

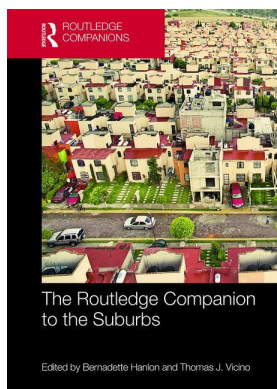
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Queer suburbs

(Sub)urban spaces and sexualities in the Global North

Andrew Gorman-Murray and Catherine J. Nash

Introduction

The majority of the population in the Global North lives not only in urban areas – to put it more accurately, they live in the suburbs surrounding these cities. In Australia, for instance, four out of five people live in the suburbs comprising the country’s sprawling metropolitan regions. Since these suburbs house the population’s majority, they reflect its social and cultural diversity. However, fairly narrow imaginaries of suburban life prevail in the Global North, perhaps particularly in settler-societies with expansive, low-density suburbs such as Australia, Canada, and the United States. The particular social norms that underpin “expected” sexual identities and relationships are prominent, with the ideal of the heterosexual nuclear family often synonymous with both imaginaries of suburban life (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Gorman-Murray, 2007) and their translation into urban planning and practice (Johnson, 2000; Howard, 2013). This chapter instead trains a lens on “other” sexualities and their relationships with suburban life, morphologies, and imaginaries. We focus on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (LGBT), and queer experiences of the suburbs in the Anglophone Global North. We consider, on the one hand, the development of neighborhoods specifically associated with LGBT and queer identities and communities, and on the other hand, the experiences of LGBT and queer people in the context of “mainstream” suburbia. The latter remains underdeveloped in extant research agendas, but given growing political and social acceptance of LGBT and queer identities and relationships, demands greater attention.

Before moving on, we want to contextualize our interest in and approach to this topic. As geographers, we understand the production of knowledge to be situated geographically as well as socially. It is thus important to provide the geographical and scholarly context of our interest in suburbia, since this will aid readers’ understanding of our approach. Since the early 2000s both authors have individually undertaken research on the historical and contemporary relationships between urban spaces and sexualities in our respective national fields, Australia and Canada (Gorman-Murray, 2006, 2007, 2013b; Gorman-Murray and Waitt, 2009; Nash, 2005, 2006, 2013b, 2014). Since 2012, we have collaborated on examining ongoing socio-spatial changes in gendered and sexual landscapes in each country’s key global city, Sydney, and Toronto, in an effort to understand these changes within a transnational comparative context. We have examined the formation, transformation, and lived experience of urban neighborhoods linked to LGBT and

queer communities, including the effects of planning, politics, and social mobility on inner-city suburbs (Gorman-Murray and Nash, 2014, 2016, 2017; Nash and Gorman-Murray, 2014, 2015a, 2015b). We extend our interests and approach in this chapter: thinking about urban life in the Anglophone Global North, we consider LGBT and queer experiences in relation to both inner-city “queer-friendly” suburbs and wider “mainstream” suburban landscapes.

It is important to define our key terms. Regarding suburbia, Johnson’s (2006) adaption of Harris and Larkham’s (1999) cross-national common elements of “a suburb” is useful: a largely residential location peripheral to an urban core, with a distinctive place identity and way of life; its landscape is often characterized by low-density, freestanding dwellings, and its social environment by heterosexual, nuclear family households and conventional gender roles (female homemakers, male breadwinners). Distinctions, sometimes more imaginative than factual, are also made between inner-city and middle-to-outer-ring suburbs, with inner-city suburbs perceived as more socially diverse and liberal than the supposedly homogenous and conservative suburbs further from the urban core (Johnson, 2000, 2006). LGBT – lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender – is a now common acronym in the Global North that refers to a group of sexual and gender identities that contest heterosexual and cisgendered (i.e., conventionally masculine and feminine) norms. Queer is a more recent term (at least in its contemporary political and social usage) that questions sexual and gender binaries altogether (i.e., heterosexual/homosexual, man/woman) and urges appreciation of fluid and multiple sexual and gender subject positions. Some have taken up “queer” to challenge “fixed” LGBT politics and communities as well as mainstream heteronormativity, masculinity, and femininity. This distinction is important as it arguably has some bearing on the recent “decline” of inner-city “gayborhoods,” discussed below (Nash, 2013b; Gorman-Murray and Nash, 2014).

