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*Choreographing queer festivals: How does festivalization
contribute to different social choreographies in Amsterdam
Pride, Athens Pride and Queeristan Amsterdam?*

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Abstract

The roots of LGBTQ+ festivals can be traced back to the Stonewall riots, which united gay, lesbian, and transgender individuals in their fight against the system of oppression they faced. Queer festivals have since challenged the assumptions of heteronormativity regarding gender identity and sexual orientation, showcasing bodily practices that fall outside these norms. By examining the timelines of these festivals in two European countries, we can gain insight into the level of social impact demonstrated during these events. This enables us to determine whether a particular queer-organized festival is purely a celebration or whether it still holds significant political influence through acts of protest.

Although they share a common origin and purpose, queer festivals are not uniform and are manifested differently. This thesis utilizes choreography to illustrate how social norms and statements are embodied through these festivals. A crucial aspect of the analysis is the concept of festivalization, its integration into society and the festivals themselves, and its potential impact. The term "festivalization" is not utilized as a variable to demonstrate a positive or negative evolution of queer festivals. Instead, it is a tool that can be used to apply the lens of social choreography more efficiently to the dramaturgy of Athens Pride, Amsterdam Pride, and Queeristan festivals.

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Contents

Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgments	3
Introduction.....	5
Methodology.....	9
1. Theoretical Framework:.....	13
1. a Social Choreography and Festivalization	13
1.a.1 Social Choreography	13
1.a.3. Choreographing a social minority	17
1. b. Festivalization: positive, negative, or neutral.....	20
1.b.1 Festivals and Festivalization of the Space	20
1.b.2 Festivalization, Queer Festivals, Pinkwashing.....	22
2. Analysis: Dramaturgical Analysis: Amsterdam Pride, Athens Pride and Queeristan	24
2. a Dutch (Amsterdam) Pride Parade:	26
2. b. Greek (Athens) Pride Parade.....	32
2. c. Queeristan (Netherlands).....	37
Conclusions.....	42
Bibliography	44

Introduction

The thesis is about LGBTQ+ festivals. I will approach these festivals as such public performances with a duality in their essence: a former riot and a current normalized celebration. In this way, applying multiple lenses of social choreography will be possible. More precisely, from initially being a form of protest, Prides became a celebration and are arguably becoming a capitalistic commodification. LGBTQ+ pride movement and Festivities have a long and complex history, with numerous vital events and milestones that have helped shape the community's identity and visibility. The liberation is mainly identified as a modern phenomenon, despite known documentation of it as a timeline since the first European invasion into North America (Stein 23). The LGBTQ+ pride movement and festivities have a long and complex history. It is marked by numerous vital events and milestones that have helped shape the community's identity and visibility. Despite known documentation of it as a timeline since the first European invasion into North America, the liberation is mainly identified as a modern phenomenon. The Stonewall Riots in 1969 were a series of violent clashes between police and LGBTQ+ patrons at the Stonewall Inn in New York City. This event is labeled as a new era of activism and pride for the community. The aim was to advocate for legal rights and social acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals. One year after the riots, the first gay pride march was held in New York City, marking the anniversary with a celebratory parade (34).

Both Taylor (2014) and Ruiz (2017) provide excellent information on the festivalization of protesting and the materialization of a community in space through public celebrations. The riots that sparked the modern LGBTQ+ rights movement were a result of resisting police brutality and systemic oppression. Over time, these protests evolved into celebratory festivals that have helped increase visibility, acceptance, and community among LGBTQ+ individuals. As LGBTQ+ festivals continue to evolve, they balance between preserving their radical origins and navigating the commercialization that comes with mainstream acceptance. It is important to consider the potential drawbacks of commercializing LGBTQ+ festivals, even though they celebrate inclusivity and self-expression, as this raises concerns about how genuinely the LGBTQ+ community is represented and whether or not their struggles are being exploited for profit.

Social choreography is a term introduced by scholar Andrew Hewitt as a new model of ideological analysis in the post-Marxist era. In an interdisciplinary mode, after having traced choreographic practices from the 1790s to 1930, he suggests the embodied existence of forces reflecting material, social, and economic conditions (Vujanovic, Cjevic 3). In that sense, social

choreography is a tool for the interpretation of ideologies that are being reflected and embodied as aesthetics (TkH). By examining these festivals through the lens of social choreography, I aim to reach the interrelation between political resistance, community building, and the influence of festivalization. This can aid in the mapping of these festivals as both a source of empowerment for the queer community and as a potential site of exploitation. Hewitt did not refer much to the dance and performance studies field, which enabled many scholars to use social choreography in an expanded spectrum, often enclosing a political concern to it. Therefore, in this paper, different scholars' interpretations of the term are supplementary used to trace the connection between dance and social movements and different ways of embodiment of the choreographic expressions rooted in the past in public sphere performances.

To conduct this thesis, I follow a process of articulation of data, both conceptual for the theoretical framework of social choreography and festivalization and more material for the case studies analysis. I first approach social choreography as a way of mapping different behaviors and responses. By examining the development of this ideology, I aim to understand its theoretical underpinnings and identify potential avenues for practical application. For example, social dances like swing or hip hop or Shim Sham choreography (*Shim Sham Choreography*), which are born within the black community, use their movements for both personal expression and also as a social tool of empowerment to navigate a predominantly white society. Dance serves as a vehicle for social change, as in social choreography, to forge a sense of community and belonging. The dance movements as an action create a rupture and potentially alter the dynamics of political, social, and manifestations in a societal framework. I am intrigued by the way gestures and movements create bonds with the environment and create micro-communities in the temporality of space and time, and this interactive rupture is one of the elements that are probably innate in my case studies and give them a unique 'rhythm'.

I also approach the notion of festivalization as a multidimensional phenomenon that has the potential to produce positive, neutral, or adverse effects. In essence, festivalization refers to the assimilation of festival elements into non-festival entities. While not inherently harmful, the excessive overfestivalization of Prides, in particular the practice of pinkwashing, poses a risk that should not be overlooked. The commercialization of Pride has led to the creation of a festive atmosphere that often overshadows its original purpose, which is to promote LGBTQ+ rights and raise awareness of the challenges faced by the community. The danger of this practice lies in the fact that it can lead to the commodification of Pride and the dilution of its message, which can have a negative impact on the very people it aims to support. My aim at this part is to show both

positive and negative aspects of festivalization. Although pinkwashing and commodification are rapidly evolving phenomena, festivalization can also serve as a positive political act or a neutral spatial phenomenon where festival characteristics enter a non-festival public space.

My thesis's main research question is formed as follows:

How does festivalization contribute to different social choreographies in Amsterdam Pride, Athens Pride, and Queeristan Amsterdam?

The concepts of aesthetics and social norms are central to the festivalization and social choreographies. Aesthetics in this context refers to the relationships created between people and their environment during various queer festivals. Social norms, on the other hand, encompass both the heteronormative, patriarchal society and the binary representation of alternative queer norms, which questions the possibility of a non-hierarchical fluidity. Queerness events range from organized parades to Queeristan (which is anti-parade but queer-friendly) and protests condemning all queer festivals. The aesthetics of each of these events can be analyzed accordingly.

With the applied analyses of the three case studies, I aim to pinpoint their differences and answer my research sub-questions:

- *How do these protests and festivals organize relationships between bodies and public space?*
- *What do the movements of bodies represent as metaphors and enact? What relationships do they construct?*
- *Is there a shift of protesting towards celebrating queerness? If so, how is it represented in the three case studies?*

Pride festivals have become a popular topic of discussion in academic circles and society at large. On the other hand, social choreography has gained interest among scholars but remains primarily a theoretical concept rather than a practical application. I aim to create a connection between the celebration of queer festivals and the ideology of social choreography, using terminology and tools from the performance studies field. The dramaturgical analysis triangle is the most crucial tool in this regard, and its use can help expand both notions. Upon conducting an analysis of three distinct festivals celebrated within the western world, it becomes evident that significant

differences exist in the social norms and sociopolitical mechanisms underpin each of these festivities.

Methodology

The way queer festivities reflect social norms and aesthetics in different contexts will be explored by analyzing how it is employed within their dramaturgical structures. To explore the case studies, the dramaturgical analysis by Groot Nibbelink and Merx implements the triangle of composition, spectator, and context (Groot et al. 8). Although dramaturgy is a term from the performance field, it can be applied to any performative event or installation presented to an audience. Dramaturgy can be approached as a multilayered element that organizes any theatrical term or means and reflects on the produced experience (5). As Nibbelink and Merx mention (7), dramaturgy probably raises more questions than answers regarding a work's composition, its interaction with the audience, or -to quote the most important for this research topic-

How does a performance relate to the 'outside' world, that is, to everyday life, to historical events or actual phenomena, to anything present within the theatre but not 'of' the theatre.

Considering their fluidity and inclusive nature, in addition to the long history of queer social oppression, queer festivals enact as if they were conventional theatrical events. Through a dramaturgical analysis, the above question regarding the interaction of the performance with the outside world could be analyzed to draw some general conclusions. The dramaturgy of queer festivals could be under what Van Kerkoven describes as *Major Dramaturgy* (8). Unlike *Minor Dramaturgy*, which refers to producing a specific artwork, *Major Dramaturgy* expands the boundaries and includes the city and the environment.

