Podcast interview with Matt C Smith

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I am very excited to be here in Brighton with Matt Smith. They're a doctoral student at the University of Brighton. And I'm here because I got in touch and got very excited to hear about their research at the RGF conference. I wonder if you could just tell me a little bit about that research and how you got interested in it.

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Yeah, so I presented the RGS in the summer, just sort of presenting some of the findings from my PhD research. Which is on trans and non-binary experiences of urban space in Brighton Hove. But then thinking through the kind of implications for planning, theory and practice. And so, that was kind of just presenting a bit of the two things that I did in my two main kinds of research focuses which was firstly doing an analysis of how trans features within planning policy in the city of Brighton and Hove and then looking at the experiences of trans and non-binary residents, using creative mapping sessions. And that was more to kind of focus not on the kind of, particularly experiences of planning as such, but the lived experiences of city space, and then kind of trying to think through like, what does it mean to do forms of inclusion. And how that changes, depending on what questions to ask and where you start.

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It’s a great combination of those two things. I mean, you have got the planning and I'm really excited in these sorts of qualitative methods and wondered if you could say a little bit more about those sorts of creative mapping because I just thought that was fascinating.

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Yeah, so I guess in terms of how it came about, was because I was thinking you have a lot of stuff which is based more in like human geography, social geography, particularly like the field of trans geographies, where there's a lot of looking at the lived experience, and the kind of embodied knowledges that people have, but also how they inform people's kind of experiences of spaces, in terms of both like euphoria inclusion, marginalisation and oppression. A lot of research necessarily does the two things together, whereas they're looking at that lived experiences of space and place, and also looking at the kind of policy that's going on. And so, I really wanted with my research to do both of those things. And so that's why I also do a kind of a discourse analysis of policy. And that is to bring the two together. So on the one hand, looking at how planning is functioning in terms of material practices and everyday kind of practices of planners, and those forms of inclusion. And at the same time, looking at those lived experiences. And I guess it's kind of quite difficult, then trying to bring them together, because there's kind of like two different little worlds. But that's kind of what I wanted to do with the research. And the creative mapping sessions have quite a roller coaster of development, in the sense that I developed these kind of creative workshops that would be a kind of set of three workshops which the same kind of participants would attend in each one is a development from the kind of starting with forms of body mapping and storyboarding. To start with the geographies closest in, as I think Robin longer said it, where you start with the kind of the bodies in space, but also those kinds of personal narratives. And then building to then are over the sessions to those kinds of more spatialised experiences, particularly at the city wide level because that's what I'm kind of particularly interested in. But it feels like quite a leap to ask people to necessarily just go what are your experiences of the whole city and like, and so it felt like a sort of a certain development to get there, through the credit mapping sessions.

But then COVID did disrupt what I was planning to do so there was a lot of alteration and so half of the research became the kind of two online sessions instead of a group setting one on one. But that seemed to work really well where there was a kind of a week or two weeks in between each session and then setting a little bit of a homework task as well. And it had enough flexibility. It really worked well for everyone. And got some really good little visual representations through the making of the storyboards or the kind of city maps.

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Wow, so there was sort of one session that was more focused on body mapping and then a week or two later people would be mapping the city.

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Yeah, exactly. So, there's like storyboards or body maps, or the option to do neither. For one participant just didn't work with how their brain worked in terms of how they think about and how they talk about their own experience. So, it is clear that's where the creative method was maybe getting in the way. So we were just like, don't worry we don't have to do that. And we just had a really great conversation from a few notes that they had made before the session. But then the kind of the next session of the making a city wide map, they really just they took two and it is really interesting seeing that difference of how different people take two different methods more easily. So, it is having that flexibility built in.

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Yeah, that is really important as well. So, you're not excluding people, isn't it? And you are able to participate.

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Yeah, exactly.

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So, you must have got some really exciting data as well and quite challenging to analyse that data as well leads to transcripts and maps and

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recording.

Yeah, exactly. So, I had the transcripts from the sessions alongside the actual visual representations themselves. And most of the transcripts were like a description by the person who made it have what the representation meant to them. So it was I guess, less about me doing an essay, like a in depth visual kind of analysis of the map so much, but focusing, firstly, on the meaning that people had and they spoke about their own experiences. That was like the first stage of analysis, just kind of a thematic analysis.

