Futures of Queer Space in Toronto

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Futures of Queer Space in Toronto

by

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Abstract

Many spaces for queer people in Toronto have closed. Others have evolved or emerged to serve a changing community and new customers with different needs, desires and expectations. The future of these spaces in Toronto is uncertain largely due to increasing rents, the dispersion and acceptance of queer people, and how we increasingly leverage technology as a replacement for physical contact and connection. Existing relevant research mainly focuses on the historical significance of queer spaces, reasons for queer space disappearance and the current landscape of fixed, temporary and digital space. This research study builds on existing research to explore how queer spaces in Toronto may evolve in the future. Leveraging insights from semi-structured interviews with local queer space creators, experts and community builders as well as foresight methods, the research examines the role and attributes of queer space in four divergent Toronto scenarios based in 2043. Research outcomes indicate that queer spaces will continue to play an important role in the lives of queer people in the future, and that spaces with connecting, teaching, transportive, inclusive, intersectional and accessible attributes are most relevant in the futures explored. These attributes define spaces that are inclusive to all and used for community-building and connection, for sharing stories, history and celebrating progress, and for escaping to utopian worlds. And while this study highlights key weaknesses and threats to Toronto's queer spaces, the outcomes also reveal potential for positive change and reasons to have hope. Preliminary recommendations and strategies for preserving, adapting and creating queer spaces are prioritized for greatest impact and show that queer collaboration and collective engagement have the greatest power and potential for manifesting a future of Toronto where queer people have the spaces they need to thrive.

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Introduction

I started my research already knowing that queer spaces have played a significant role in the development of identity and community for many 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals. Gay bars, event spaces and travel destinations were so important to my queer formative years – all vital for meeting friends, having sex and feeling like I wasn't alone. I still (and always will) love being around other queer people. Knowing that queer spaces have been steadily disappearing over the last 20 years in Toronto and other parts of the world, I also started my research with a general concern for the future of these spaces – and with a strong assumption that the future would be better if it had physical queer spaces in it. My primary research inquiries, centred around my early assumptions, initially focused more on the protection or preservation of queer spaces. That was until I started talking about my research interest with friends and colleagues, and they asked me questions like, "What if queer spaces aren't actually important in the future?" and "What if spaces like the ones used by queer people today are totally irrelevant?" In my defense, I'm not naive enough to expect the future's queer person to occupy and use space in the same way we do today. But I didn't truly consider the possibility of a future where space plays a significantly less important role (or no significant role at all) in the development of queer sexual and gender identities and support systems. These helpful conversations uncovered new research possibilities and areas of inquiry and reset some of my assumptions. As a result, the research that follows is an exploration of how

queer space in Toronto may evolve in the future. And, to be clear, that includes being open to a world where queer space may not actually need to be protected or preserved because, in that world, having queer space doesn't really matter.

For my research, I will first examine what queer spaces are and what attributes are often relevant and important to these spaces. I will look at examples of queer spaces in Toronto throughout history for context and examine emerging queer spaces in the city for hints about the future. Using foresight methods, I will next build a set of divergent Toronto futures that consider different uses and relevance of queer space and community. And finally, based on the outcomes of my research and my leveraging of innovation design tools, I will consider strategies that may (or may not) be needed to preserve, adapt or create spaces inclusive of queer individuals in the future.

Positionality statement

I acknowledge my standpoint and privilege as an educated, white, cis-gender, able-bodied, Canadian, gay man. And I acknowledge that my positionality influenced this research project. I am grateful to the many research participants who helped challenge and expand my thinking, and to all members of the broader queer community who seek to reposition or challenge the dominant culture and prevailing systems of power.

Research question

My primary research question that will guide and frame the study that follows is:

How might queer spaces in Toronto evolve in the future?

Research methodology

The research conducted throughout this project follows four phases: (1) Understanding queer space, (2) Emerging trends, spaces & perspectives, (3) Futures of Toronto queer space and (4) Recommendations & conclusion. A description of each phase and the relevant research questions and methods are outlined in the table below:

Phase	Description	Questions	Methods
1. Understanding queer space	Defining queer, space and queer space Attributes of queer space Toronto's queer spaces throughout history Examining the queer space system	What are queer spaces and why are they significant? Why are queer spaces at risk or disappearing? How are queer spaces failing to meet the needs of queer individuals?	Literature Review
2. Emerging trends, spaces & perspectives	Horizon scan of trends across STEEP+V Interviews with queer spaces creators and community builders to better understand current challenges and future possibilities	What trends and drivers are shaping queer space? What types of queer spaces are emerging in Toronto? What strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats exist?	Trend Scanning Semi-Structured Interviews

3. Futures of Toronto queer space	Four divergent futures scenarios of Toronto in 2043 Exploration of different uses and visualizations of space and different human perspectives and feelings in each future Future features of queer space	How might queer spaces in Toronto evolve in the future? How important are queer spaces to queer people in the future? How might queer people use and engage with space in the future?	Scenario Development Time Machine Future Journaling
4. Recommendations & conclusion	Strategic recommendations tested against the 2043 futures scenarios	How might we preserve, adapt and/or create spaces that are inclusive for queer people in Toronto in the future?	Literature Review Semi-Structured Interviews Light Wind-Tunnelling

Table 1: Research methodology

Section 1: Understanding queer space

Context & background

What is queer?

The word queer has different meanings for different people. It can be empowering and precise to some, while offensive and abstract to others. How we apply and make sense of queer is constantly changing, and in some ways, the word defies definition (Chambers et al., 2017; Cheves, 2019).

One early definition of queer is abnormal or strange (Lashkari, 2018). With this meaning, the word evolved into a slur used against those whose sexuality or gender existed outside of the societal norm (Cheves, 2019). While some still see it this way, many 2SLGBTQQIA+ individuals embrace the word with pride and believe it has been reclaimed as a label that celebrates difference and not conforming to a dominant culture (Lashkari, 2018). Some more progressive queers believe the term creates new space for anyone previously othered by the more traditional LGBT rights movement and by outdated notions of gender and sexuality (Cheves, 2019). Others believe the word represents those who radically live on the margins and hedonistically prioritize fun and pleasure (Cheves, 2019). Some others may simply use the term as a stand-in replacement for "gay" or "lesbian" (Cheves, 2019). Some believe that queer should have no definition in order to effectively represent the unique desires, behaviours and experiences of any individual (Cheves, 2019). And some feel the word has a deeper

connection to politics and social justice issues (Chambers et al, 2017) and connotes a subverting of social constructions and structures of power (Caterall & Azzouz, n.d.). Perhaps most commonly, queer is now used as an inclusive umbrella term for a variety of identities in opposition to heteronormativity and a synonym for "not straight." The word can represent the full spectrum of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ identity, including non-heterosexual orientations and non-cisgender identities (Lashkari, 2018).

For the purposes of this research, queer will be used as an inclusive term to represent the entire 2SLGBTQQIA+ population, with the acknowledgement that the diverse members of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community have their own unique lived experiences, needs and perspectives. Throughout this research, queer will also represent a questioning of the status quo, a questioning of what is considered normal, and a desire to change or shape the future into something different.

What is space?

Space is a physical and social landscape (Saar & Palang, 2019) that can be

- "Partly constructed, imagined or animated through social practices" (Formby, 2017, p. 84).
- Produced socially and through interactions (Formby, 2017).
- Interchangeable with place (Formby, 2017).
- A way of observing, learning and understanding the world (Formby, 2017).

- "Regulated by assumptions and discussions about who does and does not belong" (Chambers et al., 2017, p. 116).

For people and communities who exist on the margins of cities, spaces can also be places of exclusion and even violence. But, at the same time, occupying space is very important to the identity, acceptance and visibility of marginalized people and communities. Freelance Design Consultant Ira Sanyal (2017) writes,

> "to reclaim [spaces], one has to take the risk of being present. Being present long enough to allow one's body to familiarize with the space, long enough to pick up the language of the space or even create a new one that does not follow the tacit codes of the space. Reclaiming urban public space, means reclaiming it in every sense, reclaiming the right to walk, to stroll, to loaf, to sit alone, to hang out with others, to wander, to get lost, to be visible, to be invisible, to use a toilet, to just be, in all those spaces, at all hours" (para. 2).

By claiming and occupying space, people of all kinds who have experienced isolation and marginalization can also find community, acceptance and belonging.

What is queer space?

Just as there is no universal meaning of queer, there is no single style, physical character, function or typology that defines queer space (Stone, 2022). In fact, historian and professor George Chauncey has said, "There is no queer space. There are only spaces put to queer uses" (as cited in Pavka, 2020, para. 51).

Originally, queer spaces were created or occupied by marginalized queer people in search of support, freedom and self-expression (Wilson, 2021). Queer spaces were developed out of necessity in response and resistance to persistent social, legal and sexual persecution (Branton & Compton, 2021). Queer space existed in the margins through an appropriation and transformation of heterosexual space (Glassmann, 2012). In the short film *On Hollywoods: making a queer urbanism*, critic and educator Mimi Zeiger and writer Victor Jones discuss the potential of queer urbanism. Jones says in the film, "Queer space is the space that you left me when you didn't allow me to participate in your project. It's the shit you left me after you took everything else! And we did a fucking amazing job with almost nothing" (Stone, 2020).

One prevalent characteristic of queer space is the freedom that the space brings the user. A queer space is a safe environment to explore one's sexuality and form a positive queer identity (Stella, 2012). Queer spaces can be private homes, bars and nightclubs, public parks, community centres, virtual reality simulations or any other combination of public, private or virtual space. Queer spaces can exist momentarily for one person or last for decades and be used by many.

Lucas LaRochelle (n.d.) is a designer and researcher who created Queering the Map, "a community generated counter-mapping platform for digitally archiving 2SLGBTQQIA+ experience in relation to physical space" ("About," para. 1), when they were a student at Concordia University in Montreal. For five years, community members have

documented experiences in physical space on Queering the Map, including the

following examples from contributors in Toronto:

> "Andy Poolhall was here before it closed. It used to host Cherry Bomb every
> month. The number of queer moments is infinite. The first time I went, I went
> alone, and I was quickly adopted by a helpful older woman who asked me what
> my type was and introduced me to everyone in the bar who fit the description I
> gave."

> "It's so nice to be drunk and safe and together here at The Beaver. I've never felt
> so sexy."

> "The gym at Church St Public School was the first place I did drag one Monday
> evening with my queer dodgeball league. It was a Britney-inspired look. It felt
> really great to queer the space of a public school and reclaim a time in my life
> that was hard at times."

According to LaRochelle, "queer space is still near impossible to define. There are

endless possible definitions that are also contradictory. I would move towards

something that is transient – queer space is produced through action" (as cited in

Fleming, 2020, para. 4).

In the 1997 book *Queer Space: The Architecture of Same-Sex Desire*, Aaron Betsky

argues that "the purpose of queer space is ultimately sex" (as cited in "What is Queer

Space?", n.d., para. 1). In the book, he writes that queer space "is a useless, amoral,

and sensual space that lives only in and for experience." Betsky continues, "It is a space in between the body and technology, a space of pure artifice" (Betsky, 1997, p. 5). While Betsky's contribution to queer space discourse is often criticized for its unbalanced focus on the perspectives of cisgender, white, gay men (Stone, 2022), the 2022 book *Queer Spaces: An Atlas of LGBTQIA+ Places and Stories* offers additional insight and more diverse perspectives. Foreword contributor Olivia Laing (2022) affirms the importance of queer space with the belief that queerness needs an ecosystem to thrive. She says that queer space is "not just a physical building in which to hook up or hang out. Instead, it's an alternate universe, a secret network that runs right round the world" (p. VIII). In the same book, writer and community organizer Ailo Ribas (2022) also offers her perspective. Queer space, she says, "is that which teaches us to move between worlds, to shapeshift, to learn and teach the skills necessary to gestate and conceive our own worlds." (p. 2). Christopher Reed's (1996) contribution to the definition of queer space in the essay "Imminent Domain: Queer Space in the Built Environment" focuses on the term imminent, asserting that no place is "completely unqueerable" and that queer space is threatening, looming and always ready to take place (para. 5).

While these divergent and sometimes complementary queer space interpretations represent only a small portion of those that exist within the studies on the subject, they help demonstrate how vital these varied spaces can be and the love, hope and growth they can offer the user.

Attributes of queer space

Through research, eight common attributes of past and current queer spaces were identified. Not all queer spaces exhibit each attribute. Some spaces can be described by many of the attributes, while others few or none at all. These attributes, however, can help to further explain the structure and function of queer space and will form a foundation or baseline for where queer space may evolve to in the future:

Attribute	Description
Safe	• Spaces that are free and protected from homophobia, violence, external aggression, sexism, harassment, misogyny and misunderstanding (Artz, 2021; Segalovich, 2022; Moore, 2022) • Spaces of acceptance (Choquette, 2018) that enable lifestyles that were once or are currently not accepted in the public domain (Segalovich, 2022) • Spaces that are comfortable, welcoming and open for people to freely identify as they choose (Glassmann, 2012)
Transforming	• Spaces for expression, performance, experimentation and exploration that support the development and evolution of sexual and gender identities that move and shift in different ways over time (Adamopoulos, 2021; Glassmann, 2012) • Spaces that offer potential and possibility (McLean, 2020) and support "letting go of masks and a shadowed life, in order to live brightly, flamboyantly, and unapologetically" (Choquette, 2018, para. 7) • Spaces that are rooted in secrecy as a matter of survival – "adaptable ephemeral and anonymous" (Choquette, 2018, para. 7)

	• Spaces that are constantly evolving and taking on new significance, meaning and power linked to individual identity (Choquette, 2018)
Connecting	• Spaces that enable community-building, friendship and "chosen family" development (Adamopoulos, 2021; Formby, 2017) • Spaces that offer a sense of belonging through connection (Formby, 2017) • Spaces that support identity construction through a closeness and comparison to others (Formby, 2017)
Teaching	• Spaces that pass down memories and communicate a shared history (Formby, 2017) • Spaces that teach a shared culture, including "language, symbols, customs and rituals" (Formby, 2017) • Spaces that enable personal growth and development (Glassmann, 2012)
Appropriated	• Heterosexual or normative spaces that, through necessity and creativity, are carved out, claimed and reterritorialized for queer purposes (Choquette, 2018; Oswin, 2008) • Spaces that become queer through activation and inhabitation, repurposing existing structures or typologies of space (Pavka, 2020) • Spaces that are misused or deformed for "perverse purposes" (Betsky, 1997, p. 5)
Transportive	• Spaces that are created as "fantastic places of the imagination" in response to gaps in representation of identity-affirming spaces in the real world (Betsky, 1997, p. 57) • Spaces that are otherworldly, whose thresholds are like "crossing into the looking glass in Wonderland" (Vaccaro, 2021, para. 3)

	• Spaces that uncover hidden layers and underground networks (Larsen, 2021) and that are constructions of a parallel world that rethinks heteronormative culture and binary thinking (Nash, 2011)
Sexual	• Spaces that provide opportunities and potential for sexual encounters (Formby, 2017) • Spaces that are sexual in nature and whose energy and structure lends to cruising, intimacy and sex (Betsky, 1997) • Spaces that are sensual, "designed for seduction" and offer pleasure, "spectacle, consumption, dance and obscenity" (Betsky, 1997, p. 5)
Transgressive	• Spaces that are unconventional, at odds with the dominant, stable and heteronormative environment, that challenge the status quo and subvert the norm (D'Aprile, 2022; Choquette, 2018; Moore, 2022; Pavka, 2020; Segalovich, 2022; Stone, 2020) • Spaces that are a conscious act of resistance to a world designed to confine or eradicate queerness (D'Aprile, 2022; Choquette, 2018) and offer the possibility of behaving differently (Pavka, 2020) • Spaces that facilitate activism and the possibility of social and political change (Formby, 2017)

Table 2: Queer space attributes

Why is queer space important?

Queer space continues to play a significant role in the city of Toronto and the lives of many of Toronto's queer-identifying population for a number of key reasons:

1. **Necessity:** Many queer people – especially migrants escaping oppression, youth, seniors, Black people and trans people – continue to be marginalized and need spaces to feel safe, accepted and free. Queer spaces function as protection, a support system, a welcoming symbol of queer pride, or a place where queer people can escape homophobia and feel prioritized (Moayeri, 2019; Nusser, 2010; Pavka, 2020).

2. **Demand:** 1 in 4 queer people attend queer-specific venues or events in their local communities at least once a month (Artz, 2021) – that's approximately 30,000 queer-identifying people in Toronto who regularly seek out queer spaces and community. These "difference-affirming" spaces generate feelings of affirmation and validation (Formby, 2017, p. 115).

3. **Symbolism:** Queer spaces offer symbolic significance and can help create a sense of belonging and inclusion "simply by being there" (Formby, 2017, p. 115).

4. **Community & Social Connectedness:** Queer spaces often form the basis of queer people's understanding of community and friendships, enabling connection and relationships and facilitating feelings of comfort and safety (Formby, 2017; Powers, 2019).

5. **Health:** community and mutual support are important to health and wellbeing. Queer people who reside in areas with more queer people have lower rates of depression and higher levels of self-esteem (Hess & Bitterman, 2021). Particularly in old age, feeling part of a community can have positive impacts on physical and mental health and quality of life (Formby, 2017).

The problem with queer space

Queer spaces, however, can be complex and paradoxical. While their intent is often to provide safety, comfort and acceptance, these spaces can also be dangerous, alienating and exclusionary (Formby, 2017).

In *Gay Bar: Why We Went Out*, author Jeremy Atherton Lin (2021) explores how queer spaces can create experiences and feelings that are simultaneously positive and negative, when he writes, "my self-awareness and sense of ease amplify concurrently. Twink, top, masc, queen, member of a throuple, tweaker, tourist, voyeur, exhibitionist, pee-shy, among friends, lonely, terrified of disease. In gay bars, I have been each of these things. I've found my identity affirmed and challenged. I have been tugged between isolation and camaraderie" (p. 34).

Through research, a few primary issues with queer space were identified:

1. **Overwhelming Whiteness**: Spaces within gay villages or "gayborhoods" can be overly structured around or targeted to white, gay, cis males (Caterall & Azzouz, n.d.; Vaccaro, 2021), often excluding women, people of colour or trans individuals. This exclusion can lead to people feeling marginalized from the rest of the queer (or gay) community and can prevent a needed sense of belonging and safety (Formby, 2017). Queer spaces can also "other" people with disabilities due to a lack of accessibility (Formby, 2017).

2. **Commercialization & Straight Appeal**: Many spaces are losing their queer

   sensibility through targeting, for commercial reasons, straight markets for events

   like drag brunches and bachelorette parties, forcing some queers to seek out

   other spaces to feel safe and comfortable (Gorman-Murray & Nash, 2017;

   Gorman-Murray & Nash, 2021; Branton & Compton, 2021). This focus can

   position queers as on display for straight observers (Bell & Binnie, 2004) and

   lead to a dilution or erosion of queer space, re-establishing heteronormativity in a

   space that was previously appropriated for queer purposes (Formby, 2017).

3. **Sex & Drugs**: Queer space can be sexualized and involve drug use. According

   to some research, the sexualization of queer space can lessen possibilities for

   community development and support (Formby, 2017). Some queer spaces can

   also be overly focused on youth and attractiveness and alienate older and other

   queer individuals in the process (Formby, 2017). Queers use more drugs than

   straight people, and this usage can sometimes lead to substance issues and

   dependency. According to research, drug use amongst queer people can be

   linked to an attempt to separate themselves from the heteronormativity of their

   daily lives, to escape unhappiness, to increase comfort or to align themselves

   with the social norms of some community spaces (Formby, 2017).

Where have all the queer spaces gone?

Queer spaces are closing all over the world. Since the mid-2000s, close to 60% of London's queer spaces have closed (Hoard, 2022) and almost 40% of gay bars in the United States (US) have shut down (Branton & Compton, 2021). In 2020, a fundraising campaign called the Lesbian Bar Project was launched to recognize that lesbian bars in the US are near extinction and to celebrate and support those that remain (Phillips, 2022). According to the Lesbian Bar Project (n.d.), while there were close to 200 lesbian bars in the US in the 1980s, there are now fewer than 30 (para. 1). In large and cosmopolitan cities like Barcelona, Berlin, San Francisco and Sydney, formerly lively gay neighbourhoods or "gaybourhoods" have experienced structural decline and some level of disappearance (Caterall & Azzouz, n.d.).

In Toronto, concern over the future of the Gay Village has been a topic of community-based and media conversation for almost 20 years. Between 2004 and 2014, more than 40 articles were published in the mainstream and gay press on the decline of the Village and alternative options for where and how queer people live (Gorman-Murray & Nash, 2021).

