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*Remaking South Beach: Metropolitan gayborhood trajectories under homonormative entrepreneurialism*

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## **Abstract**

This paper contributes to research on metropolitan gayborhood trajectories and homonormative urban entrepreneurialism by assessing a South Florida case study. We probe allegations of gay men being displaced from South Beach and the opposing narrative of a sexually-diverse city with undiminished appeal. To that end, we present expert informant interviews, participant observation, media archives, and census data showing that the remade gayborhood coexists and competes with other, more affordable LGBT nodes. While socioeconomic, demographic and cultural characteristics differentiate these clusters, exploratory spatial data analysis indicates that the majority of metropolitan same-sex households reside elsewhere. We acknowledge Miami Beach's recent pro-equality efforts, yet argue that homonormative politics conditions them. Public-private actions adopt corporate formats, prioritizing tourist-oriented initiatives and spectacular events that promote non-threatening, market-friendly forms of sexual dissidence. The conclusion discusses implications for queer community-building in metropolitan regions fragmented by socio-spatial inequality and competitive city-marketing catering to heterogeneous yet exclusive global audiences.

**KEYWORDS: entrepreneurialism/queer geography/gayborhoods/Miami**

## Introduction

Is South Beach still a gay-friendly neighborhood? This study surveys widely-varying responses to this question within debates on whether this increasingly upscale district of Miami Beach remains South Florida's premier LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender/transsexual) urban enclave. Putting the case study in the broader context of gayborhood trajectories evinced in multiple other locales, we revisit the local controversy between those arguing decline and an exodus of gay men versus upholders of neighborhood maturity as a result of society becoming more accepting of sexual diversity. Furthermore, we adopt an urban political economy approach informed by the queer critique of homonormativity, or the neoliberal politics of (homo)sexuality. In our view, remake rather than decline characterizes the trajectory of South Beach as a gayborhood in a context of multiple, differentiated and competing nodes of LGBT commercial activity and residential life. Moreover, the City of Miami Beach has adopted conspicuous pro-equality initiatives in recent years, particularly during Mayor Matti Herrera Bower's term in office. Yet, we argue that an entrepreneurial form of homonormativity mediates this turn. Thus, selective sexual tolerance is enacted in relation to, and largely as a conduit for, global tourism promotion, upscale property redevelopment, business attraction, and the organization of prominent events and spectacles. Issues of ongoing exclusion, housing affordability and neighborhood life constitute lesser priorities even as LGBT residents are reported to have moved out and more-affordable gay villages consolidate in neighboring Broward County with an ostensibly more community-oriented character.

The study is organized into five sections. The first section revisits debates on gayborhood trajectories and the erosion of LGBT territorialities as a possible consequence of increased social acceptance and residential integration. We review academic research and the popular press,

delineating central arguments on the causes, extent and significance of gayborhood change. We then discuss the definition and uses of homonormativity. Its limitations notwithstanding, we argue that this construct provides a productive interpretation on how entrepreneurial urban governance selectively embraces sexual tolerance. The second section introduces the thorny local debate focusing on claims of gayborhood decline and gentrification, which have led particularly to gay-male eviction and exodus. Putting these in perspective, the third section analyzes intra-metropolitan locational trends for LGBT-oriented businesses since 1975. The dataset that we developed shows complex patterns of restructuring, which combine decline and growth depending on type of business and customer base. Findings in the residential sector are more tentative due to data limitations. Yet, using the census proxy of same-sex couple households, we mapped the distribution of multiple LGBT clusters that exhibit decidedly different socio-economic profiles. The fourth section discusses the rise of homonormative entrepreneurialism in the City of Miami Beach. Relying on expert informants, participant observation, archival and media research, we examine public-private initiatives, events and institutions, also commenting on the policy discourse and produced imagery. Finally, our concluding remarks reflect implications of metropolitan fragmentation for queer activism and propose possible pathways for future research on gayborhood trajectories and homonormative entrepreneurialism.

#### Gayborhood trajectories: A review of extant research

In the mid-twentieth century, visible LGBT geographies emerged across metropolitan areas of the United States. While the original focus was on gay-male territoriality and categories such as ‘gay villages’ and ‘gay ghettos’, contemporary interest on ‘gayborhoods’ reflects a broader scope of spatialized sexual dissidence and more nuanced historico-geographical analyses of their variegated origins and trajectories (M. Brown, 2014). Even though sexualized ‘safe’ spaces for cruising, socializing and performing in drag already existed in select European cities

(Andersson, 2012; Sibalís 2004; Higgs, 1999); it was American case studies that first attracted academic interest and generated explicit political economy perspectives (Castells, 1983; Levine, 1979). Urban geographers brought attention to the multidimensional character of the gayborhood problematic cutting across sexual politics, residential and commercial patternings and the partial and geographically-selective transformation of urban built environments. Initial research topics included the following: the need to construct segregated, fortified, queer places to resist a hostile heteronormative mainstream; the role of gender and sexuality in capitalist gentrification processes; and the transformation of inner city neighborhoods under entrepreneurial regimes of urban redevelopment (Knopp, 1990; Lauria and Knopp, 1985). In the new millennium, however, phenomena of gayborhood decline and de-gaying came to receive significant attention from the LGBT and mainstream press as residents and businesses seemed to be dispersing away from areas, which nevertheless still thrived overall (Stiffler, 2014; Russell, 2013; Babineau, 2008; P.L. Brown, 2007; Hayasaki, 2007).

