



Between Being and Looking Queer Tourism Promotion and Lesbian Social Space in Greater Philadelphia¹

Marie Cieri

Department of Geography, Rutgers University, 54 Joyce Kilmer Ave., Piscataway,
NJ, USA 08854-8054 Tel.: (732) 445-4103; Fax: (732) 445-0006; E-mail:
mcieri@rci.rutgers.edu

Abstract “Between Being and Looking” is a political and personal investigation of lesbian social space in Philadelphia, set within the context of mainstream promotion of queer tourism in the city. It is also part of a body of work I have been doing for the last few years, the goal of which is to develop alternative methods of generating, analyzing and communicating geographic information through a variety of accessible texts and tools of visualization drawn from geography, the arts and popular culture. Central to this effort is a desire to offer new and potent ways of telling geographic stories that emanate not so much from ‘authoritative’ sources such as government officials, planners, marketers, the news media and the geographic mainstream as from the populations themselves that are generally studied and represented by these authorities. Project findings include evidence that lesbians do not generally maintain the same relationship with capitalist spaces of consumption as gay males do, though queer tourism promoters have conflated lesbian tourism with gay male tourism. In a society where the presence and agency of lesbians and bisexual women are both ignored and overly generalized, “Between Being and Looking” seeks to encourage further investigation into their relationship to space and place within critical social geography and critical cartography.

Introduction

“Between Being and Looking” is part of a body of work in which I have been engaged for the last several years, the goal of which is to develop alternative methods

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of generating, analyzing and communicating geographic information through a variety of accessible texts and tools of visualization drawn from geography, the arts and popular culture. This approach has its roots in work I have been doing in the geography doctoral program at Rutgers University as well as in my prior background as an arts producer, curator, practitioner and writer. In fact, what I am largely attempting to do is develop new and potent ways of telling geographic stories that emanate not so much from ‘authoritative’ sources such as government officials, planners, the news media, marketers and the geographic mainstream as from the populations themselves that are generally studied and represented by these authorities. In large part, developing new and effective ways of giving voice to the perceptions of those who are usually represented can be seen as a way of transferring some of the power inherent in the generation and communication of geographic information to those who generally lack it. This work is also clearly critical of the positivist approach currently dominant within the employment of geographic information systems (GIS).

“Between Being and Looking” is also a political and personal exploration of lesbian social space in greater Philadelphia, set within the context of mainstream promotion of queer² tourist space in the city. The project evolved from an article entitled “City markets ‘gay’ Philly” that I happened to see during the summer of 1999 in the *Philadelphia Gay News* (Adams 1999). I had never really thought of the city as particularly queer, let alone a place to visit specifically as a queer tourist. But, then again, why not? The city’s two mainstream tourism agencies apparently had made gay and lesbian tourism a keystone of their “Philadelphia, the place that loves you back” campaign. In the age of global capitalism, Philadelphia clearly had recognized a need to compete with such cities as New York, San Francisco and Amsterdam for queer tourist dollars, and it would be interesting to see if this manifested itself in terms of increased visitation and visibility for gays and lesbians there. The city, of course, also has appeared in some of the travel guides written by and for lesbians and gay men.

This became an opportunity for me, as a geographer, to pursue my interest in comparing authoritative information and representations of people, places and cultures with what exists on the ground, not only to my eyes but also, more importantly, to the eyes and minds of people who are being represented. It also offered a way to challenge the commonly held belief that queer tourism has little to do with lesbians and bisexual women, only with gay men.³ This view seems to be a product of

² I use the term “queer” in this project in a political sense, as an encompassing adjective to refer to lesbian and bisexual women, or to make a collective reference to lesbians, bisexuals, gay men and transsexuals (though I do not deal specifically with transsexuals here). I realize there have been debates about the meaning and appropriate use of this term, but they are beyond the scope of this project. The women I interviewed used the term variously, according to their understanding of the identity(s) associated with it, so I decided it would be appropriate for the purposes of this project not to fix its meaning in any one identity or ideological outlook.