In 2014, ahead of Toronto's WorldPride, a planning study was released that established a vision for the future of the Village and strategies for additional support. The vision included eight pillars and focused on areas such as protecting the queer community, enhancing inclusion, providing a new cultural designation to the area and developing

new spaces and infrastructure to support residents and visitors (Gorman-Murray &

Nash, 2021). Despite efforts, businesses and spaces in the area continued to suffer. In

January 2020, Toronto's City Council adopted a motion to develop recommendations

that could help grow and retain queer small businesses and cultural spaces (Blackman,

2021). While recommendations were meant to be developed and shared over the last

couple of years, no public information is available on outcomes or additional measures

of support that have been put in place. Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the

519 and other Church-Wellesley Village businesses publicly expressed their need for

help to survive, seeking more assistance from all levels of government (Carlberg, 2020).

Disappearing?

Existing research on the disappearance of queer space tends to focus on five key

reasons:

1. Gentrification leading to rising property costs and rent expenses (Powers, 2019;
   Hoard, 2022)
   a. Commercial rent in Toronto increased by almost 40% in 2021 (Hoard,
      2022)
   b. Toronto's Village is losing space to condo developers (Hoard, 2022)
2. Technology changing the ways that queer people engage (Powers, 2019; 52,
   Hoard, 2022)

a. Dating and sex apps like Grindr, HER and Scruff have changed the way queer people meet for dates and to hook up, replacing connections once made primarily in bars and other spaces (Hoard, 2022)

3. Growing acceptance of queer culture lessening the need for queer-specific spaces and leading to increased population dispersal (Powers, 2019; Branton & Compton, 2021)

   a. Younger generations of queer people are more interested in "cooler," more diverse neighbourhoods and entertainment spaces (Moayeri, 2019)

4. COVID-19 business disruptions disproportionately affecting queer spaces (Hoard, 2022; Branton & Compton, 2021; Adamopoulos, 2021)

5. Many queer spaces once targeted towards cis, white, gay men no longer meeting the needs of an increasingly intersectional and diverse community (Wilson, 2021; Adamopoulos, 2021)

Causal Loop Diagrams are a common systems tool and a simplified map of the connections in a system of cause-and-effect relationships (Wardman, 2016). Leveraging Causal Loop Diagrams, disappearing queer spaces – in Toronto and elsewhere – can be represented by a set of reinforcing loops – loops that strengthen the direction of change (Wardman, 2016) - with the COVID-19 pandemic accelerating movement and impact within the entire system:
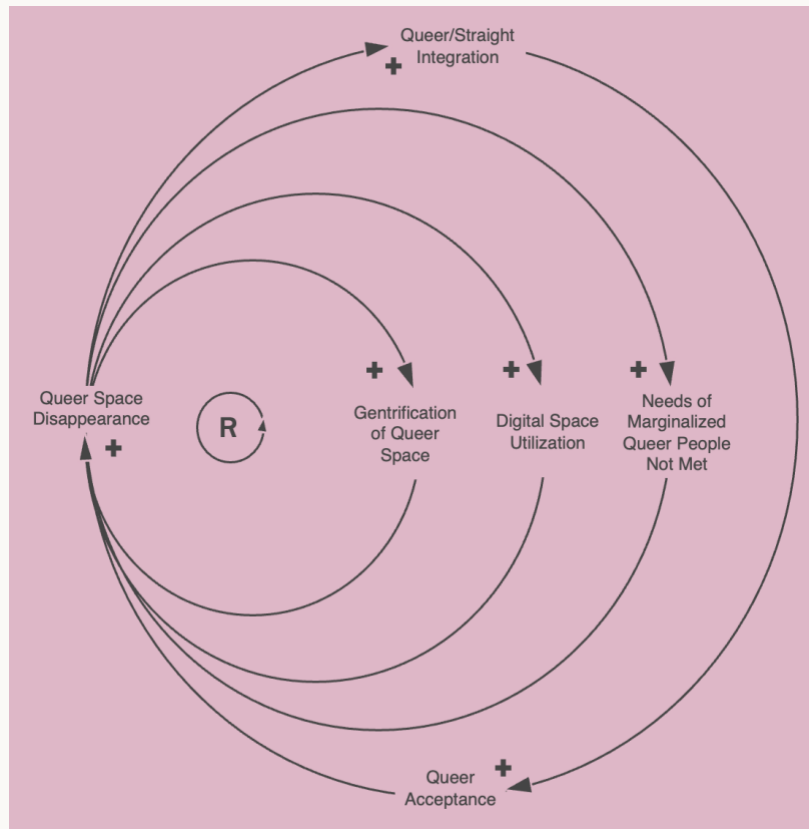
Figure 1: Disappearing spaces causal loop diagram

As queer spaces disappear, the system propagates (1) additional gentrification, (2) queers dispersing or seeking different types of space, and (3) queers leveraging technology as an alternative to physical space, which in turn all lead to additional queer space closure and disappearance.

Or changing?

On the other hand, some may argue that queer spaces aren't disappearing, but simply changing. Another reinforcing causal loop diagram can represent a different interpretation of the system surrounding queer space where queer spaces change and

take on new forms and meanings as the needs of different communities and groups of people are not met by former spaces:
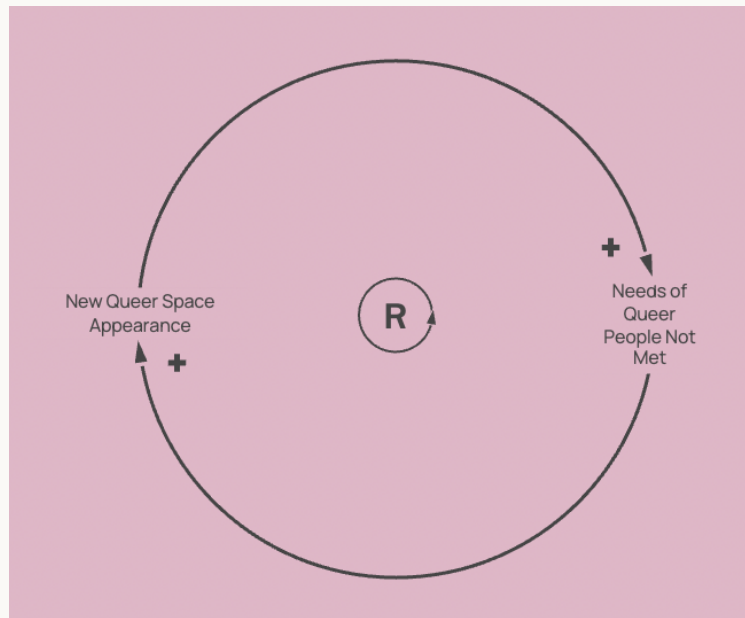
Figure 2: Changing spaces causal loop diagram

To add context to this system interpretation, temporary spaces or "pop-ups" have been filling the void of disappearing queer bars for years now (Hess & Bitterman, 2021). While non-permanent, these spaces have a similar potential to fixed spaces for community building and self-exploration (Hess & Bitterman, 2021). They also better serve and create experiences for queer community members who were previously underrepresented by other fixed establishments. These roving queer spaces often take place in atypical venues, from parks, empty warehouses and commercial spaces to cultural and community centres (Abraham, 2019).

Similarly, queer population clusters have been forming outside of traditional gay neighbourhoods, and inclusive businesses and infrastructure have developed locally to support the needs of residents. These neighbourhoods are more attractive and

perceived as more supportive to an expansive range of sexual and gender identities than traditional gay villages (Gorman-Murray & Nash, 2017). In Toronto, these emerging queer neighbourhoods exist on both sides of the city and include areas such as Queen West, Parkdale and Leslieville (Gorman-Murray & Nash, 2021). In some respects, these alternative queer neighbourhoods form a networked relationship with traditional gay villages, positioning the village as a "hub" that queer people may orbit or support from outside or a repository of history and memory that provides ongoing inspiration for queer communities (Hess & Bitterman, 2021; Gorman-Murray & Nash, 2021).

Digital and hybrid spaces

A debate focused on the impact of social media and other new digital technologies on physical place and community continues (Drushel, 2019). These technologies are transforming cities and how individuals engage with other people and space (Gorman-Murray & Nash, 2016). In the queer community, many believe that online or virtual communities are now larger than their offline, physical counterparts (Formby, 2017). Some feel that technology and networking apps are the cause of the disappearance of queer spaces, while others believe these virtual communities complement and enhance existing forms of networking and community (Formby, 2017). The latter opinion positions online communities more as a response to the demand for community and relationships that has followed the decline of queer spaces and neighbourhoods (Drushel, 2019). What is clear is that physical and digital spaces are intertwined and that conceptualizing physical queer places in the future requires understanding how technology will impact and shape the world in which queer people live (Gorman-Murray & Nash, 2016). To this point, the concept of hybrid space is focused on the holistic and complementary relationship between virtual and physical space (Gorman-Murray & Nash, 2016). Hybrid space offers the potential for any physical space to take on queer meaning and experience (Hess & Bitterman, 2021) and for queer virtual and physical spaces to exist harmoniously and support each other (Hess & Bitterman, 2021). The anonymity of the internet can also offer a space for self-exploration and information-sharing that is distinct from physical space. For queer people exploring gender identity, for example, digital space can allow for gender embodiment and learning opportunities

that do not exist in the offline world (Formby, 2017). The internet also creates a safe space for people to "come out" and develop their own identity (Formby, 2017). For these reasons, queer people are often early adopters of new technologies (Formby, 2017).

The future of queer digital and hybrid space is still very much unknown. It's unclear whether physical queer spaces can effectively exist alongside virtual and mixed realities and other metaverse spaces. Or whether digital worlds can develop into truly productive spaces for queer people to develop identity and form connections with other queer people. What is clear is that digital spaces are not a passing trend and that the focus must be on how these spaces can integrate with the offline world (Hess & Bitterman, 2021; Stone, 2022).

A population profile of Toronto
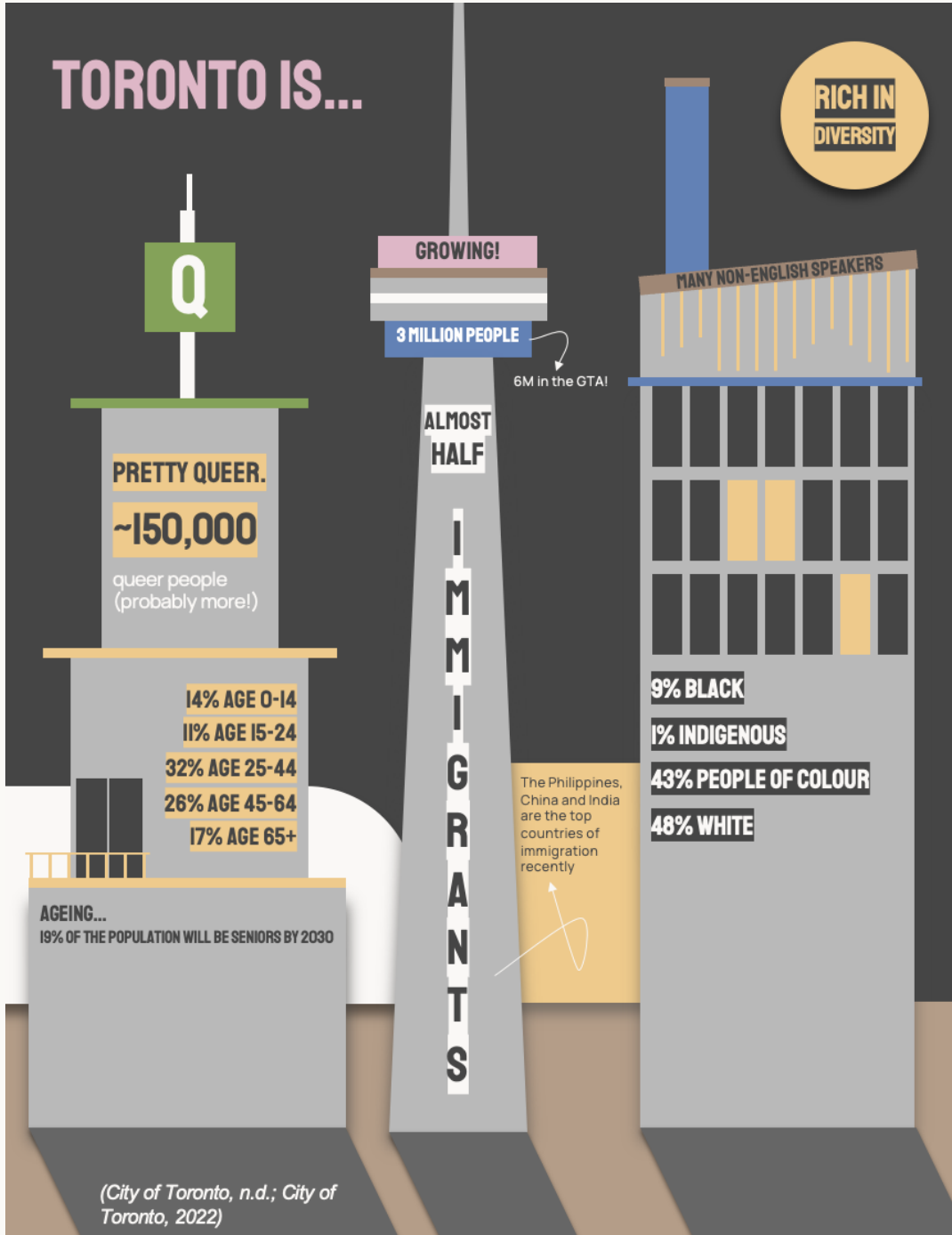
Figure 3: A population profile

A brief history of Toronto queer spaces

The origin, development and evolution of queer spaces in Toronto, presented alongside key moments of queer Canadian history, offers a basis of understanding and context and establishes trends and patterns for how these spaces and communities have developed over time. Queer spaces in Toronto began as public spaces for predominantly male cruising and same-sex sexual encounters and evolved in the 1950s and 1960s to include bars and nightclubs along Yonge Street frequented by gays and lesbians. In the 1960s, gay residential concentrations formed around this downtown city neighbourhood, which some attributed to new apartment buildings at the time that featured studio and one-bedroom apartments, some of the first in the city with floor plans that catered to the single and childless (Moayeri, 2019). As time passed, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, more queer spaces opened and shifted to Church Street and Toronto's gay Village was formed (Moayeri, 2019). Located in Toronto's downtown, the Village developed around the intersection of Church and Wellesley streets, as a hub for nightlife, social organizations and government-funded programs and services (Gorman-Murray & Nash, 2016). For many years, Toronto's queer community gathered, connected and organized in this popular and symbolic neighbourhood. But in the early 2000s, queer spaces began to appear in other Toronto areas, particularly along Queen Street West, and initial concerns were voiced about the Village's decline (Gorman-Murray & Nash, 2016). Some of Toronto's most important, iconic and infamous queer spaces are presented chronologically below:

1841
Canadian Criminal Code imposes the death penalty for all persons engaging in same-sex sexual relationships (Canadian Centre for Gender + Sexual Diversity, 2018).

1869
"Buggery" is no longer punishable by death in Canada, replaced instead by a maximum punishment of life in prison (Canadian Centre for Gender + Sexual Diversity, 2018).

1890s
Allan Gardens becomes a popular cruising ground for men seeking same-sex encounters (Chambers et al., 2017).

1950s
Queer night life emerges with the Halloween drag balls at Letros's Nile Room and the Continental, a popular hangout for lesbians (Chambers et al., 2017).

1. THE CONTINENTAL (1950s-1972) | Queered: 1950s
An infamous bar in a rough neighbourhood that brought together two marginalized communities isolated from the rest of conservative Toronto: queer women and male Chinese immigrants. The Continental offered a refuge for both, with a separate women-only area frequented by lesbians and sex workers (Larocque, 2020; Romanska, 2021).

2. ST. CHARLES TAVERN (1951-1987) | Queered: 1960s
A popular bar for primarily gay men for almost 20 years, gaining notoriety for its annual Halloween Balls for drag queens and "female impersonators" in the 1970s. The bar's menu featured the phrase, "Meet me under the clock," an expression well known amongst the gay community at the time. The clocktower still stands and is one of the most iconic visible representations of Toronto's queer history (The ArQuives, n.d.; Hutchison, 2021a).

3. THE MUSIC ROOM (1962-1966) | Queered: 1962
One of Toronto's original "after hours gay clubs" featuring dancing and drag shows. Its co-owners were fixtures in Toronto's queer community and were known to be extremely supportive of their queer clientele. For example, they would raise funds for any charges brought forward to patrons by the police (Hutchison, 2021b).

1967
Jackie Shane, a pioneering transgender performer and a prominent figure in Toronto's R&B scene, records her live album at the Saphire Tavern including a performance of her hit song "Any Other Way" (Chambers et al., 2017).

4. GLAD DAY BOOKSHOP (1970-Present) | Queered: 1970
Opened in 1970 by Jearld Moldenhauer, Glad Day is Canada's first queer bookstore and now the oldest surviving queer bookstore in North America, offering a wide selection of queer literature. The bookstore originally operated out of Moldenhauer's apartment, which also served as the original offices of the Body Politic, one of Canada's first gay publications. Glad Day has changed locations three times, and it moved to its current location on Church Street in 2016 (Glad Day Bookshop, n.d.; Glad Day Bookshop, 2022).

1969
Homosexual acts are decriminalized in Canada (Queer History Timeline, n.d.).

5. HANLAN'S POINT (1862-Present) | Queered: 1971
A popular resort community for summer cottagers in the mid-1800s, including the Hanlan family who settled there in 1862 and then later converted their property into a hotel. Part of the beach was designated clothing optional as early as the late 1800s and has remained a popular destination for nudists since. By the 1970s, Hanlan's Point Beach had become known as a gay-friendly hangout spot and was also the site for some of the earliest pride celebrations in Toronto (Turner, 2021).

1970s

Annual queer-bashing ritual takes place outside the St. Charles Tavern on Yonge Street every October 31 (Chambers et al., 2017).

1972

The first unofficial Pride march in Toronto takes place from Nathan Phillips Square to Queen's Park (DiMatteo et al, 2021).

1974

Four lesbians perform the song "I Enjoy Being A Dyke" at the Brunswick Tavern in Toronto and are arrested after refusing to leave the bar (Canadian Centre for Gender + Sexual Diversity, 2018; Queer History Timeline, n.d.).

1981

As part of "Operation Soap," Toronto police raid four gay bathhouses in the city and arrest close to 300 men – one of the largest mass arrests in Canadian history. The event is now considered one of Canada's critical moments in queer rights mobilization (Canadian Centre for Gender + Sexual Diversity, 2018; DiMatteo et al, 2021; Queer History Timeline, n.d.).

6. THE ARQUIVES (1973-Present) | Queered: 1973

A Canadian non-profit organization, founded as the Canadian Gay Liberation Movement Archives. The ArQuives acquires, preserves and provides public access to material and information by and about queer people in Canada. Founded out of the Body Politic newspaper collection and beginning as a small reference collection co-housed with Pink Triangle Press, its mandate is to safeguard the queer history of Canada. The ArQuives' current location at 34 Isabella Street was renovated and re-opened in 2009 and includes a reading room, rare book library, offices, AV room and gallery space for exhibitions (The ArQuives, n.d.).

7. METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH (1973-Present) | Queered: 1973

An inclusive congregation of the worldwide Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) that openly affirms and supports queer people. MCC Toronto has the most members out of all Metropolitan Community Church congregations and now congregates in alternate larger locations for popular services on Christmas Eve and Pride. Committed to social justice and human rights, MCC Toronto was instrumental in helping to change the law on same sex marriage in Ontario (Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto, 2022; MCC Toronto, n.d.).

8. THE 519 (1975-Present) | Queered: 1970s

A non-profit organization and community centre operating in the heart of the Church and Wellesley Village. As an agency of the City of Toronto, the 519's programming is controlled by the community through a volunteer board of directors and includes 12-step meetings, improv workshops, prayer groups and more. For over 35 years, the 519 has been working with local residents, the houseless and the queer community to build "healthy, welcoming spaces to meet, participate and celebrate together." In 2010, a modern renovation was completed that increased event space at the 519 by almost 50% (The 519, 2022; Balkissoon, 2018).

9. BUDDIES IN BAD TIMES (1979-Present) | Queered: 1979

Founded by Sky Gilbert and two friends, Buddies achieved success in the 1980s as a queer theatre company, growing to become the largest and longest-running queer theatre company in the world. After spending over a decade without a fixed location, Buddies moved into its first home at 142 George Street in 1991. In 1994, Buddies moved into its current home in the Toronto Village. Gilbert said in a 1989 interview, "Buddies is not about assimilation and never has been about glossing over the differences between gays and straights. We are interested in life on the edge, the avant-garde, forbidden territory." (Buddies In Bad Times, n.d.).

1981

Unusually high rates of rare diseases in young gay men are reported, initially referred to as GRID (Gay-Related Immune Deficiency), but later renamed AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) (Canadian Centre for Gender + Sexual Diversity, 2018).

