Queering neighbourhoods: Politics and practice in Toronto

Catherine Jean Nash[1]

Department of Geography
Brock University, St Catharines ON L2S 3A1
cnash@brocku.ca

Abstract

Changing political, social and economic circumstances operating across a variety of scales are transforming the socio-spatial landscapes for Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans and Queer (LGBTQ) people in Toronto. While the established gay village continues to be the imagined and material centre of political and social life for the LGBTQ community, various groups are increasingly utilizing other locations in the downtown core but outside the Village, particularly an area know colloquially as 'Queer West.' This paper argues that for some queer women/gender queers individuals, the Village is not viewed as a desirable location for social or political organising given perceptions the area is dominated by largely white, middle class, gay men. Further, the possibilities, potentials and limitations for queer women/genderqueer individuals to take up alternative locations are constituted through complex social relations and include notions of what 'queered' and 'queering' space entails and participants' own imagined sense of place and reflecting aspects of their own classed, racialized and gendered positioning

Introduction

There is a growing concern that some gay villages appear to be in decline, experiencing a loss of businesses expressly catering to a gay or lesbian clientele, a shrinking Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans and Queer (LGBTQ) residential concentration

---

and a concurrent growth in businesses and residential accommodations dominated by to a heterosexual men and women (Binnie 2004; Brown 2004; Collins 2004; Visser 2008; Gorman-Murray and Waitt 2009; Browne and Bakshi 2011).[2] LGBTQ political, social and economic organizations fear they will experience diminishing political and economic clout without a territorial base to draw on (Binnie and Skeggs 2004; Bell and Binnie 2004; Casey 2004; Reynolds 2009). Municipalities intent on utilizing the presence of a gay village as markers of diversity, tolerance and cosmopolitanism risk potentially losing marketability and tourist dollars (e.g. Florida 2002)

The City of Toronto has a well-established commercial and residential gay village (the 'Village'); one that is fully integrated into the social and cultural fabric of the city and one that has remained at the centre of gay and lesbian political and economic life since the mid 1970s (Kinsman 1996; Nash 2005, 2006; Warner 2002). And yet, here too, anxiety exists around whether the Village is in decline (although there is little empirical evidence to support these concerns). At the same time, alternative neighbourhoods are developing a reputation as new queer districts populated with queer friendly bars, restaurants and cafés (Di Prado 2006; Ledger, 2010a, and b; Gee 2011).

In order to better understand what is happening in Toronto with respect to the Village and alternative queer neighbourhoods and venues, this paper examines how and why some self identified queer women/gender queer individuals[3] are choosing to live and/or socialize in an alternative area labeled 'Queer West.'[4] Drawing on

---

[2] How the terms such as 'lesbian', 'gay', 'bisexual', 'queer' and 'trans' are used in this paper depends on when they are used, by whom and in what context. 'LGBTQ' is most often used by academics, LGBTQ activists and community members as a catchall phrase to refer to a broad range of gendered and sexual minorities and is used that way here where appropriate. Participants generally use the terms 'lesbian' and 'gay' as identity categories referencing unproblematically male or female embodied individuals who express same sex desire. Queer is taken up in a number of different ways and is explored here in the context of identities, subjectivities and practices. 'Trans' is used most often to reflect a shifting understanding of gender and embodiment with varying degrees of stability or multiplicity.

[3] The term 'queer women/gender queer individuals' is an admittedly bulky term but is intended to capture the complexity of the self-understandings deployed by participants. While the majority of the 15 participants (12) positioned themselves as 'queer' women initially, this was usually followed by a series of modifiers or qualifiers (e.g. 'queer, les, gay dyke' or 'queer macho-femme') to complicate their positions. One participant identified as gay, a second participant identified as 'dyke' and a third participant identified as 'gender queer.'

[4] This paper draws on 15 interviews with self-identified queer women/genderqueer individuals. All participants had some secondary education (some college (1); undergraduate degree (5) completed Master's level (5); PhD (2); PhD in progress (1) and one incomplete undergraduate. The ages ranged from 18 to 45 years and all participants lived in Toronto's downtown. Nine participants identified using the term 'white.' The remaining participants identified, variously, as a 'person of colour', 'half white-half black', 'brown', 'black African Jamaican' and 'Latino/white' and 'Asian.' Of those who provided an answer to the question of 'class' identification, nine identified as 'middle' class, one as 'upper middle' class and one as lower middle class. Two individuals identified as working class. Finally, four participants were unemployed; nine identified as employed fulltime, three as part time, two as full time students and no information on one participant. All interviews were conducted in downtown Toronto, were unstructured and opened ended, recorded and transcribed. All participants were provided with copies of their transcripts for comment, clarification or revision.

interview data, and archival research,[5] this paper argues that while there are myriad idiosyncratic reasons why some queer women/gender queer individuals are drawn to Queer West, there are also collectively expressed rationales that speak to both the commonality of some experiences around the sexualized, gendered, racialized and classed nature of urban space in Toronto.[6] In exploring these common rationales and experiences, this paper seeks to contribute to the growing body of geographical scholarship on the transformative processes reconstituting longstanding gay villages and LGBTQ urban spaces (Brown 2004, Gorman-Murray and Waitt 2007; Ruting 2008; Visser 2008).

The paper begins by providing background and context through a brief overview of the Canadian political, legislative and social landscapes as well as a description of both the Village and the Queer West neighbourhood. Second, this research is positioned in the broader geographical scholarship on the varying transformations taking place in gay villages in many western cities. The third section details queer women/gender queer individuals place making activities in Queer West, and highlights some of the complications, tensions and transformations in the context of Toronto's political and social urban landscapes.

A. Canadian sexualized and gendered landscapes: Toronto's gay village and 'Queer West'

The current transformations underway in the Village and in the constitution of alternative LGBTQ landscapes need to be positioned within the contemporary political and social environment in Canada around LGBTQ issues. Canada, in its official posturing, presents itself as unique in its relatively progressive, yet not uncontested legislative, regulatory and human rights protections for gays and lesbians. Gay and lesbian activism, gaining momentum in the 1960s, contributed to the successful albeit partial, decriminalization of homosexuality in 1969 (Kinsman 1996; Smith 2010). By the early 1970s, gay liberation organizations operated in Montreal, Halifax, Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver, agitating for social and legal changes often under difficult personal and collective circumstances (Kinsman 1996; Nash 2005; Warner 2002).

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, gay and lesbian activists campaigned for the inclusion of sexual orientation in human rights legislation at the federal, provincial and municipal levels (Smith 2005, Warner 2002, Rayside 2008). Activists backed numerous court cases pressuring for political and social change while working to build a collective sense of identity and shared purpose (Herman 1995; Kinsman 1995; Nash 2005, 2006). Most significantly, the 1982 Charter of

---

[5] Archival research included examination and analysis of mainstream press (local and national) and LGBT press around perceptions about changes in the Village. Websites and blogs such as Queerwest (QueerWest.org); Gay Toronto (Gay Toronto.com); Toronto Gay Cities (Toronto Gay Cities.com), Lesbian social business network (LSBN.com); Superdyke (directory.superdyke.com/toronto/ etc. provided information on local events.

Rights and Freedoms (the 'Charter') entrenched an open-ended list of human rights protections in the Canadian constitution. Although the Charter did not expressly include sexual orientation as an enumerated ground for protection, the Supreme Court 'read in' sexual orientation in the case of Egan v. Canada [1995] thus ensuring that without express legislative exclusion, sexual orientation is a protected category.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, a series of high profile court cases illustrated the need for further legal protections for gays and lesbians around parental rights, partnership and employment protections (Smith 2010). Several successful court cases resulted in legislative amendments granting same sex co-habiting couples the same status as co-habiting heterosexual couples. Most significantly, in 2005, the federal government passed legislation extending marriage to same sex couples. With that, Canada became one of the few countries in the world where gays and lesbians enjoy the benefits of citizenship including pension and health benefits, open military service, fostering and adopting children and a broad range of other benefits typically extended to 'families' (Grundy and Smith 2005; Sears 2005; Field 2007; Rayside 2008, Smith 2010; Warner 2010; LaViolette 2009; Osterlund 2009; Trembly, Paternotte and Johnson 2011).[7]

Despite these gains, an increasing vocal opposition (largely religiously-based) is actively seeking to diminish or extinguish these rights and protections (see Nash *et al*, this issue). Much of this opposition takes the form of objections to 'hate speech legislation', 'anti-bullying' policies in schools, the formation of gay-straight student clubs, and an equity-based curriculum which, opponents argue, pushes for the acceptance rather than mere tolerance of gays and lesbians (Smith 2010; Warner 2010). Nevertheless, LGBTQ people in Canada enjoy strong legal protections and general, although not total acceptance in Canadian society.

