) and ACU (right).

Upon completion of a final written draft of this thesis, all interview and workshop participants were sent a document summarising the findings and results, as well as a list of quotes used from their interview or workshop group. Each quote was accompanied by a short explanation of how it was interpreted and used for this thesis. The purpose of this was to give each participant the opportunity to give feedback on the findings and results, highlight any issues or problems that I had overlooked, give clarity to the interpretation of quotes if they did not agree with the original interpretation and use, and make sure they agree with how themselves and the movement are being framed and represented in this thesis.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Chapter 1: The Dutch LGBT/Q political landscape

In this section, I will describe some existing groups, collectives and movements in the LGBT/Q political landscape of the Netherlands, and highlight some of the ways in which these groups interrelate and interact. With countless LGBT+ and queer groups, collectives, and organisations existing on both the national and local scale in the Netherlands, I am aware that I can only begin to scratch the surface of this landscape. The following text is therefore largely based on my own experience of discovering and navigating groups in the Netherlands, supplemented with information from interviews and online research. I will also give an overview of the historical development of queer movements in the Netherlands, in order to give some context into how historical groups and political movements have shaped the LGBT+ and queer political landscape as it is today. Due to my methodological focus on sites of friction in the LGBT+ scene in the Netherlands, which centred the research on events in and around Utrecht and Amsterdam Pride, my experience of the present scene is very Pride-centric. I do believe, however, that this represents some of the loudest, most active, and most opinionated voices within the LGBT/Q political landscape, and serves to highlight existing antagonisms and frustrations.

During my first summer in the Netherlands, in 2021, I attended a Pride demonstration in Utrecht organised by multiple groups, including the Utrecht-based queer feminist collective Niet Normaal*. A friend and I painted slogans on large pieces of cardboard the day before the demo; theirs said 'pride is a protest until everyone can join', and mine said 'queer solidarity smashes borders' (Figure 3). The purpose of the demonstration was to reclaim pride as a protest, to stress the need for queer people to fight for marginalised groups, and to fight against racism, xenophobia, and transphobia both inside and outside of their own communities. The official statement from the organisers of the demo read:

The first pride was not just a riot, it was a queer uprising against police brutality and state violence led by trans women of color, working class queers, sex workers, and young people. What is pride then? It is a collective celebration of queer and trans resistance and rebellion in all its forms. This is the pride we choose to honor and celebrate. This year, we take the streets in solidarity with our queer and trans kin living in limbo, in the asylum system, locked up in refugee camps.

The rise of the far right, their increase in power and platform to spew hate and homonationalistic rhetoric, has been streamlining hateful agendas in the public debates. We will not stand for the use of queer liberation politics to uphold the idea that Europe's safety is on the line, demonizing migrants and refugees, where they are scapegoated under an image of the dangerous "other". Our liberation will not be co-opted by far right nationalism. We don't buy into the narrative of progress, it is old and it has

been killing us for hundreds of years. The European Union is investing billions of euros in the name of safety, to keep people away, to let them drown, and to let them suffocate in containers. In addition, the EU also invests in abusive regimes that imprison, enslave, and torture people at the periphery of their colonial and imperial sites of despair. Europe is constructed on the dying bodies of people trying to cross its borders. Due to the Dutch reputation of being a liberal state, safe haven for gay and queer people, many queer people apply for asylum here. For the ones that are lucky enough to survive impossible conditions and make it here, they will be facing inhumane conditions in the refugee camps, brutal mistreatment from the IND asylum procedures, and violence from COA and their straight, cis peers with whom they have to live in close quarters once they arrive. For whom is this place really safe?

When it comes to LGBTQI+ rights, the Netherlands promotes itself as being progressive. Consecutive Dutch governments have been using this “tolerance” politic promoting pinkwashing images doing soft diplomacy and business on behalf of big corporations in many places around the world for decades. They wrap their neocolonial structures and exploitation in rainbow flags, structures that have left lands uninhabitable and render lives impossible all over the world, forcing people to flee their countries in search of a better life.

We call on our communities to come out and join in solidarity to the fight of abolishing all the structures that exploit and dehumanize our migrant and refugee kin (Fite Qlub, 2021).

The day of the demonstration was warm but rainy, and I remember the signs becoming soggy in our hands, the paint dripping and merging. The weather didn't seem to dampen anyone's mood, however, and the march was full of fire and energy, with people passionately shouting slogans such as “ah, anti, anti-capitalista!” and “heyhey, hoho, transphobia has got to go!” alongside chants such as “from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free!”. After the demo, dinner was served in the park by the dumpster-diving collective Taste Before You Waste, carrying the feeling of collective joy and solidarity on into the evening. This was the first pride event that I had ever been to in which I felt like people were fighting for a better future for everybody, and a future that I wanted to join the fight for.

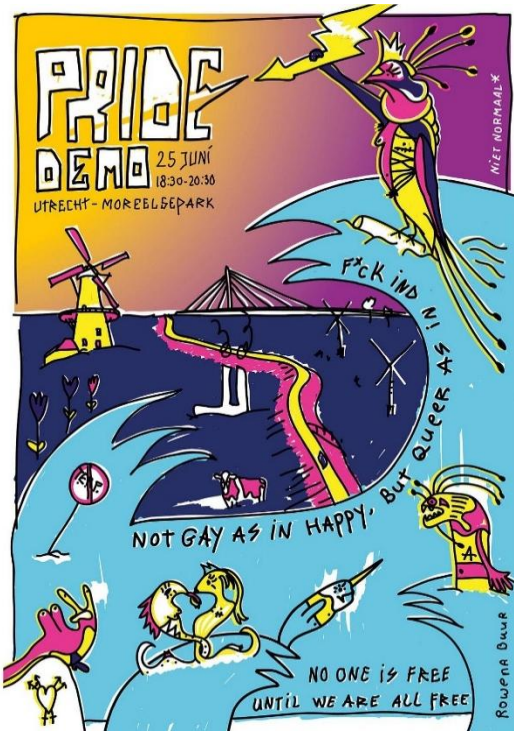


Figure 3 The poster for the Pride demonstration organised by Niet Normaal* (left) (Fite Qlub, 2021) and a photo of me at the demonstration (above) (Fite Qlub, 2021).

After the demonstration, I started following both Fite Qlub and Niet Normaal* on Instagram to stay updated on their events, but didn't attend another event of theirs until the start of the following summer. The event, hosted by Niet Normaal*, was on the day of Utrecht Pride, and was called "No no to the popo chillout pride party". It was held as an alternative to the commercial Utrecht Canal Pride Parade, in which corporations, political parties, and the police all had boats. On my way to the party, I walked through the official Pride crowd, stopping occasionally by the canal to watch some Pride boats float past. The boats were decorated in rainbow balloons and flags, and of course their occupants and the crowd of onlookers also had rainbow flags, clothing, face paint, and glitter. In contrast, I don't think I spotted a single rainbow at the no no to the popo party – perhaps in unanimous opposition to rainbow capitalism. The description of the party, posted on Instagram, read:

Utrecht's official Canal Pride is back after two years. But whose pride is that? Rainbow capitalism, boats for cops and racist political parties is #NotOurPride! So on the 4th of June we make our own party, away from the gayos! Come hang out in QT babes paradise for music & food, bring your own drinks!

The first pride was not just a riot, it was a queer uprising led by trans women of colour, working class queers, sex workers, and young people against police brutality and state violence. What is pride, then, but a collective celebration of queer & trans resistance in all its forms. That is the pride we choose to honour and celebrate!

In the early hours of 28 June, 1969, the Stonewall Riots, also called the Stonewall Uprising, began when the New York City police attempted to raid

a gay bar called the Stonewall Inn. The brutality of the raid – the latest in a long line of police targeting of gay, lesbian, and trans people – sparked six days of rioting, protest, and clashed with the police. Central to sustaining the uprising and its militancy were black and brown trans women like Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera, who would go on to co-found Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) and work with the GLF (Gay Liberation Front) to organise a pride march on the one-year anniversary of the riots, 28 June, 1970.

Just as we did with organising Pride Demos in Utrecht in 2020 and 2021, we continue taking a stand against a violent, racist, Islamophobic, homophobic, and transphobic police force who have been historically responsible for protecting the status quo. The police have always been, and continue to be, an arm of the state and thus cannot be trusted to serve or protect the people. Abolish the Police in the Netherlands and beyond! Boot their boats! (Niet Normaal*, 2022).

During the party, at the main Utrecht Canal Pride parade, a small group of activists from multiple collectives held a protest against rainbow capitalism and the corporatisation of pride (IndyMedia, 2022). They hung four banners from a bridge crossing above the main canal parade, which read: Queer liberation not rainbow capitalism; No capitalism at the end of our rainbow; No profit from pride; and Our identity is not for sale. The article posted about the protest on IndyMedia, a radical alternative Dutch media website, stated that “within the first half hour of the protest the activists were confronted by a large number of police officers and forced to leave the Monicabrug under the threat of being arrested” and then “the protest went on, on the wharf next to the bridge, under the watchful eye of a huge police force”. The police made it clear that the activists and their messaging were not welcome to be included in the Pride parade.

In experiencing how the Utrecht Canal Pride contrasted with the Niet Normaal* anti-police party and the Elektra TINFA* anti-capitalist protest, all taking place in the same city at the same time, I became interested in looking further into the social and political dynamics of this ‘divide’. I interviewed a member of the Elektra TINFA* squatting group, who was at the Utrecht Pride protest, as well as two people from Utrecht who chose to attend the Niet Normaal* no no to the popo party instead of the official canal parade. I also interviewed two people who attended the canal parade: one person who was on the boat organised by the Staatsbosbeheer (state forest management) and one person who was in the crowd watching the parade, who is active in the Utrecht LGBT+ scene and also a member of the Netherlands Radical Faeries. The Radical Faeries are an international community of queer people with roots in spirituality and non-hierarchical organising, who value connection to the non-human natural world and celebrate queer difference (Folleterre, n.d.; Eurofaeries, n.d.). I chose to talk to these people due to their connection to environmental politics and cultures, in the expectation

that they would therefore have interesting insights into the relationship between queerness and ecological ways of being.

I then set out to look for other sites of 'discordance' between LGBT+/queer movements in the Netherlands. Through following Fite Qlub on Instagram, I had come across a group called Queer is Not a Manifesto, a collective who describe themselves as "a foundation that centers queer and fluid identities" who "build platforms, initiate projects and create visibility in order to promote the gloriousness and pluriformity of (queer and fluid) identities, histories, experiences and narratives (Queer is not a Manifesto, n.d.). Alongside Fite Qlub, Queer is Not a Manifesto organised a Reclaim Our Pride protest in summer 2022, as an alternative to an in protest of the main Amsterdam Pride canal parade. The protest took place on the 30th of July, and on the 27th of July they held a protest sign-making event at Vrankrijk, the aforementioned legalised queer squat in Amsterdam. The aim of the demonstration was to "demand an intersectional Pride that links the fight against discrimination based on sexuality and gender with the fight against racism, sexism, class, and other forms of exclusion", and the explicit demands were: not your advertisement (queerness should not be used as a marketing strategy for corporations); end institutional racism; stop homonationalism; abolish IND and grant asylum now; transcare now (no waiting list and no diagnosis needed for trans people to access gender-affirming care); put your money where your mouth is (end free labour); stop pinkwashing; and stand for queer solidarity around the globe (We Reclaim Our Pride, n.d.).

Unfortunately I was not in the Netherlands at the time of the Reclaim Pride march, so could not attend, however I later had the opportunity to interview someone involved with Queer is Not a Manifesto. This person explained to me that Reclaim has existed for four or five years already, and that it "exists out of newcomers, out of people from Egypt to Palestine to Morocco or, you know, former colonized countries, you could say, by the West. And we're queer people who live in exile, still live in exile. So that was a big movement and it grew bigger every year" (Interview 6). They described how in 2021, Reclaim "hijacked" a Pride walk organised by Homomonument by walking at the front and demanding attention for marginalised groups at Pride events. Afterwards, the organisers of the Homomonument Pride walk asked if they could work together with the Reclaim group, and the following year (2022) Reclaim Our Pride was organised together with Homomonument, Queer is Not a Manifesto, Fite Qlub, and other groups. The Reclaim demonstration, however, remained a separate event from the official Pride Amsterdam week.

The official Pride Amsterdam week 2022 ran from the 30th of July to the 7th of August, with the 'main event' – the canal parade – taking place on Saturday the 6th. I went to a range of events, partly as research and partly to enjoy the parties and celebrations with friends, on Friday the 5th and Saturday the 6th of August. On the Friday, I went to a lecture at the Student Hotel (which had rebranded itself as the Pride Hotel for the week) from a professor at the University of Amsterdam called

'Pinkwashing 101', which was described as an interactive masterclass addressing the topic of pinkwashing and how it is experienced by LGBTQIA+ individuals (The Social Hub Amsterdam, 2022). Later, I also somewhat ironically came across an online campaign called No Pride in Capitalism, which was accusing the Student Hotel of pinkwashing during Pride week. Describing itself on Instagram as "calling out the bullshit" (No Pride in Capitalism, 2022), the campaign targeted the Student Hotel for only making their toilets gender neutral during Pride week, and re-gendering them as soon as the event was over. The campaign pointed out that this is an example of pinkwashing, as the Student Hotel capitalises on the huge numbers of visitors and tourists coming to Amsterdam for Pride week by rebranding themselves as LGBT+-friendly (No Pride in Capitalism, 2022). I had already felt the irony of the pinkwashing talk being held at the Student Hotel when I saw that they were giving out rainbow-branded bottles of Heineken for people to drink during the lecture, and coming across No Pride in Capitalism campaign afterwards further highlighted this politicised conflict of interests.

On the Saturday, I went to a Queer Poetry Night co-hosted by Unwanted Words, a Rotterdam-based project who provide a platform for LGBT+ and queer poets and spoken word artists (Unwanted Words, n.d.), and the LIMBO collective, described as "a project that welcomes all queer individuals with a refugee background to create meaningful interactions, knowledge and skill acquisition" (Framer Framed, 2022). The event, held at the Framer Framed gallery, was part of the Queer Currents event platform, who aim to "bring more diverse and inclusive, relevant content, culture and art to the Pride Amsterdam weeks" (Framer Framed, 2022). Many of the poems and spoken word performances focussed on the intersection between queerness and race or migration; people spoke of the in between-ness of an identity spanning two cultures and their search for belonging and community. After the poetry evening, I went to a party at Vrankrijk hosted by SEHAQ, a "leftist feminist refugee-led group that aims to create safe spaces for queer & trans refugees from the Middle East & North Africa in the Netherlands" (SEHAQ NL, n.d.). The party was called Anal Pride 2022, and the event poster (Figure 4) depicted someone grasping a businessperson from a pride boat in one hand, and using the other to wipe their butt with the 'C' from a 'Canal Pride 2022' banner – leaving the banner reading 'Anal Pride 2022' (Vrankrijk, 2022).

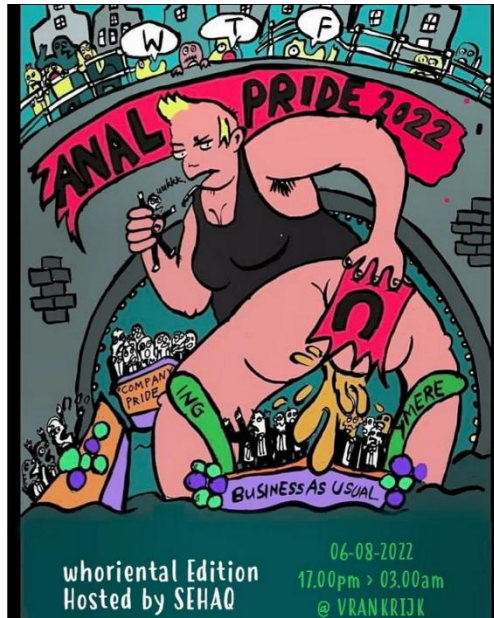


Figure 4 The event poster for SEHAQ's Anal Pride party at Vrankrijk, Amsterdam Pride week 2022 (SEHAQ Queer Refugees Group, 2022).

After the divided Pride of 2022, and following the tireless efforts of groups like Queer is Not a Manifesto, Black Pride, Fite Qlub, and Homomonument, in December 2022 the municipality of Amsterdam announced that Pride Amsterdam 2023 would become Queer and Pride Amsterdam 2023 (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022). Queer and Pride Amsterdam 2023 will be jointly organised by Queer Amsterdam (a collective of diverse LGBT+ and queer groups, many of which are part of the aforementioned Queer Network Amsterdam) and Stichting Pride Amsterdam, who have organised Amsterdam Pride for the past 27 years. This is in an effort to include marginalised voices and perspectives, and to give more attention to “various groups that have to fight extra for representation, recognition, emancipation and security” (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022). The event will span two weeks, with the first week being organised by Queer Amsterdam and the second week being organised by Stichting Pride Amsterdam. The two organising groups will receive separate funding (Dominic, 2023; Klaassen, 2023) and their event programmes will be accessed via separate websites (Klaassen, 2022).

The inclusion of Queer Amsterdam in the organisation of Amsterdam's official Pride event represents a huge win for the groups who have been campaigning tirelessly to put BIPOC, refugee, and trans rights on the LGBT+ agenda, and this is an achievement that should be both celebrated and congratulated. The divided structure of the new Queer and Pride Amsterdam, however, seems representative of a divided LGBT+ scene in the Netherlands, which appears to reflect the differences, discordances, and frustrations that I have observed in exploring both historical and current LGBT+ and queer movements in the Netherlands. The Netherlands has a long history of, and global reputation for, progressiveness in LGBT+ rights, however, as Wekker (2016) observes, this has historically not extended far beyond the rights of White gay men. This reputation has resulted in a mainstream LGBT+ scene which is largely depoliticised, due to the needs of the most powerful voices being met, resulting in the widespread and common perception that the aims of the LGB

'movement' in the Netherlands have been accomplished (Wekker, 2016). As we have seen from the frustrations and frictions outlined above, this is perception is not shared by everyone, however, especially those that are fighting for a movement that acknowledges and responds to marginalised groups and intersectional perspectives. These organisations are building on the history of BIPOC queer and trans activism in the Netherlands.