The chapter proceeds as follows. We begin by discussing the development of gayborhoods, or inner-city suburbs associated with LGBT identities and communities (though often dominated by gay identities and communities). We then consider how wider suburbia – “mainstream” middle-to-outer-ring suburbia – has been understood and experienced by gay men in comparison to gayborhoods. However, gender intersects in different ways with sexual orientation in the construction of suburbia (Doan, 2015), so the third section brings attention to lesbian spaces across the inner and outer suburbs. Finally, we return to the inner-city to discuss changes in LGBT and queer urban spaces. Transformations and dissipations of some gayborhoods have been paralleled by the coalescence of new “queer neighborhoods” in cities such as Sydney and Toronto (Gorman-Murray and Nash, 2017; Nash and Gorman-Murray, 2015b). In our discussions, we draw on published research from diverse disciplines regarding urban spaces and sexualities in the Anglophone Global North.

Gayborhoods

Research on the development of inner-city gayborhoods in the Anglophone Global North is amongst the earliest and most enduring scholarship on urban spaces and sexualities. In disciplines such as urban sociology and urban geography, research on gayborhoods in U.S. cities emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Castells, 1983; Levine, 1979). “Gayborhood” is a relatively new moniker for these inner-city suburbs; earlier terms, still sometimes used, include “gay ghetto,” “gay village” and “gay enclave.” All are used to describe a neighborhood that houses a gay residential, commercial, and service concentration – a spatial clustering of gay households along with leisure venues, businesses, and community organizations serving gay clientele. In one of the earliest discussions – but one that retains currency – Levine (1979, p. 364) suggested that “an urban neighborhood can be” seen as a gay ghetto, village, or enclave “if it contains gay institutions

in number, a conspicuous and locally dominant gay subculture that is socially isolated from the larger community, and a residential population that is substantially gay.” Soon after Levine’s statement, in a ground-breaking case study, Castells (1983) demonstrated that gay men were intimately involved in the renovation of commercial spaces and housing stock in San Francisco’s Castro area, effectively territorializing this neighborhood through property development. The Castro has been described as “the most famous example of a gay urban neighborhood” (Valentine, 2002, p. 146).

The work of Levine (1979) and Castells (1983) makes clear that early gayborhood development had specific gender, class, and race parameters, largely impelled by the interests of middle-class, white gay men (Knopp, 1995). While potentially exclusionary of lesbians, bisexuals, and trans people – a point to which we return later – the congruence of gayborhoods with middle-class white gay men in particular nevertheless allowed pioneering researchers to conceptualize reasons underpinning their development. Castells (1983, p. 161) argued that gayborhoods emerged in response to social, political, and economic imperatives, “to build up a new community at a financial and social cost that only ‘moral refugees’ are ready to pay.” A gayborhood like the Castro provided a material (economic) and territorial (spatial) base for political organization and sub-cultural self-definition. Lauria and Knopp (1985) and Knopp (1990a) advanced these theoretical insights into gay men’s territorialization of inner-city suburbs in U.S. cities. They identified place-making processes as a response to wider social oppression, transforming urban spaces “in such a way as to reflect gay cultural values and serve the special needs of individual gays vis-à-vis society at large” (Lauria and Knopp, 1985, p. 159). They neatly summarized the thesis thus: “Gays, in essence, have seized the opportunity to combat oppression by creating neighborhoods over which they have maximum control and which meet long-neglected needs” (Lauria and Knopp, 1985, p. 161). Gayborhood development thus provided a geographical base for rights’ claims and electoral representation.