Toronto's Gay Village

Urban concentrations of gays and lesbians are a common fixture in many North American cities and are often now recognized as an integral aspect of cities' political, social and economic life. In the Canadian context, identifiable gay and lesbian neighbourhoods are well established in Toronto (e.g. Ross 1995, Chenier 2004, Nash 2005), Vancouver (Bouthillette 1997) and Montreal (e.g. Ray 2004; Hunt and Zacharias 2008; Podmore, 2001, 2006) with visible concentrations in Ottawa (Lewis, this issue) and in smaller regional centres such as Lethbridge, Alberta (Muller-Myrdahl, this issue).

Toronto's Village consolidated into a publically recognized gay and lesbian neighbourhood along Church Street in the late 1970s and is currently home to a

---

[7] Same sex marriage is legal in the Netherlands (2000), Belgium (2003), Spain (2005), South Africa (2006), Norway (2008), Sweden (2009) and Portugal (2010) and in the United States in the states of New York, Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, Vermont and New Hampshire. A number of other countries have some combination of civil unions, partnership agreements and other limited legal rights.

substantial concentration of bars, restaurants, cafés, professional, health and social services catering to an LGBTQ clientele (Ross 1995; Kinsman 1996; Nash 2005, 2006). At the heart of the Village is the 519 Church Street Community Center, the main service provider for the LGBTQ community in Toronto. Several blocks south, at the corner of Church and Carleton Streets is the main office of AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT). On the tree-lined, side streets are myriad businesses, from lawyers and accountants to pet care and interior design, geared toward the LGBTQ community. As well, the area is home to the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, a repository of some of the most important historical material on gay and lesbian politics in Canada. Today, the Village stands as the material, imagined and symbolic core of Canada's LGBTQ population along with Montreal's 'Village gai' and Vancouver's 'Davie Street Village.'

Since the mid-2000s, the Village has experienced various economic, political and social transformations although the actual impact these changes are having remains unclear. With the economic turmoil of the last few years, as well as changing demographics, rising land prices, and shifting political and social conditions, a number of several longstanding and iconic Village businesses have either closed or relocated (Miller 2005; Mooney 2010; Kennedy 2010). Many mainstream and LGBTQ commentators argue the Village is experiencing an influx of non-LGBTQ individuals renting or buying units in the new apartment and condominium developments dotting the area and regard the potential loss of LGBTQ space as a direct threat to the LGBTQ communities' political and social strength (Di Pardo 2006; Balkissoon 2009; Mills 2009; Mooney 2010; Ledger 2010a). For others, the demise of the Village as the centre of gay life is a mark of the LGBTQ communities' maturity and coming of age (Ledger 2010b). Despite its apparent decline, Dennis O'Connor, chair of the Church-Wellesley Business Improvement Association (BIA) in which the Village is located, argues the Village remains pivotal for the LGBTQ community. "[I]f we ever need to march again that's where we'll go. In tough times people return to the womb" (Di Pardo 2006, 9).

Queer West - Parkdale, Liberty Village, Trinity-Bell Woods and Beaconsfield

Queer West encompasses an assortment of locations, constituting an imagined sense of a queer place. While its boundaries are nebulous, it is generally seen as encompassing parts of Liberty Village, Trinity-Bell Woods and Beaconsfield districts, although its imagined core is located in the Parkdale neighbourhood. Parkdale, considered by participants to be the imagined centre or core of queer activities in Queer West sits at the edge of the West Queen West district — a trendy, up-and-coming enclave inhabited by "downtown hipsters with their one-gear bikes, condo dogs and rolled-up yoga matts" (Gee 2011, A12). Appearing only recently on the redevelopment radar, Parkdale is a mishmash of stately Victorian homes, mainly converted into apartments and boarding houses; rental buildings, row housing, duplexes and triplexes and a modest amount of low-

rise industrial development. The neighbourhood is home to some 35,000 residents who, on average, are among the cities' poorest (Slater 2004; Whitzman 2009).

Over 10 years ago, Christopher Hume (1997), the Toronto Star's urban affairs columnist, described the neighbourhood as made up of "old poverty and new arrivals, of ugliness and idealism, of shabbiness and fresh paint." Today, it remains a marginal area occupied by Tibetan, Vietnamese, Somali and Philippine newcomers as well as sex workers, drug users, street people, the elderly poor and the marginal of all stripes. On the northwest side, one sees the beginnings of residential gentrification near Roncesvalles with the establishment of new, trendier restaurants and cafes. In recent years, Parkdale and the surrounding area have been caught up in the broader forces of neoliberal-based policy directives encouraging residential redevelopment in the form of high-rise condominiums and the area has experienced an influx of moneyed, mainly white business and home owners. There has been some displacement of more marginal people, including those with very low incomes, psychiatric service users, and new immigrants to Canada. As Carol Whitzman, a local planner argues, Parkdale simultaneously "evokes images of a revitalizing urban village and a declining slum" (2009, 3, see also Slater 2004; Keil 2009).

Queer West is not a visible or publically acknowledged queer neighbourhood in the way that gay villages tend to be although a local festival Queer West Fest is listed on the City of Toronto Website for festivals and events — suggesting that in some sense a more formal recognition process is underway (City of Toronto, 2011). A number of restaurants, bars and hotels host queer events or are regarded as queer friendly because they are owned by LGBTQ people, have visibly queer employees or have a high number of queer users. The neighbourhood does not boast the usual LGBTQ symbols such as rainbow flags, pink triangle stickers or queer positive images although the local community health care facility does have a rainbow flag over its entrance as part of Pride celebrations. A Queer West website, largely a one person operation, has done much to promote the area as a queer alternative to the Village, listing queer venues and hosting queer events such as bike rides, arts shows, community forums and Queer West Fest (Queer West 2011).

B. Traditional gay villages: Transformations and redirections

Gay villages are embedded in the broader transformative processes and pressures at work across urban spaces in North American cities and Toronto's Village is no exception. Geographic scholarship contends that gay villages, operating within wider neoliberal economic and political processes, have been central to the commodification of both gay and lesbian identities and gay village locations (Skeggs, 1999; Bell and Binnie 2004; Binnie and Skeggs Prichard 2002; 2004; Brown 2006: Visser 2008). Municipal governments in North American cities have increasingly been oriented towards neoliberal economic and political ideologies, many embracing an entrepreneurial and competitive stance in order to attract new businesses and refashion themselves as locations supporting diversity,

the arts and counter-cultures (e.g. Keil 2009; Walks 2001; Leitner et al 2007). Gay Villages were often drawn into the fray, in part, due to of Richard Florida's (2002, 256) oft-quoted assertion that "to some extent, homosexuality represents the last frontier of diversity in our society, and thus a place that welcomes the gay community welcomes all kinds of people." Cities such as Toronto marketed as havens for diversity and multiculturalism (see Catungal, this issue), have increasingly promoted their gay Village as an example of the city's diversity and tolerance. Toronto`s gay village scene, incorporated within these neoliberal practices of commodification and consumerism, exemplifies the new urban places to be experienced by a cosmopolitan citizen desiring the slightly risqué, 'the nouveau' and 'the hip' (e.g. Keil 2009; Kipfer and Keil 2002; Walks 2001). This has made the Village a destination for some heterosexuals (both men and women) eager to experience (and demonstrate) their trendy sensibilities and cosmopolitanism. Alternatively, as Casey (2004) demonstrated, the use of gay venues by heterosexual women, contributed to the self-exclusion of lesbians based on issues of safety and comfort (see also Pritchard *et* al 2002). Some argue this has, at the same time, contributed to the 'degaying' of the neighbourhood and the reification of certain forms of gay and lesbian identity and the marginalization of others (Rushbrook 2002; Florida 2002; Binnie and Skeggs 2004). With the successes of Canadian gay and lesbian movement politics, LGBTQ people have greater opportunities to be safely visible in locations beyond the Village. More broadly, many gay villages themselves are experiencing changes that suggest they are becoming less central in the lives of LGBTQ people. Drawing on arguments that gay villages are largely places of consumption and consumerism, Bell and Binnie (2004, 1815) assert gay enclaves are 'degaying' in part because of "colonization by trendy (and less trendy) straights" pushing out those LGBTQ people whose presence may not constitute a comforting and palatable gay and lesbian consumer space.[8] In other locales, disillusionment with the gay scene, growing Internet use, increased commodification, and (re)packaging has attracted non-LGBTQ people to the Village, often resulting in increasing property values and the development of new residential areas with a largely heterosexual population (Ruting 2008; Collins 2004). The changing circumstances of Toronto's gay village and its emerging alternative queer places, is mirrored in the experiences of other cities and offers some preliminary starting points for thinking about the on-going changes happening in Toronto.