The first element of the triad of dramaturgical analysis is the spectator, by which Groot-Nibbelink and Merx describe the collective address of an issue in a specific manner and the structural role created for the spectator to inhabit, developing different emotions and cognitive or emotional paths from it (8). Pride parades are participatory; therefore, in my analysis, I adapt this part of the triad to refer to the participants. However, in the case of Amsterdam Pride, I use both terms to differentiate the involvement level of each category in the procedure.

Groot Nibbelink and Merx use the term social context to refer to a performance's social, political, and economic background that somehow emerges (8). This emergence can be either subtle or radical, either a conscious or a subconscious choice. In our case studies, the former systemic oppression of a societal minority, capitalism, gender (in)equality, and festivalization are some context components to be further discussed.

Composition includes all the principles and tactics that aim for a successful performance outcome from (7). In addition to referring to the creation of a work of art, the term "composition" can also encompass the overall "texture" (8) of a performance, including all of the organizational dynamics that occur in space and time. Therefore, I will use the term social choreography for the composition aspect of the dramaturgical triangle.

Social choreography is a term introduced by scholar Andrew Hewitt as a new model of ideological analysis in the post-Marxist era. In an interdisciplinary mode, after having traced choreographic practices from the 1790s to 1930, he suggests the embodied existence of forces reflecting material, social, and economic conditions. (Vujanovic, Cjevic 3). Hewitt referred little to the dance and performance studies field, which enabled many scholars to use Social Choreography in an expanded spectrum, often enclosing a political concern. Therefore, in this paper, I will primarily use different scholars' interpretations of the term to trace the connection between dance and social movements and elements of choreographic expressions rooted in the past and expressed in the present in public sphere performances and examine how the environment interferes with the people. If we do this, we can trace a connection between components and their created 'statement' while interpreting it as a reflection on and by society (9).

As Marx and Groot Nibbelink suggest, it is important to remember the relationality between the three sides of the dramaturgical triangle. They are flexible and enable navigation from and towards each other, creating different messages and interpretations each time (9). This allows tracking many different relationships in the process. Alongside the main triangle of the dramaturgical analysis, another triadic analysis model is created by joining two corners every time: *spectatorship*, *statement*, and *situatedness* (9). I devote each of my case studies to a different dramaturgical concept: Amsterdam Pride to *spectatorship*. Athens Pride to the *statement* and Queeristan to *situatedness*. *Spectatorship* is the combination of spectator and context plane and puts emphasis on the position of the spectator and how their perspective and experience are positioned within the performance (9).

Pride parades are participatory public events where both passive spectatorship and more participation are apparent. Participants can have different roles at Prides, such as participating in the celebratory events, joining the public march, or becoming accidental participants. Their level and motivation for participation may vary. My analysis of this case is primarily focused on the aspect of spectatorship while also making a clear distinction between spectators and participants. In order to conduct this research, I used bibliography sources as well as videos of last year's Pride online. I claim

that Amsterdam is the most festivalized and celebratory one, and my main inquiry is the examination of whether this is a positive or negative effect. I use a 44-minute-long video as my audiovisual source, which consists of different clips and POVs of participants/spectators' documentation. These clips are set as examples of how the festival positions the spectator in its marketing and how attendees at the festival interact with space. By doing so, I also try to engage the other two concepts of *theatricality* and *absorption*(12), which Merx and Nibbelink include in the dramaturgical analysis plan to gain a better understanding of applied festivalization. This approach helps gain a better understanding of the concept of festivalization not only as a sociopolitical phenomenon but also as a scenographic element that is also interrelated to the social choreography of bodies and space.

I believe that Athens Pride has more protest elements than other pride events. Although Athens and Amsterdam are both located in Europe, their different socio-political and economic histories can affect the messages they convey. The specific economic and socio-political conditions of a place can influence the outcomes of a movement. In the dramaturgical plane, a *statement* is the combination of context and composition (9). The message conveyed by a statement is shaped by the societal context and individual interpretation. It is a multi-shaped message between the performance and the societal context (9). Through a bibliography, mainly from Greek scholars, I attempt to relate the contemporary socio-political status to the symbolism of power and its correlation to police enforcement and riots. This highlights how the protests and riots of the last century have influenced today's parade and how it represents the societal need to either accept or deny authority. It is a form of action and reaction. I use both my personal experience as a source and audiovisual material to highlight the potential for turbulence. My arguments on why Athens Pride parades have characteristics of protest are divided into two subcategories. First, I use a video showcasing aversion towards the queer movement to support the theory of archived memories within the body (Lepecki) as a form of protest and also the need for LGBTQ+ to still fight for visibility. Conservatism and patriarchal forms of family structures are apparent in the Greek community, which impacts the queer community and even leads to the intervention of the Greek Psychiatric Organization to declare that queerness is not something to be changed. Then, I also want to link to the general aversion towards authority as a form of protest and the tendency to reject it, using the official reply of the Athenian Pride to state its disapproval towards police after violent occurrences.

Finally, Queeristan is the last to be analyzed as the least festivalized of all the festivals. It condemns the public and commodified queer celebration that is usually associated with the Pride parades.

Queeristan is analyzed under the prism of *situatedness* (9) , the combination of spectators and context, and according to the dramaturgical analysis, reflects the standpoint of the participants towards the world, society, and the performance itself (9). Hence, the concept of situatedness is employed to investigate whether this approach serves the ideology of Prides differently or equally and whether it proposes an alternative viewpoint on the nature of society `and how it should operate. I set out to explore the reasons behind people's participation in such a non-conventional queer festival and to do this; I draw upon the socio-political background that the participants bring with them. Queeristan, as a newer and self-made festival, offers a limited bibliography, but much information can be found on its website. Another source I employ is past research on the festival when it first started. I use two videos from YouTube -one promoting the festival and one composed by interviews with participants of 2010 Queeristan to illustrate how the concept of festivalization is manifested in the festival.

1. Theoretical Framework:

1.a Social Choreography and Festivalization

1.a.1 Social Choreography

The term social choreography describes individuals' predetermined behavior and movement patterns within specific social groups based on their social status. This thesis focuses on the analysis of social choreography in the context of queer festivals and the way festivalization interferes with the manifested embodied choreographies at queer festivals. In my thesis, I use the term of choreography - which is commonly associated with the domain of dance – with a broader perspective, to examine the way in which ideological statuses are internalized and the way individuals occupy space during social events with the aim of discovering relationships and generating inquiries on this subject.

Andrew Hewitt introduces the term and uses the example of choreographies of the bourgeois era between the late 18th and late 19th century, approaching social choreography as an analytical tool (Hewitt 3). This method provides a means to study movement mechanics in artistic domains and utilize these insights in a broader social or political context. Hewitt's methodological approach offers the ability to scrutinize the mechanics of movement as observed in an aesthetic dance form and extend this analysis to a broader social or political context. This highlights the significance of aesthetics in shaping the political spectrum and serves as one among several prospective applications of Hewitt's model. It is noteworthy that the aesthetic dimension plays a fundamental role in formulating the political approach (Hewitt 3), and dance as an art form could be an “*aesthetic medium*” to interpret something with political value (6). This means that for Hewitt, dance mirrors social orders and reflects an external stratum, but this reflection also contains non-superficial elements (3).

Hewitt's theory has been widely discussed by scholars, who have offered their own perspectives and interpretations. Among these, Thk editorial on social choreography stands out as a thorough and comprehensive analysis.. According to the analysis by Cvejic and Vujanovic (3), social choreography manifests how certain ideologies influence society in various aspects, including the physicality of the body, the economic structures, and material and immaterial production. To apply dance terminology and ideas to non-dance festivities may seem unorthodox, although it could lead to new insight. It is stated that social choreography could be applied to denote a relationship between “*choreography and social movements as a form of aesthetic ideology*” (3), which in return

reveals another level of relationship between bodily movement, public space, and community (3). In my opinion, the final inter-relationships triangle accentuates the participatory and community-based aspects of such ideologies and consequently positions social choreography and queer festivals within the domain of community-based performance. Similar to social choreography, community-based performance advocates for a communally created experience. The aim is for the process of creating and expressing personal or social ideologies rather than a finished performance product (Kuppers 4,5). It would be beneficial to conceptualize both ideas as part of the same umbrella. Doing so attributes the identity of a social collectivity to Pride parades, which target social changes, and it will help us understand how societal standards are manifested and challenged during queer pride. It will also raise questions about how society should work and move towards creating a more inclusive and vibrant community. The main question behind this would be how this shared ideology can be expressed in a given time and space, using the materiality of the bodies and the environment as a form of social choreography.