³ This idea was expressed to me many times during the research phase of this project, especially by gay men, and is reflected in the fact that most studies of queer tourism have focused on gay men (see pp. 154-55 of this essay).

selectively looking at the more visible population rather than recognizing that lesbian culture is different from gay male culture and that manifestations of lesbian tourism may well look different, feel different and have divergent spatial characteristics from those of gay male tourism. In Philadelphia, I was seeking responses to a number of questions about lesbian tourism that could apply almost anywhere: Factoring in age, background and where one falls in the coming-out continuum, does lesbian tourism have to do with identity formation, ratification and/or modification? Search for community? For sex? For queer culture? Is it a context for meeting people? Or is it just about women traveling who happen to be queer? And within a larger, political economic framework, does lesbian tourism have a different relationship to global capitalism and capitalist spaces of consumption than gay male tourism does (or tourism in general, for that matter)?

I embarked on three paths that I compared and contrasted within a variety of visual and textual formats: an examination of tourism promotion of queer space to queer tourists in Philadelphia, the experience of a lesbian tourist in the city and perceptions of queer space put forth by lesbians and bisexual women who live and work in greater Philadelphia. The results are contained in “Between Being and Looking,” a project that is inflected with the particular methodology I employed as well as with the complexities of being and looking that operate within myself and the 12 women who participated in this project.

History, Theory, Methods

The origins of “Between Being and Looking” lie as much in an ongoing attempt to develop alternative methods of generating, analyzing and communicating geographic information as they do in feminist geography and queer studies. Particularly compelling to me in this context is the continuing conflict between what I see as the potential of GIS to assist in social discovery and creative problem-solving and the continued use of these tools within a positivist framework. The goal of much of my recent work has been to be both critical of prevailing practice and to offer some ways of representing geographic space differently. As I attempt to do this, I borrow liberally from the tools of art as well as geography to put forth alternative ways of looking at and thinking about people as they interact with each other in space. In contrast to the positivist approach that still permeates GIS practice, I deliberately highlight the subjectivities that enter into virtually all representations of geographic space and human interactions within it, even those that seemingly speak geographic ‘truth’ (maps displaying geopolitical boundaries, Census data, high crime areas, queer hot spots in the city, etc.).

While I use GIS and other tools that are often employed by geographic positivists, I am interested in combining them with other visual, textual and (perhaps in the future) aural and animated elements to put forth a more complex, less bounded, and I would hope truer picture of human interactions in geographical space. In essence, I am interested in the retelling of certain geographies that are taken for granted because they emanate from authoritative sources; this retelling is achieved by mixing what are generally considered subjective perceptions with what are commonly

taken to be factual demarcations of space. “Between Being and Looking” is just one of several projects I have been developing over the last several years in this mode; others include “Drawing on Perception: Re-territorializing Space and Place from African-American Perspectives” in Boston and Mississippi (in progress); “Remotely Aware of the Elderly,” a project dealing with gentrification and displacement of the elderly in San Francisco (in progress); and “Best Not to Be Here?” (1999-2000), in which I address the errors, omissions and ambiguities, rather than the certainties, that exist in seemingly authoritative data sets (in this case, the state government-issued “Known Contaminated Sites in New Jersey”).

The techniques I have employed within these projects include GIS and remote sensing analysis and interpretation, computer as well as cognitive mapping, map overlays and other types of visual collaging, 3D modeling, GPS, ground-truthing of GIS data and geo-referencing procedures, standard urban planning analysis, strategic juxtapositions and graphic manipulations, photography, hand drawing, interviews, library research, historical comparisons, diaristic as well as academic texts and writing, memory and a great deal of walking and driving and being in places with my eyes and ears open.

Many ideas and a broad range of texts have laid the foundation for this work. Central among these have been critiques of geographical methods that veer toward positivism, many of which fall under the rubric of GIS or GIS science. Mei-Po Kwan, in a recent essay, aptly summarized the GIS debate:

While many maintain that the development and use of GIS constitute a scientific pursuit capable of producing objective knowledge of the world, others criticize GIS for its inadequate representation of space and subjectivity, its positivist epistemology, its instrumental rationality, its technique-driven and data-led methods, and its role as surveillance or military technology deployed by the state (2002, 645).