Following the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1811, the COC (the Cultuur en Ontspanningscentrum, or Centre for Culture and Leisure), one of the first gay rights organisations in the world, was founded in Amsterdam in 1946. From its inception, and still to this day, the COC worked to achieve LGBT+ equal rights and social acceptance, as well as help pass laws and policies that respect sexual and gender diversity. In 1971, the COC was renamed the Nederlandse Vereniging voor Integratie van Homoseksualiteit COC (Dutch Association for Integration of Homosexuality COC), and expanded to form regional COC groups outside of the central Amsterdam-based office. The 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City sparked an international trend towards global solidarity amongst gay and lesbian communities, and in the legacy of Stonewall annual Pride demonstrations began to take place in the Netherlands from 1977 onwards (Shield, 2020). Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, HIV/AIDS activism emerged in the LGBT+ scene in response to the growing health crisis affecting many members of the LGBT+ community. Although these activist groups and their work has been largely invisibilised, ignored, and poorly documented (Parry and Schalkwijk, 2010), some archives exist from groups such as Act Up! Amsterdam, Act Up! Utrecht, and Aidsfonds (House of HIV, n.d.; Aidsfonds, n.d.). In 1987, the Homomonument pink triangle was built in Amsterdam as a memorial for the LGBT+ people who died in Nazi concentration camps during World War II, and remains a site of protest to this day (Homomonument, n.d.).

Outside of the dominance of organisations such as the COC, many groups became active in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s to represent the more marginalised voices in the Dutch LGBT+ scene. In 1976, the Amsterdam-based lesbian feminist group Lesbian Nation formed in response to male domination in the COC, naming themselves after Jill Johnston's *Lesbian Nation: The Feminist Solution* (Littel, 2021). Lesbian Nation fought against heteropatriarchal domination, and are remembered as a driving force behind the first large scale gay and lesbian protests in the Netherlands (Littel, 2021). The founding members of Lesbian Nation came from the 'Zondagsgroep' (Sunday group), a radical lesbian discussion group who used to meet in the 'Vrouwenhuis' ('Women's House'), a feminist activist squat in Amsterdam (Littel, 2021). In 1984, Tania Léon, Gloria Wekker, José Maas and Tienieke Sumter founded Sister Outsider, an Amsterdam-based action group for Black and migrant women who love women (With Pride, n.d.), the year that Audre Lorde published her book of the same name. Gloria Wekker (author of *White Innocence*), read Audre Lorde's *Zami* in the early 1980s, the first book she had ever read by a Black lesbian author (With Pride, n.d.). This inspired the inception of the group Sister Outsider, which aimed to increase the visibility of the culture and literature of Black women and Black lesbian women, due to their lack of representation in

both the White lesbian and White feminist movements (Atria Kennisinstituut voor Emancipatie en Vrouwengeschiedenis, n.d.).

Sister Outsider disbanded in 1986, but a number of other queer BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) groups were formed shortly afterwards across the Netherlands, including Brown Blossom, Culture Shock, Gay Cocktail, Strange Fruit (Wikipedia, 2022), SUHO (Surinamese Homosexuals) and Flamboyant (Colpani et al, 2019.). Perhaps the most well-known of these groups, founded in 1989, Strange Fruit used activism, art, and poetry to challenge the marginalisation of BIPOC queer people in both the Dutch LGBT+ scene and in their own ethnic communities, and was one of the first groups to challenge the rising ‘pro-gay’ Islamophobic discourse emerging in Europe in the 1990s (El-Tayeb, 2012). As I previously mentioned in the introduction, the late 1990s and early 2000s political scene in the Netherlands saw a rise in ‘homonationalism’, which is defined as the use of Islamophobic discourses and arguments in the name of protecting the LGBT+ rights, by framing the Muslim community as a danger to the non-Muslim LGBT+ community. In *White Innocence*, Gloria Wekker describes the aforementioned Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn as an ‘icon of many White gay males’, and cites a widely-quoted article from *De Volkskrant* entitled “Islam Is a Backward Religion,” in which Fortuyn states that he “does not feel like doing the emancipation of women and gays over again.” (Wekker, 2016). In pushing the view that Muslims are endangering the rights and liberties of gays and lesbians, Fortuyn and others used the ‘LGBT+ tolerant’ nature of the Dutch national identity to further marginalise queer BIPOC people and divide the political and cultural landscape of the Dutch LGBT/Q ‘scene’.

Also in the early 2000s, the first transgender queer activist collective in the Netherlands known as ‘the Noodles’ was formed. The Noodles described themselves as a diverse and multicoloured (“veelkleurig”) group who organised political actions and open discussions around gender diversity, genderqueer discrimination, freedom of expression, and sex/gender compartmentalisation both inside and outside of the Dutch gay and lesbian scene (The Noodles, 2006). Trans activist and artist Jiro Ghianni, one of the members of the Noodles (Jiro Ghianni, n.d.), later went on to be part of the QueerNL collective, a group formed following the organisation of a queer-representative group at an anti-racism demonstration in 2008 (QueerNL, n.d.). QueerNL described themselves as “an autonomous non-funded collective of queers and queerfrendlies in the process of formation” who “unabashedly wish to make the Netherlands queer, to make the mainstream gay community engage with its commercialisation and exclusion, and to work with activist groups on race, gender and class” (QueerNL, n.d.). One of the strongest legacies of the QueerNL collective was arguably their Queeristan festivals (renamed ‘Radical Queer Resistance’ in 2017), which were held annually from 2010 to 2018 (Queeristan, n.d.; Radical Queer Resistance, n.d.). These festivals were deliberately intersectional, and described as “exploring and countering the normative workings of gender, sexuality and identity in an autonomous space that avoids capitalism, commercialisation, heteronormativity, racism, ableism, sexism

and transphobia” (Queeristan, n.d.). QueerNL worked alongside multiple groups to organise the festivals, including Vrankrijk, a previously squatted (now legalised) queer political café in Amsterdam.

Despite the disintegration of most of the above groups, the queer movement in the Netherlands continues to thrive today in their legacy. The Queer Network Amsterdam, launched in 2022, is a coalition of 23 queer organisations working to diversify the wider LGBT+ movement and put Black people, people of colour and trans people at the forefront (Queer Network Amsterdam, n.d.). The groups include: MarokKueer Zawya, Queer is not a Manifesto, Transkeeters, Fite Qlub, Papaya Kuir, SEHAQ, Trans United Europe, Black Pride, TranScreen, TRANS magazine, Mikel Haman Foundation, LGBT+ Youth Performance, Colourful Pride, Foundation art.1, Queer Currents, Pride Photo, Pera Foundation, The Five Winds Foundation, Foundation OndersteBoven, Beards of Berlin, COC Amsterdam, and Amsterdam Museum. The Queer Network Amsterdam consists of a number of groups that help give both a community and a voice to BIPOC queer people, such as MarokKueer Zawyam Papaya Kuir, SEHAQ, and Fite Qlub. A lot of the queer and LGBT+ groups in the Netherlands, especially in Amsterdam, are structured around specific diasporas (Interview 8) of first, second, and third generation migrants and refugees. Other groups have formed in response to the specific needs of certain groups, such as Lapelfabriek, a group for neurodivergent LGBT+ people, and Trans Zorg Nu, who campaign for access to trans healthcare and provide support for trans people.

In exploring the existence and historical legacies of these different organisations, who explicitly fight for the needs of the most marginalised queer people, my experiences of a divided scene at Utrecht and Amsterdam Pride appear to reflect frictions across the LGBT/Q political landscape in the Netherlands. During interviews, this divide also was referred to both directly and indirectly on multiple occasions. One respondent, for example, when asked how the pride parades made them feel, described feeling “disconnected”, “distanced”, and “not super happy to be gay” (Interview 8). They went on to explain that they felt: “very disappointed because of the stuff that happens with, like, police having a parade float, and people saying racist things during it, and you're just like, seriously, this is where we are? So I think it makes me a bit disappointed. And just not feel very connected to that stuff. It sort of feels like there's a big divide perhaps” (Interview 8). Another person described an uncomfortable and confrontational “clash” between themselves and other people at pride parades, and related it to their anti-capitalist politics (Interview 3).

Every person that I interviewed showed dislike or mistrust, to varying extents, towards pinkwashing, rainbow capitalism, and the commercialisation of Pride, and many people expressed uncomfortable feelings towards Utrecht Pride, Amsterdam Pride, or Pride parades in general. Across different interviews, Pride parades were described as: “disappointing” and disconnecting (Interview 8); “very commercial, White, basically a King’s day (a Dutch monarchy celebration) for straight people” (Interview 6); “Disneyland with rainbow sauce” (Interview 6);

performative, exploitative, and hypocritical (Interview 3); “a party for straight people” (Interview 1); a “circus” (Interview 1); oversexualised (Interview 1); “confronting” (Interview 3); and “some sort of money machine” (Interview 2). One person acknowledged that their feelings towards Pride parades were “a bit double”, because of the crowds at Pride events being filled with, in general, “sweet people” (Interview 2). Others had a more positive experience of Pride overall, describing the parade as, for example, “welcoming” (Interview 4) or “a really positive experience” (Interview 7). These people, however, remained critical of Pride due to the high economic cost of participating in the canal parade (Interview 7), resulting in the participation of too many large corporations (Interview 4). From these interviews, I identified two main criticisms which are causing a divided landscape: the capitalist co-option of Pride events (and the LGBT+ ‘movement’ in general) and the exclusion of marginalised groups (especially BIPOC people, genderqueer, agender, and transgender people, and asexual/aromantic people).

This divide also seems reflective of the academic difference between queerness and LGBT+, outlined earlier in the theoretical framework, which is nicely highlighted in the name ‘Queer and Pride Amsterdam’. Relating this back to the theory of new normativities, Pride Amsterdam’s transgression of (cis)heteronormativity could be considered to be neither transformative nor queer, but rather elicits anger and other uncomfortable emotions from queer people and minority groups through its neoliberal, conformist, and discriminatory tendencies. As such, many queer groups expend energy on fighting oppression not only from the wider cultural and political landscape, but also from the very organisations that claim to represent them. This is not an original observation – corporate pride marches and “homocapitalism” have long been critiqued by queer activists and academics (Conway, 2022), and in the Netherlands racial and class divides between LGBT+ people have been observed for over a decade in the context of homonationalism and the increase in right-wing political leanings amongst White, gay, Dutch men (El-Tayeb, 2012; Wekker, 2016). Meanwhile, radical groups such as Queer is Not a Manifesto, Elektra TINFA*, and No Pride in Capitalism stress that anything queer must be explicitly anti-capitalist, anti-racist, and anti-patriarchal, and continue to put anti-social queer theory into practice in their loud and unapologetic disruption of the status quo.

In understanding queerness in this way, it follows that queer groups and collectives are inherently intersectional in their political beliefs and practices, whilst the same cannot necessarily be said for LGBT+ groups and collectives. Although I have spoken about a ‘divided’ scene, and presented it in this way, I want to be careful to avoid perpetuating false binaries by dividing organisations, and especially the individual people within them, into categories of transgressive/conforming, reformist/radical, or assimilationist/liberatory. This exploration is focussed on queerness, which can be expressed and enacted in multiple ways and by definition should be neither gatekept nor heavily categorised, but does provide a means of identifying groups who are more likely to take an anti-capitalist and intersectional perspective to issues surrounding gender and sexuality. The question remains,

however, of the extent to which this intersectional approach extends into environmental politics and more-than-human conviviality.

In this past chapter, I have described some of the different organisations active in the LGBT+ and queer political landscape in the Netherlands, especially those that I have explored directly through both interviews and personal experience. I hope that this brief delve into different groups and their interactive dynamics will help contextualise the following chapters, in which I explore some of the key ways in which more-than-human conviviality arose in the utopian imaginations and normative politics of the people that participated in this research.

Chapter 2: Post-capitalist utopias

One of the key shared aspects of queer utopias and more-than-human conviviality that arose during interviews and workshops was that they are both anti-capitalist; both recognise oppression as rooted in capitalist economy and culture, and are subsequently striving towards post-capitalist worlds. In this chapter ‘post-capitalist utopias’, I will describe the ways in which post-capitalist futures arose in the utopian imaginations and normative politics of the people who participated in this research, especially in regard to how this relates to more-than-human conviviality. Although the connection between queer oppression and the degradation of non-human nature through capitalism has already been partly explored during the introduction of this paper, the link between the two was also identified by many interview respondents and workshop participants and is worth expanding on here. One person summarised during interviews: “I think it's connected (queer oppression and the oppression of non-human nature) in the way that a lot of stuff is connected, through capital, like I think capitalism is like doing harm to both things” (Interview 8). This arises from an understanding that oppressive and exploitative structures do not exist in separation, but rather interrelate and reinforce each other (Rogue, 2012), meaning that all forms of oppression and exploitation must be simultaneously addressed. In analysing material from interviews and workshops, however, I found that the relationship between queer utopias and more-than-human conviviality through capitalism goes beyond addressing shared roots of oppression. Throughout the following chapter, we see that queer utopias are focussed on building post-capitalist cultures of care, community, and needs-based organising, providing a strong cultural framework for transformative futures.

During interviews, people's imagined solutions for responding to the ecological crisis reflected a desire for post-capitalist futures. When asked: “In an ideal world, how do you envision the solutions to environmental problems being put into practice?”, some of the answers included: an eco-socialist revolution in which everyone has their basic needs met as a bare minimum (Interview 8); people need to stop placing their self-worth in things that capitalism is selling us (Interview 6); much higher taxes for corporations (Interview 7); a culture shift away from individualistic mindsets, towards a community focus (Interview 1); ending industrial agricultural systems (Interview 2); more focus on community, less focus on profit and growth (Interview 3); and highlighting the need for universal basic income (Interview 6). Interestingly, solutions grounded in technological optimism were not mentioned, nor were the typically-advertised individual solutions of taking shorter showers, switching to energy-efficient lightbulbs, or making sure you fill up the washing machine when you do laundry. Instead, people's answers, and the discussions we had around their answers, were often grounded in post-capitalist cultural, societal, and value shifts. One of the biggest examples of this, which arose multiple times, was people's desire to move towards community-focussed mindsets, and away from mindsets of competition and individualism.

Queerness, with its relations to both chosen family and alternative family structures, is perhaps primed towards an understanding of the importance of community. The Utrecht-based squatting group Elektra TINFA*, who participated in the anti-rainbow capitalism demo at Utrecht Pride, squat homes for young genderqueer people who do not feel comfortable, safe, or welcome in their parents' homes (Interview 1). During an interview with one of the members of Elektra TINFA*, they told me that they were currently living with people who left their previous homes due to transphobic family members, which led them towards alternative ways of living. Elektra TINFA* exemplifies one of the ways in which queer people find and create community in response to systemic violence and oppression. One of the workshops that we hosted at the squat, called Queering Intimacy, was based on a zine of the same name by the Queering Intimacy Collective (unable to find online, but the zine is available on Etsy: <https://www.etsy.com/>). In the zine, they explain that "...because queerness operates outside of mainstream legal structures and the nuclear family, in the rejection of compulsory heterosexuality we find models and opportunities to live creatively and intentionally". They then go on to list queer ways of living, including queer communes and co-ops, group co-parenting, drag families, non-monogamous networks of lovers, political lesbianism's utopian visions of life without men, queer squats, cats and their dykes, and queer liberation movements.

As such, it follows that many of the people I interviewed also described communal and non-individualistic ways of living as part of their vision for solving environmental problems. This was centred on growing food together, such as all living structures (apartments or villages, for example) having community vegetable gardens (Interview 2) or a more community-focussed mindset in which people can grow and share food together (Interview 1). One interview respondent included growing vegetables in their environmental vision of a community in which tasks associated with daily living become divided amongst the community, rather than being the responsibility of each individual (Interview 3). They described a community structure in which people are "leaning on each other", for example "one person does a lot of the cooking and another person is growing vegetables for the cooking and then someone else is, I don't know, making a fire to keep us warm or something, then you can do that without everyone having to work and then paying for their own". This idealistic dream points to a desire for community in order to subvert capitalistic means of survival, and a move to a way of living in which people work together to ensure that the basic needs of those around them are being met (food, warmth, shelter) regardless of economic capital.

During the utopia workshops, people also dreamed of a post-capitalist world in which community would be fostered through sharing; here, however, people talked about things beyond basic needs, such as books and fashion. When describing their queer utopias, one group talked about the home-made second-hand bookshelves that have been increasingly popping up on streets around the Netherlands:

“I like all the little bookshelves everyone has outside their house. I love it. Yesterday I saw one that was a boat on its side, but had glass doors. It was really cool, really well made and amazing books in there. And everyone has them, it's so cool. It's like people suddenly woke up and were like, yeah, we'll put books outside of the capitalist mindset. We don't have to get money for them from marktplaats, we can just give them away” (Workshop 2, Group 2).

The group discussed how this idea could be expanded beyond books, for example to clothes; they dreamed of a place on the street, accessible to all, that has thousands of different types of clothes so “you can just pick whatever you want for that day. Or have play clothes, which you can dress up as a pirate for the whole day. Or an animal maybe” (Workshop 2, Group 2). This was in part related to the desire for fluidity of identity and expression, but also shows the desire for a post-capitalist economy in which everything is shared, rather than individually owned. The discussion around community book and clothes swaps is similar to the concept of a ‘library of things’, where infrequently-used items such as a lawnmower, a movie projector, tools, kitchen equipment, and vehicles are shared by a community of people, instead of each person or household having to own them.