Knopp (1990a, 1990b) also examined the intertwining of gay territorialization of inner-city suburbs with gentrification and urban regeneration. These economic processes produced spatial marginalization and exclusion *within* LGBT populations along axes of gender, class, race, and age. It was mainly white, working-age, middle-class gay men who were able to muster the financial resources to buy and renovate residential and commercial properties, with surplus income and time to spend in the local businesses and venues created (Knopp, 1995, 1998). Castells (1983) also suggested that men, but not women, were inherently territorial in order to offer a reason for gay men’s visible territorialization vis-à-vis lesbians. Adler and Brenner (1992), Rothenberg (1995), and Bouthillette (1997), among others, have shown this was, and is, not the case, and that lesbian urban communities certainly existed, although they took less palpable and commercial forms than gay men’s. We expand upon this critique later. Subtle and overt exclusions also operated around race and age in the public venues and spaces of gayborhoods (Caluya, 2008; Gorman-Murray, 2013a). As a result of these social and economic processes, gayborhoods became spaces where certain groups of gay men fit, but fractions of the LGBT and queer communities have been marginalized – lesbians, bisexuals, trans people, as well as non-white, non-wealthy, and older gay men.

While early insights focused on well-known U.S. examples, including San Francisco’s Castro and New York’s Greenwich Village, since the 1990s scholarship has expanded within and beyond the U.S., with studies investigating gayborhood development in Los Angeles, U.S. (Forest, 1995), Chicago, U.S. (Winkle, 2015), Vancouver, Canada (Bouthillette, 1997), Toronto, Canada (Nash, 2005), Sydney, Australia (Murphy and Watson, 1997), Manchester, U.K. (Quilley, 1997), and London, U.K. (Collins, 2004), inter alia. Collins’s (2004) evolutionary model of gay village development is important. Based on observations of Soho, London, he devised a

four-stage model of gayborhood evolution, which underscored entwined economic, social, and political forces propagating gay urban spaces. His model describes the dynamism of gayborhoods, which typically begin with a “beachhead” gay bar in a marginal inner-city location, bringing in gay clientele; this attracts additional gay venues, consolidating a commercial cluster that draws a gay residential population along with a diversity of secondary businesses and services catering to this population. However, in the fourth stage, gayborhood success encourages both “mainstream” colonization and property price increases that may force out gay residents and institutions, leading to decline. The model has been applied elsewhere, with particular focus on understanding the “final stage.” For instance, Ruting (2008) and Lewis (2015), for Sydney and Washington, DC, respectively, interrogate diverse trajectories of “decline,” including assimilation, dissipation, dispersal, fragmentation, relocation, and replacement. Collins and Drinkwater (2017) revisited the model and integrated these complications. We revisit the geographies of gayborhood decline later; first, we discuss gay lives in “mainstream” suburbia.

Gay suburbia

If gayborhoods are perceived as “gay territories” enabling security and freedom, however diffuse and permeable, then we must also consider from what and where these territories have been supposedly sequestered. While the urban/rural binary is one well-established spatial trope – where the countryside is seen as oppressive and the city as liberating (Weston, 1995; Bech, 1997) – another, perhaps more crucial, juxtaposition is posited between the “queer” inner-city and “heteronormative” suburbia. With reference to Sydney, for instance, both Hodge (1995) and McInnes (2001) have highlighted how inner-city gay territories and identities are constructed in relation to middle-to-outer-ring suburbia, often by the city’s gay media. In this relational geography, the suburbs become the “non-gay” other of gayborhoods like the Oxford Street “pink triangle,” which encompasses parts of the inner-city suburbs of Darlinghurst, Surry Hills, and Paddington (cf. Kirby and Hay, 1997 on Adelaide). This spatial imaginary has a problematic dual function. On the one hand, it normalizes the inner-city as “safe” gay territory, which is often not the case, as this visible gay concentration can attract anti-gay violence (Tomsen, 2009). On the other hand, it elides the lives and experiences of gay men (and other LGBT and queer people) living in the suburbs.

Unfortunately, this has been mirrored in research: with fewer visible gay venues, services, and residents, less scholarly effort has been invested in understanding suburban gay lives (Doan, 2015). Nevertheless, work by sociologists and geographers in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s was attentive to the role of sexuality and intimacy in suburbia, underscoring the heterosexual ideals suffusing “suburban dreams.” Game and Pringle (1979) and Johnson (1993), for instance, demonstrate how suburban development in Australia was impelled by interlocking desires for opposite-sex marriage, nuclear family formation, and homeownership, rendering the suburbs both material and imaginative sites of heterosexual marriage, home life, and reproduction. Perhaps it is no wonder that the suburbs have been cast as the gayborhood’s “other.” But as Hodge (1995) equally demonstrates for Australian suburbia, many gay men have “suburban dreams” and make their homes there. Since the 1980s, a small but slowly growing number of studies have begun to investigate suburban gay lives in the Anglophone Global North (Dines, 2009; Tongson, 2011).