Academics have also taken stock of these emerging phenomena. With an empirical focus on London's Soho, Collins (2004) was among the first to develop a four-stage evolutionary model to explain ostensible territorial erosion. In his model, gayborhoods arise when declining urban areas provide conditions for a first formational stage with the location of liminal activities and behaviors (e.g. cruising grounds and sex work) and the presence of at least one gay establishment. This is followed by a second stage in which clustering occurs for gay men and businesses catering to them. The third stage is one of expansion and diversification of both the residential and commercial sectors beyond bars and nightclubs. But then, what others see as decay, Collins (p. 1802) interprets as a fourth stage of "integration or assimilation into the fashionable mainstream." Cumulatively, on one hand, there is an influx of heterosexual

customers for local services and businesses become that more mainstream and no longer cater to an exclusively, or even primarily, gay clientele – while on the other, parts of the gay community exhibit outflow or suburbanization.

While useful for modeling gayborhood trajectories, Collins' liberal stance and linear economicist approach has also received multiple critiques. Some have pointed out that the model may be limited in its historical, economic and cultural assumptions to the case studies selectively chosen as empirical validation thereby making further generalization problematic (Lewis, 2013; Andersson, 2011). Multiple other cases evince different trajectories. Sydney's Oxford Street, for example, Ruting (2008) argues that a colonization of queer space is a result of displacement and not social assimilation/integration. In a similar vein, Doan and Higgins (2011) posit that the trajectory of Atlanta's gay villages has been tightly linked to broader gentrification processes with urban change eventually leading to the pernicious dispersion of LGBT populations beyond erstwhile consolidated neighborhoods. Moreover, such gayborhood transitions may erode their vibrancy, safety and visibility as territories of sexual alterity and queer freedom from heteronormative constraints (see also Binnie and Skeggs, 2004 and Moran et al., 2001 for studies of Manchester).

An additional layer of complexity comes from diverging hypotheses on the causes and consequences of heightened social acceptance of sexual diversity. These include arguments on the broad-scale political demobilization of LGBT youth as the 'post-mo' (or post-gay) generation becomes increasingly acceptable to society's heterosexual mainstream and disavows sexuality-based identity politics (Nash, 2013; Weinraub, 2011; Gorman-Murray and Gordon-Waite, 2009); studies on the role that technology has played in decentering gay men from traditional gathering places (Diaz, 2012; Hearn, 2006); and a combination of the aforementioned factors (Rosser et al.,

2008). Moreover, some point that there is nothing new in the decline of specific gayborhoods: fashionable ‘hot spots’ simply have always had a mercurial nature of impermanence in the context of consumer and generational changes – particularly within North America’s rapid urban change and gentrification. Numerous gay villages have appeared and disappeared prior to the current debate in places such as San Jose (Cooker, 2002), Atlantic City (Simon, 2002) and Montreal (Podmore, 2006; Hunt and Zacharias, 2008). In fact, decline across the board may not be a foregone conclusion. Certain gay villages actually receive official designation and state sponsorship (Lewis, 2013), while others even maintain overtly hedonistic sex scenes (Anderson, 2011). Moreover, both Lewis (2013) and Schroeder (2014) point to the importance of gayborhoods beyond commercial scenes and gentrified residential zones, as a safe space for homeless LGBT youth and visitors from nearby rural (and less accepting) areas, for instance.

In our view, in order to adequately theorize these geographically variegated gayborhood trajectories, more attention should be paid to their metropolitan contexts and the governance shifts that shape their evolution as differentiated geographies. Of particular relevance is the increasing embrace of selective sexual tolerance agendas by entrepreneurial regimes of urban governance, or what we could call homonormative entrepreneurialism. Based on Dugan (2002, p.179), the concept of homonormativity captures a politics that, without contesting dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, promises “a demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption”.

Homonormativity has received much attention in recent years, particularly by theorizations on how the highly profitable ‘pink economy’ has facilitated the newfound acceptance of homosexuality (Andersson, 2012; Oswin, 2007; Hunt and Zacharias, 2008; Duggan, 2008; Visser, 2008; Browne, 2006; Bell and Binnie, 2004). Richardson (2005) argues that this has



allowed gayborhoods to become more commodified and corporatized in the context of neoliberal sexual politics. Such politics support (normalize) market-friendly ways of gender and sexual dissidence while marginalizing those that are not. Bell and Binnie (2004) draw attention to the new ‘queer unwanted’, which include sex workers, those who frequent cruising grounds and spaces of public sex (Ross and Sullivan, 2012; Andersson, 2012; Hubbard, 2001, 2004); transgenders (Nash, 2011; Doan, 2007); LGBT people of color (Weinraub, 2011; Visser, 2008; Nero, 2005; Nast, 2002); and the overtly political/activist/anti-capitalist (Freedman, 2013; Wilkey, 2013; G. Brown, 2007; Sears, 2005).

