

# Queer Fight Club and heterotopic freedom dreaming

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# Questions



- Who belongs in the city and how do people create those spaces of belonging?
- why do we need community?
- specifically, why do we need queer/neurodivergent community? and
- why is that so hard?




# Outline

- The disappearance of third spaces
  - Trans geography and no-space
  - Moving from u-topia to heterotopia through freedom dreaming
  - Studying play in the Global South
  - QFC Joburg
    - Boyhood
    - Reparative justice
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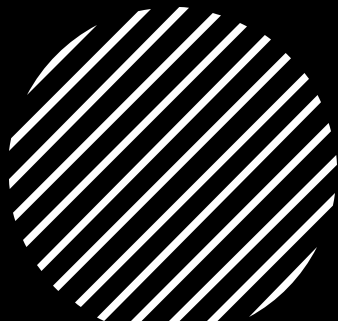
# Importance of Reclaiming teh City

- Third places refer to community gathering spots outside of home and work, such as cafes and parks.
  - In particular, queer spaces can be “*los huecos negros* [black holes] of ... society, find ways to tunnel through, reach escape velocity, appear and disappear unpredictably” (Ochoa, 2015).
  - Since Covid and with ongoing privatisation and securitisation in the cities, third spaces are vanishing.
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# transing space

- We queer spaces with our own existence (Ditsie, 2024)
- Bodies are not products of environments, but rather co-conspirators in the creation of that environment. A body within trans becoming, therefore, is one which is “a phenomenological topography of affects ... re-energiz...[ing] bodily boundaries”. They are bodily expressions which are deeply enmeshed in corporeal space and time, which “emerge as intensive maps, values composed of transverse orientations toward a shared world”. (Hayward, 2010)





## Hayward's Web

“These silken lines reference the skeletalization of surface, the web is an extension of the surface affects of the spider; it feels with its web. Likewise, the human body is stretched topographically, places and bodies are put into process, or rather they emerge through a spatial, temporal, corporeal generativity.... Entangled selves linked through sensuous encounters, and each prepositional thread – that which bonds others to each other – carries a particular resonance” (p.231, 232)

Lefebvre:

“It produces, it secretes and it occupies a space which it engenders according to its own lights: the space of its web, of its stratagems, of its needs” (1991, 173).

“Here the production of space, beginning with the production of the body, extends to the productive secretion of a ‘residence’ which also serves as a tool, a means” (173).



# Trans geography

- As cultural geographer Jack Gieseking argues, “trans geography is a geography of no place, because there has long been the idea (in media, politics, documents, geography, medicine, and so on) that trans people do not exist” (2023, 573).
- I borrow Michel Foucault’s (1967) concept of the emerging heterotopias. Rather than no-place (u-topia) the heterotopia consists of a multiplicity of sites often utilized to enact intimacies unrelated to the site itself.



# Livermon (2013)

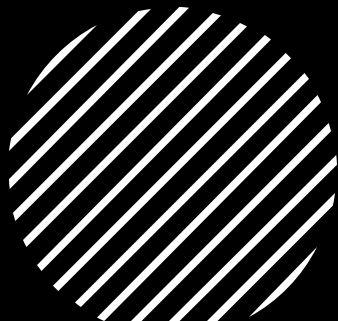
- “Play is an activity that demands serious attention because it provides possibilities for the discovery of new social configuration” (p.510)
- Usable space: “Space takes on meanings that are intimately connected to notions of race, class, gender and sexuality” (p.509). He therefore uses the notion of “usable spaces” to understand how black queer people - particularly black queer men - use the spaces around them. “Usable space speaks to communities that are multiply marginalized but who find agentive methods of reworking space in both urban and non-metropolitan area” (p.510) to “reconfigure space for the means of survival” (p.510). This reconfiguration is “the creative labor of appropriation and re-appropriation that is central to the process of black queer self-making in township space” (p.510)





# Freedom Dreaming

Kelley (2003)



