

### **Scientific goal of the project**

Speculative genres are committed to the creation of new meanings by relying not on the common understanding of the world, but on the establishment of new modes of perception and openness to new social and political orders, classifications, and power relations. Not surprisingly, they have been also interested in the representations of diversity and various faces of queerness. This is also true for one of the newest varieties of media utilizing speculative fiction: webcomics. The proposed project will offer a first comprehensive discussion of how characters of queer identity are represented in speculative webcomics. In the course of the project, I will seek to answer the question about the way in which speculative webcomics express queerness. I will also look for the features of the medium that can be considered queer. Finally, I will research the ways in which speculative webcomics are connected with queer activism online.

### **Research project methodology**

The envisioned analysis of the representation of queerness and queer identities in speculative webcomics requires an approach going beyond the literary aspects of narrative. In order to conduct my research, I need to use concepts drawn from a number of diverse disciplines and fields of study that enable accounting for the multidimensionality of the texts. Thus, the analysis of the selected texts will be conducted using concepts and perspectives from science fiction studies, comics studies, or even games studies, as well as theories on the performativity of gender and sexualities, and queer theory.

### **Expected impact of the research project on the development of science**

The project will advance the state-of-the-art in two disciplines: the cultural discourses of speculative fiction and comics studies, both of which have produced a significant body of academic texts (articles and books). From the perspective of speculative fiction studies, it will contribute to the existing scholarship on queerness in narrative media by extending it to the medium of webcomics. From the perspective of comics studies, it will develop a line of inquiry into the queer discourse in speculative webcomics and provide a systematic account of how queerness is represented and contextualized in the medium and further this discussion with case studies allowing for the establishment of detailed analytical criteria. Thus, the project will not only contribute to the extension of theories focusing on the genres belonging to the general category of the fantastic but also to bettering the understanding of the social and cultural relevance of speculative webcomics.

### **Outcomes**

The findings obtained in the course of the project will result in three international journal articles/book chapters as well as presentation of the findings at recognized international academic conferences (such as the International Graphic Novels and Comics Conference).