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A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR RESEARCHING QUEER POLITICAL INTERESTS^[1]

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ABSTRACT

The political interests of the queer^[2] community do not receive sufficient attention in Romanian academia. Although recently some advancements have been made in this respect^[3], more studies are necessary to support the local progress of sexual orientation and gender identity minorities' rights. Such research requires a discussion regarding the concept of political interests, how and if it can be applied to certain groups of people and what its limitations are. The topic of political interests has been widely discussed in political science and seems to be based on a troublesome concept. On the one hand, there are numerous authors approaching this subject in connection with democracy and political representation studies. On the other hand, the concept also has at least three other uses - political interests as interest in politics, public interest and interest groups. These are completely different than the idea of an individual's (or a group of individuals') own specific interests. This article will present a selection of various scholarly views about political interests while trying to offer a justification for applying the concept in research on queer communities. I will also draw on feminist studies which can provide complex and helpful resources for understanding political interests. For the prospect of developing a better research tool, I will investigate the concept and method of "intersectionality". While surveying these themes, I will also draw on queer theory to give weight to the necessity of studying queer political interests.

KEYWORDS

- Political interests
- LGBTQIA+
- Queer theory
- Feminism
- Intersectionality
- Political representation

The concept of "political interest" becomes highly relevant when approaching research related to the needs and wants of individuals. When such research involves a specific group, aggregated on common lines which stem from difference relative to the norm (for example: queer individuals), feminist political theory can provide valuable insights. The concept seems to be widely utilised in political science research and debates, while still maintaining a contested character, with theorists trying to define it ideologically, sociologically, culturally, economically, and so on.

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2 I am using this term to refer to persons of different sexual orientations and gender identities other than heterosexual and gender heteronormativity. In this paper queer can be substituted with LGBTQIA+. I will use queer as I believe it

A useful view on this subject comes from Anna Jónasdóttir. In *On the concept of interest, women's interests, and the limitations of interest theory* (1988), she analyses political interests from the perspective of feminist political theories and offers a series of updates for the concept. She writes:

“My main objective is to argue that the concept of interest is useful if re-defined. [...] But it has its limitations. All the values that women strive for cannot be contained in the historically conditioned, utilitarian concept of interests.” (Jónasdóttir: 1988, p. 35).

I believe the focal point here is the fact that this concept is useful for advancing rights and liberties which a group of individuals is fighting to obtain (for example the queer community). Any approach in using the concept, though, must be done carefully by considering some limitations which seem to stem mostly from the way political interests are understood and applied in various ideological and theoretical frames.

Continuing along these lines, it must be pointed out that the subject of political interests is not without theoretical conflicts. One of the most important debates, as per Jónasdóttir, is about the difference between “objective” and “subjective” interests - “How are objective interests determined? Is the concept scientifically meaningful at all, or are subjective interests, that is, an individual’s conscious wishes and preferences the only ones with which we can actually work with?” (Jónasdóttir: 1988, p. 36). Another important debate is that between the “pluralist” and the “Marxist” views - “Against the Marxists, who assert objective class interests, the pluralists counter that what are considered to be a group’s or individual’s objective interests always rest upon the researcher’s subjective values and thus are unscientific” (Jónasdóttir: 1988, p. 36). Finally, there is the supposed opposition between “public interest” and “special or private interests”. Public interest is criticised in modernity “from two opposing perspectives, one Marxist and one libertarian/atomistic” (Jónasdóttir: 1988, p. 37), either as being the representation “of the special interests of the ruling class” (the Marxist view), or as a concept which is “both scientifically meaningless and politically dangerous; only the interests of rational individuals are able to be defined, represented and thus, are real” (the libertarian/atomistic view) (Jónasdóttir: 1988, p. 37). These ideas prepare the ground for a definition of political interests by pointing out some limitations - from questions about how to determine them, to the way they should be understood in terms of political ideology. I believe that Jónasdóttir’s opinion should be viewed as setting boundaries for the concept and not as annihilating its usefulness as a concept.

The author shows that interests have a double significance: “the form aspect” (participation in representation) and a “content or result aspect”. Jónasdóttir’s points has a broader coverage of categories.

3 Sînziana Cârstocea’s PhD thesis - “La Roumanie - du placard à la libération. Eléments pour une histoire socio-politique des revendications homosexuelles dans une société postcommuniste” (2010) and Marius Mite’s PhD thesis - “Perceptions of members of the LGBT community regarding the exercise of their rights and quality of life in Romania” (2020).

out that in modernity the concept of interests has been defined more from the perspective of content (“needs, desires, preferences and demands”), and the aspect of “active participation” seems to be left aside (Jónasdóttir: 1988, pp. 40-41). Following Jónasdóttir’s arguments this is not a good thing, because the mere existence of political interests does not guarantee their representation, and unrepresented interests are unrealised interests. I interpret her idea as an indication that political interests have the attribute of being representable in the political arena (for example wishing to have magical powers is not representable, while wanting or needing free specialised healthcare as a transgender person is).

Jónasdóttir presents a summary of the ideas she considers important about political interests. This presentation can be regarded as a definition of the concept: the concept is historically conditioned, it must be understood from a formal perspective to allow for the content to always be dynamic; the formal aspect allows not only for a discussion about the content of the interests, but also for setting up the subjects in the position to create alternatives for choices; finally, there has to be an acknowledgement of the concept’s limitations in regard to addressing human needs pertaining to “love and care for others” (Jónasdóttir: 1988, pp. 50-51). Here, the author refers to life choices (career, partner, children, etc) which are not necessarily interests (defined as “control over future choices”), but “are primarily about assuming responsibilities and committing oneself, giving up one’s options”. Jónasdóttir points out that these situations (“relationships of mutuality and trust”) can create “possibilities of choice which could not have been otherwise obtained” (Jónasdóttir: 1988, p. 51). This idea can offer the solution to validating the existence of a group with common interests of queer individuals⁴ from the perspective of interpersonal relationships between them, especially on the component of care for the other. Queer individuals are diverse from many points of view (gender, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic situation and so on), still the same as with other groups with diverse members, they can form a coalition via “relationships of mutuality and trust”. This aspect is usually omitted by political science theorists who generally have a patriarchal and heteronormative discourse⁵.

Jónasdóttir’s solution for constructing a group with common interests is the “alliance”, she is referring to the group of women, but I believe that the idea can be functional also between queer individuals. The author considers that there are “deep social cleavages of class, race, or ethnicity among women” and that a sorority or solidarity between women type of approach is not realistic. Sorority is seen as functional only between a few persons, solidarity among many, but only the alliance can be the “minimum of necessary unitedness among all women” (Jónasdóttir: 1988,

4 Later, I will present a series of clarifications about the importance of a group with common interests. Basically, the strict interest of a single person cannot be represented politically in an efficient manner, and the public interest is too general a notion that does not take into account the existence of groups with specific interests. Thus, the notion of a group with common interests becomes relevant.