G. Brown (2012) questions the validity and explanatory power of homonormativity, and is particularly critical of the complicity undertones, which imply a particular alignment of gay white men with power structures (i.e. patriarchy, heteronormativity, sexism, racism and capitalism) that continue to oppress them as well. Other critiques include the assumption of a zero-sum game in which the gains made by one group must come at the cost of another; a discursive overemphasis on the power and pervasiveness of homonormativity perpetuated through comparisons with heteronormativity; and the overlook of contestations and resistances to power structures from within the LGBT community itself – which presupposes that ‘ordinary’ gay men and women can no longer be radical/queer (Lewis, 2013; Podmore, 2013; G. Brown, 2012, 2009; Andersson, 2011; Bassi, 2006; Oswin, 2005). While aware of these caveats, homonormativity helps us qualify a certain genre of neoliberal urbanism. We define homonormative entrepreneurialism as a form of urban governance that promotes alignments and partnerships between capital and select LGBT actors, while simultaneously privileging corporatized and easily-marketable kinds of queer spaces and subjects over others. The rest of the study focuses on analyzing the trajectory of South Beach as a gayborhood and how the rise of

homonormative entrepreneurialism shapes what is now a space less focused on local LGBT populations and increasingly specialized in global tourism and upscale redevelopment.

### The Gayborhood Trajectory of South Beach: a thorny debate

Some context on South Beach is required before analyzing its current state as a gayborhood. South Beach is the southernmost district of the City of Miami Beach, which is located on a barrier island in Greater Metropolitan Miami), one of the most populous and globalized urban areas in the United States (Nijman, 2011). By the 1990s, South Beach had emerged as the region's most prominent gayborhood out of an erstwhile dispersed LGBT community territorializing in a disinvested, crime-ridden and poor retirement community sometimes nicknamed 'God's Waiting Room'. Kenttamaa Squires (2014) notes that this clustering arose through a mix of gay-male-led gentrification of a historic district (in this case designed to protect South Beach's famous Tropical Art Deco architecture) and its tradition as a center of nightlife and debauchery (Capo Jr., 2011; Nijman, 2011). Its popularity became known nationally and internationally alongside a reputation for overt sexuality and drug use. Previous studies on sexualities in Miami Beach have focused on its changing populations and their predicaments (Avivi, 2011; Berkowitz and Belgrave, 2010; Kurtz 1999, 2008), with a particular public health focus on the high rates of HIV/AIDS and substance abuse (Butram and Kurtz, 2012; Egan et al., 2011; Akin et al., 2008; Kurtz, 2005). Yet, the geographies of sexualities have been virtually absent from studies of Miami Beach urban development. Therefore, with this study we seek to advance such a discussion, which is particularly relevant at this time of rapid remake and alleged impacts on LGBT populations.

Over the past decade, the press seemed to agree that the queer party of the 1990s was over. Gay men in particular were reported to leave in droves for quieter, cheaper and friendlier gayborhoods in the Fort Lauderdale area and centered on the smaller municipality of Wilton

Manors, located within a 30-minute drive to the north. Article headings are suggestive and range from “Who needs South Beach? Fort Lauderdale crashes the party” (Lee, 2002) to “Where the boys are Part 2: Watch out South Beach. Fort Lauderdale is making its move as a top gay spot” (Lee, 2005b), “Broward beckons gays, many leave Miami-Dade for a place to settle down” (Tanasychuk, 2008), and “Questioning South Beach’s status as a gay mecca?” (Melloy, 2010). Articles also underscored differences in age, purchasing power and cultural capital between South Beach and Broward. Telling headlines include examples such as “An alternative to Miami’s South Beach / quieter Fort Lauderdale appeals to mature gay, lesbian travelers” (Lee, 2005a) and “SoBe or Lauderdale? A matter of taste; Fort Lauderdale is comparable to Walmart, South Beach is like Target claims retail queen” (Muther, 2003).

A particularly extensive and controversial report came from the local press titled “Gays leave unfriendly South Beach for Fort Lauderdale”. Written in the vein of incisive investigative journalism, the article posited multiple factors for the northward exodus of gay men (O’Neill, 2010). These range from the anecdotal and testimonial to structural shifts that made the area less welcoming to LGBT residents and businesses, including allegations of an increasingly hostile public space, a spate of heinous homophobic attacks graphically reported, and even the gruesome murder of local icon Gianni Versace in 1997. In addition, O’Neill mentioned the soaring rents and land values explaining that the residential and commercial sectors spiked in the early 2000s. On one hand, national franchises have replaced locally-owned small businesses and lavish hip-hop clubs catering to out-of-towners substituted local gay bars as signifiers of the nighttime economy. But on the other, a more tightly-knit community network, lower rents, more spacious housing and easier access to home ownership functioned as pull factors to Wilton Manors.