These descriptions of worlds in which daily tasks are divided amongst the community, and possessions are shared for everyone to enjoy, reminded me of the section in *The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions* that I mentioned earlier, in which Mitchell describes the different faggot communities of Pansy Street. Each queer house on Pansy Street has a different sub-culture, and adds something different to the community. Whilst the Boys in the Backroom protect the community, the Gay as a Goose tribe cook and the tribe of Angel Flesh help people heal. The faggots and their friends have built a queer space in Pansy Street that exists despite, and in resistance to, the culture of Ramrod, which is described as a violent land owned by “the rich men without colour”. To me, queer alternative communities that exist despite the hegemonic cisgender, heterosexual, monosexual culture parallel alternative ‘eco’ communities that exist, to varying extents, outside of hegemonic capitalist, consumerist discourse and practices. For example, ecovillages, land squats, forest occupations, and housing cooperatives all represent alternative ways of living that tend towards more ecologically-minded practices. In recognising the oppression of queerness and non-human nature as both rooted in capitalism, it is interesting to see how both queer and environmentally-minded people (or, of course, the many people who are both) have found resistance in community. The concept of community sharing is often cited as a more environmentally friendly way of living due to fewer items being needed per person, and is therefore a direct way of showing how community relates to post-capitalist conviviality.

“The strong women told the faggots that the more you share, the less you need. At first the faggots thought the strong women were being obtuse or utopian. But as they began to share their clothes and their secrets and their magic potions

and their spaces and their incantations and their animals and their books and their visions and their food, they learned, slowly, that the more the more they shared with each other, the more there was that could be shared and the less any one faggot needed. The more that goes around the more you get back.”

The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions

Further, a value-shift towards community and collectivism, and away from individualism, is congruent with conviviality because this puts systems and institutions at the root of environmental destruction, rather than the habits of individuals. With a collectivist mindset, the solutions to these problems are more likely to be seen to lie in transformative change rather than individual behavioural change. Further, people who think more collectively than individually are also more likely to take environmental action (Xiang et al., 2019; Khan, 2023), just as countries that prioritise individualism are less likely to take action on climate change (Clott, 2022), because their actions are responding to the needs and wants of people in general, rather than themselves as individuals.

In expanding on their desire for community and collectivism, one workshop group added “...also taking and giving care. As the most anti-capitalist protest” (Workshop 2, Group 1). In their queer utopias, the desire for collectivist mindsets was connected to polyamory, queering intimacy, and queering family structures in order to foster cultures of care that extend beyond monogamous partnerships and the traditional nuclear family structure. For example, one person connected capitalism and individualism to heteronormativity, through:

“...the ways in which we think of our support networks as the mononuclear family and the kind of affective relationships that you can develop within this framework... it is believed that you find support and you were expected to provide and receive care within your own family, but it's not the reality for so many people” (Workshop 2, Group 1).

Another person wrote that they would want to see more queering of family and friendships, by blurring divides between relationships (Workshop 1). Community, rather than being connected to blood family, was often more about chosen family and fostering a shared sense of belonging and intimacy together through, for example, working on or towards something together (Workshop 2, Group 2). Many people talked about the importance of extending care beyond close friends and blood family, and one person described their vision for a world in which care is not just extended to all humans, but also to beyond-human animals (Workshop 2, Group 2).

Related to this extension of care, people spoke of a need for more empathy and compassion in order to foster solidarity with the struggles of others. One person envisioned a queer utopia in which empathy is an active practice, because “it works like a muscle you need to train and for that you need time... it takes time to train and to understand, to listen to people who do not share the same experiences as you do” (Workshop 2, Group 1). A different person spoke of their experiences of

going to demonstrations, in which the people joining the demo are mostly those that are being oppressed by the struggle, for example mostly queer and trans people at demonstration for trans healthcare (Workshop 2, Group 2). They suggested that this lack of solidarity was as a result of a general lack of empathy for the struggles of others. One person also wrote that in order to reach their queer utopia, there would need to be “more kindness and compassion for everyone’s lived experiences” (Workshop 1).

“We gotta keep each other alive in any way we can ‘cause nobody else is goin’ do it.”
The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions

These ideas around empathy, care, compassion, and solidarity were also extended towards beyond-human animals. This is exemplified by the quote above, but was also highlighted when people spoke of their desire for multispecies communities; one group talked about the need to acknowledge that we live in multispecies worlds, and foster multispecies co-living (Workshop 2, Group 1), and someone from another group stated that “for me, animals would definitely be part of that community” (Workshop 2, Group 2). Here, we see a more-than-human conviviality enacted through beyond-human community care. Further, care and empathy are seen as stereotypically ‘feminine’ traits, and are both things that have become undervalued in Western patriarchal society. A utopia which recognises the fundamental importance of both care and empathy could therefore be seen as anti-patriarchal, and therefore a form of resistance to both queer oppression and the oppression of non-human nature. Fostering ways of relating to each other which prioritise care and empathy could also ensure solidarity amongst both human and non-human struggles, and subsequently create a society which is less exploitative and destructive of both humans and non-human nature.

Returning to the idea of care as an anti-capitalist act of resistance, the need for better mental health support also arose as an aspect of care within people’s queer utopias. This reflected a desire for a utopia in which there is an awareness and understanding of mental health problems, and they are no longer stigmatised and shameful. More relevant, however, was people’s recognition that the current mental health crisis is rooted in societal, rather than individual, failures such as the capitalist ‘grind culture’ (Schwab, 2021) in which people are expected to be constantly economically productive and to work towards achieving success in the form of money and property. The mental health crisis was also talked about during interviews, as one of the biggest issues that should be addressed in LGBT+/queer movements, and was mentioned during a speech at the Reclaim Pride protest in Amsterdam in which the speaker stated that “the LGBTQ+ community suffers from the highest rates of depression and suicide” (Pride TV, 2021). It is therefore unsurprising that community care, related also to mental health, was such an important aspect of people’s queer utopias. A society, or utopia, in which mental health is valued could reflect a more environmentally-friendly society, for example by redefining success as based on happiness, level of connectedness to non-human nature, or quality of relationships. This could result in communities in which

people are no longer striving for ideals rooted in economic growth and consumption, which can be linked to the exploitation of both human and non-human nature, but rather focussed on ideals rooted in the (mental) health and well-being of the community. The concept of care discussed during the utopias workshops extended beyond simply looking after the humans and beyond-humans around you.

Related to community care, one group also talked about what justice would look like in their queer utopia. Rather than prisons, they dreamed of a world in which transformative justice was the answer to conflict and harm (Workshop 2, Group 1). Transformative justice is a community-based response to violence, harm, and abuse (Mingus, 2019) which does not rely on the state to create safety, but rather aims for community safety, healing, and accountability. Transformative justice is a radical alternative to prisons and the current punitive justice system that was created by and for Indigenous communities, Black communities, communities of colour, poor and low-income communities, people with disabilities, sex workers, queer and trans communities (Mingus, 2019), who are often disproportionately and wrongly targeted by state punitive justice. Prison abolition is related to conviviality due to the capitalist nature of the prison system, which operates as a mass industry exploiting the labour of incarcerated people (Pulido and De Lara, 2018; Purdum et al., 2021; Denvir, 2022). Further, a key aspect of conviviality is its focus on social and environmental justice, of which prison abolition is an increasingly recognised factor. Although all participants of the queer utopia workshops were white, resulting in a major lack of representation of BIPOC perspectives, some people appeared to be drawing upon the work of BIPOC activists and academics whilst describing their utopias, as seen in these discussions around prison abolition.

The above post-capitalist connections between queer utopias and more-than-human conviviality can be summarised as care, community (or collectivity), and needs-based organising (structuring society around meeting everyone's needs) (Figure 5). The workshop participants in particular emphasised the ways in which the values of care, community, and meeting the needs of others should be extended towards beyond-human beings. Within these post-capitalist queer utopias, extending the community or collective beyond the nuclear family and monogamous partnerships means also including non-human nature as part of the collective, and therefore as part of this extension of care and awareness of needs. Assertions such as these highlight the ways in which anti-capitalist sentiments can become more concretely embodied through the imagination of post-capitalist futures, by reminding people of the importance of values so easily forgotten within capitalist culture. The changes to cultural values discussed also show how systemic change can protect non-human nature beyond the typical narrative that economic growth is unsustainable on a planet with finite "natural resources"; post-capitalist convivial futures must therefore also focus on fostering community, collectivity and care.

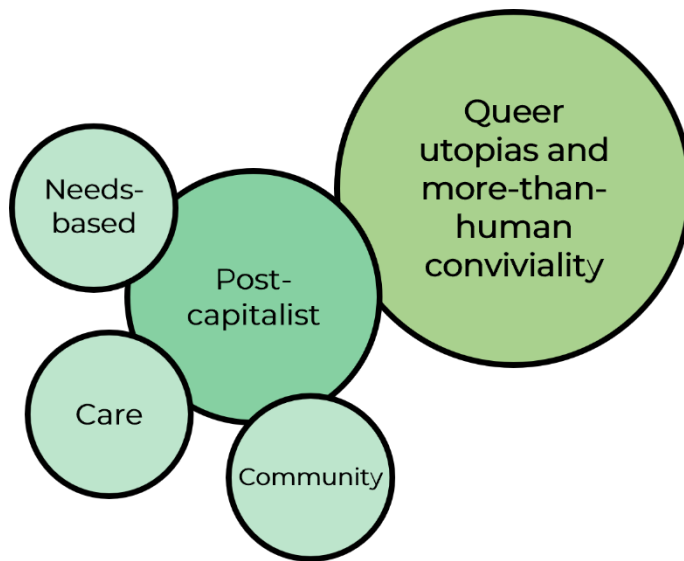


Figure 5 Visualisation of ‘post-capitalist’ as a shared aspect of queer utopias and more-than-human conviviality, and the ways in which this was imagined within people’s queer utopias.

In *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*, José Esteban Muñoz writes about queer utopianism, and utopias in general, as a means of imagining a world beyond the “here and now”, and therefore a world beyond capitalism:

“...utopia is primarily a critique of the here and now; it is an insistence that there is, as they put it (“they” being utopian philosophers such as Ernst Bloch, Theodor Adorno, and Herbert Marcuse), “something missing in the here and now”. Capitalism would have us think, for instance, that there is a natural order, an inevitability, the way things would be. The “should be” of utopia, its indeterminacy and its deployment of hope, stand against capitalism’s ever expanding force field of how things “are and will be” (Muñoz, 2016).

Queer utopianism takes people’s dissatisfaction with the present and uses it to imagine the potential of something different, something more hopeful, more satisfying. When collectively dreaming about utopia during the ‘queer utopias’ workshops that I facilitated for this research, people similarly took the injustices and dissatisfactions that they identified during the ‘critique phase’ of the exercise, and used these to build upon their imaginations of a better future during the ‘fantasy phase’. As Muñoz describes in *Cruising Utopia*, this exercise in utopian thinking acted as a means of breaking through and thinking beyond the “ever expanding

force field” of capitalism. Multiple elements of post-capitalist futures arose in the utopian imaginations and normative politics of the people who participated in this research, as I have described throughout this chapter.

This somewhat describes the relationship between utopianism and post-capitalist futures, however Muñoz takes this a step further to explain the post-capitalist nature of a specifically queer utopianism. He writes: “It is important not to hand over futurity to normative white reproductive futurity” and calls for a utopian political imagination that allows us to envision and enact “a “not-yet” where queer youths of colour actually get to grow up”. The future, he explains, “...is only the stuff of some kids. Racialised kids, queer kids, are not the sovereign princes of futurity”. Queer utopianism speaks to a futurity away from the confines of the traditional white, nuclear family and towards different measures of success. As I mentioned earlier in this thesis, queer theorists have linked heteronormativity to “neoliberal, capitalist notions of what makes a “successful” self: being productive, reproductive, forward-looking, upwardly-mobile, and wealth-accumulating; and striving towards happiness, consumption, and stability in the form of “the good life.” (Barker and Scheele, 2016). Queer utopianism entails a recognition and rejection of neoliberal, capitalist notions of “the good life”, and a move towards redefining success away from cisheteronormative ideals of the nuclear family, and the associated ideals of (re)production, consumption, and wealth-accumulation.

Within people’s post-capitalist dreams of a world in which success is measured by the strength of the community, the level of care everyone receives, and the extent to which everyone’s needs are met, we see this rejection of the ideals of the nuclear family. Instead of care being confined to the nuclear family, care is extended towards the entire community. Instead of needs being primarily and expectantly met within the nuclear family, the entire community is responsible for being aware of, and trying to meet, everyone’s needs. These are very different markers of success to those promoted and consolidated by capitalist culture. During a queer utopias workshop, one person stated their desire for a “fluid perception of time” (Workshop 2, Group 2). This reminded me of a concept called ‘queer time’, which describes the different relationship to time that queer people experience due to not following the “chrononormative” (Jaffe, 2018) life path of their cishet peers. Halberstam (2005) describes queerness as “an outcome of strange temporalities, imaginative life schedules, and eccentric economic practices”, and queer time arises as a result of this; it is the consequence of a life structured and marked by things such as coming out, gender transitions, rejecting ‘adulthood’, and exploring polyamory, and unstructured and unmarked by things such as getting married, having children, and moving in with your ‘significant other’. As Halberstam (2005) points to when referring to queers’ “eccentric economic practices”, many cisheterosexual markers of both time and success are tied to capitalist economy and culture through the promotion of things like marriage and reproduction, whereas many queer markers are not.

Related to queering and reimagining the definition of success, people also talked about redefining their self-worth beyond capitalism. As I already mentioned above, when asked “In an ideal world, how do you envision the solutions to environmental problems being put into practice?”, one person answered that “people need to stop placing their self-worth in things that capitalism is selling us” (Interview 6). They expanded on this, stating that:

“...we are born in the world where the body is naked and then we are ashamed of it because capitalism told us to be ashamed of it, and then we need to buy stuff to feel better about our naked body. Well, that's a very big misunderstanding. We're all born in the world with the naked body and in that sense it's perfect. So let's start with that or let's start with... be more modest. You know, we can't have all this stuff. Take a step back, learn from things around us, and stop thinking we are on top of every fucking food chain as humanity” (Interview 6).

Another person that I interviewed described how they find more “homonormative”, as opposed to queer, spaces to be “quite self-centred and quite focused on more superficial things like looks and body and fitness and careers and money and external validation and all these things” (Interview 5). During workshops, people connected the gender binary to heteronormativity and beauty standards (Workshop 2, Group 1), and talked about how those who fit into heteronormative beauty standards feel or act superior to those who do not. Multiple people linked negative body narratives to money and consumerism or capitalism, as they have experienced people around them feeling the need to buy and consume things in order to feel better about themselves and about their bodies. Both also point to people's need for external validation, through consumption, in response to body shame. In my personal experience, queer spaces tend towards higher levels of body positivity or neutrality than cisheteronormative spaces. The quote from the person above suggests that they have experienced the same thing in what they feel is a queer space (radical faerie gatherings) compared to homonormative spaces. Within queer spaces, the hegemonic narratives around body standards are less dominant, and validation comes less from adhering to these standards, resulting in less pressure to meet them.

Queer approaches to the body were also related to having the space and to focus our attention on other things than body validation, as the person quoted above said to “take a step back” and “learn from the things around us” (Interview 6). Delinking our self-worth from body standards would give people the space to focus our energy attention elsewhere than the sizes and shapes and weights of our bodies. As Farrell (2015) writes:

“Who benefits when we gaze incessantly at the fat on our bellies, thighs and upper arms—squandering our energy and money—rather than turning our attention squarely to the problems of tremendous income inequality, violence in our neighbourhoods, endless wars and war profiteering, water

scarcity, and global climate change? Who gets to make decisions about those issues while the masses are fixated on reducing their size?”

Of course, many queer people are familiar with how debilitating shame can be, and many have put a lot of work into moving beyond shame. Although I think a deeper discussion on this is outside the scope of this report, it is worth mentioning to further explain why deconstructing body shame could (or should) be part of a vision for responding to environmental problems. Returning to the theory upon which this thesis is based, the need to conform to a certain body type and buy clothes or other items to make oneself more conventionally attractive stems from a form of biopower; people internalise dominant Western norms around appearance and feel under self-policed and social pressure to present themselves in a way that is deemed socially acceptable or desirable. As queerness commonly questions and resists self-policed and social pressure around gender and sexuality, it follows that queer spaces conform less to conventional body standards. In these body-positive (or body-neutral) queer utopias, perhaps there would be more energy to address issues like income inequality, water scarcity, and global climate change.

Consistently bringing together post-capitalist imaginations and ecology, The Institute of Queer Ecology explores the concept of ‘Grub Economics’ in their film series ‘Metamorphosis’ (IQECO dis.art, n.d.). At the beginning of the film, they talk about how the only constant thing in the world is change, as opposed to the myth that everything in “nature” consistently stabilises to an equilibrium, a maintenance of the status quo. The film then states the need to move towards a queerer understanding of nature that is not based around Darwinian competition, and cycles of evolution, but rather acknowledges the importance of mechanisms like symbiosis and co-evolution for ‘intersectional, collaborative survival’. Following this, the concept of ‘Grub Economics’ arises: due to their insatiable appetites for a specific plant or insect species, caterpillar grubs are compared to extractivist industries and mass consumerism. The film later states that the “only possible way forward (for society) is a total transformation in how the world is imagined and how it operates today”. In biology, they say, this would be a complete metamorphosis, in which “an organism completely restructures itself to better meet its needs and ensure its survival”, rather than remaining in a perpetual larval stage. Capitalism forces people and societies to remain in this larval stage, to endlessly consume, rather than “liquidate our assets”, redistribute our resources, and create something new. At the end of the film, they ask: will we allow ourselves to die in this larval stage? Or can we imagine the world into something better?

Chapter 3: Justice-driven utopias

As I described in Chapter One: The Dutch LGBT/Q Political Landscape, the people I interviewed during the first stage of this research were chosen due to their presence or association with different events in and around Utrecht and Amsterdam Pride 2022. The queer politics they spoke about were therefore largely centred around Pride and the two main criticisms of Pride that I identified earlier: the capitalist co-option of Pride events (and the LGBT+ 'movement' in general) and the exclusion of marginalised groups (especially BIPOC people, genderqueer, agender, and transgender people, and asexual/aromantic people). As the previous chapter addressed post-capitalist queer utopias, in the following chapter 'Justice-driven utopias', I will focus on criticisms around the exclusion of marginalised groups, and how this political stance shapes people's queer utopias. As in the previous chapter, I will ground these utopian imaginations increasingly in their relationship to more-than-human conviviality throughout this chapter.