John Pickles, among others, has pointed out that the use of GIS within multiple sectors of society has brought about significant changes in the way space is conceptualized, represented and constructed. GIS therefore requires “a critical theory reflecting sustained interrogation of the ways in which the use of technology and its products reconfigure broader patterns of cultural, economic, or political relations, and how, in so doing, they contribute to the emergence of new geographies” (1995, 25). A number of geographers have worked to further develop critical theories of GIS, but they have offered little in the way of concrete alternatives to positivist use of the technology. In recent years, geographers working in critical GIS and in public participation GIS (PPGIS) have provided some examples of how to use GIS differently, but the most fertile reference points for me have come from a number of social theorists, philosophers, artists, historians, ethicists and communications analysts whose work has suggested ways to re-represent space along more humanistic lines.

A particularly important touchstone in this regard is an essay by geographers Neil Smith and Cindi Katz entitled “Grounding Metaphor: Towards a spatialized

politics.” This text lays out in theoretical terms some of the central issues that underlie my work:

Newton, Descartes and Kant were the philosophical progenitors of spatial modernism, as much as Columbus, Napoleon and the Duchess of Sutherland were its practitioners. The depth of their collective influence, the taken-for-grantedness of the absolute space they established, is only beginning to be challenged. That this space is quite literally the space of capitalist patriarchy and racist imperialism should hasten critique and reconstruction. Meanwhile the uncritical appropriation of absolute space as a source domain for metaphors forecloses recognition of the multiple qualities, types, properties and attributes of social space, its constructed absolutism and its relationality (1995, 79-80).

The absolute space and attendant metaphors that Smith and Katz describe have been created and/or perpetuated in large part by geographers and cartographers who share the political, economic and social ideologies of spatial modernism. Smith and Katz point out that while they “habitually give lip service” to the idea that maps are strategic social constructions, these geographers “more often proceed from traditional realist assumptions” (Ibid., 70). Those taking a positivist approach to employing tools of spatial representation clearly fall into this category. What I aim to do, in contrast, is subvert both the ideology and the metaphors of spatial modernism and replace them with new spatial representations that reflect the multiple viewpoints inherent in race, class, gender, sexuality and age differences and to insert them into the public sphere. While I view this as a critical endeavor, I also see it as a positive gesture within the scope of activist enterprise, one that I have been undertaking in collaboration with alternative seers and interpreters of space.

A key image of the relationship between real people and urban space comes from the French philosopher Michel de Certeau, who wrote about the subversion of hegemonic social structures through the “practice of everyday life.” His descriptions of this process mirror how I see my collaborators in “Between Being and Looking” and related projects reinscribing the spaces and places where they live and work:

Unrecognized producers, poets of their own affairs, trailblazers in the jungles of functionalist rationality, consumers...trace “indeterminate trajectories” that are apparently meaningless, since they do not cohere with the constructed, written, and prefabricated space through which they move. They are sentences that remain unpredictable within the space ordered by the organizing techniques of systems (1984, 34).

Dolores Hayden’s efforts to broaden existing narratives about the history and design of American cities by including the perspectives of working women and men from diverse ethnic backgrounds has provided further inspiration for this project. Grounded in theories about the production of space and global capitalism, she aims to redefine mainstream representations of urban landscapes through a cross-disciplinary

approach that includes the arts as well as social science and relies heavily on the contributions and visual memories of everyday people. Speaking about the complexity of factors that have shaped American cities, Hayden writes:

One can't simply turn to economic geography (or any other kind of quantitative analysis) because there the human experience of place is often lost. Rather, the cultural geographer's model of landscape needs to be better anchored in the urban realm, retaining the biological and cultural insights necessary to convey the sense of place while adding more focused analysis of social and economic conflict (1995, 17).

Here Hayden advocates for the mixing of quantitative and qualitative research and the kind of representation I am trying to achieve in combining GIS methodologies with a variety of geographic, ethnographic and artistic techniques.