5 Twentieth-century non-feminist or non-queer political theories (practically the general body of research on modern political interests) do not take into account the interpersonal relationships of love and care, which are considered a feminized subject. At the same time, the subject of political interests is genderless, lacking sexual orientation, ethnicity, etc. The most important criticisms of the theory come precisely in this direction - the lack of particularization of the subjects and the homogenization of their interests in the lines of heteronormative patriarchy.

p.55). In this sense I believe that queer individuals have historically been part of alliances, more or less directly, a fact which is visible through the terminology used by queer activists in their public discourses - usually acronyms^[6] which bring together diverse categories of sexual orientation and gender identity like lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersexual and so on.

The concept of “political interests” has been approached by many researchers and the debate was generally oriented on the lines identified by Jónasdóttir. Grenville Wall wrote in the article *The concept of interest in politics* (1975) about the utility of this concept in political sciences (Wall: 1975, p. 487). Andrew Reeve and Alan Ware, *Interests in Political Theory* (1983), have described political interests by interconnected formulas: “«x is in A's interest» means that «x does (or may) promote A's wellbeing over a period of time»” (Reeve, Ware: 1983, p. 380). Another theorist, S. I. Benn, in *‘Interests’ in politics* (1960), makes the following observation: “to say that something is in a man's interest is not necessarily to say that he will be glad of it immediately; but it does seem to imply that one would expect him to be glad of it at some time” (Benn: 1960, p. 130). He somewhat connects political interests and happiness or self-fulfilment, but remains in an ambiguous and paternalist area, with a clear heteronormative subject in mind.

“Political interests” must be differentiated by other concepts with similar names - interest for politics, public interest, interest groups. Also, there is a need for clearer terminology. Although some theorists use the singular form, sometimes without the term “political” - only “interest”, I prefer the plural form of the word always grouped with “political” - “political interests”. Authors whom I have quoted until this point show that individuals may have more than one interest, these interests can be particular, so not necessarily common with a public standard and that they are representable in the political domain. These are the aspects of the concept which I will document in the current article.

“Public interest” (Benditt: 1973) and “interest groups”^[7] are notions which political theorists explain by using the concept of “political interests”, the first usually as an aggregation (sum) of individual interests, and the second as a means of obtaining something specific. I've mentioned that a concept with a similar name, but different meaning, is that of “interest in politics”. Hilke Rebenstorf explains the idea in her book *Democratic Development?* (2004). Political interests are about the “needs, desires and demands” of people (Jónasdóttir: 1988), while interest in politics “[lead] people to weigh ideological positions, to assess their pros and cons, and finally to make a commitment and achieve political identity” (Rebenstorf: 2004, p. 89).

The political representation aspect of political interests

Having discussed some introductory features about political interests I will now explore the relation between this concept and that of political representation. As I have explained in the previous section if an individual's interest is not politically representable, then it is not a political interest. This is relevant for queer communities

6 For example: LGB, LGBT, LGBTQ+, LGBTQIA+, etc.

7 I recommend Thomas S. Clive's article - “Interest group” (2020) from Encyclopedia Britannica, which can be accessed here: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/interest-group> (accessed on 25.01.2021).

as political representation is an important part of solving claims, obtaining visibility when negotiating for rights, fighting discrimination and so on. Queer persons can have needs, desires and demands which are distinct from the heteronormative majority in a given society and in order to satisfy them they need political representation.

Hanna F. Pitkin (1967) presents and defines the concept of interests as vital to representation theory. The author refers to the concept by using the singular form - “interest”, without adding the term “political”:

“[...] the concept of interest forms a kind of link between the representing of abstractions (which do not have wishes) and representing of people (which do). An interest is itself an abstraction. [...] But one can also represent the interest of certain people, of an individual or of a group. Sometimes interests are the interests of someone.” (Pitkin: 1967, p. 156)

Pitkin also identifies a typology of interest: “the concept of interest thus occurs sometimes as attached to a certain group of people and sometimes in unattached form” (idem). I think that the attached/unattached typology attributed to the concept of interest is important in order to better understand the directions in which the political interests of a group can be researched. For the present article, the most relevant is the type of interest attached to “a certain group of people” because I am specifically concerned in the “desires, feelings, opinions” of certain people - queer individuals.

Pitkin’s interpretations highlight two types of interest - the interest of a person, relative to that person’s well-being, with the reverse “disinterested”, and something that is interesting to a person, with the reverse “not interested” (Pitkin: 1967, pp. 156-157). Following Pitkin’s logic, political interests should be informed by both, since well-being and projects, things, interesting achievements for a person at a given time, can be pursued politically as “desires, feelings, opinions”⁸.

Pitkin writes about the concept of interest understood as having a stake in an objective way that “interpretations vary from objective to subjective in different ways. At the most objective end of the scale are unattached interests, where there is no particular person or group whose interest it is (and who could therefore claim the right to define it).” (Pitkin: 1967, p. 158) The author gives here the example of world peace which is not a “psychological state” and cannot be measured in any group or person. On the other hand, Pitkin says that modern theories of interest introduce a subjective element and explains this through a series of questions. “Who else but the person involved has the right to say whether they have a stake or not [...]? Who can tell someone if he will win or lose in a transaction, if he insists that he does not feel any gain or loss?” (Pitkin: 1967, p. 159). Following this logic, the author considers that it is possible to put an equal sign between interest and to have a stake, “but to leave to the individual in question the final determination if he has a stake or not” (idem). I believe that the idea of having a stake helps to shape the concept of political interests as it shows the existence of a gain (stake) for the person in question. For example, a stake for queer communities is being less discriminated, less harassed, less bullied against

8 For example, related to welfare for queer people, medical services suitable for sex life in homosexual relationships may be important, because they sometimes are a taboo in the doctor-patient relationship, and “in the interest” may be important laws for legalizing civil partnership or child adoptions by non-heteronormative couples.

and this can be done by promoting the political interest of receiving protection against discrimination targeted specifically at this community.

The concept of interest can be researched as follows: “there are two possibilities embedded in the idea that interest is what one has at stake, according to one’s own judgment [...] one can ask an individual or a group about what they pursue or observe their behaviour and one can draw their own conclusions” (Pitkin: 1967, p. 161).