During interviews, one person described feeling disappointed at Amsterdam Pride because of hearing people say racist things during the parade (Interview 8), and another person explained that they did not feel that Utrecht Pride parade represented the whole LGBT+ or queer community, because they noticed that most of the people on the boats were White (Interview 4). This person theorised that one of the reasons for this exclusion could be the commercialisation of Pride, which has made it very expensive to be on one of the boats in the parade. This means that often only those with the sufficient economic capital and disposable income are able to participate in the parade, and are the most visibly represented, whilst everyone else joins as part of the audience. Another person that I interviewed explained that this is not how things always were, and that everyone used to be able to join as individuals, or as a group of friends, in a boat in a canal parade (Interview 7) before the event became so commercialised. Following these observations and critiques, I did some online exploration into BIPOC exclusion at Pride parades; the articles that I read were from the US or UK, but I understand the socio-political context to be similar to that of the Netherlands. Pride parades have been criticised for being too straight, White, commercial, and elitist, catering primarily to White cis gay men, and perpetuating the White privileges that exist in LGBT+ scenes and spaces year-round (Levin, 2016; Henry, 2018; Johnson, 2019). In the Netherlands, the grassroots organisation Black Pride NL organises a Pride weekend in Amsterdam every summer, which centres the needs, experiences, and liberation of queer BIPOC people.

Another person that I interviewed described how some of their feelings of discomfort around Pride parades arise from the over-sexualisation of queerness and queer people during these events, creating the feeling that queerness was being reduced to just sex and sexuality (Interview 1). They explained that, as an asexual person, they felt excluded at Pride: "Being queer is so much more than sex and all that stuff and partying. It's just being... like it's not... why am I being

sexualized? I very much did not feel included”. As well as asexual exclusion, they explained how the sexualisation of Pride and a focus on sexuality also led to the exclusion of genderqueer, transgender, and agender people. They told me about their experience of Utrecht Pride, describing that they “saw all the normal rainbow flags and a few lesbian flags and all that stuff and only at the 26th or something did I see the first trans flag. There was not a single boat that I saw that had a nonbinary flag or an ace flag or anything. It all felt very much sexuality-oriented”. This sexual focus not only excludes asexual people, but can also exclude people for whom the very concept of sexuality is irrelevant because it rests on the existence and importance of gendered categories, as well as people for whom queerness is more about their gender identity than sexuality. In summer 2021 and 2022, the organisation TransPride Amsterdam supported and joined the Reclaim Pride march in Amsterdam, organised by Homomonument and other groups, to better address the “structural exclusion, discrimination, racism, and transphobia that the LGBTQI+ community experiences on a daily basis” (TransPride Amsterdam, 2022).

Pride marches that are organised as a protest rather than a commercial parade, such as the Niet Normaal* protest in Utrecht or the Reclaim Pride march in Amsterdam, tend to be much more diverse and inclusive of marginalised groups. The 2022 Reclaim Pride walk statement, published online by Queer is Not a Manifesto, demands, amongst other things, to: abolish the IND; grant asylum and work to all seeking refuge from gender-based violence; stop institutional racism, including ethnic and racist profiling done by the police; stop homonationalism; assuring easy access to gender-affirming healthcare and document-changing for trans people; and working in solidarity with queer people across the globe. They state:

“Where Pride once started as a movement that fought for freedom and equality, it has now grown into a party that revolves around commerce and money. A celebration in which certain companies and political parties participate that have nothing to do with this struggle for freedom.

For us, there is no pride in arms trade and in the destruction of indigenous territory that ING finances. There is no pride in fighting resource wars or exploiting employees as multinationals like Amazon do. In fact, oppression and exploitation are diametrically opposed to the principle of human rights, and, therefore also LGBTQI+ people.

As in the times of Stonewall, our Pride is intersectional: we cannot celebrate the freedom of one group at the expense of the freedom of other groups.

Worldwide we see a huge growth of the far right, conservatism and, nationalism, accompanied by violence towards LGBTQI+ communities, refugees, undocumented migrants, Muslims, and BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) communities. Political parties such as the VVD, CDA, D66, PVV, FvD and SGP conduct a scapegoat policy. In other words, the most marginalized groups are blamed for all socioeconomic and social problems.

While the neoliberal policy of the VVD in recent years of brutal cutbacks in health care, housing and education has had disastrous consequences. Especially for the most marginalized” (Stichting Homomonument, 2022).

Following these demands, the new Queer Amsterdam week for Amsterdam Pride 2023 (of which Queer is Not a Manifesto and Black Pride NL are both partners) is explicitly focussed on speaking up for those whose safety, needs, and rights have not yet been fully socially or politically acknowledged or realised (Queer Amsterdam 2023). Queer Amsterdam will “showcase queer- and transness in all its shapes and sizes, in all its colours and shades of diversity”, and will make “values such as social justice, anti-discrimination and national and international solidarity... the common thread running through the program” (Queer Amsterdam 2023). Queer Amsterdam represents a direct response to people’s criticisms of exclusion and marginalisation at more ‘mainstream’ Pride events, and highlights that addressing the systems and institutions that oppress marginalised groups is imperative to queer liberation.

Many of these organisations and collectives take an intersectional approach to oppression and liberation; as TransPride Amsterdam wrote in their statement about the Reclaim Pride walk, “Our pride is intersectional – we cannot the violence against and exclusion of the LGBTQI+ community from institutional racism, homonationalism, sexism, Islamophobia, and other forms of oppression and violence” (TransPride Amsterdam, 2022). Similarly, during interviews and workshops, queer oppression and the oppression of non-human nature were seen to be linked through intersectionality. An intersectional approach to oppression sees all struggles and oppressions – queer, class, racial, gender, species, ecological – as connected. In the statement of the Reclaim Pride 2022 protest above, they explain “As in the times of Stonewall, our Pride is intersectional: we cannot celebrate the freedom of one group at the expense of the freedom of other groups”. During a speech at this protest, queer performance artist and social justice activist Devika Chotoe stated:

“It’s about time we collectively start to understand that queer emancipation equals resisting racism, sexism, classism, ableism, transphobia, xenophobia, and homonationalism. Queer emancipation means refusing rainbow capitalism and pinkwashing and using our movement to perpetuate or mask other forms of oppression. Queer emancipation is pro-climate justice, pro freeing Palestine, pro-sexworkers, refugee and indigenous rights. Queer emancipation is inherently intersectional. If it’s not intersectional, it’s not queer emancipation” (Chotoe, 2022).

Here, climate justice is explicitly included as necessary to queer emancipation. Likewise, during interviews, one person explained that:

“You cannot do class struggle without queer liberation, you cannot do queer liberation without class struggle, and you cannot do ecology without class struggle. So then you cannot do queer liberation without ecology, because you

cannot do class struggle without ecology. I actually did try to squat a farm earlier this year, and that was also going to be queer safe place. I was actually planning to have a more queer ecology based squat (on the farm), but then that one didn't really work out, so we had this one (the squat in the city) and then we did some gardening” (Interview 1).

This person linked their political views on queer liberation and intersectionality to their personal dreams of creating queer safe spaces that embody ecological principles and practices. To further emphasise their point, they showed me a sticker made by the Dutch LGBTQ+ climate activist group Queers4Climate which read ‘No Pride on a Broken Planet’ (Figure 6), and related queerness and ecology through the simple fact that there will be no queer liberation if life on Earth ceases to exist. Equally, without queer liberation through the resistance of racism, sexism, classism, ableism, transphobia, xenophobia, and homonationalism, much of life on Earth will cease to exist.



Figure 6 No Pride on a Broken Planet sticker, made and distributed by Queers4Climate (Gaykrant, 2019).

During the second queer utopias workshop, the focus of most people’s queer utopias involved ending oppressive systems, structures, and institutions, such as capitalism, patriarchy, colonialism, and cisheteronormativity. There was a common understanding of intersectionality and recognition of intersectional oppressions, such as acknowledging that queer liberation would also involve addressing race and class struggles. The first exercise, dreaming about utopia, was divided into two phases: a critique phase and a fantasy phase. During the critique phase, people were asked to brainstorm things that they see as unjust about the world that we are living in order to create a starting point from which to start dreaming about utopia. One group started with capitalism, before moving quickly onto patriarchy, gender binaries, and heteronormativity, and then later:

“Racism. Where do we write that one?”

“It's here in between capitalism and patriarchy. Like racism and colonialism and colonial legacies still happening. Indigenous genocide.”

“It's all so connected right? It's sometimes overwhelming.” (Workshop 2, Group 1).

Another group reflected this sense of overwhelm, deciding that it might be easier to answer the question “what is just about the world that we are living in” instead, because they experience too many things as unjust (Workshop 2, Group 2). Anthropocentrism and the destruction of non-human nature was also similarly entwined with the complexity of problems, being linked to capitalism, racism, and patriarchy (Workshop 2, Group 1).

One person that I spoke to during interviews pointed to the relatedness of queer oppression and the oppression of non-human nature through the values and ideas implemented by Western imperialism and Christianity (Interview 6). They explained that colonial values and ideas erased, and continue to erase, both Indigenous ecological knowledge and Indigenous non-binary gender categorisations. The importance of recognising and centring traditional ecological knowledge for environmental justice has been widely recognised, and it is becoming increasingly unaccepted to exclude Indigenous worldviews from environmental practices such as conservation. In particular, Western academia has begun to accept and adopt the practice of recognising human beings as part of, rather than separate to, non-human nature. In this way, environmentalists strive to move beyond nature-culture dualisms in both their thinking and practices. Similarly, the colonial erasure of genders beyond the Western binary is becoming more widely known within queer academia and media (O'Sullivan, 2021; Theil, 2021; Ramirez and Pasley, 2022). When deconstructing Western binary gender categorisations, people often refer to Indigenous non-binary understandings of gender, gender-nonconformity, and gender fluidity, such as Native American Two-Spirit people and the hijras in India (Dozono, 2017). As such, Western imperialism, the domination of Western ideas, and the subsequent erasure of Indigenous ideas led to binary thinking regarding both non-human nature and gender identity, which people are now working to deconstruct and decolonise.

This relation of queerness and ecology through the exclusion (and erasure) of marginalised groups, and taking an intersectional approach to oppression, was reflected in people's visions for environmental solutions. One person explained that they believe that environmental solutions would better be achieved through changes to economic systems and electing leftist governments, which would be more likely to happen in regions such as South America if other countries stop “meddling” in their elections (Interview 8). When asked about what values would need to replace current values to achieve their environmental vision, this person also spoke about anti-racism and providing reparations for past and ongoing colonial damages. This linking of environmentalism to decolonisation is becoming

increasingly visible within both environmental academia and activism, with organisations such as Debt for Climate, who have groups existing throughout Europe, and the Netherlands-based initiative CluB (Climate Liberation Bloc). Debt for Climate are advocating for all of the debt that the Global South 'owes' the Global North be cancelled, and that the Global North give interest-free payments to the Global South to pay their climate debt and enable countries in the Global South to recover from the colonial exploitation and emissions of the Global North (Debt for Climate, n.d.). CluB was founded in 2017 by a group of climate activists in the Netherlands, and are fighting to raise awareness in the wider climate movement to show that environmental problems are a direct cause of colonial exploitation and extraction, and that the solutions therefore lie in dismantling colonial, capitalist systems (Mama Cash, 2019).

During the queer utopia workshops, people's intersectional and social justice-driven approach to utopian politics arose through a common consensus that queer utopias would be decolonial and beyond patriarchy. Although people often mentioned decolonisation and anti-racism without expanding on what this means or could look like, one group talked about the decolonisation of knowledge and ideas, as well as places (Workshop 2, Group 1) and when asked 'what gives you hope?', one response was "other ways of knowing" (Workshop 2). The same group also described binaries of man/woman, mind/body, and emotion/reason as "Western paradigms" that are patriarchal as well as colonial (Workshop 2, Group 1). Perhaps due to the whiteness of the workshop groups, resulting in a wider experiential understanding of feminism than anti-racism, moving beyond patriarchal ideals was discussed more in depth than decolonisation. Some specific ideas and discussions that arose related to dismantling the patriarchy were: embracing vulnerability; self-love and body positivity; dismantling sexism; learning to give open and healthy communication about sex; and recognising the importance of care and community, as discussed in the previous chapter.

A key aspect of (more-than-human) conviviality is approaching environmental issues through an environmental justice framework, which means advocating for solutions to environmental problems that are in line with social justice: fair distribution of wealth, opportunities, and privileges regardless of identity (race, class, gender, sexuality, species, ability, etc.). The approaches to queerness and ecology outlined above which view the two as related through an intersectional, especially feminist and decolonial, lens are also in line with this framework. Here, queerness relates to more-than-human conviviality by showing the importance of social justice for both queer liberation and the liberation of non-human nature. Elements of social justice, most notably in the form of intersectionality, decolonisation, and moving beyond the patriarchy, were also reflected in the utopian imaginations of the people who participated in this research, both in the normative politics that were discussed during interviews and in the explicitly utopian dreams of the workshop participants, and were further sometimes directly linked to ecology. This directly exemplifies another key connection between queer utopias and more-than-human conviviality. I have added these three shared

elements – intersectional, decolonial, and beyond patriarchy – to the diagram introduced in the previous chapter (Figure 7) in order to clarify the connections between concepts that are being drawn and explored throughout this thesis.

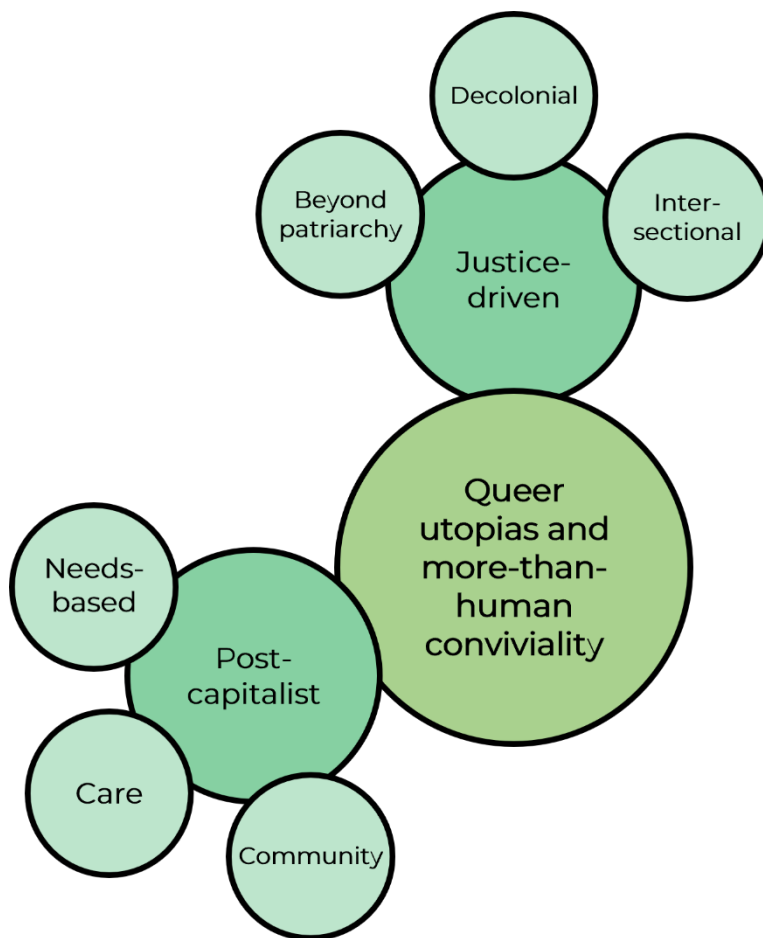


Figure 7 Visualisation of 'justice-driven' as a shared aspect of queer utopias and more-than-human conviviality (alongside 'post-capitalist' – see previous chapter), and the ways in which this was imagined within people's queer utopias.

In the previous chapter, I mentioned that all of the participants of the queer utopias workshops were white, and so were most of the interview respondents. Although many people still appeared to draw upon the work of BIPOC activists and academics when discussing their normative or utopian political ideas and imaginations, and talked about intersectionality, social justice, and decolonisation, this lack of BIPOC representation was not reflective of the BIPOC-led queer political landscape outlined in Chapter 1 and is a limitation of this research. Although I tried to reach out to BIPOC queer groups and collectives for the second queer utopias workshop, this did not end up addressing the lack of representation at the workshop itself. There are a number of potential reasons for this; it could have been a result of location (upon reflection, ACU appears to be a largely white-dominated space), the way that the workshop was framed and promoted making it

inaccessible to lots of people, the lack of monetary compensation for participation resulting in the exclusion of marginalised and thus more economically-disadvantaged groups, the existing white dominance in Dutch activist (and anarchist) spaces, or the white dominance within my own social circles and networks. I don't know the exact reasons, and it could have been a mixture of these things as well as other factors that I have overlooked. Still, it remains that much of the material upon which I based this thesis was not spoken to me directly by BIPOC queer people.

As I outlined in Chapter 1, the Dutch queer political landscape has been built on, and remains driven by, the work and knowledge of BIPOC queer people and activists. Groups such as Sister Outside, for example, helped inspire some of the radical, queer, BIPOC-led groups that we see today, such as *Queer is not a Manifesto* and *Fite Qlub*, whose work has been fundamental in amplifying the voices, needs, and perspectives of marginalised groups within the wider LGBT+ landscape. A lot of the queer groups in the Netherlands, especially in Amsterdam (many of which have united to form the *Queer Network Amsterdam*), are structured around specific diasporas (Interview 8) of first, second, and third generation migrants and refugees. These groups and collectives take an inherently intersectional approach to their queer politics, and always show respect to and recognition of the BIPOC-led history of queer activism and academia. I mention this all here because, although the utopian politics of the people I talked to did end up being largely intersectional, they are still the utopias of a majority white demographic. This would be problematic and worth discussing in any case, but seems especially important to give space to here given that a lot of the Dutch queer political landscape is built on the work and knowledge of BIPOC queer people.