And then the second stage was then really kind of thinking, okay, what do all these experiences mean? For planning, or like, or planning theory and practice. I guess a large kind of like both the academic arguments and literature, but also like the professional kind of practitioners and what it might mean for them. And that's where I got really thinking about the idea of trans infrastructures as a way bridging concept between the kind of lived experience of people and the kind of the complexity of people's lived experience. And the kind of way to articulate it into planning that perhaps is more useful in my eyes than perhaps how it's being done at the moment.

Where there's often a certain kind of flattening and a focus towards certain things or needs which are the most amenable to how planning thinks and ways of doing things currently within planning. And the kind of the idea of trans infrastructure builds on a few academics in the literature to talk about queer infrastructure as well which is particularly the work of Bandcamp kin and lo Marshall where they researched kind of queer nightlife venues. So LGBTQ plus nightlife venues in London, and those spaces as a real part of the social fabric for LGBTQ plus people in the Capitol and beyond. And so, it's trying to take that concept on but expanding it beyond the standard more than nightlife venues and then thinking about all the kind of multiple dimensions of the built environment and the social environment that kind of enabling constraint trans lives. And that's how we're trying to then think through this idea of trans infrastructures.

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Wow. So, can you sort of give us some sort of specific example or examples of what you would see as trans infrastructures in that in your data?

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Yeah, it's a very good question and one of the most tricky ones because that's where I'm kind of at as well with my write up at the moment. I think it's a difficult one because I guess, when you're trying to like have an expansive concept as a kind of a including quite a lot of different aspects which aren't traditionally being thought of as planning concerns or the concerns of planning. And so, for instance, one of the things which clearly came up in my data is something like housing. And it's kind of recognised before that trans people have more precarious kind of experiences of housing because of relationships to like employment and transitioning. And also, because of discrimination and precarity around kind of the home and finding kind of affirmative and affordable housing particularly in Brighton Hove can be a very big issue or less than easy. And so, thinking of something like housing not just as like a specifically thinking through housing as like part of like a infrastructure for trans people that really enables or constrains their ability to inhabit the city of Brighton Hove. And it's something which leads to displacement in the sense living outside of the city. So within the surrounding area where there is more affordable housing and being able to then just visit it but there's the kind of a desire to live within the city. And that came up in people's experiences where they also had experienced discrimination in their housing environment within Brighton Hove and then that had led to them kind of being displaced out of the city again, and either they've been commuting in to for their social activities or studies. And so, it's like one kind of aspect where there's this real kind of paternalism centripetal force and there's like a kind of displacing effect that can happen. And in previous research that looked at how the kind of medical geographies that kind of displace trans people from Brighton for instance to the gender identity clinics in London. And so this was kind of like highlighting that different aspects that hadn't been looked at before.

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I guess that's related to the fact that people move to Brighton particularly for their experience around their gender and their sexuality. And, you know not everyone does. Some people might be queer and just move here for the sake of a job or something as well. But it's become something like the place to go to and it has been historically for quite a long time for trans people. Whether that's because the in the Brighton our story project which is a queer history project said in the kind of 1970s it was recommended that if you are transitioning that you moved to Brighton for the two years you needed to live in your chosen gender as the phrase was I think at the time before being able to have medical access to medical transition.

And people narratives still come through where they're still moving here, particularly for the kind of the idea of it being more trans inclusive. And that came up in the in the data, people do experience it as a space of like relative comfort or the most comfortable they've ever felt. And so that's really facilitated by this kind of network of transport services that do exist within the city, which enable people to get the kind of the knowledge to be able to navigate structures whether they're health care or housing or otherwise to help facilitate and enable people access to these services. And those are really kind of key kind of development of those knowledge over time to be able to help people to do that. And then it really does inform people's experiences of the city as a as a being able to have a greater kind of access to the city in the range of services and feeling also just less isolated when dealing with these issues.

