“This book represents a clarion call to student, academic and practising planners and politicians to open their ears, eyes and minds to the question of sexuality. Petra Doan is to be commended for assembling this landmark contribution to planning scholarship, which highlights the challenges LGBTQ communities continue to endure in the twenty-first century whilst also showcasing the contributions they make in creating dynamic and vibrant cities.”

Paul J. Maginn, Associate Professor, School of Earth and Environment, University of Western Australia

“How can planners contribute to building urban societies that are truly diverse and inclusive? Planning and LGBTQ Communities helps answer this critical question as the authors unpack how LGBTQ residents, who also embody a range of intersectional differences, experience and shape urban life outside the familiar gay neighborhoods. This is a necessary contribution to an overlooked subject.”

Dr. Renita Ehrenfeucht, University of New Orleans

“Planning lags behind its sister disciplines in the scholarship of LGBTQ communities and issues. With Planning and LGBTQ Communities, Petra Doan and colleagues close some of this gap. As a course text, their book will bring fresh ideas to planning students’ understanding of diversity, and provides practical advice for the practice of planning. Cases presented extend well beyond the ‘iconic’ locales and will make visible to readers layers of LGBTQ communities that have been relatively invisible to the institutions of planning.”

Gwen Urey, Professor of Urban & Regional Planning, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

“Moving beyond conceptions of a static, bounded ‘gay ghetto’, this important and timely volume considers the varied ways in which LGBTQ-identified individuals have occupied, moved through and transformed cities. Though mainly focused on US cities, the questions raised by this book are far from parochial and encourage a wider reflection on the ways that planning serves the interests of diverse communities. A provocative plea that LGBTQ rights to the city should be recognised, and honoured.”

Professor Phil Hubbard, University of Kent, UK

“This book is a wonderful collection of excellent essays that addresses a key issue: how do we plan for LGBTQ people? Bringing together the world’s leading scholars, this insightful, perceptive and engaging book is a must read for all in planning, urban studies as well as geographies. There can be little doubt that this is a groundbreaking book that will be useful for teaching as well as research.”

Dr. Katherine Browne, University of Brighton, UK
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THE PERVERSIVENESS OF HETEROSEXISM AND THE EXPERIENCES OF QUEERS IN EVERYDAY SPACE

The Case of Cambridge, Massachusetts

Sarah P. Nusser and Katrin B. Anacker

Introduction

"[S]paces can [...] take on quite disparate meanings for different people and for diverse social situations" (Edelman, 1995, p. 74). The geography of queer places concentrates on the usage of space over time and the formation, development, and consolidation of identity (Bell, 1991). Space and identity are important for queers as most public space is heteronormative, and queer expressions are often contested by the heterosexual public (Bell, 1991; Duncan, 1996; Frisch, 2002; Knopp, 1992; Myslik, 1996; Nusser & Anacker, 2013; Pritchard et al., 1998, 2002; Valenti, 1993, 1996).

The phenomenon of queer spatial concentrations with mixed, i.e., residential and entertainment, uses has been documented for decades. In the 1950s, queer entertainment areas were located on the edges of cities and in abandoned areas of downtowns. In the 1980s, some queer residential areas were established, and since the 1990s, many queer neighborhoods with mixed uses have sprung up in large cities, such as San Francisco (Black et al., 2002; Boyd, 2003; Castells, 1983; Lyon & Rowntree, 1998; Weightman, 1981; Winters, 1979), New York (Rothenberg, 1995; Winters, 1979), New Orleans (Knopp, 1990, 1997; Moss, 1997), Paris (Winchester and White, 1988), Montreal (Podmore, 2001, 2006), and smaller cities (Forsyth, 1997a, 1997b; Kidder, 1999), but also in select suburbs in select metropolitan areas (Anacker, 2011; Hodge, 1995; Lynch 1987, 1992). Over the past few years a subset of queer spatial concentrations have been documented, for example, the phenomena gay ghetto; gay village; gay district; gay mecca; gay neighborhood; and the "gayborhood," which primarily caters to gays and to a lesser degree to lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered individuals (Bell & Binnings, 2004; Brown, 2013; Browne & Bakshi, 2011; Chisholm, 2005; Christensen, 2009; Collins, 2004; Fetner, 2008; Knopp, 1997; Kuhrt, 2004; Levine, 1979; Lewis, 2002; Miller, 2005; Nash, 2006; Pritchard et al., 2002; Reed, 2003; Reuter, 2008; Farmer, 2008; Sibalis, 2004; Visser, 2003; Waite & Markwell, 2006). Somewhat recently, queer-friendly neighborhoods, "where same-sex-attracted residents, businesses, and institutions are welcomed in a dominantly heterosexual milieu, and group interaction fosters dialogue" have been analyzed (Browne & Bakshi, 2011; Gomian-Murray & Wait, 2009, p. 2870). While some have argued that gay neighborhoods have degayed, declined, or demised (Browne & Bakshi, 2011; Geis & Higgins, 2011; Pritchard et al., 2002), others have argued for their continued relevance and attention (Brown, 2013; Lewis, 2013).