Work by Gavin Brown (2004, 133) on a growing gay male presence in the Spitalfields neighbourhood in London argues that some of these new spaces are best understood as `post-gay', which he defines as those locations "where sexual difference is visible and acknowledged without being the central marker of the

---

[8] Arguably, this may have racial overtones as Martin Manalansan (2005) argues about New York City in his article 'Race, Violence and Neoliberal Spatial Politics in the Global City'. However, this has not been fully explored yet in the Toronto context.

space." Post-gay spaces, Brown argues, are to be distinguished from "queer spaces and identities [which] are those that consciously disrupt normative sexual and gender binaries" (2004, 133). As part of a newly marketed cosmopolitan landscape promoting ethnic diversity and authentic urban experiences, Brown suggests Spitalfields provides the possibility for unremarked sexual difference where it is not necessary "to clearly define and delineate our sexualities" (p. 136). As this paper discusses, Queer West, with its multiple users, is clearly a neighbourhood where for some, sexual identity and place are clearly linked and that potential visibility of other queer people as well as the wider users of space is central to a connection to place.

Gorman-Murray and Waitt (2009), in their consideration of Australia's Newton, an inner-city neighbourhood in Sydney, and Daylesford, a suburban area in Greater Melbourne, argue there is a need to differentiate between what we might call 'traditional' gay enclaves and what might be described as 'queer-friendly' neighbourhoods. Queer-friendly neighbourhoods, they suggest, "denote areas with a visible and acknowledged but not overwhelming presence of gay and lesbian residents, businesses and organizations" (p. 2855). These queer-friendly neighbourhoods make an attempt to market the presence and visibility of gays and lesbians as a positive characteristic of the area and there is some attempt at both the grassroots and municipal levels to "facilitate cohesion across social difference", with varying degrees of success (p. 2859). In the case of Queer West, this paper argues that the queer-friendliness of Queer West is driven by both its simultaneous marginality and nascent gentrification and not any clear attempt to frame the neighbourhood in a more formal sense as 'queer-friendly.'

Gustav Visser (2008) argues that in Bloemfontein, South Africa, there is an argument to be made about the degaying of gay male leisure space through the processes of homonormalization, but that other 'straight' leisure spaces are 'claimed by both hetero-and homosexual identities, thereby being simultaneously 'gayed' and 'straightened' (p. 1345). Visser argues that forms of homonormative empowerment allow certain gays and lesbians to be increasingly part of 'everyday' spaces leading to the "gaying of straight space." (p. 1346). Visser's work highlights how class, gender normativity, race and mobility permit some gay men to participate in this 'gaying' of heterosexual spaces in arguably quite privileged and exclusionary ways.

Finally, Browne and Bakshi (2011), in examining LGBT leisure spaces beyond Brighton and Hove's formal gay village, make the argument that scholars need to move beyond the gay/straight binary in considering leisure spaces and examine how "leisure practices can reconstitute space in diverse socio-sexual/gendered ways, contesting any presumption of straight space awaiting 'queering'" (p. 183). Many of these new spaces, they argue can be understood as "simultaneously gay and straight." Further, different LGBTQ individuals are constituted within classed, racialized and gendered categories that enable and constrain the ability to occupy and be visible and present in urban spaces (Sibley

1995; Mitchell 2003; Teelucksingh 2006; Alexander, 2006; Nash 2005; Browne *et al*. 2007*;* Smith 2009; Brown 2011; Taylor 2011).

This literature forms a useful starting point for thinking about the ongoing transformations in both the material and representational formulations of queer spaces in Toronto. But as this paper argues, what is happening in Queer West in the case of queer women/gender queer individuals, does not map neatly onto this literature.

C. Life in the Village: Imaginaries of place

This research draws on 15 open-ended, semi-structured interviews with predominantly self-identified 'queer' women and one genderqueer individual residing in downtown Toronto. The impetus for this research came from the initial and seemingly straightforward observation that Toronto's gay Village is experiencing many of the transformational processes underway in other cities with gay districts (Di Pardo 2006; Ruting 2008; Visser 2008; Gorman-Murray and Waitt 2009; Balkissoon 2009).

These material changes in the structure of gay village spaces are experienced and responded to in different ways by different groups. Perceptions about who the Village is for and the nature of the lifestyle it sustains informs, for some, an oppositional, anti-essentialist social and political activism that is creating alternative queer spaces beyond the Village (Nash 2010; see also Nash and Bain 2007). This paper argues that participants' perceptions about the Village and its inhabitants are significant in understanding why some queer women/ gender queer individuals seek alternative locations to live and socialize. Second, the possibilities, potentials and limitations for participants taking up space are circumscribed within complex power relations embedded in the hierarchical social relations of class, race and gender. Participants, in discussing why Queer West is a location available to be 'queered', often (and inadvertently) reflect their own classed, racialized and gendered positions that privileges some and excludes others. Therefore, what places are 'queer', or 'queerable', is a relational concept and depends on 'who' is present, the nature of place and the specific meaning 'queer' obtains in those circumstances.

To begin within, it was perhaps not much of a surprise, given the current geographical literature, that participants paint the Village as a location used by people fitting into what they describe as an essentialised and normative gay male identity conceived of as apolitical, white and middle class. Participants experience the Village as a location that supports and sustains a particular form of normative gay male culture and as a landscape exemplifying those attributes most commonly found within mainstream portrayals of gays and lesbians. For example, Natalie, argues:

> Church Street feels very normative. So it feels like the thing that the
> gay street is supposed to have; lots of really good looking gay men who

have lots of money, who go to the gym regularly and wear nice clothes. The dykes that go there, I think a lot of them are middle class, white dykes, and lots of people from the suburbs who come downtown to party on the weekends (queer woman of colour, fat and able-bodied, macho-femme, lower/middle class).

Natalie's comments illustrate several common themes found across a number of interviews — that the Village is now constituted within normative expectations about how gay men and lesbians should 'look', which includes a middle or upper class aesthetic and is dominated by whiteness. While the Village is largely regarded as gay male space, the lesbians who are thought to use Village spaces are also cast within normative categories that see the 'Village lesbian' as middle class, young and white (see Podmore, this issue). The sense that the Village is a place that suburban gays and lesbians visit on the weekend reinforces the notion that those in the Village exude a suburban, middle class normativity.

The stereotypic figure of 'middle class, white gay male' was central in most conversations with participants. The question is not whether this assessment of the Village and its occupants is either 'fair' or 'true'. While current scholarship cautions against simplistic assertions about the hegemonic influence of 'affluent gay white men' and the seemingly pervasive and all-encompassing centrality of their consumeristic desires and values, these perceptions nevertheless persist (Nast 2002, Elder 2002; Southern 2004, Oswin 2005). In thinking about how queer women/gender queer individuals portrayed the Village, the paper draws on Oswin's (2005, 82) approach and undertake a political and performative reading of such stereotypes that focuses on "how they might function as representational devices." The participants utilized a form of stereotypic short-hand, drawing on notions of class, race, sexuality and gender in representing their understandings and experiences of the Village and Queer West spaces. This is not to suggest that they are unaware of the complexity and heterogeneity of locales and users. But these representations and imaginaries about the Village had a common and powerful circulation that underpinned decisions and practices about where queer women/gender queer individuals might want both to live and socialize.