Perhaps the earliest study was Lynch’s (1987, p. 13) ethnographic research on “the lifestyles of white, middle-class suburban homosexuals” in a Californian city. Through his four-year field study, together with a comparison to extant accounts of gayborhoods, he found that these suburban gay men were less “out” than inner-city denizens, and adhered to “suburban dreams” of

building a career, owning a home, and obtaining a life partner. He surmised that the middle-class suburban environment inhibited homosexual identity formation and that suburban gay men were individualistic and assimilationist, concluding that “the lure of large cities and gay ghettos has faded” (Lynch, 1987, p. 13). His findings prefigured later conceptual developments: homonormativity, or assimilation to coupled, domestic, consumerist, middle-class lifestyles (Duggan, 2003); and the decline of inner-city gayborhoods as cultural, political, and economic touchstones for gay communities (Ghaziani, 2014). Kirkey and Forsyth (2001) further investigated differences in suburban and inner-city gay identity work in the U.S., and Brekhus (2003) highlights the diversity of gay suburban lives. Brekhus’s (2003) ethnographic study of a New Jersey suburb revealed different modes of gay identity work in suburbia. “Commuters” travel to gay leisure venues to be “out,” but adopt “generic” attributes in suburban environments; “integrators” live openly gay lives in the suburbs, but see this as one part of their holistic identities. In comparison, Kirkey and Forsyth’s (2001) interviews with gay men living on the “metropolitan edge,” in Massachusetts’ Connecticut River Valley, found a “gay life” that was nonurban and home-centered but also positively integrated with the wider community.

Studies of gay suburbia in Australia have been significant, too. Wotherspoon’s (1991) history of Sydney’s gay subculture describes twentieth-century suburban gay life as clandestine, but also notes how rising car ownership post-World War II enabled easier travel both between suburbs and to the emerging Oxford Street gayborhood. In a ground-breaking work on gay men in Sydney’s western suburbs, Hodge (1995, pp. 41, 43) argued that “broadening . . . research into suburban spaces . . . can diversify our understanding of the relationship between sexuality and space and may . . . reveal strategies for overcoming homophobia that may not have been clear in research on gay territories.”

While the suburban imaginary has “played a role in constructing gay spaces (and therefore gay identities) by becoming [inner-city] gay Sydney’s ‘other,’ there is also a diversity of sexual practices and sexual identities in the suburbs” (Hodge, 1995, p. 41). He argued, “Gay men in western Sydney have a different relationship to the ‘wider heterosexual world’ than that experienced by the inner-city gay community” through the affordances of the suburban home (Hodge, 1995, p. 46). The home was, and is, a site in which gay relationships and identities can be affirmed, and through which relations with friends and neighbors meant “bridges could be built between straight and gay” (Hodge, 1995, p. 46). Gorman-Murray (2007, 2012) furthered this work, highlighting the paradoxical role of the suburban home for gay men. Using interview data, he found that the home is a place where gay identities, relationships, and rights’ claims can be publicly asserted – to friends, family, and communities, for instance – thus queering the “suburban dream” and reinforcing Hodge’s (1995) suggestion of “building bridges” through the home. Simultaneously, he contended that homes are not utterly private, but public sites where gay lives are surveilled by neighbors, salespeople, and tradespeople. Through this tension, we might understand the suburban home as a site where gay identities and rights are continuously negotiated.

Lesbian urban spaces

Research into lesbian urban spaces, like work on gay suburbia, has offered a corrective to the early focus on gayborhood development. Moreover, this work has countered the early centering of (some) gay men’s experiences in social and geographical research, and brought a more nuanced gendered lens to our understanding of the relationship between sexuality and space. Beginning in the late 1980s, researchers began to examine processes of urban territorialization by lesbians.