Cambridge, Massachusetts, has never had queer or gay neighborhoods, although it has historically been considered a safe and accepting place for queer people. This chapter explores how queer people experience residential and entertainment space in Cambridge, MA, one of the most progressive cities in its region. Queer people who participated in in-depth interviews were asked about the spaces they feel the most and least comfortable being queer. These spaces were then analyzed for common characteristics within a Lynchian framework, including fit, control, and access. Ultimately, this chapter seeks to understand how relationships between the planning, design, and management of spaces create hostile or inclusive environments for queer people.

Theoretical Background

This contribution is theoretically based on Lynch (1984), who developed a general spatial theory of city form that systematically states general relationships between the form of a place and its value assumptions. Lynch created a set of performance characteristics, such as vitality, sense, fit, access, and control. These characteristics can be measured through a number of spatial analytics and are sufficiently flexible to capture the fact that different city forms have different values and motives. For this contribution, we reduced the framework to fit, access, and control, the three characteristics we found most relevant for our study.

Fit evaluates the relationship between the activities people (want to) conduct in places and the physical characteristics of places. It assumes the possibility of difference between a place's actual spatial and temporal patterns and the desired visions of that place's user. This is especially important for queers whose desired visions might include the ability to express identity in a non-normative way, to exhibit displays of affection, to interact with people like themselves, or to be highly visible or discreet about sexual identity in public. Lynch utilizes two indicators strongly associated with fit, i.e., comfort and satisfaction, to which physical elements of space may contribute or detract from. To evaluate fit, we explore spatial volume, degree of enclosure, the formality or informality of decoration, and the connotations of various building materials in this contribution.

Access generally refers to the degree of choice offered among accessible resources, including human, material, activities, or information. However, we apply this performance characteristic to analyze how spaces signal welcome and to
whom, focusing on queers. According to Lynch, access is central for an understanding of the social system and for analyzing the psychological impact of the city. In this contribution, we look at the connection of each analyzed space to its public realm, the number of transition spaces between a site and the street, and the permeability of its borders.

Control is the performance dimension that addresses the regulation of space and behavior through city codes, private legal contracts, private management of space, and the perpetuation or disruption of norms symbolized in space. Control includes not only ownership rights but the right to be present in, behave freely in, appropriate, or modify a space. Differentiating between the right to be present and the right to behave freely in the public domain is especially important when it comes to the level of control queer people have in a city. To analyze control we consider the management policies employed by business owners or the public sector, the level of one-way visibility in an indoor space, signs and symbols, and the options for activities and movement in space in our contribution.

In sum, our analyzed spaces in Cambridge exhibit varying degrees of fit, access, and control. We will discuss these dimensions in greater detail below, applying the three-pronged framework to the districts and commercial spaces identified in local interviews.

Data and Methods

The fieldwork for this study took place in February 2010 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. We conducted 13 interviews, hoping to follow up with a survey with a larger sample size. Cambridge was chosen because of its progressive politics and its history of queer activism. For example, Cambridge City Hall processed the nation’s first gay marriage applications at 12:01 a.m. on May 17, 2004, and Massachusetts had previously become the first state in the United States to make gay marriage legal. Despite the increase in queer rights in Cambridge over time, there has been a decrease in the number of queer spaces since the 1990s. The remaining queer and queering spaces were the focus of our study.

