

Sexuality and Space: Queering geographies of globalization  
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session title:

**Revisiting the material world:**  
urban policy, design + activism  
after queer nationalism & globalization

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## **Living in the material world (again): Linking activism & physical space through late queer theory**

Madonna Ciccone's 1980s anthem equated 'the material world' of sexuality (and sexual politics) with the contorted markets of expanding consumerism. Barely five years later, queer nationalism emerged as the most powerful alliance to date between sexual minorities, mobilizing women and men from both minority and hegemonic ethnic groups. In the same period, queer theory (Seidman 1997: 139 – 161, Escoffier 1998: 173-185), largely originating from the North American university English Departments, became established as the major vantage point for examining homoeroticism -- as well as homophobia and disparities around sexuality and sexual minorities. But the narratives examined in early queer theory, the indicators of actual social relationships and transactions, were overwhelmingly literary (Turner 2000). And most of these texts were fictional.

Throughout the last decade, a host of older sociological and more recent geographical indicators and models, as well as a wider range of less text-based culture, have had less impact. The notions of reality, that asserted homoeroticism and recognized associated disparities, were dominated by the written word. Paradoxically, this strong link between queer theory and certain often dominant discourses around activism has been at a time when popular (and scholarly) culture has been diversifying outside of a small number of text-based venues.

Our arguments, in organizing this panel, are the following.

1. The paradigmatic links between literature, queer theory and activism, that characterized queer nationalism over the nineteen nineties, have declined.
2. The early queer literary / theory / nationalism paradigm provided the basis for some forms of activism, such as around AIDS and other severe threats to the body. But this work was insufficient for framing and valuing some other forms of civic activism.
3. Other perspectives and sources of information, often lumped under such headings as 'cognitive mapping', are providing some additional frameworks for asserting homoeroticism along with tracking and confronting homophobia and related inequities -- including around

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strategic sites and forms of territorialisation.

4. The diversity of these other available sources, and the pressures for confronting persisting inequities, are returning activism to an emphasis on the material world and such physical indicators as space, economics and bodies engaged in a range of linked experiences.
5. But globalization, particularly in a time of an expanding economy of information, can not be understood in terms of purely physical or classically 'materialist' indicators.
6. A return to the material world represents a diversification of the modes of discourse used for tracking and asserting queer experiences -- not a negation of the querying of culture as a link to broader social experience. Analysis of queer life through cultural narratives will continue to be central to defining frameworks for political activism. But the impact and relevance of related scholarship will be increasingly a result of links that emerge between narratives of common and divergent experiences, a range of material indicators, and new forms of civic activism.

Now, a decade after the explosion of queer nationalism, we can better examine the contradictory legacies of these theoretical developments on interventions in the material world of sexual minorities, urban space and related urban policy. Our discussion examines the links between a century of sexual minority activism and more recent opportunities that have emerged with notions of 'queer space'. We begin with the question of how has queer theory prepared sexual minorities for increased engagement, in 'the material world', in response to the persisting inequities experienced by those networks and communities engaged in homoeroticism?

### **Problem statement:**

#### **The limits to tracking disparities around homoeroticism through literary narratives**

Most people who experience marginalization because of same-sex desire also contend with unequal access to social and environmental resources through at least one other condition such as their race, culture, language, class, disability, and age - not to mention their gender. Confronting those combined and cumulative inequities, this difference, has been the greatest weakness of gay liberation, lesbian feminism, and queer nationalism. A failure to recognise this and the subsequent inability to negotiate alliances has remained the Achilles Heel of much activism that attempts to confront homophobia and build queer communities. To reduce these many inequities to generic difference or even to the problems of decolonisation tends to obscure the full extent of what, two decades ago, might have been conceived, jumbled together, as overlapping oppression.

Certainly, some queerscapes are more colonial or liberatory than others. Some queerscapes are little more than plantations and some are closer to country clubs. Some queer networks are heavily constrained by state interventions, totalitarianism or a stifling emphasis on consumption.

