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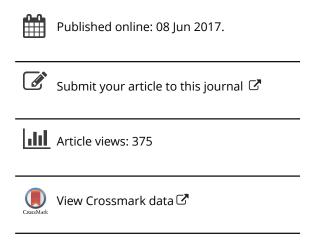
Fragile subjectivities: constructing queer safe spaces

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ABSTRACT

This paper uses framing theory to challenge previous understandings of queer safe space, their construction, and fundamental logics. Safe space is usually apprehended as a protected and inclusive place, where one can express one's identity freely and comfortably. Focusing on the Jerusalem Open House, a community center for LGBT individuals in Jerusalem, I investigate the spatial politics of safe space. Introducing the contested space of Jerusalem, I analyze five framings of safe space, outlining diverse and oppositional components producing this negotiable construct. The argument is twofold: First, I aim to explicate five different frames for the creation of safe space. The frames are: fortification of the queer space, preserving participants' anonymity, creating an inclusive space, creating a space of separation for distinct identity groups, and controlling unpredictable influences on the participants in the space. Second, by unraveling the basic reasoning for each frame and its related affects I show how all five frames are anchored in liberal logics and reflect specific ways in which we comprehend how queer subjectivities produce/are produced through safe space and its discourse.

Subjectivités fragiles: construction d'espaces sûrs pour les gays

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article utile la théorie de l'encadrement pour remettre en question ce que l'on entendait jusqu'à présent par espace sûr pour les gays, sa construction et sa logique fondamentale. Par espace sûr on entend habituellement un lieu protégé et inclusif, où l'on peut exprimer son identité librement et confortablement. En se concentrant sur l'Open House de Jérusalem, un centre communautaire pour les LGBT à Jérusalem, j'enquête sur les politiques spatiales de l'espace sûr. En présentant l'espace contesté de Jérusalem, j'analyse cinq cadres d'espace sûr, qui soulignent les composantes différentes et oppositionnelles qui produisent cette construction négociable. Le débat comprend deux parties : tout d'abord, je tente d'expliquer les cinq cadres différents pour la création d'espaces sûrs. Ces cadres sont : la fortification de l'espace gay, la protection de l'anonymat des participants, la création d'un espace inclusif, la création d'un espace de séparation pour les groupes d'identités distinctes et le contrôle des influences imprévisibles sur les participants dans cet espace. Deuxièmement, en éclaircissant le raisonnement de base pour chaque cadre et les effets qui y sont liés, je montre comment les cinq cadres

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sont tous ancrés dans des logiques libérales et reflètent les manières spécifiques dont nous comprenons comment les subjectivités gays produisent / sont produites grâce à un espace sûr et son discours.

Las subjetividades frágiles: la construcción de espacios gais seguros

RESUMEN

Este artículo utiliza la teoría del encuadre para desafiar los conocimientos anteriores del espacio gay seguro, sus construcciones y lógicas fundamentales. Usualmente, se entiende como espacio seguro a un lugar protegido y abierto, donde uno puede expresar su identidad libre y cómodamente. Centrándose en el *Jerusalem Open House*, un centro comunitario para personas LGBT en Jerusalén, se investiga la política espacial del espacio seguro. Dentro del controvertido espacio de Jerusalén, se analizan cinco marcos de espacio seguro, esbozando componentes diversos y de oposición que producen este constructo negociable. El argumento es doble: primero, se intentan explicar cinco marcos diferentes para la creación del espacio seguro. Los marcos son: la fortificación del espacio gay, la preservación del anonimato de los participantes, la creación de un espacio abierto, la creación de un espacio de separación para distintos grupos de identidad y el control de las influencias impredecibles sobre los participantes en el espacio. En segundo lugar, al desentrañar el razonamiento básico de cada marco y sus afectos relacionados, se muestra cómo los cinco marcos están anclados en lógicas liberales y reflejan formas específicas en las cuales se comprende cómo las subjetividades gais producen/se producen a través del espacio seguro y su discurso.

Introduction

Safe space is an always contested and ambiguous term within LGBT and queer discourses. In this paper, I aim to expand this field of discussion of queer safe spaces, making it more reflexive through discussing distinct framings of the term safe spaces, revealing some overt and covert logics, meanings and goals. Focusing on the Jerusalem Open House (JOH), an NGO and a queer community space in Jerusalem, this paper offers an analysis of the concept of safe space in geographical queer discourse, and shows how different framings of safe space are subtly produced, accentuating diverse interpretations and nuances. The main questions address the ways the concept of safe space is produced by/produces how we currently think about LGBT subjectivities.

The five safe space frames which are articulated in this article are: fortification of the queer space, preserving participants' anonymity, creating an inclusive space, creating a space of separation for distinct identity groups, and controlling unpredictable influences on the participants in the space. These frames are anchored in liberal rights discourses and reflect a contested meaning of the term safe space in the queer context, which could reflect a failure to understand exactly what a safe space is (expectations), and how it should be achieved (practice).

The Roestone Collective (2014) have called for the analysis of safe space as a 'living concept, identifying tendencies and variations in its use, and recognizing its situatedness in multiple contexts' (p. 1347). This article responds to that call by introducing the five distinct frames for the concept of queer safe spaces.

Rooted in Erving Goffman's work (1974), framing is an endeavor to describe and analyze 'what is it that's going on here?' (p. 25). Frames help elucidate everyday experiences and situations, and suggest what is important and salient in a specific cultural context, by high-lighting particular definitions of knowledge, occurrences, and discourse. Snow and Benford (1988, 1992) contend that 'frame resonance' determines the mobilization potential of a frame and its effectiveness. Frames are cultural components, and, as such, they are always chal-lenged by other frames. Those frames that resonate with the wider cultural frame are more acceptable, creating a wide shared understanding of meanings.

Using frame theory is productive in that it clarifies diverse meanings of queer safe space and its understandings for different subject identities (i.e. lesbians, transgenders, etc.), while not implying that this is *the* meaning of what safe space ought to be at that particular space–time. Frames are an analytic tool to interpret the ways these differentiated under-standings of queer safe space construct the LGBT social, cultural, and physical space.