The sense that the Village is a location that one consumes as a commodified leisure space was also a common perception. For Sarah, the Village is a place for partying, for fun and for pleasure for those who can afford it. The Village is an apolitical location, a place that, despite its venerable history as a locus of radical political activism, is no longer a place fostering resistance and opposition. That sense of the apolitical was tightly linked back to the imaginary of normative white gay masculinity and related forms of materialism. Sarah notes:

Whereas Church Street [main Village street] for me really feels like this white, gay men with money playground — bars, and whatever. I'm not interested in going … because I'm not interested in that kind of forgetful party culture; like "we go out Friday and Saturday nights and

> we drink and then on Sunday mornings we go and have brunch. And
> that's our lives and we have condos and cars and very tiny dogs (queer,
> sometimes femme, white, working class, employed).

While the Village used to be the alternative or radical location for political
activism, participants no longer see it as a location that reflects political beliefs that
resonate for participants with its 'forgetful party culture.' Sarah connects a certain
form of material aesthetic somewhat disdainfully to certain specific locations
(condo, bars and places for brunch) and certain commodified objects (cars and tiny
dogs).

For these participants, the apparent lack of a discernible politics, forms of
radical activism or even a vague political sensibility render the Village an
unappealing place to congregate even for socializing. By contrast, events in Queer
West often were perceived to have political undertones, intended to raise awareness
or encourage participation in political causes. For participants engaged in a broad
array of activist projects (many unrelated directly to LGBT or queer issues), it
made more sense to locate in the bars, restaurants and cafés in Queer West. As Mel
argues:

> [T]he more aware and the more political I got and the more involved I
> got with community, the more I started gravitating towards the West
> End [Queer West]. A lot of organizations would have their parties to
> make people more aware of [their] organization, they would have it in
> the West End, they wouldn't have it on Church Street because it's really
> apolitical … trying to politicize the spaces [that are] strongly apolitical
> … is another challenge (brown, genderqueer, gay, privileged).

Despite these views that the Village is 'apolitical', the Village remains central to
Canadian gay and lesbian mainstream politics. Certain forms of political organizing
and activism are still a substantial part of Village life with organizations such as the
519 Church Street Community Centre and Aids Committee of Toronto remaining
central to advocacy activities and community support around trans issues, sex
worker support, homeless queer youth and AIDS activism. In particular, ethno-
specific AIDS organizations located in or around the Village go a long way to
providing services to racialized queers and are involved in racialized health politics
which goes a long way to challenging or disrupting the 'whiteness' of the Village
(Catungal, this issue). But these activities are not regarded by most participants as
'radical' or transformative and are often seen as managed by professionals,
operating within an assimilationist, mainstream politic (Kinsman 1996; Warner
2002; Rayside 2008; Smith 2010). As Mel notes, the sort of political events held in
Queer West locations would be problematic to hold in the Village because they
would have to politicize spaces that were otherwise 'apolitical', that is, inject an
alternative or perhaps conflicting political sensibility into Village spaces which
might be difficult or unsuccessful.

Perceptions about the Village as an apolitical and commodified site mainly supporting consumption and partying extend to Toronto Pride. Despite arguments by scholars that some Pride events might be understood as supporting 'partying with politics', (Browne 2007, on Dublin and Brighton and Hove), participants here took exception to the type of 'politics' visible at Pride (Browne 2007). Queer women's/gender queer individuals' perceptions of Toronto's Pride celebrations echo their ideas about the Village more broadly as a space that is no longer the publically transgressive, political event it once was. Many participants regard Pride as a homonormative and assimilationist project. Sarah argues,

> I really feel skeptical about Toronto Pride in general as being representative of me or as being a positive welcoming space for people who are outside of "we're white yuppies and we all want to get married and have kids"... That's sort of the end of Pride for me. It takes it out of its roots of radical resistance and roots of protest and roots of resistance and queer communities that are trans people, people of color, people who do sex work and all that stuff.

Sarah's comments illustrate that Pride appears to promulgate the values of a certain group of gays and lesbians who fit into normative understanding of the 'proper' Canadian gay and lesbian, that is, one who wants 'to get married and have kids.' Over a decade ago, Kates and Belk (2001), in their research on Toronto Pride, made the argument that "conspicuous consumption during Lesbian and Gay Pride Day may be a politically dubious activity" but as a display of market power, "may actually result in social legitimization of gay and the lesbian and gay community" (p. 329). Pride events may also be constituted as political spaces through a combination of pleasure, emotions and partying and activities that are merely 'good fun' but can contest and subvert everyday spaces (e.g. Browne 2007). Yet while Village spaces and Pride events may arguably be political spaces constituted through the 'party with politics' or political displays of 'market power', many participants here asserted that neither of these forms of politics are values they identify with.

In keeping with much of the current literature on commercial gay villages, it is clear that Toronto's Village is perceived by many queer women /gender queer individuals as supporting a certain form of mainstream gay culture that privileges and promotes certain sexualized, gendered, classed and racialized identities (e.g. Nast 2002; Bell and Binnie 2004; Ruting 2008). Paradoxically(but fortuitously, perhaps) the gay movement's political and social successes often grounded in Village organizations and activism, also means that some members of sexual and gendered minorities have greater opportunities to be visible in other urban locations. These groups include Casey's (2007) 'queer unwanted'; those not fitting into homonormative expectations; those groups for whom the Village has never been more than a temporary refuge and for those participants who gravitate towards Queer West as a more comfortable place to live, socialize and both participate in and produce what they describe as more radical forms of political activism.

Queered/ing Queer West

For much of its existence, Queer West area has been a marginal neighbourhood not yet drawn into the newly developed and marketed cosmopolitan neighbourhoods dotting Toronto's downtown. In recent years however, formal efforts have begun to market the area as ripe for development (e.g. City of Toronto, 2006). There is no substantial mainstream acknowledgement of the growing LGBTQ presence in Queer West and certainly no attempt to market it as a 'queer-friendly neighbourhood.' Whether Queer West is experienced as Brown's (2004) 'post-gay' landscape or Gorman-Murray and Waitt's (2009) 'queer-friendly' neighbourhood, depends on who you are, that is, on racialized, classed, gendered and sexualized selves (as well as other social markers such as dis/ability and religion). Queer women/gender queer participants did not think about Queer West as 'straight' space but perceived Queer West to be already 'queer', that is, a space that is already non-normative in terms of gender and sexuality as well as class, race, and household structure. Rather than understanding space as 'straight' space being 'gayed' or 'queered' (e.g. Visser 2008) or space as "simultaneously gay and straight" (e.g. Browne and Bakshi 2011), many participants understood Parkdale as at least partly, already 'queer' while recognizing how those perceptions (and the ability to use those places) are tied up with particular gender, class and racial privilege. While, as Natalie Oswin (2008: 89) argues, geographical scholarship has often considered queer spaces "as spaces of gays and lesbians or queers existing in opposition to and as transgressions of heterosexual space," queer is used here by participants to mean not only alternative to normative heterosexual spaces but alternative to homonormative (white, middle class, assimilationist) gay and lesbians spaces as well (see also Brown 2007).

Recent scholarship argues for the need to take seriously the intersections between class positioning and sexualities. As Jon Binnie (2011:22) argues, it is 'important to recognize that the relationship between class and sexuality varies geographically and that class distinctions are often made through space and place.' This sentiment applies to thinking about gendered and racialized subjects as well. What 'queerness' means in any particular case takes its cue from its relational circumstances; from the specificities of the intersections of location, people and practices operating within relations of power and hierarchical social networks. In other words, in understanding the inter-constitutive aspects of queerness, people and place, scholars must attend to the specificities of both subjects and places and to "the material circumstances in which queer subjectivities are produced and contested" (Binnie 2011: 23). Being 'queer' in 'queer spaces' in Queer West depends on your positioning with social categories and power relations; it depends on who you are and how you understand and use places (see also Nash, *forthcoming*).

