
From 'Gays only' to 'Gay friendly': lesbians' experiences of inclusion and exclusion in Amsterdam's gentrified nightlife

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Abstract

In urban studies there has been limited research focused on exclusion/ inclusion of lesbian women within nightlife. Therefore, this paper focuses on mapping lesbian nightlife in Amsterdam, with questions such as 'Where to find lesbian spaces in urban nightlife areas?' and 'How do lesbians experience clubbing in the gay scene?'. By doing in-depth interviews with lesbians who are familiar with the nightlife in Amsterdam, owners of local lesbian bars and organizers of lesbian events, the dynamics of lesbian experiences in urban nightlife will be put into perspective.

This research is centralized on one case-study; the city of Amsterdam. Amsterdam is internationally known as a tolerant city, which has a gay friendly character. To which extent is this so-called 'gay capital' also a place for gay women? The first results show a dynamic and mixed picture. Some lesbians do not feel the urge to hang out in the gay scene and prefer the heterosexual scene, where they feel included. Others experience exclusion within the gay scene, and mention they lack an own space. The gay scene seems to be dominated by gay men, who are overrepresented in numbers. Besides this marginalized position of lesbians, something else is going on in the gay scene. Certain gay areas in Amsterdam become increasingly attractive nightlife spaces for heterosexuals, while in the past these areas tend to be exclusively gay. This shift of consumers seems to represent a change of 'safe spaces', which turn into hip, modern places being 'gay friendly', but dominated by heterosexual youngsters. What explains these dynamics in gay urban nightlife? And what does this mean for the gay community?

Keywords: nightlife, lesbians, in, /exclusion, gender, gentrification

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