Thus, this paper has two objectives: First, I aim to explicate five main frames for the con-struction of safe space, their interaction, integration and points of contrast, thus emphasizing the necessity for a more nuanced terminology. Second, by carefully unraveling the basic reasoning for each frame and its related affects, I will show that even though there are fun-damental contradictions between the frames, the liberal logics on which all five frames are established create queer subjectivities as fragile, weak subjects, in constant need of protec-tion from unsafe space.

I begin with a discussion of key theories regarding queer safe space and its negotiation followed by a short methodology section. Then, I introduce the contested space of Jerusalem, mainly with regard to its LGBT presence and struggles; I analyze the framings of safe space as illustrated at the JOH, outlining how this negotiable construct is produced before finally discussing its resonance with liberal logics and construction of subjectivities.

Negotiating queer space, constructing safe(r) space(s)

Since the 1990s, it has been commonly accepted within geographies of sexualities that space is actively produced as heterosexual (Binnie, 1997) and heteronormative (Bell & Valentine, 1995). The function of diverse overt and covert mechanisms of spatial control indicates ongoing suppression of non-normative sexualities, governing and silencing LGBT desires and embodiments in space (Valentine, 2000).

Despite this seemingly coherent image of space, geographers and specifically feminist geographers (Massey, 1994; McDowell, 1999; Monk & Hanson, 2010; Rose, 1993) have shown that space is rather negotiable and can encompass conflicts and splits. These conflicts con-struct meanings and open up new ways of (re)constructing and being in space (see e.g. Massey, 1991; Skeggs, 1999; Valentine, 1996). Feminist geographers (Pain, 1991, 1997, 2001; Pain & Koskela, 2000; Valentine, 1989) have suggested shifting the analytical prism, exploring not the ways in which women's experiences in the city are formulated by their understand-ings and experiences of fear and risk, but the 'mutual constitution of gendered identities and spaces' (Bondi & Rose, 2003, p. 234), further problematizing women's fear and its con-nection to risk within the discourses on urban safety. Much of the current thinking on the construction of safe space is affected by this body of knowledge, suggesting a mutual con-struction of LGBT subjectivities and their experiences in space, specifically queer space.

Unlike heterosexual space, LGBT space is imagined to be safe for LGBT individuals – a space devoid of sexism, LGBT-phobia and violence (Nash, 2011). Doan (2007) claims that 'overt action create[s] a safe place for people who identify as queer' (p. 57). The LGBT space is portrayed as one of tolerance and acceptance, where difference is 'celebrated'. In actuality, in some cases LGBT spaces reproduce power relations which are mostly based on the het-eronormative constitution of identities (Nash, 2010; Oswin, 2008), recreating hierarchies and exclusion (Brown, Browne, & Lim, 2007; Oswin, 2013).

Since the understanding of what is meant by safety is at the heart of the controversy, it is pertinent to outline its definitions and emphasize the unequal access to safety. A safe space is supposed to be a protected place, facilitating a sense of security and recreating discourses of inclusion and diversity. It is a metaphor for the ability to be honest, take risks, share opinions, or reveal one's sexual identity (Hartal, David, & Pascar, 2014). Safety in this sense is not merely physical safety but psychological, social, and emotional safety as well.

Queer safe spaces play a major role in constructing LGBT space (Hanhardt, 2013). The term safe space reflects the environment it ought to be and sometimes serves as a prereq-uisite for creating queer spaces. However, as Quinan (2016, p. 362) notes it 'often goes unex-plained and sometimes unquestioned', remaining an ambiguous term describing multiple settings such as spaces where (sometimes marginalized) subjects can be their authentic selves, in which subjects can be expressed (heard, creative) and feel at home. Such settings vary in scale and can include community centers, home spaces, leisure spaces, bars and clubs, pride parades, neighborhoods, and more. For example, Gieseking (2016) while researching New York, traced diverse negotiations of neighborhood and bars as safe spaces, claiming that lesbian and queer women's abilities to navigate New York are specific to sub-jective experiences of race, class, gender, and age. Boulila (2015) claims that being denied lesbian subjectivity can be seen as a form of making a space unsafe, while a comfortable space is one in which subjects can 'extend into space and take part in the reconfiguration of that space' (Boulila, 2015, p. 149). Therefore, safe spaces discourse omits an intersectional understanding leading to a specific identity around which safe spaces are formulated (Fox & Ore, 2010).

Another definition regards safe spaces as paradoxical and relational spaces, 'responding to an interaction with an insecure world' (The Roestone Collective, 2014, p. 1326). This defi-nition recognizes that creating a safe space, even if only temporarily, requires a deep under-standing of the context and subjectivities of individuals. Consequently, a more nuanced analysis of power and its manifestations is needed, as well as a discussion of the intertwining of power, relationality, and subjectivity. Over and above reflections highlighting the medi-ation of power into safe space discourses and spaces, there is a discursive conflation of safety with comfort. This amalgamation is taken up by Held (2015) who asks what it means to feel comfortable and safe in a gay village, associating belonging with feeling secure, as both are important in creating a sense of sexual identity (see also Noble, 2005; Skeggs, Moran, Tyrer, & Corteen, 2004). Boulila (2015, p. 135) claims comfort can be 'understood as a framework for agency'; and Myslik (1996, p. 165) concludes that a safe space is produced through 'emo-tional and psychological safety that comes from being in an area in which one has some sense of belonging or social control'. Although queer belonging is considered an attainable goal, in their discussion of educational environments Stengel and Weems (2010, p. 505) conclude that 'what we count as "safe" is an imaginary construction reliant on ritualized forms of control', which resonates with Ahmed (2006) who suggests that power marks some bodies

as ones who belong and others as out of place, implying that radical conceptions of safe spaces are needed. While Whitzman (2007) asserts that conflict is inherent to processes of defining safer space, Anzaldúa (2002, p. 3) takes this consideration of power mechanisms one step further:

> [T]here are no safe spaces. [...] To step across the threshold is to be stripped of the illusion of safety because it moves us into unfamiliar territory and does not grant safe passage. To bridge is to attempt community, and for that we must risk being open to personal, political, and spiritual intimacy, to risk being wounded.