In every queerscape, no matter how egalitarian, there are environmental, political and economic factors that enforce some inequities. The formation of networks and even more territorialized communities often nearly parallels these 'hierarchies of oppression'. Being in a cultural or language minority often constrains access to public space where a person can make contact and find peer support. These differences often overwhelm and further distort the *de facto* spatial apportionment that a queer individual experiences and work to limit the amount of (private and public) space that is effectively available to minorities.

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Recognition of the queerscape provides the basis for better identifying and monitoring transactions and inequities in the enjoyment of landscape amenities. Equally, these other forms of containment and isolation, derived from social hierarchies other than homophobia, can be more precisely mapped. But it is easy to reduce the analysis to what was once referred to as primary contradictions, especially those persisting in postcolonialism<sup>1</sup> and related to race, culture, and class. It is more difficult, but equally as important, to consider the inequities that result from language, disability, and age: conditions that in the global labour market could become more significant generators of inequities than they are at present. Today, nationalities function less around shared territories and more around the lines that link local experience to global exchange. For sexual minorities over the last three decades, key social affiliations have often been linked to a small number of strategic sites that often function as regional centres for socialising, services and social (more than that of classical notions of ghettos).

Current politics around challenging and confronting homophobia, racism and gender inequality, and their host of synergies in the disparity of access to information and (both physical and electronic) public space, become central to the work of any activism that hopes to diminish social inequities in queer communities and communalities (Saalfield & Navarro 1991).

### **Reality B.Q.T. (before queer theory)**

Studies of marginalized sexualities and sexual minorities before queer theory were often dominated by the sociology and history of homosexualities: of 'gay and lesbian studies'. These frameworks for recognizing individuals and asserting and describing experiences linked to homoeroticism had severe limitations that queer theory partially functioned to alleviate.

The following were the key problems with earlier lesbian and gay studies; difficulties that sometimes persist and which influence later developments in queer theory.

- ❖ Sociology was the privileged discourse and was treated as science. Other discourses were largely devalued.
- ❖ Other than relatively localized and obscure socialist feminist, there were no frameworks for querying and challenging privileged perspectives and realities -- particularly in terms of gendered, cultural and postcolonial difference.
- ❖ The indicators and measures related to lesbian and gay studies were limited. Information tended to be one extreme or the other: either qualitative interviews or excessively quantitative and often reductive data. Large portions of the experiences and conditions of sexual minorities, especially of women and cultures outside of Europe and North American, were devalued as 'not really being gay or lesbian' or ignored.
- ❖ Information was forced into a small number of categories, sometimes linked to identity politics, that negated a wide range of erotic experiences. Just one example was the 'problem' posed by bisexuality that often lead to its being ignored in lesbian and gay studies.

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- ❖ B.Q.T., self-defined experiences of sexual minorities, and homoerotic culture in general, were often discounted and ignored as not being 'objective'. And the solution to this problem, of a kind of self-censorship of queerness, is perhaps the greatest contribution of early queer theory. There is now intellectual space to describe a wider range of homoerotic and transgendered experiences (that moves beyond the in/out dualism imposed by concepts of the closet) even without quantitative measures removed from the subjects.

Much debate can be generated around how effectively queer theory has responded to these problems. One thing that is clear is that these obstacles prevented both scholarship and activism, from recognizing the wider range of queer experiences and their impacts on urban life. In this context, it is understandable that it has taken a decade for queer theory to have achieved this impact. What can be added to these earlier strategies to develop a queerer theory that is better grounded in material conditions as well as critical readings of cultural discourses? In this panel, we explore this question specifically in terms of providing a better basis for recognizing inequities around sexual minorities and marginalized sexualities in public and private space -- and for organizing collective interventions in those spaces.

