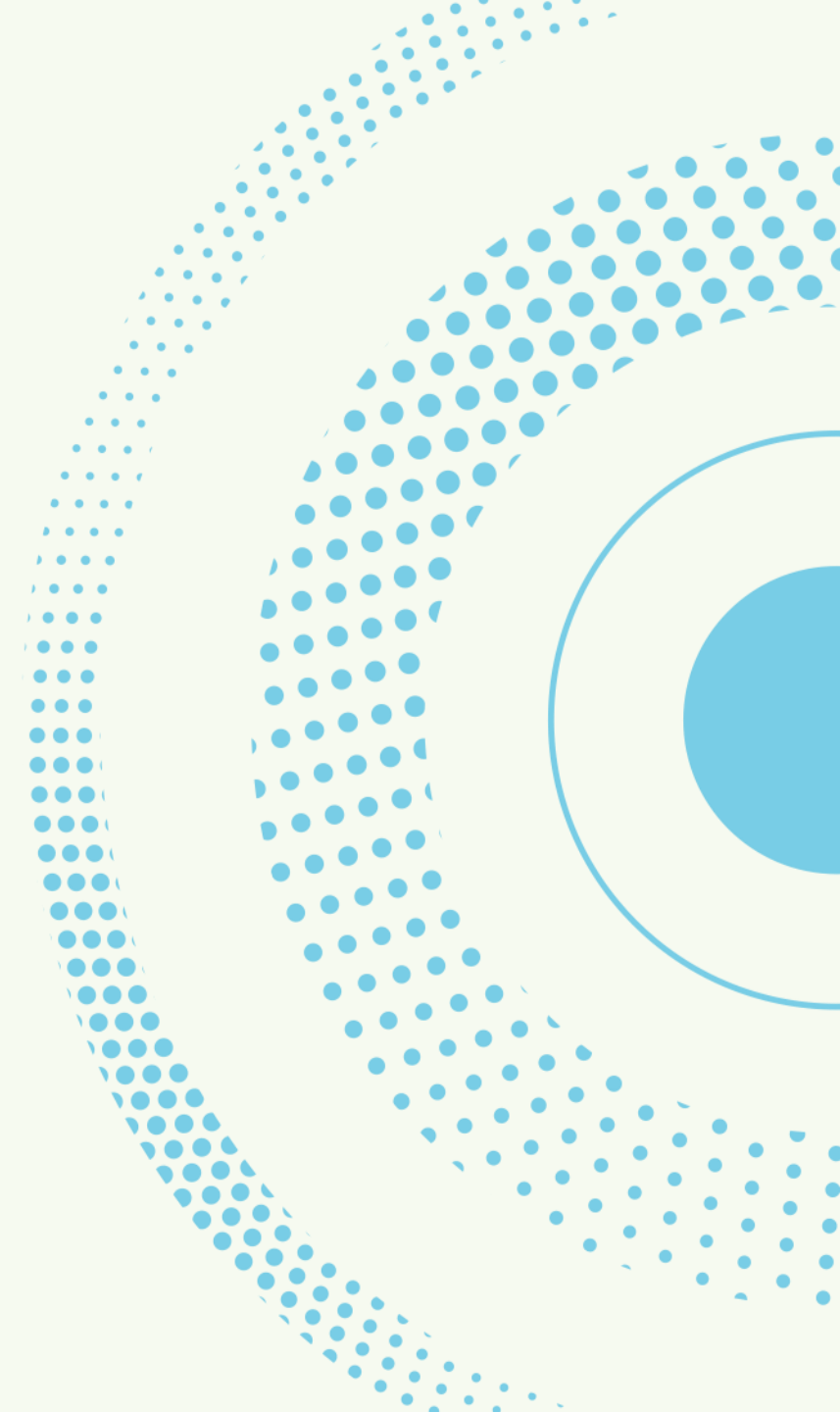


LGBTphobia in rural areas: Negotiations and strategies by LBT women

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May 2022, Queering the city Webinar series



The Israeli periphery

- Local Israeli terminology for both **rural space** and **margins of urban space**

The research is based on data from:

- Kibbutzim - a collective settlement
- Moshavim – a cooperative settlement
- Moshava – a non-cooperative rural settlement
- Villages
- Small towns or development towns – marginalized state planned small towns (Tzfadia and Yacobi, 2011)



2 research projects

- 1) Queer activists – sense of place and belonging in LGBT+ activism
- 2) Negotiations of lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LBT) women's political subjectivity



Political subjectivity

A dynamic process in which subjects negotiate their ways of living

Constituted within the mundane

Subjectivity is political in its essence

The political aspect of subjectivity is attentive to locations and power location

(Rahimi, 2015; Häkli & Kallio, 2018)



Methodology

LGBT activism in peripheral Israeli spaces

- 11 months of ethnography at two activist spaces:
 - The team to Promote the LGBT community in Eshlul Regional Council.
 - Geim-Bagalil in Kiryat-Shmona.