Separatist spaces were formulated as a means of creating community and a safe space for women (Barnard, 1998; Frye, 1993). Discussing separatist spaces, Browne (2009) suggests that 'an engagement with marginalized and alternative spaces of difference [...] allow for positive affectivities and productive tensions that do not neglect relations of power' (p. 541). These kinds of negotiations over the creation of safe space frames are at the heart of this article.

Deploying certain discourses of queer safe spaces not only reflects upon specific power locations and queer subjects' intersectional identities but hints at its grounding within the core reasoning fundamental to liberalism. Specifically, LGBT preoccupation and even obsession with safe spaces is unfolding within a context of (Westernized) LGBT politics bolstering LGBT public visibility and advocating for it. Visibility, as a political goal, is part of a wide understanding of individual liberty, anchored in identity politics as a means to attain rights (read: normalization) for LGBT subjects (Richardson, 2005). Within liberal thought, personal identity is considered an epicenter for representation, a tool for the creation of cultural meaning and social acknowledgment. Moreover, identity politics is a liberal democratic component, in which the state serves as a mediator of the dialog between different cultural groups (Calhoun, 1994).

Identity politics is defined through Western culture's understanding of the self as an individual, who has liberty from the principle of majority rule and a limited government. Within LGBT politics, Michael Warner (1991, p. xix) coined it the 'Rainbow Theory':

> [...] a fantasized space where all embodied identities could be visibly represented as parallel forms of identity. This ethnicizing political desire has exerted a formative influence on Anglo-American cultural studies in the form of an expressivist pluralism that might be called Rainbow Theory. It aspires to a representational politics of inclusion and a drama of authentic embodiment.

Unlike identity which is considered a violent construct, Butler (2004) outlines subjectivity as a relational construct, constitutive of identity, entailing the (ethical and political) interdependency of subjects:

> But perhaps we make a mistake if we take the definitions of who we are, legally, to be adequate descriptions of what we are about. [...] it fails to do justice to passion and grief and rage, all of which tear us from ourselves, bind us to others, transport us, undo us, and implicate us in lives that are not are own [*sic*], sometimes fatally, irreversibly. (Butler, 2004, p. 20)

This understanding of relationality calls for a new analysis of the ways safe spaces are formulated through identity politics, requiring a consideration of queer subjectivities through the construction of safe spaces and the liberal reasoning they entail. Staeheli and Mitchell (2008, p. 106) assert that 'differences in the kinds of rights and their deployment shape not only the nature of political conflict, but also the kinds of publics and even the kinds of cities that are created'. In this paper, I will use frame analysis to unravel diverse understandings of queer safe space, showing that although these frames reveal major contradictions, they are

anchored in liberal logics and reflect specific ways in which we comprehend how queer subjectivities produce/are produced through safe space and its discourse.

Methodological note

This article explores the diverse meanings and framings of queer safe space. It focuses on the LGBT activist space at the JOH. Data collection draws on five months of ethnography at the JOH between January and May 2010, accompanied by 10 in-depth interviews with central activists. The ethnographic method enabled spatial, affective and embodied field notes (Till, 2009), that were scrutinized and interpreted at later stages. The interviews were conducted with leading current and former activists at the JOH. All interviews lasted between two and five hours, and were recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were sent to participants for their approval.

Interviewees gave written consent for the use of their real names in this article, as they are all well-known local public figures who wanted credit for their statements. Moreover, the LGBT activist community in Israel is small and the majority of the local activists were interviewed. Because activists are familiar with one another, there was no point in using pseudonyms since their statements are recognizably their own.

In order to locate and determine themes, all the collected data were thematically coded, noting repetitions of ideas and meanings (Hannam, 2002). Overlapping themes were established regarding meanings of LGBT safe space, and the diverse usage of the term, which serves as the basis of this paper.

My location as a researcher at the JOH was informed by a dual positionality (Misgav, 2015). Even though I wasn't a stranger to the queer activist scene in Israel, I began this study at the JOH positioned as an outsider. After a very short while I gained the activists' trust, I was given the keys to the front door and the code for the alarm system, a very meaningful gesture in the unsafe environment surrounding the JOH. Soon after I was asked to apply to the JOH's board in the upcoming elections, and subsequently was elected and served as a board member. Thus, I was both a researcher and a fellow activist, ethically and politically committed to the JOH, making me 'an intimate insider' (Taylor, 2011). At the same time, I was dedicated to my research. This delicate situation required me to undergo critical processes of self-reflection regarding the consequences of my involvement, my relationships with the activists and the JOH staff and my commitment to the JOH's goals and the Jerusalem LGBT community.

Jerusalem (un) safe space

Jerusalem, Israel's capital city, is a contested city which has been characterized as a space of ongoing violence (Adelmane & Elman, 2014; Hepburn, 2004). The city reveals the profound fissures in Israeli society – religious, ethnic, national, political, and gendered (Fenster, 2005; Hasson, 2002; Yacobi, 2012; Yacobi & Pullan, 2014). It has been portrayed as a condensed space, constructed by physical confines such as enclosed neighborhoods and the separation wall, which reflect social, political, and national boundaries. The city center has accumulated a dense social fabric, which holds together a diverse population.

Contrary to Tel Aviv, which is portrayed as a global city, Jerusalem is characterized as a national city, symbolized by 'holiness […] static, eternal state' (Alfasi & Fenster, 2005, p. 352).

Although there are different attitudes toward the LGBT presence in Jerusalem, as expected, the city, which is often portrayed as carrying religious components (Adelmane & Elman, 2014; Vinitzky-Seroussi, 1998) and where most residents are Orthodox, is not welcoming of LGBT individuals.