And that's not something that's unique to Brighton and Hove of course. There's like other places with other services and stuff. But it still feels that something that people who move here really experienced as a key change. And so, there's something around people wanting to move to Brighton Hove in order to be able to have access to a range of services, and also a range of transpacific support services, and better quality of life whether that's just moving around the streets and public space. And at the same time, you've got kind of certain dynamics within the city such as housing. So, you've got this push and pull tension and I think the idea with kind of taking on transit infrastructures as a way to facilitate and increase the liveability of trans people's lives in the city is a way that hopefully policy could in practice take on and enable the kind of articulation of trans needs in a way that really does kind of increase liveability rather than where often in policy it can come up as a bit of audit check and where there's a making sure there's no further discriminatory effects but not necessarily seeking to really decrease those differential power relations that exist between social groups.

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That sounds interesting and important presumably if people are sort of pushed out, then potentially they lose access to those community links that they feel isolated potentially if they're not in the city where they hoped they might be.

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Yeah, and then that can be kind of just across a range of different services that you might not normally expect as well. So, for instance, there's one participant spoke about being able to access a chiropractor. And they specifically came to a chiropractor based in Brighton and they said in the future when they need to access chiropractor they will access one in Brighton because even if they're not queer or trans themselves they're just much more likely to be queer or trans inclusive which isn't necessarily true for chiropractors in Brighton. But they said that they specifically had experiences in the town further on down the coast where they lived that they hadn't had an affirmative experience. And it had been a very poor experience of accessing those services. So, it's that thing where there's just kind of a range of all different kinds of services.

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Yeah, and I suppose the importance you're talking as well about the sort of community embodied knowledge and the with the sort of links and the way that people would connect up to other people who know about those services and so on. So it's not just the services, it's sort of the knowledge, the community knowledge, so which, with the infrastructure is also includes sort of organisations and networks.

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Yeah, exactly. So, you've got a few kind of quite long established now like organisations that are trans specific or trans, inclusive and wide LGBTQ charities and NGOs. And that does form a particular kind of like support ecosystem within Brighton Hove which, being able to access can really make changes in people's experiences. it's like having a certain institutionalisation of that knowledge in order to be able to help people and the continuity of that. And I guess it is particularly important because of the lack of concrete and lack of sustained trans spaces. I guess a lot of trans spaces often or trans focus spaces tend to be very temporal. Where that's something like Trans Pride in the city which you know is kind of a phenomenal event that's been going for the10th year in 2023. And that's kind of really important to the city and kind of important for people's experiences of the city. But it's also demonstrating a kind of fragility and vulnerability often to trans spaces because they are so temporal. And having those kinds of support services as a more kind of consistent source of knowledge is really kind of important in that context.

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Yeah, returning to the data as well, did you find some interesting differences between people or were there commonalities more important, what kind of things came out?

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I guess it was kind of in terms of people's lived experiences, they were very varied and it was complicated in how they related to each other. So, for instance, that was one of the key aspects to inform people's sense of comfort in a place was also their kind of biography. So, their previous experiences of other places or similar spaces. For instance, one participant spoke about how they felt very unsafe in the housing estates and that was informed particularly because they grew up on housing estate that they had to leave because of persistent kind of experiences of discrimination and oppression. And so that kind of carries with them, and that informs their kind of experiences still in those kind of those places in the city they may feel safer or not. And that kind of that comes out in that first phase of analysis where you really look at just kind of people's embodied experiences and spaces because they're kind of very varied. And you start to think what can this ever possibly mean for trying to have implications of planning because there's a certain generalisation and a certain standardisation. And that's where those kinds of things are harder to necessarily articulate or wouldn't be so relevant. One of the perhaps unsurprising things coming out of that was people's experiences.

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There were kind of quite some patterns coming through in the data in terms of spaces that were avoided. And whether that was night time spaces and places after dark which is kind of to be expected for people who suffer discrimination and oppression around like kind of forms of gender based violence. But also the kind of avoidance of busier spaces during the summer and Brighton city centre and the differences around seasonality of the city as well.

And those experiences have come from what it means the crowds and how people experience crowds particularly about that sense of whether people who come from outside Brighton might not be engaging in the city in the same way. And so there's those differences that kind of are similarities that come up. But there was also the kind of the uniqueness of different people's experiences. There was one really nice kind of experience where there are different pockets of comfort or pockets of affirmation, which people spoke about. And those were, for instance, there was one where one participant spoke about how there was the nudist beach, and they experienced that particularly late in the summer. We’re going there with friends was experienced. That's a space of affirmation. When, and they there's a really nice kind of little narrative around like them floating in the water and experience a comfort within themselves in their body.