Political representation, the central theme of Pitkin’s book, is also based on the interaction of representatives with those represented and the promotion of their interests. The author points out two directions - the first in which interests are objective, “determinable by people other than the one whose interest it is, the more possible it becomes for a representative to further the interest of his constituencies without consulting their wishes” (Pitkin: 1967, p. 210). Here we face the problem of the representative as a paternalistic caregiver: “if such a view is pushed too far, we leave the realm of representation altogether, and end up with an expert deciding technical questions and taking care of the ignorant masses as a parent takes care of a child” (Pitkin: 1967, p. 210). The second direction explains interests as “definable only by the person who feels or has them”, and the representative consults “his constituents and acts in response to what they ask of him” (Pitkin: 1967, p. 210). This vision also, taken to the extreme, can turn the concept of representation into an illusion.

I will continue with another author who talks about political representation as I consider this topic to be particularly important. Of course, even if relevant, not everyone’s political interests come to be represented, but it is important that these interests are representable, otherwise they are not political, but a different type of ideas, separate from the socio-political sphere where people can and do have a stake.

Anne Phillips (1998) offers some insights about politics, referring to liberal democracies: she writes about difference which should “be regarded primarily as a matter of ideas” and about how political representation is measured depending “on how well it reflects voters’ opinions or preferences or belief” (Phillips: 1998, p. 1). The author identifies one of the problems of this type of political system - political exclusion. This can happen either because of the “electoral system (which can over-represent certain views and under-represent others)”, either because of “people’s access to political participation”, which depends on their socio-economic situation (Phillips: 1998, p. 1).

Phillips considers dialogue is very important in a democracy. She supports her point of view as follows:

“Discussion matters, as much as anything, because it offers a way of dislodging existing hierarchies of power. The majoritarian democracy of the ballot box inevitably privileges majorities, and this can have particularly severe consequences for those groups that are in a numerical minority.” (Phillips: 1998, p. 151).

The author points out that the majority constituents are also not safe in terms

of representation, as the majority vote favours what is considered widely accepted at a given time. Phillips exemplifies with the group of women who, even if they can form a significant numerical group, do not easily manage to get their political interests resolved because the majority-type democracy maintains the dominant norms - patriarchy in the present example (Phillips: 1998, p. 151). In this logic, queer communities suffer even more as they are not even a recognised numerically relevant group (or even if they were, in general public censuses of populations up until 2020⁹ did not explore this category and there is no relevant data on a national scale).

Furthermore, the author brings into debate other aspects that damage the process of political representation by presenting the ideas of two theorists. Phillips quotes Cass Sunstein discussing aspects of social class: “«poverty itself is perhaps the most severe obstacle to the free development of preferences and beliefs», [...] in the absence of a more deliberative democracy people will not even see what else they could want” (Phillips: 1998, p. 152). On the other hand, Phillips quotes Iris Young who points out the idea of “cultural imperialism” whereby women or those from an ethnic or racial minority may “be forced to formulate their needs in the language of dominant groups”¹⁰ (Phillips: 1998, p. 152).

A Romanian feminist view on political interests

In my opinion, feminism has the capacity to inform many of queer theory’s endeavours. For example, talks about oppression and discrimination of women, which are central to feminism, are also major themes in the fight for rights led by queer activists. Of course, while borrowing theory, methodology for research and solutions for similar problems, queer theory has its own views, methods and solutions which are specific and have to be explored independently.

Oana Băluță (2008) discusses political interests from a Romanian feminist perspective. She summarizes her research:

“Theory, better said theories that analyse political interests try to offer an answer for the following questions: do women have different political interests from men? Are there unitary political interests of women or various interests that depend on several factors. Is the concept of interests adequate or is the one of needs better suited for activities that involve women?”
(Băluță: 2008, p. 13)

When Băluță discusses political interests, she is interested in gender. In my paper, the concept of political interests also takes into consideration sexual orientation. The questions mentioned before are relevant to my research because we can substitute

9 Currently there are plans to include questions about sexual orientation in the 2021 UK national census - <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/censustransformationprogramme/questiondevelopment/sexualorientationquestiondevelopmentforcensus2021>, accessed at 05.08.2021.

10 I think this idea also applies to the situation of queer people. Although it is probably easier to understand the idea of cultural imperialism in relation to, for example, the effects of European colonialism on other countries, the majority culture may have similar effects due to the dominant norms. For example, in a conservative, religious society, where marriage is ideologically and theologically constructed as the union of the opposite sexes and which condemns homosexuality as an enemy of family life, queer couples demand access to religious marriages to the detriment of civil partnership, which, although more liberal and more legally protective, is seen as too weak relative to the dominant norm.

the term “woman” with “queer person”. The queer version would be: do queer persons have different political interests from heterosexuals? Are there unitary political interests of queer persons or various interests that depend on several factors? Is the concept of “interests” adequate or is the one of “needs” better suited for activities that involve queer people?

In the subchapter “Political interests in feminist political theories”, Băluță talks about the political representation of individuals in a society. She writes that “women don’t have to have individual representation, but to be represented as *a group with common interests*, which brings to the debate aspects such as: the necessity to have women in politics, they have to be amongst law-makers, the representation quotas have to be bigger, equal representation is necessary” (Băluță: 2008, p. 17). This is generally valid for any group with shared interests, in this case, queer people. Of, course, there is the issue of equal representation for this group: unlike in the case of women, where we can use censuses^[11], we cannot precisely count queer people and, in any case, counting them might be a reductionist approach^[12]. Băluță discusses the relevant questions which researchers must pose in order to have an inclusive approach: “«are there several political interests all women share?» or «are class, ethnical, racial differences amongst women relevant?»” (Băluță: 2008, p. 17). In the section on intersectionality, I will discuss how each dimension which affects a person (gender, sexual orientation, etc) is as important when it comes to defining their experiences. I believe any research on political interests needs to be open to as many variables as possible in order to paint a clear picture^[13].

I will focus on an important idea: when analysing the works of Anne Phillips (1998), Băluță notices that, for Phillips, “the differences between the interests of women and those of men are more important than the differences between different women” (Băluță: 2008, p. 22). I believe this can be applied to queer persons as well - the difference between the interests of queers and heterosexuals are more important than those between queers. This is because queers can be defined as a group, regardless of any differences, given that they share experiences that are different from the ones of heterosexual individuals. Still, we shouldn’t ignore the differences between queers in order to clearly define their political interests. Similar ideas have been debated by Kimberle Crenshaw in her article “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color” (1991). The author states that „intersectionality might be more broadly useful as a way of mediating the tension between assertions of multiple identity and the ongoing necessity of group politics” (Crenshaw: 1991, p. 1296). I will present the relevance of using the concept of “intersectionality” in a following section, but I wish to point out the author’s view

11 A census only takes into account male and female genders, for the Romanian perspective see <http://www.recensamantromania.ro/noutati/volumul/>, accessed at 02.11.2020

12 The queer group has at least two differentiating dimensions: sexual orientation and gender identity, which is diverse and dynamic.