Figure 6.1 below illustrates Cambridge’s local history of enacting queer-friendly legislation, culminating in the formation of Cambridge’s GLBT Commission. We began our fieldwork in Cambridge, speaking to the co-chairs of the GLBT Commission, which was created by the City Council and codified in the Municipal Code in 2005. We believe that such a commission is unique in the United States. Its expressed purpose is to:

[A]dvocate for a culture of respect and to monitor progress toward equality for all persons with regard to sexual orientation and gender identity. We are committed to promoting and monitoring policies and practices that have a positive effect on the health, welfare, and safety of all persons who live, visit, or work in the City of Cambridge with respect to sexual orientation and gender identity. (City of Cambridge, GLBT Commission, n.d., n.p.)

Old Cambridge Baptist Church declares itself welcoming and affirming of GLBT people, the first of only seven faith congregations in Cambridge to do so to date.

1983

Cambridge becomes the first city in the Commonwealth to enact non-discrimination law on the basis of sexual orientation.

1984

Project 10 East, the first public school gay/straight alliance in a public school east of the Mississippi - and at the time, only the second in the country - was founded at Cambridge Rindge and Latin School. Kathy Keegan is the current coordinator of P10East.

1988

Cambridge becomes the first city in the Commonwealth to enact domestic partner legislation.

1992

Cambridge becomes the first city in the Commonwealth to amend its non-discrimination law to include transgender people.

1997

The Cambridge School Committee (under the leadership of current Mayor, E. Denise Simmons) establishes the dedicated position of LGBT Family Liaison, to ensure that LGBT families and their children are welcome in our public schools. The Welcoming Schools Program is then formed and is coordinated by LGBT Family Liaison Melody Bazo.

2004

Cambridge becomes the first city in the Commonwealth and the nation to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples.

2005

The Cambridge GLBT Commission is established to advocate for a culture of respect and monitor progress toward equality of all persons with regard to sexual orientation and gender identity.

Cambridge GLBT Commission
Please join us at our meetings, 4th Thursday of the month.
More information: cambridge.gov/gltb

Cambridge gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) history flyer

One way the GLBT Commission links to the queer community in Cambridge through a number of Yahoo groups, including the Cambridge Men’s Group, Rainbow Cambridge, Boston Masala, and the Queer Asian Pacific-Islander Alliance. The GLBT Commission co-chairs distributed our solicitation for interviews through these mechanisms (see Kitchin & Lysaght, 2003 for a similar invitation strategy). About a dozen individuals responded to this outreach. In addition, we reached out to potential participants through friendship networks,
resulting in 13 interviews in total. While these strategies were a successful method of securing interviews in a limited amount of time, we acknowledge that a large proportion of the queer population is not part of these networks for any number of reasons. With more time, it would have been highly interesting to incorporate several additional methods, including both a venue- and a snowball-driven approach to connect with people who are not tapped into these networks, who do not use the Internet, or who wish to remain anonymous about their identities in public.

We developed a list of 17 questions focused on where in Cambridge interviewees felt the most and least comfortable being queer, as well as the physical and social characteristics of the spaces identified with a focus on nonresidential spaces. The initial question was “Where in Cambridge do you feel the most comfortable being gay/queer/lesbian/transgender/bisexual?” Most questions in the interview were open-ended, asking participants to reflect on their perceptions of the spaces that resonated most with them, including the specific point at which comfort levels change when approaching a space, the perceived relationship of each space to its surroundings, and emotions associated with particular elements of each space. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed.

Interviews were conducted with seven males, four females, and two genderqueers; nine white persons and four persons of color; and three people in their 20s, five people in their 30s, two people in their 40s, two people in their 50s, and one person in his 60s. Interviews were conducted in person or over the phone, and each interview lasted between 30 minutes and an hour.

The interviewee-identified spaces were visited after the interviews to determine if and how physical and spatial relationships related to the Lynchian framework discussed above. Our goal was to use the framework to characterize the performance of a variety of urban spaces with which queers in Cambridge typically come into contact, as well as to see trends and differences based on age, gender, and race/ethnicity.

Results

Overall, each of the 13 interviewees in Cambridge felt comfortable as a queer person in Cambridge’s public spaces. However, different interviewees expressed being out on the street in subtly different ways, ranging from being visibly out to being comfortable with being perceived as out, even if behavior is not overt; to not having to constantly monitor one’s surroundings and personal behavior in public spaces.