But also, that being then kind of witnessed in an affirming way. And there's a lot coming up around that kind of the differences in the data and how the kind of both how people's perception of others but also how those gazes and that sense of like having an affirmative maybe it's like a non-cisgender based gaze of their themselves in their body and being read in certain ways. Versus a sense of kind of a much more what can be experienced as a more surveiling gaze or what’s sometimes referred to as a scope It regime, where there's kind of like a certain kind of, depending on how bodies are being read and how they're being interpreted, but also their kind of the discourses and the cultural discourses that are occurring. And that kind of informs a very specific sense of people's different experiences across time and space.

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And the seasonality is just fascinating as well. Like today in December, it's so different for us. it's going to be like in June or July and the implications that has for who's watching and how people feel.

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Yeah, and I think generally people experienced brighten the home or it's often we talked about in a way where there's the summer city and then there's Brighton Hove the rest of the year. And it just feels like a very different place. And that did come up in a few people's experiences while we're in relation to clothing and stuff. Because of the for some people, there was the real sense of like being able to be covered up and made them feel more comfortable in their body and how they were being read. And that becomes more difficult during summer months. And so, then that felt like there was a bit more experiences or what typically might be called dysphoria for those participants between their body because also the nature of like how they're having to present because of the heat and then how they might be read as well.

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I guess in terms of things that surprised me with my findings, it's less to do with the kind of creative mapping sessions. But in terms of the for the policy analysis, it was the kind of there was how I how I thought about it and writing it up as I kind of telling different stories of trans or LGBTQ in policy over kind of quite a last 15 years of planning in Brighton and Hove, and there are some aspects which were quite, where I'm trying to just tracing how maybe needs from LGBTQ specific consultation has arrived and how that kind of gets articulated. But often there was a kind of as a moving in and out of policy where something is a becomes a presence, and then it disappears.

And I think that's something specific, or it's something that comes up quite frequently in looking at gender and sexuality and LGBTQ in policy, were the kind of often is articulated as a form of absence. And this, this is talked about in some of the literature as like an absence is a policy action in itself. And so, it's trying to understand how these things kind of can come in and arise and then disappear. And I had a kind of quite digging into like old policies and council minutes. And because there was a kind of an LGBT specific consultation that the council did, all the way back in around 2006, where they looked at, or where they did to specific sessions with LGBT residents, or people who work in Brighton and Hove for planning purposes and the drawing up of the local plan.

And one of the kind of parts that was articulated sometimes or was articulated through the second session in particular, which was like a kind of community consultation was around seeking a recognition of the Gay Village or the St. James St. Area Kemp towns, it's differently called, and recognising that in policy as a kind of a form of like, cultural and cultural importance to the city. And this did get then articulated when it was added into the local plan by a counsellor. And then that got put in. And then the local plan was sent off for examination. It was then had to be withdrawn because of the introduction of the localism act in 2011. And so, the plan was withdrawn, and then it kind of got revised and what became what is now city plan, part one. But in that process of the kind of the withdrawal and the revision, a lot of things stayed the same.

But the Gay Village policy disappeared. And so it's one of those frustrating things where I have I've had, I've talked with him through interviews with clients, and there's nothing that anyone can point me to of the reason why, and any kind of like paperwork that saying why something was taking out, because often it's like there's a paper trace for how things are put in, and revisions that come in, but for how something gets taken out, is a bit harder. And so that's something where there's the kind of the Gay Village is articulated into policy. And then for some reason, it gets articulated out. And is kind of that frustrating absence. And that was something that was kind of surprising. When I hit upon it, it was like I felt like an investigative journalist.

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This tough to say. Because they think there's a lot of different there are different lines of argumentation at the time about why something should be considered or not, and recognition of something like that as a form of cultural of cultural importance for the city. And I think I just find it generally quite surprising that that isn't that that never was fully articulate as to why exactly. I think I can't really speculate. I think any of my thoughts feel like they might incite a gossip from I don't know. I can't pin it down.

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So, it'd be interesting actually, to know a bit more about the sort of planning side of the research as well. So, you've done interviews with planners and you've done sort of analysis, thematic discourse analysis of planning documents.