### **Why revisit the material world?**

Full democracy, of course, entails more than giving underrepresented groups their civil rights. It also requires eliminating the inequities between the haves and the have-nots that make tolerance of 'minorities' necessary. When practices that disturb the coherence of the social imaginary or that fall beyond the boundaries of intelligibility are tolerated as 'minority deviations', the propriety of the prevailing symbolic order and the social relations it secures remain unquestioned.

(Hennessy 1994: 89)

In reviewing the emergence of queer theory, Steven Seidman identified what he saw as the postmodern departure in gay culture and politics that provided the basis for the particular link between scholarship and activism that emerged a decade ago. He argued that queer theory (and nationalism) arose from

multiple, local, intersecting struggles whose aim [was] less the end of domination or human liberation than the creation of social spaces that encourage the proliferation of pleasures, desires, voices, interests, modes of individuation and democratization.  
(Seidman 1993: 106)

Indeed, modern social theory, has been weak, in general, on recognizing qualitative transactions and processes as related to the following:

1. desires:
2. pleasures and related acts;

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3. voices;
4. interests
5. modes of individuation and collectivity; and
6. the pressures for equity and democratization.

In fact, there have been threads of twentieth century modernism and totalitarianism that have been focused on the constraining and actual negation of these experiences and discourses.

While queer theory recognized a new world beyond totalising narratives, the imperatives for mapping more locations of homoerotic contact and experience have gone unfulfilled. This is because early queer theory provided virtually no theoretical basis, certainly none with any rigour, for tracking the sociology, geography and space formation of the homoerotic 'material world'. In fact, queer theory's concentration on 'readings' of literary texts often obfuscated physical and political economic relationships. What then would theories of queers in space be like if they were driven by desires to understand how social relationships are formed by and are being reconstructed across inhabited space?

The level of serious intellectual engagement around sexual minority concerns for public space remains limited in policy formation, civic politics and urban design. We believe that it is in better understanding these myriad potential forms of queer interventions that there is the basis for a critical and politically salient theory of queers in space (Ingram, Retter & Bouthillette, 1997: 3-15). And it is with this activist engagement that a deeper basis for understanding the texture of queer and non-queer space within larger erotic (and often misogynist and de-eroticized) landscapes of 'public' and 'private' can be developed. But such a framework, that links desire with social resources, space and policy requires a framework that tracks the material world far more rigorously than queer theory. In 1994, Rosemary Hennessy noted the avoidance, in queer theory, of materialist social theory and materialist feminist analysis in particular (Hennessy 1994: 90-91). She noted two tendencies in queer theory: a textual approach to signification (Hennessy 1994: 93) versus a more Foucauldian, post-Marxist materialism typified by an almost total avoidance of the role of labour in social life. Compounding this gap was the "equation of sociality with the symbolic" (Hennessy 1994: 97) through which queer theory has relegated sexuality to the realm of culture and artificially separated it from the market and capital (Hennessy 1994: 106).

Today, members of sexual minorities are increasingly forced to deal more precisely, theoretically and rigorously with the details of social space. And while there are some new scholarly enclaves, such as queer theory, few of the radical implications of theories of queer **space** have been acknowledged in public policy, urban planning and environmental design. The following passage from one of the most important recent theoretical discussions on the topic, Rosalyn Deutsche's *Evictions* (1996), begins to lay the basis for a critique of both notions of queer space described entirely through cultural expression and those of the city where homoerotic bodies have little specific impacts on physical space.

Spatial forms are social structures ... Space, severed from its social production, is thus fetishized as a physical entity and undergoes, through inversion, a transformation. Represented as an

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independent object, it appears to exercise control over the very people who produce and use it. The impression of objectivity is real to the extent that the city is alienated from the social life of its inhabitants. The functionalization of the city, which presents space as politically neutral, merely utilitarian, is then filled with politics. For the notion that the city speaks for itself conceals the identity of those who speak through the city. (Deutsche 1996: 52).