Most participants, when asked to work through how Queer West became 'queer', argued that Parkdale, and Queer West more broadly, are 'queer' to begin with. For example, Sarah asserts, "[I]t's a queer neighborhood … there is space for

difference, there's space for you to be fucked up or crazy or have shit happen." Unlike the Village's more normative associations, Queer West is regarded as constituting and fostering the possibilities for more radical and broad forms of 'difference' because of its' pre-exiting, non-normative attributes and aesthetic. But the very 'queerness', of Queer West, erupts from its marginality, defined as marginal only in relation to the positioning of most of the queer women/gender queer individuals interviewed for this research — the seeming 'diversity' of the population, the mix of classes (but largely poor and working class with some gentrification), newcomers, ethnic groups 'street people', artists, the 'homeless' and those perceived as mentally ill. As Ursula, points out,

> [Parkdale] is queer specific but also just real range…lots of diversity on all kinds of levels. Lots of, certainly, ethnic diversity and I know certainly from one of my housemates who works a lot with new Canadians in the area, so there's that presence, but there's also feeling [that] this is not a real conformist mainstream neighborhood … there's lots and lots of people with tattoos and piercings and … there's an eclectic vibe (white, 33, upper/middle class, queer/bi, student, part time employment).

The 'diversity' of people in the neighbourhood is reflected in the visibility of 'others' whose presence reflects ethnic or class-based diversity and non-conformity in embodied appearance ('tattoos and piercings'). As Podmore (2001) argues in her study of lesbian visibility in Montreal, visibility, at least for the lesbians in her study, is somewhat paradoxical in that spaces available for social networks are often those diverse yet marginal locations where alternative gendered and sexualized identities could circulate generally unremarked but be legible as such to each other. That sense of visibility in diversity for Ursula and many of the other participants reflects a sense of difference that seems to stem in part from their positioning as 'white', middle-class and normatively embodied. Her sense of Queer West as a place of 'ethnic diversity' and new Canadians might make it seem unfamiliar and, arguably, 'queer.' As well, the queerness, for Sarah, comes from the area's ability to provide opportunities for people who feel they do not 'fit' into more normative categories of embodiment to be visible and to socialize with others (see also Taylor 2011).

Whether and how one is rendered 'visible' for these participants, that is legible to others (both other queers and occupiers of the space) is dependent, in part, on the nature of the person in relation to that place. While Sarah might take notice of non-normative embodiment and diversity, others who might embody alternative, non-normative aesthetic might see the queerness in place as the ability to blend in or be invisible. As Alex (37, white, 'dyke', middle class) argues, "[I]t's safe for you to be visible and/or you can spend your time with people who are also a part of your community I think that is definitely part of the draw of … queer people to this particular part of town." Queerness, as it is used here, is about 'operating beyond powers and controls that enforce normativity' (Browne 2007,

889). But the meanings associated with that 'normativity' in this place encompasses not only hetero and homo-normative usually related to questions of sexual orientation and, increasingly, gender, but positions of race and class as well. For many participants, the 'queerness' of place rests on one's on relational positioning.

The 'queerness' of Queer West intertwines with participants' ideas of themselves as 'queer' individuals. Most rejected queer as a stable or inflexible subject position. When asked about understandings of themselves as 'queer', many participants wove together notions of a 'queer' place, a 'queer' subjectivity and 'queer' political and social practices. Natalie suggests that being queer is about locating one's self in non-normative places; places that are about more than sexual non-conformity:

> … queer is most interesting and most exciting to use to think about spaces that are not normative, they're kind of disruptive towards the social expectations and norms around gender, around sexual desire, around the performance of gender and desire. … So I think the way I'm invested in queer has very little to do with who you have sex with and how you construct your sexual relationship to your social role in the world around you.

While in some cases, queer can become a fixed identity for some, many of the self-identified queer women/gender queer individuals here reflected Ford's (2007, 479) observation that queer can signify no specific subjects, but 'a political and existential stance, an ideological commitment, a *decision*, to live outside some social norm or other.' Participants largely took on 'queerness' as a political and ideological positioning that is reflected in their rejection of the Village as sort of normative, apolitical (not radical) space and their notions of Queer West which can only be understood in the context of their own middle class, mainly white sensibilities. Chelsea, notes:

> Queer tends to be a bit more political – and I'm not talking about being political about something like same-sex marriage. I'm talking about having more of an anti-oppressive framework of how we look at things, an anti-racist framework like being really shameless and open about that. Like being hardcore feminist even if we don't identify that way. I think gays and lesbians have the idea they just want to be like everybody else, whereas I don't think Queer people have that in mind (white, able-bodied, queer, middle to upper class, fat, Les, unemployed).

Chelsea's comments signify queer politics as something different from the mainstream gay and lesbian movement's claims for inclusion in mainstream institutions such as marriage. Many participants use queer 'as a political term as much as a "lifestyle" description and identify queerness with anti- assimilationist and radical politics' (Bernard 2009, 2). However, their comments and insights also

reflect a trend within some forms of queerly based, anti-identitarian and anti-consumerist perspectives to be critical of commodified gay villages while romanticizing 'queerness' as a more critical and authentic subjectivity and politic. As Natalie Oswin reminds us, claiming a certain queer authenticity may render invisible the "figure of the complicit queer", namely, that queer who is always embroiled in particular forms of power relations including, as might be the case here, neoliberal practices and relations such as gentrification (Oswin 2005, 81). Queer spaces, then, can be both complicit in the reproduction of various normativities while providing opportunities for transgression and contestation (see also Nash and Bain 2007; Brown 2009).

Queer Privilege, Queer Guilt

So despite its political intentions, queerness is not "always and everywhere progressive", a circumstance that did not go unremarked upon by participants (Oswin 2005, 80). As well, alternative sexualities, practices and experiences, in 'certain manifestations, may serve to deepen race, class and gender exploitations and domination' (Oswin 2005: 80). Many participants' understandings of Queer West are inflected by their classed, racialized and gendered subjective positions — something many of the participants where both aware of and struggled to work against. As noted earlier, the interviews used in this paper are with, by in large, white, young and middle class people, many have some university education. Both Natalie and Mel identified as queer people of colour whose alternative perspectives indicate much further work is required on the intersections for 'queer', racialization, and gender. As suggested above, Queer West, is arguably both 'queer' and 'queerable' for some because it falls outside romantic, neoliberal imaginings of 'real' neighbourhoods as homogeneous, stable, heterosexual, white and middle class with clean streets, schools, playgrounds and properly maintained single family homes. As Jasbir Puar (2002: 936) asserts, "while it is predictable that the claiming of queer space is lauded as the disruption of heterosexual space, rarely is that disruption interrogated also as a disruption of racialized, gendered and classed spaces."

In thinking about Queer West as a 'queer' place (for some) and as a place where some form of 'queer' subjectivity can be experienced, the relational nature of the meanings of queer practices and places becomes clearer. More importantly, many of the queer women /gender queer individuals interviewed understood their ability to occupy and/or constitute queer spaces reflected forms of advantage and privilege that could exclude and marginalize. As Taylor (2011:4) argues, 'it is important to theorize the conditions, places and possibilities of *advantage* as well as *disadvantage*' such that there is a need to problematize privileged lives, as well as those that are marginal.

Taken at face value, participants' fondness for the 'queerness' of Queer West and the pleasures of experiencing non-normative locales represents an arguably romanticized view of Queer West; a set of spatial understandings only available to

those privileged enough to be on the outside looking in. The marginal nature of Queer West, its inexpensive housing, diverse and largely poor population and the fact it remains, up until recently, largely ignored by neoliberalist impulses of commodification and consumerism gives it a further cache. These ideas might be contrasted with the experiences of other residents of Queer West who do not necessarily understand their neighbourhood as 'queer' and, individually and collectively, may be striving for a 'better life' reflected in more normative middle class values, sensibilities and spaces. What 'queer' means in this context arises from the specific, embedded and embodied experiences of the person, in this case queer women/ gender queer individuals, doing the speaking.

The majority of the participants identified as 'white' and acknowledged to, some degree, both their classed and racialized positioning. Participants openly acknowledge that the queer spaces emerging in Queer West are predominantly white, a paradoxical claim given that the 'queerness' of Queer West was attributed, by many, to the visible racial and ethnic 'diversity' of its inhabitants. As Brigid, notes:

> The Queen West queer scene is pretty white still. [I]n terms of … diversity and I've heard nonwhite people complaining that it feels like an exclusive space against people of color. I think that's a problem everywhere…I see gentrification happening. I see it getting posher and more exclusive and I see it getting well, I guess, Starbucks (queer woman, white, middle class, unemployed).