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Yeah. So I guess it kind of started with an kind of an open ended I did kind of helicopter interviews to begin with where it was just having a few kind of overviews with a couple of planning practitioners to just get a sense of how gender for quite broadly is being articulated. But then specifically for them my kind of focus how then is trans being articulated. And that led to a couple of focuses really, in terms of trends being articulated into policy. And one of those was through the kind of form of health and equality impact assessments. And so that's a yeah, in terms of like impact assessment, or in terms of equality impact assessments, because of the Equality Act 2010. Trans is a or gender reassignment is a protected characteristic. And so, therefore, there's a kind of a there's a, you have to demonstrate your due regard for trends in terms of development of new policy. And so, when you're developing, for instance, in planning your new local plan, you need to demonstrate your due regard for a whole range of protected characteristics. And, and trans is one of them. So I just kind of followed up on how that is being articulated and how that is being thought about. Because one of the things that came up in the kind of looking at the literature and there was some reports, simply by the Town and Country Planning Association, they did a nice little bit of research on equality impact assessments within planning departments in London, and looking at how those, how those were done. And there's a kind of a real diversity and varied kind of forms of how they can be done, but also the depth of detail they might go into.

But there was nothing that really said about how trans specifically is being articulated. Now we have this new kind of legal, legal setup with the Equality Act, there was no research saying how is trans being articulated. And so that's where I did a kind of a few interviews with practitioners, planning practitioners in order to understand how trans is being articulated. And on the hallway kind of found is the health inequalities impact assessments. They are really beneficial process for the development of the local plan. And it's a really good point of being able to include and think about a range of differing groups and needs particularly marginalised groups, such as LGBTQ populations. However, how trans was kind of being articulated because of the nature of the actual structure of the impact assessment, where it's kind of is an iterative process, but it's kind of looking at policy, and it's doing a bit of inequalities audit check on are those policies going to have like, particularly negative consequences for particular groups, and so to try to prevent that from happening, or if there's going to be particular opportunities that can be maximised.

However, it's kind of the whole structure, and it's formed around the sense of the policy as it is being developed. And so, it's not necessarily actually articulating how to, it's not articulating how can trans liveability of the city be increased? And that's a kind of a different question. So as well, that was the kind of the major and concrete way that trans was being articulated into planning policy. It was only doing so much. And it was kind of perhaps limited in the kinds of ways that it could change or transform planning policy to be more inclusive for trans people. And that kind of also goes for a range of different social groupings as well. Yeah.

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And what do you think? What do you how do you think planning could change or should change to be more inclusive to do more on trans liveability improving trans liveability and not just no detrimental impact or whatever?

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Yeah, I guess it's, it's difficult because, for instance, my research really focuses on the local level. So, it focuses on bison hoe and as a local authority. And if anyone knows who works within planning, there's certain like limitations and restrictions that come within the fact that within the English planning setup, there are there's a lot of centralization then there's a lot of ways in which sense Your government kind of regulates and sets the parameters for what can or cannot be done. And so I think there's a kind of, yeah, I wouldn't want to put this all on local planners as like the burden for half to how things can change. And goodness knows the planning policy kind of landscape is constantly in flux. And it's constantly changing. And it feels like you're just trying to keep up with what is the now the new, the new policies. But I think for me, what I've got, what I like to think about is, I guess it's kind of like the, as it stands, there's limitations for the imagination, for what planning should be doing or could be doing. And it's then kind of reconceptualizing, that kind of planning imagination. So instead of it being how to orient trans needs to make them amenable for planning, it's more thinking about how can planning be oriented around marginalised group’s needs, and how best to then be articulating them.

Whereas at the moment, it feels like engaging with the planning system, you're very much bought into the ways of doing and the ways of thinking of planning, which really kind of channels it in focuses things into certain arenas, and certain ways. And so it's kind of try to maybe get away from that and to reconceptualize, what can be done and the scope of planning, which is perhaps a much bigger question, then obviously, just one authority. But I think it's what's needed in order to have a kind of a planning practice that is focused around increasing liveability for inhabitants of a city, and not just increasing forms of engagement or inclusion within how planning as is at the moment.