New legislation in 1988 revolutionized the status of LGBT individuals in Israel, abolishing the penal code that prohibited homosexual intercourse (Harel, 1999). Since then, LGBT subjectivities are increasingly present in public space. These changes also enabled the emergence of new advocacy, support groups, and social movements, in addition to the legal and political work being done (Kama, 2011). Although not always reflected in everyday spatial politics, this legislation was followed by many subsequent legal achievements (Gross, 2015), making the Israeli establishment generally tolerant toward LGBT individuals.

The increase in tolerance from the Israeli state is in stark contrast to that of the Jerusalem municipality. For example, hostile attitudes were apparent during the publicized protests against holding World Pride in Jerusalem in 2006. Antagonism toward LGBT individuals has also been noticeable in the form of many violent incidents. Years of discrimination, in terms of municipal support, as well as the refusal of the municipality to secure or even allow a pride parade in the city, or its reluctance to hang rainbow flags on the streets on the day of the Pride Parade accentuate intolerance toward LGBT individuals. As a result, scholars have observed a heightened sense of spatial alienation and estrangement among LGBT individuals in Jerusalem (Fenster & Manor, 2010), culminating in a general feeling of unsafety for LGBT individuals.

This feeling was reinforced at the 2005 Jerusalem Pride Parade, when Yishai Schlissel, an Ultra-Orthodox Israeli, stabbed three marchers, and then again in 2015, when the same person, just three weeks after he was released from jail, stabbed Shira Banki, a 16-year-old girl, to death and wounded five other marchers during the Jerusalem Pride Parade.

The JOH was established in 1997, with the aim of becoming a safe, empowering, and high-profile space for the LGBT community in Jerusalem. It is the only community space for LGBT individuals in Jerusalem, home to an HIV test clinic, many social groups including youth groups, an LGBT library, psycho-social services, a play-space for young kids and various cultural events. Most importantly, it organizes the annual pride parades in Jerusalem alone and copes with local dilemmas, focusing on LGBT visibility in an intolerant space and responding to the Palestinian and ultra-Orthodox communities living in the city.

Since its inception, the JOH has hoped to simultaneously be an open and safe space as well as a public visible space. This desire was motivated by its Jerusalem location, as depicted in an interview Jerry, one of the JOH founding activists, gave to a local newspaper:

> From the beginning, there were groups who hesitated about going into the JOH […] the parents [of LGBT individuals] group said from the beginning that they would never meet inside the JOH, and so we should look for a different [safer] space for them, which is what we did. Same goes for the youth group […] and the Orthodykes [a social group for Jewish-Orthodox-lesbian/bisexual/transsexual women] and other social groups. Once a group of religious and Orthodox gays was established, they said the same […]. And they do not hold their meetings inside the JOH and we are not against it and we are not ashamed of it. We understand that this is a part of these groups' needs, that for their perseverance and sustainability, they have to be careful not to be exposed, not even to other gays. (Goren, 2002, paras. 25–27)

Located in the city center, with a flag hanging out the street facing window, the JOH is a visible place that stands out within its conservative surroundings (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Left: street view of the JOH (Photograph: Ebtesam Barakat). Right: the JOH social space (Photograph: Gilly Hartal).

Paradoxically, the JOH's visibility is what makes it an insecure place, even though it is the only designated social (non-commercial long-lasting) LGBT space in Jerusalem (see Hartal, 2016). In a complex city such as Jerusalem, diverse groups have different needs in order to create and preserve their safety. As noted in Jerry's interview, religious women, LGBT youth, and parents of LGBT people all wish to maintain their safety. As this article will show, these groups frame safety differently, producing a layered terminology, inspired by the tense social and spatial context of Jerusalem.

The Jerusalem contested urban space constitutes an interesting terrain for the investigation of understandings of safety, and specifically the construction of queer safe spaces, due to formal and cultural discrimination against LGBT individuals, and LGBT people's perceptions that it is an extreme violent space for them (Adelman, 2014; Wagner, 2013). This lack of safety as well as LGBT marginalization in Jerusalem accelerated an explicit discourse regarding safe spaces among local LGBT activists. Since these meanings resonate with wider conceptualizations of safe spaces in other queer locations, they are applicable to various social spaces. Thus, this case study can shed light on queer safe spaces discourse in the wider context, helping understand how diverse meanings of safe space are narrated.

Framing queer safe spaces

The findings reveal five major frames in the creation of safe spaces. While there is some overlap regarding the reasons for creating a safe space and the protection it entails, in this section I will explore each frame separately, to underscore the various needs and practices articulated by the activists. After introducing each frame, I will outline its basic reasoning and related affects, in order to discuss the complexity, nuances, and logics embedded in queer discourses of safe space.

Fortification

The decision to hire a guard for the front door of the JOH during opening hours was one of many repercussions of a shooting that occurred on the night of 1 August 2009, at the *BarNoar*, a Tel Aviv space for LGBT youth. A man broke into the discreet yet unguarded space, killing

two and wounding10 others. The shooting in the center of Tel Aviv shocked many and was perceived as a landmark in Israeli LGBT history, leading to structural changes in local LGBT organizations as well as to ideological and strategic shifts in LGBT politics (Gross, 2015). At the JOH, the shooting provoked a discussion regarding safety, and consequently a contractor was hired to provide security services (the services of such a contractor are common practice at commercial and organizational spaces in Israel, where security services are mandatory).

Sivan, the administrative coordinator of the JOH at the time described the aftermath of the *BarNoar* shooting:

> I don't feel safe when we have activities in the JOH without a guard […] before [the BarNoar shooting] we didn't have it [the guard]. We would just look through the peephole at the door and open. […] It is mostly a reaction by the youth groups and their facilitators, saying that it is good that there is a guard now, and that the youth feel safer with the guard.