### **Too many arguments about queers in public (& private) space**

Most people who are homoerotic and who identify as being either 'queer' or a member of another sexual minority are familiar with having to share social space with and accommodate people who are either hostile to them or less than empathetic. Most of the time, sexual minorities and homoerotic acts are barely tolerated, if at all. In better situations, we are afforded small amounts of public space. But many of us who have organized political or cultural events have had the curious experience of being told that there was a 'location conflict', that there was no room, when we have tried to arrange the use of public spaces for queer events. This leads us to question how much of this 'lack of public space' is due to the demands of other, often avowedly heterosexual groups, how much results from our minority position and how much from outright 'homophobia' (Herdt & Boxer 1992; Skelton 1995)<sup>2</sup>.

By recognizing specific experience of and actions in physical space, people lay the basis for mapping it. Through mapping social space more clearly, we invariably alter our uses of it and transform it. Processes of reconstruction, of what today is sometimes called queer space, is the subject of the second half of this discussion. But before it is viable to begin this project, it is necessary to look more clearly at a host of strategies that fall under the rubric of being and surviving as 'queer'. More specifically, there are unresolved tensions between homoerotic acts and identities and between some groups coping with marginalization and more active strategies of resistance and alliance formation. Most of the social space of marginalized sexualities is (and will continue to be) public though the form it takes and the extent to which wider populations can access this space will continue to vary greatly. This discussion is intended to enable better tracking of inequities in public space around the expression and enjoyment of homoeroticism and sexual dissidence. For people who can afford to worry less about the violence of homophobia on a day-to-day basis, this discussion is about charting goals for constructing new kinds of social spaces. But those social spaces, perennially vulnerable to homophobic violence along with more organized state repression, embody particular strategies and histories of resistance (Norton 1992; Chauncey 1994).

Our discussion is also an exploration of what has been termed "building free territory" (Wittman 1998 [1972]: 339) and Franz Fanon's less sympathetic notion "homosexual territory" (Fanon: 1967: 183)<sup>3</sup> in his essay on decolonisation. This conscious making and transforming of homoerotic social space has been recognized for centuries. For example, the term 'Sodom' has been used, often negatively, to describe homoerotic space taking and placemaking in urban England going back to at least the sixteenth century (Norton 1992: 20). In this discussion, we are looking at a range of places some as small as closets and others that extend well beyond buildings to landscapes, metropolitan regions and even more global linkages. All of these forms invariably have theoretical and cultural dimensions as well as implications for policy, design, and the management of specific places.

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Some broader theoretical questions begin to emerge about sexuality, political economy, design and public space. Why is play, pleasure, and erotism so often marginalised (Winchester & White 1988) in relation to power, so-called democracy and economic function in urban design (Kerkin 1998) and in the public space that is subsequently built? Is the effective censoring of homoeroticism and sexual minorities from public space largely the result of this broader hostility to the uncontrollable bodies that consensual sexuality (but especially minority eroticism) can engender? Are location conflicts between heteronormative and homoerotic functions of social space simply the result of constraints on sexual expression between autonomous adults, in general, or more persistent and mutating forms of homophobia? If we can create increasingly more sex-positive cultures that are relatively devoid of homophobia, will there continue to be location conflicts simply because of the minority status of certain forms of erotic expression? And, would homoeroticism in this context continue to be a minority sexuality?

A wider range of perceptions, ideas, and priorities related to communities and the environments and regions in which they are situated are crucial in order "to build effective affinities" (Haraway 1991: 157) for new queer alliances. An extension of this argument is that without more supple theory<sup>4</sup> for resolving questions related to communities and respective localities, efforts to expand and strengthen alliances, in a period of globalized capitalism that "privatize public space and publicize private space" (Boyer 1994: 3), are bound to fail. Both 'queerness'<sup>5</sup> and public space, in all their different forms, are at crucial junctures on the map of political and cultural thought in this new century. Given the contradictions in the current period dominated by globalization and class entrenchment, with new gains for and yet new assaults on networks and enclaves of sexual minorities, theories of sex, communality, activism and public (and private) space have never been more unresolved and in need of renewed activism.

