

# **“Brexit makes no sense if you're gay”: A corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis of two diverging notions of homonationalism within the Brexit debate**

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Puar (2007) proposed the notion of homonationalism to understand “the complexities of how “acceptance” and “tolerance” for gay and lesbian subjects have become a barometer by which the right to and capacity for national sovereignty is evaluated” (Puar 2013, p. 336). However, over the past decade that original definition of homonationalism has been warped into a new, now more common, or ‘reductive’ (Puar 2013) , application as “another way to mark how gay and lesbian identities became available to conservative political imaginaries” (p. 337). In other words, right-wing nationalist voices co-opt gay rights as a means to promote a xeno/islamophobic and/or anti-immigration stance.

The current study explores how these two perspectives on homonationalism shaped and were reproduced within the Brexit debate in the UK media leading up to the 2016 EU referendum. How did the national news media represent the ways in which the Remain and Leave camps made use of homonationalist arguments to further their respective causes?

In order to analyse this, I conducted a corpus-assisted CDA study of approx. 250 articles from the 70-day campaign period discussing LGBTQI+ rights and the referendum. This study explores, via concordance analyses of LGBTQI+ search terms, how Vote Leave is portrayed as arguing in line with the newer, ‘reductive’ application of homonationalism, whereas Vote Remain is shown to argue more in line with Puar’s (2007) original definition. I will also link this to heteronormative ideologies in the overall debate surrounding the referendum and the opposing sides’ and media’s appeals to voters.

## **References**

- Puar, J. (2007), *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Duke University Press: Durham, NC.
- Puar, J. (2013). Rethinking homonationalism. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 45 (2): 336-339.