There are a number of contemporary artists whose work to a greater or lesser degree is geographic in nature and which simultaneously explores related social issues. Their approaches have certainly affected my thinking and practice. They include Laura Kurgan, Mark Lombardi, Kathy Prendergast, Houston Conwill, Matthew Coolidge, Mel Chin, Alfredo Jaar and the REPOHistory collective, to name just a few. Kurgan, for example, often uses GPS and other advanced geographic methodologies to map how, in her view, "digital technologies actively invent, construct, and rearticulate the architectural territories, landscapes, times, scales and forms which we think we know" (1999, 1). Prendergast, on the other hand, has used an expressionistic drawing style to impart a radically subjective tone to maps of cities across the globe. In regard to her 1997 project, "Lost," Catherine Nash has written that Prendergast's work "harnesses the pleasures of geography's traditional empirical and encyclopaedic impulses but also combines the grid-referencing accuracy of cartography with the unpredictability of emotion" (1998, 5). Generally my own work is more imbued with a social science perspective than these artists, but I draw heavily on my background in the arts and the model of their visual experimentation to try to create alternative representations and new metaphors of space that will be readable and accessible to a broad public. In this regard, the work of statistician Edward Tufte has contributed much to my thinking. In his books, Tufte has used copious examples of information design, some of it geographic in content, to demonstrate how certain techniques and approaches can serve and enhance the integrity of information while others do not. Since projects like "Between Being and Looking" are designed to function as stand-alone pieces (as well as suitable for framing in a more academic context like this), the way they communicate information about the production of social space is very important.

The approach I am taking is not entirely new – in some ways it can be seen as a return to a number of earlier practices in geography as well as in art. For example, the "mapping impulse" that was part of 17th century Dutch culture led to production of geographical images as both the background and foreground of many works by such painters and printmakers as Jan Vermeer, Jan van Goyen, Rembrandt van Rijn and Jan

Christanensz Micker. And many mapmakers of the time were clearly influenced by contemporary art as they often mixed cartographic descriptions with painterly, ethnographic images derived from what was known or imagined about the places they were mapping (Alpers 1983). A related phenomenon occurred in the representation of the “new landscapes” of the American West in the nineteenth century. J.B. Krygier, in his 1997 article “Envisioning the American West: Maps, the Representational Barrage of 19th Century Expedition Reports, and the Production of Scientific Knowledge,” talks about how a mix of perspectives, both “Plain and Pictorial,” (“realistic” and “imaginative”) characterized the images constructed for government and public consumption of the newly explored landscapes of the West. In essence, a hybrid message was delivered that combined the subjective with the scientific in the name of geographical reportage. Krygier’s article is in large part about “an understanding of visual ways of knowing in geography and in science” (1997, 27), and as such is an important reference for re-analyzing the positivist approach in geography and for developing a present-day tactic for generating and communicating geographic information that acknowledges a multiplicity of origins and points of view.

Project Specifics

The decision to explore lesbian social space in Philadelphia within the context of mainstream promotion of queer tourist space in the city was both a product of my ongoing research on alternative ways of analyzing and representing space and a political and personal interest in the relationship between tourism and queer identity formation/ratification/modification. I also was intrigued by the idea that a city like Philadelphia, not especially known outside its borders for its GLBT population or progressive social mores, would decide to make queer tourism one of the hallmarks of its campaign to compete for increased tourist dollars on a global stage.

Regarding the relationship between tourism, globalized capitalism and contemporary cities, the most important source for me was *The Tourist City*, a 1999 collection of essays edited by Dennis R. Judd and Susan S. Fainstein. As they state in their opening essay:

The competition among cities has become more frenetic with every passing year. City governments sponsor advertising campaigns, sales missions, and special events, join with property developers in public-private partnerships to build hotels and retail malls, and finance convention centers, arts venues and sports arenas. Once cities prospered as places of industrial production, and in the industrial era they were engines of growth and prosperity. On the eve of the twenty-first century, they are becoming spaces for consumption in a global economy where services provide the impetus for expansion (1999, 2).

