

PINK PUBLIC SPACE

seminar and exposition on different identities and urban space

Rotterdam, 26 (23-30) June 2001

Introduction

Since 1996 the Lesbian division of Womens Studies Europe (WILD) has been working on several aspects of 'Thinking Space'. For its project in 2001 the group has chosen as its theme the (in)visibility of lesbians in public space. The project has been placed in the context of the 'Pink Programme' of one of Europe's Cultural Capitals 2001: the city of Rotterdam. The Rotterdam part of this project takes place in June 2001 and consists of primarily of an open, international seminar, accompanied by a masterclass (studyweek) and exposition. In the first half of 2001 the WILD group prepares this programme, by compiling a cartography of lesbian visibility in public space. In the second half of 2001 the results will be published on the WILD website and other possible channels.

Aim

Before lesbians can be seen as a 'target group' of urban planning and the housing market, it is necessary to form an idea of what we are talking about. Visualizing the (in)visibility of lesbians as a specific group of urban users works two ways:

- it challenges lesbians to 'materialize' identity in terms of space; and
- it enhances the awareness of lesbian presence for those who are not.

Both aspects are equally important preconditions for putting into practice the 'many cities' of Rotterdam and an urban policy aimed at 'diversity'. The WILD group has worked through a large variety of projects on the first aspect: "what is lesbian identity in terms of space?". Now the time has come to confront these academic findings with the everyday practice of urban planning. The seminar will place lesbians as urban users on the agenda of planners, policy-makers, administrators, housing coöperations and designers. It will also confront common interests and different identities such as gender, culture, age.

Pink Public Space

The 'Pink Public Space' seminar will focus on 'different identities and public space':

- 'Different identities' is the central theme of Rotterdam Cultural Capital 2001, and Rotterdam Roze (Office Pink Cultural Capital). The latter is co-organizer of the seminar. Different identities means both: the different ways of being lesbian or gay; as well as the fact that everyone's identity consists of more aspects than (lesbian/gay) sexuality: gender; cultural/ethnic background, physical impairments are prominent other factors.
- '*Public space*' here means in the first place the urban space outside the home; however the distribution of space and dwellings as performed by (semi-)public entities is also seen as part of the public space.

The 'Pink Public Space' seminar raises questions such as:

- what is the position of lesbians and gay men on the housing market?
- in what places is there a risk of encountering violence?
- how are lesbians and gay men represented in the process of formation of public space?
- is public space accessible for people with multiple oppressed identities?
- do lesbian women and gay men have similar interests in public space?

Themes for discussion will include also professional practice and practical issues such as accessibility, and safety.

Programme 'Pink Public Space':

- Keynote lecture "Different identities and urban space" by Beatriz Campbell
 - Round Table discussions with invited speakers:
 - from local policy making- and planning bodies
 - from lesbian and gay organizations
 - from Thinking Space projects in Europe
- So far four Round Tables are foreseen:
- 1- visibility & risks in public space
 - 2- housing specifically for lesbian mothers and lesbian/gay elderly
 - 3- multiple oppressed identities and accessibility
 - 4- thinking space: theories of space and visibility
- presentation of the first European Cartography of Lesbian visibility in Public Space

Exposition of the cartography

the WILD group works on a cartography of 'Lesbian visibility in public space'

The results will be presented for the first time during the RCC Pink Week open seminar 'Pink Public Space'.

The exposition will point at landmarks and urban rituals that tell us something about lesbian (in)visibility. The RR2001 WILD project aims to do just that: bring to the surface a concrete recording of urban/public space by lesbian women. This will be registered in many possible locations, such as: street, square, public transport, pub, garden, sportsfield, school, hospital etc. There are many thinkable forms of visualization, including foto/video, 3D models, 2D drawings or collage, map/plan, theater, computeranimation etc. Each WILD-member will visualize one situation in her hometown, using a media of choice, before coming to Rotterdam.

The exposition remains open during the 2001 Pink Week at the Schouwburg Rotterdam.

Simultaneously there will be a display of books and materials on the theme of different identities and urban space in the nearby van Gennep Bookshop window.

Studyweek Lesbian visibility in public space

Before the seminar a studyweek takes place from 16-23 June 2001. The WILD group brings together the contributions from different European cities, in order to recognize the differences and common factors, and work on interpretation. Parallel situations will be looked for and visualized in Rotterdam. The cartographies will present lesbian experiences in terms of space, including representations and analyses of landmarks, buildings, symbols, rituals, gestures and behaviours. This can be done through photography, mapping, essays and so on.

During the studyweek the following activities take place:

- Workshops, each in turn lead by participants, concerning ongoing research projects in 'Thinking Space', discussion of texts from the reader, and the cartography itself.
- Participants will exhibit the results from phase one, as well as to perform a comparative study in the public space of Rotterdam (eg: someone who brings a picture of a lesbian family in a shopping mall will attempt to take a similar picture). Volunteers from Rotterdam will be present to help participants find their way.
- the group will work on the interpretation of the cartographies and prepare the presentation of its results during the 'Pink Public Space' open seminar.
- Also the discussion at the round tables of the seminar are prepared.
- Finally the group composes the exposition of the Cartographies adjacent to the Pink Public Space seminar.

Participants

The seminar will be of special interest to professionals working with urban space. The Bureau Rotterdam Roze will facilitate the active participation of diverse lesbian and gay communities.

Invitations are published in the Cultural Capital publications.

The seminar and exposition at the Stadschouwburg are open to the public.

Requierevements for participation in the masterclass are as follows:

- Participants are asked to document at least one instance of lesbian visibility in public space in their home-towns. Contributions are so far expected from Austria, England, Finland, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain.
- Participants are also being asked to contribute at least one text from their bibliography relevant to the theme. Out of these texts a Reader will be compiled and distributed to create a common theoretical platform in the study-week.
- Finally, participants are being asked to define their workshops for the study-week.

During the preparatory phase, participants will actively discuss the development of the trans-european project via an internet mailinglist facilitated by WILD.

Organization

The following parties are involved:

WILD-thinking space: responsible for content and the masterclass, with back-up from

WISE (European association of Womens Studies), Utrecht

Rotterdam Roze 2001 (Pink Capital office): logistic support, registration and incorporation in the programme and publicity of RCC 2001

Tussen Ruimte (Intermediate Space; office for architecture in Rotterdam): Coordination of the project and design of the exposition and shop-window.

Coöperation with urban institutes in Rotterdam is in progress, such as:

Erasmus University Rotterdam, Steunpunt Wonen, dS+V, NAI

Lesbian and Gay organizations will be specially invited to participate in the seminar

Information

For the programme of Rotterdam Cultural Capital see: www.rotterdam01.nl

For the programme of Rotterdam Pink Week see: www.rotterdamroze.nl

For information on WILD/ Thinking Space see: www.sappho.net/wild/

For information on the Pink Public Space seminar and Cartography project contact:

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This text can be downloaded at: www.sappho.net/wild/2001.html