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The Right to Jerusalem: The Danger of Queer Safe Spaces

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This paper critically engages with the concept of queer safe spaces in the borderland urban setting of West-Jerusalem. Based on an analysis of the case study of safety within the Israeli queer community, we argue that queer safe spaces offer a specific formation of space and suggest that hegemonic discourses (re)produce power structures into critical arenas, resulting in unsafety for queer individuals. This analysis is grounded in ethnographic accounts of the authors' participation in the Israeli queer community. The discourse of safety, which is central to Israeli culture, and its effect on local queer discourse, are applied here to inform a discussion of personal experiences of queer safe space. Israel, as a place of unsafety, and West-Jerusalem as a borderland space, are used to examine the construction of queer safe space as an embodiment of the unsafety, non-belonging and alienation in West-Jerusalem more generally.

Theoretical Introduction

This study investigates key everyday queer events building on the authors' experience with the queer community in West-Jerusalem.¹ We

wish to understand whether and how hegemonic militarist-colonialist security practices in Israel and specifically in Jerusalem (Kotef & Amir 2007; Bar Yosef 2013) are reflected in the construction of discourses and practices of queer 'safe spaces' and in turn, how this construction produces a sense of un/safety. Israel's hegemonic militarist-colonialist security practices produce various discourses and provide a sense of safety using heavily armed security forces, surveillance, and violence against Israeli society's Others (Ihmoud 2015; Puar 2015; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015a). Our study draws on the Foucauldian (1977) perspective that hegemonic discourses (re)produce power structures in critical arenas in order to discuss queer safety within the contested urban space of West-Jerusalem. By offering a situated view of queer safe spaces, we claim that their contextualization and their specific sociocultural and geographic nuances are highly relevant for the construction of norms, boundaries and hierarchies in/of space. In this sense, we offer that notions of safety and affective expressions of belonging and/or alienation are connected to Israel's securitization practices and discourse. As a result, queer discourses and spaces in Jerusalem are based, to some extent, on hegemonic-heteronormative understandings of safety. Examining specific sites and moments in West-Jerusalem gives voice to embodiments, expressions, and reactions to queer un/safety.

Everyday experiences for queers living in Jerusalem is, at times, a reality of un-belonging and Otherization. In an attempt to offer momentary respite from these constant threats of violence, Jerusalem's queer community construct spaces designated as 'safe' for queers. For this paper, we broadly define 'queer safe spaces' as spaces designed to serve the needs of non-heteronormative or not-cisgender individuals. In other words, queer safe space is an affective mode of safety which allows its participants to produce a sense of belonging, feel at ease with, and achieve familiarity within a specific place (Boulila 2015; Fox & Ore 2010; Hanhardt 2013).

Queer safe spaces are increasingly at the focus of academic and activist scrutiny (e.g. Browne 2009; Giesecking 2016; Hanhardt 2013; Held 2015; Quinan 2016). Portrayed as a space of tolerance and acceptance, queer space is imagined to be safe. However, in some cases queer spaces reproduce power relations (Nash 2010; Oswin 2008), recreating hierarchies and exclusion (Brown, Browne & Lim 2007; Oswin 2013). The metaphor of queer safe spaces plays a major role in constructing LGBT space (Hanhardt 2013). Moreover, safe spaces are conceptualized as paradoxical and relational spaces, 'responding to an interaction with an insecure world' (The Roestone Collective 2014, p. 1326).

Discussing West-Jerusalem space, which is located in the Middle East, we have to keep in mind that the queer preoccupation with the construction of safer spaces is unfolding mostly within a context of (Westernized) LGBT politics bolstering LGBT public visibility and advocating for it. Considering Israel's continuous state of war and

subsequently Israel's militarized society as a general context, we deconstruct the use of the term 'safe' in queer spaces in West-Jerusalem, in which security issues are inextricably embedded in race, nationalism, and militarism, and where security for some necessarily involved the denial of security for Others (Ihmoud 2015; Puar 2015; Pugliese 2015; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015a, 2015b). We use the term 'Other' to refer specifically to Jewish Israeli society's notion of otherness, which includes individuals perceived as Arabs, whether Jews or non-Jews of whatever religiosity. Israel's public and private spaces are saturated with discourses about safety: from the security guards placed in the entrance to all public spaces to the anti-missiles rooms built in all new Israeli apartments. This predominance of safety serves as a constant reminder of Israel's 'existential threat' by both Palestinians and neighboring countries. At the same time, Israeli safety practices subvert many Israelis' actual safety: for instance, the availability of guns and weapons, aimed to protect Israelis against terror attacks, leads in some cases, directly or indirectly, to accidents and/or violent attacks on women and children.

Following Anzaldúa (1987), we study the securitization of Jerusalem public sphere as a borderland, a hybrid space that does not fall into the binaries of 'here' and 'there' or 'us' and 'them'. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants (Anzaldúa 1987, p. 3). West-Jerusalem embodies the hegemonic securitization discourse and practices which constitute major forces shaping the lives of Israeli queer individuals and communities.

Thus, an analysis of queer safe spaces in West-Jerusalem allows us to study the wishful process of creating spaces deemed safe for queer individuals in a borderland area and the mechanisms operating at the heart of such spaces. We suggest that West-Jerusalem is an invaluable terrain for the investigation of queer urban sense of safety, revealing how local political atmosphere and culture, beliefs, and ideologies are key to creating safety and belonging in urban space. Such a study is particularly relevant for further explorations of the constructions, structures, and mechanisms of queer safe spaces in conservative and contested cities, and in borderlands more generally. Understanding how queer 'safe spaces' are facilitated in West-Jerusalem can also help explore some of the needs, challenges, and possibilities that globalized understandings of safety and security create for specific counter-publics (Warner 2002).