Sarah also argues that queerness has a hegemonic 'whiteness' to it.

> …That's where I guess I caution myself and say there's room for queerness and queerness being difference because queerness in the end ends up pushing out people of color and racialized folks and people with sketchy immigration status or whoever is here illegally to.

Many participants echoed both Brigid's and Sarah's perceptions that the queering of Queer West was not only a white project but was caught up in class relations. Many also acknowledged that the intersection of classed and racialized positionality made it possible for them to use Queer West spaces. While they might consider themselves 'working' class, they could afford to live in the area and frequent queer establishments. While many queer women/gender queer individuals reject the Village because of perceptions about its classed and raced organization, they also expressed some consternation that queer women's/gender queer individuals' presence in Queer West might have the effect of creating similar kinds of classed and racialized exclusionary spaces despite their desire for the 'queerness' of the space to be more open and inclusive. The marginal nature of Queer West and the specific attributes of participants based on racialized and classed privilege allowed for particular associations that brought certain forms of material queer spaces into being while that very set of associations might be inexorably altering those spaces as well.

> … because the rents are low and it's kind hip and cool or whatever and that us just being there changes it, you know. People are kind of drawn to what they see as edgy, what they see as … nonmainstream, but just by being there you're kind of changing it. The class implications are kind of startling … we drive up property values and than the people who have been living here for two generations … where do they go?

Most participants expressed some anxiety over their presence in Parkdale and recognized, to varying degrees, the notion of Oswin's (2005) complicit queerness in how spaces are drawn into neoliberal practices and both reproduce and transgress various normativities. Participants acknowledged that there was some form of cosmopolitan 'know-how' in their use of Queer West locations that allowed them to revel in the experience of these spaces while remaining safely detached from the harsh realities of everyday live for most Parkdale residents (Rushbrook 2002; Bell and Binnie 2004). There is a complicated interrelationship between the privileged ability to occupy 'edgy' or 'gritty' urban spaces as voyeurs or sophisticated 'collectors' of urban spatial experiences and the possibilities for personal freedom and liberation that such use provides (Graham and Marvin 2001). As Sarah notes:

> [There is a] cultural cachet of 'living where the crack-whores are and living where the fucked-up sketch-bag homeless people are…' Like lots of moving to the neighbourhood to make fun of the people who live [there]…like 'I live in a neighbourhood full of junkies, ha ha' …as opposed to 'this is a community…I participate in this community, and other people also participate.' It's more so 'I'm an outsider within, noting everything that's fucked-up and ridiculous and let's sit on the corner at the laundromat and drink Pabst Blue Ribbon [a beer perceived as upscale, artsy and preferred by 'hipsters'].

Sarah also points to a distinction between using the space as a distanced observer and being a participant in a community. Many participants expressed an interest in being involved in community affairs, attending community events and making contributions to the area that went beyond merely using certain locations. This was closely linked to various political commitments that were often at the root of different events held in Queer West.

Gays and lesbians have often been at the forefront of gentrification and regeneration in downtown urban neighbourhoods in North America (e.g. Castells 1983; Knopp and Lauria, 1985; Knopp 1990, Nash 2005) although care must be taken in characterizing gays and lesbians as more affluent, mobile and consumeristic (Gluckman and Reed 1997; Badgett 2001; Binne 2010). But many of the participants were aware that their presence in Queer West, particularly as residents might be having the effect of pushing out other marginal groups. Further, the establishment of queer or queer friendly venues in Queer West often tend to push up prices for food and drinks which comes at the expense of its original

inhabitants who have access to fewer affordable locations and who are among the city's most vulnerable. Alex notes,

> But a healthy city needs like need to have queers, needs to have artists, it needs to have all of those, cause those on the fringes, that's where anything new is going to come from and it's going to prevent the city from stagnating and I think queers are part of that I think you know because that's where all the interesting stuff has happened that's where people are always going to want to go and once they get in, you know, it's like a wedge.

Queer women/gender queer individuals are not alone in their use and enjoyment of Queer West spaces. As noted in the introduction, many different groups within the LGBT community make use of Queer West locations and they do so in different ways. This highlights the contested nature of queer place making. Many participants eluded to the presence of 'hipsters', including those who identify as heterosexual, gay or queer. The so-called' homohipser' is characterized by many participants as mainly white, young, male and middle class, and drawn to Queer West for its artistic and social 'edginess' (Aguirre-Livingston 2011; Pilling 2011, Nash, *forthcoming*). Participants argue that as Queer West becomes more visible and more individuals attend queer political events, these locations are at risk of being taken over and depoliticized by 'hipsters' (both hetro- and homo-) as well as by apolitical gay and queer young men, depoliticizing queer spaces thereby rendering them as safe and 'cool' for a middle class, white and mainly heterosexual crowd (Pilling 2011). For example, Choi, points out:

> You know you have some sort of political stance, or you know [a space] just for people of colour, but then it just becomes like some big-ol-popular thing and that's what happens from situating yourself in that neighbourhood, right? Like it just becomes a trend, just becomes popular and…over time [it's like] 'I want to be popular' [and] 'we need to make money 'cuz this is an event' [and] it just becomes a free for all… more Queen West hipsters, the scenesters who are just like 'oh it's a free venue to go into, cheap drinks, lets just join the party' and that's what makes it slightly uncomfortable and annoying (Asian/Canadian, gay, working class, 28, unemployed).

Choi's comments illustrate how in the formation of political and often racialized spaces, various forms of urban cosmopolitan whiteness circulate in such spaces once they have been sufficiently stabilized as commodified and trendy locations. This points to the ways in which the processes of market neoliberalism operating in Queer West are opening up the area to those queers who are able to take advantage of the possibilities the area offers while at the same time working to smooth the way for a wider marketability of such spaces (see Leitner *et al* 2007). Indeed, many queer women/gender queer individuals in this research utilizing

Queer West spaces expressed some frustration over how their activities paradoxically queered and commodified spaces, which provided opportunities for more politically and social radical spaces while seeming to be complicit in the reproduction of privilege and exclusion.

D. Final Thoughts

Queer West, a nebulous and largely unbounded area straddling the Parkdale, Liberty Village, Trinity-Bell Woods and Beaconsfield districts, has a growing number of queer-friendly venues and is home to an ever-increasing queer residential population. While it certainly does not have the presence, profile or recognition of the Village, it is one of a number of downtown neighbourhoods that support queer populations. This paper examines how queer women/ gender queer individuals experience Queer West locations, explores why the neighbourhood is attracting queers and how queer place making might be taking place. It argues, first, that research participants utilize a particular imaginary about the Village that frames it as a location dominated by white, middle class gay male sensibilities. Echoing much of the current geographical scholarship, participants tended to perceive the Village as the material and symbolic home of white, middle class gay men and as sites for gay male consumptive practices (Nast 2002; Bell and Binnie 2004; Binnie and Skeggs 2004; Visser 2008; Gorman-Murray and Waitt 2009; Browne and Bakshi 2011). This paper works through the specific ways in which these imaginaries about the Village underlie and shape participants' place making in Queer West.

Second, this paper argues that the possibilities, potentials and limitations for queer women/ gender queer individuals to take up alternative locations are constituted through complex social relations. Participants, in considering why Queer West in a location available to be 'queered', bring their own imagined sense of place that reflects their own classed, racialized and gendered positions that privileges some and excludes others. What we mean when we argue places are 'queer', or 'queerable', is specific and relational and saturated with power relations. As feminist and queer geographers scholars working within Foucauldian and various poststructuralist frameworks argue, normative social categories, based on such markers of identity as gender, sexuality, race and class position, individuals within uneven hierarchical social relations such that some identities and subjectivities are privileged over others (e.g. Moss and Falconer Al-Hindi 2008; Sharp 2008; Valentine 2007). Put another way, who you are and the nature of places under consideration are integral to the specific meaning of 'queer' and the nature of the 'queerness' of that place.