Political subjectivity of LBT women in the Israeli periphery

- 61 semi-structured interviews with LBT women
 - Over 28 years old
 - Currently live in the periphery and have been there for at least 5 years.



LGBT activism in peripheral spaces

Critique of urban LGBT activists and activism

spaces LGBTs can only leave or escape  the movement of returning



Subversion of the disciplinary mechanism of the center



The movement of returning

The hard-core activists dispersed, one got married, another left.... This is a periphery after all; this is the nature of things here. Only we [my partner and I and another activist] stayed here, the three musketeers, **stuck here**. (Miki)

The younger LGBT individuals, [...] they get to Tel-Aviv, they have friends there, they go to parties etc. and after a few years they return [to the periphery]. Some with their tail between their legs, some after school, some actually want to come back here and some have no other choice, failures and such... (Miki)



Subversion of the center

Doesn't it seem odd to you that the Tel-Aviv Gay-Center offers photography classes but in Kiryat-Shmona we're barely able to pay the rent [for Geim-Bagalil]? [The inequality between the center and the periphery is] very clear, but no one is willing to get up and say it out loud... (Rotem)

I went to Tel-Aviv [for an organization's seminar]; I didn't understand half of the words they were saying. (Rotem)

There [in Tel-Aviv] everyone is fighting. [...] Here, we favor all sides. (Miki)



Subversion of the center

I go into a meeting [at the Tel-Aviv Gay-Center] and half of the people are playing with their smartphones, and I look at the way they are dressed, like all the expressions of consumer culture and capitalism, but exaggerated [...]. Maybe that's life there, it's more significant there than here. The rhythm of life is different; the aspirations are different [...]; The Café culture or take-away coffee... it's different. (Rotem)



LBT political subjectivity

Homonormativity

Ratification and endorsement of heteronormative institutions and structures into LGBT lives, culture, and discourse.

Homonormativity is manifested mostly via two modes, both anchored in urban logics:

- 1) The “included” upper-middle class monogamous couples (mostly able-bodied white men) who are considered “good citizens”.
- 2) LGBTs who embody the popular image of the gay lifestyle (parties, casual sex, drugs and gay tourism).

Both modes are exclusionary and marginalize LGBTs outside urban space.

(Duggan, 2002, 2003)



Two strategies – assimilation and contestation

- 1) Assimilation – women assimilate or camouflage their sexuality
- 2) Contestation – an embodied politics of the everyday through which women negotiate their identities and practices.

Both strategies manifest political subjectivity that is produced thorough life experiences in the periphery.



Assimilation

We even hanged [rainbow] flags out here; we carefully thought it through in advance. [...] Anything that is extroverted, that externalizes our lesbian identities, is something that we take the time to consider thoroughly. It's not simple [...] in the interaction with a small community, there is an unwritten contract that you don't bother your neighbors. You don't make noise at certain hours, you don't hang large flags in the yard [...] they'll have to explain it to their kids, they'll have to make an issue out of it and discuss it, and it will make them uncomfortable. We have a commitment to the community not to [...] make anyone feel uncomfortable because of our personal choices. (Rebecca)



Contestation

One Saturday morning a young man calls me [from the club] and tells me: “Gil, you have to come [...]”. I asked, “What happened? What did they do?” [and he said:] “You have to come and see for yourself”. Alright, I thought, maybe they broke a window [...]and he said:] “I can’t read it, the words. There is a graffiti, I can’t read it”. Wow... eventually I managed to get it out of him, it read: “Gil is the town lesbian” [...] I’m a person who loves humor, it’s the tool I use to cope with life. I thought, wow, ‘the town lesbian’! Who did I have to beat [to be first]? Was there a contest nobody told me about? [...] But then I thought, wait a minute, suddenly this is a weapon? A weapon for someone to attack me with? [...] We closed the club down because of this, and the seventh graders all of a sudden said: “Lesbian is not a curse word, Gil, you are who you are and this can’t and shouldn’t be used against you, it’s not nice”. So I think, I believe that this is an integral part of who I am.
(Gil)



Contestation

I'm not sure I'm an activist. [... but] I am the kind that I frame the personal is political. [...] I don't know if it's that I don't have the time or the power. Seriously, I just try to contribute through my being. (Gil)



Contestation

Once it happened at the entrance to the train station. In front of lots of people. It was [...] humiliating, like, I think I chose to shout back at them, [...] my way of turning the situation into a less humiliating one. Some of my friends told me that it's dangerous and that I shouldn't react like that, and I understand their concern, [...] but I also feel that if I don't respond then my reason for being will not exist. (Adi)



Summary

LGBT activism –

Negotiations with the center, constructing LGBT peripheral spaces as subversive.

LBT political subjectivity -

LGBTphobia that produces LBT subjectivities as political.

Nuances of homonormativity and their manifestations in peripheral spaces.



Thank you!

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