The guard is presented as someone who provides a feeling of security to the people inside the JOH, specifically the youth group attendants. Noam, the chairwoman of the JOH, described the change made by the presence of the guard:

> […] during the weeks of the preparations for the pride parade we had regular threatening calls on the answering machine at the JOH […]. And there were cops around the house and more. This year [2010], it's generally quieter; I think we didn't even have one stink bomb […]. Last year, going up the stairs [to enter the JOH] was a nightmare, it was crazy – the stink bombs throughout the week of the parade […]. One time a girl opened the JOH's door and threw a stink bomb inside, and it was awful being inside […]. Not this year. This year we have a guard, so it is different, it is less [dangerous].

The guard is perceived as reducing the violence during the lead up to the pride parade and the parade itself, preventing the 'awful' feeling Noam described as being inside the JOH unguarded.

The JOH's guard works for a security company, sits outside the JOH, by the always locked door. He checks the bags of each person entering the JOH, and asks them questions regarding their reasons for entering, making sure they are there for the activities and that they have not come to attack or harm the JOH's attendees. The guard's examination, along with his gaze, subject those entering to an experience of being scanned, not only physically checking whether they carry a weapon or a stink bomb – but also psychologically, checking their identity, to see if they belong (i.e. if they are LGBT, allies or otherwise). The guard labels each of the people he lets in as an LGBT individual, marking the border between heterosexual and LGBT space. His job is to distinguish between the safe space inside the JOH, and public Jerusalem space, which is marked as unsafe for LGBT people. This dichotomy between public and private spaces which is anchored in liberal logics reinforces sexual discipline (in both spaces) (Duncan, 1996), illustrating how such binary constructions reproduce political relations and reconstruct the power structure (Benhabib, 1995).

Looking at social groups' negotiations of emotions in the lesbian spaces, Held (2015) reflects on racist experiences of lesbian women being refused entrance to certain lesbian venues, feeling that their bodies were 'read' as different. Likewise, the space near the JOH's door is rendered a space of selection, filled with the guard's power to decide who will enter (i.e. belong) and who presents a threat. This combination of power and liminality made the experience of passing through the door an uncomfortable and even a threatening one, since the guard's gaze forced on the attendees an external identification by an armed stranger. The possibility of being refused entry formulated a sense of unsafety that I, as a researcher and an activist, like many other JOH's activists, felt every time I entered the JOH.

One of the main reasons for having a guard is the youth group. During youth group meetings, all other activities at the JOH are stopped in order to facilitate an isolated space for LGBT youth, which the JOH staff considers is safer for them. The guard is seen as an extra protective layer. As Yonatan, the JOH director at the time said:

> We are careful […]. Of course we want to protect them [queer youth] from all that is outside as well as from the dangers within.

Yonatan presented the youth as in need of extensive security, to prevent their exposure to violence, and to minimize their fear within the JOH. The emphasis on the guard's role as a protective layer for queer youth brings up the ambivalence of placing a guard at the entrance of an LGBT space, with the intention that this will make the space safer. Schroeder (2012) looks at the ways safe spaces for queer youth are constructed by adults and argues that such spaces work both to constrain and restrict queer youth. This duality of safe space formulated by adults for queer youth was well illustrated in Sivan's account of the problems arising from having a security company guard at the entrance to the JOH:

> [The security company] sends the strangest people, whose basic communication with the world is awful, or who sit all day inside because it's too cold, or because they want to connect to the web, and one who browses the net and watches porn while he's in the JOH, one who's always late …

Watching pornography in an LGBT community center is considered a contributing factor to undermining the safety. Pornography is framed as an anti-women and violent industry, generally degrading and contributing to an improper sexual education. Specifically, its emphasis on heterosexuality and the invisibility of a positive LGBT presence are perceived as harmful. Moreover, it makes the guard's presence sexually threatening, a form of sexual harassment of the women entering the JOH. This also emphasizes that the guard is not doing his job. While his duty is to protect the individuals entering the JOH from violence, in actuality, he creates additional security problems and even poses a threat himself to some. Paradoxically, the guard, whose job is to protect, accelerated feelings of insecurity.

This frame of safety reveals that closing a space and setting up a guard does not necessarily make the space safer. Even though the public space of Jerusalem is perceived as unsafe for LGBT individuals, the guarded organizational space of the JOH produces a duality, in that what is safe for some might inadvertently induce unsafety for others.

The intention of the fortification of the JOH was to enable both activists and attendants of the JOH a non-threatening space for their activities, motivated by liberal logics pertaining to the right to asylum. The fear of violence that initially prompted this fortification increased the potential of fear and violence leading to a complex outcome.

Anonymity

Current Western LGBT subjectivities are constituted through the spatial metaphor of the closet (Brown, 2000), which is produced by an epistemology of concealment. This concept indicates a need for a hiding place, a small limited safe space for the negation of LGBT individuals' social and cultural marginality (Sedgwick, 1990). For many LGBT individuals, their 'real' home, private sphere and family life do not provide a safe location or a space of acceptance and comfort; many conceal their LGBT identity, or face homophobia and violence. The closet can be seen as a wide cultural frame in which LGBT subjectivities are produced. The

JOH aims to provide a place for comfort, a place where LGBT individuals can feel safe, without undermining their anonymity in all other places.

Even though the *Open Clinic*, a JOH project promoting HIV/AIDS testing, is open to anyone who wants to be tested, it is also framed as a safe space. On the JOH's website this is how the *Clinic* is described:

> In a city where conservative culture deters at-risk populations from receiving HIV/AIDS testing, the *Open Clinic* has created unprecedented accessibility to HIV/AIDS testing for the city's residents, whether they identify as LGBT or not. Founded in 2007, the clinic provides the only free, anonymous, rapid-result HIV/AIDS testing service in the city. Created by the community, for the community, it offers a medical 'safe space' where clients receive care and counseling from professional staff that is sensitive to their needs and concerns and free of prejudice. The clinic has shown a remarkable ability to reach at-risk populations, including ultra-Orthodox men, new immigrants and Palestinians. […] The *Clinic* also serves as the JOH's health-related advocacy branch, dedicated to the notion that access to appropriate health care is a fundamental human right. ('JOH Open Clinic,' n.d.)