The report's most sensationalistic claims about hate crime and safety were promptly discredited (Rothaus, 2010a) but the structural issues that were identified remain to be addressed. The following section places the South Beach gayborhood in its metropolitan context to show that remake and upgrading are more accurate descriptors than decline and exodus: overall gentrification has indeed impacted some LGBT residents and businesses but also provided a new impetus for the promotion of South Beach as an appealing homonormative global playground.

#### Who is Leaving South Beach? Residential and commercial trends of decline and growth

This section shows that while South Beach remains an important node within South Florida's LGBT geographies, this gayborhood exhibits a markedly higher socio-economic and housing profile than other clusters and it is also differentiated along demographic and cultural/symbolic axes. Our assertions are cautious given the challenges involved in this type of research. Theoretical and empirical issues render the quantitative measurement of gentrification and displacement controversial (Freeman, 2009). In what concerns LGBT populations, intricate identities and behaviors defy clear-cut categorical definitions and the economic and demographic data available are scanty (Hayslett and Kane, 2011; Gates, 2010; Gates and Ost, 2004; Black et al. 2000). Brown and Knopp (2006) highlight the constraints on relying on state-defined territorial scales and demographic categories (such as those of the US Census) to map queer space. Yet they also recognize that reflexive quantitative geo-spatial analysis "can be an integral part of a politics of uncloseting urban (and other) spaces that are otherwise heteronormatively represented and imagined" (Brown and Knopp, 2008:55).

We compiled our own database of LGBT-oriented businesses because there are no publicly available data for LGBT business-ownership like those for racial minorities and women. We were able to enumerate businesses catering to LGBT customers by surveying advertisements and listings in both local and national publications. The Stonewall National Museum and

Archives in Fort Lauderdale holds copies of magazines dating back to at least the 1970s. In order to identify LGBT-oriented businesses of local relevance and track their numbers over time, we surveyed a sample of representative specialty magazines (including *The Wire*, *Hot Spots*, *The Weekly News* and *This Week with David*). We then tabulated businesses that could be assumed to have a certain degree of national exposure by surveying the *Damron LGBT Travel Guides* and looking for businesses listed as LGBT or LGBT-friendly. Table 1 contains multiyear data (1975, 1990, 2000 and 2013) for both variables. The data are presented for the entire two county region that makes up the part of Greater Miami we are interested in and disaggregated for the cities of interest. For the first category (local publications), the absolute number grew in Miami Beach until the year 2000, with a particularly strong increase in the 1990s. The ensuing decade, however, recorded a dramatic drop, with the count decreasing by over half. The city has also lost its leading share in the second category (*Damron guides*) during this period, even though the absolute decrease was far less. Thus, whereas the loss in locally-oriented businesses is more salient, a significant number of businesses still cater to LGBT customers and are particularly focused on attracting domestic and international tourists. In fact, many of the establishments in the *Damron men's* and *women's* guides are upscale hotels and restaurants or belong to nationwide chains. Meanwhile, Fort Lauderdale and Wilton Manors have both increased their absolute numbers and today account for larger regional shares of business in both categories. Growth in the latter is particularly noticeable between 2000 and 2013.

#### TABLE 1 GOES HERE

While Table 1 does not show a breakdown of business types, the decline in locally-oriented businesses in Miami Beach was most evident for bars and night clubs. In fact, by 2013 there were only 5 such establishments left in the city. Moreover, there are no gay saunas or strip

clubs left in Miami Beach as opposed to across Biscayne Bay in Miami and cities in Broward County. Claims of de-gaying are also based on the waning of cruising in public space. Most notably, the local Flamingo Park has been the scene of controversy. In the late 1990s, LGBT community leaders collaborated with the city police to discourage sexual activity in the park (flyers with the catchphrase “What You Do is Your Business, Where You Do it is Ours” were distributed) while demanding an end to raids on nightclubs (Patron, 1997). Surveillance then intensified, with police beginning to arrest males caught at night in the park and adjacent alleyways, charging them with loitering. Tension peaked in 2009 after a notorious incident of police brutality that caused the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) to intervene by suing the City of Miami Beach for discrimination against gay men (Rothaus, 2010b).