There is a bidirectional approach between social choreography and queer performances that are organized in multiple dynamic elements. As Pristas argues, to achieve a comprehensive understanding of a performance, a multifaceted approach is necessary so that one can recognize that seemingly mimetic forms of communication are subject to various influencing factors (Cvejic, Vujanovic 2). By mimetic forms of communication, I refer to mimesis as an act of interaction by copying and creating something almost identical in a different moment (Alexei Taylor). Similarly, the opposite, approaching societal themes with an openness to connect them to movement and dance, is equally crucial. There is, therefore, emphasis on execution, and the ability to achieve specific movements as a critical factor in the dance field has shifted to dynamic patterns of organizing multiple elements in motion (Cvejic, Vujanovic 72). In my understanding, social choreography cannot be perceived as a fixed formula that can be applied to events or performances to extract conclusions and ideologies that reflect society. Instead, it is an opportunity for open dialogue between different ideologies, society, and its own application, which is also fluid and subject to potential modifications.

The existence of a correlation between physical movement and political or ideological beliefs, whether through dance or daily actions, is, therefore, a vital element of the idea of social choreography. Several artists and theorists have recently drawn parallels between choreography and social movements, analyzing protests and riots. While some may view bodily movements, gestures, postures, or states as political activism, such attributions may oversimplify or idealize

the actuality of political agency. Other comparisons may reveal more complex and even confrontational expressions of dissent. (Cvejic, Vujanovic, 3). This way, choreography is folded, unfolded, and refolded in time and space and represents a tool to organize “bodies in space, or organizing bodies with other bodies in an environment that is organized” (Klein 31).

Lepecki also proposes that memories of past oppression can be accessed through the body's stored memory. More specifically, in his Journal 'The Body as an Archive', he examines how the act and re-enactment of the body stored as an archival memory can have a political dimension. He argues that there is no distinction between the body's archive and the body itself. Re-enactments are described as belongings of the past that seem to take us back to the origin but paradoxically create a different version of it. They have a political and ethical purpose, which highlights that the present is different from the past but also creates something new that is fully integrated into the 'memory' of the original work. This bypasses an author's desire to have the final say on a work's destiny(35). I think that the theory of stored and embodied memory can serve as a valuable framework for analyzing the dynamics within queer festivals in the LGBTQ+ community. This notion can be particularly interesting for the analysis of Amsterdam Pride, the more festivalized one of the festivals, as it makes it intriguing to test whether commodification or festivalization can outscale queer people's lived experience of potential oppression.

.1. a.2. Social Choreography - Social Dance: Swing dance

In this section, I pursue to link social choreography as an ideology to the way it relates to gender, bodily gestures, and the performativity of social dances and their meaning. Judith Butler (*Gender Trouble*) is known for her theories on how gender is a socially and culturally constructed formulation, and people born with a biologically assigned sex, through repetition of bodily movements, gestures, and behaviors, learn to adopt the identity of the gender. Susan Foster, in her article “Choreographies of Gender,” suggests the use of Choreography instead of Performativity can be helpful in more efficiently presenting the depth of social values in cultural practices and draw more attention to the corporal materiality, its movement in space and its nonverbal gestures (5). Foster argues that each body has a posture and specific gestures, may focus more or less on momentum, and incorporate specific race, class, or ethnicity elements. Therefore, each body is a potential story narrator, a response to someone else's story, or a social statement (9). The idea of choreographies of gender and race can be seen most clearly in relation

to dance choreographies, so I will explain this first, but my interest is in the way that queer festivals and parades create a new reality for the gender presentation of a choreographic level. The analysis of the body in a choreographic framework to pinpoint gender-based differences is not limited to structured choreographies and can be applied in an extended way. Conventionally, in the dance field, male and female bodies are trained and disciplined, but how they use flow, gravity, and momentum changes (13-14). Breakdance, as an example of social dance deriving from the black community, is an example of the 'rupture' of the stereotyped gender-dancer formula. Similarly, I suggest that queer festivals and parades can also create a similar new reality for the gender presentation on a choreographic level.

Similarly, swing dance, although it has a totally different rhythm than breakdance, it also creates a rupture and a new reality for black people. Its history can be explored as an example of social choreography; It organizes individuals into gender and race-based categories, expressing the physical embodiment of sociality and community("Dance - Social Dance"). Swing and dance, being dynamic and constantly evolving, have undergone re-contextualization on multiple occasions since their inception. They continue to represent different populations, ranging from the most reactive to the most "nostalgia-bound" ones. Despite having a solid sociopolitical root and initially representing black minorities, swing's re-contextualizations have transcended the boundaries of race and culture to become a social phenomenon. It is, first of all, a recontextualized symbol and manifestation of the black body in a white America, and many dance scholars have agreed on its service as a medium for "*communication, solidarity, community, and catharsis*" (Hammock 13).

A crucial part of the social choreography is the sense of a built dynamic triadic inter-relationship between the physicality of the space, the performers-dancers, and the audience. (Cohen-Stratynner 121-123). Having joined the social lindy hop swing community as a non-black person has sensitized me to the transformative power of Afro-American dance and jazz history. In this context of black colonization, the physical space is not just a neutral background but rather a site of power struggles and historical legacies. The performers-dancers, who may be black or of African descent, carry with them the weight of their colonial histories and the ongoing legacies of oppression, marginalization, and resistance. The audience, in turn, may be composed of people from various backgrounds who bring their own perspectives, biases, and assumptions. In this context, the physical space becomes a contested site where the performers-dancers can challenge and subvert dominant narratives and power structures and where the audience can be confronted with uncomfortable truths and alternative perspectives. Through their movements, gestures, and expressions, the performers-dancers can embody the experiences of black colonization and the ongoing struggles for liberation

and self-determination. The audience, in turn, can be invited to engage with these experiences and to reflect on their own complicity and resistance in relation to the legacies of colonialism and racism. Overall, the inter-relationship between the physicality of the space, the performers-dancers, and the audience becomes a powerful means of reimagining and transforming the dynamics of black colonization. In my mind, this dynamic is in the form of a fluidity of power and opposites or poles that fight each other but happen to exist at the same time and space for a brief moment.

1.a.3. Choreographing a social minority

After having introduced the basics of social choreography as a notion, in the following paragraphs, I aim to expand upon the concept by exploring its various manifestations as a map of the dynamics of social norms. Approaching non-dance events and asking questions a dance scholar would be interested in would reveal new relations. In 'Choreographies of Protest,' Susan Foster writes that the body is a critical player in facilitating positive social progress. Her analysis concentrates on the physical body in relation to the evolving structure of power, investigating the degree to which protesting individuals are interconnected and the intensity of the interaction between their bodies and those who support the current system. Individuals make informed decisions based on their interpretation of others' actions in the context of (subconscious) group collaboration. (Foster 396-397). Foster questions the impact of how movement can serve as a reflection of their individual and societal identities, shaping their understanding of ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality. Moreover, it explores the connection between their everyday routines and the critical moments of their protest, highlighting the importance of acknowledging the link between them. (Foster 396) Considering that my case studies refer to social events whose main participants are minorities and LGBTQ+ parades at given situatedness, including aspects of parade, I aim to follow a similar approach to Foster and compare the results between the cases.

Social choreography can hold a role in shaping and challenging the existing social norms. More specifically, Social choreography is crucial for individuals who do not conform to the dominant social norm, whether the white dominance model or established social heteronormality. This plays a vital role in creating or opposing a specific social order, such as invisibility. Utilizing self-identified embodied movements within social Choreography can be an immensely impactful means of rediscovering one's sense of self-worth and reconstructing the fabric of our social reality (Johnson 66). This could be summarized in what Taylor (32) in her article "Festivalizing Sexualities:

Discourses of 'Pride,' Counter-Discoursed of 'Shame'" - quotes from Polchin (386) on the sociopolitical dimension of Pride parades and festivities as a:

A political expression of visibility within the public realm and asserts a sense of self by locating the queer body within a particular social environment – namely, the street. Such visibility reacts against the confined space of the 'closet' (..) To come out depends upon emerging from the spatial structures of the closet and into the public, onto the street.

As Taylor points out, publicly expressing non-normative desires not only serves to increase the visibility of the queer community but also has the potential to temporarily disrupt our perceptions and usage of physical space (32-33). This manifestation alters the public order and space momentarily, challenging the heteronormative and conservative societal norms tied to specific physical locations. However, although brief, this alteration weakens the borders between normal and 'outlaw' and creates a new dynamic in the in-betweenness of public and private space and life. Queer bodies enter space and are still viewed as 'out of space' by social standards, which only accept them in the invisibility of privacy. It is not about a body as a body anymore; the body transforms into a subject of public discourse, and it is all about the impact of the environment on and by it.

On a similar note, what could be interesting is the mapping of the political within a social choreography. Lepecki,, drawing on Rancière, coined the term "choreographic element" to describe a crucial aspect of policing that involves the regulation and control of movement and bodily gestures in society. The concept of "choreopolice" is used by Rancière to explain how movement and bodily gestures are policed in society, including the regulation of pedestrian traffic on sidewalks and the structuring and control of dance and other forms of performance. Artistic expression and personal freedom are often restricted by the regulation of movement or "choreopolice." However, he proposes "choreopolitics" as a means to counter this oppressive force. Essentially, choreopolitics involves using movement and bodily gestures to challenge and subvert the normative constraints of choreopolice. By redefining "choreography" in this way, Rancière aims to liberate it from its oppressive nature and create opportunities for innovative expression and freedom. This idea is highly relevant to Hannah Arendt's political philosophy, which posits that politics should establish conditions in which individuals can achieve self-fulfillment and freedom. Different types of choreography can either facilitate or hinder this goal. By defying the normative constraints of choreopolice, choreopolitics expands the possibilities for

innovative expression and freedom while contributing to Arendt's proposed political telos. Andre Lepecki, in "Choreopolice and Choreopolitics," draws attention to the relations built when police intervene during a public protest, parade, or social event (16). Jacques Rancière's concept of "police" is grounded in the mechanisms and structures that regulate and control individual actions within society. Rancière posits that this policing is not confined to traditional law enforcement; it encompasses a wide range of social, cultural, and economic practices that influence the manner in which individuals behave and interact with one another.