Philadelphia, a city the authors would describe as “second tier” in comparison to sure-fire tourist destinations such as Paris, Rome, Tokyo and New York, experienced major deindustrialization and disinvestment in the last decades of the twentieth century and has had to focus on other sectors, including tourism, to revitalize

its economy. Primarily known to outsiders as the site of the Liberty Bell and the place where the Declaration of Independence was signed, Philadelphia in recent years has seen the need to branch out into niche marketing in order to attract more tourists to the city. One of these marketing niches has been designed for queer tourists, especially those with plenty of disposable income and a propensity for trying something different, i.e., a city of history and traditional charms that also promises to be a welcoming place for gay men and lesbians.

As Fainstein and Judd point out, the casting of cities as vibrant tourist destinations involves not only the promotion and commodification of what exists in the urban landscape but also the promise of things intangible and unknown. “As a result, tourist sites are writ large with signifiers, where the representation (and hence the anticipation) of the experience is at least as important as its actuality....” (Ibid., 25). This provides cities with a great deal of room to re-image themselves as places they think potential visitors want them to be. This also leaves cities wide open to the disappointment and/or alienation visitors might well feel if and when their experiences do not match advance billing, but cities still count themselves ahead in the game if they are able to increase tourist dollars with image makeovers at the expense of the competition.

As I was preparing to conduct on-site research for “Between Being and Looking,” I consulted a number of texts about queer history, theory and culture. These included insightful essays on queer spaces by Jon Binnie (1995); Michael Brown (1997, 2000); Gordon Brent Ingram (1997); Lawrence Knopp (1995); Tamar Rothenberg (1995); and Michael Warner (1993) among others. However, almost all of the research and analysis that has been done to date on the production of queer space and/or queer tourism has focused on gay men rather than lesbians and bisexual women. John D’Emilio (1993) and Danae Clark (1993) provide interesting insights into relationships between capitalism and queer identity, but do not deal with queer space necessarily nor with queer tourism specifically. There clearly is a need within critical social geography to investigate the connections between lesbian identity, tourism and the capitalist production of space.

Knopp, Warner and Binnie, especially, do provide useful material on sexuality and urban space, queer capitalism and gay male tourism. Knopp, for example, has pointed out that while “predominantly white, and male-dominated gay social and political movements” have pushed alternative codings of space into the public sphere, this has occurred “within racist, sexist and pro-capitalist discourses....” He says the most obvious result has been the proliferation of gay commercial, residential and leisure spaces, developed primarily by and for the white male middle class, financed by “‘progressive’ (often gay) capital eager to colonise new realms of experience and to undermine potential threats to its power” (1995, 158). Michael Warner minces no words in stating that, “Gay culture in [its] most visible mode is anything but external to advanced capitalism and to precisely those features of advanced capitalism that many on the left are most eager to disavow. Post-Stonewall urban gay men reek of the commodity” (1993, xxxi). Jon Binnie, in writing about the gay tourist destination of Amsterdam as well as the gay entertainment district of Soho in London, points out that

while the media increasingly stereotypes gay men as “affluent, avid consumers and tastemakers,” not all gay men are actually able or interested in participating in a gay consumerist lifestyle (1995, 199). These analyses provide a partial base for “Between Being and Looking,” but they do not contain substantive discussion of the role of queer women in the production of queer space, their relationship to queer capitalism and how lesbian tourism fits into the mix. “Between Being and Looking” is meant to challenge the ways that queer urban spaces until now have been represented.

One of the primary goals of the project is comparing authoritative information and representations of people and places with the perceptions of those who are being represented. The ‘authoritative’ material that served as the initial springboard for “Between Being and Looking” came from the city of Philadelphia’s Convention and Visitor’s Bureau (CVB), the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation (GPTMC) and queer tourist guides containing information about Philadelphia, particularly the *Damron Women’s Traveller* of 1999. Dozens of other gay and/or lesbian guidebooks to the US as well as other countries were also consulted to get a further feel for the narratives they offer. Counter-material came from my own “ground-truthing” of these texts and the CVB/GPTMC map of queer tourist destinations as well as from interview and cognitive-mapping sessions with 12 lesbian and bisexual women from the Philadelphia area. These women ranged in age from 21 to 59; were primarily white, though one African-American and one multi-racial woman also participated. More of the women were partnered than single; the group came from middle-class and working class backgrounds and held a range of professional and working class jobs. This was by no means an exhaustive survey of lesbian and bisexual women in greater Philadelphia, nor of lesbian tourists who come to the city, but I believe the information they provided lends a much clearer picture of lesbian and bisexual women’s presence within the geography of this and perhaps other cities than has been available to date.