In the *Utopia* of Thomas More (More, 1949), society was built upon the colonisation and enslavement of the people native to the island, and exemplifies in fiction how the utopian imaginations of some can lead to the realised dystopias of others. This process of utopian/dystopian mirroring has also become reality throughout history, such as in the dystopian concentration camps of the Soviet Union or Nazi Germany, produced in part by Marxist or fascist utopian ideologies (Isaac, 2015). This highlights the importance of recognising who's utopian dreams are being voiced and enacted, and who's could be being invisibilised – or squashed – in the process. Even when using the concept of utopia as a vehicle for hope and potentiality beyond conformity, as in the queer utopianism of Jose Esteban Muñoz, it remains important to acknowledge who's hopes are being recognised, as these hopes inform people's political imaginations and visions for transformative change. As a white person, I feel less able to recognise the ways in which the queer utopian imaginations and normative politics of the majority-white participants of this research could contribute towards creating a BIPOC dystopia as in the work of Thomas More. Most participants were also explicitly intersectional in their approach to transformative change, at least in theory if not in practice. I think it is more possible, however, that some of the needs that would arise as important during utopian discussions of queer BIPOC people have not been brought to light in this

thesis, due to the privileges and potential blind-spots of myself and the majority of the research participants.

Despite this, I remain confident in the assertion that I made during the theoretical framework, that queer utopianism is potentially more able to avoid the trap of falling into the realm of fascist dystopianism than some other forms of utopian thinking. Queer utopianism is not about searching for a uniform and 'harmonious' utopian future, but rather seeks to create better futures by continuously looking to ways in which we can improve our lives in the present. It is in this rejection of harmony and uniformity that I believe queer utopianism resists fascism, and this rejection arose multiple times during the queer utopias workshops. One workshop group talked about embracing antagonisms, and contradictions, in the sense that they do not want to make everything fit into the same mould, or strive for harmony in an "inherently disharmonious world" (Workshop 2, Group 2). A desire to move beyond uniformity arose mainly in the form of embracing fluid identities. One person, for example, brought a blurry mirror to the workshop as their object to describe their queer utopia, because in a utopia they/others would be undefined and undefinable, and vagueness would be better embraced (Workshop 1). In the second workshop, one group talked about self-expression and self-determination through the desire to choose their own name and to change it whenever they pleased (Workshop 2, Group 1). Another group talked about being able to express themselves in different ways in different spaces, or at different times, and being able to easily adopt or drop different identities without feeling under pressure to remain the same 'type' of person (Workshop 2, Group 2).

People's embracement of contradictions, through recognising their own contradictory ways of thinking, feeling, and being, also seems to make them more likely to embrace contradictions and disharmonies in the wider world. Although this does not excuse the limited BIPOC representation in this research, especially the queer utopias workshops, it does point to the ways in which queer utopianism opens up space for a plurality of different worlds, experiences, and perspectives. In terms of conviviality, this could create a world in which people embrace epistemic diversity and are more open to learning from non-Western sources of knowledge about, for example, ecology and solutions to environmental problems, which is of course also linked to decolonisation. It also points to a relinquishing of control, both over other people and over non-human nature. Of course, whilst this queer embracement of disharmony and non-conformity opens space for a multiplicity of perspectives and ways of being/doing, it remains important that these are in line with social justice, as shown by the repeated occurrence of decolonial, anti-patriarchal, and intersectional sentiments expressed in the normative politics and utopian imaginations of the people who participated in this research. This has been helped by the rising popularity of intersectional approaches to struggles and oppression in left politics, and more specifically queer politics: in the words of Marsha P. Johnson, "No pride for some of us without liberation for all of us".

Given the compounding relationship between patriarchy and queerphobia, it follows that moving beyond the patriarchy was a common aspect of people's queer utopias and normative queer politics. Discussions around dismantling the patriarchy were especially related to an understanding of queerness as going beyond sexuality, and people putting more of an emphasis on genderqueerness as a transgression of patriarchal heteronormativity. Due to the assimilation of non-heterosexual identities into a heterosexual and capitalist framework in the Netherlands, genderqueerness remains more of a subversion of Western binary understandings of gender and heteronormativity than gay or lesbian sexualities. This could also explain the observation that genderqueerness has been, and often still is, significantly less widely represented, understood, and fought for within mainstream LGBT+ movements; non-heterosexual sexualities are highly visible at Pride marches, for example, whilst a deeper understanding of queerness beyond this is not visibly considered by the majority of the crowd. To me, a big highlight of this is the continued popularity of the slogan 'love is love' at Pride events, which speaks for little beyond the acceptance of a greater diversity of sexual and romantic relationships. I am not trying to say that this isn't important, but rather point out that realising a queer utopia beyond patriarchy would require a lot more than accepting different forms of love. This is a sentiment that the (genderqueer) people that I spoke to whilst undertaking this research appeared to reflect during discussions around deconstructing the gender binary.

In queer theory, binary thinking is seen to uphold oppression due to the hierarchal structure of a dualism, in which one side becomes inferior to the other; as Diana Fuss (1991) explains, a binary has a superior 'original', which is seen as the norm, and an inferior 'supplement', which is then otherised. For example, 'female', 'homosexual', and 'emotional', are supplement to 'male', 'heterosexual', and 'rational'. To help us think beyond binaries, Gloria Anzaldúa describes identity as fluid like a river: "identity is not a bunch of little cubbyholes stuffed respectively with intellect, race, sex, class, vocation, gender. Identity flows between, over, aspects of a person. Identity is a river – a process" (Anzaldúa, 2009). I was reminded of this quote during the first queer utopias workshop, in which one of the participants expressed their desire to be "fluid like the Rhine" (Workshop 1) – the Rhine is river running through Wageningen that I mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, and which seems to create strong connections here between people and the non-human natural environment. Throughout the workshops and discussions, it became clear that to many people moving beyond the patriarchy, and realising utopias beyond the patriarchy, meant deconstructing hierarchal (and patriarchal) binaries of male/female, human/non-human, and nature/culture. I will go into a deeper discussion on this in the following chapter: Utopias beyond all binaries.

Chapter 4: Utopias beyond all binaries

Moving beyond binary ways of thinking was the third key commonality that arose between queer utopias and more-than-human conviviality. In queer spaces, this is generally discussed in terms of deconstructing binaries of gender and sexuality (male/female, homosexual/heterosexual), and instead trying to think in ‘spectrums’ and ‘fluidity’. More-than-human conviviality, however, generally considers binaries in terms of those seen as most relevant to ecology – the nature/culture and human/nonhuman binaries. In the following chapter ‘utopias beyond all binaries’, I will describe the ways in which post-binary thinking arose in the utopian imaginations and normative politics of the people who participated in this research, and how the typically queer take on post-binary thinking, regarding gender and sexuality, intersected with posthumanist thinking on deconstructing the divide between humans and nonhuman animals. During both interviews and workshops, the idea of queerness being beyond human – both in the sense that queerness can extend into non-human nature, and in the sense that queerness can bring about a questioning of what it means to be human – arose multiple times. Throughout this chapter, I hope to show how queer nonbinary utopias, which recognise and respect the existence and practice of fluidity, can shape anti-hierarchical ways of thinking and being and subsequently prefigure environmentally just futures through posthumanist and anti-speciesist thinking and doing.

Before moving to a discussion on posthumanist utopias, I think it is important to first mention that many people spoke about beyond-human queerness by describing ways in which non-human nature is queer. For example, one person described their relationship to nature, stating that:

“Animals are very queer. And in all sorts of ways, right? Sexually, but also when it comes to gender, when it comes to intersex bodies as well, it's like everything that you can think of you can find it in some sort of animal species, and I like that. There are many (radical) faeries who believe that we as queers have a special role to play in protecting environment and fighting for like climate justice, fighting to preserve nature” (Interview 5).

Another person gave the example that snails can reproduce without having sex (Interview 1) – snails have both ‘female’ and ‘male’ reproductive cells, and so can self-fertilise. They then went on to state that fungi are queer because they “don’t do gender” and they “know that gender is fake” (Interview 1). I came across a zine about this recently, entitled *Queer Fungi: Why Mushrooms Are Gay* (Leyzorek, n.d.), which describes the many genders/sexes of mushrooms, and also relates mushroom communities to the LGBT+ community through their shared use of underground networks to ensure their survival (see Appendix A) The diversity of non-human nature can be used to highlight how absurd rigid binary categories of gender and sexuality amongst humans are, and to throw cultural norms and understandings into question in a very queer way, by showing that in non-human

nature these norms do not exist. When I organised a queer poster-making session at the squat, a few people made posters stating 'nature is queer!'. This embracement of queerness beyond humans represents a part of their connection to the non-human world and resulting ecological mindsets, perhaps due to the validation or sense of belonging that comes from seeing themselves reflected in non-human nature, one that they do not receive from 'mainstream' human society.

In an issue of the online blog *Ecocore*, guest edited by the Institute of Queer Ecology (Ecocore, 2017), the author states that nonhuman nature showing sexual and gender deviance beyond binary norms can destabilise human exceptionalism and us/them thinking (yet another binary) with respect to nonhuman animals. Last summer, I attended an anti-speciesist activist skillshare where, during workshops and other conversations, all animals (both human and nonhuman) were referred to as 'people'. For example, the agreement not to touch others without consent (an already highly accepted and important agreement between most humans) was also applied to other people such as dogs and cats. Just as changes in language are being used by queer people to deconstruct the man/woman binary, such as they/them pronouns or gender-neutral familial language (e.g. 'sibling' instead of brother or sister, 'parent' instead of mother or father), nonbinary language can also be used to question and deconstruct anthropocentric ways of viewing the world. I recently obtained a dictionary of antispeciesist language as a zine (also available online: huntsabsireland.com/speciesist-language) which contains many ways to move beyond anthropocentric ways of talking about nonhuman nature, including using they/them pronouns for nonhuman animals, especially those of an unspecified gender (although the extent to which gender, as a social construct, should apply to any nonhuman animals is also pointed out as debatable).

Sexual and gender diversity in non-human nature is also commonly drawn upon to argue that LGB(T+) identities are 'normal' and 'natural'; in a way using the existence of LGB(T+) non-human animals as one of the ways in which LGB(T+) humans can be legitimised. As one person that I interviewed stated: "I mean, there are lots of queer animals. And when we hear that, we are amazed, like what? Are there queer animals? Yeah, because it's normal. We just made it abnormal" (Interview 4). This can represent a nice response to years of homophobia and social exclusion on the basis of homosexuality being 'unnatural', and the person that I interviewed made it clear that this is just one amongst many arguments that can be used to legitimise sexual and gender diversity. Arguing for acceptance and justice on the basis of it being 'natural' or 'normal', however, can also be a tricky practice. As Cuboniks states in *The Xenofeminist Manifesto* (2018):

"Anyone who's been deemed 'unnatural' in the face of reigning biological norms, anyone who's experienced injustices wrought in the name of natural order, will realise the glorification of 'nature' has nothing to offer us – the queer and trans among us, the differently abled, as well as those that have suffered discrimination due to pregnancy or duties connected to child-rearing".

People continue to point to examples in nature to justify and validate, for example, patriarchal community structures, racism, gender roles and stereotypes, animal agriculture, and selfishness/greed. To me, an argument for something on the basis of its existence in 'nature' should be treated with scepticism, as the blurb for *The Xenofeminist Manifesto* explains:

"Biology is not destiny. Injustice should not simply be accepted as 'the way things are'. This is the starting point for *The Xenofeminist Manifesto*, a radical attempt to articulate a feminism fit for the twenty-first century.

...the manifesto seeks to uproot forces of repression that have come to seem inevitable – from the family, to the body, to the idea of gender itself.

If nature is unjust, change nature!" (Cuboniks, 2018).

As such, there are two ways in which people related queerness to non-human nature: using queerness in non-human nature to deconstruct and delegitimise social norms, and using queerness in non-human nature to legitimise LGB(T+) identities as a normal way of being. The latter example, however, has been criticised within some queer, feminist literature. Science and society ignored the existence of queerness within non-human nature for years, and is able to pick and choose what is deemed 'normal' and 'abnormal', legitimising exclusions and injustices in the process. From a social justice perspective, I therefore prefer to take the use of queerness as a means of deconstructing, questioning, and delegitimising norms within human society. In this way, we can both question and celebrate ways of being regardless of whether they exist in non-human nature or not. Rather than looking to non-human nature to justify human normality, we can then instead look to nature to celebrate diversity, abnormality and beyond-human ways of being.

An example of this that I learned about during interviews was the radical faerie bonobo gatherings, in which people are invited to "shed their human shell" (Folleterre, 2021) and live as a community of bonobos for five days. The person that I interviewed spoke about how bonobos are chosen because they live in matriarchal, polyamorous communities, and so living as a bonobo can inspire people to change the ways that they live in their daily lives (Interview 5). Similarly, another way in which queerness was related to non-human nature was through the use of queerness to question what it means to be human. One interviewee explained their perspective on this:

"What I think that's very important about the queer movement is that they put loose... een losse schroef, you say in Dutch, but loose screws, loosely translated. Very fundamental things, like, what is a human? For me, my queerness is about how do we define the notion of human in terms of gender, in terms of sexuality? But for me, that also goes beyond that. It also can go beyond, what queerness, what identity, or me, can mean or be. So we also had with queer is not a manifesto for instance, it's an example of this, it was called 'woof woof' and we wanted to let people experiment how it was to be a dog. And that sounds very absurd, of course, but actually it's not

because... this night was inspired by a philosopher called Eva Meijer and she wrote a book about the rights of animals basically. And she also said we should start with language, we should not call them animals but human animals and non-human animals” (Interview 6).

The book referred to by Eva Meijer is called *Dierentalen* (Meijer, 2016), or *Animal Languages* in English. Meijer writes about the many ways in which different animals use language, such as how dolphins call each other by name and how prairie dogs can warn others about dangerous humans by describing the colours of their hair and clothing. She then uses this to question the perceived linguistic divide between humans and non-human animals. The Queer is Not a Manifesto event, inspired by Meijer, invited people to “become an animal” in order to “protest the hierarchy in which human-animals are superior to all other creatures” (Queer is Not a Manifesto, 2021). Using different methods, such as performance art, they demonstrate that “to become an animal is a queer practice which centres communication through body and energy”. In both the radical faerie bonobo workshops and the Queer Is Not a Manifesto workshops, embodying other species of animal is used to demonstrate and learn different ways of relating to each other. These workshops show how thinking queerly enables us to move beyond binaries, including the human/nonhuman binary, and in doing so to question speciesist hierarchies.

“It is categories in the mind and guns in their hands which keep us enslaved”
The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions

These sentiments also arose during the queer utopias workshops; for the ‘Postcards From the Future’ exercise, one person wrote from a future in which they do not have to put a label on either their gender or their species (Workshop 1). Another person described a utopia in which they could transform their body into the body of different animals (Workshop 2, Group 2). During the second workshop, one group cited the “hyper separation between man and nature”, and the resulting superiority of man over nature, as the reason for the current environmental crisis (Workshop 2, Group 1). Hierarchies were again talked about in terms of human dominance over non-human animals and nature. One group mentioned the need to move on from anthropocentric worldviews and speciesism:

“...connected to like capitalism, racism, patriarchy, is anthropocentrism... saying that human intelligence is considered the only intelligence, or like a superior intelligence, and this is why we slaughter animals, or (why) we don't care about their extinction or we don't consider them as equally righteous entities and beings on the planet” (Workshop 2, Group 1).

The same group later talked about the need to reconnect with the land, and with non-human nature, in order to deconstruct the “violent hierarchy” which places humans over non-humans. During the first workshop, one person wrote that for

their queer utopia to come into existence, people need to start thinking and acting like non-humans (and non-adults) have the same agency and decision-making power as (adult) humans (Workshop 1).

Similarly, whilst in the fantasy dreaming stage of the queer utopias workshops, (as I mentioned and discussed briefly in Chapter 2), people also talked about multispecies communities as part of their utopias. When brainstorming key words that describe and explain their utopia, one person said “I think it would be important to acknowledge that we live in multispecies worlds. So multi species co-living could be another keyword” (Workshop 2, Group 1). People discussed how multispecies communities could operate in a way that does not see humans as dominant over animals. One group talked about a permaculture farm system in which the animals, such as sheep and cows, are also seen as farmers (rather than ‘livestock’ or ‘pets’, for example). These animals maintain the farm by grazing the grass and fertilising the land with their manure, and acknowledging them as farmers helps in viewing them as equal members of the farm community. The concept of multispecies communities again reflected a desire to deconstruct human/nonhuman and nature/culture binaries and hierarchies between species.

The desire for multispecies communities relates to more-than-human conviviality by showing how people’s utopian dreams of community extend beyond the human. The word ‘convivial’ translates to ‘living with’; a more-than-human conviviality therefore specifies the need to also live alongside those that are not human. Although this was often talked about with regard to non-human animals, such as the example of the cow and sheep farmers given above, it was also spoken about in terms of non-sentient beings, or parts of non-human nature that would not normally be seen as ‘alive’. During the ‘Postcards From the Future’ exercise, one person wrote a postcard to themselves from the Natisone river in Italy, which is drying up due to climate change. The postcard read:

“The human history and the past caused my slow death, my present, and the fact that I have no future. I am slowly dying and I, too, might be dead tomorrow. I say ‘I too’ because our present and future is so intertwined. Our life and death force is entangled and not distinct at all. In a world where rivers are dying, oceans suffocating, forests burning, and species getting extinct in this very moment, how do humans expect to have a future?” (Workshop 2).

Through giving the river a voice, this person described the way in which all things are entangled, and how the concept of multispecies communities can extend even beyond the common conception of ‘species’ – in this imagination of the future, the river, too, is part of the community.