### **Trajectories of queer urban activism under globalization**

In North America, the 1969 Stonewall Riots, and the early activism around public space in the preceding few years in Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco, were the first (somewhat) conscious attempts to claim and then reconstruct queer space. Gay liberation and lesbian feminism, however, did not provide all of the theory<sup>6</sup> to look at the diversity of social relations<sup>7</sup> and contexts in which homoerotic acts take place. Gay liberation and lesbian feminism were far too often framed in white, eurocentric, North American terms that effectively excluded people of colour and much of the activism of the Third World (Hall 1996: 14; Drucker 1996)<sup>8</sup>.

After gay liberation and lesbian feminism came the lesbian sex and race wars (Duggan 1995), the porn wars (Waugh 1996: 3-6) and the ravages of AIDS. These factors, alongside increasing globalization and the redefinition of national identities, re-enforced the unevenness of social development for sexual minorities -- especially in the earlier gay enclaves and ghettos. Then, between 1987 and 1991, came the media actions of ACT UP, Outrage! and Queer Nation which once again attempted to (re)appropriate public space. With the increased globalization of capital, however, queer space had been dissected, stretched, fragmented, and spread in ways that until recent decades would have only been possible to imagine in science fiction. While sometimes very new and exciting public spaces have been created, "the territorial economy" (Escoffier 1998: 66) of the later gay ghettos typically has entrenched class, gender and (at times, even) ethnic hierarchies.

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Queer theory of the early 1990s, in recognizing this trajectory of activism with its direct implications for public and private space, began to create the basis for a more precise framework for the spatial and political economies of sexual minorities. But today this theory which is largely based in literary and other cultural studies is increasingly constraining understandings of the links between individual subjectivities and the broader context of the material world. While queer theory revived a field of geography, centred around subjectivities such as sexuality, the implications for more aggressive studies of the links between physical spaces and eroticized cultures, remains sorely lacking. We believe that a theory of the spaces of homoeroticism and sexual minorities is actually crucial to expanding and diversifying the frameworks for understanding these groups. Physical space and its experience, in subjective and collective terms, is becoming increasingly central to new forms of queer theory that lays the basis for activism.

### **Strategies for tracking & mapping queer transactions (across space)**

Public space, by its position within most societies, is collectively designed, managed and redesigned on an ongoing basis. In this discussion, we offer different analyses of the intersection of spaces of habitation and contention. The intention is to find a more compelling basis for theories of queer politics and intervention in our communities, especially in a time when all totalizing ideologies are in decline. As activists from divergent disciplines and various networks of sexual minorities and minority sexualities (Warner 1993: 240; Waugh 1996: 5), we explore a more expansive and provisional theory of queers in space, that includes communities, landscapes<sup>9</sup> (with their inevitable biophysical, cultural, and ideological dimensions (Baker 1992)), and strategic places. In this more comprehensive framework for viewing social inequities, including those derived from patriarchy and homophobia, we examine 'class' and class struggle in terms of globalizing political economies and local forms of resistance. As we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century, after a century of some of the worst forms of crass and reductionist materialism, a thorough analysis of spatial formation and articulation, including that from people with marginalized sexualities, may provide a way to understand the demarcation between material production and cultural, as well as spiritual, engagement.

The vocabulary of public space has gone through its own evolution. In recent years, it has become possible, finally, to publicly debate issues around "public (homo)sex" (Bell 1995: 305) in areas such as city parks. But so far, there has often only been vague mention of the specific physical relationships between sex, social discourse, and site. While general descriptions may suffice in certain contexts, they lack both the analytical framework and data to be used for advocating better management of such areas, which in most of the urban areas of the world are degrading from habitat fragmentation, pollution and trampling. In practical terms, many of these areas are becoming more hostile to sexual minorities, such as sexually active gay men, who have used them for years. This contradiction in the new queer geographies is highly problematic for activists and may spawn alternative perspectives grounded more in the discourse of social needs for public space as part of the built environment. Here, another paradox becomes evident in that most open space is only partially designed and constructed. The cusps of zones overtly altered by humans and more natural areas have often been particularly attractive to sexual renegades.