This paper is the outcome of an ongoing discussion between the three authors. We are informed by different disciplines, positioned differently within queer communities, and have different personal and political approaches to the issue at hand. Methodologically, this study incorporates each author's work, all in first-person voice, discussing auto-ethnographic and ethnographic experiences and data. Rather than a monolithic voice, we thus aim to produce a nuanced and layered

argument, illustrating the complicated and polyphonic nature of West-Jerusalem's space.

The remainder of this article proceeds from a large-scale public spatial point of view to an internal-social one. In the next section, we discuss West-Jerusalem and the unsafe experience of being queer in its public space. Next, we introduce queer groups and organizations' efforts to establish safety for queer individuals in the city. Examining the boundaries between the 'safe' and the 'unsafe', we consider what happens in these in-between contact zones of classifications. Finally, we discuss how social relations within queer spaces generate additional in/security regarding legitimate and illegitimate sexuality.

Central West-Jerusalem: Queerdom in an LGTB-phobic Environment

Jerusalem is a contested city characterized as a space of ongoing violence (Adelman & Elman 2014; Hepburn 2004). It is the geographic epitome of the profound fissures in Israeli society—religious, ethnic, national, political and gender (Fenster 2005a; Yacobi 2012; Yacobi & Pullan 2014). Specifically, Jerusalem has often been portrayed as a condensed space, made up of physical confines such as enclosed neighborhoods and the Separation Wall, which mark sociopolitical and national boundaries. Contrary to Tel Aviv which is often portrayed as a global city, Jerusalem is characterized as a national city, symbolized by 'holiness [...] static, eternal state' (Alfasi & Fenster 2005, p. 352). Sacred to Islam, Christianity and Judaism, the city includes large religious populations. Moreover, it is divided into West and East: The West is almost exclusively Jewish, while in the East, occupied and annexed in 1967, by the Israeli military, most of the population is Palestinian (mostly Muslims with some Christians). Along the border separating Occupied East from West-Jerusalem, and from the rest of the West Bank, and throughout the city as a whole, space is heavily controlled, surveilled, and militarized by Israel's security forces (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015a, 2015b, 2016).

The hybridity and uniqueness of borderland areas are useful for in-depth understanding of social phenomena (Anzaldúa 1987; Pugliese 2015; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015a, 2015b). In public discourse, Jerusalem's heterogeneity and complexity are often flattened to a one-dimensional portrayal, as a religious city (Adelman & Elman 2014; Vinitzky-Seroussi 1998) with an Orthodox majority, seen as unwelcoming toward queer individuals. From a queer point of view, the city is often described as an extremely conservative and violent space, unsafe for queer individuals (Adelman 2014; Wagner 2013). Furthermore, evidence indicates a formal and cultural discrimination against queer visibility, particularly against the Jerusalem Open House [JOH], the major (Jewish) queer organization in West-Jerusalem that will feature centrally in our discussion.

This paper focuses on the West part of Jerusalem. West-Jerusalem's character, population and tensions are most poignantly visible downtown, in the commercial center. This is a conglomeration of stores selling clothes, street food, tourist souvenirs, and trinkets, loud with the sounds of the city's trams and buses. In this relatively small area, individuals from most of Israel's classes and ethnicities come together: ultra-Orthodox mixed with religious-Zionist and secular Jews, soldiers, as well as Palestinian and tourists.

Lefebvre (1991, 1992) coined the term 'right to the city' to refer to the ongoing dialectics within urban spaces. The debate on the right to the city challenges formal understandings of belonging and citizenship by stressing that *all* city dwellers have a right to use the city's spaces for diverse work and leisure purposes. Blomley (2004) claimed that people use space in diverse ways and have different claims over space, laying the foundation for understanding how collectives claim their right to the city. This productive notion was taken up by a wide range of scholars to imply various meanings, such as the right to become political players in the city (Staeheli 2008), the responsibility for shaping the city (Secor 2004) or the gendered right to the city (Fenster 2005b).

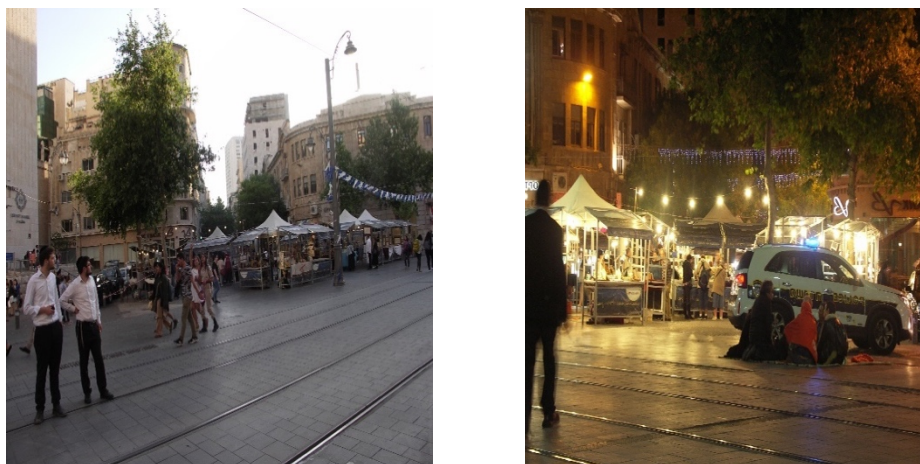


Figure 1: Zion Square by day and night (photos by Y. D.)

Jerusalem is layered with multiple cultural, religious, racial and ethnic politics. These encounters come to extreme in the city center, which is an intense arena of encounters and confrontations. This vibrant mixture of languages, accents and religions is more accepting of some differences than of others: any sign of difference could be punished, either by a comment, or by physical threat (L.P.). An older, religious woman could try to police your modesty as measured by the length of your skirt, explaining that your exposed flesh could lead men to sin. A young girl may approach you, painfully pulling your short, brightly dyed hair (similar things could happen with tattoos and piercings). Non-normative gender appearance or non-heterosexual displays of intimacy, such as holding hands with a same-sex partner, often evoke

a hostile comment, and sometimes lead to a physical attack. Jerusalem's 'character' is often conceived in Israeli society as Jewish-religious, conservative, Zionist, and normative. Looking different was therefore at times seen as a threat or a challenge to its nature. At the same time, the city center was the place where much of civil life took place: shopping, demonstrations, and LGBT hangout places were all located there. Since LGBT lives and community spaces were in the heart of Jerusalem's conservative, militarist, and religious everyday life, living a queer life and participating in queer safe spaces often meant coming into contact with what could have very quickly turned into an unsafe public space.