EARLY 1980s

Toronto's Village emerges as a centre for the queer community and provides new opportunities for support, organization, protest and entertainment.

1988

Activists hold a public meeting at a Toronto high school, demanding better health care and access to medication for patients with HIV (Canadian Centre for Gender + Sexual Diversity, 2018).

1995

Ruled by the Supreme Court of Canada, sexual orientation is included in Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Queer History Timeline, n.d.).

2000

Queer culture and nightlife begins to move outside of the bounds of the Village, with the launch of events such as Vazaleen (Chambers et al, 2017). Male Toronto police officers raid an all-woman queer and trans event known as the "Pussy Palace" (Queer History Timeline, n.d.).

10. THE STEPS (1980s-early 2000s) | Queered: 1980s

The stoop at the Second Cup Café franchise on the corner of Church and Wellesley emerged organically as "The Steps" (also known affectionately as the Suction Cup, the Second Slut, or Last Chance Café), an important social gathering place to many Toronto queers of the 1980s and 1990s. The Steps were amongst the first publicly visible spaces for queer people to gather in the City and the place queer visitors seeking community would come to see first when visiting Toronto. Building management bricked up this important public queer space in the early 2000s due to "loitering" (Chambers et al, 2017; Idlewild, 2016).

11. WOODY'S (1989-present) | Queered: 1989

A landmark, unassuming bar in the Village and a popular destination for queer (primarily gay) tourists visiting the city. The bar is known for its "best" competitions hosted by local drag queens, including "best chest" and "best ass." At one point in the 90s, Woody's was so popular it was selling the third highest amount of beer of any establishment in Ontario. Long-time general manager Dean Odorico has said, "In those days, gay bars were like the epicentre of the community. That's where you met guys, and that's where you met friends." (Larocque, 2014; Woody's, 2022).

12. SLACK ALICE (1997-2013) | Queered: 2013

Rebranded as Slack's before its eventual demise, this laid-back bar filled an important gap in the village by becoming its trademark – and only permanent – women-focused bar. Since it closed more than 10 years ago, the Village has not been home to any spaces targeted at women (Abernethy, 2020; Lenti, 2013).

13. PUSSY PALACE (1998-2000) | Queered: 1998

The first Toronto Women's Bathhouse event ever, run by the Toronto Women's Bathhouse Committee for cis and trans women and trans men. These bathhouse parties featured BDSM and sex rooms, nudity, hot tubs and pool lounging, creating new and innovative space for an underrepresented community. The final "2000 Pussies" event in 2000 was raided by police (Sismondo, 2022; Taylor & Powell, 2019).

2009 & 2010

Toronto's first Trans March happens in response to Pride's lack of organizing efforts for the trans community (Queer History Timeline, n.d.). The first Take Back The Dyke March is organized in protest to give lesbians more space in Pride celebrations (DiMatteo et al, 2021).

2016

Black Lives Matter Toronto halt the Pride parade in protest to address anti-blackness in the queer community (DiMatteo et al, 2021; Queer History Timeline, n.d.).

14. THE BEAVER (2006-2020) | Queered: 2006

A beloved and inclusive queer bar founded by late queer scene promoter and artist Will Munro and Lynn MacNeil. It was the first – and when it closed in 2020, only – queer bar on Toronto's west side, offering optionality for queers looking for nightlife and entertainment outside of the Village. Munro was instrumental in changing Toronto's queer scene by creating club nights, such as Vazaleen, and creating this special space for all kinds of queer people and many different DJs and performers (Knegt, 2020; Ritchie, 2020).

15. BLOCKORAMA (2009-Present) | Queered: 2009

An essential – and the first – Toronto queer space at Pride created by and for queer and trans Black people. Blockorama has evolved into an all-day dance party and stage during Pride to celebrate Black queer and trans history, creativity and activism. Jamea Suberi, a Trinidadian lesbian, feminist, educator and activist, co-created the space to address the lack of representation of people of colour at Pride. For many years, Blockorama has been deprioritized and underfunded, and the organizers have fought to keep the space a visible, inclusive and safe space for the Black queer community at Pride (Queer Events, n.d.).

Figure 4: Toronto queer space history

Toronto queer space actors map

To better understand the queer space landscape in Toronto, key stakeholders operating within the broader system were identified and placed on an actors map. An actors map is a visual depiction of the key organizations and/or individuals that make up a system, including those are affected by the system as well as those who influence the system (FSG, n.d.). By mapping these stakeholders relative to power and knowledge, a clearer visualization of connections, relationships and power dynamics emerged:

- **USER:** At the queer space user-level, knowledge is highest amongst those queer community members who are most involved in programs, services and community organizations, while power is highest amongst the large population of straight people who are now regularly attending queer spaces and events for entertainment.

- **ORGANIZATION:** At the organization-level, knowledge and power is concentrated more with digital and temporary queer space creators and businesses who identify as "queer-friendly" vs. the owners and managers of fixed, physical spaces that are on the decline.

- **ECOSYSTEM:** Pride Toronto, as an ecosystem actor, holds considerable power and knowledge relative to some other community stakeholders and organizations, and City departments and organizations, while powerful, have significantly less knowledge.

- **SOCIETY:** Provincial and federal government actors continue to hold significant power in the queer space ecosystem, but corporate and technology sector

stakeholders have emerging knowledge and power with the potential to disrupt the system and enact change.

For reference, and to expand on insights above, actors in the queer space system are mapped across different stakeholder levels and relative to knowledge and power below:
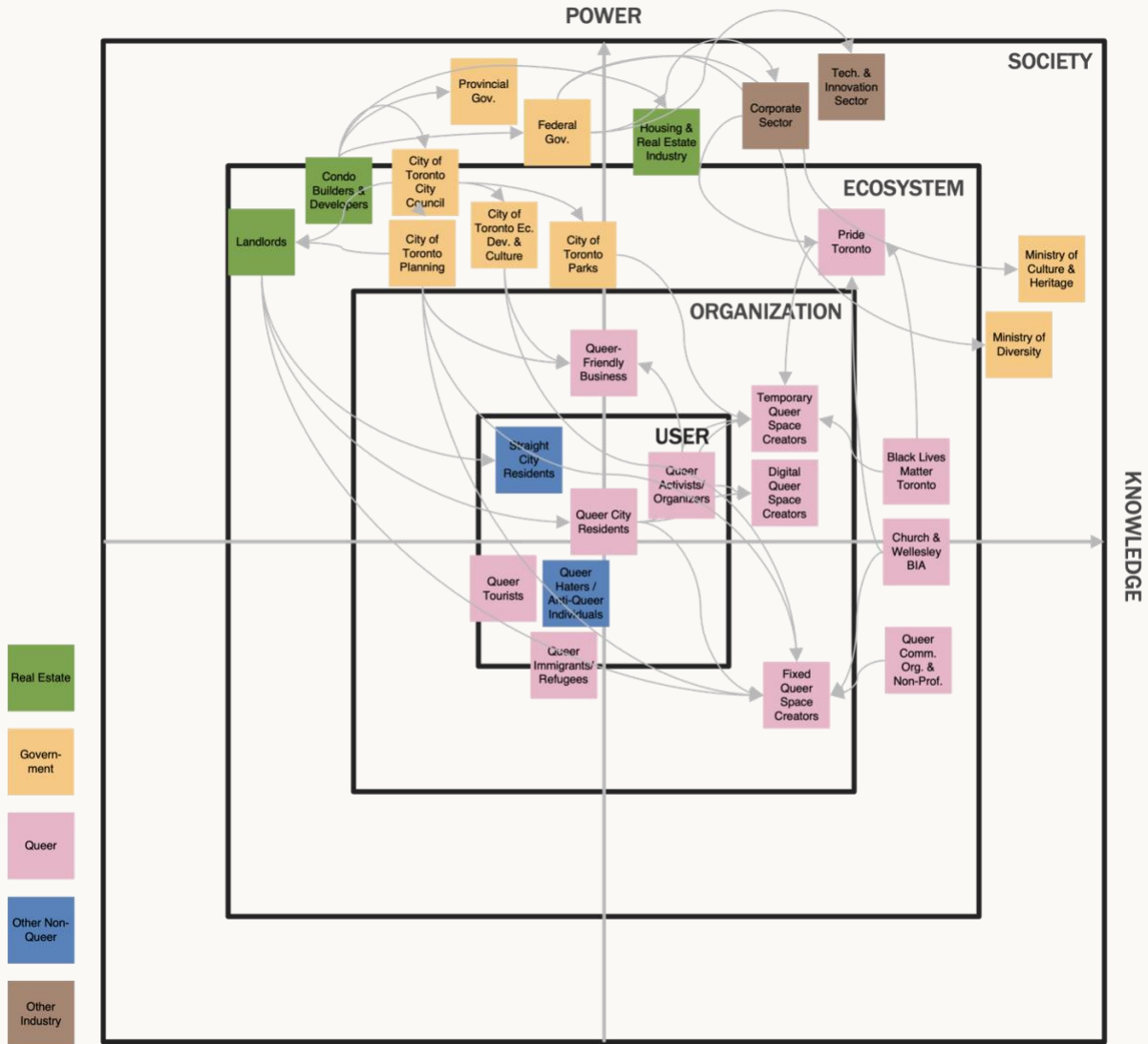
Figure 5: Toronto queer space actors map

Section 2: Emerging trends, spaces & perspectives

Timeline for exploration

Strategic foresight uses ideas about the future to anticipate change. It is about exploring different possible futures and the opportunities that exist within each of those worlds to inform decisions and strategies (OECD, n.d.). In other words, strategic foresight offers the potential to shape the future. Thinking of and imagining the future is not only important to foresight practices, but for queer theory rooted in utopianism as well. "Queerness," according to José Esteban Muñoz (2019), "is not yet here; thus, we must always be future bound in our desires and designs" (p. 185). Accordingly, the research that follows is immersed in the year 2043, twenty years from today. 2043 is close enough to exist on the horizon, but far enough away, in the words of Muñoz, to reject the "here and now and [insist] on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world" (p. 1). As a timeline for futures exploration, 2043 also sits chronologically between several relevant projections and goals that have the potential to shape the future of queer space. These future-oriented milestones are depicted in the illustration that follows:

Following Mayor John Tory's resignation, Toronto Mayoral election.

Queer time machine

2023

2023

2023

2025

Canadian recession, weakened economy and increased unemployment rate (Otis, 2022).

Federal election where polls have the Conservative party defeating the Liberals (The Canadian Press, 2022).

Planned achievement date of the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, n.d.).

Planned achievement date of Toronto's goal to be "a city with opportunities for all: a leader in the collective pursuit of justice, fairness and equity" (City of Toronto, 2017).

2030

2035

1-in-5 American voters "will be LGBTQ" (Fernandez, 2022).

2040

Ontario's population to grow by more than 25% reaching approximately 19 million in a medium growth scenario (Statistics Canada, 2022).

2043

2043

→ **2045-46:** 89% of Ontario's population growth to come from immigration (Province of Ontario, 2020).

→ **2050:** 68% of the global population will live in urban centres (United Nations, 2018).

→ **2050:** Canada's commitment to have net-zero carbon emissions (Government of Canada, n.d.).

→ **2068:** Canada's current population could close to double with seniors making up 30% of the total (Statistics Canada, 2019).

Figure 6: Timeline for exploration

External scan: trends

After identifying a timeline to set the futures research, a high-level STEEP+V scan was conducted on secondary research sources to identify key trends that are relevant and impactful to the futures of queer space. The STEEP+V scan represents trends assigned to the following categories (Saritas & Proskuryakova, 2017):

- Social - trends that focus on ways of living or different lifestyles and demographic structures
- Technology - trends that focus on technological progress, innovation, problems with technology including privacy and security
- Environment - trends that focus on sustainability, climate change, pollution, resource depletion, biodiversity
- Economy - trends that focus on economic growth, industrial structures, competition, markets and financial issues
- Politics - trends that focus on political perspectives, instability, regulation, political action or parties
- Values - trends that focus on attitudes or preferences associated with work, culture, leisure

A STEEP+V scan is a common futures framework for simple scanning and external environment analysis (Foresight University, n.d.). The trends identified through the scan were extrapolated for the year 2043 and used to build out more immersive futures

scenarios. These trends are categorized and briefly described with information that indicate the trend's presence or potential below:

Social

Fluidity in the Water

Gender and sexual identity are undergoing a sea change, as an increasing number of people are no longer identifying with typical labels. Some say they aren't a man or woman, gay or straight, but perhaps neither or maybe both, and sometimes something different tomorrow than they were today or yesterday (Steinmetz, 2017). 20% of millennials identify as something other than straight or cisgender, compared with 7% of boomers (Steinmetz, 2017).

Off the Sauce

Alcohol consumption in younger generations is decreasing due to changing values and priorities (Ellen, 2022). Older people are most likely to drink, while people ages 16-24 are least likely to drink, with 26% of that age group fully sober (Ellen, 2022).

Forever Young (Sort Of)

Demand for plastic surgery continues to grow as procedures become less invasive, more advanced and affordable. Soon stem cell technology will be used to regenerate cells and tissues that restore bodily form and function. Treatments are being developed to significantly slow down the appearance of aging (North Downs Hospital, n.d.). 75% of

plastic surgery clinics have seen an increase in business compared to pre-2020 levels with almost 30% saying their business has doubled (Pratt, 2022).

Creature of Cohabit

Co-living involves several unrelated individuals sharing a living space - often with private bedrooms and shared common spaces. These communities have emerged primarily in response to unaffordable housing (CBRE & Streetsense, 2020). Many young people in expensive cities including Toronto are opting for creative use of shared spaces. In 2015, there were very few co-living properties in the US, but as of 2019, there were more than 5k beds in ~150 co-living communities with plans to open more than 50k beds and hundreds of millions of dollars of equity in place to meet expansion targets (CBRE & Streetsense, 2020).

You Must Be Trippin'

The use of hallucinogens, including classic psychedelics such as LSD and psilocybin ("magic mushrooms") are gaining in popularity amongst younger people. Some people are also turning to psilocybin for medicinal reasons (Livne et al, 2022; Matzopoulos et al, 2022). Hallucinogen use increased from 4.69 million to 6.01 million between 2015 and 2019, including a 60% increase in LSD and a 95% increase in other unspecified hallucinogens, a category that included mescaline and psilocybin (Matzopoulos et al, 2022).

The Loves of My Life

More people are embracing polyamory, the idea of loving and having a relationship with more than one person at a time (Zane, 2019). ~5% of Americans are estimated to be polyamorous, with these numbers likely to increase. Only half of millennials want a monogamous relationship (Zane, 2019).

Technology

Reality Bites

Mixed reality wearable technology allows users to interact with virtual elements in the real world. Mixed reality is the merging of a real-world environment with a virtual world. In mixed reality, real and virtual elements interact with one another (Marr, 2021). The augmented reality and virtual reality market was valued at USD 2,094 billion in 2021 and is expected to reach the value of USD 13,934 billion by 2029, at a CAGR of 69% (Data Bridge Market Research, 2022).

Man Meets Machine

Bioengineering combines engineering principles with sciences to design and create biological systems and biomedical technologies, such as engineered bacteria and tissue engineered organs (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). Employment of bioengineering professionals is projected to grow 10% from 2021 to 2031, faster than the average for all occupations (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022).

The Bots are Coming!

Conversational AI bots are becoming the norm at home and in the workplace. In 2022, the emergence of ChatGPT and other AI products disrupted the workplace and educational sector. Bots are becoming increasingly intelligent, building new skills, increasing productivity and retention rates, and developing their own personalities (Clark, 2021; McNeal, 2015). It is predicted that 80% of the US workforce could have 10% of their work affected by this type of technology and almost 20% of jobs would have half of their work accountability at risk or replaced (Estrada, 2023).

DIY

Self-service development is focused on offering consumers the tools and information to complete tasks independently and have a better experience with a product or a service (T, 2021). The global self-service market accounted for USD 15.70 billion in 2015 and was expected to reach USD 37.75 billion by 2021, growing at a CAGR of over 15% between 2016 to 2021 (T, 2021).

Asleep at the Wheel

There has been an increased adoption of artificial intelligence in the research and development practices of the automobile and transportation industry, with many safety and other potential benefits already being realized by users (Precedence Research, 2022). AI in transportation market size is projected to surpass USD 14.79 billion by 2030, growing at a CAGR of 22.97% during the period 2022 to 2030 (Precedence Research, 2022).

Environment

It's Getting Easier to Be Green

Cities are being redesigned with more green and public spaces and fully-serviced neighbourhoods with amenities located within a 15-minute walking or cycling distance (Antunes et al, 2021). The 15-minute city trend has grown in recent years, with cities like Paris, Melbourne, Sydney, and Vancouver, exploring ways to introduce the concept within their neighbourhoods (Johnson, 2023).

Without a (Carbon) Trace

Younger people are showing a sense of responsibility for the way they travel and a willingness to alter their tourism decisions to reduce their carbon footprint and protect the environment (Globetrender, 2020). 44% of Gen Zs agree with the statement "I think a lot about the environmental impact of my travel." 65% would consider taking a train instead of a plane to reduce their carbon footprint (Globetrender, 2020).

Economy

Bring It Home

Companies and governments are focused on strengthening their at-home supply chains as a result of shipping gridlock and supply-chain disruptions due to fractured trade relations and pandemic interruptions to manufacturing and development (Goldman Sachs, 2022). Share of sentences in earnings calls that include references to reshoring,

nearshoring and backshoring supply chains increased from 1 to 9 on a tracking index (Goldman Sachs, 2022).

Nostalgic Escapism

Nostalgic escapism has increased in popularity in recent years, with some claiming that consuming nostalgic media (including music, movies, television, books and video games) helps people escape the turbulence of a more challenging everyday life. Nostalgia allows consumers to take a break from the present (Zahair, 2022). More than 50% of consumers find comfort in old TV shows, films and songs from their youth (Wilkinson, 2021).

Dining Dynamics

Ghost kitchens are physical spaces for modern restaurateurs to create food for off-premises consumption without staff or tables required for customers. They are a low cost, low risk alternative to opening a brick-and-mortar restaurant and allow restauraneurs to expand into multiple locations with minimal upfront investment (CloudKitchens, 2022). In the US, 51% of restaurateurs have already shifted to ghost kitchens or virtual kitchens. Online food ordering has grown 300% faster than traditional dining (CloudKitchens, 2022).

I Subscribe to That

The demand for subscription e-commerce has increased due to the convenience and instant gratification the service model offers. Subscriptions provide an affordable way for consumers to access what they want when they want it (Wertz, 2022). The subscription

e-commerce market size is expected to increase from $73 billion in 2021 to $904 billion by 2026 (Wertz, 2022).

Politics

We're All In This Together

More municipal governments are using city residents to collaboratively design and participate in development, zoning and planning projects (Antunes et al, 2021). Many platforms and tools have been developed for cities to amplify the voices of residents and allow them to collaborate with city staff and officials (e.g., Civy, CitizenLab, Civocracy). 44% of 167 cities in a survey engaged citizens in municipal matters through some form (Appleton, 2020).

Rise of the Independents

The share of voters who identify as independent continues to rise and, as a result, political systems are becoming more unpredictable and less effective. An increase in independents has also led to more extreme views in core party platforms leading to a decline in support from centrist voters (Fosler & Zuroski, 2022). For conservative voters in the 2022 Ontario provincial election, the New Blue Party and the Ontario Party gained traction and provided additional options for far-right voters disillusioned with their traditional mainstream political party choice (Passifiume, 2022).

Big Brother is Watching You

More cities are leveraging AI technologies to surveil citizens, ensuring their safety and security while raising questions of privacy (Antunes et al, 2021). AI surveillance technology is spreading at a faster rate than expected: 75/176 countries are actively using AI technologies for surveillance purposes (Feldstein, 2019).

Values

Children Are Not The Future

A rising share of people are saying they are unlikely to ever have children, with reasons ranging from general disinterest to concerns about climate change (Brown, 2021). More than 40% of non-parents ages 18 to 49 say it is unlikely that they will have children, an increase from the 37% in the 2018 survey (Brown, 2021).

Wellness Obsessive Compulsion

The world is fixated on wellness: from self-help and mental wellness apps to wellness-focused vacation packages to companies having to introduce workplace health and wellbeing programs for their employees to stay competitive (Tyler, 2017). The global wellness industry is worth an incredible $3.7 trillion and is rapidly increasing (Tyler, 2017).