A mapping of social relations in process, in contrast to the kind of static tracing that has dominated landscape architecture and urban design over the last century, has a myriad of uses

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and connections to possible interventions and activism. Too much of twentieth century planning and design has been linked to various forms of social surveillance and technocratic control. Modifying the architecture of these scapes of marginalized sexualities more consciously is part of the broader project of environmental design through 'staging uncertainty'<sup>10</sup> that allows for those potentially more spontaneous and less predictable social pursuits such as erotic expression, fraternity and love. In this context, environmental design becomes part of a mapping that is as temporal as it is spatial: an indefinite project to 'restrategize' the deployment of events and, for (homo)erotic communalities, an extension of the Surrealist project of 'systematic bewilderment.' Architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, and planning have direct impacts on these pressures for broader and more democratic processes of "queering" (Bell *et. al.* 1994: 32) places, as defined by the needs and perspectives of particular networks and communities other than the most privileged. In order to do this, we must look more closely at 'queer', theories of queer space and political economic interventions in these zones and relate them back to the things that matter most in our (queer) communities.

**Narratives | map | interventions:  
Contesting current forms of public (& private) space**

'[I]t is the map that engenders the territory[.]'

Jean Baudrillard (1983: 2)

The social spaces of sexual minorities are often either highly ephemeral or constrained – that is, 'ghettoized'. Many networks involve considerable connectedness as a result of their relatively small size and consequent isolation. Paradoxically, the spaces of earlier "satellite cultures" (Sadownick 1996: 23) found in the pre-Stonewall gay male life of North American and western European cities, have become a late twentieth century signifier. This connection/disconnection contradiction influences how most of us exist in and build our respective networks and communities. Many of us, especially those on the furthest margins of sexual minorities, are very much still struggling for our psychic or cognitive space as much as some physical space on the planet. On these shifting outer limits, space, as an inherently vague concept, becomes less important as a trendy code word for various types of postmodern malaise and more useful as a means for renewed tracking of chronic inequities and power relations, as related to gender (Butler 1990), race<sup>11</sup> and access to communality and resources, amongst other categories.

The places where sexual minority identities can express themselves sexually and the spaces where acts can be transformed into identities are some of the more strategic and transformative queer spaces. Such zones of exploration date to well before the emergence of modern notions of gay men and lesbians as part of an "alternative modernist enterprise" (Boone 1996: 244) associate with homosexual subcultures going back to the 1920s, particularly in Paris and New York City. The eroticized margins of the social 'datascape' (Corner 1998) can be called a queerscape - larger than a community, or more precisely a "gay population" (Brown 1998: 74), but smaller, more grounded and with less pretence than any sort of singular Queer Nation or planet. A queerscape is also a matrix for both the assertion of same-sex desire and for resistance to homophobia and heteronormativity. In these spaces there are always currents of imagination,

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of only partially recognized and territorialized desire, that is as much about an open space as its vegetation and its designed fixtures. But it is a landscape of erotic alienation<sup>12</sup> and alien(ated) nations. As a social layer in the (urban) landscape, a queerscape shifts with the changing demographics, political economies, and the blurred boundaries of public and private space (as influenced by both the state<sup>13</sup> and non-state institutions, aesthetics, and cultures of desire).

In order to better respond to the transformation of social space by sexual minorities and marginalized sexual acts, there are a huge number of forms of homoerotic communalities, that warrant careful study, comparison, and analysis. The following are just a few of the relatively unexplored sociological phenomenon of queer space.