1.b. Festivalization: positive, negative, or neutral

1.b.1 Festivals and Festivalization of the Space

Festivals of all kinds are an integral part of our lives, serving different purposes. The analysis of festivalization provides valuable insights into the socio-cultural dynamics and economic implications of integrating festival elements within various contexts. It enriches the ground for a better understanding of the correlation between commodification and queer festivals, while providing different aspects of the notion.

As Sala describes (11-15), festivals offer an opportunity to participate in activities, providing a setting for individuals to build relationships and networks, which can have both social and economic benefits. Furthermore, festivals have evolved into self-contained marketplaces that intersect various economic systems, such as money exchange, art, fashion, and experiences. (15). Denissen (52) highlights the need for festivals as a festival industry to tailor their 'events' or 'service product' to target with the audience's needs, creating a customized stage experience (52). The festival industry, although culture and entertainment-focused, remains a part of capitalism where market rules of demand and purchase still apply.

Discussing festivalization means examining how various practices of festivals have evolved over time and the purposes they serve. The concept of festivalization refers to including festive elements in various cultural, event, and experiential settings. The idea is often used to describe the infusion of celebratory or festive attributes into non-traditional festival environments (Sala 17). Usually, festivals become augmented, commercialized, globalized, and standardized with multiple capitalistic and Western elements added to them. Sala (17) points out that another dimension of festivalization is the 'eventalisation' of everyday cultural activities -such as the attendance of a movie at the cinema or an art gallery- where the economic dynamic roles of consumer and producer can mix with each other and not always be distinct.

Festivalization is a phenomenon with economic roots as well, but it is even more of a social phenomenon, and it reflects how society is changing. Denissen describes (53) festivalization as a process by which a place is turned into a space. He explains that a space is representative of a neutral location on a map, while a place is a composite of diverse transformative energies such as the location, the group of participants, the artists involved, and more. Each place is distinctive and discernible from one another, with space serving only as a parameter for them. A relationship between space and place exists, representing the general and the particular, and the intentions of the organization and other parties involved significantly influence this process of transitioning

a space into a place.. (52). The participation of the audience and its engagement is essential and contributing to the transformative process (53). We could say that festivalization is a long process, with many steps, and the first step being the deliberate choice of a location. This can be perceived as a scenographic approach of festivalization and is intriguing to be placed in the framework of the Pride parades later on since they take place in a public urban environment where normal life and festivalized life are called to coexist. Therefore, the relation between place and space is something you will explore in my analysis.

In this quotation of location and festivities, Susan Luckman adds the parameter of time as well. . In “Location, Spatiality and Liminality at Music Festivals: Doofs as Journey,” she describes a built relation between time, space, and participants, which resembles a map’s functionality. The road to the festival and the festival place represent a journey to and the reach of a brief state of freedom away from the hustle and society’s normative standards (194-195). This means that people’s deliberate and conscious choice to attend a festival is accompanied by another subconscious choice to ‘agree’ and contribute to the festival. (194-195). From a scenographic perspective, participants are part of the spatiality of the place. They are invited to actively engage in the festivities, to be affected by and affect others. The festivalization of the space could acknowledge the need for involvement in a micro-community that shares common interests or traits in an agreed and finite time and space frame. During this transformative procedure, a different and new energy and purpose is attributed to a place, and the participants' sense of belonging is enhanced. The creation of inter-locality and connections between groups with similar interests, while beneficial in promoting connectedness, often leads to the commercialization of such events, causing them to become separated from the local community.

The primary objective of this paper is not to ascertain whether festivalization can be classified as a positive or negative phenomenon. Instead, the focus is on examining the various aspects of this trend and comprehending its impact on the relevant domains. My objective is to elucidate the concept of festivalization as a wide-ranging spectrum that can positively and negatively impact the community and individuals. The effects of festivalization, if not managed well, can lead to unfavorable outcomes. Conversely, planning and executing appropriately can significantly benefit the community and encourage individual participation. The festivalization of space serves as a foundational concept that facilitated the establishment of a connection between the queer parade's urban and street origins, the impact of a public festival with different degrees of participation for the spectators/participants, and the negative influence of festivalization under the prism of commodification and pinkwashing. I speculate that the observation of festivalization as

an ideology that can be perceived and analyzed as a scenographic element and not only a result of commodification in the performance field can be beneficial for the dramaturgical analysis of the case studies. This perspective creates a common ground for the existence of space – participants – time, and the way they coexist and interrelate within the festival's framework.

1.b.2 Festivalization, Queer Festivals, Pinkwashing

The origins of LGBTQ+ festivals can be traced back to the Stonewall riots, which brought together gay, lesbian, and transgender individuals to fight against the systemic oppression they faced (Markwell and Waitt 61). Since then, LGBTQ+ festivals worldwide have challenged the assumptions of heteronormativity regarding sexual orientation and gender identity, showcasing bodily practices that fall outside these norms. Through a brief global tracking of festival timelines, we can gain insight into the level of social load demonstrated during these events. This provides an opportunity to discern whether a given Pride celebration is solely a festive occasion or whether it still maintains a meaningful political influence through acts of protest. Analyzing and efficiently comparing our case studies in the next chapter will be crucial.

During the 1970s, the organization of a gay parade was perceived as indistinguishable from a gay protest or political demonstration. This was due to the authorities' perspective that any public gathering of homosexuals was confrontational, while the homosexual community regarded it as a courageous exhibition of political commitment and resistance. At the time, the organization of a gay parade was often equated with a political demonstration or protest by the gay community. The authorities often perceived public gatherings of homosexuals as confrontational, while members of the community viewed them as a courageous expression of their political commitment (Taylor 29).

In recent years, Pride festivals have garnered significant popularity, serving as vibrant and celebratory events that showcase the rich and diverse culture and identity of LGBTQ+ individuals. These festivals offer a platform for communities to unite and foster inclusivity, pride, representation, and visibility. LGBTQ+ festivals offer a welcoming and inclusive environment for individuals of all sexual orientations and gender identities to freely express themselves without the fear of being discriminated against. These festivals create a safe and supportive community for all attendees. During pride parades, central city roads turn into a celebration with multiple colors, music, and different people. Music festivals can be considered a stationary event-map wherein individuals are encouraged to explore their inner selves. Conversely, parades can be likened to dynamic maps that form a part of a larger map, which consists of the streets designated

for the celebration and, ultimately, the metropolitan area. Consequently, the place-location of the Prides becomes a globalized space of connectedness. As per Taylor's analysis, the physical manifestations and surroundings and the participants' bodies can be interpreted as materialized representations of queer identity, culture, and ideas that were previously obscure. This expression of their cultural identity holds excellent significance, as it provides an accessible and celebratory platform to showcase a fight against invisibility and social injustice.

Simultaneously, hosting queer festivals has become a recognized means of attracting local and international visitors, which in turn provides significant economic benefits. The support of businesses and governments further fuels the growth of these events. This is where concerns of over-festivalization and exploitation of queerness are raised. The phenomenon of Pinkwashing is a term used to describe said acts of companies and governments faking support for LGBTQ+ rights for their benefit. This term is derived from the combination of "pink," which is commonly associated with the LGBTQ+ community, and "whitewashing," which implies deliberate masking of undesirable information. The practice of Pinkwashing is often employed as a means of generating profit or diverting attention from other pressing issues ("What Is 'Pinkwashing'?"). Consequently, Pride parades are not exempt from controversy and opposition, as they have been accused of 'covering' and neglecting the real needs and concerns of the most marginalized communities.

Witnessing banks supporting queerness for the pride day or pride month is perceived as unfair and ironic if they simultaneously support, for example, oil and gas pipelines that negatively impact communities of Indigenous people in the area (Hol 457). For example, in "Resisting Pinkwashing: Adaptive Queerness in Vancouver Pride Parades." Andy Hol describes various standpoints on how queer protests evolved from condemning capitalistic heteronormality and white supremacy have turned into another platform of capitalistic propaganda and promotion (456-460). Guided by the concern of mainstream Pride parades forgetting their radical roots of liberation, he introduces a new concept called adaptive queerness to address the way "*which people frame seemingly non-queer issues in queer ways*" (459). Adaptive queerness is a potential mechanized tool for challenging power inequalities mainly attributed to what he calls "*pink capitalism*" (459). During the 2014 Vancouver Pride, he conducted interviews with people of different ages and backgrounds with participants to conclude that pride's orientation has shifted, and every one of them seemed concerned by the presence of corporations in parades (456). Queer parades originated from the need to protest against all kinds of systemic oppression, whether it was manifested against queer people, femininities, or any other vulnerable group.

