

Queer (Second) Cities

30-31 August 2023, Online Conference

Confirmed Keynote Speakers: [Davy Knittle](#) (University of Delaware) and [Jas M. Morgan](#) (Toronto Metropolitan University)

The molly houses of London, the lesbian salons of Paris, the queer club scene of Berlin: LGBTQIA2S+ spaces are frequently considered urban and Western by default. Queer community in physical space is therefore often mapped onto a very limited number of metropolises, pushing rural queerness, the global South, queer periphery and queer second cities to the margins. Jack Halberstam's critique of metronormativity (*In a Queer Time and Place*, 2005) as "the conflation of 'urban' and 'visible' in many normalizing narratives of gay/lesbian subjectivities" (36) can thus be further specified as referring to particular kinds of urban spaces and excluding others. In this symposium, we invite you to share your research on queer spaces outside of or on the margins of the metropolis, the communities that build and use these spaces, the infrastructures and practices they employ to do so, the cultures that shape queer second cities, and the ways in which all of the above are portrayed in literature, audiovisual media, the news, visual arts and any other media. Vice versa, we are also interested in how queer discourses and narratives shape urban and non-urban space.

Where the term 'second city' may describe inferiority in relation to a first, primary, or alpha city along quantifiable terms such as population, economic production, or city size, we use the term akin to Ameel, Finch and Salmela's wider definition in *Literary Second Cities* (2017): "Secondary cities have become increasingly defined in terms of their function, their relationships with metropolitan and other urban centers, as well as in terms of the specific kinds of urban experiences they enable" (6). Queer second cities may then be cities that are less prominent than capital cities but well-known for being hubs of LGBTQIA2S+ communities: Philadelphia, Brighton, Cologne, Montreal, São Paulo, Bologna, or Portland. Or they could be relatively small cities, towns, or villages with an extremely high queer population, such as Cherry Grove on Fire Island, Skala Eressos on Lesbos, Hebden Bridge or Provincetown. There may also be a link between post-industrial cities, such as Manchester, Leeds, and Portsmouth, and queerness. Tel Aviv, Taipei or Bangkok are capital (and thereby 'first') cities that are well-known for their queer communities but are, despite their size and status, frequently marginalized as non-Western. Quintana-Vallejo (2021) additionally suggests a link between queer diasporic writing and second cities.

We also want to explore potential feminist and gender transgressive notions of the 'second', relating 'second cities' to Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) and Butler's reading of Beauvoir as providing a new and radical understanding of gender and gender performance. Thought of as a verb, 'to second' can express support and agreement, bringing community and unity back to a term that may otherwise sound deceptively binary. We invite you to think of queer second cities as any spatial configurations that transgress, queer and question normative assumptions and majority-oriented positions, including rural and peripheral geographies.

We welcome proposals for 15-minute presentations from all areas of research, focusing in particular on literary studies, cultural studies, trans studies, queer studies, gender studies, media

studies, sociology, political science, and human geography. Potential topics may include but are not limited to:

- Queer urban space
- Trans experience and city space
- Trans and queer life beyond the Western metropolis
- Non-binary thinking and the urban/rural dichotomy
- Two-Spirit spatialities
- Queer rurality
- Peripheral queer space
- Locating queerness in space and time
- LGBTQIA2S+ communities, communes, and communal spaces
- Lesbian and gay towns
- ABC spaces in urban and non-urban settings
- Metropolitan queerness and stereotypes
- Post-industrial cities and their queer communities
- Queerbaiting and commodification of queerness in connections to space (see Richard Florida's infamous "Gay Index" as accelerating gentrification)
- Queer artistic production in interaction with queer spaces
- Intersectional identity categories (race, class, age, disability/ability)
- Queer ageing in queer second spaces
- Queer care work and raising of children
- Storytelling formats and Genres
- Affect and queer space
- Intertextuality in queer second cities

Please send your 300-word abstract and a 100-word bio note to Jun.-Prof. Dr. Maria Sulimma (maria.sulimma@anglistik.uni-freiburg.de) and Dr. Lena Mattheis (l.mattheis@surrey.ac.uk) by 15 May 2023. We look forward to reading about your queer ideas!

References:

Ameel, Lieven; Jason Finch and Markku Salmela. *Literary Second Cities*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Vintage Classics, 2015.

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990.

Halberstam, Jack. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. NYU Press, 2005.

Quintana-Vallejo, Ricardo. "Mapping Queer Diasporas in Literary Second Cities: Benjamín Alire Sáenz, Gabby Rivera, and Ocean Vuong." *Literary Geographies* 7.2 (2021): 275-291.