A Context for Research

Exactly what one ends up seeing and how much one is able to engage in lesbian culture in a particular place is partly a product of who one is (race, class, gender, age, relationship status, personality, etc.) and what one has experienced (economic, social and psychological background). There’s no denying that, during my travels in Center City and other parts of Philadelphia, queer women could have passed in front of me without my knowing it, and that some I identified as queer really weren’t that way at all. As a white, 40-something lesbian with a life resume of some complexity, I relied on clues that were obvious (women holding hands in public or dancing together at a women’s bar) and not as obvious (body language between women, particular modes of dress and adornment, or the way someone looked at me). There also are choices people make: to readily reveal their identities in public, or to do so only sparingly to certain people at certain times in certain places. From those signs available to me, I put together my own sense of lesbian presence and non-presence in the places I visited, not quite matching the visions offered by my queer tourism guides. Perhaps if I had visited during Philadelphia’s high season (the Fourth of July?), I at

least would have seen more queer women tourists floating around the places I visited (maybe they would be using the same guides!), but to my mind this would have added a presence largely produced by the marketplace-oriented guides themselves rather than by lesbian and bisexual women just living their lives in the city.

Luckily, I was not limited to the guides. As I added the role of research geographer to that of lesbian tourist, I was able to engage a number of local women in a process of being and looking so I could begin to construct a more accurate picture of lesbian social space in greater Philadelphia. The first few women I contacted were friends of friends, and from there I was able to build a small network of women to interview and involve in the alternative mapmaking included in the project. Toward the end of my stay, I also approached some women without a more formal introduction who also agreed to work with me.

Each of the 12 Philadelphia-area women involved in “Between Being and Looking,” is, like me, made up of a unique combination of identity characteristics and social experience. It is not surprising, then, that no two women said exactly the same things to me or looked at space in identical ways. This should be evident from the color coding used in the project’s multi-layered cognitive maps and for the interviewee quotations. One of the reasons the coding is used in this way is to visually break down and communicate the idea that there are really no simple ways to read and interpret their perceptions – one cannot say that this one woman said this because she is white without also saying that her age, social class, where she has lived in Philadelphia, what her politics are and who her partners have and have not been have a lot to do with how she perceives space in the city. On the other hand, there are many interesting overlaps as well: for example, a disdain for going to bars and clubs is shared by a 37-year-old African-American shop owner who has a partner in another city; a 29-year-old, partnered, middle-class woman who grew up in Philadelphia and recently returned to go to graduate school; and a 50-year-old white single lesbian from a working class background. They have somewhat different reasons for feeling this way, but the effect is the same in terms of reading and inscribing lesbian social space onto the city. The material here is very rich, and I encourage viewers to explore the maps and quoted materials to discover for themselves the commonalities and differences contained within them.

This overall presentation should not be construed as the definitive description of tourist space for queer women in the city, nor, for that matter, of social space in general for lesbians and bisexual women in Philadelphia. I used my own perceptions and interviewed a dozen women with various backgrounds and opinions, and these are the combined findings that came from those sources. There were considerable overlaps too, and these make it possible to define certain spaces as more lesbian than others, and to re-inscribe maps and other geographical descriptions with the perceptions of people who in the past have been left out of the process of representing themselves and their interactions with each other in space. I propose that stronger faith be placed in this description of space than those found in queer tourist guides. It is also important to keep in mind that the research for this project was done in December 1999 and that lesbian social space does change over time – perhaps not as much as gay male social

space, which seems more tied into the comings and goings of commercial enterprise, but it is still something that should not be perceived as immutable. (The yellow markings on the project maps designating “places of memory” are testimony to that.)