In regard to being visibly out, a bisexual non-Hispanic white woman in her 20s described it as “holding my partner’s hand when I walk down the street.” A gay non-Hispanic white man in his 60s described it as “wearing rainbow paraphernalia anywhere in Cambridge.” In regard to being comfortable with being perceived as out, a gay, non-Hispanic white man in his 30s mentioned that “there are implicit signs of intimacy […] like eating dinner together and walking around the city together and doing it all the time when we’re outside of our home […] and I feel comfortable doing that.” In regard to not having to constantly monitor one’s surroundings and personal behavior in public spaces, a gay, non-Hispanic white man in his 30s stated that “I feel comfortable in most places and not thinking twice,” while a gay, non-Hispanic white man in his 40s stated that “I don’t have to edit myself.” These quotes help us to understand the many ways in which behavior is regulated in public space, even if only implicitly.

Many interviewees were conscious of symbols and signs in public spaces that made them feel more comfortable being queer. A bisexual non-Hispanic white woman in her 20s stated, “I’ve seen a lot of GLBT folk with identifiers […] like putting the flag on their bag […] I’ve seen a lot of that.” A gay non-Hispanic white man in his 30s noticed “little stickers in windows for businesses […] they’re nothing new but they’re showing up more and more.” A gay, non-Hispanic white man in his 40s said, “You see a lot of equality stickers. People are very open about that.”

Interestingly, one interviewee, a lesbian non-Hispanic white woman in her 50s, did not perceive symbolic signs to be present in the public realm, stating, “You mainly don’t see rainbow flags hanging.” This may point to a perceived difference in symbols that are generated by an individual or an individual business and those that are generated and affirmed by a collective body. For example, the stickers were closely associated with a specific individual or a specific business, whereas signs are more boldly situated in the public realm.

Besides reflecting on public spaces, the 13 interviewees identified 14 permanent queer and queering spaces in Cambridge (primarily around Inman Square) and in Somerville (an adjacent small city). Additionally, interviewees identified temporary queer spaces in Cambridge and Boston, typically in the form of a queer night at a bar that may be a one-off event or happen once a month. The interviewees also identified temporary queer spaces. Massachusetts Avenue in Cambridge had the greatest density and the greatest mix of permanent and temporary queer and queering spaces identified by interviewees (see also Browne, 2006; Kitchin & Vaughan, 2003; Pritchard et al., 2002).

Particular features of buildings enhance and legitimate differences among individuals” (Edelman, 1995, p. 80). Often, queer space is not explicitly labeled as such, although many spaces use subtle symbols such as rainbow-colored lights or signage that suggests welcome. Queer spaces are often highly enclosed and characterized by the perceived high level of safety, acceptance, and human connection they provide. Sometimes queer spaces only provide these qualities for specific groups of queer people based on sexual preference, age, gender, and/or race and ethnicity. Queer spaces can be bars or church spaces, among others.

Queering spaces are often less enclosed than queer spaces, i.e., having more porous transitions between the sidewalk and the establishment such as outdoor seating or glass facades. Many queering spaces are coffee shops or districts that are physically differentiated in some manner, either by being semi-enclosed or by being architecturally distinct. Queering spaces typically utilize management
practices, like hiring employees that are "alternative looking," and contain a diversity of users, increasing feelings of queer control.

Below we will discuss a few examples of queer space (Paradise, St. John, followed by a few examples of queering space (Toscanini's, 1369 Coffee House, Darwin's, Harvard Square, One Kendall Square).

Examples of Queer Space: Paradise | Society of St. John the Evangelist

Paradise

Several interviewees recalled Paradise, a long-standing bar/sex club, but none had been there in years. They described Paradise as a formerly straight neighborhood bar that had found its current niche as queer space in the 1990s when other queer bars were dying out. Others described it as a sex club for a frequent clientele of older, working class men. Paradise has a flexible dance floor on the first floor, which is mostly used on weekends. Paradise also has an upstairs lounge, which is used each night. As a gay white man in his 60s stated, "They've got male dancers and male porn on TV sets above the bar."

In regard to fit, Paradise has free parking attached to the building so patrons can safely and quickly slip into and out of the bar. It also has a discrete entrance away from a busy thoroughfare (Massachusetts Avenue), allowing visitors to remain discrete about their visit. In regard to access, Paradise's interior is highly enclosed and removed from the public realm, but it is located on a major road, at the intersection with Albany Street, near the border of Cambridge and Boston, giving it a visible and accessible location.