For the residential sector we assessed the location of same-sex households (SSHs)<sup>1</sup> in 2010. We produced a LISA map (Local Indicators of Spatial Association)<sup>2</sup>, which is one of the most commonly-used forms of exploratory spatial data analysis (see Figure 1). Our analysis revealed an overall pattern of dispersion with about two thirds (65%) of SSHs in South Florida living in census tracts where they represent less than the overall average for the region. Yet, we also identified three contiguous clusters of relatively higher SSH local ratios, which indicate ongoing processes of gayborhood formation and LGBT residential clustering. The largest of these is by far is a broad area in southeastern Broward County with a share of 27% of SSHs in the metropolitan region. This cluster encompasses parts of Fort Lauderdale as well as smaller municipalities such as Wilton Manors and Oakland Park. While still showing larger than average local ratios, the cluster identified in Miami Beach (including parts of South Beach) now only has a small share of the regional population (slightly above 4%), which is comparable to that of a third cluster that we identified in the mainland of Dade county along the Biscayne Corridor.

Furthermore, Table 2 reveals that the three clusters exhibit socioeconomic, demographic and housing contrasts. Particularly when compared to Broward County, Miami Beach has higher home values and income levels among the total local population. The latter is nevertheless younger, more transient and international, with higher proportions of renter-occupied units and foreign-born residents. The higher proportion of individuals at or near poverty (up to 150% of federally-defined poverty line) in Broward County indicates the possibility of more forgiving conditions for those trying to get by than the pricier areas of Miami Beach and the Biscayne Corridor. Yet confirming such a claim would require further investigation exceeding the scope of this study. Likewise, disaggregating SSHs into male and female (as Brown, 2011 does for Seattle) would show further differentiation of the clusters. Yet these data were not ready available from the US Census Bureau for 2010 at the time this paper was completed. Furthermore, surveys of both coupled and single LGBT populations would provide more nuanced geographical descriptors of their residential patterns.

TABLE 2 GOES HERE

FIGURE 1 GOES HERE



The Old City Hall Building containing the Miami Beach LGBT Visitor Center (Source: Authors' photo)

### Spectacular Gayborhood Remake: The rise of homonormative entrepreneurialism

Gayborhood trajectories cannot be attributed to mere economic and demographic shifts. The analysis also needs to encompass more than built environment transformations and changing social of public space. Whereas these are constitutive parts of the restructuring of South Beach – a story of partial population decline, business losses and selective replacements documented earlier, they are influenced, in turn, by institutional contexts of urban governing and policy changes vis-à-vis sexual inclusion. This section documents the rise of pro-equality initiatives in the City of Miami Beach, arguing that this turn has been largely shaped by an entrepreneurial form of homonormativity that promotes selective sexual inclusion as long as this goal is



compatible with, and may further promote, tourism- and redevelopment-oriented urban objectives. We base our arguments on in-depth interviews with six expert informants strategically positioned in the city's LGBT governance circles as well as local media articles and field observations conducted as event participants and witnesses to neighborhood life. Our assertions are not intended as a general indictment of LGBT politics in the city, which we rather interpret as a symptom of how South Florida's metropolitan fragmentation also shapes its geographies of sexualities. Accordingly, we seek to advance a nuanced critique of this form of homonormative entrepreneurialism in which a binary between regimented exclusions and queer progressivism cannot be neatly constructed, particularly when visions and actions are analyzed at the level of individual organizations and their leaders.

Politically-organized sexual minorities have maintained public visibility in South Florida since at least the 1970s. Miami Beach was the first city in the region to pass Human Rights (1992) and Gender Identity (2004) ordinances (Amato, 2010; Nevins, 1992). The (homo)sexualization of entrepreneurial policies became apparent by the mid-1990s when the city began to explicitly target gay-male tourists and other LGBT market niches (NPR, 1995). Yet the 2007 election of Matti Herrera Bower as mayor initiated the most substantive involvement of LGBT interests of any local administration in the city's history. The first Hispanic female mayor, Herrera Bower also stood for an identity politics of diversity and inclusion. Nevertheless, her six-year, three-term tenure was also guided by neoliberal recipes of government expense curtailment; attraction of external investors, businesses and consumers; and promotion of high-profile mega-projects focused on tourism, culture and the arts – in as e.g. the proposed \$600 million convention center renovation (Veiga, 2013).

Pro-equality initiatives under Herrera Bower displayed entrepreneurial logics. The organization of local LGBT interests followed a corporate model that incorporated locally-established business leaders and resulted in the creation of the following: a) the Miami Beach LGBT Business Enhancement Committee, established in 2008 as an advisory board to policy-making and legislation; b) the Miami Beach LGBT Visitor Center, opened in 2011 and run by the local LGBT Chamber of Commerce; and c) the Pink Flamingo Hospitality Certification Program, which thus far has focused on ‘diversity tolerance training’ so far only for hotels in the area. Therefore, promoting the creation of new establishments and stemming the exodus of small businesses have taken priority, with several of our expert informants confirming that private and public actions have been particularly concerned with repairing the image of South Beach as a ‘gay-friendly’ destination. This activism also translated into moderate policies of recognition, such as technical changes in the city ordinance that finally permitted rainbow flags to be flown by businesses in the city. Yet, these informants did not report to perceive a de-gayng arising from LGBT residential dilution; on the contrary, they saw neighborhood change as a product of fluid housing markets and individual choices.