Primary research approach

Nine semi-structured interviews were conducted with Toronto queer space innovators, experts and community builders in November 2022. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative research method that combines a set of standard questions with the opportunity for the researcher to go deeper into particular themes or responses (Barclay, 2018). These interviews complemented existing research on Toronto and local queer spaces with a focus on emerging queer spaces and perspectives. Interview participants were identified through secondary research including a Toronto queer space literature review, social media including Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn, as well as queer space websites, message boards and other online forums. All interview participants were past or current queer space creators, managers, innovators or queer community builders or had deep academic expertise in an adjacent field of study. The nine interview participants were 16+ years old and identified as a member of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ or queer community in Toronto, the Greater Toronto Area or the province of Ontario. Interviews were conducted virtually for one hour through Microsoft Teams and focused on the following key areas and questions:

1. Who are you?
2. What do you do?
3. Why is this work important to you?
4. Are queer spaces at risk of disappearing in Toronto? Why or why Not?
5. Will queer space continue to be important in the future?
6. What does the future of queer space in Toronto look like?

7. What recommendations do you have to support the creation, adaption, or preservation of queer spaces in the future?

In addition to semi-structured interviews, an online future journaling exercise was deployed through Typeform, an online survey and forms provider. Diary or journal study is a research method that offers contextual understanding of user behaviours and experiences over time through collecting qualitative data (Salazar, 2016). This method was selected to gather in depth insight and details from a potential day in the life of future queers. This exercise targeted input from 30-50, 16+ year-old individuals that identified as a member of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ or queer community in Toronto, the Greater Toronto Area or Ontario. Participants were recruited through an Instagram post that was then posted or shared through additional queer organization and queer influencer Instagram accounts. The screening process involved including inclusion criteria and requirements in the recruitment post as well as in the consent information that preceded the future journaling exercise. Participants were also asked to confirm demographic details that aligned to participation eligibility through the online form. The future journaling exercise, including application and outcomes, is explained more in Section 3.

Interview participants

A short biographical profile of each of the nine semi-structured interview participants, including relevant details of their experience creating, studying or working with Toronto queer spaces and communities, follows:

1. Alyy Patel (They/Them)

A gender-fluid community organizer and Ph.D. student researching queer South Asian women. Alyy is the executive director of the Queer South Asian Women's (QSAW) Network, a platform they started in 2019 aiming to enhance visibility and belongingness amongst the queer South Asian diaspora of sexually and gender-marginalized folks. The QSAW Network organizes online events for community building, advocacy, learning and development. Among their programming is the monthly Chai & Chill, an event that is uniquely themed each month and facilitated by a subject matter expert. Themes vary from creative workshops to the very popular speed friending, where up to 200 people are placed in rotating virtual rooms with prompts that help build friendships and community and make possible romantic connections. When Alyy and the QSAW Network soft-launched in August 2019, they were surprised by the immediate reaction and strong interest from the community. For the QSAW Network, it's been incredible to see a growing community of queer South Asian women and trans and non-binary folks come together over the last few years, creating and occupying space that never existed before.

2. Car Martin (They/Them)

A queer architect and part-time professor at George Brown. Car has lived in a number of North American cities, including Seattle and Detroit where they studied architecture. They have called Toronto home on and off for the last 20 years, spending their time working in architecture firms and nonprofit and community spaces and exploring creative independent projects. Car developed their own private independent practice called Cyan Station during the pandemic. Cyan Station is Car's outlet to explore and foster their personal values of symbiosis, collectivism and environmental justice. The intention behind Cyan Station is to build up a practice that collaborates with nonprofits, community spaces, individuals and small businesses in participatory projects. Cyan Station also allows Car to develop and invest time in understanding larger systems design and thinking, including how social and ecological systems can thrive and how interconnected variables influence each other. Car hopes to create more opportunities for queer and diverse practitioners to work with and learn from each other and share resources in a supportive environment and sustainable business ecosystem.

3. Eli Bawuah (He/Him)

A public engagement specialist with professional expertise and an educational background in planning and designing space. Early on in his career, Eli was inspired to explore and better understand the divergent spatial needs of different communities based on his own lived experiences of being half Filipino and half Ghanaian. He developed an interest in queer "spacemaking" while working on his Master of Planning degree, and his work is inspired by other Toronto queer spacemakers who existed before him. In his current role with the City of Toronto, Eli engages face-to-face with different Toronto communities to plan, design and develop parks and public space. Eli's team operates under a tiered community engagement model, and their mandate is centred around creating spaces that community members want to use and enjoy in their neighbourhoods. In his recent work, Eli is collaborating with Jay Pitter Placemaking to develop and execute the Little Jamaica Cultural Plan, the City's first-ever formal cultural district. In this project and every engagement, it's important to identify a community involvement strategy upfront and engage the community and stakeholders early on to establish and align on a vision. Without community engagement, studies and analysis alone cannot adequately define the unique needs of different communities and community members.

4. Mingus New (He/Him)

A Technical Community Manager at TikTok and queer space co-creator of Sqwish (2015+) and Club Quarantine (2020). Sqwish is a queer basketball club that started with

a few friends who identified a need for Toronto queer sports options and, over the last seven years, has evolved into a community organization complete with terms and agreements. Sqwish is a safe space for queer people who want to play non-aggressive basketball and who don't feel comfortable playing sports anywhere else. Club Quarantine, "the original online queer dance party," started the night of the first COVID-19 lockdown. Similar to Sqwish, Club Quarantine began as a group of friends filling a void in spaces for queers at a specific moment. However, what started as friends connecting, dancing and playing music over Zoom quickly evolved into a behemoth of an online virtual queer dance party with thousands of attendees and Instagram followers and featuring live performances by Charli XCX, Lady Gaga and Kim Petras. Club Quarantine benefited from a time when entertainment and culture publications had less to write about and musicians and DJs had fewer opportunities to make money and perform for their fans. In its early days, the party also helped many queers find fun, creativity, light and entertainment during a challenging and uncertain time.

5. Paniz Moayeri (She/Her)

An academic and Intern Architect working towards her license. A portion of Paniz's 2019 graduate thesis focused on the connection between space and queer heritage in the Iranian LGBTQ+ refugee community of Toronto. As an Iranian-Canadian, Paniz's interest in this research was partially inspired by questions she needed to answer for herself. Her research explores queer spaces as means through which queer heritage has been passed down through generations. As queerness is one of the few types of

marginalization that most often can't be taught by one's parents, queer people need to find their teachers, and often queer spaces play the role of classroom. But how does this work for refugees and asylum seekers, groups of people who are displaced, often homeless or incredibly traumatized? Paniz, through her work, examines case studies of refugees and asylum seekers and their relationships to queer spaces. While Paniz is resistant to the label of "expert" given the rapidly changing geopolitical climate and asylum system, her valuable research takes an extensive look into a part of Toronto's queer ecosystem that is often ignored or misunderstood.

6. Sammy Rawal (He/Him)

A digital artist, director, sometimes DJ and party promoter and queer space co-creator of Yes Yes Y'all (2008+). Prior to moving to Toronto, Sammy grew up in Vancouver and was part of the rave scene where there was more openness in terms of where gay men should go out, what they should listen to and who they should go out with. When Sammy moved to Toronto for university, he found that the Church-Wellesley Village was more alienating than inclusive and not a space he felt safe in. He started to explore queer experiences in different parts of the city. This exploration led him and four of his close friends from different backgrounds and sexual and gender identities to create Yes Yes Y'all, a space where people with very different lived experiences can be free and together and represent their authentic selves. Developing from a lineage of other queer hip hop parties and growing out of Toronto's west end queer nightlife scene, Yes Yes Y'all was created in response to the predominantly white-centric spaces and parties

available in the city and especially within the Church-Wellesley Village. The party's mandate has always been to offer a safe space for anyone and everyone—you can be gay, lesbian, trans, straight, whatever as long as you love the music and you want to dance and be free.

7. Scooter McCreight (He/Him)

A semi-retired DJ living in the woods. Queer space creator of multiple Toronto parties, including Cub Camp and most recently Camp Flirty (2020+), a small community and queer sanctuary three hours north of Toronto. Disappointed with the financial challenges and limitations to creating and operating queer space and nightlife in the city, Scooter escaped Toronto during COVID-19 and purchased a rural property to get closer to nature, find a creative outlet and push the boundaries of space. The concept for Camp Flirty was inspired by the Radical Faeries, a community movement in the US that seeks to redefine queer consciousness and explore genderqueer sensibilities. In its close to three years of existence, Camp Flirty has developed into a queer retreat and safe space for expression and creativity for groups of Scooter's friends. During these semi-regular gatherings, Camp Flirty has hosted up to 25 people, in addition to multiple friends during their sabbaticals, writing retreats or holidays.

8. Tania Morano (She/They)

A Business Development Strategist, longtime promoter of events targeted to queer women and queer space creator of Toastr (2012+). In the mid- to late 2000s, Church Street offered two spaces for women, which were always busy. There were a handful of promoters, and the market for women-focused events was strong. However, around 2013, both spaces closed, and the market for fixed spaces for women dried up. To provide queer women with a safe and fun space, Tania co-created Toastr, a monthly event that began in Toronto's east end and over the last decade has popped up in various locations across the city. Toastr's mandate is to create a beautifully executed and welcoming, warm, safe space for women. This job is rewarding, but sometimes challenging as each new venue, security staff member and bartender needs to be screened to ensure they understand and appreciate that the goal is fun, welcoming and safe spaces for queer women. Toastr's age demographic is the 27+ group and, to some younger promoters and queers, has a perception of being "the older women's party." This reputation doesn't bother Tania, however, who admits that Toastr can be a bit on the upscale side, and playfully mentioned that it is very unlikely that any of Toastr's guests risk being caught in the cross fire of "someone throwing a fucking fire extinguisher."

9. Winnie Luk (She/Her)

An accomplished Canadian queer organization professional, working within the community for 20 years as Director of Operations for Inside Out, Canada's largest queer film festival, and as Managing Director of Rainbow Railroad for close to four years.

Rainbow Railroad helps queer individuals around the world escape violence and persecution in their home countries. During Winnie's time at Rainbow Railroad, the team worked night and day to bring about 2,700 queer people around the world to safety. From 2018 to 2022, the organization had to scale quickly as budgets grew from $2.6M to about $8M and thousands of requests came in from individuals in danger. Winnie was also one of more than 20 community members who came together to purchase and save Glad Day Bookshop, the oldest surviving queer bookstore in North America. Each community member acquired a share of the business and over the last decade has helped to evolve Glad Day's business model into a community gathering space, café, restaurant and popular drag brunch locale. While the co-operative business model has come with challenges, Winnie and the team have managed to sustain a historic Toronto queer business despite the rising cost of real estate and a changing landscape.

Interview themes & insights

Overview

Nine key themes and insights emerged from the nine semi-structured interviews:

1. Queer space is critical. Now and in the future.

2. Toronto's fixed queer spaces exclude racialized queers, queer women, trans and non-binary people.

3. Fixed, temporary and digital space is needed to sustain a flourishing queer ecosystem in Toronto.

4. The Village offers enormous untapped potential for renewal.

5. More satellite queer spaces in growing and sprawling neighbourhoods will be needed.

6. The City of Toronto must do more to support the queer community.

7. For queer Toronto to thrive, we must have more affordable housing.

8. Queer space is becoming less about partying and alcohol consumption and more about community.

9. Queer culture is at risk.

Each key theme and insight will next be expanded upon in more detail, including direct quotes from semi-structured interview participants.

1. Queer space is critical. Now and in the future.

All interview participants agreed that queer space is important and most believed queer space will continue to play an important role for queer individuals in the future. Interview participants felt that queer space is and will be particularly important for those who are most marginalized: often women, trans, non-binary and racialized queers.

> *"I think the human condition is that everyone wants to feel loved and part of a community. And I think queer spaces are always going be that access point to finding your people. I think in that respect queer spaces are always going to be important."* - Sammy Rawal

Some interview participants acknowledged that spaces for queer men (specifically white and cis men) were less important today in relation to feelings of safety and belonging. Tania expressed that the lives of queer women have become easier and more accepted over the last twenty years, but that prioritizing the rights, safety and belonging of trans and racialized queers should be the primary focus moving forward. Car acknowledged the widening gap between queer individuals:

> *"As our world becomes more inequitable, the lives and experiences of queer individuals who don't have access to wealth are going to look very different from the lives and experiences of those who do. People who have intersectional and marginalized identities are going to be in a much more vulnerable position, and queer spaces will continue to be super important for them."* - Car Martin

Sammy expressed that the cultural climate for queers outside of the downtown core was much different and that spaces for these individuals to express themselves and live their lives authentically were very important.

Paniz identified that queer spaces were important means through which queer heritage was passed down through generations:

> *"Queerness is one of the few types of marginalization that your parents can't teach you how to operate in. Other forms of marginalization can be learned from context, but if you're a queer person, chances are you need to find teachers. Queer spaces are classrooms and they are crucial in passing down queer heritage."* - Paniz Moayeri

Interview participants acknowledged that creating safe queer spaces involves more than just posting a rainbow flag on the exterior of a business. However, some participants also identified that these symbols of inclusion could be very important and meaningful to people, particularly those new to Canada escaping persecution in their home countries.

2. Toronto's fixed queer spaces exclude racialized queers, queer women, trans and non-binary people.

All interview participants noted that women, trans, non-binary and racialized queers often feel excluded and deprioritized in fixed queer spaces in the city. Interview participants acknowledged the lack of queer spaces for racialized and other marginalized individuals and how most fixed queer spaces were targeted towards white,

cis, gay men. Many interview participants also shared personal experiences with discrimination and overt racism in Toronto's queer spaces, primarily in the Church-Wellesley Village:

> *"When I went to the Gay Village when I first moved to Toronto, I knew it wasn't for me. It was one of those weird things where on paper it was like this is your neighborhood. This is, like, your gay neighbourhood where you should feel like your authentic self. And I never felt that. I felt more alienated. It was like these predominantly white, gay male spaces that I didn't really feel comfortable in."* - Sammy Rawal

> *"There is a set pattern for a lot of queer South Asian women where we will enter into mainstream LGBTQ+ spaces and we feel like we don't belong. We will experience things like white lesbians othering us and making us feel like we aren't even gay. We're made to feel like we are a straight best friend in that space. If you're a fem-presenting brown person, you will often just get read as straight. Even if there are no overt comments made, you can tell by other people's attitudes and how they take up space around you that they don't think you belong. It's very exclusionary."* - Alyy Patel

> *"We often go to the Village because that is essentially our only choice of queer spaces. There are no other options really for us to go to. We face experiences of racism and discrimination, but we put ourselves through this because it's ultimately the only sort of "queer safe space" that we have. There's no choice."* - Eli Bawuah

Over the past 10+ years, this exclusion and discrimination have led to the exploration of other parts of the city and the creation of more temporary queer spaces that prioritize the experiences of women and racialized, trans and non-binary individuals. These transient, pop-up spaces strive to create safety, inclusion and belonging for the communities they serve. Tania said:

> *"Queer women have done a great job creating spaces in a broken, fucked-up system. The business model for fixed spaces for women isn't sustainable. And I'm exhausted by the conversation. If there were a market for lesbian event space, I would own one. So temporary spaces have been created to serve the market. Do queer women need fixed spaces? Probably not. Is it a shame that we don't have fixed spaces? Absolutely."* - Tania Marano

When it comes to thinking about policy, guidelines, planning and design, individualized and intersectional experiences must be accounted for. Eli explained why having more diverse and intersectional spaces was important based on his own experiences:

> *"I understood that I needed more than just this overarching queer community. I needed friends, or I needed, you know, a second family that was made up of queer Asians and queer Black folks, because as I got to grow into myself more I noticed how different I was from the people I regularly associated with. So that's when I realized that it's important to have spaces for subgroups. It's important to have community and to create that sense of safety, that sense of belonging—and the connection that you have with folks who look like you or share similar experiences with you. I remember my first time entering a queer space predominantly occupied by Black people—my first time in my 20 years having*

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seen this many queer Black people filling a room. And I was, like, tearing up

walking into this space with music blasting in the background." - Eli Bawuah

3. Fixed, temporary and digital space is needed to sustain a flourishing queer ecosystem in Toronto.

Most interview participants identified that fixed, temporary and digital queer spaces all play an important role in Toronto. Interview participants discussed how the COVID-19 pandemic showed us that digital space is not enough, and that physical space continues to matter for queer community-building and connection. They highlighted the authenticity of in-person connection in physical space in opposition to the sometimes rigid, overly structured or awkward conversations facilitated through digital space.

Interview participants also recognized that temporary space can operate outside of the boundaries imposed by fixed space. Temporary spaces in unusual locations, such as public spaces and parks, can offer queer individuals the ability to celebrate their lives in the outside world. Sammy spoke to the magic of temporary space:

> *"These past couple summers, I've seen, like, outdoor raves and parties these*
> *kids are throwing that are illegal, and they're sort of taking up public space*
> *outdoors and creating this really fucking magical experience. That's exciting. As*
> *an old queer auntie that is in bed early these days, to me that is fucking cool." -*
> Sammy Rawal

Interview participants also recognized that, during the pandemic, those who were previously unable to show up regularly to physical spaces discovered that digital space offered a thriving outlet for safely connecting with their community. According to some interview participants, the internet offers immense benefits, including anonymity for closeted queers starting to explore their authentic selves; enhanced accessibility and widened opportunities for participation, including those with different levels of comfort in social situations; a means for building and organizing community in unsafe countries and regions; and visibility to those who are often othered or excluded from fixed queer spaces.

Some interview participants acknowledged that digital spaces such as Instagram and WhatsApp are becoming more and more relevant for queer women, including an emerging hook-up culture facilitated through "sliding into DMs" (i.e., sending private or "direct messages").

On the other hand, interview participants also recognized that digital space can be problematic, often leading to censorship or mental health challenges and isolation when it disproportionately replaces physical connection. Related to censorship, Scooter said,

> *"Digital space can be extremely unhealthy. Community standards are erasing queer culture. When I was doing my parties, posters would get banned, erasing everything that I was doing. Who we are as queer people and, like, how we express ourselves is being constantly moderated and washed away."* - Scooter McCreight

Engagement with digital space should be moderated effectively and augment experiences in and connection to physical space. Car shared their predictions for the future:

> *"It'll be up to individuals to be able to think critically about how they engage with [digital space]. And of course, if it's up to individuals, it also means that institutions have to cultivate those critical thinking skills. So it's also a matter of education and how we train young people to be aware of the usage. Unfortunately, from a societal perspective, I don't think it's going to become healthier." -* Car Martin

Most interview participants acknowledged that digital space is changing the landscape of physical queer space. Paniz said,

> *"Yes, some things have changed. Like, you don't really need a bathhouse anymore. You can go on Grindr, and it's a lot easier. So bathhouses are closing. They're absolutely getting erased by the internet. But, like, what kinds of physical spaces can replace them? What kind of space can fill the social space hole left by the bathhouse?" -* Paniz Moayeri

4. The Village offers enormous untapped potential for renewal.

Interview participants consistently referred to the importance and symbolism of the Church-Wellesley Village:

"I think the Church-Wellesley Village always has to exist. A city like Toronto without a queer village doesn't make sense to me and goes against the diversity model that we have in place for our city. I worry about the future of the Village, though, because businesses are disappearing and the neighbourhood is getting smaller and smaller." - Eli Bawuah

"It's not necessarily for me, right? Like, I have my network of people because I've been in the city and community for so long. But, you know, people who are just coming out, young people who don't live in the city, need this space. I've always thought the Village was important because, again, it's not just about my needs. It's about other people who don't have the same access and community." - Winnie Luk

Interview participants also consistently recognized some of the weaknesses of the Church-Wellesley Village, including primarily serving a white, gay male clientele and a pattern of failing and closing gay spaces. Alyy also identified the impacts of gentrification in the once more popular Gay Village:

"There are a lot of straight people and families moving into the Village and that is killing the vibe. I think that's a problem that needs to be fixed. We really need to start prioritizing creating and preserving spaces for queer people to live, work and have fun in the neighbourhood." - Alyy Patel

Some interview participants expressed their belief that fixed spaces in the Village for women, trans, non-binary and racialized queers could be successful today based on the

demand and market. Multiple interview participants also recognized the untapped potential of the Village. For example, Alyy said,

> *"The Village has so much potential, but it feels like some business owners are giving up or are fine to let their business model continue to cater to the needs of cis, white, gay men. And as a result, that's predominantly the population that is showing up. Actually, you know what? I take that back. That's not the only population that's showing up anymore. We're starting to see more racial diversity in the Village, and we need to see spaces that reflect the community better. I think there needs to be a complete overhaul, a significant revamping of the Village." - Alyy Patel*

Alyy also identified that niche queer spaces in hidden locations or smaller neighbourhoods on the outskirts of downtown were less accessible to queers travelling into the city from surrounding areas. For these queer individuals, having a thriving and vibrant queer centre is very important to finding community and self. In terms of reimagining the Village and capitalizing on the neighbourhood's potential, two participants had some thoughts:

> *"Nobody can deny the fact that when you walk into the Village there is something special you feel in your heart—like, something in you lights up. It is a beautiful space, and it's queer joy that we don't get to experience when our spaces are dislocated. And I think that there's definitely something to be lost if that were to happen. When you are a younger queer person growing up in the suburbs of Toronto, you cannot wait until you're old enough to go on the subway or GO train to explore the Village. I remember the first Pride I went to. I was underage, and*

we just walked laps around the Village. It was so much fun. We couldn't go to parties, but it still brought us so much joy. And there are so many queer youths who do the same thing because it is a space that makes them feel loved and seen when they're rejected by their family, social circles, and peers. We need to invest our time into revamping, redesigning and bringing life back to the Village. Giving up isn't the answer. I'm very passionate about this, and I hate that my work is all about problematizing these spaces, because I would do anything to save them." - Alyy Patel

"I understand the reasons for condos, of course, but I think what's missing is guidelines and policies to ensure queer commercial spaces are created in the base of these condos. We need to create requirements and incentives for developers to reserve commercial space for queer businesses. I think it would be really cool if we could also explore, develop and revamp the side streets of the Village. And we should offer subsidies to have more racialized queer business owners. There was a bar on Church Street that had a Middle Eastern night somewhat recently, and that was the first time I'd ever seen anything cultural in a permanent queer space. Why don't we have more of these events and spaces that could celebrate events like Chinese New Year, Filipino heritage, and Black History Month?" - Eli Bawuah

5. More satellite queer spaces in growing and sprawling neighbourhoods will be needed.

Many interview participants also discussed the need for queer space outside of the Village:

There's an accessibility issue. Toronto is really large, and it doesn't make much sense that 90% of our gay bars are in one neighbourhood. Every neighbourhood should have a couple. Personally, I would rather make community with the people I'm going to be seeing at my grocery and corner store." - Mingus New

"I don't think it's a one or the other situation. I think you can develop space elsewhere and you can try to keep the Village alive. Because there is value in both. We gotta take what we can, right?" - Paniz Moayeri

"I think the periphery will become more important as we think about queer spaces. If you look at New York, it's a really good indicator of what will happen if things just continue to get more expensive in the city. The way that Brooklyn looked 20 years ago compared to today is night and day. And I think that's definitely going to happen in the GTA." - Car Martin

"We need the Queer Village and queer spaces outside of the Village as well. We have 'Queer West,' but there should be spaces in Midtown—North York, especially. Places all over the city. Queer flags, logos, stickers. I hope to see more and more of that. Maybe we just have a city that just has so many queer spaces that the whole city is just queer at the end of the day. We should have as many as possible. We should be activating abandoned spaces or underutilized

spaces like parking lots. We can close more streets down. We have streets that

we know are underutilized, and we can turn these streets into parks and public

space." - Eli Bawuah

6. The City of Toronto must do more to support the queer community.

Many interview participants identified the need for more community participation in planning and development to ensure marginalized communities have a voice in shaping the city and the types of spaces that are developed. Eli discussed the potential of involving different communities in this work:

> *"It is possible to do community-centred work related to planning and development*
>
> *and also to bring compassion, joy and love into the process. I would never have*
>
> *thought that I could walk into a meeting with developers and talk about how much*
>
> *we should show compassion to the community. That inspires me. That's what*
>
> *motivates me to, you know, not shy away from wanting to centre community.*
>
> *Those community-centred approaches can be integrated into development work*
>
> *more and more." -* Eli Bawuah

Car discussed the desire for more significant interventions at the city-level:

> *"We need to make some really bold choices to level the playing field from an*
>
> *economic and wealth perspective in general. I think that would create the*
>
> *conditions for queer spaces to be more accessible and also more equitable*

across queer communities. How can we make affordable housing for everybody? How can we make social and subsidized housing absolutely available to everybody? How can we give communities free space and also reduce the oversight and regulations in that space? I think that's a really important piece, especially for queer communities. I think it's really important to have these, like, grey areas—that the city provides space for and kind of looks the other way. You know, ultimately, like how do you create these sort of in-between spaces for people?" - Car Martin

Mingus discussed the lack of investment in and prioritization of the creative sector and marginalized communities:

"The city is a lot worse than it was ten years ago. Toronto isn't investing in the arts or in marginalized folks. It's getting very unaffordable. Usually, boring people can afford nice things. I think a lot of the most interesting people are getting pushed out. Because the city doesn't prioritize the arts, most people I know in the creative world hit a ceiling pretty quickly and then they go elsewhere. John Tory sucks. And Doug Ford sucks. And they suck each other." - Mingus New

Multiple interview participants also recognized the need for more support for queer seniors, including community development, establishing connection to younger generations and senior housing and care. Participants said,

"I think we forget about queer seniors. There's really no queer space for seniors to go to where they would feel comfortable. In long-term care and senior homes, a lot of queer seniors are going back into the closet. Can you imagine after

everything these people have experienced, spending their final years going back into the closet? I feel like that speaks to the injustice that we're not really looking at when it comes to queer seniors in the city. And I feel like it needs to be a conversation that more folks need to be engaged in across academics, policymakers and planners. There needs to be a serious discussion and plans developed to support queer seniors and their experience." - Eli Bawuah

"I keep going back to queer seniors. This is a big underserved population. And we need better forms of care and support in place." - Paniz Moayeri

"It's something that I've been thinking about a lot. Spaces for seniors, especially people who need care, are pretty horrible across the board. But if you fall outside of any sort of mainstream category, they're even worse. They're not spaces that allow for individuality or diversity. They just put everybody into this sort of, like, machine of dominant culture where everyone gets the same type of space. It's really sad." - Car Martin

Interview participants also discussed how, in the absence of adequate support from the city and industry, queers can best support other queer individuals and marginalized communities:

"I'm such a huge proponent of volunteerism because it drives small nonprofit organizations everywhere. And it is also a fact that people who volunteer are happier. It's natural serotonin. If you are wanting to support the community, volunteering your time towards something that you feel passionate about is a win-win for everyone." - Winnie Luk

"I would like to create a more supportive environment for young marginalized people within my own profession. The field of architecture is incredibly competitive. I've never had an experience in my field where someone of an older age with more experience actually helps me do anything. It's not that kind of culture. So it's created this condition that only people who come from wealthy backgrounds have money or agency. So I would love to create a practice that creates a more supportive environment for people who are part of a community as opposed to a bunch of cutthroat assholes—to create spaces for people to work for good wages. I want to start a collective of other practitioners who are independent, who have similar interests to me, so we can share resources and hopefully create an environment where we can be more supportive to younger people trying to become architects." - Car Martin

7. For queer Toronto to thrive, we must have more affordable housing.

All interview participants discussed the increasing unaffordability of Toronto rent and real estate. Three participants expressed different views on Toronto's future related to affordability:

"We've gotten to the point where Toronto feels very unliveable on many levels. And so I can't help but feel there's going be a reaction to that. I hope the pendulum swings the other way. But it's going to be hard work that requires

people to mobilize to create change. We have the potential to switch it up." -
Sammy Rawal

*"Toronto is freaking unaffordable. A lot of the problems [with queer space] are
connected to Toronto's affordability problem and problems for all people with a
certain kind of class. The prediction is grim. No one's gonna be able to afford it.
Inherently the system is flawed. We can't design our way out of oppression." -*
Paniz Moayeri

*"A lot of people are leaving or intend to leave the city and are looking for
alternatives. It's just so expensive to live in, and the quality of life is so much
different than it is in other areas. I hope queer people continue to explore
alternative options outside of Toronto." -* Scooter McCreight

Two participants referenced models and potential solutions for addressing some
affordability challenges for marginalized communities:

*"The City of Toronto needs to play a role in making space available at a low cost.
The City owns a lot of property and has the power to make those spaces
available either on a temporary or permanent basis—affordable spaces where
various communities can create community and safety and celebrate cultural
practices. I think there needs to be an openness to letting go of dominant cultural
practices and ego—to creating spaces that would be good for communities that
you don't understand. I still see Toronto as being in high demand from people all
over the world. We're in a pretty severe global climate disaster, and we live in a
really safe place and also a place that's insulated from a lot of severe climate*

problems. It's going to be an attractive city and an expensive city more and more, for a long time. I think the city has a big responsibility, and I wish that there would be different leadership. Vancouver has done a lot for making more artistic spaces available at a cheap rate for people. Models like that are very, very important—to make sure that people have spaces for housing but also commercial spaces that can be used as community spaces." - Car Martin

"The community is not reflected in Toronto's space. And how do we reflect the community? Legislation. It's through better bylaws and policies. If you're building a condo, okay, X number of units need to be affordable housing units. Subsidize X square footage of space, or X square footage of the building needs to be designated for some sort of social programming. - Paniz Moayeri

8. Queer space is becoming less about partying and alcohol consumption and more about community.

Many interview participants identified that queer spaces are evolving beyond partying and alcohol consumption to be more focused on healthy community development and safety:

"Interests are extremely different from what we wanted back in the day, which was to just go to the club, meet women, pick them up, fuck around or get partnered and then never come back again. But many younger people don't like club parties at all. Or much less. And we're seeing all of these new types of events and spaces for queer women, like poetry slam nights, game nights, walks

in Riverdale Park. And you know, I'm all for it—great, good, let's create spaces." -
Tania Marano

"But we need more than just bars or clubs. We need queer community spaces where queer folks can come and read a book, have a coffee, have a chat, meet other queer folks. More spaces for programming, community support and development." - Eli Bawuah

"There's been an evolution of temporary space, pop-ups and niche clubs, like queer cycling clubs and queer wine and beer clubs. There's, like, a club for everything. And I kind of love that. And I think it's just a smart progression because who can afford the real estate? And why would you want to be locked down to that type of real estate and maintenance? You know, everything and anything can go wrong with sensitive electricity or plumbing, vendor sourcing, human resources, etc. So I think it's incredibly smart. Especially with the members of the younger generation now who are doing these pop-ups and clubs. And they're not just like bars and dancing and flirting. It's not just about that anymore. It's really expanded to be about social gathering and community building, having more spaces, safe spaces to call their own." - Winnie L

9. Queer culture is at risk.

Multiple interview participants recognized that the growing acceptance of queer people in Canada could be contributing not only to the disappearance of queer space but also to the degradation of queer culture. While participants were grateful for the progress

made by queers in Canada over the last decades, many mourned or considered the impacts this progress is having on queer culture:

> *"People are now bringing their straight friends to queer parties, which you know is great in some ways. But at the same time, the subversiveness that makes queer people queer is just not being presented as much in nightlife. I need the weirdness of it, you know, that generally isn't accepted by heteronormative people and the straight community. I think things are just becoming more mainstream and commercialized. And we're really losing subversive, underground queer events and spaces that will hold them. Equality is obviously very important to people's safety and people's rights. But I feel like equality has always meant that we have to change ourselves to become more accepted and more straight to everyone. So I have a weird relationship with that conversation. I find the subversiveness of queer culture and the rejection of, you know, heteronormativity is kind of what makes queer culture so special. So it's like finding equality can mean losing the things that make us unequal or different."* - Scooter McCreight

> *"Queer people have a very beautiful culture that includes language, references and symbols. If we disperse or fully integrate, then some of that may disappear. It's getting harder and harder to tell who's gay and who's straight. The internet has made it a lot easier for people to pick up on other people's language. And I want queer culture to exist, but I also don't want homophobia to exist forever. I think in an ideal world, queer people still can hang out with other queer people. I just think queer people should be able to feel comfortable if they want to go to a*

non-queer bar. Unfortunately, I think a lot of the creativity and beauty in queer culture comes from being persecuted and put down. So I think we probably become a little less innovative and creative when there's less homophobia." - Mingus New

"Queer culture has inherently been formed around the closet. Without the closet, there would be no culture. The whole culture is about being closeted. But we're at a point in time, thankfully, in a country where we don't need to be in the closet." - Paniz Moayeri

"Gay people and queer culture have become part of everyday life in a lot of ways. With younger generations, the need for queer-specific space has changed. It could be just my privilege or the way I navigate my life, but I feel like I can be queer in any space I go to. There's no point in my everyday life where I feel like I have to change the way I talk and the way I move through life. There are so many more open-minded spaces that don't cater to just straight people or don't just cater to gay people. I think a lot of queer spaces are disappearing because people's needs are changing." - Sammy Rawal

SWOT analysis

From the semi-structured interviews, a summary of the key strengths (S), weaknesses (W), opportunities (O), and threats (T) (or SWOT analysis) related to Toronto queer spaces was produced. A SWOT analysis is an analytical method used to identify significant internal (Strengths and Weaknesses) and external (Opportunities and Threats) factors in a system and is an important tool for strategic planning (European Foresight Platform, n.d.). Insights from this analysis will help inform the futures scenarios and recommendations explored in Sections 3 and 4 of the research. The SWOT Analysis follows:

Strengths

- Toronto is very queer and getting queerer – there's a market/demand for spaces
- The queer community is supportive of each other's projects
- Temporary and digital spaces for women, trans and non-binary folks have emerged and improved in recent years, including a growing DIY movement creating magical experiences in unusual places
- Queer space creators are creative, innovative and resilient when it comes to operating in a challenging system
- Digital spaces are abundant and critical for many young people navigating their queerness and more accessible than many physical and temporary spaces
- The Church-Wellesley Village has historic significance and offers important symbolism
- The City of Toronto is starting to prioritize community engagement in planning initiatives
- Compared to other large cities, Toronto has historically offered spaces for queer people (more than just cis, white, gay men)

Weaknesses

- Safe space is more challenging in temporary places, including finding queer security and venues
- No fixed spaces for queer women, trans and non-binary folks in the city – a very challenging business model
- Residential and commercial rent is very expensive, and quality of life is threatened by rising costs
- Queer businesses took a significant hit during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Accessible, mid-sized venues for queer events/parties are difficult to find
- City rules and regulations stifle nightlife, creativity and community development
- City and government support is missing in the financing and support of queer space
- City is not investing in the things that make Toronto special
- Sex positive spaces are disappearing
- Areas outside of downtown feel less safe for queer people or have fewer queer people
- Queer people who made creative living/space decisions during the pandemic seem to be returning to the city
- The queer community can be critical with a lot of opinions about queer space
- The Village is a relic/homogeneous
- When queer businesses close, existing bylaws and zoning exceptions lapse, and these businesses often can't be replaced
- Continued exclusion of racialized, trans and non-binary people – spaces are still very white and normative
- Spaces outside of the Church-Wellesley Village can be less accessible for new residents and GTA-based queer people
- The Church-Wellesley Village has more and more straight people
- The City's departments may lack diverse perspectives
- Lack of precedence/guidelines that have been implemented to support marginalized communities
- Lack of DEI training for city officials and folks in decision-making roles
- Minimal spaces, programs and support in place for queer seniors
- The queer community can be complacent - we are not demanding better support
- The City's departments are not accountable or empowered to make change
- Volunteer work in Toronto can be underappreciated and underrecognized

Opportunities

- Younger queers are more focused on creating spaces not centred on alcohol, drugs and partying
- Develop and utilize space that better serve subcultures and communities who have different spatial needs and expectations
- Supporting trans and non-binary folks in the next phase of the queer rights movement
- Large province with lots of land and underpopulated areas – potential for rural exploration
- Queer space continues to present a great opportunity for queer people to meet other queer people and hook up / have sex
- Neighbourhood/decentralized queer spaces
- Toronto is a magnet for queers around the world
- Pandemic has proved that physical space matters/is critical for community building
- Spatial needs are changing – new spaces need to be developed
- Make services and support more accessible for those new to Canada and most marginalized (languages, legal, healthcare, housing, social services, etc.)
- More participatory design/development and community engagement (rooted in compassion, joy, love)
- More support for queer seniors
- Digital space creates widened opportunities for participation/more accessible
- Demand exists for more queer spaces for women, trans, non-binary, racialized queers
- Spaces that create comfort for individuals to be alone, including cafes
- Rotating nights/events that are centred on the needs of marginalized queers
- Village side street development
- More policies in place to create residential units and commercial space for queer people
- Less traditional policies and city government/innovative and progressive city
- Queers with access/privilege to help others and lead positive change (mentoring, financial assistance, lobbying)
- Leverage the "shiny pink dollar" and investment of organizations to drive positive change in the city
- More volunteering and participation
- Identify more small- to mid-size development
- Multi-generational spaces and non-traditional family spaces
- Intergenerational knowledge transfer and connection

Threats

- Growing obsession with digital space
- Gentrification and condo development eliminating innovative and creative space potential
- Queer spaces no longer in queer hands
- Soaring commercial/residential rental costs
- Trumpism corrupting Canadian politics
- Queer assimilation and queer events appealing to mainstream and straight audiences
- Digital community standards leading to queer censorship, moderation and erasure
- As certain queer people before more accepted their need for safe spaces decreases
- Queer spaces are built around homophobia – if the goal is to not have homophobia, do we lose the need for queer space?
- Gen Z boredom with fixed space
- Ageing population
- Heteronormative power in key roles/leadership/industries; traditional and dominant culture making change very difficult
- Rising wealth gap and inequalities
- Attack on Ontario's Greenbelt

Figure 7: SWOT analysis

Innovations in queer space

Following the SWOT Analysis, Doblin's Ten Types Framework was used to assess current queer space innovations identified by interview participants and explore the potential for future opportunities in queer space. Associated with the Framework are six principles for using the model effectively (Deloitte, 2015):

1. Understand all ten types

2. De-emphasize reliance on products and technology

3. Think about categories as well as types

4. Use the types that matter most

5. Understand what your users really need

6. Use enough of the types to make a splash

The principles, particularly principle 4, 5 and 6, will be applied and considered as innovation is integrated into the queer space futures scenarios in Section 3. A summary of the emerging queer space innovations and level of opportunity in the future, aligned to Doblin's framework, is captured in the tables that follow:

Queer space configuration

Innovation Type	Description	Examples	Opportunity
Profit model	The way in which you make money	Pay What You Can (PWYC); Subscription/Membership; Cooperative Ownership; Angel investors; Government subsidies and support; Corporate sponsorship/investment, Community Land Trust (CLT) model	High
Network	Connections with others to create value	Collectives/practitioner collectives; Participatory design/community engagement; Multi-generational partnerships and education; Scholarship, mentoring and community outreach programs; Programs that prioritize queer ownership	High
Structure	Alignment of your talent and assets	Roving teams for roving parties; Shared resources	Medium
Process	Signature or superior methods for doing your work	Streamlined and simplified process for creating and starting spaces (pitch opportunities)	Medium

Table 3: Configuration innovation opportunities

Queer space offering

Innovation Type	Description	Examples	Opportunity
Product Performance	Distinguishing features and functionality	Talent, including up and coming guest DJs, sound curators, Drag Queens; Queering straight culture	Medium
Productive System	Complementary products and services	n/a	Low

Table 4: Offering innovation opportunities

Queer space experience

Innovation Type	Description	Examples	Opportunity
Service	Support and enhancements that surround your offerings	Healthy community building; Educational components; Development focus	Medium
Channel	How your offerings are delivered to customers and users	Digital promotion through networks using social media (What's app, Instagram); Hybrid spaces; VR+ experiences; DIY spaces (illegal, non-conforming); Rural exploration	High
Brand	Representation of your offerings and business	Promoters as personalities/influencers; Collective/community sponsorship	Medium
Customer Engagement	Distinctive interactions you foster	Transition from event to experience; Non-alcoholic and partying; Spaces that foster deeper connections; Daytime spaces; Customization of experience	High

Table 5: Experience innovation opportunities

Section 3: Futures of Toronto queer space

Critical uncertainties

Critical uncertainties are factors that are both highly impactful and uncertain in their relation to a system, industry or broader area of inquiry. For some futures scenario generation methods, identifying critical uncertainties is a necessary first step. Through the semi-structured interviews, three critical uncertainties emerged as the most impactful and uncertain factors contributing to the future of queer space in Toronto:

1. **The affordability of space:** all interview participants identified the affordability of commercial and residential space as a key driver in shaping the future of the city of Toronto and the queer community. All participants identified that space has become very unaffordable in the city, but many referenced the current downtown in the real estate market and speculated what that could mean for the future in. terms of affordability of space. Some participants also expressed optimism, or even expectation, that new policies or interventions could make spaces available to more people at a lower cost (*will space become more or less affordable in the future?)*

2. **The relationship between technology and physical space:** interviews were heavily centred on the uncertain future of technology and the implications on physical spaces. Many participants identified the opposing relationship between technology and physical space and how technology has led to changing social habits and the disappearance of queer spaces. Others felt that technology has the potential to positively transform, complement or underpin experience in

physical space (*will technology and physical space interact harmoniously in the future, or will they be in opposition?*)

3. **The degree to which all queer people are accepted:** with the increasing power of the alt right and anti-queer movements on the rise in many countries, interview participants expressed their concern for the future of queer acceptance in Canada. While all participants identified the progress that has been made by queer people in Canada over the last few decades, many also felt this trajectory could change and queer acceptance could be at risk in the future (*will some – or all – queer people continue to be marginalized in the future or will queers be celebrated and recognized as equals?*)

These critical uncertainties will form the foundation for the futures scenarios explored in the remainder of Section 3.