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Yes, yes. That makes a lot of sense. And it's quite a radical vision. Oh, that I mean, there may not be but are there any examples of places outside of England where you think, Oh, they're doing something a bit more like at all, like Transpacific or if possible, but if not, if it's other marginalised groups, I guess that would be counted as good, you know, good examples of both.

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Yeah. Think I don't have anything off the top of my head. That is also part of my next part of my writing. I go into that international perspective, I think there isn't, there isn't so much about I guess it's that really like, any kind of it comes almost back to like, ways of governing and democratic practices. And so how things are whether things are, you know, really kind of forms of, you know, community participation, or you know, it's that kind of going back to the classic and Steen's ladder of participation, and different varieties of peoples actually being able to have input to a process and what are they given kind of ability to change or not? Yeah, but yeah, yeah.

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Yeah. And I guess having chosen this as a case study shows up the limitations of the English system as well, because presumably, if it were going to work well, anywhere, then who would be the kind of place it might work better?

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Yeah. And I guess that was a kind of a major impetus for the kind of focusing on Brighton and Hove was because there is a history since the kind of the, there's some great work by Kath Brown, my supervisor, Jason Lim, around kind of LGBTQ experiences of the city and policy and activism, and that featured around 2010 2013. But since then, there's been a huge amount of change in terms of like trans inclusion work. So, bison have did a trans needs assessment in 2015, which was kind of a ground-breaking needs assessment for any kind of municipal authority within England at the time. And also, there's a longer history of Brighton Hove has been one of those kinds of few municipal authorities that for a long time has been better at articulating LGBTQ. However, that's also been all, often that dynamic has been one of activism or activist pushing and forcing it to be on the agenda from the outside. And so it's not like a necessarily a clean and easy kind of relationship or progression. And so that was a sense of like, okay, over the last decade, active trans inclusion work that's happened with embracing hope, but has that affected planning, and how, for instance, because planning is its own thing, it's its own kind of You know, what if one branch or many within local government, and so has that been shaped by those efforts, and were, particularly, maybe needs have been identified, but they haven't been articulated into planning. And so for instance, that was another branch of the policy analysis where I looked at how certain needs were identified in the trans needs assessment, but they were never articulated into a planning policy document, until I put them into a consultation process.

And then it became articulated by there's a sense of like, again, the role and particularly the role of advocates, and the role of people having to push for these things and joining up those dots. And that's where you kind of really have the role of someone who's a specialist to be able to put those things together. And that's something which has been found within previous kind of LGBTQ municipal Policy Research. Going back for, you know, last 30 years, it's the kind of those key people who take kind of particular there's key people who take a particular advocacy on certain issues. Obviously, it means they're channelled in certain ways, because it's, you know, relying on certain people to do that. Yeah.

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That's, that's very reminiscent of some of the things I've found in active travel research and those their reliance on those people in the fact that yeah, those people leave or they're not there anymore, suddenly, the whole product that everything becomes very fragile, doesn't turn.

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Yeah. And that's something I guess, looking at local government in particular, but it's probably true for a range of different kinds of institutions, whether it feels like there's often a lack of institutional memory, or institutional learning. Because looking at equalities, policies, particularly around LGBT with a focus on trans over the last 2030 years, you get a sense of things coming up again, and again, and these kinds of iterative circles. And so I guess it's that trying to rupture this idea of a sustained linear development.

And it perhaps it's much more kind of a no sustained, cyclical kind of focus, where often as a coalescing of certain sport, Alison Bain and Julie Padmore called coalitional moments, where you have these coming together of certain groups and people in government to then produce those kind of moments of change, where things might get articulated into policy, which is, of course, a limited sense of change anyway. But those things kind of happen. But often, particularly, you know, there's a sense of exhaustion or like, for activists, there's, you know, they can only sustain a certain level of like trying to think of that phrase for like, exit when people

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get burnt out.

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Yeah, there's a sense of activist burnout. Where also those groupings and partnerships, community partnerships, only can be sustained for a certain level of time, because they rely on certain, often a certain kind of core group of people over time as well. And so, then when they kind of they arise, they might they contribute to some change, but then they can dissipate. And so that's where you can kind of over time see a certain like, moving again, or leaning towards certain ways where then things aren't being articulated. And that's kind of, I guess, where you can say there's being a reaffirmation of a normal activities around whether that's heteronormativity or cisgender, normal activities, or just, you know, ways that reinforce not having to think about certain forms of social difference.