In some ways, Queer West has the markings of a post-gay landscape that provides a space where it is not necessary to 'clearly delineate or define' that difference (Brown 2004, 133). Yet while Queer West's particular landscapes might allow sexual difference to go unremarked, for queer women/ gender queer individuals, Queer West provides the possibilities to establish spaces where

'queerness' is a visible, acknowledged and defended attribute of that place. That queerness is about instability and mobility across gendered and sexual spectrums does not detract from the desire to craft locations where that queerness is a visible and noted attribute of place. Although for some men, Queer West reflects Brown's post-gay landscape of unremarked sexual difference, it is important to assert there are multiple and conflicting meanings available for understanding place (Nash, *forthcoming*).

On the other hand, it remains to be seen whether Queer West develops into the queer-friendly neighbourhood described by Gorman-Murray and Waitt (2009) where a queer presence might be acknowledged and there might be formal attempts at the municipal level to foster some form of cohesion across social difference. With the listing of Queer Westfest on the City of Toronto (2011) community website, there is some more formal notice being taken of the area. However, there is little else to suggest the area has developed any sort of profile beyond an informal and modest queer presence.

Whether the Queer West has spaces that are being simultaneously 'gayed and straightened (Visser 2008) or are rendered "simultaneously gay and straight' (Browne and Bakshi 2011), is not of central concern here. Queer women/gender queer individuals arguably experience Queer West as 'queer' largely in relation to their own normative racialized, gendered, sexualized and embodied self and are able to 'queer' space through acknowledged positions of privilege. Yet concurrently, these locations are vulnerable to an almost immediate appropriation by others who, coming from different but no less privileged locations, are able to usurp that queer space as well. Queerness may be a marketable commodity in certain circumstances, which is not, in and of itself a 'bad' thing. Yet it remains to be seen how this almost unavoidable result in the making of queer space can be harnessed in ways that open up locations for LGBTQ people beyond the Village.

Acknowledgements:

References

Aguirre-Livingston, Paul. 2011. Dawn of a new Gay. *The Grid* (Toronto) 6 June. Accessed September 4 2011). http://www.thegridto.com/city/sexuality/dawn-of-a-new-gay.

Alexander, Bryan Keith. 2006. Performing black masculinity. Race, culture and queer identity. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press.

Badgett, M. V. Lee. 2001. Money, Myths and Change: The Economic Lives of Lesbians and *Gay Men*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Balkissoon, Denise. 2009. Exodus sees Church St. losing its gay village. *Toronto Star* 13 Oct. Accessed September 6, 2011. http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/article/709153--exodus-sees-church-st-losing-its-gay-village-identity#_jmp.

Bell, David and Jon Binnie. 2004. Authenticating queers space: citizenship, urbanism and governance *Urban Space* 41, 9, 1807-1820.

Bernard, Ian. 2009. Disciplining Queer *Borderlands* 8, 3, 1-16. Accessed September 6, 2011. http://www.borderlands.net.au/vol8no3_2009/barnard_disciplining.htm

Binnie, Jon. 2011. Class, sexuality and space: A comment. *Sexualities* 14, 21-26.

Binnie, Jon and Beverley Skeggs. 2004. Cosmopolitan knowledge and the production and consumption of sexualized space: Manchester's gay village. *The Sociological Review* 52, 39-62.

Bouthillette, Anne-Marie. 1997. Queer and gendered housing: A tale of two neighbourhoods in Vancouver. In Gordon Brent Ingram, Anne-Marie Bouthillette and Yolanda Retter (eds.) *Queers in Space: Communities, Public Places, Sites of Resistance*. Seattle: Bay Press, pp. 213-32.

Brown, Gavin. 2004. Cosmopolitan camouflage: (post-) gay space in Spitalfields, East London. In, Jon Binnie, Julian Holloway, Steve Millington and Craig Young (eds.) *Cosmopolitan Urbanism*. New York: Routledge, 130-145.

Brown, Michael. 2011. Gender and sexuality I: intersectional anxieties *Progress in Human Geography* 12, 53-70.

Browne, Kath 2007. A party with politics? (Re)making LGBTQ Pride spaces in Dublin and Brighton. *Social and Cultural Geography* 8 (1), 63-87.

Browne, Kath and Leela Bakshi, 2011. We are here to party?: Lesbian, gay bisexual and trans leisurescapes beyond commercial gay scenes. *Leisure Studies* 30 (2), 179-196.

Browne, Kath, Jason Lim and Gavin Brown 2007. *Geographies of sexualities* theory, practices and politics Burlington, VT: Ashgate.

Castells, Manuel. 1983. *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Casey, Mark. 2004. De-dyking queer spaces: Heterosexual female visibility in gay and lesbian spaces. *Sexualities* 7, 446-461.

Catungal John Paul, and Debbie Leslie. 2009. Placing power in the creative city: governmentalities and subjectivities in Liberty Village, Toronto *Environment and Planning A* 41, 11, 2576 – 2594.

Chenier, Elise. 2004. Rethinking class in lesbian bar culture: living 'The Gay Life' in Toronto, 1955-1965, *Left History*, 9 (2): 85-118. Reprinted in, Mona Gleason and Adele Perry (eds.) *Rethinking Canada: the Promise of Women's History*, (5th ed.) Toronto: Oxford University Press, 85-118.

City of Toronto 2011. Toronto Festivals and events calendar http://wx.toronto.ca/festevents.nsf (Last accessed 2011 September).

City of Toronto 2006. Toronto Staff Report, http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2006/agendas/committees/te/te060613/it005.pdf. (Last accessed 2011 September).

Collins, Alan. 2004. Sexual dissidence, enterprise and assimilation: bedfellows in urban regeneration. *Urban Studies* 41, 1789-1806.

Cowen, Deborah. 2006. Hipster urbanism *Relay* (Sept/Oct), 22-23.

Di Prado, Michelle. 2006. Less gay, less village; With crime and housing prices both high, This 200- Year-old District Is Losing Its Core. *National Post* 2 December, p. 9.

Duggan L., 2002. The new homonormativity: The sexual politics of neoliberalism. In: R. Castronovo and D. D. Nelson (eds.) *Materializing Democracy: Towards a Revitalized Cultural Politics* Dukem, Duke University Press, 175–194.

Egan v. Canada. [1995] 2 S.C.R. 513, 1995 SCC 4.

Elder, Glen. 2002. Response to 'queer patriarchies, queer racisms, International. *Antipode* 34, 988-91.

Field, Ann-Marie. 2007. Counter-hegemonic citizenship: LGBT communities and the politics of hate crimes in Canada *Citizenship Studies* 11, 3, 247-262.

Florida, Richard. 2002. *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. New York: Basic Books.

Ford, R. T. 2007. What's queer about race? *South Atlantic Quarterly* 106, 3, 477-84.

Gee, Marcus 2011. Thanks to gentrification my slum is now on the leading edge of cool. *Globe & Mail* 25 April.

Gluckman, Amy and Betsy Reed, 1997. *Homo Economics: Capitalism, Community, and Lesbian and Gay Life*. London: Routledge.

Gorman-Murray, Andrew and Gordon Waitt. 2009. Queer-friendly neighbourhoods: an interrogation of social cohesion across sexual difference in two Australian neighbourhoods. *Environment and Planning A* 41, 2855-2873.

Graham, Stephen and Simon Marvin. 2011. *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and the Urban Condition* . London and New York: Routledge.

Grundy, John. and Smith, Miriam. 2005. The politics of multiscalar citizenship: The case of lesbian and gay organizing in Canada. *Citizenship Studies* 9,4, 389-404.

Herman, D. 1994 *Rights of Passage: Struggles for Lesbian and Gay Legal Equality*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Hume, Christophe. 1997. La vie bohème. *Toronto Star,* G3.

Hunt, Mia and John Zacharias. 2008. Representing Montréal's (gay) village. *Canadian Journal of Urban Research* 17, 28-57.

Jackson, Stevi. 2011. Heterosexual hierarchies: A commentary on class and sexuality. *Sexualities* 14, 1, 12-20.

Kates, S. M. and R. W. Belk 2001. The meaning of lesbian and gay Pride day *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 30, 392-429.