Futures approach

Following the identification of critical uncertainties, three foresight and visualization methods were then used to build and explore a set of divergent Toronto futures that consider different uses and relevance of queer space and community. These methods were:

1. Futures scenario generation

Inspired by the Zwicky box, a tool used to create many unique ideas by breaking a focus area into categories using intersecting values (Kushahrin, 2022), a 2x2x2 matrix was developed. The Zwicky-inspired matrix leveraged the identified critical uncertainties (space affordability, technology integration, acceptance of queer people,) where the limits of the X, Y and Z axes represent the polarities of each uncertainty. A brief brainstorming session was conducted on each of the eight quadrants produced by the 2x2x2 matrix to understand how each could contribute to a highly distinct futures scenario that would offer different insight towards understanding the future of queer space in Toronto. The eight quadrants were narrowed down to four based on their potential for representing a unique and vastly different future for the city of Toronto. Quadrants were eliminated when features of the scenario overlapped with other quadrants or exhibited highly similar defining characteristics. The final four quadrants, or scenarios, were then developed further by (1) research outcomes from semi-structured interviews with queer space creators and community builders, (2) the relevant trends

and drivers identified through the external scan and (3) the ideas, feelings and observations expressed by research participants through the future journaling exercise.

2. Future journaling exercise

34 queer-identifying research participants wrote a creative and personal future journaling exercise outlining a day, time or experience in their life in the year 2043. Participants were encouraged to (1) use their imagination, (2) assume they were the age they are today, (3) limit their entry to 200 words and (4) consider some of the following prompts: *What is your life like as a queer person in 2043? Who makes up your support system or community? How do you occupy or utilize different types of space/place? How marginalized or valued/equal are queer lives? How liveable or unliveable is the city of Toronto? How do you engage with technology?* Each journal entry was analyzed and then tagged to the most relevant of the four futures scenarios based on the alignment to the polarities of each axis. Sentences and short segments from the group of journal entries aligning to each scenario were then selectively aggregated to create one journal entry from the perspective of one imagined individual for every futures scenario. These journal entries are used to form a story around an individual's experience in queer space in the future. The input from all research participants was also used to inspire and shape the scenarios.

3. AI future space generation

Future queer spaces were created from the outputs of the futures scenarios and future journal entries. Key descriptive words from the four future journal entries and scenarios

were then used in the AI image generator tool Midjourney (n.d.) to create a visual

representation of the exterior, interior and other elements of the queer spaces.

Future scenarios

A visualization of the 2x2x2 matrix formed around the three critical uncertainties is depicted below:
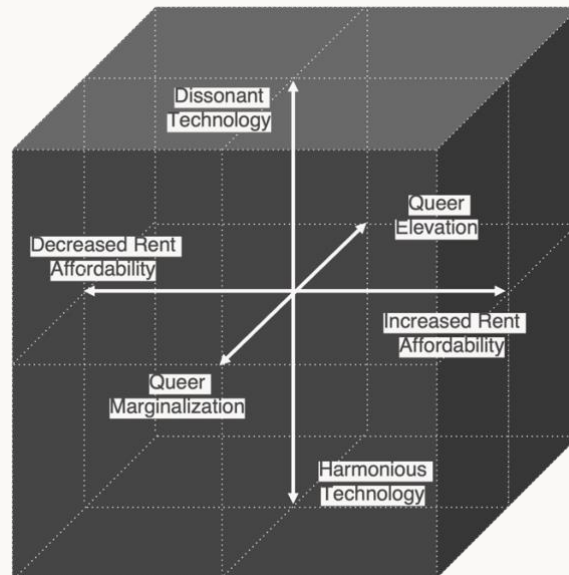
Figure 8: 2x2x2 matrix

The six polarities, or the opposing ends of the critical uncertainties, that exist within the matrix are:

- **Harmonious Technology:** physical and digital space are complementary and experiences in fixed and temporary spaces are enhanced by technology; technology is regulated and controlled effectively and is a positive presence in most people's lives.

- **Dissonant Technology:** physical and digital space are in opposition, with digital spaces and virtual worlds being the most dominating force in people's lives;

technology has significant and unhealthy control over a large portion of the population and contributes to issues with mental health and isolation.

- **Increased Space Affordability:** commercial and residential space in Toronto is more affordable and lower income earners are able to live happily in the city; space is subsidized through city spending and programs; small business success is possible and common; more spatial options for community-building and connection exist for customers.

- **Decreased Space Affordability:** commercial and residential space in Toronto is less affordable, putting continued financial pressure on residents and business owners; small businesses are less and less viable; more lower income earners are living in less desirable spaces, leaving the city, or expanding the boundaries of the city.

- **Queer Elevation:** all queer people are accepted, celebrated and recognized as equals; more people identify as not straight and are comfortable experimenting with sexuality and gender; queer culture continues to be trendy and becomes popular with most people; income, health, education imbalances are greatly diminished.

- **Queer Marginalization:** some or all queer people are discriminated against; the cis, white, heteropatriarchy continues to prevail, while others are pushed to the side; significant imbalances exist for queer people related to income, health and education opportunities; many or all queer people feel vulnerable or unsafe in the city.

The futures scenarios developed from four of the eight distinct quadrants are first colour-tagged and summarized, and then explored in greater detail in the research that follows:
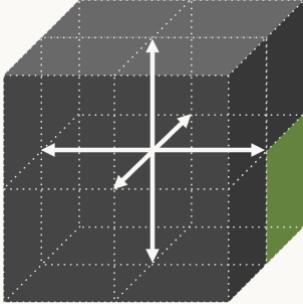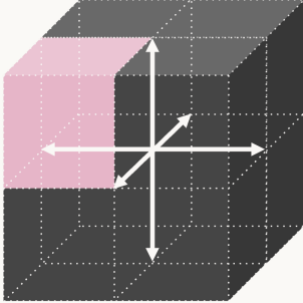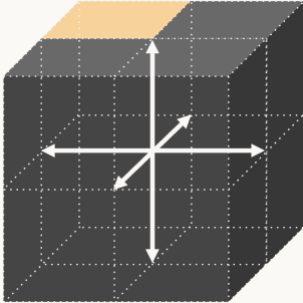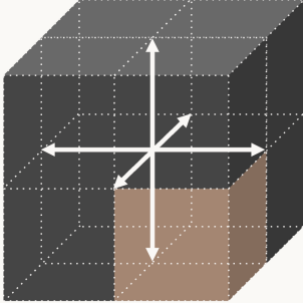
Futures Scenario	Description	
	Scenario	**Homo-Homogenization**
	Key drivers	Queer Elevation, Harmonious Technology, Increased Space Affordability
	Relevant trends	Fluidity in the Water, Off the Sauce, Bring It Home, Dining Dynamics, Without a (Carbon) Trace, We're all in this Together
	Scenario	**Power to the Patriarchy**
	Key drivers	Queer Marginalization, Dissonant Technology, Decreased Space Affordability
	Relevant trends	Reality Bites, Creature of Cohabit, Asleep at the Wheel, DIY, Nostalgic Escapism, Rise of the Independents
	Scenario	**The Great Queer Escape**
	Key drivers	Queer Elevation, Dissonant Technology, Decreased Space Affordability
	Relevant trends	You Must Be Trippin', The Loves of My Life, I Subscribe to That, It's Getting Easier to Be Green, Children are not the future, Wellness Obsessive Compulsion
	Scenario	**Shelter From the Norm**
	Key drivers	Queer Marginalization, Harmonious Technology, Increased Space Affordability
	Relevant trends	The Robots are Coming!, Man Meets Machine, Forever Young (Sort of), Big Brother is Watching You

Table 6: Scenarios overview

1. Homo-Homogenization
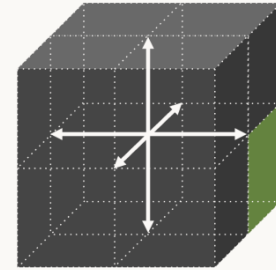
Key Drivers: Queer Elevation, Harmonious Technology,
Increased Space Affordability

Queer is everywhere. A quarter of Canada's population now identifies as something other than straight or cisgender. Identifying as queer has transitioned from being accepted in certain spaces to being part of the regular and normative fabric of Canada. In Toronto, we have entered a period of hyper-inclusivity, where the needs of formerly marginalized communities are prioritized, and inequities are balanced through government support and community engagement. Diversity of all kinds is prioritized in planning, development projects and policy review. Corporate social responsibility initiatives have expanded and evolved to effectively channel funds from large organizations into the hands of communities that need them the most. The extreme corporatization of events like Pride has slowed down, and community members are now more involved in decisions about how corporate donations are invested. In several meaningful ways, the lives of previously marginalized individuals have gotten significantly better. However, many feel the varied cultures, communities and experiences that made Toronto unique and special have been reduced, diluted, homogenized, and replaced with a city of people who more and more act and think alike.

Technology has evolved along with the way we use it. The Internet of Things has facilitated hyperconnectivity across social spaces, home and work. This connectivity has

produced new efficiencies, conveniences and improvements in quality of life. Professional and social networks are no longer confined by language or physical proximity, as humans around the world seamlessly collaborate and connect using technology that seeks to minimize distance and difference. Auto-translation tools have revolutionized linguistics education, making everyone and no one proficient in the world's languages. Networks of global experts partner together to solve complex problems for local organizations and governments. These new opportunities have transitioned power to the highly skilled individual, creating a workforce heavily composed of independent contractors and consultants. People have developed more critical thinking and decision-making capabilities in terms of how they apply and engage with technology in their daily lives and how they strike the right balance between in-person and digital connections. This healthy relationship with technology has permeated the spaces we occupy—physical and digital spaces complement each other and are often combined to create hybrid space, where actual and virtual elements merge and enhance our surroundings.

As the city has grown and expanded its borders, small business models and opportunities have improved. And while operating fixed space is more viable, the queer experience is no longer centred on nightlife, alcohol, drugs and partying as deeper connections, special experiences and spaces that exist at all times of the day become more important. These spaces are incredibly varied and include gaming outlets, dating and sex stations, hybrid cafés and entertainment venues, customized experience spaces, and health and wellness boutiques. The heteropatriarchy and white supremacy are slowly being dismantled to clear the path for new systems of power and influence.

For the most part, there is less crime in the city, and law enforcement and police services have evolved, with a larger role for city support staff who specialize in mental health care. However, as more progressive politics in and around Toronto have taken hold, some individuals who desperately seek to maintain their former power and influence have formed a dangerous and extreme resistance. These groups are known for violent acts of rebellion in spaces occupied by community members that were previously marginalized.

Federal, provincial and municipal governments have prioritized making affordable housing and vibrant public space available for everyone. Despite some opposition from more conservative voters and city councilors, Community Land Trust models in the city have grown to allow different communities the ability to manage and control land use in targeted neighbourhoods throughout Toronto. To make space for the increasing urban population, the city has grown upwards. And upwards. Soaring condominium developments cover the sides of all major intersections. By offering former residents modern and accessible replacement spaces, large neighbourhoods of single-family detached homes have been acquired by the city and replaced with mid-sized residential buildings to maximize geographic utility while protecting surrounding green and public space. Toronto has adopted more progressive zoning practices, which have created opportunities for mixed land use, with commercial spaces existing in residential areas and vice versa.

Climate change continues to have severe impacts on regions all over the world. Toronto has become a top destination for climate migrants, and due to progressive immigration policy, the city's population has significantly outgrown expectations over the last 20

years. Healthy immigration policy has continued to be a central focus for politicians in power, as progressives have demonstrated the value and impact of immigration on our economy – especially as we seek to develop new forms of energy and technology innovation. People, industry and government are heavily focused on reducing carbon footprints to meet aggressive targets to combat climate change. To accommodate city growth, Toronto has invested significantly in public transit systems, making the larger city more accessible. Bus and streetcar systems have been replaced with underground and elevated transit. Dense traffic on city roads continues to present a challenge, but many residents choose to avoid driving cars to avoid expensive taxes and tolls. International travel has reduced significantly, and the tourism industry in Canada has transitioned to cater to locals. Due to significant restrictions and costs associated with air travel, most Canadians are no longer able to travel internationally. When making the decision to relocate to Canada, many immigrants are forced to say goodbye to their friends and family forever. Hybrid theme parks that simulate international travel and foreign experience exist in large domes or bubbles on the outskirts of Toronto. These spaces create job opportunities for many locals who were previously employed by the foreign tourism industry.

Canada has been focused on reducing its reliance on foreign supply chains, developing more local economies that have created new jobs and a larger workforce. While these efforts have presented new challenges, a booming and highly diversified agriculture industry has emerged in Ontario, benefitting from rising temperatures that have enabled the growth of new crops. Many other food products are now grown locally in vertical farming facilities powered by clean energy. Investments in technology and AI have

created more efficiency in production and service, streamlining processes and eliminating certain types of work. Tech workers who are also skilled at collaborating with and leading humans are in demand. This rapid change has put significant pressure on the government and the education sector to reskill the workforce and seek out and develop new skills in those arriving from other countries. As a country, we have struggled to keep pace with demand for new skills and capabilities and, in some ways, Canada's new economies have been plagued by ineffective and inefficient management and operations. Canada's culture continues to evolve so rapidly that some critics and academics believe we have lost a sense of national identity. While many queer people celebrate the elevation of queer lives, others feel the great spread has led to a significant erosion of queer culture. Activists from primarily older generations seek to preserve queer landmarks and history in a world that is unrecognizable in many ways and continues to change quickly.

Future journal entry: Homo-Homogenization

I woke up and immediately tried to access YOPI again, but my therapy chip knew I hadn't meditated or had a glass of water, so it prevented me from sabotaging the IRL tranquility of the morning. I chatted with Juancho in the courtyard, who just turned 100, and I've been assisting with their grocery shopping and appointments. We decided to have dinner together on Thursday, and they reminded me about the strawberries that Ato left in the kitchen for everyone.

Once I finished my daily goals, I logged into YOPI and spent a couple of hours hanging out with my new friend Charley in Q-World. Charley lives in New Zealand but enjoys spending time in YOPI Toronto. We discovered that our city has better non-binary, second-hand clothing stores than Wellington, so we also spent some time in the shops on Harbord. I think I might be falling for Charley, but JJ seems fine with it. The three of us plan to take PDP and go to Queerland this weekend for a night of dancing. Charley might not be physically present, but that's alright. Queerland is celebrating its one-year anniversary, and this weekend's event will take us on a tour of historical queer village hangouts. I've heard of many of these spaces through the "back in my day" stories from the seniors in my queer book club. Speaking of which…listen to this: last week, Rory from book club told me that thirty years ago, their greatest wish was to be able to hold their partner's hand in public and kiss each other without shame. It shattered my heart. I'm grateful that Rory's wish came true for the next generation of queer folks.

JJ was also off work today, so we prepared dinner for a few friends using ingredients from our garden. I'm always impressed by JJ's ability to transform things from the dirt into delicious meals. I appreciate what working part-time allows us to do. Even a decade ago, this wouldn't have been possible, and we would most likely have had to live outside of the city. I'm glad that we now live in a world where you don't have to work so hard just to feel okay. Before Hamilton was integrated into Toronto, many individuals relocated there to avoid the high cost of living (just another little tidbit from the book club). Peace out!

Queer space: Queerland

The architectural marvel, Queerland, is a modern theme park located in the Toronto exterior. The park is housed in a large dome, offering guests a weather-regulated and fully-immersive experience. The park provides hybrid experiences for queers from all over the world to connect and have fun. Centering learning and wellness, Queerland also offers visitors a range of educational and self-care opportunities.

Queerland is part of a larger network of queer theme parks located in major cities around the world. With the limitations on international travel, Queerland provides an opportunity to experience travel to other queer destinations without ever leaving the comforts of home. The park is connected by TTC public transit, making it easily accessible to visitors from all over the Greater Toronto Area. Season passes are available for thrill seekers and enthusiasts who want to experience Queerland all the time!

To celebrate our one-year anniversary on Canada's National Queer Day, Queerland will take guests on a hybrid tour of global queer bars throughout history. Don't miss this opportunity to experience and connect to your queer roots!

Figure 9: Midjourney image generated using prompts "Dome theme park indoor futuristic queer village"

Figure 10: Midjourney image generated using prompts "Small theme park interior architecture future digital beautiful lights and colour people celebrating"

Figure 11: Midjourney image generated using prompts "Old fashioned street full of fake gay bars and nightclubs that are inside a dome using advanced digital technologies"

Queer space: YOPI (Your Own Private Idaho)

Your Own Private Idaho (YOPI), affectionately named after the B-52's hit from the 1980s and later the Gus Van Sant film from 1991, is an augmented reality platform that offers users a truly unique way to connect with others from all over the world. Whether you want to explore different cities or countries or tour imaginary worlds, YOPI is your ultimate travel agent, map and method of transportation! Our smart controls ensure you practice consent while engaging with other users, manage the amount of time you spend in YOPI worlds, and are always safe from violence and discrimination.

For queers interested in trying on different genders and identities, YOPI is a safe and supportive space for the ultimate experimentation. Enjoy YOPI as either hybrid or fully digital space, and try some of our games and challenges to build your IQ and EQ.

Don't miss Q-World, part of YOPI's standard subscription and winner of the 2042 Best

New Space Award, a world that blends psychedelic and plasticine filters and that Wired

called "a lucid dream space for the queer imagination to flourish"!
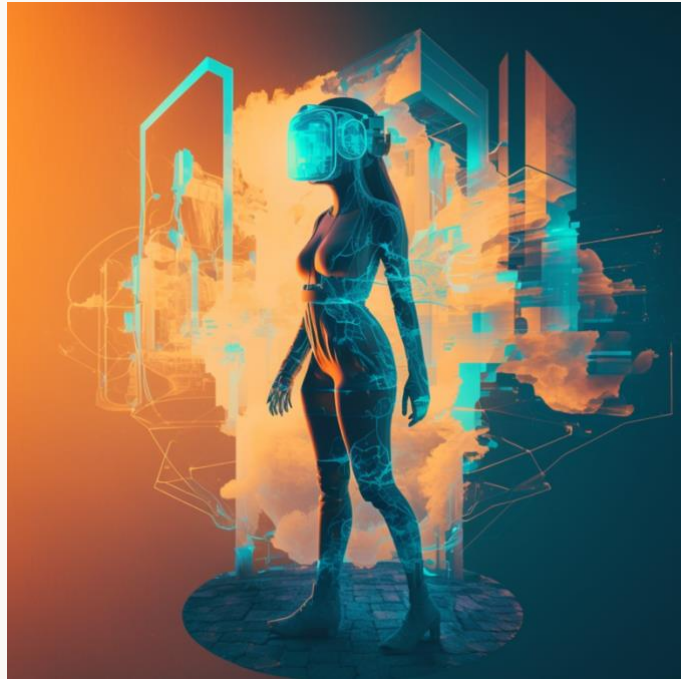
Figure 12: Midjourney image 1 generated using prompts "person exploring augmented reality future world"

Figure 13: Midjourney image 2 generated using prompts "person exploring augmented reality future world"
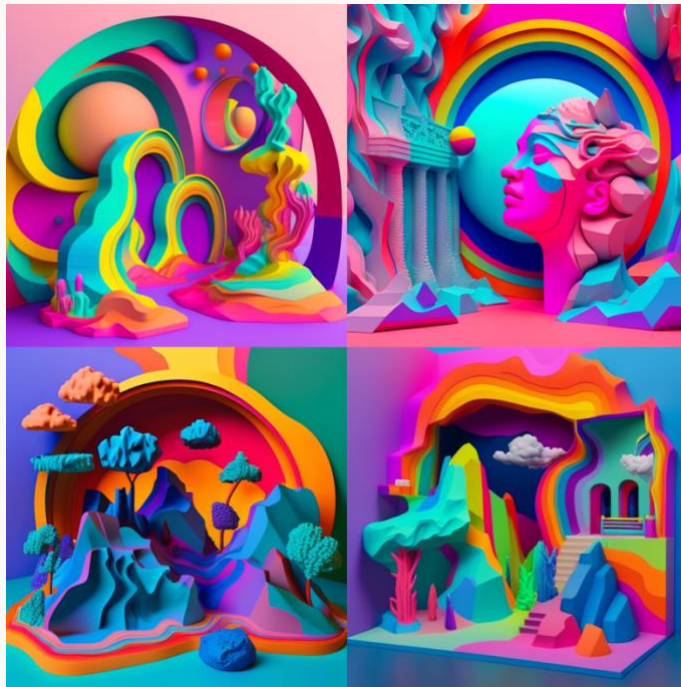
Figure 14: Midjourney image generated using prompts "queer plasticine world virtual reality psychedelic"

2. Power to the Patriarchy

Key Drivers: Queer Marginalization, Dissonant Technology, Decreased Space Affordability
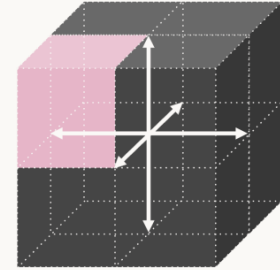
As global issues have intensified and quality of life everywhere has decreased, Toronto has become more unaffordable, and inequities between its residents have increased. The white heteropatriarchy has fought hard to hold on to power amidst more regular widescale technology disruptions, environmental disasters and financial crises, pushing vulnerable communities further and further into the margins. The rich and privileged have become richer and more privileged by continuously taking from those who already have so little. Discrimination, including homophobia, has increased as more resources have become scarce and those in power look to maintain a certain quality of life for themselves. Many queers stay in the closet to avoid losing whatever quality of life is left for them. Medicine, health support, education and other social goods are reserved for the elite, though underground digital health and learning systems have emerged to support those on the outside. The media spews misinformation, and the news is controlled by a select few. People no longer voluntarily consume these messages; instead, digital portals for media consumption follow individuals wherever they go, reinforcing messages that keep existing systems in place. Crime in the city has increased significantly despite the municipal government's ongoing investments in the police force. For the most part, those who commit crimes are looking for ways to survive in a very challenging world. With skyrocketing rental costs and a growing population, one- and two-bedroom apartments across the city have been converted into multi-

resident units with stacked sleeping spaces and shared accommodations for those who

can't afford sufficient space. For a long time, city officials have ignored new housing and

infrastructure development, opting for quick, short-term, band-aid solutions while they

focus efforts on managing increasingly complicated political issues and external conflict.