Zion Square is constructed as a wide-open space in the middle of the shopping area, located so centrally that you must pass through it in order to get to many places (see Figure 1). Throughout the day, the square was full of people crossing it, soldiers and civilians resting for a minute on the benches around it, and youth (those often labelled as 'at risk') smoking and hanging out with their peers. Zion Square meets the definition of a public sphere as it is used as a gathering place for groups or demonstrations, as well as for a constant subterranean struggle on visibility and control between various social and political groups (Habermas 1989). In particular, its common use as a site for demonstrations has turned it into a political arena dominated by rightwing and ultra-Orthodox groups, highlighting Jerusalem's symbolic role in the Israeli sociopolitical arena. Public squares play a key role in creating socio-spatial boundaries and hierarchies (Victor, 1967, p. 19), and Zion Square is no exception. Historically, in fact, it is second only to its urban and political archrival, Tel Aviv's Rabin Square, known for its association with leftist and secularist stances (see Hatuka 2010, p. 55).

Importantly for our purposes, and in stark opposition to its prevalent public image, the square's centrality also allows for momentary and precarious acts of 'reclaiming the city': in the last few years, slut walks, stand-in demonstrations against the occupation, and several pride parades have crossed or occupied the square. Most often, however, particularly on weekend nights, the space's potential for plurality is denied by public performances of patriotism and religiosity. A popular gathering place for rightwing religious youths, groups hang out at the square, sometimes drunk. This sense of aggressive excitement is pumped up by male Breslovs (known also as Nachmans), members of a highly visible segment of the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community who dance to high-volume religious and popular music. Another permanent weekend presence in Zion Square is Lehava, an extreme Jewish rightwing group infamous for fighting intimate relationships between Jewish women and Palestinian men (Freidson 18/09/2016). These and other groups coalesce into a highly explosive mass, not knowing when, or against whom, it will finally detonate.

A five-minute walk away from the square is the city's Independence Garden: similarly to Zion Square, the garden changes at night. At

daytime, it is frequented by families, individuals, and dog walkers; the nights traditionally 'belong' to anonymous homosexual trysts, for which this garden has been famous since the early 1970s. In that, too, it is second only to the eponymous garden in Tel Aviv. The park has recently been renovated by the municipality to include 'the construction of a Museum of 'Tolerance and Human Dignity' on top of Muslim graves of the Mamilla neighborhood in Jerusalem' (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015a, p. 123; see also Makdisi 2010). This enforced change in the usage of public space is criticized by the queer community as a heterosexually biased attempt at queer-cleansing (e.g. Berlant & Warner 1998; Gieseeking 2016; Hanhardt 2013).

Zion Square is also steps away from the JOH (see Figure 2) and Mikveh bar, which caters mainly for queer populations. Located on side streets branching out of Jaffa Street, the main street of West-Jerusalem, these are the only queer spaces in Jerusalem. Walking along Jaffa Street, a pride flag hanging from the first-floor porch of an office building is clearly visible, coloring all those who enter the building as potentially queer. After ascending two short flights of stairs, you arrive at the JOH door. In my (L.P.) first years there, you would ring to enter; after 2009, a security guard would do it for you, greeting you if you were familiar, and searching your body and bag if not.



Figure 2: The rainbow flag outside the JOH (photo by Y. D.)

In this section, we have characterized public space in the center of West-Jerusalem as a dangerous place for queer individuals. This description signifies not only the dangers but also the boundaries such dangers create, clearly marking which space is safe and reaffirming the binary role of such boundaries. The boundaries between safe and unsafe are not different from other boundaries in Jerusalem, which, as described, are inherent and ubiquitous in this contested city. Queer safe spaces do exist, but outside public space. The next section will emphasize the ways in which the intersection between religious,

ethnicity and socioeconomic status in West-Jerusalem construct issues of visibility and violence for the queer community in Jerusalem.

Visibility vs. Violence in West-Jerusalem

In 2011, I (G.H.) was starting my ethnographic work at the JOH. An NGO and community center, established in 1997 to serve as a safe, empowering, and highly visible space for queer individuals. Initially, it was located right next to Zion Square, and later relocated a few blocks away, but still in the city center. The JOH deals with issues often unique to West-Jerusalem, focusing on queer visibility in an intolerant city and serving the needs of Palestinian and ultra-Orthodox Jewish queer individuals whose intersectional identities make them vulnerable.

One cold January afternoon, the JOH staff suddenly noticed that the rainbow flag hanging from the street window was missing. Not knowing whether its disappearance was deliberate, administrative coordinator Sivan and I tried to hang a new one. Sivan told me that the flag was often taken down, despite its second-story location on a window not facing the main street. That incident led to a discussion on the importance of the flag as a marker of queer visibility in West—more than just an indicator of queer space, it was a sign of tolerance in a fractured and contested city.

As a political practice designed to achieve recognition and a place in public (national) space, visibility featured centrally in queer studies (Duggan 2003; Hartal 2016; Ritchie 2010; Wagner 2013). As the discussion continued, I found out that visibility was a central narrative in the JOH's discourse and its activists' understanding of the center and its role as a queer space in West-Jerusalem. The discussion also revealed the different understandings of queer visibility and their intertwinement with the safety discourse.