- ❖ The so-called gay (and the few lesbian) 'ghettos' are poorly studied, even San Francisco's. Research that has been conducted on these locales should be fully compiled and analyzed.
- ❖ A number of basic questions about the political economy of gay ghettos could be explored to do with relative costs, benefits and risks (such as from homophobic violence) that they present.
- ❖ The presence and social transactions of sexual minorities in spaces that supposedly provide alternatives to ghettos, such as suburbs and margins, can be more fully inventoried and analyzed.
- ❖ There are a host of broader questions about the uneven development of sexual economies of pleasure across metropolitan areas, including the position of homoeroticism in general, and its specific impact on the social life of neighbourhoods.
- ❖ There is great need for case studies and comparison of use patterns and social transactions in relatively public queer sites such as parks, beaches, streets, cafés, baths, clubs, raves and broader neighbourhood strips.
- ❖ The relative significance of those public and private sites, that are 'strategic' (Ingram 1997) to various networks of sexual minorities (and their comparison to sites that are important to non-minority sexualities) is a huge question with implications for both sociology, public policy, and urban planning and design.
- ❖ The relationships between 'coding', use, and aesthetics (and the need for specific forms of design for sexually minorities) has barely been explored
- ❖ And from a political standpoint, a framework for tracking inequities more precisely, that takes into account the combined implications of gender, ethnicity, language, age and location, amongst other things, is overdue. And the longer this framework takes to gestate the more difficult it will be to articulate social policy for various vulnerable and under-represented groups of sexual dissidents and minorities.

### **Conclusions:**

#### **Expanding the landscape of queer narratives**

#### **+ linking narratives to inventions**

As we illustrate with the case studies in this panel, there are a host of under-utilized ways to describe the experiences, conditions and impacts of sexual minorities in public (and private) space. Each of these added strategies for conducting research recognizes still neglected aspects

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of queer life. And this new knowledge, then, is linked to a wider range of strategies, tactics and interventions for asserting, defending and transforming homoerotic and transgendered space.

in conclusion...

As for providing the basis for tracking the spaces and material conditions of sexual minorities, queer theory has not been particularly queer or even constituted much of a departure from its posited nemesis, essentialism. As the constructionism versus essentialism debates exhaust themselves, a host of new ways of looking at homoerotic(ized) social relationships and space can emerge. If we create a theory of queer space and queers in space, grounded in the needs for better ways to transform our networks, neighbourhoods and metropolitan areas, the role of geography, sociology, (including ethnography and even cultural studies) and urban policy far exceed the opportunities for research afforded by literature.

The following discussions in this panel begin to outline new research strategies and information sources -- for more vital links

1. between individual and collective experience and creating better social environments,
2. between theory and activism, and
3. between intuitive realizations and research leading to conclusions that provide the basis for badly needed public policy around sexual minorities.

The new task of queer placemaking is to implode the false binaries of pleasure and struggle (Hennessy 1994: 105) to create three-dimensional continuums of a richer and less state and market-regulated set of experiences. Hennessy argued for a "materialist queer theory [that] can put forward a critique of heterosexuality that does not shrink from celebrating the human capacity for sensual pleasure even as it does to address the overdetermined relations among identities, norms, and divisions of labour." (1994: 108-109)

Having made this argument, we do not believe that sociology or geography can assert themselves in the queer space **cultural** discourse without considerable resistance. For one thing, renewed use of empirical data (what people do, where and how in relation to particular designed spaces and spatial typologies such as apartments, park, cafés etc.) will make the decade of queer theory discourses look poorly substantiated (as, indeed, much of it is). More problematically, a sociology of queer space will also highlight how most urban planning processes largely ignore or discount questions of sexuality (and even gender) as well as regional political economies of pleasure (as opposed to leisure) in general. There are virtually no urban planning and design positions on earth, where a scholar has been able to focus on questions of sexuality (and still very few on gender). So any invigorated sociology of queer space would be necessarily expansive, 'make waves', be viewed as aggressive and 'bad' in the new world order of 'queer [cultural] space *lite*'. Such a renewed interest in "on-the-ground" (so-to-speak) material relationships might be viewed by some as being a kind of 'vulgar materialism', prompting critiques harkening back to those applied to the bastardised versions of historical materialism that were so popular in the 1970s. This misunderstanding is compounded by the fact that there have been relatively few community-based groups of sexual minorities that have actually demanded more rigorous and empirical research on use of space (as a prelude to redesign). In fact, a central tenet of twentieth

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century liberal scholarship, that people have a right to information about themselves (including about how they as a sexual minority use and do not use space) may need to be aggressively re-articulated in the coming decade.