In doing this research, it became apparent to me that there has not yet been a critical, geographical analysis of sexuality and tourism in the US, nor has there been any related critique of lesbian and gay guidebooks and their role in the perception/production of queer social space here or abroad. Moreover, the positioning of lesbian identity within the burgeoning enterprise of queer tourism has not yet been taken up within critical social geography. “Between Being and Looking” is an initial attempt to redress this situation. This project also extends the range of subject matter that practitioners of critical GIS have chosen to explore. It is an exciting prospect for me to think that, in the words of one reviewer of this project, “in effect, [she] is also queering critical cartography!” Queering and otherwise expanding the representational capacity of human geography is precisely what I aim to do in this and the related projects I have described.

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Conclusion

What I have tried to do in this project is re-portray the spatial aspects of lesbian and bisexual women’s presence in Philadelphia as a counter to the ways promoters of queer tourism have characterized the city. I have drawn on my own experiences as a lesbian tourist as well as the perceptions and experiences of local lesbian and bisexual women and have tried to present the information gathered in ways that invite and are accessible to a non-academic audience. As stated in the Introduction, “Between Being and Looking” is informed by critical social theory in geography, queer studies and several other fields, but part of my goal for this and related projects is to communicate geographical research in ways that might engage general audiences by using techniques drawn from the arts and popular culture as well as from geography and other social sciences.

Having followed lesbian and gay travel guides to other destinations in the past, I wasn’t particularly surprised to find there were frequent disconnects between what was described on page and map and what I was able to discover in Philadelphia. Tourist guides by and large are consumer guides, and they promote places and spaces where knowledge, culture and a variety of pleasures can be had most easily by the enthusiastic visitor. The attainment of these location-based products generally leads tourists on a path of capital expenditure through historic sites, tours, museums, restaurants, hotels, shops, clubs, bars, sports arenas and the like, rather than toward an

experience contributing somewhat less to the local economy, such as one built around walking through the city, staying with friends and buying food in local grocery stores.

For the heterosexual tourist, the idea of identity formation/ratification/modification is not as strong a driving force as it is for homosexuals, unless perhaps one is going back to the country of one's origins or visiting a place where one can feel more part of a particular interest group (e.g., an enthusiast of Victorian novels touring the English countryside or a Buddhist convert visiting ancient religious sites in Nepal or Japan).⁴ For queer tourists, especially for those who are visiting as queer, the prospect of connecting to others with the same sexual orientation seems to loom much larger. The reasons for this are many, but underlying most is the desire to participate when circumstances allow in an identity that is marginalized within the larger society, at home and beyond. It is as if one "cannot get enough of" the identity in the limited context of where one lives because where one lives is always dominated by heterosexual culture.

The desire to participate then can be broken down into a variety of potential sub-desires, ranging from curiosity to learning more about being queer, to the perceived safety of being queer in an anonymous environment, to searching for community, to seeking out sexual partners, to seeing and/or encountering people of common identity. The impulse to visit as queer of course varies in strength according to a number of other factors, taken alone or in combination, such as age, gender, race, class, partnership status, coming out history, travel experience and personality. But queer tourism, overall, does hold out the promise that one will be able to be one's queer self in an extended (spatial) fashion if one visits the right spots at one's travel destination.

Queer tourist guides tap directly into this desire to be queer in new places, but they clearly do so with capitalist intent front and center. For the Convention and Visitor's Bureau in Philadelphia, it's all about "business as business" when it comes to luring gay and lesbian tourists to the city – the overwhelming majority of sites listed in the CVB/GPTMC guide and map are those where queer desires are fused with financial transactions. In spatial terms, the restaurants, bars and clubs, hotels, theaters, shops, gyms, hair salons, coffee houses, bookstores and "erotica" sites described are nearly all in Center City Philadelphia, the headquarters of commerce anyway; according to the promoters of queer tourism, this is precisely where visitors are most likely to experience queer culture in Philadelphia. This was nearly as true of the women's guide I used as it was for the map and guide distributed by the city (which, as I point out in the project, was compiled by one local gay man). Whether queer women, queer men, straight women or straight men are producing and propagating the picture of queer Philadelphia, that picture is almost the same. Though the texts of women's guides are clearly written in answer to the specific, perceived desires of lesbians and bisexual women, readers for the most part are directed to the

⁴ This is not to say that heterosexuals never seek out sexual experiences when traveling as tourists, but it does not seem to have as much to do with forming, ratifying and/or modifying one's sexual identity as it does for the queer tourist.

same sites as men, the vast majority of which are focused on commerce. And in my experience and those of my interviewees, these are generally not places where the lesbian and bisexual traveler will encounter other queer women.