2. Analysis: Dramaturgical Analysis: Amsterdam Pride, Athens Pride and Queeristan

After having given insight into social choreography and festivalization, I will implement the gathered information into the structure of the triadic dramaturgical analysis model, with social choreography representing the composition component. The queer festivals will be approached as a different type of performance where all the so-called 'theatrical means' work in harmony towards the externalized communication in an extended relationship between the stage and the spectatorship (Nibbelink and Merx 6,7). When it comes to spectatorship in the case studies, I aim to differentiate between the spectators-passengers who mainly participate in the parade with their "gaze" and the active spectators-participants who physically participate in marching.

I argue that Amsterdam Pride and Athens Pride have totally different contexts (due to their economic and sociopolitical differences), affecting the other two dramaturgical components. More specifically, I believe the "celebratory" aspect is more prominent in Amsterdam Pride, with a higher degree of Festivalization, whereas in Athens, the essence of protest is still more prominent. Therefore, to better map the effect, I will use what Marianne van Kerkoven describes as 'minor dramaturgy' to describe the dramaturgical impact in the outer circle of the main dramaturgical artwork (8). Finally, Queeristan is oriented toward eliminating festivalization within its existence, offering a different approach to queerness community building. The order of analysis thus will be from the most celebratory to the least one festival to compare the findings and answer questions regarding the importance of queer festivals, the creation of bonds within a community, and its impact.

Based on the triadic dramaturgical analysis, for each case study, I will examine different angles to address different dramaturgical perspectives: spectatorship, statements, and situatedness (9). For Amsterdam Pride, which is, as stated, the most commercialized one, the emphasis will be on composition and spectator, leading to analysis through the prism of spectatorship and the way its position during the happening is constructed. For the Athens Pride, I will combine context and composition to extract the different statements. Statements are fluid messages born through the reflection of the outside world on the performance and its coexistence. Therefore, bearing in mind the more "rebellious" social status of the Greek queer community, it is relevant to evaluate how reality is criticized and criticized through Pride. Finally, for Queeristan, I will focus on situatedness, combining spectatorship and context. Queeristan is situated in the betweenness of a festival and a properly functioning small community. With this fact as a starting point, I am curious to develop

the idea further, questioning how Queeristan suggests an alternative, less festivalized acceptance of queerness, and probably micrography on how society could function too.

2.a Dutch (Amsterdam) Pride Parade:

Amsterdam Pride parade is regarded as one of the most vibrant and popular events celebrating LGBTQ+ rights and culture. It spans two weeks annually in Amsterdam during August and is also referred to as Canal Pride due to the numerous boats sailing through the city's canals, showcasing diversity, inclusion, and the spirit of the LGBTQ+ community. The Dutch LGBTQ+ community organized the first Pride March in 1977, but the annual Pride parade was not established until 1996, after twenty years. Currently, the Amsterdam Pride has expanded to a nine-day festival that includes various activities such as film festivals, dance parties, cultural events, and sports activities. ("From Year to Year"). The official Pride website has created a timeline for all the past parades, and the evolution regarding the number and the size of the festivities and the participation is vividly apparent.

Despite its celebratory character, the festival still makes a political statement: Within Pride's context, a collective identity of freedom of queer bodies' exposure is materialized. However, the concern that arose with this safe space for folks to express their "normality" is the limitation of space and time within it is socially approved (Kaygalak-Celebi 547). Within the Pride parade framework, people can freely express their 'authentic' identities without the fear of being judged; Kaygalak – Celebi question whether this is a real chance of self-expression or a time and space-limited demonstration of queer acceptance by heteronormative society. Although LGBTQ+ festivities are supposed to propose a different perspective on the heteronormative status quo, they still obey to some heteronormative standards and are not fully separated from them. The examination of Pride's integration into the broader spectrum of commodification and normalization of queer identities through their intersection with other marginalized identities holds considerable interest. This means that the social choreography and the way bodies and space interact may reflect this inseparable oppressive bond of intolerance and disapproval of heteronormative orders.

Amsterdam Pride has gained immense popularity and taken on many characteristics of a festivalization, with the Dutch queer-friendly identity has been utilized to attract tourists. To help tourists have a memorable experience, Martijn, a Dutch travel guide on Youtube, has created a video titled "Gay the Netherlands," which highlights the best locations for dancing, flirting, and drinking during the week and weekends. Amsterdam's gay nightlife is centered around Reguliersdwarsstraat, which boasts a rich history of gay bars that has spanned nearly a century. The video also covers the various festivals, including the Pride parade, which boasts about 80 boats and multiple festivals in and around the city center ("Gay the Netherlands").

Exploring spectatorship:

According to Konstantinos Eleftheriadis in 'Queer Activism and the Idea of "Practising Europe,"' Europe is constructed through social movements that operate outside of the formal political system and the public sphere. Festivals like Amsterdam Pride attract diverse audiences and encourage socialization and sharing. As argued by Michael Warner, the community creates its own rules and structure through internal communication without relying on preconceived notions. The use of the English language in Dutch Pride signifies an effort to make the event transnational and appeal to both national and international audiences. This combination of sociopolitical significance and freedom in organizing makes Amsterdam Pride a noteworthy event. (Eleftheriadis 147). I would argue that globalization and the trend toward festivalization can create a more universal form of spectatorship. This does not mean identical experiences, but rather the use of a common language for communication and the recognition that the event is global can create a sense of shared experience.

I differentiate between active participants of the Pride parade, spectators who intentionally or unintentionally join in, and the transitional spectrum in between: spectators who become participants. This concept of in-betweenness is a journey from physical involvement (the body appearing in a specific locality) to mental and spiritual involvement. With a starting point of Amsterdam ranking among the top tourist destinations in Europe and its Pride being a tourist attraction as well, I argue that we should also involve tourists' bodily experience in the parade as part of the analysis equation (Kaygalak-Celebi 546). It is also important to note that observing spectatorship is linked to each current sociopolitical state, and current social topics are reflected and integrated into it, serving as a reminder of the societal context for the spectators (Merx and Nibbelink 10).

Through footage of the 2023 Amsterdam Pride found on YouTube, we can perceive the augmented emphasis on the address of the spectator (“Amsterdam Pride 2023 Canal parade Party). For context, in this video, we can follow the point of view of a spectator and navigate through the different activities and spectacles of last year’s Amsterdam Pride. The video is 45-minutes long and features a collage of clips from different participants. The diverse perspectives resemble social media content under a specific hashtag. Each clip is unique and provides a distinct perspective on the individual experience. This diversity of viewpoints and experiences is similar to the varied content that can be found on social media platforms under a particular hashtag. Although it is only one video, there is no narrative; it is just a compilation of clips giving multiple insights. For reference, it starts with showing people celebrating in boats on the canal, and after a minute, people are gathered in and on buildings to have a view of the Pride from above. The camera is sometimes still, documenting what is happening in front of it – for example, people sitting at the edge of canals waiting for the parade to pass by - and sometimes it follows the happening. When this happens, instead of only the festival being in motion, the filmmaker becomes a moving element of it in motion and drags us with them. Sometimes, their presence is acknowledged by other spectators or participants, and they wave to them, and sometimes, the attention is entirely towards the parade itself. Merx and Nibbelink (9) differentiate between different types of addressing the spectators: theatricality, which makes the theatre-creating process visible to the spectator, and Absorption, where reality and performance are merged, and the spectator is drawn into the world of the stage. In the case of Amsterdam Pride, both modes are simultaneously present and affect differently the spectators and participants. I would argue that the people filming the videos can be positioned as spectators, and the people being filmed can have either of the identities of spectator-participant. Finally, we, as viewers of the videos, could be described as indirect phantom spectators.

While walking by the streets of Amsterdam, people/spectators witness the transformation of the former public space into a celebratory arena with multiple events and more minor celebratory activities. Given the extensive and abrupt nature of the proposed transformation, I suggest we consider it as a form of *absorption* wherein the pride festival would become the norm throughout the event’s duration. This approach would enable the festival to serve as the central and unifying theme of the event, providing a cohesive and celebratory atmosphere for all participants. By adopting this approach, we would be able to showcase the values of diversity, inclusion, and acceptance that underlie the pride movement while also delivering a memorable and impactful experience for all attendees. This means that for the set time and location of the festival, it

becomes a micro-community with a different micro-normality and a dynamic where the spectacle and the non-spectacle meet with no distinct borders between them. While there are benefits to using this tactic, such as fostering community and offering a new perspective on familiar surroundings, there are also potential negative consequences. Specifically, the presence of corporations and organizations that engage in "pinkwashing" - claiming to support the queer community without truly supporting them - could be deemed a danger. As a result of the total assimilation of themselves, the spectacles, and the marketing into a single entity, it becomes more challenging for observers to detect the obscured exploitation of queerness. This assimilation creates a mass that is difficult to differentiate between the different elements making up the entity.