The stakes of queer visibility in Jerusalem are high: as a holy city with large religious populations, it is required to maintain a delicate balance between rivaling understandings of its geography, significance, and history under a constant threat of inflammation. Claiming space against a religious majority and a dominant presence of armed forces, queer individuals are seen as both a challenge to the city's strong religious, conservative, and gender-normative character, and as a potential threat to its equilibrium. This understanding of queer communities as foreign and dangerous has significant implications for those who cannot move freely in urban space, such as youth and members of religious communities. In a space where presence, and even more so visibility has this symbolic power, and where being visibly queer is often experienced as a threat to one's sense of safety, the JOH's choice of maintaining visibility conveys a clear message: the presence of queer individuals in Jerusalem is an indisputable and unchangeable fact. In the Israeli context more broadly, this is also a courageous stand for liberal-humanistic ideologies. Its repeated vandalizing attests to the fact that the flag's symbolic meaning is well understood by city dwellers.

The analysis of flag-flying is of considerable geographical importance for the understanding of social inclusion (Gorman-Murray, Waitt & Gibson 2008). A flag hung in public is a performative act of existability, and an aesthetic of power-location (Leib & Webster 2004). In the West-Jerusalem landscape, the rainbow flag's concrete presence is a volatile issue. Cofounder and first chairperson of the JOH, describes the symbolic part played by the flag in maintaining queer visibility:

[After the establishment of the JOH] I thought that hanging the flag would bother some of the people who have experienced shame and difficulty and stigmatization, who would never come up the stairs to the JOH if they saw a flag flying from the balcony. After a couple of years we had a discussion in the plenary of the JOH on this specific issue, [...] it was decided that we would hang a flag. Indeed, a large flag was hung [...] even though it was burned and stolen a couple of times. (Interview with Jerry, West-Jerusalem: February 2011)

Cautiously raising the issue of flag flying in a JOH discussion, Jerry described how the difficulties and presumed danger of queer visibility in West-Jerusalem were replaced by an understanding of the importance of visibility. This practice revealed the existence of a queer space in the center of West-Jerusalem to those who were not aware of it and helped establish a sense of spatial belonging for the city's queer. Sometimes, as Jerry pointed out and as elaborated in my ethnography (G.H.), this visibility was disrupted: hoisting the flag in West-Jerusalem was not a one-time activity but rather a continuous performance, repeatedly asserting queer presence and contesting the heteronormativity of West-Jerusalem. JOH community coordinator highlighted:

The fact is that there is a building with a rainbow flag that a lot of people pass by and thus know that this place exists. They are still not willing at all to think about coming in here. [...] A very significant service that the JOH provides is the mere fact that it exists. (Interview with Yaron, West-Jerusalem: January 2010)

Yaron framed the JOH's visibility not only as an indicator of a queer place in public space, but also as a source of empowerment and legitimization for queer individuals. The JOH health coordinator added another factor: 'A rainbow flag outside is therapeutic in this city' (Interview with Binyamin, West-Jerusalem: February 2011). Paradoxically, for those who cannot enter the JOH because its visibility might mark them as queer, walking the streets and seeing a rainbow flag can serve as a symbolic moment of belonging (Fenster 2005a; Secor 2004; Yuval-Davis 2011).

On February 3, 2011, after one month of ethnography, I (G.H.) attended the biannual plenary of the JOH. During this event, a veteran activist commented:

Things were done which in my opinion were amazing, even though they were so scary. [We asked ourselves,] will there be a flag outside? What will it be like to walk down Ben Yehuda [Street] waving

[a flag]? We were up there so no one would see us [...]. Things have changed, [...] it pops up, it is gaining visibility, it is less scary [...].

Past dilemmas regarding visibility in West-Jerusalem public space raised fear and controversy. The JOH's visibility had the potential of marking as queer those who entered its space or partook in its activities—an indication which could be undesirable or even dangerous to some. The flag symbolized a process of politicization that the JOH underwent: a shift from being only a home and shelter for queer individuals in West-Jerusalem, to being an organization of social change. Along with this change, the JOH began to organize annual pride events in Jerusalem—an activity that further highlighted the complexity of creating safety for queer individuals in West-Jerusalem's public space, as marching necessarily exposed them to danger.

West-Jerusalem pride parades always attracted opposition, which often took violent forms (e.g. Eisner 2012; Elad 2008; Hartal 2016; Wagner 2013). The annual parade was opposed, whether it marched through the city center or on side streets, or was relegated to a stadium; whether it ended in a political demonstration or an after party. Even outright violence against marchers did little to mitigate that opposition. This violence was sometimes even supported by the municipal administration, as reflected in a statement by former ultra-Orthodox Mayor Uri Lupolianski in a local newspaper: 'As far as I'm concerned, going to Temple Mount with a pig's head [symbolizing for all that is impure] and holding a pride parade is the same provocation' (Matan 2005, p. 20).

Thus, despite the ongoing visibility of the JOH and the flag it flies, the embodied experience of walking the city streets remains a difficult experience. Noam, the JOH chairperson, reflected on these difficulties, accentuating the influences of the overall violent atmosphere in West-Jerusalem on queer activists and the ability to create a safe space. Noam described the aftermath of a queer party at the Bass club, following the 2009 West-Jerusalem Pride Parade. After the party, a queer group was violently attacked on the street by a person who shouted gender-related slurs at them. The attack was traumatic for the community as it demonstrated the unsafety of West-Jerusalem's streets, on the very day of the parade and in the public city center. Following this incident, Noam and other activists met at the JOH and wrote a flier for distribution in the city center. This act represented an attempt to cope with the unsafety of the West-Jerusalem public space by demonstrating to the neighborhood residents how unsafe this common public space was. This act was a statement of refusing to be shamed by broadening the circle of mutual responsibility and publicizing the concept that safe space was necessarily one that was safe for all.