This was partly a response to problematic gendered assertions Castells (1983, p. 140) made in his earlier study of gay territorialization in the Castro, in which he argued, “Lesbians, unlike gay men, tend not to concentrate in a given territory, but establish social and interpersonal networks.” Work by Winchester and White (1988), Adler and Brenner (1992), and Valentine (1995) on Paris, and an unnamed American and British city, respectively, contested these assumptions. Lesbians sometimes concentrate in certain neighborhoods, but these communities are often less visible than gay male enclaves because lesbians, like heterosexual women, have less access to capital than gay or heterosexual men, and “because a fear of male violence deters their willingness to have an obvious presence in the landscape” (Valentine, 2002, p. 148). Castells (1983, p. 140) also assumed that lesbians were “more concerned with the revolution of values than with the control of institutional power,” and this has some support in later work. Valentine (2002, p. 148) contends that due to “the influence of feminism lesbian ‘communities’ have tended to be more radical, politicized, and less materially oriented than gay men, which has stymied the development of businesses and bars run for, and by, women.”

Since the 1990s, researchers have analyzed a range of lesbian neighborhoods in the Anglo-phone Global North, particularly in U.S. and Canadian cities. A number of more-or-less visible lesbian enclaves have been discussed, with their development and morphology differing from gayborhoods. As Valentine (2000, p. 3) argues, “Lesbians do create spatially concentrated communities but . . . these neighborhoods are often composed of clusters of lesbian households and sometimes countercultural institutions such as alternative bookstores or cooperative stores rather than commercial bars and institutions.” Rothenberg’s (1995) study of Park Slope, in New York City’s borough of Brooklyn, was an insightful riposte to Castell’s (1983) suggestion that lesbians do not territorialize while highlighting the distinct nature of lesbian neighborhoods and their formation. The intersection of the women’s movement with early waves of gentrification provided a socio-spatial context for lesbians to engage in “sweat equity” housing development in Park Slope, attracting a cluster of lesbian households – similar to early gay gentrification in the Castro (Castells, 1983). However, the reasons for their continued concentration differed: “word-of-mouth, not statistical information, is what lures women to a ‘lesbian neighborhood’” (Rothenberg, 1995, p. 169). The “power of lesbian social networking” (p. 177) was crucial for the consolidation of a lesbian neighborhood, captured in the title of Rothenberg’s piece: “And she told two friends.”

Other work, particularly from Canada, has progressed our understanding of relationships between lesbian urban spaces and gayborhoods. Bouthillette’s (1997, p. 214) comparison of “the lesbian neighborhood versus the gay male enclave” in Vancouver, Canada – respectively, the Drive and the West End – highlighted divergent characteristics of lesbian and gay inner-city concentrations. The Drive was understood as symbolizing “grounded multiculturalism and family living in inner-city Vancouver” (p. 215) vis-à-vis body-conscious commercialism evident in the West End (cf. Lo and Healy, 2000). Similarly, in her research on Montreal’s lesbian community, Podmore (2001, 2006) contends that lesbian place-making differs from gay men’s, occurring in “spaces of difference” – marginal inner-city areas marked by demographic diversity and mixed land uses, such as the Plateau neighborhood. Countering visibility as central to territorialization, like Rothenberg (1995), she documents vibrant social networks operating in “spaces of difference” that create quasi-underground lesbian communities. In their work on lesbian geographies in Toronto (Canada) and Sydney (Australia), Nash and Gorman-Murray (2015a) extend these ideas by discussing the highly mobile nature of lesbian urban spaces, which seem to disperse and coalesce in different inner-city suburbs with more frequency than gay urban spaces. In Sydney, for instance, lesbian community spaces have moved across the inner-city since the 1980s, from Darlinghurst to Leichhardt to Newtown and adjacent suburbs. As Podmore (2001, p. 335)

contends, understanding lesbian geographies requires recognition of how “gender mediates geographies of sexualities in the urban landscape.”