As stated in the Introduction, a number of writers have analyzed the relationship between capitalism and queer identity. The focus in this regard has been on gay men, the idea being that communities of lesbian and bisexual women are less tied into the processes of capital accumulation than gay men. But that does not deter promoters of queer women's tourism from pointing their readers primarily toward marketplace sites. And it must be admitted that it is easier (as well as more economically advantageous) to do this than to direct women to other parts of the city that are less central and less commercially oriented, and where lesbians and bisexual women might not be all that visible unless one knows where to look and when.⁵ Granted, there are queer women whose notions of lesbian and bisexual women's space mirror those of gay men, are market-oriented and are not dissimilar to that projected by lesbian or gay tourist guides. But my experiences as a lesbian tourist and what I was able to learn from my conversations with local lesbian and bisexual women clearly debunked the claim made by *The Women's Traveller* that it is an important resource for queer women "in search of community." It is clear from the interviews that "community" in Philadelphia (and, one might expect, in other cities) is not so much built around capitalist spaces of consumption such as specific bars, restaurants, gyms or other commercial ventures as it is around homes, churches, softball fields or certain neighborhoods outside Center City where by invitation or chance one may engage with queer women and their culture. In the opinion of the Philadelphians I spoke to, this is in contrast to the situation for gay men, whose culture is built more around commercial enterprises that exist in critical mass in Center City and therefore is more visible.

It is certainly easier to follow a tourist guide than it is to find out for oneself what a place is really like, and admittedly it is a rare visitor who would go to the lengths I did to discover the nature and extent of queer women's space in greater Philadelphia. But I did what I did to bring out the tacit acceptance that often accompanies the reading of these guides: that surely, contained within, there should be some true sense of where lesbians and bisexual women can be found and where one can join them in some kind of shared social milieu. One's more experienced side might joke at the seeming naiveté in this, but most women I have talked to about this project have admitted to having had such expectations at some time in their lives. And they did confess that, to varying degrees, they had been lesbian tourists for the reasons I had surmised when I was planning "Between Being and Looking" (Introduction, p. 3). What I did was play out the promise of the guides in the four days I was in Philadelphia by closely following their recommendations and, by doing so, trying to "be and look" in the ways that they mapped out for me.

⁵ On the other hand, one might argue that this is what a good tourism guide is meant to do.

Sometimes I see some lesbians. Not in any particular place, maybe pumping gas.

Lots of things happen in churches.

I just want a shot and beer bar, but it's not like that anymore.

Mt. Airy, Center City and West Philly are the places.

I mostly met people through political activities, and then through friends that I made.

The lesbian community is really small, very white.

I read...that two of the best gay and lesbian bars are up here...but I can't find them.

I've seen the CVB map. I probably threw it away.

Statements like these, made by women of different ages, races, classes, professions, lifestyles and sexual histories who were involved in the project, cut right through the rhetoric of commercial queer tourism promotion. "No Sale" (of your portrayal), they seem to say, as well as "No Sameness" to identifying what constitutes queer women's culture and the social space that accompanies it. Queer tourism promotion does not reflect the reality of lesbian and bisexual women's lives in greater Philadelphia, though it tries to create just such a reality rooted in the need to produce new spaces of capitalist consumption. What these women's statements ultimately point to is the necessity of creating new representations of queer women's space and culture that reflect the true complexity and fluidity of being as well as looking in a society where the presence and agency of lesbians and bisexual women is both ignored and overly generalized. I hope that "Between Being and Looking" marks the beginning of just such a re-representation within critical social geography and the practice of GIS.

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