The act of hanging the pride flag outside the JOH building rendered the space less safe for some, as it associated the building with the queer community. However, the same act was seen by some of JOH staff and

volunteers as an attempt to make Jerusalem's streets safer for queer individuals. These views reveal different understandings of the temporality of safety: immediate (marking individuals as queer in a hostile environment) vs. long-run (part of accumulating actions aimed at increasing street tolerance for difference and showing queer presence in the city). At the same time, and as Noam's story exemplifies, the efforts to show queer presence in Jerusalem, while possibly leading to safer streets in the long run, can also be dangerous in the immediate present.

Trying to generate social change rather than submit to the violence against queer individuals in the public West-Jerusalem space, the activists approach the streets. Such acts aim to negotiate the dichotomy between public and private safety, affirming belonging to the JOH's safe space, as well as to Jerusalem more generally. Lefebvre's conceptualization of the right to the city (1991,1992) examines the role of urban space within Western capitalism. Within his theorization however, there is little discussion of visibility and performativity—two major components of activism and queer lives in urban space. Still, the right to appropriate urban space is included in the understanding of the right to the city, culminating in various perceptions of appropriation, with flag flying or having a party in a public park as some of the practices of appropriation. Building on understandings of the Lefebvrian right to the city, the activists try to create queer visibility through flag flying, flier distribution and pride parades. However, since these attempts are not always successful in securing safety for queer individuals, boundaries are not undermined but rather maintained. The next section presents the security discourse and discusses its failures, examining cases in which safety practices in queer 'safe spaces' reproduced insecurity and violence.

The Other Guarding the Other against the Other

After the 2010 West-Jerusalem Pride parade, QUEERRILLA GRRRLLLZZZ, a feminist queer rave that featured drag performances was planned to take place in Sacher Park, a mere fifteen-minute walk from Zion Square and Independence Garden. This large urban park is often used for public events organized by the municipality, family barbecuing, as well as underground events.

One of several post-pride parties, QUEERRILLA GRRRLLLZZZ was aimed specifically at queer individuals, and was the only event of its kind that took place in a public space, without the protection of walls and armed guards. The decision to hold the party in a public space meant that everyone could participate, making it more accessible to non-queers and allies. Still, the organizers attempted to keep the event secure from hostile individuals by locating it in a place partly concealed from public view, under a bridge in one of the park's pathways, and information about exact location was kept secret until the last hours before the event. As was always done in this party line, a few volunteers were in charge of maintaining the party as a 'safe space'. These

individuals were publicly identified during the event so people who felt unsafe could approach them and ask for help. Fenster (2013) claims that parks are contested sites of spatial and temporal appropriation, revealing the ethno-national boundaries that cause women to avoid specific places and routes in urban space. Referring specifically to Sacher Park, Fenster shows how 'Picnics, barbecues and birthday parties are another example of appropriation of the park that creates a sense of privacy and intimacy for those who appropriate it, as they also demarcate clear boundaries (by putting up chairs, ropes, balloons, blankets and so on) and transform these spaces into 'forbidden' places for other people' (2013, p. 72). Similarly, this rave attempted to temporarily carve out a 'safe space' for queer individuals within Jerusalem's public space.

This attempt, however, was quickly challenged: shortly after the party began, a group of young men arrived, heaped homophobic slurs against the participants and threatened them with physical violence. Against the efforts to construct the party's space as safe, queer subjects in Jerusalem's public space were in danger. The sense of privacy described by Fenster (2013) clearly has limits, since the boundaries are respected only if you are of a certain sociopolitical identity. In other words, the practice of demarcating a space of your own in the park is not respected when queer bodies are involved, rendering it a space of exclusion rather than inclusion for the queer Other.

Israeli society is masculinist, colonialist and militarist. This manifests in the Israeli atmosphere of harassments and LGBT-phobia. At the same time, queer safe spaces are constructed in Israel in keeping with its hegemonic securitization 'liberal' discourse. This relation is evident, as suggested above, in the presence of armed guards in some queer spaces—hired to protect queer community members against those who are seen as outsiders, thus ironically reproducing the broader pattern of the so-called 'villa-in-the-jungle' mentality of Israel (e.g. Bar Yosef 2013; Yacobi 2015; Zaban 2015). Israeli securitization practices include security guards that have been placed at the entrance to most Israeli public places: restaurants, businesses, state institutions, universities, etc. The official aim of these armed guards is to secure the Jewish Israeli in-group from various security threats. A similar justification, relying on a securitization logic, is used when Israeli LGBT community spaces use armed security guards to secure these communities members from their own threatening Other: an ultra-orthodox Jew (almost exclusively a heterosexual man) plotting violence against queers. This violence is related to the intense opposition within ultra-Orthodox communities to the pride parade in Jerusalem (see Figure 3) and to homosexuality in general.

This opposition manifests itself at the national level, as ultra-Orthodox elected officials often express objection to queer life. On the local level, Jerusalem's queer community and the Jerusalem pride parade have met much resistance from the ultra-Orthodox community, which feels

that this presence endangers Jerusalem's character as a sacred, Jewish space. One example is Pashkevils,ⁱⁱ which are posted around in central Jerusalem every year prior to the Jerusalem pride march. Here is an example of a 2010 Pashkevil:



Urgent Call for Rescue

Death at Our Doorstep

We have been horrified to hear that the debauched and licentious [queers] are plotting to move the **march of adulteration and abomination** [the pride parade] **under the houses of Israel**, populated by synagogues and schools, families, men, women and children

We call upon whoever is able to act to do whatever they can to prevent this severe public hazard. Do not give them a toehold

In Jerusalem our Holy City in general and in our streets in particular, And there shall be no such sacrilege in Israel.

Figure 3: Pashkevil on a bulletin board in central Jerusalem (partly translated on the right) (photo: G. H.)