13 As Băluță explains, women aren’t just women, they also have a certain socio-economic status, they belong to a certain cultural community or have a certain racial background (I am wary of using this notion, as the concept of race when employed in politics can justify racist views). This logic can be used for queer people as well - a person can be gay, Jewish, differently abled, woman, man, transgender, intersex and so on, and all these identities can impact their political interest.

on group politics. In short, her argument is that identity can be objectively assessed using the discriminatory institutional structures in society that delimitate “otherness”. Groups with similar discriminatory experiences do have common interests and can share in an identity, even if their members differ in other respects.

In the subchapter “Multiculturalism and political interests” (Băluță: 2008, pp. 24-26), Băluță talks about the cultural dimension of a person’s identity and considers that this has a significant impact on political interests. This applies to the Romanian space, which is home to a significant number of minorities¹⁴. Traditional gender roles affect women differently from men (for instance, women are seen as the family’s caretaker, while men are those who make money), and family (or its absence) can lead to behaviours that are incompatible with one’s political interests (for instance, homophobia in religious families can make some queer people have homophobic beliefs too). An important question remains - how are political interests shaped in this case?¹⁵

Which political interests should be relevant? The case of enlightened preferences

In my research, I have come upon an interesting review of the concept of political interests written by Lary Bartels. His central argument is that there are special political interests which are better than others and come from “enlightened” group members. I find this view useful if one would like to study the case of civil society organisations which represent the political interests of a particular group (for example the queer community). I believe it is useful because it doesn’t only point out to the formation of political agendas (by taking into account only the “better” political interests), but unwittingly shows the limitations of such a view which can exclude some group members from setting that agenda based on their social status (mostly because of lack of education).

Lary Bartels proposes a clear definition of political interests in his project *Public Opinion and Political Interests* (1996). Bartels uses the plural form of the concept of “interest”, next to “political” - political interests. His version refers to “political interests as enlightened preferences”. He poses four questions which sum up his thesis.

“What does it mean to say that some specified policy is ‘in my interest’? Can a policy be in my interest in spite of my own conviction to the contrary? Are arguments about what is in my interest simply ideological assertions, or can they be bolstered with empirical evidence? Where might we look for relevant evidence about what is in my interest?” (Bartels: 1996, p. 1)

Based on these questions, the author develops a methodology that can be useful “for formal analysis and for empirical political research.” (Bartels: 1996, p. 1).

14 According to the table “Population based on ethnicity from the censuses from 1930-2011, from <http://www.recensamantromania.ro/noutati/volumul-ii-populatia-stabila-rezidenta-structura-etnica-si-confesionala>, accessed at 2.11.2020, there are 15 different ethnicities in Romania, and 17 different religions

15 In the case of a religious queer person, there is a tension between the need to protect that person’s cultural identity (which might include homophobic religious teachings) and the importance of protecting that person’s human dignity (the freedom to live one’s own sexual identity).

Bartels prefers to define political interest as enlightened preferences, presenting in a footnote several other authors who used the concept (Bartels: 1996, pp. 1-2). He quotes Robert Dahl (1989) - “A person’s interest or good is whatever that person would choose with fullest attainable understanding of the experience resulting from that choice and its most relevant alternatives.”; he brings up Jane Mansbridge (1983) who considers “«interests» as «enlightened preferences among policy choices, enlightened meaning the preferences that people would have if their information were perfect, including the knowledge they would have in retrospect if they had had a chance to live out the consequences of each choice before actually making a decision»; he also quotes William Connolly (1972), “policy x is more in A’s interest than policy y if A, were he to experience the results of both x and y, would choose x as the result he would rather have for himself”; finally, he adds Walter Lippmann (1955) - “«the public interest» as «what men would choose if they saw clearly, thought rationally, acted disinterestedly and benevolently»”.

The author bases his strategy on Dahl’s definition of power: “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do”. Starting from this, Bartels writes: “my definition of interests as «enlightened preferences» suggests that «various groups and classes of individuals should pursue given goals» when enlightened group members see those goals as reflecting their interests”. (Bartels: 1996, p. 9).

I believe this generic view can lead to a dismissal of some of a group’s political interests and it does not take into account the differences between the members of a group. My opinion is based on what Băluță and Jónasdóttir wrote about the need to respect a group’s diversity in order to correctly focus on the relevant political interests.

Bartels thinks “enlightened preferences” are influenced by three major criteria: informational, cognitive and cultural:

“Informational criteria recognize that reflection and calculation are unlikely to produce correct conclusions unless they are informed by relevant facts. Cognitive criteria recognize that reflection and calculation require intellectual skills which unsophisticated or irrational people may lack. Cultural criteria recognize that reflection and calculation may be distorted in societies characterized by cultural hegemony, indoctrination, and manipulation.” (Bartels: 1996, p. 14)

I somewhat agree with Bartels^[16] and I notice a similarity with some of the ideas debated by Băluță and Pitkin. I am interested in the cultural aspect he mentions, as not all theoreticians who write about political interests write about the cultural dimension. Bartels believes an adequate cultural analysis isn’t possible because “Cultural elements of «enlightenment» will be much harder to gauge with typical opinion surveys - most obviously, because all of the respondents in a given survey are often participants in the same political culture” (Bartels: 1996, p. 16). Here I tend to disagree with

16 I don’t fully agree with the author’s idea of “intellectual skills which unsophisticated or irrational people may lack”. I think this is a slippery slope which can exclude people from political debates based on social status (not everyone has access to the same education). It would be more relevant to point out that some intellectual skills can be trained or educated in order to find possible enlightened preferences.

Bartels. I wrote earlier about Anne Phillips's opinion on the limitations of political representation due to dominant norms. I believe these norms are a relevant cultural aspect in researching the political interests of queer people. Even if the members of this group belong to the same culture (the Romanian culture), they all share experiences which are different from the dominant norm (heteronormativity). We can, hence, talk about variations within the queer community depending on how much the dominant culture is internalized or rejected by a member of the group.

In the last part, Bartels points out there are traps and limitations to the theory of political interests. I find the following statement relevant: "If we ask people about specific issues of public policy, we must presume that they will express their opinions about those specific issues in the context of an existing pattern of broader political and social circumstances." (Bartels: 1996, p. 31). The author considered that when we draw our conclusions, we must pay attention to various circumstances - it may be possible that, under different circumstances, subjects might have different opinions and what once was in their interest isn't anymore. For example, when subjects live in a society which discriminates them directly^[17] they might have other political interests compared to when they live in a supportive and tolerant society.