As well as indirectly referring to hierarchies through discussions on multispecies communities, deconstructing binaries, and striving for less separation, hierarchies and anti-hierarchical normative politics were also explicitly discussed. When asked of the relationship between queerness and non-human nature, one of the answers that arose was that they are related through dominance; the people, institutions,

and systems that are dominating and harming non-human nature are the same as those that are dominating and harming queer people (Interview 8). The person above who spoke of using queerness to question what it means to be human, who helped organise the ‘woof woof’ workshops inspired by the work of Eva Meijer, expanded on how this related to their vision for solving the environmental crisis, explaining that:

“...we are living in narrative that has consequences, environmentally also. Living in a society in which certain identities are dominant, but those identities are also ideas, and as long as we keep living according to those ideas, we contribute to exploitation and destruction of entities, of living things, of creatures or however you want to call it. And I think that's a little bit of the root of how to change it is, for instance, in being a dog, like imagining different ideas of what it can mean to be human and to at least try to have different power structures. Yeah, you know, the non-hierarchical thinking. I think it's very important to keep thinking about that” (Interview 6).

In ecological terms, non-hierarchical thinking could result in moving from relations of domination to relations of interconnectivity; respecting the interconnected existence of a plurality of beings, worlds, and ideas. Moving beyond binary and hierarchal thinking means that seeing difference doesn't have to result in separation, alienation, and domination. Instead, through the acknowledgement of queer fluidity over time and space, we can recognise and respect a more radical relationality, in which the ‘individual’ and the multispecies community are inextricably connected.

“The faggots’ fantasies are about love and sex and solidarity. The men’s fantasies are about control and domination and winning.”

The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions

In people’s queer utopias, moving beyond binaries of both man/woman and human/nonhuman was captured through dreams of fluidity (as expressed in chapters 2 and 3, regarding fluid perceptions of time and fluidity of expression) and anti-hierarchical thinking, which appears to be specifically environmentally embodied in anti-speciesism (Figure 8). Again, a key aspect of more-than-human conviviality is approaching environmental issues through means that seek to move beyond binary categories of nature/culture and human/nonhuman. Further, through its recognition of the need for social justice, a convivial approach to environmentalism understands how discrimination and oppression can be exercised through hierarchies of difference such as race, gender, class, and species. A more-than-human conviviality, in line with eco- or green anarchist thought (Anonymous, 2014), recognises the need to abolish all hierarchies, including those between humans and nonhumans. Other binaries that were mentioned or discussed briefly during interviews and workshops included mind/body,

reason/emotion, material/immaterial, past/future (the linear conception of time), object/subject, and friend/partner. It appears that the practice of thinking beyond personal fixed identities and categories enables queer people to expand beyond sexuality and gender and begin to question and deconstruct other hierarchal binaries. As the above results show, this can result in a queer deconstruction of the human/nonhuman and nature/culture binaries.

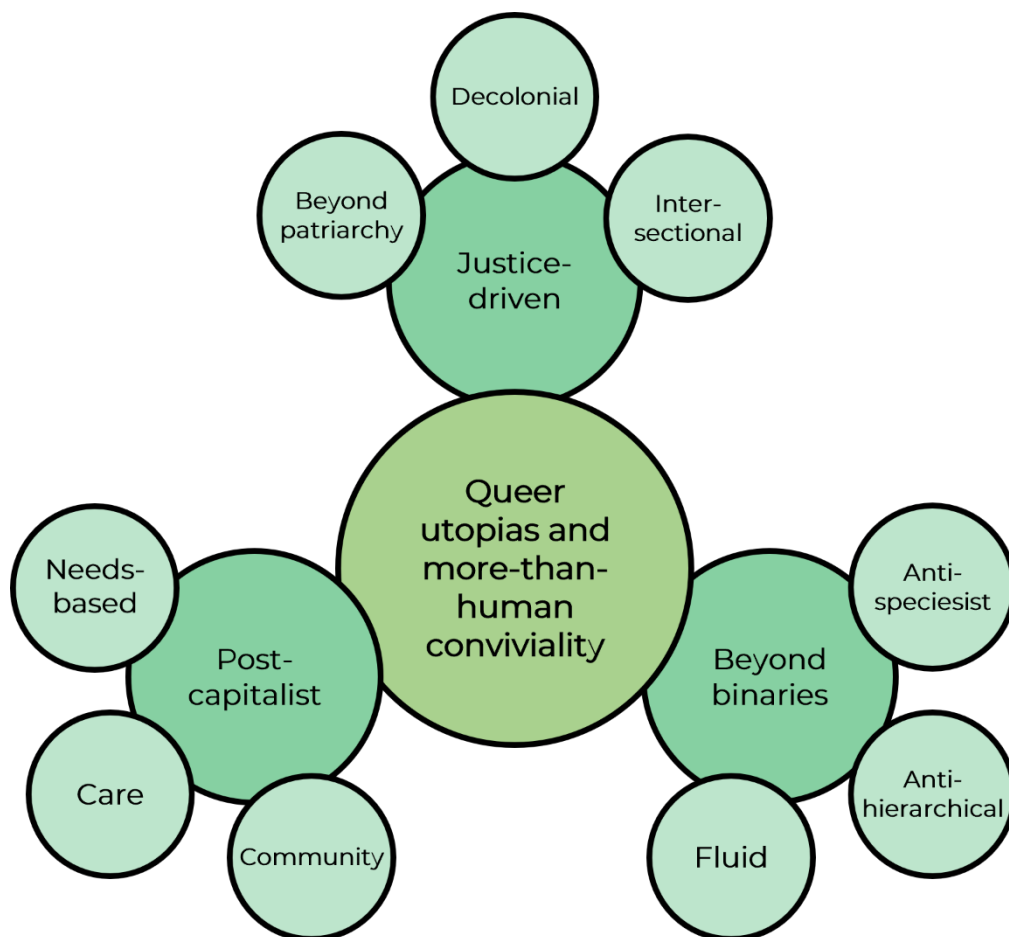


Figure 8 Visualisation of 'beyond binaries' as a shared aspect of queer utopias and more-than-human conviviality (alongside 'post-capitalist' and 'justice-driven' – see previous chapters), and the ways in which this was imagined within people's queer utopias.

The theoretical grounding of much of this thesis was inspired by queer posthumanist theorists who, drawing upon Butler and Foucault's analyses of gender and sexuality, show a means of moving beyond anthropocentric ways of viewing the world, and towards an understanding of humans as part of, rather than separate to, the space and beings around them. As described earlier in this thesis, in their book *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (2007), Karan Barad describes how all matter is entangled in the sense that the individual self does not exist, and by extension

nor does the individual or collective being that has been otherised in contrast to the self. They effectively queer traditional understandings of both humans and non-human nature by making the notion of performativity more inclusive of all matter; in their article 'Nature's Queer Performativity' (2012), Barad uses their knowledge of physics to explain the ways in which classical ontological assumptions do not account for the queer practices and fluid identities of beings such as atoms, lightning bolts, "dinoflagellate animalplant lifeforms", and humans, and in doing so presents a radical reworking of the nature-culture binary which sees culture as something nature does, rather than as two separate entities.

Queer ecology, like the work of Barad, rethinks or 'queers' the meaning of 'human' and subsequently the relationship between humans, other animals, and non-human nature. In *Strange Natures: Futurity, Empathy, and the Queer Ecological Imagination* (Seymour, 2013), Nicole Seymour illustrates how queerness has always been about questioning and rewriting the definition of 'natural', through the rejection of heterosexuality as the only 'natural' or 'authentic' sexual practice. Queer ecology has progressed from this to questioning and rejecting other aspects viewed as 'natural' or 'authentic' to the human, beyond sexual behaviour, and subsequently rejecting both the centrality of the 'natural' to the human experience, and the centrality of the human in the non-human natural world. As Seymour argues in *Strange Natures*, the post-identity culture and rejection of stable, essential identities sparked by queer theory could "lend itself most effectively to empathetic, politicized advocacy for the nonhuman natural world" (Seymour, 2013), by fostering multispecies relationality and empathy. Beyond queer ecological theory, this also appears to be happening in queer practice, as shown by the above descriptions of utopias beyond all binaries – including human/nonhuman binaries – and in people's longing for multispecies communities and a queerer understanding of the human through embodiment of the nonhuman.

As I already considered when discussing the theoretical framework of this thesis, this queering of traditional understandings of both humans and nonhuman nature could also have an impact on the ecological ways of being and acting that queer people consciously adopt or subconsciously internalise. The multiple ways that deconstructed binaries of man/woman collided with the deconstructed binaries of human/nonhuman in people's utopian imaginations further evidences a potential mechanism by which queer resistance to social norms could extend towards action or resistance on behalf of ecology. Or, to continue deconstructing these binaries, towards action or resistance to oppressive systems and structures alongside ecology. At the end of the aforementioned *Ecocore* article from IQECO, the author thanks the non-human contributors to the article, giving a list of all non-human animals "that have been recorded exhibiting either homosexual or transgender behaviour" (Ecocore, 2017). This practice reminded me of an anarchist animal liberation zine that I read recently (Wildfire, 2020) in which activists were depicted paying homage to a dog which fought alongside students during the Chilean student riots. A consideration of non-human animals as comrades in the fight for

environmental justice was also encouraged during the aforementioned anti-speciesist skillshare camp; inspired by this, whilst making a revolutionary-themed 'Guess Who' type game, a friend and I decided to include rhizome networks, magic mushrooms, and Argentinian capybaras (for why, see Goñi, 2021) on our list of favourite revolutionaries.

Should these beyond-binary queer utopias arise, this sort of thinking could extend beyond activism and into all aspects of life, bringing with it the potential of humans seeing nonhuman animals as not just their comrades but also amongst their friends, teachers, co-workers, ancestors, and chosen family. The above descriptions paint queer utopias as fluid constellations of interconnected multispecies communities, in which humans are decentralised and other creatures are recognised as kin. In *Staying With the Trouble* (2016), a book about rethinking and reforming our relationship with other beings as the answer to ecological devastation, posthumanist theorist Donna Haraway describes "making kin" as a process of recognising multispecies symbiosis. Kin are described as:

"...those who have an enduring mutual, obligatory, non-optional, you-can't-just-cast-that-away-when-it-gets-inconvenient, enduring relatedness that carries consequences. I have a cousin, the cousin has me; I have a dog, a dog has me" (Haraway, 2019).

Haraway explains that humans have an ethical duty to make kin with the nonhuman world, and in an interview also touches on her observation that "LGBTQI people from all sections of society... have been (amongst) the most innovative in the United States in terms of building and sustaining really interesting kinds of kin networks, often against great (material) odds" (Haraway, 2019). In the discussion on post-capitalist utopias in chapter 2, I mentioned how queer people have a history of finding ways to create and build intentional communities outside of mainstream legal structures and compulsory heterosexuality. Considering these conversations around multispecies communities and beyond binary utopias, it seems that these creative ways of living could extend towards nonhuman kin too. In fact, referring again to chapter 2, it already does – note the reverse possessive wording of the phrase "cats and their dykes", and it's similarity to the above quote from Donna Haraway.

During the queer utopias workshops, people were asked to brainstorm actions that they would like to take in order to help realise their queer utopia. One idea that came up was to start using "ki/kin pronouns for everything (all beings, sentient and non-sentient)" (Workshop 2). Prior to the workshop, I had already been recently introduced to ki/kin pronouns, which are a set of neopronouns (new pronouns beyond 'he', 'she', 'they', or 'it') that can be used to refer to anything – sentient and non-sentient beings, abstract and concrete nouns. Just as they/them pronouns are seen as a way to move beyond binary divisions of male/female, ki/kin pronouns attempt to go a step further to move linguistically beyond binary divisions of

human/nonhuman, nature/culture, and animate/inanimate. The idea of this is that referring to everything with the same language will shift the way we relate to things around us, making relational divides less dependent on things like gender and species. I have found that using they/them pronouns for people close to me has helped in shifting the way that I relate to people, in that it is less strongly based on gender – meaning that I often feel much less of a relational difference between ‘male-socialised’ and ‘female-socialised’ people in groups in which they/them pronouns are common. Perhaps ki/kin pronouns could do the same for lessening the perceived separation between humans and nonhumans.

This linguistic change of pronouns highlights both the queerness and the conviviality of moving beyond binary ways of thinking. It exemplifies how queer nonbinary utopias can shape anti-hierarchical worldviews, and subsequently prefigure environmentally just futures through posthumanist and anti-speciesist thinking and doing. Throughout this chapter, I have described the ways in which widely-recognised queer nonbinary thinking regarding gender has expanded to other binaries, most notably the human/nonhuman and nature/culture binaries, within people’s queer utopias and normative queer politics. This is also related to the queerness of embracing fluidity, which I have touched on here but described and discussed more in previous chapters, regarding the fluidity of queer time, fluid identities and expressions, and the queer embracement of disharmony and contradiction. In moving beyond all binaries, and embracing fluidity, we can begin to question, address, and deconstruct the hierarchies embedded in these dualisms. Anti-hierarchical thinking, which was advocated for during both interviews and utopias workshops due to the relationship between domination and oppression, also arose in the form of explicit anti-speciesism. To me, this shows how queer utopias beyond all binaries could seek to address anthropocentrism, human exceptionalism, and the human/nonhuman hierarchy not just in theory, but also in the practice of taking action against oppression.

Chapter 5: Utopia exists in the quotidian

Throughout the previous chapters, I have described the LGBT/Q political landscape in the Netherlands and explained, through the themes of ‘post-capitalist’, ‘justice-driven’ and ‘beyond all binaries’, how individuals within this landscape related queerness to more-than-human conviviality. I have also detailed the ways in which these connections arose within people’s queer utopian imaginations, and discussed how these relate to queer ecology and utopian queer theory. In order to better explore how queer utopias imagine environmentally just futures, however, I believe it is necessary to try to understand how queer utopian thinking can influence the ways we choose to be and act in the present. During a queer utopias workshop, in answer to the question ‘what gives you hope?’, someone wrote “utopia exists in the quotidian” (Workshop 2). In other words, utopia, which seems like something grand and impossible, can already be found in people’s everyday practices, and is continuously being realised and re-realised through these practices. In the same way, queer quotidian practices are testament to the potential of queer utopianism (Jones, 2013). As such, the action that queer people want to take, or are already taking, to help realise their utopias can give insight into how environmentally just futures are not just imagined but also realised through queer practices. In the following and final chapter, I will delve into the somewhat more down-to-earth results on queer utopian practice, and use queer and utopian theory to discuss the significance of these results with regard to more-than-human conviviality.

During the ‘Postcards From the Future’ exercise of the queer utopias workshop, people wrote postcards to themselves from future generations, thanking them for the work they are doing in the present to help realise the utopia of the future. This exercise was designed to help people answer the question ‘in what ways are you already embodying your queer utopia?’, and was an individual reflection exercise in which people seemed to really focus and deeply think about what to write or draw. Some people wrote postcards from their future selves, some people from other beings or entities, and some chose to draw instead of write. A selection of postcards can be seen below (Figure 9); not everyone wanted their postcard to be photographed. The exercise was designed to help identify concrete actions, practices, and changes that people have made in their lives to create the world that they want to see. During the third exercise of the workshop, people used guiding questions to brainstorm what they could do more of in the present to help further realise their queer utopia. Many people said afterwards how much they enjoyed these exercise, as it made them appreciate themselves and the things they already do in a way that they hadn’t allowed themselves to see and appreciate before. In writing from the perspective of another person, they saw themselves through new eyes, and saw things in themselves that they find inspiring in others around them.



Hi Clo there, All of space-time
 I'm writing you to thank you for your help. You've shown the world ways of acting that call into question the difference between what we see through of as 'man' or 'woman'. As difficult as it would be to explain Newton the chaos equations of his theory of mechanics, so ~~is~~ is it difficult to describe the many indirect effects that upset his firm thread. Without Genie,

Dear [redacted]
 I am writing this postcard to you while you're listening to "We might be dead tomorrow" during a workshop on queer futures in multispecies worlds. You might wonder how your past belongs to my present, and my present to your future; but if you think about it carefully, this is exactly how things work. The human history and the past ~~is~~ cause of my slow death, my present, and the fact that I have no future. I am slowly dying, and I too, might be dead tomorrow. I say "I, too" because our present and future is so intertwined. Our life and death force is intertwined and not distinct at all. In a world where

things are dying, oceans suffocating, forests burning, and species getting extinct in this very moment, how do humans expect to have a future? My present is your future, my death is a product of climate change might translate to a NO-FUTURE for all. In a context of death, your commitment to my existence and our resistance generates hope. Hope that things might be otherwise, that if we learn to exist otherwise, death will no longer translate to an end but to transformation. Thank you for being by my side, thank you for coming and and and again to my deathbed to tell my story, your story, a shared story. Forever yours
 Karienne river



The patriarchal became a machine to maintain, which ~~is~~ opened up the space necessary to re-imagine our economy. Once nobody was told to marry, or to get a birth or a vote, and we were allowed to exist as we are, we understood that nobody really lives capitalism, all that much when we think about it. I want to thank you for teaching others and giving them the space to be themselves and empowering them to fight for what human beings need rather than what the system they imagined requires of them. Much love

Dear [redacted]
 I'm writing you from a place of hope. A place of awareness. A place where we challenge constructs that don't serve us anymore and invite a new ~~idea~~ ^{idea}. This wouldn't have been possible without your tremendous effort. Without you showing that identity is not fixed, that life can be more than what we think. Your life was the message, the ~~one~~ ^{one} that we needed. Thank you.

Hi beautiful me, ♡
 Thanks for being open to explore new possibilities. Sharing with others the best part of yourself. Not being afraid to try. For exploring your no-label me. Going beyond what you think & others think. Who are you? A question that brings you to the unknown. Thanks for loving everyone. Removing all useless labels and limitations.