During the opening hours of the *Clinic*, the JOH is closed to other activities and visitors. Even I, as an ethnographer and later on as a board member, was not allowed to stay in the JOH during the hours the *Clinic* operated.

In order to emphasize the importance and uniqueness of the *Open Clinic* in offering safety, Benjamin, the *Clinic* coordinator described his personal experience in a Jerusalem hospital clinic:

> I remember the first time I went for an HIV test […]. I went to a clinic and the doctors were religious and the nurses ultra-Orthodox. As soon as I came in for the test I lost my confidentiality. The nurse stood in the middle of the waiting room with double gloves because of the hazardous and contagious material, and called out loud: 'anyone here for an HIV test?' Okay, ouch …

Benjamin recounts a violation of his anonymity by the medical staff, leading to a feeling of shame encapsulated in his phrase 'Okay, ouch'. He highlighted the importance of awareness and the understanding of the cultural baggage that HIV/AIDS carries, calling for the respectable and anonymous treatment of patients throughout the testing process. He contrasted the test he went through at the medical center with the *Open Clinic*, positioning the openness of the JOH, marking it as a serious, anonymous space that maintains the privacy and dignity of patients, discouraging the fear of stigma and shame attached to HIV/AIDS. The need for a safe space characterized by these traits is derived from the cultural essence of the AIDS discourse, specifically the association of HIV/AIDS with plague and the link between infection and the mistaken conflation of the possibility of being infected with an LGBT identity.

In Israel, anonymous HIV/AIDS testing is not subsidized by the Health Ministry, as defined in the Health Ministry Director-General's By-Law:

> If the test results are not negative, the doctor shall explain to the patient that the results are not final and that they must confirm his identification (first and family name and identification number) […]. Anonymous tests will not be funded by the Health Ministry. (Health Ministry Director-General's By-Law, August 25, 2011, p. 7)

The medical establishment frames anonymity as a threat to the ability to track and control infection. Benjamin depicted the trouble this causes for the JOH:

> The main issue for us is that we are on one hand allowed to not disclose the names of patients and their addresses, ID number etc., if they request an anonymous test. But if they are positive, the name that they give and the telephone number that they give, we must surrender to the Ministry of Health. Normally there is no such thing as completely anonymous testing.

The ministry's frame, reflecting the meta-cultural frame of HIV/AIDS, is portrayed as reluctant, suspicious of anonymity and the dangers of losing control over HIV positive individuals. Even at the *Open Clinic* (which is defined by the Health Ministry as a Point-of-Care Testing [POCT] site, approved for quick and/or anonymous testing), anonymity is restricted due to inspection and the ministry's regulations, endangering those whose results are positive for HIV.

The outing of HIV positive individuals, which is charged with negative stigma, is fraught with possibilities for shaming. The exposure of the potential of infection to a stranger's eye is unsettling and undermines the safety of the clinic. Just by coming in for the test, individuals are risking the possibility of being tagged as infected with a shameful disease, compromising their liberal right to privacy. The *Open Clinic* manages this shame by closing the doors of the JOH during the clinic's opening hours, regulating risks and trying to keep the *Open Clinic* as anonymous as can be under the circumstances.

Unlike the fortification frame which requires closing the space down, the anonymity frame encompasses constructing a space where no questions are asked. Thus, the reasoning behind this frame of safe space is based on the right to privacy, and is related to affects like fear (of stigma) and shame. These affects, unlike the fear of violence, do not call for fortification but instead require the creation of obscurity and a space of invisibility. Consequently, visibility, which is fundamental to LGBT politics, is seen as risky, generating complex discussions for the JOH activists.

Inclusivity

During the ethnography at the JOH, a community discussion was scheduled regarding the possibility of founding a new clinic for transgender people. The discussion was well attended, with over 20 activists from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. The goal of the discussion was to bring up transgender individuals' experiences of discontent and conflict with the health administration, and to determine medical needs not properly addressed. Part of the discussion highlighted the topic of safety. This is how a safe space for transgender people was described by one of the discussion participants:

> The basic thing we need in a clinic is for it to be a protected space […]. That is the basis of it all, that safety is a part of the service to the community […]. There need to be strict rules, known and available to everyone, determining what this safe space is. [The rules should reflect subjects such as] how will I be treated, who can I bring with me …

The participants lay the responsibility for creating and maintaining a safe space for transgender people at the JOH on the JOH staff. Spatial safety is articulated as a space where transgender individuals would not feel estranged or tagged as Other. Safety in this sense is described using the grammar of belonging, a sense of comfort (Fenster, 2005) and non-objectification. The framing of safety thus is anchored in a liberal logic that considers dignity and privacy as core rights.

This grammar is not surprising considering Israeli transgender activists' critique of the Israeli health administration, which they consider unfriendly and unwelcoming (see Marton, 2013; Sinai, 2013). Moreover, this call to create a space of belonging for transgender individuals within LGBT space correlates with ongoing discussions on transgender safety within LGBT spaces, where claims are made that transgender people are continually excluded, marginalized, and face high levels of violence within queer spaces (Doan, 2007; Namaste, 1996, 2000).

During the discussion at the JOH, another community member raised an additional aspect of the creation of safe space, with regard to the establishment of a new clinic for transgender individuals:

> […] I see safe space as a space which is not only trans-friendly, but as a space with high sensitivity […], a space that accepts the variance of bodies.

The goal is to construct an inclusive space, in which transgender individuals can bring up medical issues and get treatment without having to face degrading attitudes or constantly fear violence, shame, or stigma. The construction of this space within an LGBT space adds a specific aspect to articulating transgender safety as distinct from gay, bisexual, or lesbian safety, reinforcing the subtleties of gender identities.

This discussion did not lead to the establishment of a transgender clinic because of a shared understanding of the web of complexities such a clinic would have to deal with on a daily basis, as well as the shared thought that it would be impossible to create such a space within the framework of existing resources. The discussion, most of which I am unable to bring here since nearly all the discussion attendants specifically asked me not to quote them, highlighted their fear of violence and shame in many encounters with the health administration as well as with LGBT organizations, reflecting an ambivalent sense of belonging to the LGBT community.