Figure 1 Spectators- Absorption



Figure 2 Spectators

The rise of social media has revolutionized the way events are captured, shared, and experienced, profoundly impacting the dynamics of communication and connectivity. During the research process of videos of an event, one encounters numerous videos of spectators documenting their lived experiences. In a sense, it feels like through our gaze at the screen, we transform into indirect spectators. Through this lens, I suspect it is easier to spot the theatricality of the festivities and the most significant division between the spectators and the participants. For example, in the “Pride parade in Amsterdam!” video, during half of the clips, we witness the Canal parade, which is the most distinct part of the Amsterdam Pride. Usually, the camera is on other spectators waiting for the pride to pass by and waving at the camera, or it is directly on the participants passing by, dancing and celebrating on the canal. According to Merx–Nibbelink, theatricality explores the way performance-related means are used to both express a statement and better involve the spectator in the process (9). I suggest that in the case of the Amsterdam Pride parade, applied theatricality can be seen as an act of conscious display. Participants use various ‘festivalized’ and celebratory means to present themselves in a distinctive manner as a means of self-expression and statement. It is distinctive – as per in the Video also- with the use of costumes, props, makeup, and other visual elements to create a specific effect or convey a message. Theatricality can also be used as a way of creating a sense of community, where individuals come together to celebrate a common purpose or identity. The use of colorful rainbow clothes and flags, as seen in the video, where each small group has a different thematic boat, differentiates each group but also unifies them under the queer identity. I would argue that metaphorically theatricality in the sense of using festivalized props to participate in the festival actively, can be used as a microscope to examine the reason and its effect then.

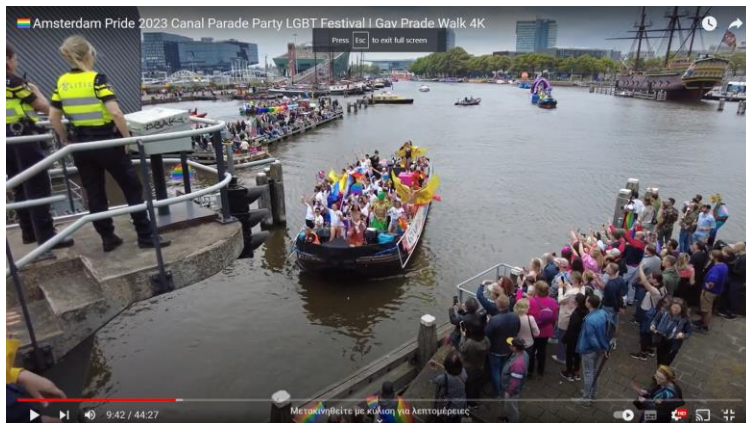


Figure 3 Participants - Theatricality

Nevertheless, despite the negativities of a potential overfestivalization of an event, for many people Amsterdam Pride is still rooted in the idea of unity, visibility and even protest. Even if for some people it is just a spectacle, for others, it is an annual anniversary of bravery, celebration, and fight. In the video *How Does Amsterdam Celebrate Pride? | 'Pride Is Protest'* by al Lewis, various LGBTQ individuals sharing their experiences and thoughts about what Pride means to them. Pride is not just a celebration but a fight for human rights and protest. It is a conscious choice to be proud of one's identity and a celebration of the queer experience. The video includes experiences of individuals from different backgrounds, including Nigeria, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United States, and highlights the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ individuals of color. It ends with a message of self-love and acceptance and encourages individuals to find their own communities and embrace their true selves. *Every day, I have to prove to the world I am valid* and are the specific words of a participant "I left (her country), and *I am free here* (in Amsterdam), *but every day I have to fight,*" notes another. ('Pride Is Protest' by al Lewis"). Therefore, one would most likely wonder why queerness is only valid within the festival and life is still an everyday fight for validation .From a dramaturgical perspective, those people could scenographically be positioned either as spectators or participants actively celebrating.

2.b. Greek (Athens) Pride Parade

Composition: "Normalization of Protest," but what about normalization of parades?

The LGBTQIA+ community and its impact as a movement is growing in Greece. Personally, being originated from and having spent the majority of my life in Athens I am familiar with the sociopolitical context there. Although I do not identify myself as queer, I recognize the privilege of me not being directly affected by it and not having experienced hardships and discrimination queer people in my direct or indirect environment have. Before deepening into the LGBTQ+ parade analysis, it would be beneficial to overview the movement of protest in Greece to understand its correlation better.

Peterson et al argue that there has been an evident shift in the sociopolitical background of protestors, with an alteration from a predominantly working-class demographic in the 1960s to a middle-class majority in the present day. (Peterson et al. 1152). This can signify a social awakening and the forming of group identity in pursuing a better living status and improvement of sociopolitical imbalances. This phenomenon is also known as the "protest normalization thesis" (Peterson et al. 1148), meaning that the composition of protestors is becoming more representative of the general population. Based on this observation, it has been argued that Pride parade participants should also reflect the social diversity found on the broader population (1148). A noteworthy discovery from a qualitative study exploring the connection between age, political beliefs, and participation in Pride parades across various European nations has revealed that these factors do not necessarily align with any particular political affiliation, age range, or level of education (Peterson et al. 1163). My area of inquiry thus concerns the relationship between the culture of protests in Greece, which is characterized by frequent and normalized demonstrations, and the established normalization of Athens Pride parades and whether the participants in the Pride parades are an accurate representation of the broader population. In 2008 (a year when multiple social riots happened), 60% of participants in an opinion poll showcased sympathy towards the riots and protests as an authentic expression of social uprising, which highlights the importance of understanding and addressing the underlying factors contributing to social unrest and movements (Andronikidou 7).

The culture of resistance, which involves challenging authority through protesting and questioning, has deep roots and has been integrated into [Greek](#) society. This behavior may be attributed to past positive outcomes and a fear of oppression by those in power. A notable example of this resistance occurred during the student movement at Polytechnic (Athens National

Technical University) on November 17, 1973, when the community-based resistance and protests led to a significant alteration in the political institution (Andronikidou 9).

Athenian Pride and its Statements:

The politically turbulent 20th century played a vital role in shaping the perception of queerness in Greece. Its impact has been significant and is now considered an essential factor in the evolution of queerness perception in the country. This resulted in the LGBTQ+ movement flourishing after the 2000s, and reportedly, until then, sexual orientation was not yet perceived as a core element of one's identity but rather as a personal decision and practice, much like pre-Stonewall United States (Petropoulou 20). A manifestation of this delay was the fact that the first official Athens Pride parade was organized in June 2005 (“Athens Pride | Φεστιβάλ Υπερηφάνειας Αθήνας”).

Queer festivals are unique in that they are cross-border events that showcase the cultural diversity of Europe. They are not confined to official public spaces but instead offer international representation and connections with other social movements and utilize digital communication. From a political perspective, they expand the reach of transnational social movements. One example of these practices is queer festivals, which are the result of shared interests, relationships, and networks. These festivals are transnational events that take place in Europe and help create a sense of community across borders. Ayoub and Paternotte state in *LGBT Activism and the Making of Europe: A Rainbow Europe?* that this political and social situation has created a contradiction in the attitude of Greek society. Through online footage documentation of the Athens Pride on YouTube, the concept resembles the Dutch approach to the festival a lot. However, as a person of Greek origin myself, I argue that the dynamic behind it is different. The video posted by Athens Pride Official on YouTube last year portrays the struggle of queer individuals for survival and self-expression within the LGBTQ+ community. The video shows people running away from the parade amidst chaos. As one person runs, they are surrounded by the sounds of car honks and their own determined footsteps. Seeking acceptance, love, and recognition, the person asserts their desire to be heard and live authentically (Athens Pride Official). Similarly, there is also plenty of footage from Parade Day with all the commercialized flags, props, and cheerful dances. So, at first glance, the campaign and the celebration look similar to the Dutch ones. On a second view, however, if we view Pride parades as a social choreography event, we can examine the underlying messages and statements being made. As Merx and Nibbelink mention, a statement is not a distinct message and a specific explanation of a happening, rather than a result of such a reflection of the outside world, a chance to reflect on the context and suggest alternative perspectives to it (9). The statements in question are revealed

through the comments left on the internet regarding the videos. During Amsterdam's Pride, the majority of comments were positive and supportive of the festival's ideology. However, for the Greek videos, the majority of comments were homophobic and derogatory towards the queer community. The comments ranged from characterizing the festivals as over commercialized and useless, to extremely homophobic. It is important to note that online life and online representation do not necessarily reflect real-life situations. However, as nowadays social media and technology as an integral and growing part of our lives, gives access to everyone to publicly share an opinion, it can be used as a form of a statement which reflects the ideology of part of the population.