And then not seeing a separation anymore between you & the others. No age, no bodies, no beings, no gender, no thoughts, no energy, no separation of all. Thanks for being active, non-stopping, just being, in your own energy. For the respect and trust for all life. And above all for being present.
 With love,
 You

Dear [redacted]
 First, thanks for being open for change and embracing and accepting the developments of yourself and others. Thanks for challenging the heteronormative ways of living and relating to each other, living the unknown, the busy in-between and accepting and understanding (trying) the beauty for "necessity" of all living and non-living species; respecting on your ways of being, your ways of being and relating and challenging yourself. Thanks for dreaming and thinking and with others; putting a lot of energy and mind space into questions of how you communicate and relate and also learn. Thanks for taking your time, being yourself.
 Love from Virginia

That such unity and peace (both within society and ourselves) is possible, because it's not always about large-scale solution, and it doesn't matter that outside our reality there are still people who follow a "traditional" style of life and deem us crazy for dreaming of something better for ourselves. The circus has taught us that freedom is possible if we're willing to work for it, and that people who will support us are just within reach, you just have to learn how to look for them, and love them without fear.
 Sending love from our little family to yours. (back)

[redacted] we've left the circus for a month now, and wanted to write to check in how things are going and to thank you all for the community that we still consider our home, even now that we are away. Living with the circus, traveling around while performing everyday, showcasing to the world how much we love art, being constantly surrounded by a community filled with people ready to give love, aid, built on sincere trust and mutual respect, has helped us so much more we could've imagined. We entered it as skeptic and came out full of love and, especially, hope. We know now (and

Figure 9 A selection of postcards from the future, written by people during workshops.

The final exercise of the workshop was to answer the question 'what can you do to help further realise this utopia?', by brainstorming answers to smaller guiding questions such as: 'what are the drivers helping you to realise this utopia?', 'what cultural changes are needed?', and 'what action could you take on a daily/weekly/yearly timescale to help realise this utopia?'. The two questions which I feel produced some of the most interesting and inspiring answers were 'what gives you hope?' and 'what are the drivers helping you to realise this utopia?'. Some of the answers to 'what gives you hope?' included: moments where I can love myself and my body; people dancing radically differently; friendship; Rojava and Chiapas; queers being open about their queerness; hope is other people; safe and queer spaces; solidarity. Some of the answers to 'what are the drivers helping you to realise this utopia?' included: connection with people and nature; going to the forest, meditation, minimally living happy people (human and nonhuman, individuals and communities); the thought of living by my own definition of happiness, without relying on things, people, or institutions that add nothing to me as a person; friends, community, being in nature, music, books, films, learning from brave people who are doing it; hope, desire, imagination, creativity; chosen family, nature; community; I personally benefit from creating space for people to be queer (and then other people live that too); and stories, books, films, fantasies. A full table with answers to all of the questions can be found in Appendix B.

The things people wrote and discussed during the second and third exercises of the workshop, and the actions that they are taking or planning to take, is testament to this idea that utopia exists in the quotidian. Some of the answers and themes that most stood out to me included: changing pronouns to break binaries; shifting and subverting social norms; building beyond-human communities and emotional solidarity; educating themselves and others on social justice; and making hegemonic narratives less pervasive through dreaming and storytelling. At the end of their speech at the 2022 Reclaim Pride protest in Amsterdam, artist and activist Devika Chotoe reminded the crowd:

"We must therefore not forget that the personal is also highly political and that transformation is a daily practice. So never underestimate your own power and agency to create the most tiniest of change every day. Every step towards a more just future, whether it's a giant leap or a baby step, is a step in the right direction" (Chotoe, 2022).

When I reflect back on the workshops, I think about the ways in which some of the things that people discussed and dreamed about during the workshop were already present. I have always had performance anxiety, and find giving presentations and leading workshops highly stressful. Both workshops, however, were filled with such caring, understanding people that I felt safe to make mistakes, be 'unprofessional', and was less self-conscious about presenting in a certain way. After the workshop, we were offered donation-based, dumpster-dived, vegan food at ACU, surrounded by posters and flyers for various political groups,

demonstrations, and other workshops. The sense of emotional solidarity, community, subversion of social norms, mutual education, and of course dreaming, was already strong.

Some people also said, both during and after the workshop, that they found the workshop inspiring and motivating, especially the due to the format of the three exercises: collectively dreaming about utopia, followed by thinking about how you already embody that utopia, and finally brainstorming together how you can further realise your utopia. I was very happy to see how the workshop, which was both inspired and directed by literature and theory, brought people together in a way that created an atmosphere of collective empowerment. I am not saying this in self-celebration, although I was pleased with how well the workshop was received, but rather to highlight the power created by a group of genderqueer people given three hours to think as idealistically as they can. As Muñoz writes in *Cruising Utopia*, “Shouting down utopia is an easy move” (Muñoz, 2016). It is very easy to bash political idealism as naïve, useless, or even “childish”, as one of the workshop groups noted (Workshop 2, Group 2). This group talked about how children often have a strong sense of injustice, which seems to get lost somewhere along the way (I remember many times as a child complaining “that’s not fair!”, before being told repeatedly that “life isn’t fair”), and then adults fighting for social justice are dismissed as idealistic and childish. In queer utopian dreaming sessions, however, “childish” idealism can flourish.

Related to this, as I already mentioned, during the second workshop there was a strong recognition of the power of stories to create change. One person talked about their job writing children’s books and how, despite the limited freedom given to them by their boss, they want to try and write subversive stories that do not conform entirely to social norms and expectations (Workshop 2, Group 2). This conversation stemmed from discussing the anti-capitalist nature of the second-hand book swap libraries in the streets, and how “books and stories and knowledge and stuff should be free”. The group then talked about how they would like to do more of their own storytelling, tell their own stories, and make more room for dreaming and imagination in their lives. People also mentioned imagination, creativity, creating more, being creative, stories, books, films, and fantasies during the third exercise of the workshop, when brainstorming what they could do, or focus on, to help realise their queer utopias. Stories and storytelling have a unique power to create transformative change; when imagining new stories and narratives, people begin to open up to new possibilities, which is a fundamental part of inspiring themselves and other people to work towards creating a world that they want to see.

Similarly, people also said that they are realising their queer utopias by trying to shift social norms and create new ways of thinking, acting, presenting, and living. This is a fundamental aspect of queerness, although also something that many people mentioned wanting to practice more without being held back by fear, the strength of existing social norms, and even their own socialisation and inner voice:

“Sometimes I see other people expressing really, to me, experimental in a gendered way. And then I'm like, what the fuck? Wow, that they dared to do that. And in the beginning I felt scared about even doing nail polish, and now I feel some things blocking me from expressing me in a certain way. I don't have the feeling it's society that is doing it, but it's a lot kind of me doing it on myself. I would like to overcome those things” (Workshop 2, Group 2).

To counteract this, some people talked about prioritising things like experimentation, exploration, and playfulness in their lives in order to actively resist being sucked into conforming to the status quo. As well as doing this for themselves, they also expressed wanting to inspire other people in the same way that they feel inspired by those who are outwardly expressive and experimental in their queerness. In these queer utopias, weirdness and abnormality are celebrated and desired, because they represent the possibility that everything could be different. These weird and wonderful possibilities can often be discovered through storytelling, exploration, experimentation, and playfulness.

**“The women who love women wrote a song for the faggots. It was called,
Anything you do that the men don't like is ok by us.”
*The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions***

I found the discussions on storytelling, exploration, and experimentation during the queer utopias workshops to be particularly exciting, because they point to a recognition of the role of utopian dreaming in creating transformative change. In the first queer utopias workshop, during the fantasy stage of the dreaming exercise, I overheard one of the groups discussing the work of the science fiction author Ursula K Le Guin. I didn't hear what was said, and unfortunately this conversation was not recorded, but regardless I thought it was noteworthy that the group were discussing a science fiction/fantasy author – especially this one in particular. In a documentary about the life and work of Ursula K Le Guin, she discusses the use of magic in the series ‘Earthsea’, and talks about the magic of new worlds and ideas being made real and tangible through storytelling (Curry, 2018). Writers, especially perhaps science fiction and fantasy writers, can do magic with words by naming things that did not exist before. In Ursula's own words: “I call it Earthsea, and there it is! It exists!” (Curry, 2018). The power and impact of fiction writing goes beyond escapism; it influences the thoughts, cultures, and behaviours of people in the ‘real’ world. When Ursula K Le Guin first started writing, science fiction and fantasy were both heavily male-dominated genres, and at first her books also fitted this trope. Soon, however, she started to question power, domination, privilege, and gender dynamics in her writing, and invited her readers to do the same in the real world around them. As one narrator said during the documentary about her books: “If a world is dreamable, maybe it can be dreamed into being” (Curry, 2018).

José Esteban Muñoz describes queerness as “...the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality” (Muñoz , 2016). Queerness, in its ever-reaching futurity and reiterating realisation of desire, here becomes synonymous with horizon-like descriptions of utopia. As I touched upon in the chapter on justice-led utopias, queer utopianism is not about discovering or creating the one true and universally ideal way of living or structuring society, but rather recognising the radical potentiality of constantly making and remaking the world into something new. By very definition, a queer utopia could never have prescriptive or narrow boundaries – what would be queer about that? Further, a queer ‘utopia’ would perhaps not even recognise a binary divide between so-called utopia and dystopia, but rather acknowledge that living as a complex and disharmonious species on a complex and disharmonious planet is not only inevitable, but more desirable than attempting simplicity and harmony. So what, then, is the value of queer utopianism, especially to environmental justice? To me, it is about queer lives and queer stories enabling people to, time after time, recognise the potential to change the world into something new, to question and deconstruct social norms, to push at the boundaries of convention, and dream new ways into being.

This sort of utopian thinking has been widely recognised to be of importance to transformative thinking, politics, and change (Johnson, 2002; Koning and Dijk, 2021). Utopian dreaming can not only promote critical thinking, but takes this a step further by motivating people to create action for social change (Fernando et al., 2018). This, of course, is significant to environmental justice and transformative environmental change, both as an antidote to climate doom and despair (which is a recipe for apathy and inaction), and to inspire people to critically engage with social and environmental idealism. In doing so, people’s imaginations can open up to possibilities that are more in line with their needs and values, enabling them to engage with or promote action that also aligns with these things. In his book *From What Is to What If: Unleashing the Power of Imagination to Create the Future We Want* (Hopkins, 2019), Rob Hopkins writes about how imagination, defined as “the ability to look at things as if they could be otherwise”, is one of the most fundamental tools that we have to envision, create, and enact better futures; again, the idea that “if a world is dreamable, maybe it can be dreamed into being”. Hopkins wrote *From What Is to What If* from his experience as the founder of the Transition Towns movement, which is an international, but community-led, movement campaigning and working towards environmentally and socially just local communities and systems. He stresses the importance of local communities using the power of imagination to change their framing of what is possible and use these dreams to help shape their present reality.

Last summer, I attended an environmental activist skillshare camp in the UK which had a programme full of workshops and discussions for people to attend. One of the workshops was about storytelling, and the power of reclaiming and rewriting dominant narratives for social and environmental change. During the workshop, we got into small groups and were asked to think of something that is widely

accepted as normal and unquestionable in society, and tell an origin story about it in a way that would make it seem silly, arbitrary, or useless. The group that I was in chose to mock the judicial system, and although I can't remember the full details of our story, I do remember that it involved a hungry young boy stealing apples from a wealthy landowner, who's soul then became entrapped in the apples when he decided use his power to punish the boy for theft. There was also something about the silly wigs that judges wear, but unfortunately I can't remember. The point is that many environmental activists – I also recently saw a storytelling workshop on the programme of a Dutch climate skillshare – are already aware of how the power of imagination can be used to inspire social change. This reclaiming and rewriting of social narratives, although the focus may be on environmental change, is in itself a very queer practice.

Queerness has a long history of rewriting social narratives, and the legacy of this was evident during the queer utopias workshops. One of the most common actions that people identified as a way in which they already embody their queer utopia was through the subversion of gender norms, such as dressing in a way that does not stereotypically conform to the gender that they are most commonly perceived as, or using different pronouns to the ones that they were assigned at birth. Gender-neutral they/them (or in Dutch *die/diens* or *hen/hun*) pronouns were used especially to question, challenge, deconstruct, and disrupt binary thinking. One person wrote from a utopia where we “challenge constructs that don't serve us” (Workshop 2) – referring here to social constructs such as gender. Another wrote: “Thanks for... not seeing a separation between you and the others. No age, no bodies, no beings, no genders...” (Workshop 1). And a different person: “Without you, wouldn't be able to feel so good about not being able to put a label on my gender and species” (Workshop 1). With this last quote, we see how some people's subversion of gender binaries also extended to a subversion of the human/non-human binary.

Gender nonconformity and subversion was also identified as a way in which people are questioning and disrupting heteronormative ways of relating to themselves and to others. One person wrote: “Thanks for challenging the heteronormative ways of being and relating to each other, living the unknown, the blurry in-betweens...” (Workshop 1). By embracing the “blurry in-betweens”, people no longer felt trapped in a cisheteronormative framework of how to look, think, and act. Another person wrote that “not having to doubt myself because of societal norms gives me more energy to take better care of myself, the beings around me, and to keep striving for justice and autonomy” (Workshop 1). This person describes how, in their utopian vision, not having to conform to social norms such as gender gives them more energy, because normally the doubt around social norms (such as questioning your own reality or normality, feelings of social exclusion, or having to explain yourself to others) takes a lot of energy. In their utopia, they use this extra energy to take care of themselves and other beings, and fight for social justice. In queer spaces, many of the norms that are aligned with heteronormativity, such as

those based on gendered appearance, body standards, and ways of relating to the 'opposite sex', have been eradicated or at least lessened. By living in their utopic "blurry in-betweens", perhaps these people already have more time and energy to focus on care and social justice.

"There is more to be learned from wearing a dress for a day, than there is from wearing a suit for a lifetime."

The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions

The previous three chapters have shown many other ways in which queer utopias offer new stories to tell about more-than-human convivial futures. These stories represent people's visualisations of what they want their worlds to be, and the potential ways that these visions could become embodied in reality. In 'post-capitalist utopias', we see the values of care and community being prioritised in societies organised around meeting people's physical and emotional needs, both humans and nonhumans, beyond the traditional nuclear family structure. We see fluid and queer perceptions of time deconstructing traditional narratives of success, and stories of the body and self-worth being told that no longer promote shame. In 'justice-led utopias', we see stories of resistance to unjust and oppressive structures being centralised, and narratives of solidarity strengthening ties between intersectional struggles. Here, queerness and queer utopianism also opens up space for a plurality of different, even contradictory, stories to be told. In 'utopias beyond all binaries', narratives are shifted away from hierarchal dualisms and moved towards embracing fluidity, made more tangible through anti-hierarchical and anti-speciesist ontologies. In these beyond binary narratives, human and more-than-human beings are imagined and spoken of as kin, and envisioned to live, work, dream, and grow together in symbiotic multispecies communities. Collectively discussing and envisioning these idealistic futures and alternative worlds gave people a feeling of hope and empowerment during and after the workshops, despite at the same time engaging in critical and at times emotionally heavy political conversations.

Despite this sense of empowerment there was also, as already discussed, a strong recognition during workshops that creating transformative change and striving for utopia is not all within the power or responsibility of individual people. During the final exercise of the workshop, the questions about how to realise these queer utopias also included 'what structural changes (changes to big institutions and the way society is run) are needed?', 'what cultural changes are needed?', and 'what are the obstacles holding you back from realising this utopia?'. Some of the answers to these questions highlighted the structural roots of the social and environmental issues that people were looking to address, including: stop neoliberalism mindset; no government, or other forms of command and controlling hierarchies; rethink entirely our political, legal, economic, educational, punitive, relational systems; (end) the focus on private property and increasing wealth; (we need a) political revolution; end all oppression; decolonisation;

dismantle patriarchy, sexism, homophobia, shift the way we perceive “otherness”; destroy the idea of individual and collective “property”; and dismantling hetero-patriarchal, White supremacist, colonialist, anthropocentric views. Just like the ‘critique phase’ of the utopian dreaming exercise, these answers came with a sense of increasing hopelessness and overwhelm, which ran in parallel to the feelings of excitement, empowerment, and inspiration that came from utopian dreaming.

This doesn’t mean all is lost, and that queer utopian dreaming cannot bring about transformative change, but more that utopian dreaming could become hopeless and draining if it stays just that – a dream. An essential aspect of queer utopianism is therefore that it goes beyond the “rejection of the here and now” (Muñoz, 2016), and insists on the building and rebuilding of new worlds, even (or especially) if this requires the destruction of the old. In the prologue to *The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions*, Vider (2013) is quoted describing the queer communes of North America:

“The communes it seemed were always on the brink of falling apart, changing members, or moving – and in some cases, they had already collapsed. And yet this very instability, impossibility, might also account, in part, for the commune’s attractiveness – it was always waiting to be tried again, modified, perfected.”

Queerness and utopia should both be understood not as nouns, but verbs – something one has to constantly strive for, become, live. Like the North American queer communes, they should be eternally changing and evolving, with their instability and impermanence seen as a strength rather than a weakness, buzzing with potentiality and experimentation. When seen in this way, they also both become active; in keeping with the linguistic theme that seems to have arisen throughout this report, perhaps, like queer, utopia could also be thought of as a verb. I think now of the quote from Angela Davis which is printed on the bookmark that I have been using throughout this research: “You have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world. And you have to do it all the time” (Davis, 2014); a utopic act is an active and ongoing reach towards a transformative future.

“Suddenly the men, armed with categories in their minds and guns in their hands, appeared at the door. (...) The queens... armed with their handbags and their high heels, let out a collective shriek heard round the world and charged the men. (...) The faggots, seeing smoke, cautiously came out of hiding and joyously could hardly believe what they saw. Elegant, fiery, exuberant queens were tearing up the street, building barricades, delivering insults, daring the men. So they joined the queens and for three days and three nights the queens and their friends told the men, in every way they knew how, to fuck off.”

The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions

At the end of *The Faggots and Their Friends*, the faggots, queens, women who love women, and fairies rise up and take action against the men. They free a queen who was locked up in “Ramrod’s camp for the undesirables” (Mitchell, 1977), “play havoc”

and create chaos in the streets, and plan for the coming revolution. They dream of a world without categories, where they can live and love surrounded by plants and trees and running streams. Although written in the 70s and in parts outdated, the critiques of capitalism, patriarchy, and assimilation into social norms, alongside idealistic environmental themes, in *The Faggots and Their Friends* reflects the queer utopias that continue to be dreamed of today. The chapters of 'post-capitalism', 'justice-driven', and 'beyond all binaries' that I used to structure this thesis are testament to the continued relevance of these themes, and the way in which they are embedded in both queerness and more-than-human conviviality. As shown in the quote above, *The Faggots and Their Friends* ends in revolution and subversion. It is a queer utopian classic that empowers and inspires by expressing the revolutionary queer spirit through fantasy storytelling, and shows how opening up our imagination to queer utopian thinking is a step towards realising political change. Both there, and now here, queer utopianism is seen as an act of radical potentiality that opens the door to worlds with which more-than-human conviviality is congruent.