Up until five years ago, the 519 Community Centre remained on Church Street, the last

visible sign of queer life and queer acceptance in a very changed and straight

neighbourhood. Members of the community fought hard to maintain the important

support and services provided by the centre. But they lost. The building and property

were cheaply converted to tiny, poorly equipped living spaces. Similarly, e-commerce

has replaced small business, and storefront windows on former commercial streets

serve as large viewing portals into the unhappy lives and strange living quarters of the

disenfranchised. More and more, older Torontonians, especially those who are

marginalized, opt for assisted suicide to avoid prolonging their unfulfilling lives. Many

people look for ways to escape their unfortunate realities and immerse themselves in

digital and VR worlds that are heavily centred on nostalgic experiences that harken

back to better times. Advancements in technology have devastated the job market.

Many roles have been replaced by increasingly smart technology, forcing those who

once performed these types of responsibilities out of the labour market to rely on

insufficient financial assistance from the government. These individuals often develop

digital addictions and complementary dependencies on new street drugs that further

enable digital immersion and numb users from reality. Other displaced workers are

forced to fill the growing demand for government-controlled work that enforces a

growing set of city rules and regulations. Friendships and relationships begin to suffer

as an "every person for themselves" mentality takes hold in the city. Dating and love are often deprioritized, and many of the city's residents experience feelings of loneliness and emptiness. VR and robot technologies provide an outlet for necessary, though infrequent sexual experience and release. For those queer people who continue to seek out experiences IRL, self-driving transportation vessels have evolved into roving, intimate entertainment spaces to make up for the lack of fixed spaces. DIY spaces also remain important for connection and community building. In some safer neighbourhoods, groups of queer people will roam streets together and participate in 5-10 minute space takeovers, where small and unexpecting businesses become temporary sites for fun and protest before the police authorities arrive to break things up and often victimize attendees. These experiences are organized through underground digital networks that communicate in codes and exist for members to stay safe and connected. Some resilient queers continue to search for beauty in the world and create art that inspires change and hope. Some other queers partner with members of similarly marginalized Toronto communities to form revolts and cyber attacks against existing systems of power, including municipal government and Mayor John Tory, Jr. Out of desperation, these activists have started new independent parties at all levels of government in the hopes of creating positive change and restoring some quality of life for those people who have been consistently failed by the system.

Future journal entry: Power to the Patriarchy

I woke up to another day where I couldn't leave my compartment due to the thick smog in the air. It always leaves me feeling tired and dizzy. I went through my usual routine of doing my weekly T-shot and taking a shower before entering v-work. Lately, it's so easy to get lost in my VR worlds (even work) when leaving my little home is so unpleasant. Does it even count as V at this point? Perhaps just another R.

For staying at home three days in a row, I earned a social credit score that I used for a long v-visit with my mom, whom I hadn't seen in six months. The last few years have been hard on her, and I feel some level of guilt that I haven't made myself more available. She's still obsessed with conspiracy theories, and I'm convinced the group she's spending time with is a cult. It's hard to see people I am connected to (even loosely at this point) so consumed by fear and paranoia.

Tomorrow, I'll protect myself and go outside – even if there's nowhere really left to go. My heart aches for a stroke of luck, a chance encounter with someone spectacularly queer. Something not generated for me by an algorithm designed to sedate non-compliance. A few people I met in another world are planning an IRL space takeover of Sam's Self-Serve Super Convenience on Dundas. Before the pigs arrive, they'll override security and dance to a Donna Summer song under the giant AI orb that looks like a disco ball. As far as queer space goes, it's not much. However, it beats ordering a car from Mo's out of desperation and hooking up with a bot like many of my male-identifying queer friends are doing these days. No judgment here, but some people must really miss privacy, intimacy and connection.

At the end of the day, I used my last remaining points to v-vist Morgan to talk about her new job and see how Jordi is doing after the baby. It's so unusual to be around babies these days. I got to v-hold her, and it was wonderful. They seem happier than usual, which is good to hear after the homophobic nightmare situation they had at their last residence.

Queer space: Sam's Self-Serve Super Convenience

Sam's Self-Serve Super Convenience is a revolutionary chain of convenience stores in Toronto that is ushering in a new era of customer experience with advanced technologies. We are known for our trademark hanging orb, which allows customers to complete their purchases quickly and efficiently. The orb also enables our advanced tech to clean up messes, restock shelves, create a safe space for customers and re-order products that are out of stock in real-time.

With nine locations in the city, Sam's is dominating the convenience market in Toronto. For three years in a row, we've been voted the most efficient place to shop in the city by Conservative Toronto. Why, you ask? Our use of advanced technology allows us to offer the lowest prices, guaranteed stock and absolutely no lost time. Don't be a sucker, shop at Sam's!

Figure 15: Midjourney image 1 generated using prompts "large futuristic self-serve convenience store in big city with large windows"

Figure 16: Midjourney image 2 generated using prompts "large futuristic self-serve convenience store in big city with large windows"

Figure 17: Midjourney image generated using prompts self-serve convenience store architectural interior high-tech digital with giant orb hanging from the ceiling"

Queer space: Mo's Motorin' Motor Inn (Mo's)

Mo's Motorin' Motor Inn is a fleet service of self-driving cars that offer private and intimate spaces for customers.

Mo's is an affordable, on-demand service that can be customized based on unique user preferences. Customers can choose from a range of options, including classic car seat set-up, beds (twin to king) – and with or without intimate bot companions. Or bring your own special human friend(s) along! In a city where quiet and private space is hard to find at the best of times, Mo's also provides much-needed relaxation and solitude. Ponder life's deepest questions in style!

Whether you need a space to release, relax or work, Mo's will deliver. Each car is professionally sterilized after each use, ensuring a safe and hygienic experience for customers. Mo's is available for rent by the hour or day. Don't wait, order us now!

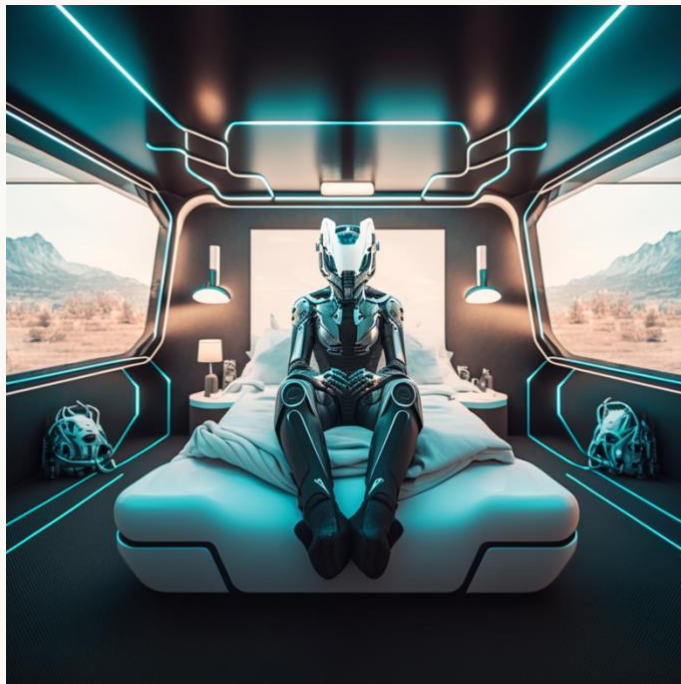*Figure 18: Midjourney image generated using prompts " Futuristic self-driving car with modern minimalist bed inside instead of seats driving in a city"*
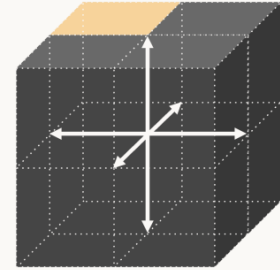
Figure 19: Midjourney image generated using prompts "a row of futuristic self-driving cars moving through a busy crowd of people at night"

Figure 20: Midjourney image generated using prompts "modern cyborg sitting on sleek minimalist bed inside futuristic self-driving car"

3. The Great Queer Escape

Key Drivers: Queer Elevation, Dissonant Technology, Decreased Space Affordability

The lives of queers in Toronto have become complicated and varied. While identifying as something other than straight or cisgender has become increasingly accepted, rent has become unaffordable for many, and quality of life in the city has decreased rapidly. Queers who have remained in Toronto occupy both ends of a spectrum. At one end are those whose large incomes allow them to live lavish lifestyles and afford the dwellings that are out of reach for most others. This group of queers no longer just includes white, gay men as times have changed, and systems of power and oppression have transformed. This group is now made up of those with influence: those who have worked hard or worked smart and fought their way to the top, and those who have challenged or tricked the system and won. These individuals most often work in tech or have capitalized on emerging technologies to build their personal brands and profiles. At the other end of the spectrum are those who are so disadvantaged that leaving the city wasn't even a possibility. This includes those who share tiny basement apartments in undesirable neighbourhoods and occupy multi-tenant homes in order to survive. The service industry has transformed, and the people in this group work low-paying jobs, quickly delivering goods and services to the elite whenever they want them. Small businesses, including stores, restaurants, movie theatres and bars, have mostly disappeared. Temporary versions of these spaces are transported to wealthy people's homes to create one-time, hyper-convenient experiences. While life is often extremely

difficult for folks on this end of the spectrum, they have formed supportive communities and strong connections, and they have re-territorialized neglected pockets of the city to offer spaces for fun and support.

And then there are those who lie somewhere in the middle of the spectrum. These people, including many queers, left Toronto to explore rural areas and smaller cities and towns across Ontario where land and other types of spaces continue to be more affordable. Culture and diversity have been cultivated in these emerging and vibrant communities. The small businesses and organizations that no longer exist in the city have materialized on the main streets of small towns as local residents seek to preserve these important elements of community. Clusters of queers have purchased undeveloped plots of land to build residential and commercial projects that meet their collective needs. Other clusters have slowly started to move into different rural neighbourhoods over time, working carefully to effectively integrate with existing populations in these spaces. For the most part, these rural-migrating population clusters avoid the technologies that dominated or created chaos in their previous urban lives. Technology is moderated carefully and reserved for strengthening community and connection. Clusters have been formed based on value systems and consist of individuals from all over the country and other parts of the world who share common interests and priorities.

Many people fear the future, and it is well-understood that climate change is irreversible. While extreme weather has been devastating to many regions of the world, Ontario has temporarily benefited as more northern land has become both fertile and inhabitable, introducing new crops, economies and communities. A warming climate in Ontario has

also provided more opportunities for people to spend time outdoors in green spaces. The dispersed population movement has made efforts to reconnect with nature and introduce new creative uses of outdoor space. Businesses and organizations that were previously confined to sheltered environments now operate for many months of the year in outdoor settings and structures. Housing and other types of spaces have changed significantly. Architecture and design no longer need to follow aesthetic rules or expectations as new forms, shapes and uses of colour have permeated the streets and lanes of these communities. Many clusters encourage the use of psychedelics for healing, fostering personal and community development and processing the future of the planet. New forms and combinations of cannabis, psilocybin and LSD are leveraged as medicine and tools that foster creativity, innovation and experimentation. For different reasons, urban and rural dwellers have mostly made the decision to stop having children. These reasons range from prioritizing self amongst many elite city folks to fear or apprehension towards future living conditions amongst rural clusters and communities. Many individuals across the full spectrum participate in multi-partnership relationships and polyamory. No longer taboo, these types of connections can offer additional financial and emotional support and create exciting opportunities for fun and sexual experience. Through advancements in mental health and a global obsession with wellness, more individuals have tapped into different levels of peace and enlightenment. While many mourn or fear the impending end of civilization, they focus on enjoying the present and living each moment—wherever they choose to live—to its fullest.

Future journal entry: The Great Queer Escape

Today, I woke up early and quietly sipped my coffee, complete with multi-vitamins, STI immunity, anti-aging nanogens, and an LSD microdose. My partner was still asleep, and the walls of our little houseboat read me the news at a frequency that didn't wake him up. The walls have been glitching more and more and, in this Lake Ontario neighbourhood, we're often left without power.

Our once tight-knit circle of friends has dispersed to the new queer communities up north, with most going to Big Fruit. We, along with other peripheral town-folks have become completely disenfranchised from a totally different queer community that is extremely wealthy and has created a protected life in luxury towers. The rich queers love looking down from the luxury towers but also seem to love coming to the barge-towns because we host the best parties. These queers have killed most of the fun nightlife in their part of the city by bringing MySpace parties directly into their homes. I went to one once but quickly realized that I didn't belong. I don't understand the point of making your house seem like a club. The animosity between our worlds is thick.

At Big Fruit, our friends live a life that is very different. And, if I had to guess, we'll likely end up moving too after our current work contract's end. Big Fruit's houses have been designed and renovated by queer architects and contractors with unconventional colour and form. Everything is accessible for people like me. And the Big Fruit gym is full of hot guys. The last time I was there visiting, there were already half a dozen hunks sweating it out at the racks at 7am. In truth, my main motivation for going was the cruising I did in the showers after. Big Fruit is a true community which feels refreshing. People care

about each other, disconnect from tech and spend time together in physical space. It sometimes feels like church but without the religious bullshit. The lighting is always very low, warm and ambient. With everyone together as one, you can feel like your soul is going to burst.

Near the end of the day, I needed a serious digital break, so I took the opportunity to get out. Past the barge, I noticed that the few small businesses that still exist in the harbour all had the rainbow flag sticker or worse, "love is love" message on the window. I made sure to patronize the last remaining cafe that's actually still queer-owned and run. The power was out when I got back. We have a generator, of course, but we made a point of dining and reading by candlelight anyway. If or when we leave, this is how I'll remember Toronto.

Queer space: MySpace

Ding dong! Who's at the door? It's MySpace, the luxury on-demand entertainment service that instantly brings fun and glamour to your home! Say goodbye to boring evenings out and hello to the ultimate at home entertainment experience. We offer everything you want, when you want it in a fully customizable package.

Going out is a thing of the past. Why should you have to leave your house to get what you want? Our end-to-end service model includes planning, setup, space management and cleaning, so you can stay focused on what matters: you. Let us spoil you and your guests with a high-tech, hybrid experience that seamlessly combines physical and digital space. Our expert planners can create the ultimate one-of-a-kind theme party or special celebration especially and uniquely for you.

No friends? No problem. We'll fill the space with wealthy, sexy, hot influencers, including locals and digital attendees from around the world. For the older elite, please note that MySpace is not to be confused with the pioneering social media platform from the early 2000s.

Figure 21: Midjourney image 1 generated using prompts "luxury on-demand, glamorous, customizable entertainment, high-tech, hybrid, combines physical and digital space, one-of-a-kind theme party special celebration"

Figure 22: Midjourney image 2 generated using prompts "luxury on-demand, glamorous, customizable entertainment, high-tech, hybrid, combines physical and digital space, one-of-a-kind theme party special celebration"

Figure 23: Midjourney image 3 generated using prompts "luxury on-demand, glamorous, customizable entertainment, high-tech, hybrid, combines physical and digital space, one-of-a-kind theme party special celebration"

Queer space: Big Fruit

Big Fruit is a queer, safe and affordable rural community with big city values. With the high cost of living and poor quality of life in Toronto, Big Fruit is an attractive alternative for those seeking a better way to live.

You won't find traditional architecture and design here! Houses in Big Fruit have been creatively designed and constructed by queers for queers. Our community buildings, including gyms and wellness centres, provide endless opportunities for fun, connection and healthy living.

On Big Fruit's Main Street, small businesses and entrepreneurship are thriving. And with ample space and property available, worry-free residents can follow their hearts and pursue their passions.

Big Fruit is a response to the chaos created by technology in our daily lives. We encourage a return to a simpler time, where technology is only used when necessary and in-person connection is prioritized.

Keep spreading queer to rural Canada by joining us at Big Fruit. Experience a new and better way of living, where creativity, inclusivity, and queer community thrive!

Figure 24: Midjourney image 1 generated using prompts "Creative, unusual and cheerful architecture in rural Canada"

Figure 25: Midjourney image 2 generated using prompts "Creative, unusual and cheerful architecture in rural Canada"
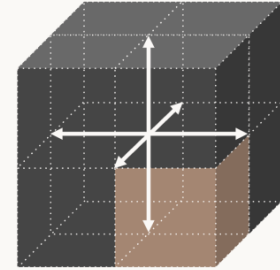
Figure 26: Midjourney image 3 generated using prompts "Creative, unusual and cheerful architecture in rural Canada"

Figure 27: Midjourney image 4 generated using prompts "Creative, unusual and cheerful architecture in rural Canada"

4. Shelter From the Norm

Key Drivers: Queer Marginalization, Harmonious Technology, Increased Space Affordability

Until the mid-2030s, all levels of government lost power and influence due to a rise in global financial and technology disruptions and climate crises whose impacts were so significant and unprecedented that political parties were not equipped to navigate the aftermath. These crises led to voter distrust and an increase in conservative values amongst Canadians. Since then, in an effort to regain control and balance, elected conservative governments have shifted their focus and investment in people and programs to emerging technologies that enforce, streamline and regulate. This includes some technologies developed domestically, but primarily encompasses foreign investments in technology from global tech superpowers. Like many other cities in the world that have invested in technology, Toronto has become a highly efficient and orderly city. Wide ranges of surveillance technologies ensure the city's residents follow rules and adopt specific behaviours. Through a points system, these technologies reward people who follow expected patterns of conduct and adopt established processes, thus creating a culture of conformity. Points allow residents to receive subsidies on food and rental expenses and encourage those who fall outside of the norm to convert. AI technologies reinforce biases and exclusion. These technologies have also increased production, development and output across all sectors of the economy, eliminating many frontline jobs. The jobs that remain are highly skilled and go to those who follow the rules and those who look and act like the people who remain in

power. Science developments have led to the production of new vaccines, including some that profess to spread heteronormativity, putting the future of queerness and being different at risk. Governments argue that, in these challenging and highly competitive times, a population that is more uniform will bring about greater productivity and economic prosperity. Extreme highrise development across the former Greenbelt has ensured that a growing population of primarily climate migrants has affordable housing throughout the megacity of Toronto. As part of their entry requirements, these migrants watch mandatory, virtual content as they move throughout their daily lives in order to learn and develop the new Canadian way of being. Non-conforming queers continue to be marginalized and deprioritized, but they also—perhaps more than ever— look out for each other and stick together. Three blocks along Church Street have been preserved and remain in queer hands thanks to the strength of the tight-knit community that remains and a group of angel investors in the 2030s. Despite the resistance of conservative government officials and many of the city's residents, these blocks have been optimally planned and converted into affordable queer spaces of all kinds, including retirement homes, residences, nightlife venues and community spaces. While regularly the target of homophobic acts of violence and vandalization, community members have come together to form citizen protection and neighbourhood watch groups to protect their dense, mixed-use space and keep the people within it safe. Hybridization of these spaces allows for greater accessibility and inclusion of queer folks who, without technology, would not have access to this concentrated space. In particular, hybrid community centres offer effective models of outreach and support for queers stuck in other parts of the country or world.