- The idea that we could possibly go somewhere that exists only in our imaginations—that is, “nowhere”—is the classic definition of utopia. Call me utopian, but I inherited my mother’s belief that the map to a new world is in the imagination, in what we see in our third eyes rather than in the desolation that surround us (p.2)
- Trying to envision “somewhere in advance of nowhere,” as poet Jayne Cortez puts it, is an extremely difficult task, yet it is a matter of great urgency. Without new visions we don’t know what to build, only what to knock down. We not only end up confused, rudderless, and cynical, but we forget that making a revolution is not a series of clever maneuvers and tactics but a process that can and must transform us. (xii)
- What are today’s young activists dreaming about? We know what they are fighting against, but what are they fighting for? ... visionary dreams of a new society don’t come from little think tanks of smart people or out of the atomized, individualistic world ... Revolutionary dreams erupt out of political engagement; collective social movements are incubators of new knowledge. (p.8)

# QFC

## = WHO IS QFC =

Queer Fight Club (QFC) Joburg is a space created for all queer, intersex, trans and nonbinary people to grapple as a way of letting off steam, becoming more in touch with our bodies, and feeling more confident in our ability to protect ourselves.

We endeavour to provide an outlet or space where people can be open towards each other and consider their physical boundaries, limitations and expressions with other people.

We do not have a set goal, it is not competitive, it does not yield winners or losers and it should not be driven by any pressure to perform.

We respect the bodies and the boundaries of everyone involved. There is absolutely no tolerance for racism, classism, ableism, fatphobia or any other type of discrimination.



## = FIGHTING RULES =

Fights are a way to express yourself, to release some aggression, to feel powerful, to be playful, to laugh, to growl, and to fight.

Takes place low on the ground to avoid injury; no standing allowed.

Each fighter sets their own rules of engagement with their opponent before a fight. In general, we work on the negotiable rules of no tickling, biting, punching, or slapping.

We fight for fun; not to harm any opponent. We immediately and without hesitation respect the "stop" of the people that we are fighting in whatever way they express it.



## = INVITATION =

We are a bunch of queers wrestling together every week. It is silly and wonderful, but also a space of safe community.

Anyone can come if someone in QFC vouches for you, with the caveat of no racism, no queerphobia, no fatphobia, no classism and no ableism.

Keeping this space as a supportive and challenging one means that 1) someone in the space must vouch for you to join and 2) you can invite someone once you've attended for 4 weeks, after asking about them on the group.

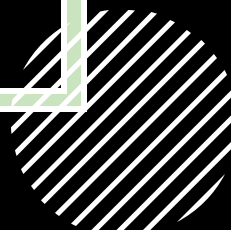
How to prepare: Wear comfortable clothes. Bring snacks if you like. Think about respecting the space and the people in it. Think about what you/your body can handle and want from this experience. Be excited!

*Please don't attend if you are feeling sick or have a contagious illness like the flu or Covid-19.*






# Why study QFC?

- queer heterotopias and the possibilities and limitations of freedom dreaming presented within them.
  - assemblages of queer and trans boyhoods within the space
  - responsibilities of justice within community formation.
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# Boyhood

- The primary objective of fight club is play, “in opposition to—or, perhaps, in willful ignorance of—the idea that childhood boyishness, queerness, and freakishness must be outgrown” (Awkward-Rich 2022, 21)
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# Reparative care and the terrible we

Awkward-Rich (2022)

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- We is held together through, and because of, “success and defeat, joy and pain, victory and failure.” (Awkward-Rich, 2021)
- this minoritarian we is terrible and vexed and the work of maintaining it often distracts from working against the material conditions that necessitate it.
- Attempting to create a space for community also means trying to create modes of collective care when things go wrong.
- When I first wrote my proposal for this conference, I thought I wanted to use it as an opportunity to think through the violence that has occurred in fight club.

QFC  
Official  
Invitation



QUEER FIGHT CLUB  
We are a bunch of  
queers wrestling together  
every week.  
It's fun, silly, and (hopefully)  
a place to make  
community  
come join us!

At Emmarentia Dam on 19 October 2pm.  
Check out this QR code to join the group

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