The frame of inclusivity is based on the formation of agreed upon policies and guidelines for communication as its basic practice, as a means to contest fear of violence, stigma, and shame and in order to constitute belonging. Its reasoning is rooted in the liberal right to dignity and privacy and the right to be treated as a human being; criticizing practices of lesbian, gay, bisexual but mostly transgender objectification.

Separation

Separatism is one of the practices for creating safety for marginalized communities (Sibley, 1995). Lesbian feminists, in particular, are motivated to create alternative zones to segregate themselves from patriarchy and oppressive sexual and gender hierarchies (Barnard, 1998; Browne, 2009; Frye, 1993; Morris, 2005; Valentine, 1997). Safe conditions provided by such spaces contribute to women's cognitive and emotional freedom of exploration, discussion, and thought (Lewis, Sharp, Remnant, & Redpath, 2015). Although there are many who critique separation as a means to achieve safety (Barnard, 1998), portraying it as rife with internal conflicts, power relations, and identity politics (e.g. Browne, 2009), since LGBT spaces are frequently unwelcoming for them, this practice remains common among lesbian feminist groups (Podmore, 2001, 2006).

At the JOH, for example, the closed women's group is designated just for individuals identifying as women (including transgender women). Unlike the youth groups, their meetings do not take place in the back community-room but in the front living-room. The women's group is not framed as an activity requiring closed doors, and other activities can simultaneously take place in other rooms at the JOH. Its isolation is constructed through social boundaries, not physical ones. The main reason for this difference, as I was told by the JOH staff, is that the participants in the women's group are all over 21 and mostly out of the closet. Moreover, the group is characterized as a cultural group, rather than a self-help or support group. Thus, the separation is due to a fear of symbolic violence, encompassing the freedom to say what one wants. The safe space that is formed, immersed in liberal logics, aims to constitute participants' belonging.

Separation, as a kind of symbolic boundary construction, is a common practice at the JOH, and most of the social groups there segregate themselves from other groups by formulating rules specifying who belongs and who does not. It is rooted in identity politics discourses (Warner, 1999), which see identity and the forging of collective identity as an essential tool in the process of LGBT liberation (see Bernstein, 1997; Richardson, 2000). The creation of such segregated spaces is based on a logic maintaining the liberal right to cultural life and the freedom to say what one wants within those spaces. Also, the act of separation within LGBT spaces is motivated by a desire for visibility, making a distinguishable space in which specific identity groups can operate.

Control

Controlling the surroundings is an additional frame of safety. Even though the idea of controlling a space in order to formulate it as safe can be partially seen in all of the above frames, I want to discuss it separately to tease out its nuances regarding external and internal interferences, disturbances, and risks. A discussion relating to a Tantra workshop (an Eastern erotic sexuality workshop connecting mind and body), which was supposed to take place in the desert illustrates this frame. Although the workshop got canceled (due to lack of safety), the discussions it raised delineate the central understanding of this frame among the activists.

Yonatan, the JOH director, raised interesting issues regarding the workshop's safety:

> Generally, the idea is to try and have a workshop indoors, inside the JOH where we can control all the parameters […]. Inside the JOH we knew how to apply the boundaries of the space […]. The desert [on the other hand] is a place we cannot control… the contents, what would such a weekend look like… We thought it would be the right thing first to have a pilot, a two-hour workshop here [at the JOH], since here the rules are clear as to what we can and cannot do.

Yonatan presented the will to have a Tantra workshop inside the JOH as a pilot for the outdoors workshop. During the pilot program, the walls of the JOH would serve as protection from voyeurism, from the gazes of strangers and the unpredictable.

The Tantra workshop is focused on sexuality. Taking queer sexuality issues outside the JOH's walls potentially exposes the participants to cultural shame with regard to sexuality, and specifically sexuality in the public space. The desert, where the workshop was supposed to take place, is narrated as a dangerous and unpredictable space, mostly because the boundaries are not clear ones, not as explicit and definite like walls and a locked door. Thus, even though the workshop was supposed to take place in an isolated place in the desert, nevertheless it is presented as one full of surprises, as not safe enough. Ironically, the JOH, which is located in the city center of Jerusalem, a populated space, and one intolerant toward LGBT individuals to boot, is described as safer than the desert. Established on the liberal right to privacy, what makes the JOH a safer space for the Tantra workshop pilot is that it is a controllable space, a space that can be regulated and monitored to protect the participants and block outsiders' gazes. The call for a gradual process in which activities would leave the JOH closed space represents the fear of losing control due to the loss of substantive boundaries, which seem essential for the creation of an LGBT safe space.

This attempt to control the surroundings to create a safe space was also illustrated by an exhibition opening at the JOH. 13 January 2011 was the opening event of an exhibition titled 'A Proud Family' by Boris Modylevsky. This was not the first time the JOH had served

as an exhibition space, and management of the event seemed to be routine for the JOH activists and staff. Sivan, the administrative coordinator, finished organizing the space, and then waited for the audience. Just a few minutes later, the room was crowded and Sivan went up to a person filming the event, informing him that he would need the specific consent of whomever he wanted to film. The photographer then went one by one, asking everyone if it would be alright for them to appear in the film. The answers varied.

The need for consent from every member of the audience exemplifies the desire to control the visibility of the individuals in the space. Specifically, this is an attempt to recreate strict boundaries and control the exposure of LGBT sexuality in the public space by blocking the camera's gaze. Visibility and exposure is framed as uncontrollable, creating fear of stigma and the potential to induce LGBT shame.

The policy and main practice of the control frame is the creation of clear boundaries by closing the space and regulating it. The basic reasoning for this practice is anchored in the liberal right to privacy and the freedom to say what one wants, enabling participants to maintain their anonymity, but be included in a space separated by engineered social prac-tices. This frame also indicates that visibility can at times be a risk factor in forming an LGBT safe space in that it uncontrollably reveals who is in the space, and thus may conflict with the inclusivity, fortification, and separation frames.