In regard to control, the Paradise sign is painted in rainbow colors, implicitly advertising the bar as queer. Paradise's interior is highly enclosed and removed from the public realm through its tinted windows, preventing the public from looking in while allowing customers to monitor outdoor activity. Also, Paradise lounge is upstairs, adding an additional layer of defense space from the street.

Society of St. John the Evangelist

Some interviewees pointed out the Society of St. John the Evangelist, an Episcopal monastery on Memorial Drive. One gay, black/African American woman in her 30s called it a "quietly queer" place. The monastery has a weekly worship space with a garden that is open to the public. The same interviewee responded, "I'll occasionally go there to sit and think."

In regard to fit, the monastery fronts Memorial Drive, a major thoroughfare along the Charles River that connects Boston and Cambridge. However, the entrance is set far back from the street. The monastery is a formal stone structure but not intimidating because of its modest scale and design. Inside, there are strict

Examples of Queering Space: Toscanini's | 1369 | Darwin's | Harvard Square | One Kendall Square

Toscanini's

Toscanini's is an ice-cream/coffee shop located on Main Street, about a five-minute walk from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). 1369 Coffee House has two locations in Cambridge, one in Central Square and one in Inman Square, both located at a ten-minute walk from Harvard and MIT, respectively. Darwin's coffee shop also has two locations, one on Mt. Auburn Street and one on Cambridge Street, each about a ten-minute walk from Harvard.

In regard to fit, coffee shops were mentioned as favorite spaces by nearly all respondents in their 20s and 30s, regardless of gender or race/ethnicity. However, one interviewee also described them as predominantly non-Hispanic white. Coffee shops serve a social and work function for interviewees. The spaces of the three analyzed coffee shops in this study are small and seating is often tightly packed. This lack of space creates intimacy but leaves little room for creating distinct spaces. To compensate, seating is either oriented near windows, granting visibility, or away from windows and the entrance door, offering some privacy.

In regard to access, all three analyzed coffee shops can be easily accessed from the sidewalks. Their facades achieve a high degree of transparency through the extensive use of glass, which enables double exposures, forming a strong connection between the indoors and the outdoors of these spaces, as can be seen in Figure 6.2 below.

Each of the analyzed coffee shops for this study had some sort of outdoor furniture to create transitional spaces, as illustrated in Figure 6.3 below.
In regard to control, the three analyzed coffee shops had employees who were strong contributors to the queering of coffee shop space. A bisexual non-Hispanic white woman in her 20s stated, "[...] [this coffee shop's] employees are nontraditional/nonconservative-looking people, and that also makes it more acceptable to be you." A gay black/African American woman in her 30s said, "They have an artists' culture [...] and it seems like the owners intentionally hire creative and punk people [...] it's a little more flexible in terms of how people look [...] that's why I like it there." Of the three analyzed coffee shops, Darwin's is the one that most explicitly announced itself as a community place, as evidenced by the notice area for flyers in its front window. Nevertheless, none of these queering places explicitly denoted themselves as queer or queer-friendly.

**Harvard Square**

Harvard Square is located close to Harvard Yard, the center and also the oldest part of Harvard University in Cambridge. Harvard Square's central point is the station of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, often referred to as the MBTA T; surrounded by a small plaza that brims with activity. This small plaza is home to a semipermanent periodical stand, street performers and exhibitors, and a variety of informal seating options around the station. Many of the buildings in Harvard Square are medium scale and constructed in brick, visually referencing the university. Whereas some street blocks end in intersections, others are interrupted by small alleys and pathways, as illustrated in Figure 6.4 below.

The Harvard Square neighborhood hosts a variety of restaurants, entertainment venues, and stores, for example Henrietta's Table (housed within Charles Hotel), Charlie's Kitchen, Cardullo's Gourmet Shoppe, and Harvard Book Store.

In regard to fit, Harvard Square was unanimously named as a highly favorable space by all interviewees, regardless of age, gender, or race and ethnicity. Many interviewees pointed out that this space has a lot of diversity and activity, along with many small and independent restaurants and shops. As a gay black/African American woman in her 30s stated, "It is a place for public art, [...] vendors, musicians, dancers, [...] I think that's really important in terms of making a wide range of people feel comfortable." Several respondents described the perceived boundaries of Harvard Square radiating from the T station as the central point. As a gay, non-Hispanic white man in his 30s stated:

Most specifically in the immediate vicinity of the T station [...] so anywhere from the movie theater to Verdict's to where Crate and Barrel used to be to Harvard's restaurant to the Charles Hotel restaurant, to the burger place, Charlie's Kitchen, Wagamama's [...] yeah it's almost like a complete radius [...] and we even walk through Harvard Yard.