Extant research suggests that lesbians are more likely than gay men to reside and be visibly present in the middle-to-outer-ring suburbs. Forsyth (1997) provided a critical early pointer to this in her study of the lesbian concentration in Massachusetts’ Connecticut River Valley area, in and around the small city of Northampton. She examined how lesbian households and services were distributed in the Valley, finding visible concentrations in fringe suburban and peri-urban areas, as well as a lesbian “service core” in Northampton. Forsyth (1997, p. 57) suggested this “raises questions about the general diversity of the semirural fringe” and “the relative locations of lesbians and gay men.” Using 2006 census data and geographic information systems, Gorman-Murray and Brennan-Horley (2011) mapped the relative location and concentration of same-sex couple family households in Australia using location quotients (i.e., residential concentrations as a proportion of the national average), disaggregated for female and male couples (a proxy for lesbian and gay couples). They found that female couples were more diffused than male couples and more likely to reside in above-average concentrations in suburban, outer-metropolitan, and peri-urban locations. From this we can at least suggest that lesbian couples are more likely to be suburbanites than gay couples. Likewise, Doan’s (2015, p. 119) study of Tallahassee (U.S.) found “a clear preference among gay men for residence in or near downtown Tallahassee compared to the stronger preference among lesbians for housing near the urban fringe.” There are multinational inferences, then, that lesbians are more likely than gay men to take up home in the suburbs in the Anglophone Global North.

Queer neighborhoods

In this final section, we return to inner-city gayborhoods and consider their future. A number of urban sociologists, geographers, and historians across various countries – the U.S. Canada, Australia, and Britain – have begun to note that long-established gayborhoods appear to be in “decline” (Collins, 2004; Ruting, 2008; Reynolds, 2009; Brown, 2014; Ghaziani, 2014; Collins and Drinkwater, 2017). As long ago as 1987, Lynch suggested that the attraction of “gay ghettos” was fading, but the twenty-first century has seen this become a prominent concern: as Brown (2014, p. 457) argued in his review of geographical work on gayborhoods, they have been perceived as “receding in size, scope, and function.” Concerns have been raised in the media and in research about the future of some long-standing gayborhoods, including San Francisco’s Castro, New York’s Greenwich Village, London’s Soho, Toronto’s Church-Wellesley Village and Sydney’s Oxford Street, and the implications for community and health service provisions (Rosser et al., 2008).

Gayborhood decline has been attributed to a number of diverse factors. Changing economic landscapes comprise one critical reason. For instance, Ruting’s (2008) analysis of Sydney’s Oxford Street, Doan and Higgins’s (2011) of Atlanta’s Midtown, and Collins and Drinkwater’s (2017) of gay villages in England all identified adverse effects from ongoing waves of gentrification. On the back of initial “sweat equity” gentrification undertaken by LGBT people, super-gentrification by (often) “mainstream” investors and wealthy buyers has impelled ever-rising house prices and residential and commercial rents. Continuous cost increases for residential and commercial properties have become prohibitive for some, forcing LGBT residents (especially renters) and businesses out of gayborhoods. Simultaneously, super-gentrification inhibits new LGBT constituents – especially those with fewer financial means – from moving into gayborhoods. The result has been a deconcentration of LGBT households, leisure venues, and services in cities in the U.S., Canada, Britain, and Australia. At the same time, other social changes have reduced

the imperative for LGBT and queer people to relocate to gayborhoods. Some research has suggested that more liberal social attitudes, together with new legal and political gains, have made it easier for LGBT and queer people to continue living openly in “mainstream” suburban and regional spaces (Gorman-Murray and Waitt, 2009; Nash, 2013a, 2013b; Collins and Drinkwater, 2017), stemming migration to gayborhoods. Other research has argued that the rise of online and mobile digital technologies – dating and community websites and apps – has made it easier for LGBT and queer people to find partners and form friendships and communities online, beyond physical meeting spaces afforded by gayborhoods (Batiste, 2014; Roth, 2016; Collins and Drinkwater, 2017). For example, Roth (2016, p. 441), referencing Tongson (2011), contends, “Grindr’s [a gay dating and hook-up app] model of community has . . . more in common with the ‘remote intimacies’ of the suburbs . . . than with the classic forms of urban gay life.” Furthermore, some researchers proffer generational changes in identity politics, and that identities such as “gay” and “lesbian” are yielding to “post-gay” and “queer” sensibilities, with these subjects eschewing the fixity of gay villages (Brown, 2004; Reynolds, 2009; Nash, 2013a, 2013b).