The Greek ideology of the 20th century has long been shaped by religion and faith, particularly in the traditional family model and gender roles. These profoundly ingrained stereotypes served as the cornerstone of the country's reconstruction after the Greek revolution. However, when these stereotypes are challenged, people tend to cling to what they know. This was evident when people initially protested against the Pride parades, claiming that God shows what is normal and that it is only heteronormative. There is this very characteristic footage of the 2016 Athens Pride, where an old lady protests and shouts against queerness while holding a Christian image. ("Louka at Athens Pride"). Although people in the context laugh and reply with humor to this, it is representative of a proportion of the (usually older) Greek population. On a different note, the matter of heteronormality based on the argument of the 'traditional' family is also a very relevant issue in the last months due to the discussion on the right for gay couples to adopt children. This led to many condemnations by many, even characterizing queerness as mental illness, which led to the Greek Psychiatric Organization officially stating queerness is not under the DSM criteria ("Press Release - Greek Psychiatric Organization"). Dramaturgically, what we as spectators attend could be described as a type of rupture, with the traditional stereotypes being smashed and the rhythm of the event getting faster with more tension. It is like the smoothness of the Pride being interrupted by tradition and being invited to a battle. In breakdance, battles represent a manifestation of social conflict being creatively released and solved. However, both parts 'speak' the same body language there, whereas in our case study, the gap between them is vast. I suspect that if the opposing group had engaged in the conflict, it could have resulted in a destructive outcome for the Pride event.

Building upon the context presented, my argument is that Greek Pride hides a dichotomy and has two poles, with one of them being the will to progress and align with the European status and the other being resilience and fear to do so, which can be manifested as violence and homophobia. In order to support this argument, I am referring to Lepecki's analysis of stored and archived

memories within the body with a political dimension. In the case study, the objection against acceptance of queerness is a re-enactment, some remnants of the past that take us back to the origin but also create a different version of it. Their political purpose emphasizes that the present is distinct from the past but also creates something new that is fully integrated into the original work's 'memory'.(Lepecki (The body as an archive), 35). In other words, the opposition to progress, change, and acceptance is a statement -a response of fear of losing the bonding substance, which in the past built their status quo and reality; it is perceived as a threat against the known values, ideology, tradition.

The social and political circumstances of the past have profoundly impacted the Greek population, and their effects are not always immediately apparent. Another crucial point I would like to make is the situationship of police and authority in the Greek framework, and the way this impacts riots, protests and even festivals So, on one hand I argue that Greek Pride parades can be read as festivals with protesting elements against conservatism and patriarchy. On the other hand I also want to draw attention to the constant objection against authority Greek civilians usually have and the correlation to read pride and marches as protest of social choreography. The notion of the police as a symbol of power, with the capacity to interfere with events, holds a significant interest in the Greek framework. This is particularly evident in the culture of protest and the inclination of individuals to position themselves against authorities, where the concept of police extends beyond law enforcement and is multifaceted. Generally, as Loader (3,4) states, The authority of the police has transformed into the authority of valid declaration, which enables them to identify, categorize, endorse, and portray both individuals and the world. This power of 'labeling' is not only acknowledged but also considered accurate without question (4). Such a framework presents an opportunity for deeper analysis and understanding of the dynamics between law enforcement and society. In two different ways, the notion of police power and enforcement is relevant to my thesis's content. The first is rooted in the birth of queer festivals and their rebellious act against authorities and their power. The second is the turbulent societal state of Greece, where people usually do not feel represented enough by the authorities and question their power. According to Loader, the police is not only a mechanism of crime prevention but also a mechanism of *“production and reproduction of order and security”* (Loader 3). When the needs for the feeling of security is not met, this can lead protest and riots against it, leading to a form of societal disorder and social choreography.

For this statement I am referring to Lepecki's arguments in “Choreoplice and Choreopolitics” and regarding on how different types of body gestures as a form of choreography can either limit or

expand possibilities for innovative expression and freedom, especially during protests or social events (16). “Police” is the set of mechanisms and structures that regulate individual actions in society. It includes various social, cultural, and economic practices that influence how people behave and interact with each other. In June 2022, few months after the violent murder of Zak Kostopoulos, a queer activist by a police officer, the official Athens Pride, replied to the European LGBT Police Association regarding their application to participate in the Athens Pride 2022 event. They ask for acknowledgment for the incident of extreme homophobia and request them to understand the state of fear queer community may have against them. “Your identification as police officers, whether in uniform or with any other signifier, does not yet have a place in the Athens Pride Festival...We will happily welcome you as individuals to experience together this day of remembrance, celebration and activism” (“Reply to the European LGBT Police Association for Their Participation in Athens Pride | Athens Pride”).

1



Athens Pride 2023

The symbol and of police participating in the Pride signifies a threat for minorities and would interfere with the pride itself possibly leading to conflicts and/or people not being able to express themselves even on Pride. However, the policemen as human beings are not being excluded from the festival; they are only excluded with their signifier and police identity, as it is that that interferes with the balance. Police officers marching and existing in uniform use strict gestures that create a sense of distance between their police and civilian identity. This distance can make civilians feel threatened. When they are in uniform, police officers move their bodies in a strict methodical way, similar to a ritual dance of punctuality. This distance is also reflected by the crowd. However, when police officers exist as civilians, they blend in and are welcomed. Their bodies engage in a more fluid and natural momentum, without performing sharp predetermined movements.

¹ This photo is derived from <https://www.in.gr/2023/06/10/greece/entasi-sto-syntagma-kata-ti-diarkeia-tou-athens-pride/>. Although the article refers to Athens Pride 2023, its context is irrelevant to my thesis and I only use the photo as a visual-dramaturgical reference.

2.c. Queeristan (Netherlands)

Queeristan is a term that merges the words "Queer" and "Stan" to create an identifiable place where queerness is widely accepted. The suffix "-stan" is commonly used in various languages to denote "land of," as seen in countries like Afghanistan and Kazakhstan ("Afghanistan, Kazakhstan: How Many '-Stans' Are There?"). This implies that Queeristan is a constructed location that embraces and celebrates the diverse experiences of queer individuals, however, despite the kind intentions of the festival organizers. However, since the name of the festival was considered provocative and the spirit of the festival is openness and inclusivity to all, since 2017, there have been discussions of renaming it to "Radical Queer Resistance" to capture the goals, ideology, and force of the festival (Radical Queer Resistance).

Queeristan is a no-fixed formulated platform where people can express their dissent and share it with others through various forms of art, performances, and workshops. Queerness is recognized as more than a mere sexual identity, as cultural factors that intersect and interact in complex ways. The festival encourages innovation, experimentation, and unpredictability to create a space where people can express themselves and share their stories in any way they choose. The aim of Queeristan is the celebration of the diversity that exists within the queer community and provides a platform for the expression of this multivocal community. (Eleftheriadis, 191- 192).

Exploring Queeristan's Situatedness: how the festival addresses festivalization

According to Merx and Nibbelink (9,10), the notion of situatedness recognizes that knowledge and proficiency are not universally the same but are instead formed by one's particular sociopolitical, geographic position state. Spectators are positioned within specific social, economic, and political contexts to which they bring their individual characteristics, which are race, ethnicity, gender, age, social class, and physical abilities. These factors can either facilitate or constrain each spectator's actions within these contexts. This creates a bidirectional relation between the standpoint of the spectator, the general context, and the performance's ideology, which affects the audience's perception and interpretation of the message.

A gap between the subject position constructed by the performance and the lived experience of the viewer can produce unpleasant consequences and tension, but when a relevant viewpoint is created and represented, the audience can feel visible with valid experiences. When they can embrace and relate to the context presented at the performance, it can feel empowered and enhance the political aspect of the performance (10). Similarly, queer festivals, in general, by

representing more the non-heteronormative identity, challenge traditional gender and sexual binaries in society and create collective identities. They foster solidarity by bringing together people from different parts of the world and implementing specific practices during the festivals (Eleftheriadis 146).

According to Valocchi, factors including race, ethnicity, and class can influence the development and manifestation of sexual identity, which means that identity is an intersectional spectrum that cannot be precisely captured by a single identity category, such as homosexual or heterosexual (754- 755). This statement aligns with the concept of situatedness as exterior factors shape one's identity and perspective of the world. However, it appears that despite the significant differences among people of all orientations, usually, queer people belong to a politically leftish group, where the gay movement emerged from too. More specifically, it emerged from the Red Fags, during the 1960s, and it focused on structural inequality and a sociological approach. The rise of neoliberalism shifted the burden of emancipation to the individual and caused the movement to become more fragmented, which is a challenge for gay politics. (Cath, Sacha et al.).

The concept of homonormativity in the LGBTQ+ community is the result of commodification, as the aim is to remove the political nature of queerness and ally it with the traditional heteronormative framework. Consequently, with the institutionalization and festivalization of Pride parades and celebrations, gay identities also become institutionalized, and their ability for sociopolitical transformation is diminished. An alternative to this phenomenon where queerness can exist without the strict framework of a celebratory parade is proposed by *Queeristan* in the Netherlands. *Queeristan* is an *autonomous DIT (do-it-together) festival* (Radical Queer Resistance) Organized by volunteers. It started in 2010 in Amsterdam as a response to the perceived lack of awareness and representation within mainstream gay and lesbian culture on issues of political and social struggles that have been a long-standing concern for many individuals and communities. Ultimately, the goal is to create a more equitable and supportive environment for all members of the LGBTQ+ community. The main inquiry of this dramaturgical analysis is to examine how the alternative suggestion of *Queeristan* addresses festivalization.