This sense of boundary helps to protect and define the space.
In regard to access, Harvard Square is highly public and easily accessible by foot or through the MBTA. While the area around the T station is very exposed, it has the option to be in a more intimate or enclosed space by ducking into an alcove or a set-back doorway (see Figure 6.4 above).

In regard to control, a genderqueer Asian American interviewee in his/her 20s commented on Harvard Square, comparing it with CambridgeSide Galleria: "Recognizing and serving an alternative audience makes me feel more comfortable [...], [in Harvard Square], there are mainstream and alternative stores but because they’re all mixed together I feel better.” A gay non-Hispanic white man in his 40s said:

There are college students, homeless people, punks on the street, families, all different shapes and sizes and colors [...] that’s one thing that I really like about it [...] it’s quite vibrant, it’s quite active [...] I think that’s one reason why I feel comfortable there.

A gay, non-Hispanic white man in his 40s stated:

There’s a lot of activity, a lot of little shops that are geared towards the alternative life (coffee shops, health conscious, poetry places) [...] a lot of students [...] a lot of openly gay guys. I would definitely hold hands with a boyfriend in Harvard Square. Probably the campus, too, but I haven’t tested it.

The same genderqueer Asian American interviewee added, “I always feel comfortable dressing the way I want to [...] presenting gender however I want.

Most interviewees also noticed queer stickers. One gay white man in his 30s said, “You see ten in one block and that starts to send a message.”

One Kendall Square

One Kendall Square is about a 15-minute walk from Kendall Square, home of MIT, and the Kendall/MIT station of the MBTA. One Kendall Square is a newly completed, 11-building campus, which is characterized by offices and laboratories along with some formal restaurants and entertainment venues. Nine of the eleven buildings were constructed before 1919, and several were part of the Boston Water Hose Factory. It is owned and was redeveloped by two private-sector real estate firms.

In regard to fit, gay men were the most likely to recall One Kendall Square. Many interviewees perceived the space as a queering space because it is the home of Kendall Square Cinema, which has a history of showing edgy films since 1995. However, the cinema is on the fringe of the campus and not directly within it.

Nevertheless, One Kendall Square’s 1,500-space parking garage is connected to the cinema, making it very easy to park and directly enter the cinema safely.

In regard to access, One Kendall Square is also highly public and accessible by MBTA, although the T station is about a 15-minute walk from this area. In order to compensate for the corporate aesthetics of the laboratories nearby, human-scale walkways and gathering spaces that allow pedestrian movement throughout the campus were created by the developer. Perhaps because One Kendall Square is an off-site location at a distance from the T station, and because it has a more anonymous aesthetic and signage, it is less visible and thus particularly well suited for gay male gathering and cruising.

In regard to control, a gay, non-Hispanic white man in his 40s called One Kendall Square “the closest it gets to queer space in Cambridge.” He added that there are:

[A] lot of gay men [at One Kendall Square] [...] groups of gay people talking very openly [...] probably because it’s an artsy place [...] the restaurants [it seems] have [...] just groups of gay people congregating there [...] I wouldn’t say it is a gay area, but definitely a large percentage [so that] I feel very comfortable there.

In the vicinity, several movie posters signal the unconventional movies of this theater.

Conclusion

Yoon (2011) states that “current planning practices have neglected the needs of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) community for safe urban spaces in which to live, work, and play” (p. 1). This statement contrasts the somewhat
recent more theoretical discussions about diversity and inclusivity in the planning field in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, and nativity (Corber & Valocci, 2005; Fainstein & Servon, 2005; Fetner, 2008; Hendler & Harrison, 2000; Howe & Hammer, 2002; Mairanne & Young, 2000; Riedorfo, 2000; Spain, 2002), which has lagged behind in terms of the LGBT community (Doan, 2011).