My interpretation and account of this research might seem uncritical and perhaps theatrical, especially given the typical framing of academic research. It is true that I didn't pay very close attention to the ways in which the normative politics and utopian imaginations that I analysed showed futures that could be interpreted as incongruent with more-than-human conviviality. One possibility that immediately comes to mind is that the value of self-expression, especially fluidity of self-expression, has the potential to result in an increased consumption of clothing and costume that could become horribly entangled with fast fashion. This was addressed in part earlier through the idea of community clothes-swaps, but of course not all queer desires for fluidity will collide with queer desires for post-capitalism and community, and vice versa. Regardless, to me it makes sense that a narrative about queer utopianism, the double horizon, is so blatant in its optimistic idealism. I also think there should be more room for this sort of idealism within academic science; more room for utopianism, queerness, stories, and hope. Recently, I was working at an academic conference on sustainability, and had the luck of being scheduled to moderate a session on the use of storytelling in sustainability research, transformative change, and the subversion of societal processes. Towards the end of the session, one of the presenters stated that "re-enchantment is resistance (Dr Sarah Royston, SCORAI-ERSCP-WUR Conference 2023). Prior to undertaking this research, I wouldn't have fully understood their statement; now, I hope this sentiment is threaded throughout my thesis.

Queer utopian thinking can influence the ways we choose to be and act in the present by re-enchanting the future, giving space to radical potentiality, and inviting people to subvert their normality. In other words, the very act of dreaming up an ideal future gives it more potential, and uncovers a multiplicity of smaller steps that could be taken towards realising that future. More-than-human convivial futures can be realised through queer practices, such as caring for more-than-human animals as fellow kin and learning from our kin to form new social

relations. Returning to utopia in the quotidian, these ideals can be reached for every day through practices such as using ki/kin pronouns, learning of more-than-human ways of being and relating, and engaging in practices that strengthen our connection to the beyond-human world. These are just a few examples of the numerous ways in which queer utopias imagine environmentally just futures, and how these can be, and are being, realised all around us in the present. Queer utopianism also highlights the environmental importance of noticing who's stories are being told, what narratives have become stagnant and embedded in our social relations, and empowering queer utopian stories to destabilise these narratives through resistance and subversion.

CONCLUSION

Exploring the ways in which queer utopias imagine more-than-human convivial futures has taken me on a journey from shouting chants at alternative pride demos to discovering the queer political landscape, from conversations with passionate activists to collective genderqueer dreaming sessions, from feeling stuck between revolutions to recognising the daily revolution of the queer spirit. The goal of this study was to uncover the connections between queerness, queer utopias, and more-than-human conviviality, in order to understand the extent to which queer utopianism is relevant to, or congruent with, more-than-human conviviality. Following interviews and workshops, three main themes arose to structure the myriad of ways that more-than-human convivial futures were envisioned in the normative politics and queer utopian imaginations of the people that participated in this research. These three themes were: post-capitalist utopias, justice-driven utopias, and utopias beyond all binaries. Given the abstract nature of these themes, each was dissected into three more tangible sub-themes; 'post-capitalist' was represented by care, community, and needs-based organising, 'justice-driven' by intersectional, beyond patriarchy, and decolonial, and 'beyond all binaries' by fluid, anti-hierarchical, and anti-speciesist. Following this analysis, I can conclude that both queerness and queer utopias are highly congruent with more-than-human conviviality, and that they share many important elements, foci, and goals. Environmentalists with a beyond-human convivial approach to transformative change would therefore benefit from an intentional embracement of queer academia, such as queer ecology and queer utopianism.

Of the eight shared features of queer utopias and more-than-human conviviality discussed in this report, two especially stood out as aspects of queerness that I think could be better adopted by environmental academia: moving beyond all binaries, and resisting capitalism by prioritising (more-than-human) communities and community care. Within queer utopias, embracing fluidity and deconstructing commonly held binaries of man/woman, emotional/rational, nature/culture, and human/nonhuman, to name just a few, resulted in a move towards anti-hierarchical thinking and behaviour, which were also often embodied in anti-speciesist ontologies and activism. Although the importance of resisting nature/culture and human/nonhuman dualisms is becoming increasingly acknowledged within environmental academia, other binaries such as the gender binary continue to be commonly perpetuated in this field. Given the hierarchical nature of the gender binary, many people therefore continue to uphold patriarchal structures by maintaining and enforcing this binary, to the detriment of both humans and more-than-human nature. The second recommendation is for a greater focus on, and understanding of, the importance of community and community care beyond the traditional nuclear family structure. As well as being a post-capitalist act of resistance, the extension of care towards the collective can also foster greater beyond-human empathy and recognition of humans as part of a wider multispecies community.

Another takeaway from this study is that the importance of queer utopian thinking and living should be more widely recognised and embraced in the fight for transformative change, within the realms of both academia and activism. The imagining and envisioning of alternative futures can help people rediscover their child-like idealism and hope, and empower them to strive towards this newly-possible horizon. Queerness, in its eternal struggle against social norms, convention, and uniformity, is utopia's ultimate partner; together they seek to create better futures by continuously looking to ways in which we can question our lives in the present. Queer utopic stories enable people to, time after time, recognise their potential to change the world into something new, to question and deconstruct social norms, to push at the boundaries of convention, and dream new ways into being. Further, both queer utopianism and more-than-human conviviality are practices through which we can resist patriarchal capitalism and build a better world for all human and nonhuman, sentient and non-sentient, beings. This is something that I believe could be better acknowledged and adopted by both environmental and LGBT+ movements, as well as academia in general. Queer utopianism creates space not only to long for a better future, but to also feel its potential in the present, to dream and then enact "new ways of being in the world and ultimately new worlds" (Muñoz, 2016). It is an active rejection of social norms, a subversion of the status quo, and an antidote to assimilation that allows us to taste transformative change on the horizon and refuse to settle for half-hearted reforms.

"The strong women told the faggots that there are two important things to remember about the coming revolutions. The first is that we will get our asses kicked. The second is that we will win."

The Faggots and Their Friends Between Revolutions

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APPENDIX A

Queer Fungi: Why Mushrooms Are Gay

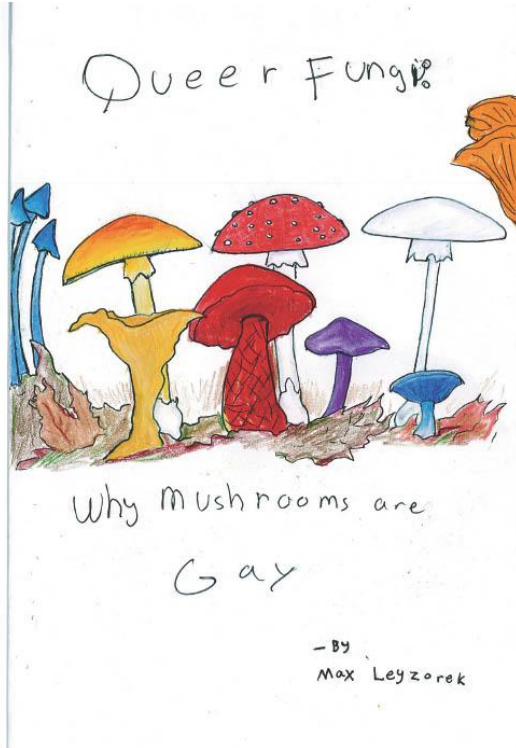



Table of Contents

1. Intro
2. Art (Illustration)
3. Gender as a Fungal Construct
4. Art (Illustration)
5. Toxicity
6. Art (Illustration)
7. Community
8. Art (Illustration)
9. Diversity
10. End

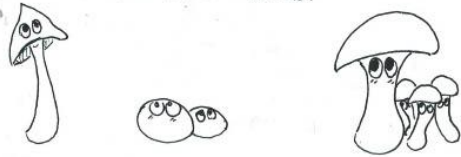


⑧ Diversity

From thousands of genders to none, with every color of the rainbow on display, I truly think that mushrooms can be — no, already are, a queer/LGBT icon.

They are beautiful and deadly, strong and fragile, they endure through unity and togetherness and embody success despite their multitude of diverse natures and ways of being.

In short, mushrooms are a neat place to look for inspiration regarding the LGBTQA community and humanity's future as a whole.



⑨ Introduction

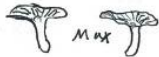
Welcome!

If you picked this up because you saw the brightly colored cover and assumed it was an ID booklet, you may need to look elsewhere.

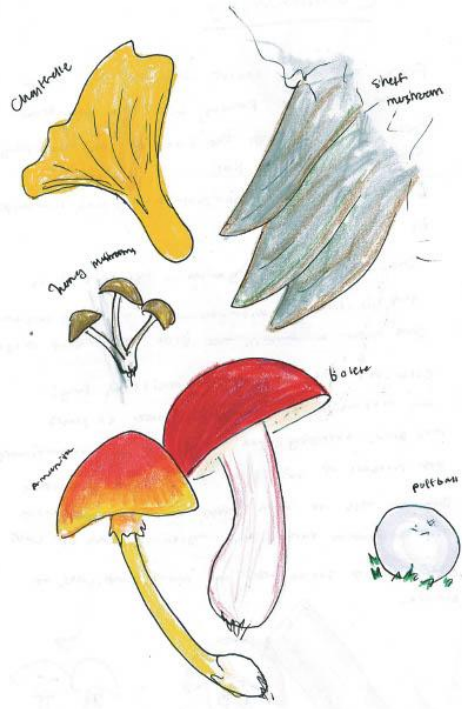
If, however, you are here because you identify as one of the LGBTQA, and/or love mushrooms as well, this may end up being just your kind of thing.

This booklet, or zine, is intended to spark interest and curiosity on the topic at hand. It is a project I took on personally as an LGBTQA person who loves mushrooms.

That being said, anyone is welcome to read this, and while this project itself is small, I hope it can inspire bigger ones with more potential in the long run.



⑩



② Community

From the 1950s secret clubs, to the most recent gay pride parades, LGBT folk have found their way through the cracks of an unaccepting society for a long time.

Community is very important here, and likewise in fungi.

The largest living organism in the world in fact, is literally underground as a honey mushroom grew under a forest in the Blue Mountains of Oregon.

Close to home, yet rarely considered, fungi are responsible for decomposing matter so plants can grow, supplying food to wildlife, and communicating over thousands of miles below ground with each other.

They are able to warn others, and ~~share~~ relay useful information through their mycelium, much as LGBT people develop secret codes, and founded secret clubs, to survive.



②



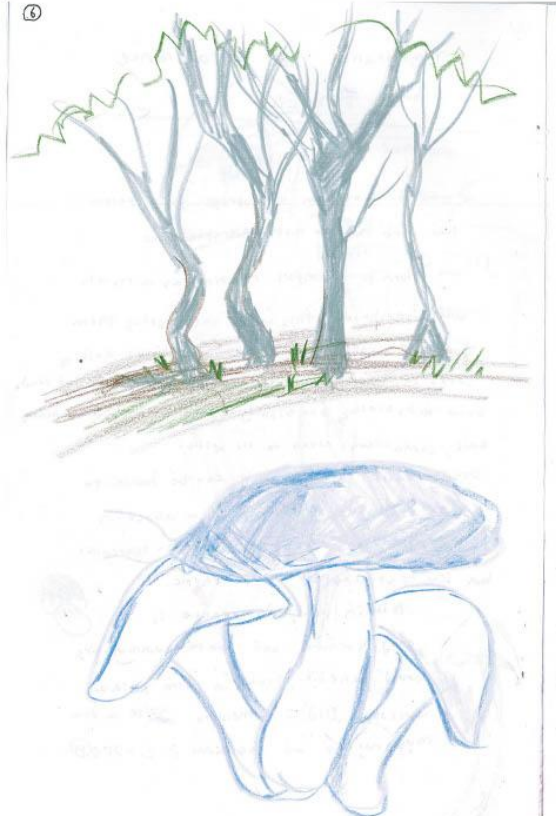
③ Gender as a Fungal Construct

While it may seem generally accepted to come up with one of two ~~sex~~ gender identities when inquiring after a pet or a child, this falls very short in the mushroom kingdom. As a whole, mushrooms have over 20,000 genders/sexes, with one in particular standing out. Schizophyllum commune has 23,000 sexual identities, so you will likely never come across all of them, and if you thought asking a person their preferred pronouns was hard, you'd be entirely out of luck among these guys.

Pat's note: Asking pronouns isn't hard, by the way.



③



⑤

Ignorance and Intolerance breed Toxicity

It is common knowledge that people fear what they do not understand, and are given to harmful reactions as a result.

With mushrooms, this can be stereotyping them as all poisonous, despite some potentially holding cures to disease, or seeing them as drugs, the bad kind. Some mushrooms can signify death in toxic, or unhealthy soil, some can clean up oil spills.

In the LGBT community, it can be harder to escape abusive relationships or abuse in general, because a system built on ignorance has less resources for these people.



All in all, ignorance is only harmful, and both communities could benefit from a more positive outlook. Did I mention quite a few mushrooms are actually? LGBT@B.



④



APPENDIX B

Answers given to questions during exercise 3 of the queer utopias workshops

Questions used to guide the exercise: What can you do to help further realise this utopia?	Answers
<p>What structural changes (changes to big institutions and the way society is run) are needed?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stop neoliberalism mindset - No government, or other forms of command and controlling hierarchies - Rethink entirely our political, legal, economic, educational, punitive, relational systems - The focus on private property and increasing wealth - Political revolution, not relying on money for everything, change the prison system (re-education rather than dehumanisation) - End all oppression - Better education at a younger age - Facilitating community - More kindness and compassion for everyone's lived experiences - Education - More spaces for being yourself and being creative - Less fear, more trust, less hate, more love, don't despair, embrace hope
<p>How should people's thinking, values, and/or beliefs change?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Becoming aware of what we actually feel and need instead of trying to buy more things to make us happy - Realising that the future is not as grim as we might think - Educate, share experience - Communicate viewpoints in a safe, respectful way - Destruction of binaries into post-dualism of nature/culture, mind/body, man/woman, object/subject - Shifts: capital → care, human → multispecies worlds, individual → communal/collective, binaries and binary separation → (unreadable) - That the rainbow community is not here to take away but here to set us free - That non-humans or non-adults don't have agency and are not able to make decisions for themselves - We should value new ways of interpreting ourselves as innovation - That LGBT+ people don't want to take away any pr another's rights and values

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Just observe – no judgement, no distorted, and be open to new realities - Being open to learn, accept, and understand
What cultural changes are needed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decolonisation - Community instead of individualism - Dismantle patriarchy, sexism, homophobia, shift in the way we perceive “otherness” - Destroy the idea of individual and collective “property” - Dismantling hetero-patriarchal, White supremacist, colonialist, anthropocentric views
What gives you hope?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People dancing radically differently - The strength of queer people - Friendship - Collective endurance - “Utopia exists in the quotidian” - Other ways of knowing - Rojava and Chiapas - Queers being open about their queerness - Learning new things/skills that feel like they can make a difference - Hope is other people - That you see more queerness in our society - Seeing how much things have improved historically - The people I met today! - What people is beyond all limitations - Moments where I can love myself and my body - Safe and queer spaces - Solidarity - Kind people
What are the drivers helping you to realise this utopia?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Going to the forest, meditation, minimally living happy people (human and nonhuman, individuals and communities) - The thought of living by my own definition of happiness, without relying on things, people, or institutions that add nothing to me as a person - Friends, community, being in nature, music, books, films, learning from brave people who are doing it - Hope, desire, imagination, creativity - Chosen family, nature - Being myself - Community - Connection with people and nature - I personally benefit from creating space for people to be queer (and then other people live that too) - Friends! - Stories, books, films, fantasies - Events like this <3 - Exchange spaces, reflections, understanding - A supportive environment

<p>What are the obstacles holding you back from realising this utopia?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current societal norms, own emotional blockage (hopelessness, feeling that is useless, dooming something from the start) - Sense of powerlessness, hopelessness - Energy/time - Societal fractures/fragmentation - You have to survive in a society with conflicting capitalist values - Scared of failure and disappointment - Lack of trust and hope - Socialisation - Social norms - Fear - Resources - Feeling scared to disappoint people - Myself (fears) - Misunderstanding about what LGBT people want
<p>What can you do on a micro (e.g. every day) timescale to help realise this utopia?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Challenge own beliefs - Use ki/kin pronouns - Make people happy / care for them - Talk about this workshop and what I have learned with my community - Believe in the possibility of our ideal future, create more, be more open - Support others - Embrace the beauty and diversity of relationships - Showing people that it is OK to be LGBT+ - Show support/care to people who are important to me - Put pronouns in my email - Don't be afraid to be myself fully
<p>What can you do on a meso (e.g. once a week) timescale to help realise this utopia?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be more vulnerable - Show your true colours to strangers - Join more events/meetings/workshops - Being political - Give education and celebrate holidays like coming out day and spirit day - Be more brave in expressing myself to those people that I know will be accepting - Visiting workshops like these to find likeminded people and educate yourself - Create or go to queer events - Learn and share new knowledge and skills - Put radical queer zines in tiny libraries/bookshelves - Be mindful of the ways in which my daily actions impact other people, species, and the planet as a whole - Workshops, TED talks, self-educate
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Activism, educate, spread awareness - Grow and share food together with others

<p>What can you do on a macro (e.g. a long-term project) timescale to help realise this utopia?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Educate myself and others, activism, lobbying/political pressure- Perfect my trade and art, communicate my needs and desires, involve others that dream the same way- Start a queer collective- Building deep and loving relationships (with others and myself)- Expend the knowledge about LGBT+- Accomplish smaller steps to take big steps- Celebrate my own anniversaries/holidays that feel meaningful- Explore ourselves and share with honesty
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