Keil, Roger. 2009. The urban politics of roll-with-it neoliberalism. *City* 13, 2-3, 232-244.

Kennedy, John. 2010. Gay strip on the block: Can Church Street survive the recession and a changing identity crisis? *Now* 14 January. Accessed July 2011. http://www.nowtoronto.com/news/story.cfm?content=173248

Kinsman, Gary. 1996. *Regulation of Desire: Sexuality in Canada* (2d ed.) Montreal: Black Rose Books.

Kipfer, Stefan and Roger Keil. 2002. Toronto Inc? Planning the competitive city in the New Toronto, *Antipode* 228- 264.

Knopp, Larry. 1990. Some theoretical implications of gay involvement in an urban land market. *Political Geography Quarterly* 9, 337-352.

Lauria, Micky and Knopp, Larry. 1985. Toward and analysis of the role of gay communities in the urban renaissance. *Urban Geography* 6, 152-169.

LaViolette, Nicole 2009. Independent human rights and sexual minorities: an ongoing challenge for the Canadian refugee determination process. *International Journal of Human Rights* 13, 2/3, 437-476.

Ledger, Brent. 2010a. A little friendliness does not a gay neighbourhood make. *Toronto Star* 06 August. Accessed September 2011. http://www.thestar.com/living/article/843712

Ledger, Brent 2010b. As gay culture discovers joy of maturity, parenting transforms our lives. *Toronto Star* 4 September Accessed September 6, 2011 http://www.thestar.com/iphone/Living/article/85480

Leitner, Helga, Jamie Peck and Eric S. Shepard. 2007. *Contesting Neoliberalism: Urban Frontiers*. New York: Guilford Press.

Manalansan, Martin 2005. Race, Violence and Neoliberal Spatial Politics in the Global City *Social Text* 23, 141-155.

Mills, Matt. 2009. Toronto Star story on the gaybourhood suspiciously incomplete. *Xtra!* 22 October. http://www.xtra.ca/public/Toronto/Let_my_people_go-7687.aspx

Mitchell, Don. 2003. *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*. New York: Guilford Press.

Mooney, Kyle. 2010. New owner set to unveil revived Crews and Tangos. *Xtra!* http://www.xtra.ca/public/Toronto/EXCLUSIVE_New_owner_set_to_unveil_revived_Crews_Tango-8381.aspx. 18 March.

Mills, Matt. 2009. Toronto Star story on the gaybourhood suspiciously incomplete. *Xtra!* 22 October. http://www.xtra.ca/public/Toronto/Let_my_people_go-7687.aspx

Mooney, Kyle. 2010. New owner set to unveil revived Crews and Tangos. *Xtra!* http://www.xtra.ca/public/Toronto/EXCLUSIVE_New_owner_set_to_unveil_revived_Crews_Tango-8381.aspx. 18 March.

Miller, Vincent. 2005. Intertextuality, the Referential Illusion and the Production of a Gay Ghetto. *Social and Cultural Geography* 6, 61-80.

Moss, Pamela and Karen Falconer-Al Hindi (eds.) 2008. *Feminisms in Geography: Rethinking Space, Place and Knowledge*. Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.

Nash, Catherine J., *forthcoming*. The age of the "post-mo"? Toronto's changing gendered and sexual landscapes *Geoforum*.

Nash, Catherine J. 2011. Trans experiences in lesbian and queer spaces. *The Canadian Geographer/Le géographe canadien* 55, 192-207.

Nash, Catherine J. 2006. Toronto's Gay Village (1969-1982): Plotting the politics of gay identity. *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe canadien* 50, 1-16.

Nash, Catherine J. 2005. Contesting Identity: Politics of gays and lesbians in Toronto in the 1970s. *Gender, Place and Culture* 12, 113-135.

Nash, Catherine J. and Alison Bain. 2007. 'Reclaiming raunch'? Spatializating queer identities at Toronto's women's bathhouse events. *Social and Cultural Geography* 8, 47-62.

Nast, Heidi. 2002. Queer patriarchies, queer racisms, international. *Antipode* 34, 874-909.

Oswin, Natalie. 2005. Towards radical geographies of complicit queer futures, *ACME: An International e-journal for Critical Geographies* 3(2), 79-86.

Pilling, Merrick. 2011. 'Taking up space': Spatialized privilege in Toronto's 'Queer West' scene. (Unpublished manuscript, available from the author mpilling@yorku.ca).

Puar, Jasbir. 2002. Circuits of Queer Mobility: Tourism, Travel, and Globalization. *GLQ: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 8, 103–137.

Podmore, Julie. 2006. 'Gone Underground'? Lesbian visibility and the consolidation of queer space in Montréal. *Social and Cultural Geography*, 7, 595-625.

Podmore, Julie. 2001. Lesbians in the crowd: gender, sexuality and visibility along Montréal's Boul. St-Laurent. *Gender, Place and Culture* 8, 333-55.

Pritchard, Anne, Nigel Morgan and Diane Sedgley. 2002. In search of lesbian space? The experience of Manchester's gay Village. *Leisure Studies* 21, 2, 105-123.

Queer West 2011. http://queerwest.org/ (Last accessed 2011 September)

Ray, Brian K. 2004. A diversity paradox: Montréal's gay village. In Caroline Andrew (ed.) *Our Diverse Cities*. Ottawa: Metropolis Project and Federation of Municipalities, pp. 72-75.

Rayside, Morton David. 2008. *Queer Inclusions, Continental Divisions: Public Recognition of Sexual Diversity in Canada and the United States*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Renolds, Robert. 2009. Endangered territory, endangered identity: Oxford Street and the dissipation of gay life. *Journal of Australian Studies* 33,1, 79-92.

Ross, Betsy. 1995. *The House That Jill Built: A Lesbian Nation in Formation*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Rushbrook, Dereka. 2002. Cities, queer space, and the cosmopolitan tourist. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 8, 183-206.

Ruting, Brad. 2008. Economic transformations of gay urban spaces: Revisiting Collins' evolution gay district model. *Australian Geographer* 39, 259-269.

Sears, Alan. 2005. Queer anti-capitalism: What's left of lesbian and gay liberation? *Science and Society* 69, 1, 92-112.

Sharp, Joanne. 2008. Geography and gender: What belongs to feminist geography? Emotion, power and change. *Progress in Human Geography* 33, 74-80.

Sibley, David. 1995. *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and difference in the West*. London; New York: Routledge.

Smith, Mick 2009. *Emotion, Place and Culture*. Aldershort, England: Ashgate.

Slater, Tom 2004. Municipally managed gentrification in South Parkdale, Toronto. *The Canadian Geographer* 48, 303-325.

Smith, Miriam 2010. *Political Institutions and Lesbian and Gay Rights in the United States and Canada*. London and New York: Routledge.

Sothern, Michael. 2004. (Un)queer patriarchies: or, 'what we think when we fuck' *Antipode* 36, 183-90.

Taylor, Yvette 2011. Introduction, Sexualities and class. *Sexualities* 14, 3-11.

Teelucksingh, Cheryl. 2006. Claiming Space: Racialization in Canadian Cities. Waterloo, ONT: Wilfred Laurier University Press.

Trembly, Mannon, David Paternotte, and Carol Johnson. 2011. *The Lesbian and Gay Movement and the State: Comparative Insights into a Transformed Relationship*. Burlington: Ashgate.

Valentine, Gill. 2007. Theorizing and researching Intersectionality: A challenge for feminist geographers. *Professional Geography* 59, 1, 10-21.

Visser, Gustav. 2008. The homonormalization of white heterosexual leisure spaces in Bleomfontein, South Africa. *Geoforum* 39, 1344-1358.

Walks, R. Alan. 2001 The social ecology of the post-Fordist/global city? Economic restructuring and socio-spatial polarization in the Toronto urban region. *Urban Studies* 38, 407-447.

Warner,Tom. 2002. *Never Going Back: A History of Queer Activism in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Warner, T. 2010. *Losing Control: Canada's Social Conservatives in the Age of Rights*. Toronto: Between the Lines.

Whitzman, Carolyn. 2009. *Suburb, Slum, Urban village: Transformations in Toronto's Parkdale Neighbourhood, 1875-2002*. Vancouver: UBC Press.