In this chapter we discussed Cambridge’s informal queer spaces, which are often public spaces where queer people have been known to gather to create community and safety, for example Harvard Square and One Kendall Square—although they could also be parks, waterfronts, monuments, etc. Interestingly, the use of these and other spaces by queer people has been ignored by planners.

Learning from the Cambridge experience, planners would do well to also remember Young’s (2011) proposal to construct a normative idea of city life.

By ‘city life’ I mean a form of social relations which I define as the being together of strangers. In the city persons and groups interact within spaces and institutions they all experience themselves as belonging to, but without those interactions dissolving into unity or commonness. City life is composed of clusters of people with affinities—families, social group networks, voluntary associations, neighborhood-networks, a vast array of small ‘communities.’ City dwellers frequently venture beyond such familiar enclaves, however, to the more open public of politics, commerce, and festival, where strangers meet and interact (cf. Lofland, 1973). (Young, 2011, p. 237)

At a more practical level, there are several strategies planners can pursue to increase ownership and/or control of queers when it comes to decisions around neighborhoods. First, planners should take advantage of the decennial U.S. Census, which contains the variable Unmarried Partner Households by Sex of Partners that can be utilized to investigate patterns (Anacker, 2011). Second, planners should take advantage of participatory planning approaches, for example, through inclusive citizen advisory councils to give citizens, including queer voice (Gorman-Murray & Waitt, 2009). Third, planners should officially recognize LGBT historical sites “to ensure preservation and the designation of an area as an LGBT neighborhood in general or comprehensive plan” (Doan & Higgins, 2011, p. 21). Fourth, planners should recognize the existence of queer communities and “be aware of their needs for tolerant and safe spaces” (Doan & Higgins, 2011, p. 21), for example, by designating LGBT residents and communities as priority groups in a social plan, by employing a full-time LGBT project coordinator, by having a regular advisory committee to consult with LGBT residents, and/or by having liaison with LGBT and other organizations that focus on legal and social inclusion (Gorman-Murray & Waitt, 2009). Fifth, planners should recognize the central role of LGBT businesses and community organizations, as many “provide essential community gathering places and are important in establishing and maintaining a sense of neighborhood identity” (Doan & Higgins, 2011, p. 21). Finally, planners should boost queers’ feelings of belonging through establishing dedications, murals, or other landmarks or markers (Gorman-Murray & Waitt, 2009).

Notes

In this chapter we will use the term “queer” interchangeably with “lesbian,” “gay,” “homosexual,” “transgender,” or “LGBT” (see also Doan & Higgins, 2011; Frisch, 2002).

We sought and received approval to conduct interviews from the Committee on the Use of Humans as Experimental Subjects (COUHES) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

A person whose gender identity is neither man nor woman, is between or beyond genders, or is some combination of genders. This identity is usually related to or in reaction to the social construction of gender, gender stereotypes, and the gender binary system. Some genderqueer people identify under the transgender umbrella while others do not (UC Berkeley Gender Equity Resource Center, n.d., n.p.).

References


UNDERSTANDING LGBTQ-FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOODS IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH

The Trade-off Between Visibility and Acceptance

Petra L. Doan

Introduction

Years of discrimination against non-normative genders and sexualities have created a deep-seated desire for safe spaces within urban areas among many lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer (LGBTQ) people, whether they live in large metropolitan areas, smaller cities, or rural communities. Although queer spaces in larger cities garner the most public attention, not everyone can afford the costs of education or afford the rents of such districts. Moreover, not all cities have sufficient numbers of LGBTQ people to create viable queer neighborhoods and retail/entertainment districts. Given these challenges, what can smaller cities do to create life and inclusive spaces for gender and sexual minorities? This study examines the habitation patterns and locational choices of LGBTQ people from a smaller metropolitan area in the southern United States—a region in which the climate for LGBTQ people is generally less than welcoming.

In particular, this chapter provides a closer examination of a single neighborhood, Indian Head Acres, in Tallahassee, a medium-sized city in Florida, which has attracted an assortment of LGBTQ individuals. The analysis explores the ways that this space is subtly coded as an LGBTQ-friendly space. One interviewee in the study recognized the progressive nature of the area and characterized it as a “granola” neighborhood because granola is loaded with fruit and a lot of nuts (longue in cheek reference to gays, lesbians, and other bohemians), and is most commonly sold in natural food stores and cooperatives. One such store is located just at the northern edge of the community examined in this study, making this term particularly apt.