Intersectionality as a useful research method on political interests

Political interests, the kind I work with here, are the *attached* type, meaning they belong to a person. This implies that we must define who that person is and this isn't as simple as stating the category - for example queer people in Romania. In this respect the concept of "intersectionality", as defined by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989, is useful. The main idea is that every person has their own complex identity built on several axes which influence their *needs, desires, preferences and claims*. We need to pay attention to this identity in order to clearly see the factors that are involved in the formation of political interests. What is "intersectionality" and why is it a relevant concept for researching the political interests of queer people?

What is intersectionality?

The definition of "intersectionality" has been given by Kimberle Crenshaw, considered the mother^[18] of this theory. In 1989, Crenshaw wrote the article "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" about the everyday life problems of black women in 90's America. They were discriminated against based on both their gender and skin colour, but their specific issues were on neither the anti racist agenda, nor the feminist one. They were either treated as black people or as women. Crenshaw comes up with the theory of intersectionality

¹⁷ Romania was faced with a problematic public referendum in 2018 and during that time a main topic of discussion of the queer community was the right to civil unions between same sex persons. For more information see <https://www.euronews.com/2018/10/04/explained-romania-s-referendum-on-stopping-cu-s-gay-marriage-momentum>, accessed at 05.08.2021.

¹⁸ I used the term mother, which is not common when talking about pioneering a theory, specifically to point out the sexism of the language used in academia, which relies on masculine terms.

to kickstart a talk about the way in which these women were discriminated against for being women and black *at the same time* (Crenshaw 1989: p. 149).

I believe the lack of interest in the socio-politico-economic status of each individual is a problem in sociological and political research. For instance, if someone is queer, this does not cancel the other categories that impact their lives (gender, ethnicity, financial situation, physical ability and so on). Crenshaw spoke of this as a tendency in the scientific research on 90's American black women. I think this is valid for any given person. We must always ask ourselves about the factors that influence someone's life, regardless of the specific aspect a research is oriented towards.

The reason why intersectionality is useful in the discussion on political interests can be found in Crenshaw as well - "This focus on the most privileged group members marginalizes those who are multiply-burdened and obscures claims that cannot be understood as resulting from discrete sources of discrimination" (Crenshaw: 1989, p. 140). Privilege doesn't just exist between groups (homosexuals versus heterosexuals), but also within a certain group (gay men versus lesbians). Because we live in a patriarchal society, in which the role of women is still to be subordinate to men (Crenshaw: 1989), (Jónasdóttir: 1988), (Băluță: 2008), (Phillips: 1998), and other categories put people in further subordination¹⁹, we cannot speak in generic terms about the queer community in Romania and their interests. Given that sexual orientation varies regardless of gender, it's clear that Crenshaw's notes on intersectionality should also be used when discussing queer persons and can be done by replacing skin colour with (or adding to it) sexual orientation and gender identity: a queer person can be woman, man or intersex; a queer person can have a certain ethnicity, a different religion or can be differently abled.

Even if she doesn't bring political interests directly into the discussion, Crenshaw does touch upon the idea. She is critical of social movements, talking about "feminist theory and politics": "how can the claims that «women are», «women believe» and «women need» be made when such claims are inapplicable or unresponsive to the needs, interests and experiences of Black women?" (Crenshaw: 1989, p. 154). This sentence shows the connection between political interests and identity as it is produced by the intersection of various socio-political-economic positions.

Kimberle Crenshaw continues debating the theory of intersectionality in her article "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color" (1991). Footnote 9 is worth mentioning (Crenshaw: 1991, p. 1244-1245) as she clarifies some things about intersectionality. The author believes the term indicates to "a provisional concept" which connects politics with the evolutions in postmodern theory. She proposes a methodology which would "engage dominant assumptions that race and gender are essentially separate categories" and states the possibility that "the concept can and should be expanded by factoring in issues such as class, sexual orientation, age, and colour". Crenshaw points to the idea of connecting identities when it comes to the life experiences of a person and shows intersectionality is a concept that can also apply on axes she doesn't discuss, such as sexual orientation.

19 White heterosexual men, then women; black heterosexual men, then women; white homosexual men, then white homosexual women; black homosexual men, then black homosexual women; followed by different degrees of physical ability and so on.

Therefore, the concept is useful in discussing political interests of the queer community.

In her conclusions, Crenshaw pleads for the concept to be used in politics: “I want to suggest that intersectionality offers a way of mediating the tension between assertions of multiple identity and the ongoing necessity of group politics.” (Crenshaw: 1991, p. 1299).

Other definitions of intersectionality

I will now focus on other approaches and debates on intersectionality. This concept became, in the 21st century, what Kathy Davis calls a “buzzword” (2008). The author tries to justify using this concept 20 years after it was first used. Her discourse is focused on how “intersectionality” became a successful theory, popular for a trained audience, but still confusing to researchers (Davis: 2008, p. 67).

Kathy Davis explains the term as follows:

“Intersectionality’ refers to the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power”. (Davis: 2008, p.68)

Even though this might be a definition of the concept, Davis does not want that, she wants to clarify the importance of the concept for feminism (and not only for feminism): “Quite the contrary, I shall be arguing that, paradoxically, precisely the vagueness and open-endedness of ‘intersectionality’ may be the very secret to its success” (Davis: 2008, p. 69).

A further approach to intersectionality is proposed by S. Laurel Weldon in the text “Intersectionality” (2008). The author believes that this concept “is an important contribution of feminist theory to the general endeavour of understanding society and politics. [...And] confronts an important dimension of social complexity: the interaction between social structures such as race, class, and gender (among others)” (Weldon: 2008, p. 193).

To her, intersectionality can be understood and used in two ways: intersectionality-only^[20] and intersectionality-plus. Weldon explains this using the analogy of coloured lenses which can produce a new colour when illuminated. The way in which these lenses are aligned (overlapping completely or partially, but with a contact area above zero) suggests that intersectionality is exclusive or multiple. Weldon considers that the second version, the multiple variant^[21], is the most efficient way to study diverse situations: from monistic, additive, multiplicative to intersectional effects (Weldon: 2008, pp. 203-208). In this approach, there is a shift from the simultaneous discrimination effect proposed by Kimberle Crenshaw (race and gender), to a more nuanced effect. Taking into account the lens analogy, we can notice a simultaneous effect (the contact area between the lenses, where the light passes through all of

20 This is an equivalent of the version proposed by Kimberle Crenshaw.

21 Weldon proposed a mathematical allegory: $Y = R + G + C + R * G * C$, where Y is the level of autonomy an individual has according to the effects of race (R), gender (G), class (C). (Weldon: 2008, pp. 207-208)

them) and an individual or additive effect (the light passing through at least one lens). For instance, a person who is queer, woman, roma can be affected by all these three categories at once, but each category brings its own individual issues. I believe this model can risk leading to an overcrowding of factors and effects and can block certain aspects of a research because it can add too much complexity. Still, it serves as an important cautioning that we must not ignore this intersection, nor the individual elements which can affect someone more than others.