Final thoughts: fragile subjectivities and (un)safe spaces

Investigating the construction of queer safe space requires scrutinizing both internal power relations as well as the construction of socio-spatial relations. In this article, I have identified five distinct frames, offering diverse perspectives on safe spaces and their meanings for LGBT individuals. Even though these frames seem to emerge from separate groups within the JOH, it is essential to keep in mind two things: First, all frames co-exist in one location, facil-itating a limited number of activists who not only know each other and work together, but are influenced by each other's politics; Second, since organizational resources are always limited, and in this case – extremely limited, none of these groups are exclusively free to construct the space as their own, and mainly react to, criticize, or adopt other group's per-ceptions, discourses, and goals regarding the shared space. Therefore, the frames presented in this paper are used as a tool to highlight nuances in queer safe space discourse, and reflect the way an LGBT community space is constructed/constructs queer subjectivities.

The first frame calls for fortification due to LGBT individuals' fear of violence. This leads the JOH staff to lock the doors and post a guard at the entrance. This guard's presence, holding the keys and checking anyone who wishes to enter, created safety. At the same time, the guard is external to the JOH's social fabric, fomenting new kinds of dangerous behaviors and recreating unsafety. The second frame calls for anonymity and is most apparent in the construction of the HIV/AIDS clinic. Anonymity is a tool to manage affects such as shame associated with HIV/AIDS, and is necessary for maintaining dignity within a human rights discourse. In such a discourse revealing a person as being HIV positive is an act of shameful labeling. Anonymity enables the space to be alienated, making it safer for patients who do not want to identify themselves. However, the discussion about the establishment of a clinic for transgender individuals, the third frame, calls for a creation of a space of belonging. This reflects the need for a respectful and inclusive space, in which transgender individuals would be able to reveal their differences and get assistance from the medical establishment. The

fourth frame concerns separation and centers on the construction of social boundaries, forming internal relationships of inclusion and exclusion based on identity. These are apparent in the separation of the women's group, an exclusive group solely for women who are attracted to women. The fifth and final frame reflects the need to create a controlled environment to prevent exposure to outsiders' gazes. The Tantra workshop provided a view into an attempt to create restrictions and limitations designed to control the space and its boundaries. By compartmentalizing the space and creating 'safety bubbles' within it, a feeling of safety was negotiated.

Table 1 presents these major elements of the framing process.

While there are some overlapping aspects between the five frames, there are also contradictions. The fortification frame creates concrete boundaries and check-ups, leaving outside whoever doesn't want to be identified, while the anonymity frame demands obscurity and non-identification. The control frame contradicts inclusivity, specifically because of the Jerusalem context. In this inflammable situation, controlling who joins the JOH's activities or who enters its doors automatically leads to labeling and to the exclusion of some individuals who are thought to be potential threats. For example, when an Ultra-Orthodox person comes to the JOH they are immediately marked as homophobic, as someone the guard needs to keep away, while this person could be an LGBT individual seeking advice or wanting to take part in community events.

Contemporary discussions of space in queer geography that explore the relationship between sexuality, place, and space are diverse in theory, politics, and scope. Much of this literature concentrates on the socio-cultural constructions of space (Brown et al., 2007), acknowledging the ways that social groups negotiate their everyday embodied politics, de-centering traditional constructions of space. Using categories that emerged from the JOH activists' discourses, this paper revealed different framings of LGBT safe spaces. These framings call into question certain assumptions: What are safe spaces comprised of (practices and policies)? Who are they safe for and when? And what are they safe from? Moreover, since the creation and understanding of safe space is always contested and ambiguous, by discussing its practices and meanings in various LGBT groups who share a space I am making the underlying overt and covert logics, meanings, and goals more reflexive.

What is apparent is that all frames are based on human rights concepts, particularly the right to privacy, culture, and freedom of speech. The basic reasoning for creating a safe space is enmeshed in the liberal logics that underlie identity politics. Still, a noteworthy distinction should be made between two perspectives on this rights discourse: on the one

Table 1. Elements of LGBT safe space framing processes.

Frame	Policies and practices	Basic reasoning	Related affects
Fortification	Physically safeguarding the space	The right to asylum or sanctuary	Fear of violence
Anonymity	Constructing a space where no questions are asked	The right to privacy	Fear of stigma and shame
Inclusivity	Agreed upon policies and guidelines for communication	The right to dignity and privacy, non-objectification	Fear of violence, fear of stigma and shame, constituting belonging
Separation	Segregation of a group's time-space through social boundaries	The right to cultural life, the freedom to say what one wants	Fear of symbolic violence, constituting belonging
Control	Creating clear boundaries by closing the space	The right to privacy, the freedom to say what one wants	Fear of stigma and shame

hand, viewing LGBT visibility as empowerment, creating usable regulations and guidelines, and on the other, viewing LGBT visibility as a risk, constructing a semi-invisible space. This distinction stems from the affective differentiation between violence and shame. While the fortification, inclusivity and separation frames are motivated by the perception of visibility as empowerment, the anonymity and control frames are prompted by thinking of visibility as a risk.

However, the production of queer safe space within human rights logics not only maintains power relations (Browne, 2009), but also creates spaces of normalization (Skeggs, 1999), rendering the idea of a free space for the construction of alternative culture an obscure and unachievable utopia. While safe space is often discussed through accounts of homophobia/heterosexism, it is rarely considered through intersectionality (Fox & Ore, 2010). Delineating the five different frames, this paper offers a contemporary perspective on the investigation of queer safe spaces within the field of spatial queer politics.

In conclusion, there will always be conflicts within processes of creating safe spaces. Even though these safe spaces vary widely, they all utilize identity politics and employ liberal discourses when introducing their reasoning and affects, and when establishing practices and policies for creating safety. These practices, affects and understandings of safety reflexively maintain LGBT individuals as fragile subjects, in need of protection from unsafety that may emerge at any time.

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