

Where did this course come from?

Bodywork is complicated. It can be beautiful, healing, all kinds of amazing. But it's complex. And it's always political.

As a trans person with a working-class, precarious experience, for a good part of my life, bodywork was an abstract activity that people much richer than me did. On the odd occasion that I managed to get through the door and swallow my pride to go to a low-cost massage service for some of the aches and pains that a precarious life brings, it was sometimes helpful, sometimes horrific.

I have experienced how disconnecting and disrespectful a lot of medical and therapeutic experiences can be and more times than I can count I have been judged by those who were supposed to be helping me to heal. Or else I felt ignored, unheard and treated like a slab of meat on a table. These experiences encouraged me to create a better environment for healing, to offer the safest and most respectful work that I'm capable of. The process of becoming more comfortable with my own body has changed my life and I long to share that with others.

Something about me

Hello! I'm Kes Otter Liefte.

I go by Otter or Kes (pronounced with a soft s like kestrel.) I use she/her pronouns.

I'm an author of trans speculative fiction, a workshop facilitator and grassroots community organiser based in Berlin. I also write about queer ecology, class and gender and give regular interviews. I have a [media page and bio](#) if you're curious to read more.



Bodywork

I started training in Thailand in 2012 and became an apprentice to my beloved teacher, Pi Jem Thanachon. I went on to create a sliding-scale massage therapy clinic in Europe working with people unable to access safe or affordable holistic work elsewhere. In 2016, under Pi Jem's encouragement I began teaching in her style and have had the honour of teaching in her lineage since then.

I'm something of an exception. Bodywork in the west is overwhelming given - and taught - by middle-class people who are not trans. It's not very surprising that most therapists have little idea how to relate to a body experience like mine, so I now teach trans-competency classes for bodyworkers and other complementary therapists, including this course.

I'm also an author and have published three novels. My first, *Margins and Murmurations*, has a central character who uses healing work as part of a queer resistance movement. It's impossible for me to see my work outside of its political context.

When I'm working and earning money for my survival, it's political. When I'm teaching trans-competency, it's political. When I'm helping establish networks like the Radical Bodywork Network or supporting activism through my bodywork, it's political.

I see bodywork as full of potential and I'm excited to be offering this online course as a way to bring our communities closer together.