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Yeah, and how do you know, you're in terms of your research? Is it does it? Do you see it as sort of having this action research or whatever element where you're sort of intervening in policy debates, as well as you know, researching them?

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Yeah, yeah, I guess I've never thought I never like solidly set my research within the action research kind of paradigm or methodology. But I definitely have a sense of like, wanting to intervene in a way which is producing like some kind of material, like effects through the actual research. But at the same time isn't like just focused on making those pragmatic kind of those small amenable recommendations and that kind of then what can become quite a flattening to produce kind of policy recommendations that always feels like such loaded term policy recommendations where it's kind of like, how can we make policy a bit better, but not have to really sort of substantially change it, or transform how we're thinking about it. And so I guess it's trying to keep that tension between actually seeking to have the more radical transformative change. And that being the kind of the goal overall, and at the same time, kind of recognising the inherent limitations of a small piece of research and the effects that obviously come with that, and ability to do those things. Yeah.

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Yeah, yeah, it is. One person, it's a small piece of research that it's actually something else I wanted to ask you is, I mean, you seem to have fitted in an awful lot, and an awful lot of different methods and so on. But, you know, in sort of, if you had unlimited resources, what kind of things would you have liked to have done as well,

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I guess, if there were unlimited resources, in particular, I think what I would have liked to have done is had much more kind of paid facilitators to help run then a wider set of workshops. So in terms of also how to do it to scale it up, that would be one key thing, because all of my participants only spoke to I spoke to 10 Trans participants, by multiple times. So it was kind of like a very focused, rich, qualitative methods, but all of my participants were white. And so that obviously informs and affects the kind of those experiences and how whiteness functions as a kind of can be considered as a kind of access of sameness. So it helps facilitate those experiences of relative comfort in a place like Brighton and Hove. And that's something where also my own positionality, of course, as a white person, informs and affects the research. And so for instance, the best way, in order to be able to facilitate and run it would be to be able to have creative workshop spaces, which are run and designed by him for Cutie park, or LGBTQ people of colour to kind of produce creative mapping sessions, but it perhaps in a way that isn't then informed by my sense of my desires and my research goals, because I think that would produce a different, or that's the kind of thing where I think if you were to take on these kinds of those methods, you do get those kind of self-selecting or reinforcing those certain groups who are perhaps more dominant, whether that's then within my, like, trends haven't lost my sentence?

52:56

No, that's I mean, talking about Yeah, intersectionality and diversity among participants. So, did you have with the other things as well, that you would like to have had more diversity? And I mean, did you in terms of disability perhaps well,

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quite a few participants had a range of both differing like disabilities, neurodiversity is, and kind of, like, I guess, there's like, kind of a range of physical or mental, like, different capacities. And looking at that, and how that informs people's experiences. And for instance, that came up a couple of times, particularly around people who had the intersections of disability and transverse and how that kind of affected sometimes their experiences of trans spaces or spaces that should be trans focused or trans affirming kind of spaces, and how they could be produced as exclusion, excluding, again, towards the individual because of those kinds of intersections. So, one person spoke about kind of an experience they had within an event that was a trans focused event within the city. But how that was then how like they how they'd experienced like a level of discrimination when trying to access the disabled toilet, because the end security personnel, were not reading them as disabled. And so therefore, they were then denying them access and then this produced kind of a conflict and they ended up having to leave the event in some distress. And so there's those kind of ways in which you know, you can kind of have like forms of affirmation inclusion along different forms of social difference or different lines of the intersections as human beings we have, and it needs to, you know, have all of those things, or you need to kind of consider all of those things together and not just separate those out. Because that's not how people's lives function as well. And so that's where I think something with my research where I'm kind of also aware of suggesting, perhaps like the idea of trans infrastructure, and how that plays out, it's also thinking about know how to articulate all the forms of social difference in perhaps a more meaningful way that then is not just kind of considering it in a more generalised or flattening sense of certain needs. And that being attributed or to groups of people. Yeah, identify that.

55:52

That made a lot of a lot of sense. How did you how did you recruit your sample of participants.