Such views echo the assimilationist perspective on the desirability of gayborhood dispersion in the wake of greater social acceptance and state recognition whereby LGBT citizens no longer need to self-segregate into territorial enclaves (see also news articles by Gay, 2005; Barnes and Massey, 2001; Reeves, 1999; Tatchell, 1999 for examples of this thinking). Moreover, informants described homogeneous ghettos as unappealing. Robin Schwartz, executive director of the Aqua Foundation for Women and member of the Business Enhancement Committee, cringed at the idea of spatial separation (Personal Interview, June 21, 2013). Karen Brown, executive director of the Miami Beach LGBT Visitor Center at the time

and a member of multiple tourism and business organizations, pointed out that “you don’t have to hide anymore” (Personal Interview, May 28, 2013). She added that queers are now everywhere on the beach and have no fear of being bothered in public. K. Brown acknowledged lingering homophobia but largely attributed it to a byproduct of the highly-diversified tourism coming to the area, and particularly from less-sophisticated parts of the country, which she alluded to with a generic reference to the Midwest (ibid.).

The ostensible exodus to Broward should also be put in perspective. South Beach is inherently different from Wilton Manors and Fort Lauderdale according to George Neary, Vice President of Cultural Tourism at the Greater Miami Convention and Visitors Bureau and Board Director of the Executive Committee of Miami-Dade LGBT Chamber of Commerce (Personal Interview conducted on December 10, 2012). For Neary, the latter are places for older, less cosmopolitan and predominantly white crowds – the reference to Middle America appeared again and we noticed in various other interviews and instances of participant observation that this was a common way of referring to LGBT populations in Broward County. In his view, people from all over the world know about South Beach’s allure and that LGBT tourism in South Florida actually benefits from having a variety of options from Fort Lauderdale to Key West (ibid.). Even Herb Sosa, community activist, online magazine editor and long-time South Beach resident, looked at urban revitalization in a positive light, mentioning that old-timers responsible for recreating the district’s early appeal could cash out by selling their properties and move elsewhere. In his view, national chains could serve LGBT residents just as well as local businesses provided proper training was in place (Personal Interview conducted on June 27, 2013).

The growing number of large-scale, often upscale, events and tourist-oriented spectacles high on the Miami Beach agenda exemplifies the homonormative turn within the city's entrepreneurial governing. Mayor Bower herself played a pivotal role in the organization of the Miami Beach Gay Pride. Held in 2009 for the first time in the city's history, Miami Beach Pride is a surprising late-comer to the now global roster of pride events. Local LGBT populations have been politically active since the 1970s and several other high-profile events were initiated in the city, such as e.g. the White Party (stated in 1984 as one of the earliest AIDS benefit fund-raisers – Rothaus, 2004) and the Winter Party Festival (created in 1994 to fight a statewide antigay ballot initiative – Rothaus, 2011). But these have now become massive circuit parties supplemented by a host of other ticketed events catering to differentiated LGBT markets, including the Gay & Lesbian Film Festival (started in 1998) and Aqua Girl (1999). Differing from other events, Pride does not have an activist origin and it was created by the Business Enhancement Committee. It has also assumed a markedly commercial character, where corporate sponsorships abound, political claims are flattened outside marriage equality and displays of overt sexuality are shunned as outrageous. Organized in the month of April, the parade takes place rather early for a "Christopher Street" celebration but it falls within the high tourism season afforded by South Florida's usually balmy early spring. The Pride celebration has experienced a spectacular rise in attendance and scope, reaching over 80,000 in 2013 according to K. Brown. Yet, the crowning achievement may well be yet to come. The 2017 Miami Beach-Miami World Outgames, will mark the first time this tournament is held in the United States. Mayor Bower was personally involved in securing this event as she hand-delivered the joint application to the international selection committee in Antwerp, Belgium. It is estimated that the games will bring in \$125 million in revenue for the city (Gilmer 2013).

This model of LGBT incorporation to the city's policy priorities produces complex forms of exclusion and inclusion that require further exploration, as the new institutions and initiatives set in place have also created opportunities for community-building and sexual self-expression. In discussing exclusion, it is important to note that in addition to those priced-out, South Beach has developed a culture that while cosmopolitan and more multi-ethnic than other white-dominated gayborhoods, still privileges middle and upper class incomes and younger, fit male bodies. There are no lesbian bars and only one explicitly LBT women-themed annual event (Aqua Girl) – even though our two female informants asserted that this does not reflect a hostility towards LBT women, but rather results from cultural differences and spending gaps between them and gay men, which makes profitably operating a women's bar more difficult.