An additional Other for Israeli LGBT communities, seen as a potential source of homophobic violence, is the Arab Jew,ⁱⁱⁱ which is often constructed in the Israeli imaginary as religious and conservative (Shohat 2002, 2006; Yosef 2004). In these discourses, Arab Jews embody an extreme version of Israeli hegemonic values: masculine, heteronormative, relying on traditional understandings of gender roles, macho, and religiously conservative. These ethnicities are assumed to have identifiable physical characteristics (including darker features, accent, gold jewelry, and specific clothes), making profiling easier. This assumed visibility allows the Arab-Jew to be seen as a heteronormative threat to the queer community and its safe spaces.

Several violent attacks on the Israeli queer community took place in recent years. On the night of August 1, 2009, at the BarNoar, a Tel Aviv home for queer youth, an armed man broke into the discreet yet unguarded space, killing two and wounding 10 others. The shooting in the center of Tel Aviv shocked many and was seen as a landmark in Israeli queer history, leading to structural changes in local queer organizations as well as to ideological and strategic shifts in queer

politics (Gross 2015). Since that day, events such as the pride parade and LGBT community and leisure locations have been protected by armed guards. At the JOH, the shooting provoked a discussion on safety, and a contractor company was hired to provide security services of the kind provided to many major institutes in Israel.

The guards at the JOH are positioned at the front door during opening hours. As suggested above, this boundary maintenance involves profiling (Hasisi & Weisburd 2011; Tyler & Wakslak 2004), which is based on the assumption that queer people have some kind of visibility, while those with heteronormative performance are positioned as threatening Others (unless identified as 'belonging' by a recognized group member). Profiling is a common practice applied by Israeli security forces to recognize who belongs to 'us', the Jewish people, and who is the Other (usually Palestinians) deserving more meticulous scrutiny (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 1997, 2014). Ironically, the armed guards hired to protect the space in many queer places are often identified as heterosexual men from low socioeconomic status who belong to the same social groups profiled at the entrance as threatening Others in the first place. This reflects an inherent paradox in the logic of security. The JOH administrative coordinator at the time described the aftermath of the BarNoar shooting:

I don't feel safe when we have activities in the JOH without a guard [...]. Before [the BarNoar shooting] we didn't have any. We would just look through the peephole and open the door. [...] It is mostly a reaction arising from the youth groups and their facilitators, saying that it is good that there is a guard now, and that the youth feel safer with the guard. (Interview with Sivan, West-Jerusalem: April 2011)

The guard is presented as someone who provides a sense of security to the people inside the JOH, specifically the youth group members. The JOH Chairperson described how the guard's presence changed the atmosphere:

During the weeks of the preparations for the pride parade, we had regular threatening calls on the answering machine at the JOH [...]. And there were cops around the house and more. This year [2010], it's generally quieter; I think we didn't have even one stink bomb [...]. Last year, going up the stairs was a nightmare, it was crazy—the stink bombs throughout the week of the parade [...]. Once a girl opened the JOH's door and threw a stink bomb inside, and it was awful being inside [...]. Not this year. This year we have a guard, so it's different. (Interview with Noam, West-Jerusalem: January 2011)

Noam's security fears were well founded. In 2005, Yishai Schlissel, an ultra-Orthodox man, stabbed three pride parade marchers. The two interviews I (G.H.) had with her not only reflected this painful history, but also proved prophetic. In 2015, Schlissel, only three weeks out of prison, once again stabbed marchers during the parade, leading to the death of 16-year-old Shira Banki; six other marchers were injured.

From the ethnographic experiences and data, it seems that the guard's examination, along with his gaze, subject those entering to an experience of being scanned, not only physically—checking whether they carry a weapon or a stink bomb—but also psychologically, checking their identity to see if they belong (i.e. if they are queer, allies or otherwise). The guard labels the people he lets in as queer individuals, marking the boundary between the specific queer space of the JOH and the general heterosexual space of West-Jerusalem, considered unsafe for queer people. This dichotomy between 'us' and 'them' and the intolerance toward the ethnic, national and religious Others—Palestinians (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2016), Arab Jews (Lavie 2011; Shenhav 2006; Shohat 2006; Yosef 2004), religious-Zionist and ultra-Orthodox Jews (Raz-Krakotzkin 2011; Yadgar 2010)—is thus applied by victims of the same intolerance. This irony is compounded by the fact that the sense of safety is provided by an armed guard who carries the same weapon used by the BarNoar attacker.

Collapsing onto itself, the discourse of securitization provides a sense of safety (Yuval-Davis 2011; Puar 2007; Pugliese 2015; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2015a). Having a queer party outside has been shown to be a failure, reinforcing the need for armed protection. The presence of the guard on the edge of the queer space brought the outside in, by reproducing insecurity and violent discourses. The next section takes this process to another space, to show how this negotiation of boundaries does not occur at the edges of queer space alone, but inside queer space as well, revealing how fluid queer safety is.

Illegitimate Sexuality

The questions of safety and of what it means to have a 'safe space' often came up in relation to sex. Both the JOH and the Mikveh, the only gay club in West-Jerusalem at the time, had a conflict between several narratives contesting the place that sex should have within a queer safe space. Ideas about sex positivism, and about the place of sex in queer history and present-day culture, on the one hand, encouraged the integration of at least some level of sexuality into the discussion. On the other hand, the introduction of the therapeutic and trauma discourse (such as rape culture, patriarchy, sexual harassment, 'intractable trauma', or protecting children's sexual innocence), tended to clash with these ideas. The following example illustrates how the JOH space was continuously framed through the possible presence of youth, and the constant need to protect their innocence. This duality of safe space constructed by adults for queer youth was well illustrated in the coordinator's account of the problems created by having a security company guard at the entrance:

[The security company] sends the strangest people, whose basic communication with the world is awful, or who sit all day inside because it's too cold, or because they want to connect to the web, and one who browses the net and watches porn while he's in the JOH, one who's always late... (Interview with Sivan, West-Jerusalem: April 2011)

Watching pornography in a queer community center is seen here as negative as it is considered to undermine the space's safety. Mainstream heterosexual pornography tends to objectify women and enforce a heterosexual, phallus-centric understanding of human sexuality. Pornography is framed as an anti-women and violent industry, generally degrading and contributing to improper sexual education. Specifically, the invisibility of positive queer presence is perceived as harmful. Moreover, the act of watching pornography on the premise makes the guard's presence sexually threatening, a form of sexual harassment of the women entering the JOH. This also emphasizes that the guard is not doing his job. Paradoxically, while the guard's role is to protect the JOH visitors against violence, the act of watching porn marks him as a safety hazard and even as a possible threat to some visitors (women). It was the penetration of heterosexual pornography and a heterosexual spectator that turned this situation into a threat. His heterosexual gaze is framed as able to discipline women, and even threaten them by its mere presence. The line separating watching pornography in public from physical assault, it seems, is thin to non-existent.