Yet, the desire for socio-spatial concentration cannot be dismissed: entwined with processes of decline, recent research in the Anglophone Global North has identified new “alternative” neighborhoods with LGBT and queer concentrations, distinct from “traditional” gayborhoods, materializing in other inner-city suburbs. Researchers from Australia, Canada, Britain, and the U.S. have documented the development of some of these “queer neighborhoods,” including Newtown, Sydney (Gorman-Murray and Waitt, 2009; Gorman-Murray and Nash, 2014), Parkdale, Toronto (Nash, 2013a; Nash and Gorman-Murray, 2015b), Shoreditch and Vauxhall, London (Andersson, 2009, 2011) and Berkeley, Oakland/San Francisco (Compton and Baumle, 2012). Our work has focused on understanding the coalescence of queer neighborhoods such as Newtown in Sydney and Parkdale in Toronto, including their distinction from and ongoing connections to traditional gayborhoods in these cities (Gorman-Murray and Nash, 2014, 2016, 2017; Nash and Gorman-Murray, 2014, 2015a, 2015b). While imperfect, we termed these “queer neighborhoods” not just to distinguish them from “gayborhoods,” but because we, along with researchers cited previously, found that these alternative urban spaces are perceived and often experienced as enabling a more expansive range of gendered and sexual subjects than gayborhoods, and are thus differently woven into the urban fabric.

While acknowledging ongoing tensions, arguably queer neighborhoods encompass a broader LGBT constituency than gayborhoods – including differences of gender, ethnicity, class, and age (Andersson, 2009; Compton and Baumle, 2012; Nash, 2013a; Nash and Gorman-Murray, 2015a) – as well as potential for more cohesive articulations between LGBT and mainstream communities (Gorman-Murray and Waitt, 2009; Gorman-Murray and Nash, 2016). As noted, Newtown, in Sydney’s inner western suburbs, is an example. Newtown and surrounding suburbs have been posited in Australia’s LGBT media as the “alternative” center (to Oxford Street) of Sydney’s LGBT community, housing a range of leisure venues (Gorman-Murray, 2006). Since the 1990s, a number of community services have moved from Oxford Street to Newtown, following a growing LGBT residential concentration (Gorman-Murray and Nash, 2014). In residential terms, Newtown houses the most concentrated lesbian population in Australia, and a visible trans and genderqueer community, alongside a gay community seen as more politicized and less image-conscious than Oxford Street (Nash and Gorman-Murray, 2015a, 2015b). Meanwhile, liberal politics, local settings, community organizations, and government initiatives foster mainstream recognition for LGBT people (Gorman-Murray and Waitt, 2009; Gorman-Murray and Nash, 2017). We stress that we do not offer the example of Newtown as an “ideal type” free of tension and exclusion – for instance, it is now confronting the challenges of super-gentrification and homophobic violence around commercial leisure

spaces – but rather as an instance of a “queer neighborhood” that is emerging as an alternative to gayborhood decline.

Conclusion

On face value, a focus on urban spaces and sexualities might seem narrow for some readers. However, in this chapter we hope we demonstrated that LGBT and queer subjectivities and communities are tightly woven into – and help produce – a diverse range of urban spaces in the Anglophone Global North. Certainly, we have traversed a wide terrain, from well-known gayborhoods in inner-city suburbs, to gay lives in middle-to-outer-ring suburbia, to the development of lesbian spaces across the urban landscape, to the decline of gayborhoods and coalescence of new queer neighborhoods. In all cases, urban spaces associated with LGBT and queer people are never about the experiences of sexuality isolated from other social axes. Intersections with gender, class, race, and age also shape LGBT urban spaces, including internal parameters of inclusion and exclusion. Tensions and conciliations with mainstream communities are crucial too: LGBT urban spaces have changed over time, from territorial reactions to social and political exclusion, to place-based communities responding to shifting social attitudes, legal rights, and potentials for inclusion. Given these complex and ever-changing relationships between urban spaces and sexualities, this remains fertile ground for ongoing research.

Guide to further reading

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