On the concept of “intersectionality”, I believe the following texts are also relevant: Leslie McCall - “The Complexity of Intersectionality” (2005), Nira Yuval-Davis - “Intersectionality and Feminist Politics” (2006) and, for a Romanian perspective, Alexandra Oprea - “Re-envisioning Social Justice from Ground Up” (2004).

Other authors did not favour the concept too much. For instance, Jennifer Nash has a critical approach in her article “Re-Thinking Intersectionality” (2008). Her analysis follows four problematic aspects of the theory: “the lack of a clearly defined intersectional methodology, the use of black women as prototypical intersectional subjects, the ambiguity inherent to the definition of intersectionality, and the coherence between intersectionality and lived experiences of multiple identities” (Nash: 2008, p. 4). Still, Nash claims that her goal is not to tear down the concept, but to help reposition it by revealing and analysing its problems.

Political interests and queer theory

Queer persons are often seen only through the lenses of their sexual orientation, their gender identity being ignored. As a queer person myself, I have heard around me many times phrases such as “it’s something personal”, “it happens only in the bedroom” or “it is a choice that shouldn’t be of interest to anyone else”²². Somehow, the public attitude towards queer persons seems to be rather permissive as long as the manifestation of their identity doesn’t leave the shadows. However, this shouldn’t sit right with anyone who believes in the values of a contemporary democracy. In “Histoire de la sexualité”²³, Michel Foucault noted that “the least glimmer of truth is conditioned by politics” (Foucault: 1978, p. 5). The author makes this statement in order to depict the evolution of human sexuality from the Victorian times of repression, when it was considered a taboo-subject, to the so-called liberation of the 20th century. He repeats indirectly the feminist mantra “the personal is political” – our bodies, our sexual and gender identity are political. Consequently, queer identity has to sometimes be in the spotlight, just like any other element of identity (gender, ethnicity, class, etc.), to meet political interests and adjust the control mechanisms of society.

22 For the moment, I have chosen not to discuss the stigmatisation of the sexual orientation that makes the intensive discrimination against queer people in the society, among family members and in the majority of the social, political and economic relations which they are part of possible, as this should be a well-known situation.

23 First volume, English translation, 1978.

Sexual liberation and queer movements as sources of political interests

In this section I will present some notions pertaining to rights and freedoms of queer individuals (which can be expressed as political interests). Also, I will try to show that there is a consistent and continuous history of the queer movement in order to emphasize the idea of a well-defined group - the queer community.

Queer persons' freedom is intertwined with the degree of sexual liberation that the citizens of a state enjoy²⁴. An analysis on this subject can be found in Liliana Popescu's book "The politics of the sexes" (2004), where the author dedicated a chapter to sexual liberation and to sexuality. Popescu explains:

"the problem of the sexual liberation of the citizens of a nation is important because it regards the well-being of each of us. [...] The degree of acceptance and the level of the rights for non-heterosexuals indicates the degree of the internalisation of democratic values of a country as well." (Popescu: 2004, p. 187)

These ideas show the necessity for queer participation in the democratic process if this group is to defend its political interests and to maximise the rights of its members, given that they are different in politically relevant ways from the members of the dominant group in society. Such a process can happen through articulating of specific political interests, not only on an individual level, but also as a group or through civil society.

Popescu puts the spotlight on the fact that there is a certain "mandatory heterosexuality" in modern societies that diminishes "their civilized character", affecting the individual liberty (Popescu: 2004, p. 201). Subsequently, she cites Adrienne Rich (1980), mentioning the fight against "heteronormativity as a public political institution based on power structures and imposed behaviour norms". In this regard, homosexuality is characterised as "representing the most obvious attack against the system of the mandatory heterosexuality" (Popescu: 2004, p. 205).

The pair "power" and "norms" has to be reinterpreted in contemporaneity to signify the institutional dynamic arrangements which, theoretically speaking, the citizens of a country can influence through political representation. The author talks about the historic factors that have had an impact on the sexual liberation through control – "from the judicial instances of control to the medical ones and the moral ones (supported by the representatives of clergy, opinion leaders, everyday folks)" (Popescu: 2004, p. 209). This type of control can be observed in Romania as well (Popescu's case study), with certain forms and to certain degrees of manifestation, taking into account the different political regimes that governed the nation in time.²⁵ She mentions that the agenda of sexual liberation in Romania benefited from the help of international forums that supported the development of liberties and rights of every

24 Positively – being accepted, as well as negatively - discriminated.

25 Popescu presents the evolution of the situation from the communist era in the subchapter "Sexual liberation in Romania?" (Popescu: 2004, p. 221): sexual liberation through the legalisation of the abortion and the repeal of the infamous article 200 from the Romanian Penal Code which incriminated homosexuality.

citizen (Popescu: 2004, p. 222). This situation was observed by Mihaela Miroiu (2004) as well, in regard to the development of feminism in Romania – she calls it “room-service feminism”. The author shows how major local feminist evolutions happened as a result of the specific legislative constraints imposed by international institutions (European Union, NATO, International Monetary Fund, etc.) to which Romania adhered. Miroiu explains in detail we can observe “an emancipation strategy from top to bottom which covers the weaknesses of a post/communist society” that appears “before public recognition and the presence in some internal political programmes of such a necessity and question”, having to mention that there have been attempts and local feminist activism, which have been ignored by the political factor (Miroiu: 2004, p. 257). Starting from Miroiu’s point of view, it can be admitted that queer people too have benefited from “room-service” political support in Romania in the development of their rights and freedoms.

The article “Queer citizenship/queer representation: politics out of bounds” (2008), by Kathleen B. Jones and Sue Dunlap, offers a perspective on the difficulties which individuals outside the norm – queer folks – can be met with while trying to make their claims. The authors equate the representation of their political interests with the adding of “extra chairs at the table” and show that there are a series of challenges: “if and how can be fully incorporated the specific types of statements towards the state and the reconstructions of the public and social life that these groups have made or are making” (Jones, Dunlap: 2008, p. 194). The demands of queer people imply the “extension of the community” and show their efforts in order to “fully live among those who already live in the community defined by citizenship” (Jones, Dunlap: 2008, p. 194). Jones and Dunlap consider that any claim of a group that is not at the debate table entails “threats to the moral manners and well-known institutions” (Jones, Dunlap: 2008, p. 194).

