Gay Neighbourhood And Lifestyle

Overall, there is almost a complete focus on Gay neighborhoods and the migration of Gay people in and to urban areas. Although, this is not so surprising as many ‘constructionist arguments about the development of gay identity(David Bell and Gill Valentine, 1995) imply that the population size from city life can offer ‘anonymity and heterogeneity’ (Knopp, 1995). However, Bell and Valentine suggest that there are Gay people that live in the countryside, as well as those who visit and ‘make use of the various resources’ the rural area has to offer.

A significant problem for Gay people living in the rural is that it may be quite an unsupportive social environment with a ‘chronic lack of structural services and facilities’ (Bill and Val) which may eventually lead to ‘emigration to larger urban areas which can offer better opportunities for living out the gay life’ (Kramer, 1995). The lack of services and facilities for rural Gay life can be a significant issue as a study by Georgina Gowan (1995) found that one respondent said that ‘it must be exciting to be heterosexual’ as you have places you can freely socialize (Bell and Val). To accommodate the lack of facilities and services, the presence of telephone helplines, chatlines, and sex lines have helped to impart support, information and overcome isolation problems. (LOOK AT BROWN,1995; MOSES AND BUCKNER,1980).

However, a gay rural life can also offer ‘fantasy and utopia with a place for living an idyllic gay life (Bell and Val). The rural has increasing become a fantasized location for the gay culture, with a popular gay bar in London calling itself ‘Village SoHo’, the advert for the establishment depicts an ‘unmistakably Bradford-Esque rural landscape’ (Bell and Val) with two London men before it, in the hope to attract more customers. The rural local has also been a large utopia for women, for example, in the 1970s there were numerous women-only farms developed in the U.S.A ‘where lesbians could travel from place to place, staying to work awhile with their fellow country women’ (Faderman, 1991). A similar phenomenon in the U.K was happening where small women-only rural communities were being created, which are still existing decades later, much like the one ‘set up by a group of radical lesbian feminists who moved from London to settle in Pennies’ (Bell and Vall). Nesmith and Radcliffe (1993) found that within Western thought, an argument can be made that ‘women are closer to nature than men because of their biology’ such as their menstrual cycle and child-rearing. This philosophy around femininity and nature has been at the ‘heart of many lesbian separatist attempts to establish women-only rural communes’, with an embracing relationship with ‘mother earth’ (Bill and Val). In some cases, these communities have taken a more radical approach by ‘rejecting all the trappings of the man-made city’ (BELL AND VAL), such as modern medicines, central heating, and electricity. However, due to the difficulties this lifestyle posed, it has been largely modified.

Discrimination in rural areas can also be a problem for Gay people as Arab offers representation with rainbow floor thing Gay neighborhoods are all unique with their own specific type of space and how they are represented. They can vary from nonconformist neighborhoods which are more radically based on deviant sexual behaviors or they can be more stylistically homogenous, but each neighborhood is forever evolving.

One of the major case studies which denote gay neighborhoods and how they have been seen to change and evolve is the three main Gay districts of San Francisco, which has been

extensively studied by Greggor Mattson. Bar districts are important indicators of the vitality of gay neighborhoods as ‘anchor institutions’ of gay communities (Ghaziani, 2014). The study shows how Each district, Polk Gulch, SoMa (South of Market), and Castro, has changed from 1999 to 2012, with visual descriptions of the locations, stylistic practices, the types of consumers there, and the distribution of how many Gay Bars each district has.

Polk Street has been described by Mattson as not being stylistically homogenous, with Wildermurth describing it as one of the roughest areas of San Francisco as it is viewed as a seedy and crime-ridden area accommodating ‘drug dealers, homeless drunks and hookers of both sexes’ (Wildermuth, 2013). Polk Street has seen a major decline in the number of Gay Bars located in the area, from 13 in 1999 to 3 in 2012, as shown by figure 1. As Polk street is more radical than the other two locations with its extreme sexual nonconformist behaviors, it fell victim to gentrification from without, displaced by cosmopolitan nightlife for heterosexuals (Mattson), the area did not rally to defend its Gay Bars (Robinson, 1995). In addition, figure 2 also shows the displacement of Gay Bars from Polk from 1999 to 2012.

Soma was quite a diverse neighborhood which ‘bridged social divides and created solidarity between strangers’ (Rubin, 1998) with its stylistically homogenous but not homonormative Gay Bars. This diverse neighborhood is explained through the types of consumers Mattson encountered, from ‘the Ph.D. in coveralls and work boots’ to ‘the Stanford graduate with the liberty tattoo’ to ‘the shirtless investment banker’ (Mattson). In addition to this, the sidewalks had been seen to host a mixture of groups from ‘heterosexual partygoers in their 20s’ to gay men in their 30s-50s in leather chaps (Mattson). Soma was home to quite an extreme hypermasculine nightlife with its fetish neighborhood and sex clubs, however, it completed its transition to a ‘mixed-orientation nightlife district’ (Mattson) by 2012, with figure 1 showing an overall increase in Gay Bars.

Castro has always seemed to thrive more than the other two districts, from the first Castro settlers who created a protected ghetto to escape discrimination and violence to the more recent gentrified space of metro-sexuality displayed today, it has been seen as the most vibrant institutional enclave of the Gay rights movement by mobilizing Gay voters in the 1970s and redefining what it meant to be gay (Armstrong, 2002). Mattson argues that Castro was seen to dominate San Francisco’s Gay life both qualitatively and quantitively, as between 1999 and 2012 the area saw a geographic expansion and stylistic homogenization (Mattson). This domination of Gay Bars can be seen in both Figure 1 and 2. Figure 1 shows the general increase of Gay Bars in Castro, with the district possessing 50% of all Gay Bars in San Francisco. In addition to this, figure 2 shows the southward movement of Gay Bars from Polk Street down to Castro, which agrees with a more mainstream stylistic space of metro-sexuality and more homonormative location with minimalistic bars and global shops with ‘contemporary furniture and gastronomy, attracting a well-dressed mixed gay and straight audience for drinks and meals’ (Mattson)