Thus, while the JOH was founded in relation to sexual activities and identities, some sexual behaviors and performances were deemed unacceptable within its premises. These rules, however, offered security for some at the expense of others. For instance, JOH visitors using the public computers located in the open space were not allowed to use them to access Arafat Dating, an Israeli website facilitating sexual encounters between men. Those likely to use the JOH's computers to schedule hookups usually did not have access to hookup websites through their mobile phones, and did not have internet connections at their homes (this was particularly common among the ultra-Orthodox Jews and Palestinians). Accessing such websites in internet cafes could have outed them or at least attracted undesirable attention, as could cruising in Independence Garden. The act of arranging random hook-ups through the JOH computers was deemed unacceptable since it was perceived as obscene and pornographic. The choice to ban such activities from the JOH, however, created a sense of safety for some by restricting others' access to the same safety. Similar processes aimed at creating respectability by street cleansing were often discussed by queer critics, pointing to ideologies and 'techniques of isolation' (Berlant & Warner 1998, p. 559) that constructed normalcy and deviancy (Berlant & Warner 1998; Delany 1999) under the guise of public safety, intimacy or decency.

As these examples indicate, some forms of sexuality are deemed inappropriate for the JOH public space. Michael Warner (1999) also suggests that the queer community presents a normative image and a homogenized and respectable identity in order to achieve social legitimation. This 'politics of the normal', however, results in transferring the shame to those who are less respectable, those lacking the option to 'pass' as normal. By accepting these criteria, the Other is defined as pathological and perverted, and is therefore excluded. Warner (1999) argues that this fight for normalcy and respectability is more convenient

for privileged individuals, as well as those who can better fit in. What these cases share is making sexuality present, rather than allowing sexual acts to be swept under the respectability rug. In the hierarchy of 'good' and 'bad', of 'allowed' and 'banished', the 'right' sexual model for queer youth is seen not as anonymous, for-pay, or public sex, but rather as private sex within a relationship.

Another aspect of these discourses is an underlying assumption that queer youths visiting the JOH need institutional protection against adult sexuality. Intergenerational sexual encounters have come to be discouraged as queer youth have come to be perceived as innocent, vulnerable, and in need of protection (Hartal 2017). These discourses continuously mark adult men's homosexual encounters as dangerous and in need of concealment. Perceptions of the need to protect queer youth against adult sexuality were also applied, at least in one case, to relationships between women. A kiss between the youth group instructor (aged 23) and one of the group participants in the Mikveh (aged 19) spiraled in the following weeks into moral panic in the local queer communities: the instructor was ultimately fired, while the youth continued to attend the group. The instructor and the youth were close in age, the kiss was consensual, and the instructor was an undergraduate student without any professional background. However, the story came to be narrated as one in which the instructor abused her authority, or at least did not act professionally. Therefore, for the youth group meetings to remain a 'safe space' for everyone, the instructor had to go. While close relations with youth participants were allowed and even encouraged, and this was hardly a case of extreme power relations gap, it was treated as a breach of a therapeutic relationship.

The JOH, as an organization which aims to serve many populations, and which is partly subsidized by state institutions is, to some extent, committed to such therapeutic narratives as a justification for its existence, and as an ethical argument for hosting minors (the younger group includes youth aged 16-18). It is this position that has led to an understanding of 'safe space' as an active act of protection from threats. Queer parties, in contrast, are based on a queer ethos of sexual positivity and of sexuality as a possible form of subversion. Traditionally, an open relation to sex has been part of queer life and habitus. Israeli queer parties' culture and texts often encourage participants to express their sexuality and to sexually approach others, always under agreed upon (and specified) rules of consent. Thus, working at the JOH while being a community member in West-Jerusalem was a challenging task at times, as it meant living between two systems of relation to sexuality and safety. As the kiss case indicated, these boundaries were thin, and at times easy to cross.

The Mikveh, which hosted most of the queer community events, is open only to individuals above 18 (the drinking age in Israel). All of the JOH staff (including youth instructors) regularly attended it, at least one board member regularly performed there in drag, and the head of the youth groups was one of the Mikveh's owners. As the only leisure queer

space in the city it had good connections with the JOH, but it was at times unclear how much it needed to be as wholesome and safe as the JOH was. At the same time, the Mikveh was a space for queer adults (above 18), and as the only gay entertainment establishment in Jerusalem, it was also used as a pick-up place. In this sense, sex could not be distanced completely, and many sexual encounters were seen as appropriate, or even encouraged. At the same time, some sexual interaction was still seen as a disruption, a problem to be fixed. Analyzing such cases can help understand the boundaries of sexuality within queer parties' safe spaces. For instance, it would be helpful to remember in the Mikveh parties there often was a bouncer standing at the entrance; a bouncer in charge of preventing those who looked like they did not belong from entering and removing those who were too sexually aggressive. The bouncer was a heterosexual man, entitled to use force when necessary; he was the straight strong man who protected partygoers from (at times sexual) threats. Therefore, one of the ways in which sex was deemed unsafe and intrusive was when some partygoers (often not the 'familiar faces') were making aggressive advances at some of the place's regulars.