Our rhetorical response to the obstacles (listed above) to a sociology/planning theory of queer space is that there is literally nowhere else to go. Many people do not have effective access to the often expensive and male-oriented ghettos. Women are still often marginalized across metropolitan areas particularly around sites of lesbian sexual expression and public sex in particular. A host of other networks have so little space that a social geography of queer space is quickly needed to confirm strategic sites so that they can be maintained and defended, amongst other forms of urban interventions. We hope that this paper will encourage some readers to begin to pursue more cross-disciplinary research in the coming years involving sociology, geography, planning, and where relevant, even literature.

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## Notes

1 "Postcolonial" often is used for the neocolonial which is often not very different from the colonial. (Burgin 1996: 189). For a key discussion of the not-so-postcolonial, see the essay "The postcolonial and the postmodern" in Bhabha (1994).

<sup>2</sup> See Herdt & Boxer (1992: 2) where they relate the emergence of the notion of homophobia to the critical social positioning that emerged with the gay liberation movements. For a discussion of more culturally engrained attitudes, see Tracey Skelton (1995)

<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, Fanon did not consider such space very substantial (Bleys 1995: 3-4) and was homophobic himself.

4 The architectural theorist, Manfredo Tafuri (1976: 1-49), spoke of using theory for the recognition of conflictual and dialectical relationships in environmental design.

5 "I prefer to define queerness historically as an identity, arising in the 1980s through the confluence of the relatively separate gay and lesbian movements of the previous decade, joining not just gays and lesbians, but all manner of sex/gender scuffles under a simple in-your-face term. As a historical phenomenon, its spatial signifiers can be charted and analyzed." (Reed 1996: 64)

6 For a broader framework, in which lesbian/gay/queer theory can be situated within decolonization along with various forms of internationalism and transculture, see Homi Bhabha's theory of "the other" in *The Location of Culture* (1994: 19-39).

7 "Sex is fundamentally a social activity. A history of sexuality is a history of social relations." (Kinsman 1996: 26)

8 Drucker (1996: 77-78 & 85-86) began to construct an analytical framework to better account for the extent and the diversity of sexual minorities in 'the developing world' and 'the South' that would more clearly recognize the impacts on both difference and strategies for activism from both imperialism and the persistence of "indigenous sexualities". While his review is a step towards a more global theory of sexual minorities, though at a time when such a notion is

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increasingly suspect, there is only a limited recognition of the more contemporary impacts of the increasing globalization of capital and the rise of Third World middle-classes. In this context, his notion of persistent 'indigenous sexualities' might be better conceived as "localized sexualities" where there is persistent resistance to eurocentric framings of gender and sexualities - including many which include strong elements of homoeroticism.

9 The term "landscape" emerged both as a concept and a "way of seeing" in the 15th and early 16th centuries (Cosgrove 1985: 46). See, also Deutsche. (1996: 21) where she argues that "A landscape...is an object framed for, and therefore inseparable from, a viewer."

<sup>10</sup> Corner (1998) attributes this phrase to Koolhaas.

11 For a discussion of inequities in black, Asian and latino and white gay men in the United States, see Sadownick (1996: 16).

12. Manfredo Tafuri (1976: 1) described the metropolis as "the place of absolute alienation" and related this alienation to capitalism. We would argue, that even with some recent liberalization in the corporate world, capitalism is still intrinsically bound to patriarchy and homophobia.

13 For an analysis of the more liberal state, still very much an exception in government considerations of sexual minorities, see Whittle (1994).,