Terence Ball and Richard Dagger make a brief presentation of the history of queer liberation in the book “Political Ideologies and the Democratic Ideal” (2000). Although the authors dedicate only two pages to this subject, I consider the presence of the debate on queer rights relevant in a book that discusses democracy. Ball and Dagger list the historic difficulties and discriminations that queer people have endured from the liberation in the “Ancient Athens of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle” to the persecution created by the “religions that appeared in the Near East” (Ball, Dagger: 2000, p. 212).

I am more interested in their summary of the objectives (which stem from political interests) of homosexual liberation movement which includes: protests against “the images imposed on homosexuals” (discriminatory and degrading stereotypes, similar as far as the effects go to those imposed on women and denounced by feminism), “the repeal of discriminatory laws”, access to “previously refused opportunities” and the fight against “the [homophobic] conceptions and attitudes towards homosexuals” (Ball, Dagger: 2000, p. 213).

The means used to get to these objectives include “debate centres, support groups, marches and demonstrations”, while the differences within the movement are mostly about “strategies and tactics”, more than “the principles and fundamental ideas” (Ball, Dagger: 2000, p. 213). All of these directions have positively influenced the well-

being of queer persons by getting new liberties and rights, according to Popescu's ideas that have been previously presented. The objectives of the liberation movement are the quite specific political interests of a certain group, and the way to successfully representing them depends on alliances, just like in the view of Jónasdóttir which I presented in the first section of this paper.

Historically speaking, the queer movement can be analysed much easier starting with the 20th century when it manifested through public organisations and events well-documented journalistically and internationally^[26]. A source that presents the chronology of this movement is "Pride: The Story of the LGBTQ Equality Movement" (2019, republished 2020), by Matthew Todd. The publication follows the evolution of the rights of queer people and of the activism that made them possible, situating as central event the Stonewall riots. Todd doesn't offer just a historic vision of the situation of queer people, but a series of testimonies of some important people directly implicated in the movement. The author underlines the importance of the continuity of this activism, he notes that "we have to protect those rights that we fiercely fought for and to confront whatever threatens the liberal and stable societies that protect them" (Todd: 2020, p. 6).

The article "The Stonewall Riots Didn't Start the Gay Rights Movement"^[27] (2019) presents the modern evolution of the movement for gay rights slightly different than the book "Pride". The authors show that these origins do not come from a singular episode (the Stonewall rebellion^[28]), but there can be numerous moments and activism projects identified that have contributed to the creation of a powerful movement in the 20th century.

For a discussion on queer history focused on the concept of gender (as informing political interests), I believe that the article "LGBT History" (2014) by Margot Canaday is relevant. The author affirms that "LGBT history confronts itself with a serious problem on gender" (Canaday: 2014, p. 12). Canaday cultivates two critiques – a lack of understanding of gender subordination and a mostly exclusive focus on the experiences of gay men, ignoring other categories such as lesbian, bisexual, transgender, etc. She sees the solution in a new academic approach: "we need to be deliberate about asking different questions (perhaps more about gender and less about sexuality, and here I think we have something to learn from academic trans studies)" (Canaday: 2014, p. 12). In the "intersectionality" section earlier, gender was an important part of the discussion, taken together with other categories to inform a person's identity. As I have mentioned in the abstract, I have used the term queer as a broader equivalent to contemporary acronyms like LGBTQIA+ used to describe persons who do not conform to heterosexuality or heteronormativity. Also, I have pointed out authors who show that political interests can belong not only to individuals, but to groups of persons resulting from alliances. The acronym LGBTQIA+ stems from one of the first such alliances - LGB (lesbians, gays and bisexuals - different sexual orientations). The next category to soon enter the alliance was transgender persons (a category

26 For example, through police reports about street protests.

27 <https://daily.jstor.org/the-stonewall-riots-didnt-start-the-gay-rights-movement/>, accessed on 10.12.2020.

28 For further informations, see Duberman and Kopkind (1993), "The Night They Raided Stonewall".

entailing gender identity) resulting in the use of the acronym LGBT. These letters point out not just to an alliance, but to a hierarchy about who is more visible. Sadly, this terminology brings up these persons' sexual orientation most of the time and obscures their gender identity which is problematic for some of the categories whose political interests stem exactly from that perspective (basically transgenders, lesbians, etc.). In short, broadening the focus to also include gender identity alongside sexual orientation will give voice to more complex and diverse political interests which can solve dire problems like discrimination, hate crimes and abuse, stereotyping, constraints against public expression, inflexible gender roles and so on.

I also consider that the volume "LGBTQ Mental Health: International Perspectives and Experiences" (2020), by Nadine Nakamura and Carmen H. Logie, brings a truly international perspective on life experiences of queer individuals. Although written in the academic domain of psychology, the book offers relevant information about the historic national contexts from the selected countries and regions – Sub-Saharan Africa, Colombia, Ecuador, India, Jamaica, Malaysia, Mongolia, Peru, Russia, Thailand.

Highlights of queer theory

Sexual liberation and queer movements discussed previously would not have been possible without the work of writers and researchers whose collective and continuous efforts formed the base for a new field in social sciences - queer theory. Queer theory is an academic area which started to develop mostly in the 1990s in the USA and has become an important focus of scholarly interest nowadays with classes about minorities protection, gender studies and LGBTQIA+ political, sociological and psychological scientific research. This section, designed as a simple overview, will be based on just two sources taken as examples, set apart by 20 years of queer theory development. The selection I will present should prove that studying queer political interests is relevant because it is supported by queer theory which is now an academic domain: there are numerous researchers involved in this area and the domain has transformed from the early stage of finding its conceptual structure (in the 1990s) to a research field with theories, methodologies and history (nowadays).

For this section I have chosen two sources as a result of my documentation – the book "Queer Theory: An Introduction" (1996), Annamarie Jagose, and the book "LGBTQ Politics: A Critical Reader" (2017), edited by Marla Brettschneider, Susan Burgess and Christine Keating. The two publications find themselves on distinguished positions, Jagose closer to the birth of the academic domain of queer studies (in the 90's), while Brettschneider, Burgess and Keating are set in contemporaneity (the American space).

Jagose proposes in the introductory chapter a description of the term "queer" and considers that the political power of the term "queer" comes from "its resistance against letting itself be defined and against the way in which it refuses to clarify its claims" (Jagose: 1996, p. 1). Although Jagose recognises the diversity of the categories that can be included in the term, her book remains anchored in the limitations of its time: "like many critical treatments of queer, however, this study reads it largely

in relation to the more stable, more recognisable, categories of «desbian» and «gay» (Jagose: 1996, p. 2). Still, Jagose's text remains important for the ability to collect information about and the attempt to describe theories and queer studies at that moment.

In their book, Brettschneider, Burgess și Keating (2017) offer a space for diverse authors who debate on issues of the LGBTQ rights movement after the 2000's. I have collected a series of ideas from the introductory chapter.