Across Toronto, collectives of marginalized individuals have formed to create opportunities for income and improve quality of life. Groups come together to perform complementary services that form end-to-end processes of value creation. People trade goods and services, and marginalized groups, united by difference, collaborate to share resources and expertise and to ensure their individual communities continue to exist. For many individuals in these communities, jobs have taken on less significance. Community members are more likely to volunteer and look for opportunities to give back and help others around them. People share wealth and look for ways to balance inequities.

People's personal relationships with technology tend to be positive. Most people use robot companions to increase productivity, generate income, complete chores and errands, and in some cases provide purpose and cure loneliness. These companions are highly intelligent and empathetic and are especially effective in helping seniors age in place. They are also programmed to act like the government's ideal resident: one that follows rules, establishes order and protects the status quo. However, underground queer networks have developed override codes to replace the generic hetero AI personalities with queer identity, mannerisms, humour, experience, knowledge and understanding. In many cases, these queer conversion companions have become part of the community and have established productive and supportive relationships with other humans and other robots. At the same time, the line between human biology and technology has blurred. Humans regularly take on bio-digital organs and appendages to improve performance and general health. The required surgeries and procedures to facilitate these enhancements are typically reserved for individuals in power, but black-

market processes for participation also exist. While new technologies have been used to control the residents of Toronto, they simultaneously serve as tools for strengthening at-risk communities and enhancing the lives of many who are neglected and under attack by systems of power.

Future journal entry: Shelter From The Norm

I rarely leave the Village anymore. It's not safe outside of the concentrated space we've protected and developed over time. Inside, I am not defined by my Black trans neurodiverse identity, I am simply existing. Outside, I am afraid.

Today, I volunteered for five hours at Souvenirs. I ran a hybrid writing class and, in the afternoon, moderated a panel for a screening of the 2000's film, Jennifer's Body. For both sessions, we welcomed in-person local queers and digital attendees from all over Canada and the world. With our outreach programs and ASL and sign language technology, we're finding better and safer ways to offer programs and support to all kinds of people everywhere. I love this work. And I'm grateful to exist in a space that doesn't misgender me or discriminate against me because I don't conform to white beauty ideals or because my pronouns are complicated. So much of what we do continues to be grassroots and community-led. The truth is, we wouldn't exist without our community. But our community is at risk.

In the evening, I traveled with a group to Buddies in Bot Times for their weekly pay-what-you-can cabaret show. The Bots are always entertaining, and Buddies keeps the clean energy air conditioning on high. The perfect escape from the sweltering summer

heat. Sometimes all you need is a little cool and the right company. The space is sex-positive but queer people aren't inherently sexualized for just existing anymore.

After the show, there was a small group of queer haters outside again. Fortunately, our on-site security team - well-trained in de-escalation and mental health crises - handled the situation well. We walked home in a group, passing our basketball court. A mixed group of queers were playing a casual game behind the protection wall. Some queens were lounging on the sidelines watching. It felt like summer.

In bed now, I think about my community. My heart breaks for new queer Canadians who have to hide who they are and conform in order to have shelter and food. I hope we can help them. I'm reminded that having queer community brings hope that maybe everything will be okay, that we are not alone, and that we deserve to be our authentic selves in EVERY space.

Queer space: Buddies in Bot Times

Experience the future of cabaret entertainment! Our club offers an unforgettable experience where local bots experiment with gender, sexuality and performance to delight our guests.

During these challenging times, we understand the importance of safe spaces and escapism. Our bots are here to distract you from your troubles and provide an evening of spectacular entertainment. Too hot outside? Don't worry! The Buddies air cooling system is always on high. Too hot inside? You bet. In our sensual space, Buddies is the perfect place to meet your next romantic partner.

Guests are encouraged to pay what they can to guarantee our club remains accessible to all. To ensure your safety, we also encourage travelling in groups when visiting our club.

Queer Toronto, a new era of performance and entertainers have arrived. Let's make bot-iful memories together!

Figure 28: Midjourney image 1 generated using prompts "small bots in wigs dancing in modern cabaret club"

Figure 29: Midjourney image generated using prompts "people waiting for a performance to start on stage in an intimate venue low lighting futuristic technology"

Figure 30: Midjourney image 2 generated using prompts "small bots in wigs dancing in modern cabaret club"

Queer space: Souvenirs

Souvenirs is a tech-enabled community centre serving the queer community with inclusive programming and support. At Souvenirs, we have two primary goals: (1) help our older community members stay connected, healthy and engaged so they can continue to live their lives to the fullest and thrive in place, and (2) preserve and celebrate the history of the queer community by educating younger queers.

Our programming includes bot and technology training, social events, advanced therapies and educational workshops that allow younger queers to connect with older generations.

At Souvenirs, community reigns supreme and everyone is at home. We have an alcohol-free bar, which is designed in the style of queer bars from the past. Here, you can enjoy our specialty beverage, Souvenir Sauce, a delicious and healthy alternative to alcohol that is brewed on site.

Figure 31: Midjourney image generated using prompts "inclusive digital technology-enabled film screening for queer people of colour seniors"

Figure 32: Midjourney image generated using prompts "queer people of colour seniors talking to young people in a future digital museum that looks like a bar"

Figure 33: Midjourney image generated using prompts "backs of seniors experiencing augmented reality and sitting at a bar in the future"

Attributes of future queer space

Next, the relevance of the eight common attributes of past and current queer spaces was assessed against each of the four futures scenarios. Attributes were assigned a low score ("L") if the attribute was less present, relevant or impactful in the queer spaces and experiences of queer people in that particular future, a medium score ("M") for average relevance, and a high score ("H") if the attribute was very present, relevant or impactful. An average ("Overall") low, medium or high score was then assigned for each attribute. The table below summarizes the results from this exercise:

Attribute	H-H	PTTP	TGQE	SFTN	Overall
Safe	L	H	M	H	M
Transforming	M	M	M	M	M
Connecting	H	M	H	H	H
Teaching	H	L-M	M-H	H	H
Appropriated	L	H	H	M	M
Transportive	H	H	H	H	H
Sexual	M	H	M	M	M
Transgressive	L	H	L	H	M

Table 7: Relevance of queer space attributes

Additionally, three new attributes with gaining relevance were extrapolated from the outcomes from semi-structured interviews with queer space creators and community builders, and the future journal entries completed by research participants. An average

low, medium or high score was then assigned for each new attribute in each futures scenario. Again, an overall score was calculated using the same approach as above. The table below summarizes the results from this exercise:

Attribute	H-H	PTTP	TGQE	SFTN	Overall
Inclusive	H	H	H	H	H
Intersectional	H	M	H	H	H
Accessible	H	H	H	H	H

Table 8: Future queer space attributes

Key findings

The key findings from this exercise were as follows:

- Overall, the most relevant queer space attributes ("H" overall rating) in the futures scenarios are Connecting, Teaching, Transportive, Inclusive, Intersectional and Accessible. Whether they are fixed, temporary or digital, queer spaces that enable community-building and connection continue to play a key role for queers in the future. For different reasons, spaces that have Teaching attributes also have high relevance in the future. These reasons range from celebrating history in Homo-Homogenization (H-H) to protecting history and memory in Shelter From the Norm (SFTN). As advanced technologies, including AI and augmented reality continue to expand and humans of all kinds seek out tools that enable escapism, Transportive spaces continue to be very relevant in the future for rethinking our physical worlds and experiences. This may be especially true when negative extremes of critical uncertainties such as space unaffordability, queer

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marginalization or dissonant technology are present. Over the next 20 years, queer spaces that are inclusive (spaces where everyone is welcome) and accessible (physical and digital spaces that everyone can access) appear to take on greater relevance. Intersectional spaces that prioritize the needs and experiences of queer community members who are subject to overlapping systems of discrimination also become more relevant. The need for more inclusive, accessible and intersectional spaces was highlighted consistently throughout the primary research phase of this project.

- Attributes are more likely to have low relevance ("L" score) when the positive extremes of the critical uncertainties are present – when space is more affordable, queers are accepted or elevated, and technology harmoniously complements our physical world. For example, in Homo-Homogenization (H-H), the need for Safe, Appropriated and Transgressive space is less relevant. In this future, all spaces are safe for queer people and queerness itself is no longer transgressive. With space being more affordable, queer spaces are not made of heteronormative remains. Instead, space is acquired, designed and constructed with queer intent and purpose.

- Additionally, many queer space attributes appear to take on higher relevance when one or more negative polarities of the critical uncertainties exist in the futures scenarios. In Power to the Patriarchy (PTTP), for example, more attributes receive "H" scores as a result of queer lives being marginalized, space being unaffordable and technology being dissonant or in conflict with physical space.

Section 4:
Recommendations &
conclusion

Strategies and recommendations

Through primary and secondary research, 16 strategies were identified with the potential to create, adapt and preserve queer space in Toronto in the future. Each strategy was placed in a matrix using an X and Y axis. The X axis maps each potential strategy's performance within the four futures scenarios explored in Section 3 with low or no performance in any scenario on one end of the axis and high performance across all futures scenarios on the other end. The Y axis maps levels of stakeholder dimensions from the Actors Map developed in Section 1 with strategies that could be deployed by "User" or "Organization" actors (primarily the queer community in Toronto) on one end and strategies that could be deployed by "Ecosystem" or "Society" actors on the other end (primarily Government). The output from this exercise is detailed in the table that follows:
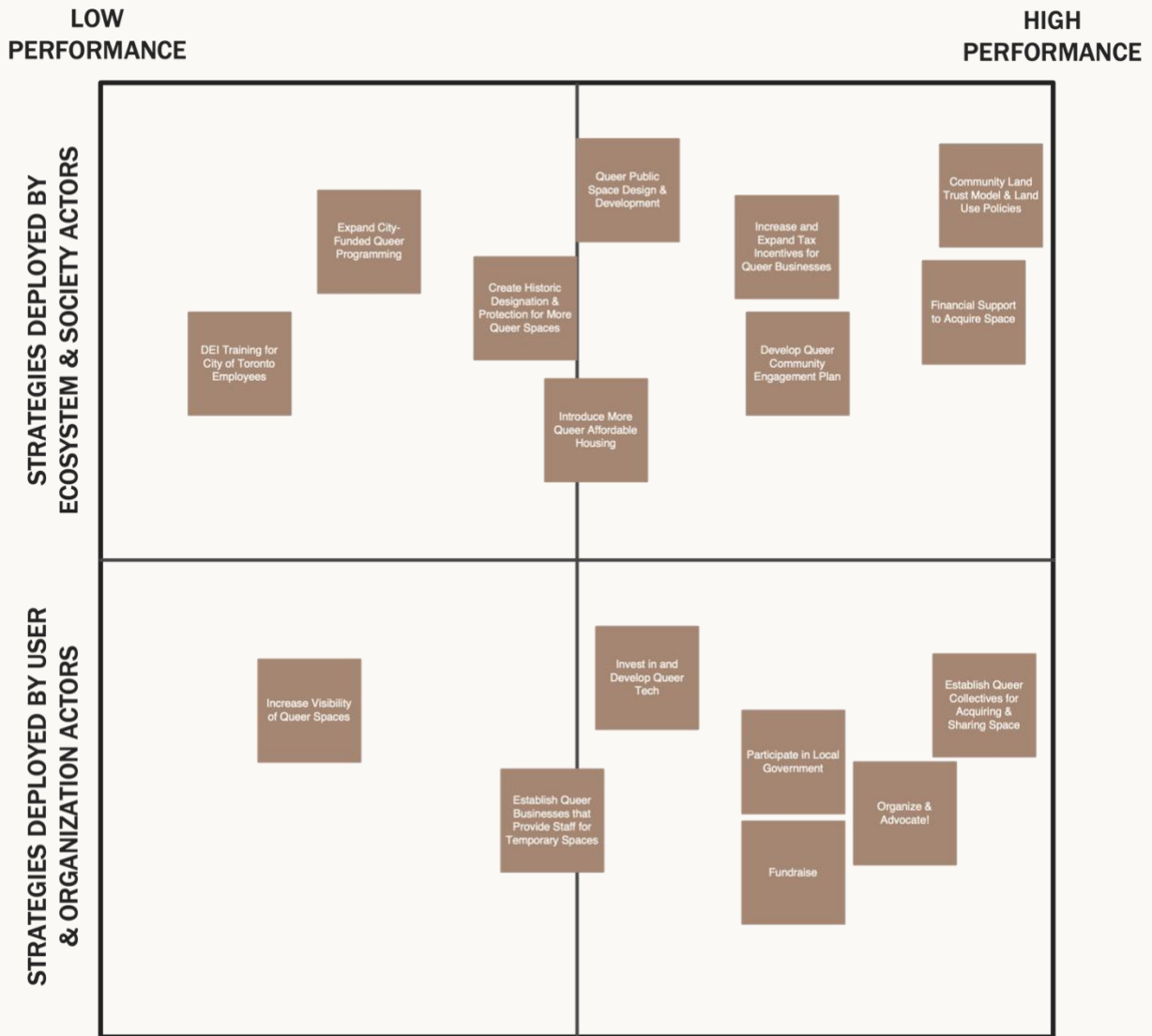
STRATEGIES DEPLOYED BY
ECOSYSTEM & SOCIETY ACTORS

Expand City-Funded Queer Programming

Queer Public Space Design & Development

Increase and Expand Tax Incentives for Queer Businesses

Community Land Trust Model & Land Use Policies

DEI Training for City of Toronto Employees

Create Historic Designation & Protection for More Queer Spaces

Develop Queer Community Engagement Plan

Financial Support to Acquire Space

Introduce More Queer Affordable Housing

STRATEGIES DEPLOYED BY USER
& ORGANIZATION ACTORS

Increase Visibility of Queer Spaces

Invest in and Develop Queer Tech

Establish Queer Collectives for Acquiring & Sharing Space

Establish Queer Businesses that Provide Staff for Temporary Spaces

Participate in Local Government

Organize & Advocate!

Fundraise

Figure 34: Strategies & recommendations performance

This exercise was inspired by Wind-Tunnelling, a method for testing the robustness of strategies or options against a set of scenarios (Van der Heijden, 2005). The relevant actors for strategy deployment are particularly significant to the futures of queer space in Toronto, as the queer community throughout history has often had to advocate for itself. So much of what the community has accomplished is grassroots and community-led and there is little indication that this will change in Toronto in the future. Through this light wind-tunnelling exercise, the highest performing strategies (or, in other words, the

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strategies that have the greatest potential for creating, adapting or preserving queer space in the future) were identified. The two highest-performing strategies that could be deployed by user or organization actors (queer community) and the two highest-performing strategies that could be deployed by ecosystem or society actors (government) are outlined in more detail below:

Queer community strategic recommendations

1. **Establish a queer collective** that:
   a. aligns on a strategy, governance structure and a set of priorities
   b. works with the community to identify needs and gaps in available space for intersectional queer community members
   c. acquires and shares event and community-building space(s)
   d. develops a team of queer event staff that can serve temporary spaces in Toronto
   e. fundraises and works with the community to preserve and create queer spaces
2. **Organize and advocate** for the protection of queer spaces by forming a mighty and diverse community group that are aligned on a set of common objectives and:
   a. engage in public demonstrations
   b. raise awareness about the importance of queer spaces (sharing stories and experiences through social media, public forums, and other channels)
   c. regularly and diligently support queer businesses to ensure that they remain financially viable and can continue to operate

d. participate in local government (attend city council meetings, zoning board hearings, and other public forums)

e. fundraise to support queer spaces by hosting events, soliciting donations, and engaging in crowdfunding campaigns

Government strategic recommendations

1. **Provide financial support** through grants and donations to queer community groups and collectives for them to purchase space. This can be done in partnership with large organizations who donate to community organizations. Wherever possible, these funds should be focused on acquiring real estate ahead of operating or running space (rent, utilities, etc.) – it is critical that these spaces are queer-owned

2. **Develop a community land trust model and more progressive land use policies** that prioritize the creation and preservation of queer spaces. This should include:

    a. zoning laws that protect existing spaces and encourage the development of new spaces – look for opportunities to develop side streets and underdeveloped areas

    b. ensuring maximum community participation in key decision-making

    c. protecting the Church-Wellesley Village as a queer neighbourhood with requirements and mechanisms in place to ensure more commercial and residential property is queer-owned

    d. creating and preserving affordable housing

Limitations & further research opportunities

While the nine semi-structured interview participants came from diverse backgrounds and offered unique perspectives on the present and future of queer space in Toronto, an opportunity exists to engage more members of the queer community not only in understanding emerging trends and perspectives but also in building out potential futures and representations of queer space. A scenario and queer space generation workshop with multiple and varied queer-identifying participants would have offered broader, more fulsome insights and research outcomes.

Additionally, the future journaling exercise failed to reach a fully representative sample of the queer community in the city of Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area. Of the 34 future journaling participants, the following key gaps were identified:

- There were no participants above the 35-44 age range; 23.5% of participants identified as 16-24, 55.9% as 25-34 and 20.6% as 35-44.

- Only 26.5% of participants identified as Black, Indigenous, People of Colour or Other (compared to ~53% of Toronto's total population); 73.5% of future journaling participants identified as white.

- Only 20.6% of participants identified as using "He/Him" pronouns compared to 41.2% that used "She/Her" and 38.2% that used "They/Them" or "Other."

Future research opportunities exist to engage different segments of Toronto's queer population to map and imagine divergent futures of the city. While this study includes some preliminary insights into strategies and recommendations for preserving, adapting

and creating queer spaces in Toronto, future research should explore these opportunities in greater detail and define key steps and milestones for strategy deployment and execution.

Conclusion

Over the past 20 years, many queer spaces in Toronto have disappeared, and others have popped up or taken on new shape and meaning. Despite the emergence of new spaces—spaces that often better meet the needs of a changing and intersectional queer community—the disappearance of and threat to physical queer spaces in Toronto is real and must not be ignored. At the time of writing this conclusion, one of Toronto's oldest queer spaces, Hanlan's Point, is under attack. In early 2023, the City of Toronto released their Toronto Island Park Master Plan, which included a proposal to build a festival space on Hanlan's Point. This development would significantly alter the use of this important and sacred space for many queer people in Toronto. Fortunately, the community and other concerned residents organized and protested, and the proposal was recently scrapped (Knegt, 2023). But many believe this won't be the last time the city tries to reclaim this space. In a recent CBC news article, journalist Peter Knegt (2023) writes, "There have always been people who have looked at Hanlan's and essentially said that we can find a better use for this space than for the queer community. Getting a historic designation from the city could protect it from those

people" (para. 22). To influence a queer-positive future trajectory in Toronto, we must ensure Hanlan's Point is preserved for queer people and queer use.

In the next 20 years, queer spaces in Toronto will continue to change. And some may disappear. But how these spaces transform with time is uncertain: will queer people continue to be marginalized and require safe spaces for survival? Or will all queer people be equal and celebrated to the point where spaces of all kinds are accepting and inclusive? Will physical residential and commercial space in Toronto be affordable for the city residents? Or will cost pressures push individuals and communities farther and farther outside of the city? Will digital space overtake or complement our physical geographies? The future is uncertain, and accordingly, no one knows the answers to these questions.

Throughout this research, different possible Toronto futures scenarios were explored, and in each of those scenarios, different uses and representations of queer space were uncovered. While vastly different, what unites these future spaces existing in parallel yet opposing Torontos is a set of overlapping spatial attributes. Spaces that are connecting, teaching, transportive, inclusive, intersectional and accessible are represented most consistently in the futures explored. These attributes define spaces that are inclusive to all and used for community-building and connection, for passing down memories and celebrating progress, and for escaping and existing in imaginary and better worlds.

This research indicates that queer spaces (regardless of whether they are fixed, temporary or digital) will continue to play an important role in the lives of Toronto's queer people in the future. However, the outcomes also show that the fixed queer spaces available today often exclude racialized queers, queer women, and trans and

non-binary people. We need to do more to create inclusive and accessible spaces all over the city, from tapping into the potential of the Village to fostering and supporting satellite spaces in other neighbourhoods. The best way to do this is through strong and collaborative relationships within the queer community and with the City of Toronto. And, in the absence of support from city departments and officials, the queer community must work collectively to protect and create spaces that are needed.

And while the research highlights key weaknesses in and threats to Toronto's queer space ecosystem, the future has great potential. The queer community can continue to organize and advocate for a better future, a future in which space exists and satisfies the needs of all community members. To quote José Esteban Muñoz (2009), "Queerness is not yet here. Queerness is an ideality. Put another way, we are not yet queer, but we can feel it as the warm illumination of a horizon imbued with potentiality. We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. The future is queerness's domain" (p. 1). Together, we can influence the future of Toronto. A future is possible in which all queer people are accepted, and technology and affordable physical space co-exist. In the face of the challenges that lie ahead, we must remain future-oriented, with our eyes on the horizon, to shape a sustainable, queer-loving and equitable Toronto.

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