Ethnically-differentiated LGBT events such as the Miami Beach Bruthaz (2006) and the Celebrate Orgullo Hispanic Pride Festival (2011), proclaim the diversity that to a degree is also reflected in the district's racial/ethnic residential profile. Rather than being simply a themed tourist event, Orgullo focuses on fund-raising for philanthropic causes, provides a space for political education and activism, and raises awareness on community-specific issues such as LGBT migration and HIV/AIDS education. Yet rampant discrimination against African Americans in particular, which is explicitly manifested in the intensified policing of the annual Urban Beach Weekend (McNeir, 2013), is an issue that may preclude greater involvement by LGBTs of color.

There are benefits for local residents that also need to be acknowledged. The City of Miami Beach has passed legislation and amended its charters to offer a bevy of legal protections to LGBT residents and workers to a level that resulted in a perfect score from the Human Rights Campaign Equality Index (in fact the only local government in Florida to achieve a perfect

score). Community activist, Herb Sosa also praised police outreach efforts to identify and better document hate-crime incidents as well as the sensitivity training and various other checks and balances that the city now conducts in order to maintain an LGBT-friendly police force (Personal Interview conducted on June 27, 2013 ).

Moreover, there was a dearth of community-oriented public spaces and organizations previous to Bower's administration. The LGBT community center created in the 1990s was short lived and the transiency of tourist- and entertainment-activities curtailed civic involvement. In certain ways staffers see the LGBT Visitor Center functioning as a 'de facto' community center, where residents can access Wi-fi service for free, use as a meeting place or learn about locally-available services (Personal Interview with Steve Adkins conducted on September 19, 2013). Occasionally, at-risk LGBT youth are provided with informal ad-hoc referrals, while more formal partnerships with service providers in other parts of South Florida are being evaluated by the Business Enhancement Committee (Personal Interview with Karen Brown, May 28, 2013). Yet, the fact that such work is the remit of business-minded civic leaders rather than community activists or non-profit organizations speaks to a lack of adequate services. By comparison, Wilton Manors has several LGBT-oriented community centers that actually compete with one another to provide free services to at-risk populations – from AA meetings to HIV testing and even LGBT-friendly religious services and adult education.

### Conclusion

This study demonstrates that remake rather than decline is the most accurate descriptor for the current stage of South Beach's trajectory as a gayborhood. The district has become an LGBT-friendly mixed neighborhood increasingly shaped by the pro-equality, but primarily pro-tourism and redevelopment, politics of the City of Miami Beach. We conceptualized this with the notion of homonormative entrepreneurialism. Therefore, this case study contributes not only to

tease out the thorny local debate on neighborhood decline, cultural/symbolic de-gayng and economic displacement versus mainstream integration, fashionable diversity and urban upgrade. It also helps to advance broader, more general discussions on geographically variegated gayborhood trajectories across the board. We showed the importance of explicitly situating transitioning gayborhoods within their metropolitan and policy contexts, which not only shape the (re-)locations of LGBT residents and businesses but also set urban priorities and the discursive definition of what the gayborhood is and who it serves (see also M. Brown et al. 2011 on this for the case of the shifting location of LGBT clusters in metropolitan Seattle). On one hand, these findings extend Bell and Binnie's (2004: 1818) argument that "the presence of gay communities and spaces has become part of the arsenal of entrepreneurial governance, giving sexual 'others' a central role in place promotion, as symbols of cosmopolitanism and creative appeal" from a thoroughly globalized yet still largely understudied urban setting in the Americas where the international tourism industry generates annual revenue of over a \$12 billion dollars. But on the other hand, the political and social nuances that we registered in Miami Beach speak to the need for research on gayborhood transformation not to fall into simplified dichotomies of decay versus gentrification, displacement and complicity.

While explicitly inserting a geographies of sexualities perspective to the academic discourse on South Florida's urban development, the study stands as only a first approximation to the complex and multi-layered LGBT geographies of the region. More research is needed on social life in Wilton Manors and other gayborhoods, focusing in greater detail on their differentiated urban trajectories as well as respective inclusions and exclusions. Perspectives from residents and non-elite sources will also help us better understand how South Beach continues to change and what it once was from the view of those who chose or were forced to

leave. Similarly, from what we learned from inter-gayborhood territorial competition in South Florida, we call for future studies of other gayborhood trajectories in North America and beyond should take into account complex (re-)location patterns of residents and businesses within metropolitan areas where multiple and differentiated LGBT clusters are becoming more common than single, historically-rooted and place-bound gayborhoods. Local economic specializations, urban development models and the politics of sexual diversity should also be considered.

Finally, we consider our study on the incorporation of LGBT interests to the governing of Miami Beach only a first approximation to the implications of homonormativity for the politics of urban development and management. Homonormative entrepreneurialism is filled with exclusions but it also opens new possibilities for queer activism and community-building. LGBT organizations need to consider their metropolitan constituents without falling into localist traps. Community-oriented work being done on the ground in South Beach offers hope that even in thoroughly commercialized gayborhoods queer activism can be part of more just urban futures and not simply be folded into the homonormative entrepreneurial designs to market cities globally to diverse yet exclusive audiences.