From the very first pages, the authors show that “the fight for diversity and sexual and gender justice is far from over” (Brettschneider, Burgess, Keating: 2017, p. 12). They list the evolutions (medical, for example) and revolutions (political) to which LGBTQ activism has contributed: from the fights against AIDS to the decriminalisation of sexual acts between people of the same sex. On the other hand, problematic situations that LGBTQ people still experience (like hate crimes) are also considered. This presentation is proof for the existence of a longstanding political group (the queer community), for the existence of queer political interests and the work that has been done to politically represent them.

The authors notice the particular dynamic created by the use of social media as a means of promoting social movements that have marked recent years like the global warming crisis, the anti-globalisation protests, the “Occupy” movement or “#BlackLivesMatter”. On one hand, these are praised for the positive effects that they have, but on the other hand, these movements are contested for giving the false feeling^[29] of participation to people. Still the use of social media as a means of LGBT activism represents a step ahead from the perspective of inclusivity (Brettschneider, Burgess, Keating: 2017, pp. 15-16). These evolutions have brought new means of expressing political interests by individuals or groups of individuals who may have not had this chance before. This implies a more diverse and complex political agenda which benefits a larger number of queer individuals than before.

The book identifies a series of problems important for LGBTQ persons which can form the base for defining specific political interests: for example, the dismissal of bisexual members from the LGBTQ community, the way LGBTQ persons who do not conform to norms dominated by sex, gender, race and class are marginalised, the underrepresentation of the LGBTQ political interests in public institutions that should represent all citizens, the privilege of LGBTQ persons with a social and economic status above average or those with needs similar to the heterosexual norm and so on (Brettschneider, Burgess, Keating: 2017, pp. 17-20).

I believe the volume “LGBTQ Politics: A Critical Reader” (2017) is relevant in order to clarify the existence after the 2000's of a complex global movement for the rights of queer persons and for a distinct queer branch in the study and applicability of political sciences. This in turn brings legitimacy to research concerning queer political interests.

29 The authors name this situation “armchair politics” – people make political activism from home, from their armchairs. This threatens with conviction that a post on social media solves all the problems, and the public becomes consequently inert, the wished changes are not followed with the same implication like in the case of the street protests, for example.

Conclusions

The purpose of the above presentation was to select a number of authors who offer diverse views on the subject of political interests and generally cover the academic debate concerning the subject. I noticed a clear overlap and repetition of the references used by most of the cited authors. These sources are mostly from the American and European space and come mainly from the second half of the twentieth century. I consider the lack of sources outside the mentioned geographical area as a functional limitation for my article. I limit myself to these because they are locally adapted to the area of which Romania is part and where my research focus is resides.

The concept of “political interests” is dynamic and intensely debated by political science theorists, as I hope to have shown so far. For this article, I have selected as a guideline Jónasdóttir’s idea of how “political interests” must be redefined in order to become an appropriate and useful concept. The most important development in this direction comes from the perspective of feminist political theory. Thus, ideas such as equal representation and the actual (physical) presence of the subjects of specific interests in the political process enter the concept; the effects of culture; the rights of women and minorities as interests; interpersonal relationships such as love (partnership) and care for each other; the effects of intersectionality and redefining groups with common interests from an intersectional perspective, having as a strategy the formation of an alliance between different people. These ideas are not only reserved for women’s political struggles, but can be applied to any group of people whose specific interests are not represented (in part or in full) by the dominant norms.

The concept is historically conditioned by the frames of reference that it encompasses almost imperceptibly at any given moment (current socio-political events, the worldview of researchers and political subjects, etc.). It must also take into account issues that may distort or corrupt political interests such as socio-economic status (especially poverty as an inhibitor of choice) or culture (general values that may guide a person to act contrary to their interests).

Political interests in a society can be analysed in connection with the presence or absence of a democracy based on dialogue that involves citizens in decision making one way or another (deliberative, participatory, representative, etc.). Such a democracy generally maximizes the chances that members of society will identify and successfully defend their political interests, and that these interests will also have a practical relevance, not just a theoretical one.

From the sources presented in the sections above one can extract typologies to which almost all the authors cited subscribe in various degrees and forms. Political interests can be objective (determined by someone other than the subject of interests; named and unattached, often considered abstract) or subjective (determined by the subject of interests; named and attached, often considered as desires, feelings, opinions, preferences). From an ideological point of view, political interests are either based on analysis from a Marxist perspective (someone other than the person in question knows what is best for them, for example the class interest), or pluralistic (opinion and judgment matter more than anything individual). These typologies intersect at a primary level, but as the criteria on the basis of which they are defined are considered

analytically, relevant functional differences appear from a political, sociological, economical and psychological point of view. Political interests can be viewed from two perspectives - form (political representation) and content (see the typologies I have just set out). The content is and must remain a topic of debate to stimulate dialogue, which is why I believe that the wide variety of categories presented provides the necessary opportunities for specific interests to be observed and resolved. The typologies and perspectives presented here can be used as an analysis tool in research on political interests, be it about queer or other categories of individuals.

All political interests have a real stake that is executed through political representation. Representation can be done by consulting or not consulting the electorate (then the interests fall into the typology of objective - not consulted, subjective - consulted). This topic also opens the question "Who represents whom?" to which a possible solution comes from feminist political theory. Political interests can be revealed in through research by observing people's behaviour or by direct questioning. The clarity of a research is given by the way the analysed subjects are chosen - an analysis of political interests must specify the people it speaks about and those specific aspects of their life that are relevant (examples of subjects and specific aspects of life: population of a country, a guild, women, queer people versus consumption habits, professional activity, private life, etc.). Finally, the discussion about political interests must also take into account the existence of alternatives to the interests expressed by people. Thus, the concept is useful for criticizing public policies and political arrangements from the perspective of the existence of options (better or worse). Interests can therefore be linked to people's well-being.

In the last section I have explored several aspects of queer theory and its history: the sexual liberation movement and rights activism, a number of relevant historical events and sources and academic landmarks on queer theory. This presentation is useful to build the premises of a research on the political interests of queer persons.

Going through the bibliographic resources used to write this chapter, I have pointed out theorists who debate how groups with common political interests can form and I have shown that these resources can also be applied to queer communities. The framework presented in this paper can be used to tackle questions about the evolution of this alliance - queer communities. Civil society can coagulate in a united movement, with a unique and strong voice to help with advancing queer individuals' political interests. I believe that the diversity of claims based at least upon the categories of sexual orientation and gender identity, to which one might add race, socio-economic status, education, participation in a culture and so on, is a healthy manifestation of the process of building the political voice of queer persons.

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