The bouncer proved useful in other cases in which those seen as 'outsiders' penetrated the queer safe space. Once, when I (L.P.) was a safe space facilitator in a queer party in the Mikveh, I was approached by a worried friend, who told me in hushed tones that a straight couple was trying to pick up girls for a threesome in the party. The couple left upon request, only soon to return, when they were again asked to leave. The event was experienced as uncomfortable by the party's participants, and highlighted some of the elusive nuances in the sense of queer safety in Jerusalem. For the couple, trying to find a partner in a queer party made sense: the women attending were less likely to be strictly heterosexual. For the party's queer participants, however, a heterosexual couple looking for a woman to have sexual relations with clearly did not 'belong'. Their advances were experienced as intrusive, bringing the heterosexual gaze into the safe space. The couple's insistence to stay was seen as refusal to acknowledge their unbelonging, as a domineering insistence on their right to be wherever they choose to be—a right which seems 'natural' to hegemonic group members. In this sense, their presence marked the space as 'infiltrated' by outsiders, subverting the expectation that the space would be safe. Thus, while both people interested in threesomes and the party's queer participants could be defined as 'queer,' the heterosexual couple was experienced as unbelonging.

As in the case of the guard watching porn, the penetration of the heterosexual gaze into queer space compromises its safety. Therefore, in order for the space to be safe, in both cases the people had to be viewed as sexual only at the times, places, and ways the occupants of these spaces felt comfortable with. In both cases, acts deemed innocuous in other contexts were seen as recreating the trauma of the heterosexual/heteronormative space. In this sense, the participants' queer identity constructed them as vulnerable, touched-by, trauma

subjects. Both spaces therefore constituted their participants as vulnerable and in need of defense.

Conclusion

This paper investigated specific nuances of Israeli militarist, colonialist, and masculinist society and its implications for the construction of queer safe spaces in West-Jerusalem. We suggested that given its socio-spatial character as a borderland (Anzaldúa 1987), Jerusalem serves as an intensified microcosm for Israeli discourses of queer (un)safety. Analyzing queers' struggles for visibility in West-Jerusalem, we found that these attempts are not always successful in securing queer safety. In addition, we claimed that the process of queer 'safe spaces' construction is often penetrated by discourses that (re)produce power structures even within critical arenas (Foucault 1977). We discussed the way that the failure of security discourse or practices created queer safe-spaces reproducing insecurity and violence: a queer party in a public park framed as 'safe space' failed to produce a sense of safety; armed protection placed in the entrance to community centers, gay clubs, and pride parades, reproduced insecurity and violent discourses. In addition, as a result of efforts to construct queer spaces as safe in relation to sex, such spaces constituted their participants as vulnerable and in need of defense (see also Hartal 2017).

We thus conclude that securitization discourses and practices shape not only normative discourses, but also queer discourses and practices. In the Israeli context, queer discourses and practices hold embodied relations to securitization discourses and to normative perceptions of safety, constructed through sexuality, trauma, and biopolitics. It is for this reason that we believe that discussions about queer safe spaces should be properly situated and nuanced through a context-specific lens.

With the global increase in dominance of hegemonic securitization discourse and practices, it comes to be one of the major forces shaping lives worldwide. In borderland areas such as West-Jerusalem, queer safe spaces are formed within a militarized and violent environment, and as such embody their mainstream notions. These ideas reflect notions of securitization and ethnicized sexuality, which get incorporated into queer discourses and usually go unnoticed and unchallenged. The fluidity of queer 'safe spaces' is not only local but also a transnational phenomenon. Queer parties, bars, and other queer spaces have been the places that allow members of the queer community a sense of belonging and authenticity. To allow them to thrive and be inclusive to wide variety of ideas, identities, and relations to state, queer safe spaces will have to become more reflexive and critical about the ways in which they remain connected to national and global discourses. The future for an adapted queer safe space, we suggest, will therefore have to include an understanding of its interconnectedness with hegemonic powers, demanding awareness

and reflexivity of the role national securitization discourses play in these efforts.

The normative 'right to the city' (Lefebvre 1991, 1992) challenges notions of formal belonging by claiming that all city dwellers have a normative right to the city. The everyday experience of queers in Jerusalem reveals a reality of un-belonging and Otherization. This everyday reality led queers to construct spaces designated as 'safe' for queers in an attempt to offer momentary respite from the constant threat of violence. This safety, we suggested, remains contested, as was illustrated through the various domains and sites in West-Jerusalem. The queer safe spaces' moments of perceived safety are frequently disrupted.

Countering violence by visibility, such as waving the rainbow flag, has been shown to contribute to long-term safety at the cost of short-term threat. Queer safety is constructed in relation to the urban city space of West-Jerusalem, taking into consideration that the queer safe space must serve all queers, even ultra-Orthodox Jewish or Palestinian ones. These and other social groups who are perceived as Others within Israeli discourses are welcomed into the space of safety, but at the same time their belonging to the queer community is consistently challenged as they are seen as outsiders. Sex too is a source of unsafety, even within queer spaces. The debate on how to create a safe space that can incorporate queer sexuality and enable its participants to positively experience their sexuality is ongoing within queer safe spaces.

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Notes

ⁱ 'Queer' is used here as an umbrella term for the entire range of sexual identities and practices. We acknowledge that the term 'queer' represents rejection of identity politics and introduces instead a subversive politics of sex/gender. In using it as an identity category we do not question this subversive potential. The term 'LGBT' is used as common in the literature to signify a subjective identification as lesbian, gay man, bisexual or transgender.

ⁱⁱ *Pashkevil* is the name for a street poster used mostly in ultra-Orthodox communities in Israel as internal community mass-communication.

ⁱⁱⁱ Arab Jews, more commonly known as Mizrahim or Mizrahi Jews, are Jews originating from Arab countries. The term Arab Jews is meant to challenge the dichotomy between Arabs and Jews in Israeli public discourse (Lavie 2011; Shenhav 2006).

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