

Soho's 'unique' sexual character should be preserved, say researchers

May 16 2018

The unique, cosmopolitan sexual character of London's Soho should be preserved in the face of gentrification, a new study argues.

The research, by academics at the universities of Kent and Middlesex, highlights that Soho has long been recognised for its support of a diverse range of sexual citizens—including LGBTQ and the kink communities—but that this is threatened by a London-wide process of 'sanitization'.

They argue that, although the area continues to be associated with 'non-conformity and deviance', the geography of sex shops in Soho has been altered by licensing strategies and more recently by gentrification and corporatisation.

Using the example of two sex shops that cater for a diverse clientele, the researchers illustrate how Soho is important in the way it continues to 'create a space' for 'sexual others' that might normally be 'marginalized or pushed to the periphery'.

The study points out that, following the Miscellaneous Provisions Act of 1982, the number of sex shops in the area declined from more than 50 to a total of 12 licenced shops now.

But it notes that there is still a high concentration of sexual retailing, with most of the sexual commerce located in the north and eastern quarters of the area; this means that almost all of the sex shops, erotic

boutiques and strip clubs are located within half a mile of one another.

This dense concentration sits in contrast to other parts of the UK, the researchers point out, where much of the licencing legislation and moral concerns about respectability has relegated sex shops to peripheral locations far away from main shopping areas.

Researcher Dr. Erin Sanders-McDonagh, of Kent's School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research, argues that it is the 'transgressive nature' of Soho that has allowed sex shops to thrive in ways that are 'unique to the area'.

'As with other Red-Light districts in Western Europe, Soho is being sanitized as part of larger gentrification processes and the worry is this diverse space will be stripped of its unique, cosmopolitan character,' she said.

The research, entitled *Immoral geographies and Soho's sex shops: exploring spaces of sexual diversity in London* (Erin Sanders-McDonagh, University of Kent; Magali Peyrefitte, Middlesex University) is published in the journal *Gender, Place and Culture*.

More information: Erin Sanders-McDonagh et al, *Immoral geographies and Soho's sex shops: exploring spaces of sexual diversity in London*, *Gender, Place & Culture* (2018). [DOI: 10.1080/0966369X.2018.1453487](https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2018.1453487)

Provided by University of Kent

Citation: Soho's 'unique' sexual character should be preserved, say researchers (2018, May 16) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-05-soho-unique-sexual-character.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.