During my research on the manifestation of LGBTQ identity in *Queeristan*, I encountered the findings of the interviews of the first *Queeristan* workshops in 2010. According to Atkins (16, 30-45), people attending *Queeristan* differentiated between the mainstream queer movements and their queer identity. The modern gay rights movement, to some degree, aims to the assimilation of gays into mainstream society, with Pride parades being sometimes an example of that.

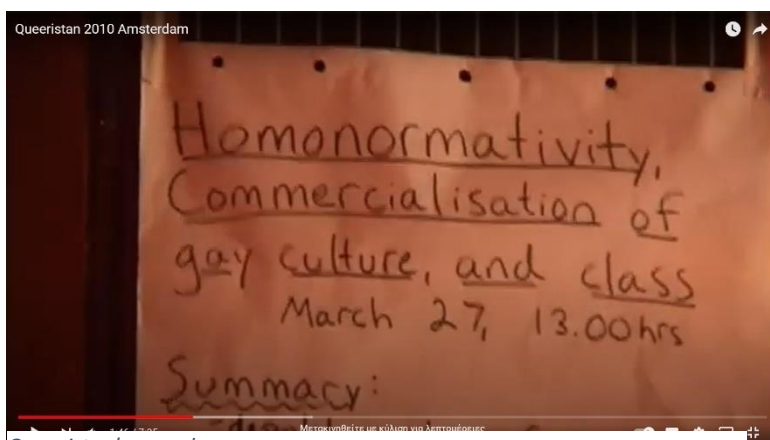
Therefore, when one chooses to express their identity in a nonconformist and non-homonormative way, their means could be perceived as more radical.

Practically, In Queeristan, a small queer micro-community is annually created and situated within the greater heteronormative Western community. They propose a 'break' from the everyday hustle of being perceived as different and also a break from the rest of overfestivalized queer festivals. Their 2013 promo video ("Queeristan 2013 Video Promo - HomoNormativity Ad") represents both heteronormativity and homonormativity as a "pill" which people consume and also a weapon to fight each other. They propose that within the Queeristan Festival, a participant can experience a mirrored reality of the usual one, where they are perceived as "normal" and nonqueer as "outlaws." Although Queeristan may appear radical and exclusive, it is a reaction to the chronic oppression of queers in an attempt to de-stigmatize the normalization of homonormativity with a highly sociopolitical background. Contrary to organized Pride Festivals, there is no fixed structure on how Queeristan operates, and this openness, togetherness, and improvisation resemble a standard societal structure.

In a video from Queeristan, which took place in Amsterdam in May 2010 ("Queeristan 2010 Amsterdam"), participants discuss various initiatives, including workshops on queer politics in the Netherlands, an art space for queer artists, and a public march. The importance of creating an inclusive space for all queer people, including those who do not conform to binary norms of gender or sexuality, was emphasized. The event aimed to challenge the exclusion of trans people from the LGBTQ+ movement and create a community for all queer people to come together and build something. One of the speakers highlighted the normative nature of the queer community and how it can be exclusive, with many separations, and also criticized the eventification and capitalistic tendency of Amsterdam Pride event: "*Pride is pretty normative even for the gay community. It is even called Amsterdam Gay Pride, not Amsterdam queer pride or whatever. It is organized by (name of a company), and it has paid 20.000 euros to be on the boat; that is ridiculous*". Queeristan also aims to create an autonomous space for queer artists to showcase their work, as there is a lack of space for artists whose work is often explicit and not accepted in traditional galleries. The importance of creating a space for all queer people, including those who do not conform to binary normative gender or sexuality, is also emphasized. Queeristan also aims to create an autonomous space for queer artists to showcase their work, as there is a lack of space for artists whose work is often explicit and not accepted in traditional galleries. From that video we can extract two speculations, one regarding the way festivalization as commodification

is targeted, and one regarding the way festivalization of a place – scenographically- is approached.

The event aimed to challenge the exclusion of trans people from the LGBTQ+ movement and create a community for all queer people to come together and build something. Unlike Pride which is a celebration limited to partying, Queeristan tackles the matter of real changes towards an inclusive environment. The full agenda they organize with workshops, talks and events, creates an environment for flourishing discussion and growth on how to fight discrimination and invisibility. Another speaker of the video says that the aim is to “*learn and talk but not just talk...look in the past and look to the future*” and that they “*have an agenda of making a place queer*” (“Queeristan 2010 Amsterdam”). I would argue that the festivalization is not condemned but rather cautiously approached and aligns to the festivalization of space as a transformative relationship between the space and the place (Denissen 52). This type of festivalization is a lengthy process, starting with the deliberate selection of a location, and can be seen as a scenographic approach, and the participation and engagement of the audience is also crucial in contributing to this transformative process. Again, since Queeristan is an exclusive festival where participants sign up and actively engage, the next step of its festivalization is the act of consciously deciding to attend it and subconsciously agreeing to contribute to it (Luckman 194-195). The festivalization of the space could acknowledge the need for involvement in a micro-community that shares common interests or traits in an agreed and finite time and space frame. The concept of a built queer microcommunity is relevant to the festivalization as an act of objection towards commodification, but it is also relevant to the community-building element of social choreography.



Queeristan's agenda

The workshops and the actions to raise awareness can be even characterized as a form of community building activities that lead to the community based performance of public march.

Although at first it resembles a Pride parade, the reasoning and dynamic behind it is different. It can be viewed as an act to transfer the festivalization of space outside the venue of the festival. As it is a fight against heteronormativity, a march can be visually interpreted as the explosion of a limited spaced queer time and space zone and its expansion to the rest of the world. The dramaturgy as the sense of 'texture' of the march compared to the Amsterdam or Athens Pride is different. Its effect is more subtle and resembles more the way a street performer addresses the civilians/audience. It is crucial to first capture their attention for them to fully engage and comprehend the conveyed message; otherwise, it becomes a mere background noise or even an annoyance. However, while Pride's messages are more universal and general, with Queeristan, a greater level of physical and mental engagement is greater, and the message becomes more personalized for every participant.



Public March - Queeristan

In conclusion, while it may not be realistic to claim that Queeristan is a sustainable small community that can last indefinitely since it is only structured for a limited period of time, it still offers a unique outlook on queer culture, tolerance, and representation.

Conclusions

In this final chapter of my work, my aim is to provide a brief and precise summary of the essential findings and arguments presented throughout my research. Additionally, I will reflect on some of the initial research questions that guided my analysis and discuss the components of my research design that were most influential in shaping my conclusions. By doing so, I hope to provide a clear and comprehensive overview of the research I have conducted and its implications for the field.

I started my thesis with the aim of exploring the social choreography theory and its application on queer festivals in Europe. I wanted to investigate how both queer and non-queer individuals interact with the spatial and temporal aspects of these festivals. To achieve this, I analyzed the concept of social choreography and its interpretation by various theorists. Subsequently, I applied this theoretical framework to dance cases to prepare the field for my own case studies. While many scholars have explored the concept of social choreography, most of the work has remained theoretical in nature. However, when I attempted to apply these ideas in practice, I faced several challenges that were more complex than I had anticipated. While it may seem easy to categorize the movements and gestures of individuals as social choreography, this oversimplification fails to capture the complexity of the concept when used as an analytical tool. In social choreography analysis, all elements of the dramaturgical triad are in tandem - including the context, spectators, and composition, which includes factors such as bodies, use of space, and temporality. As such, utilizing social choreography as an analytical tool proved to be a complex task that I acknowledge - if more effectively applied- has the potential of more complex and revealing manifestations of social norms and aesthetics.

Festivalization supplemented my theoretical framework and aided the process of analysis due to its more practical application to the case studies. Festivalization is a primarily visual effect and its presence can easily be proved and examined. It performed as a transition tool to create a common ground of reference for all the cases. I am content with the way I approach it as non just a mere side effect of capitalism and commodification but rather as a neutral notion with even positive consequences. The dangers of overfestivalization are more widely known, and it is essential to practice it with caution and acknowledge the potential risks involved. However, the potential of also providing insight on a scenographic level into the way urban space, time, and people are connected should also be highlighted.

As part of my research, I employed the triadic dramaturgical analysis diagram to study various queer festivals. The aim was to gain a perspective understanding of each event from different prisms. Among the festivals, Amsterdam Pride stood out as the most celebratory, and thus, I delved into the aspect of spectatorship and separated the embodied experience of participants and spectators. For that, through YouTube videos, I tried to understand and pinpoint the different ways Amsterdam and all the dimensions of spectatorship posed together. For the Athenian Pride, which has a more challenging sociopolitical and historical background, I tried to identify a societal 'rupture' which changes the rhythm of the way social choreography is manifested and keeps some elements of protest within. Lastly, Queeristan was the trickiest of all the festivals, due to the limited existing material on it. My sources mainly were experimental videos with informative purposes, with limitations on extracting proper dramaturgical content.

Dramaturgy is complex in itself, and approaching the equally complex theoretical framework of social choreography proves the potential of reaching concrete conclusions difficult. My thesis analyses are only the first steps of a more comprehensive dramaturgical analysis and just offer ideas and suggestions for a different perspective rather than definitive answers. The relationship between queer festivals and their evolution over time and space is a promising research field that I hope I delve into more in the future.

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