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## Endnotes

1. Cohabiting same-sex couples (SSCs) represent only a fraction of South Florida's queer communities – e.g. Grindr, a phone app for all-male dating, had more than 132,000 users registered in Greater Miami and Fort Lauderdale in 2012 or the equivalent to almost ten times the combined number of SSCs in Miami-Dade and Broward Counties (Diaz, 2012). SSCs were, however, the only LGBT population counted in the 2010 census and for whom neighborhood enumerations exist (operationalized as census tracts). Therefore, this variable provides a useful proxy to explore fine-grained patterns of residential clustering below the city level – which is of particular importance in larger municipalities such as Miami and Fort Lauderdale.



2. We used Local Indicators of Spatial Association (LISA) are derived from the Moran's I statistic (Anselin, 1995). In order to identify contiguous areas with a relatively-strong residential presence of cohabitating same-sex couples (SSCs), we prepared a LISA cluster map (high-high case only) based on rook model of contiguity for the spatial weights matrix (Anselin, 2005). We kept only cases significant at the 95% confidence level and used the Empirical Bayes smoothing recommended for rates (ibid.). Our ratios of SSCs as a percentage of all households within their census tract were calculated using the adjusted number of SSCs that corrects for the suspected over-counting that occurred in the original census results (USCB, 2011). High local values do not necessarily translate into high shares of the total metropolitan population but they indicate spatial differentiation, residential clustering and potential segregation.

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Table 1. Location of LGBT businesses by category and city (1975, 1990, 2000, 2013)

Year	Miami Beach		Miami		Wilton Manors		Fort Lauderdale		Total	
	LM	DG	LM	DG	LM	DG	LM	DG	LM	DG
	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)
1975	5 (13.2)	11 (16.7)	12 (31.6)	27 (40.9)	0 (0)	0 (0)	15 (39.5)	18 (27.3)	38 (100)	66 (100)
1990	7 (9.9)	13 (11.3)	23 (32.4)	31 (27)	0 (0)	5 (4.3)	29 (40.8)	53 (46.1)	71 (100)	115 (100)
2000	20 (18.5)	88 (38.9)	8 (7.4)	19 (8.4)	10 (9.3)	16 (7.1)	60 (55.5)	84 (37.2)	108 (100)	226 (100)
2013	9 (8)	83 (30.9)	9 (8)	31 (11.5)	26 (23)	38 (14.1)	56 (49.6)	90 (33.5)	113 (100)	269 (100)

3. LM: Local Magazines, DG: Damron Guides

4. Source: Authors' tabulations based on *Damron Address Guides*, *The Weekly News (TWN)*, *This Week with David (TWD)* and *Hot Spots* for respective years

Table 2. Socio-Economic and Housing Profiles of LGBT residential clusters, 2007-2011

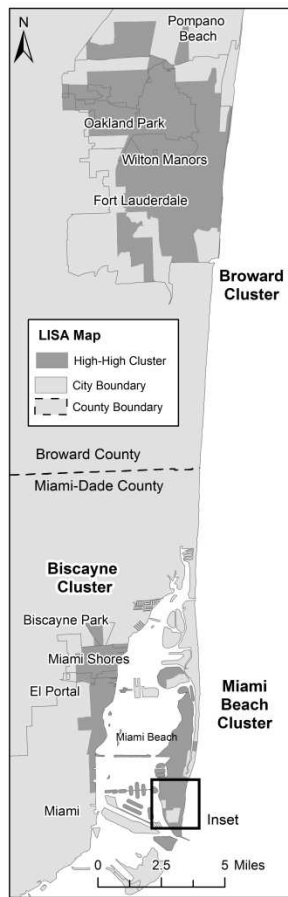
Variable/Cluster	Miami Beach	Biscayne Corridor	Broward County
Mean Income <sup>1</sup> (\$)	102,362	78,024	75,738
Mean Home Value <sup>2</sup> (\$)	439,429	337,080	297,005
Median Age	40.1	39.3	43.1
Owner Occupied (%)	43	48.5	55.4
In or At-Near Poverty (%)	22.6	23.9	29.2
Foreign Born (%)	30	29	18.7

1. Weighted by number of households, measured in 2011-inflation adjusted dollars

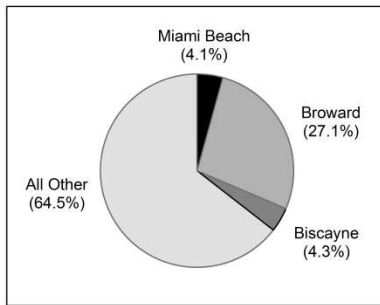
2. Weighted by number of units, measured in 2011-inflation adjusted dollars

Source: Authors' tabulations based on 2011 American Community Survey

### Clusters



### Shares



### South Beach



Figure 1. LISA Map of same-sex households (high-high cluster only), Miami-Dade and Broward Counties, 2010.

Source: Authors' map based on data from 2010 US Census