55:59

So, to recruitment for people, so I everyone was an inhabitant, which meant they either lived or they lived nearby, but or they like kind of worked socialised in, in the city. And that was kind of a recognition of the kind of how people would be wanting to move to Biden who perhaps can actually live within the bounds of it. And I recruited people primarily through to means which was sending out adverts with local, LGBTQ or trans specific organisations. And also through my own personal networks, and kind of a bit of a snowball sampling. And those were the two main forms of recruitment. Yeah.

56:51

Did they I was interested in so did you have them? was the age diversity? Or did you did you have mostly younger or

56:57

middle aged also, in terms of the range I people, the youngest person was early 20s. And then the oldest person was late 40s. And so, there was a definite sense of the ages were also I'm 31. So there was a sense of Labour’s ages were formed around perhaps like a kind of a certain distance from my own, my own age as well. So it wasn't such a huge range, particularly for because I was only ever talking to adults. But there was like a definite group that was missing was older, trans people, so anyone 50 and above. And particularly because of then those differing needs around access to different services and care, and perhaps also then different kind of, I guess, those kind of life stages, producing different kind of needs or desires for what they'd like to see in the city, which sort of came up in, for instance, in some people spoke about what they're really planning for the future and talking about, you know, what it might mean to have, like, queer and trans inclusive forms of ageing and retirement. But there is no one experiencing that, in their terms, their lived experience at the moment. Lots of scope for future research.

58:19

Yeah, definitely.

58:20

I wonder, did you want to say any more actually, about the so we talked about various other methods, but you were mentioning, using discourse analysis, I just wondered if you wanted to say any more about that at all, what kind of discourse analysis you were doing?

58:34

Yeah. So there's, when I started, I found that there's many different types of discourse analysis, and it kind of hurt my head trying to understand what form and what it was that I was doing. And then I really, I came upon the work of Carol Batchi, who is a political scientist, based in Australia. And her work really comes from a tradition of food coding discourse nurse, where she looks at problematized nations and how things are problematized into policy.

And I found that really kind of productive and useful. And she used a lot of examples to do with gender, but particularly in that kind of more focusing, I guess, on a more classic binary formation of gender or focusing on Yeah, not focusing on trans in particular. And so when I was kind of trying to trace these narratives and these stories in policy, it was also using this method of like, how things come to be problematized and where and when, and why not at other points, and I found that really useful because also part of that is a kind of feminist reflexivity. So she Karabakh she has this kind of what's the problem represented to be in these few little kind of steps and how you can go about doing it and I kind of used that as a to inform it my process but I didn't follow it to the kind of, to the, to the tee, is that there?.

And yeah, and so the kind of the final one of the steps as well as applying to all those questions that you might apply to policy to interrogate how things become and how they arise and feature and policy, and particularly also the assumptions underpinning it. And then you also applying that to your own to yourself and your own research. And that was kind of very useful for them thinking about the difference between where planning comes at trying to articulate social difference, or how planning is seeking to articulate trends. And then what my kind of desires and my kind of ambitions for like, where I'm starting out and where I might kind of see planning going elsewhere. With articulation, yeah.

1:00:51

Yeah. And I suppose and linked to when you were talking about sort of them, you know, planning being this thing that the, you know, talking about trans deliverability had to fit into that it was like that way round, I suppose, thinking about something as a planning problem as well, sort of presupposes it being soluble within planning terms, in a sense. So, something gets constructed as a planning problem, it's already been.

1:01:14

Exactly. So yeah, there's that real sense of how what becomes material consideration is so often like the term within planning, particularly those decisions on the ground, and kind of the local level, like what is the material consideration in the form formation of both policy and also like a particular development. And often, there's kind of the material consideration features around kind of environmental or economic issues, but the how those social issues and that part of like kind of economic sustainability are, and how that past sustainable development that kind of tried environmental, social, economic, particularly, it feels that social often gets less of a look in because there's that thicker, stickier kind of issue and how to articulate it. And, yeah, so how that kind of like, how then forms of social difference were being articulated. But also how, how, I guess how the kind of predominant way that trans was being articulated was through the lens of equalities and equalities work. And that's something also particular to maybe the last kind of 10-20 years within local governance about the kind of institutionalisation and modernization processes that are formed like kind of particular like, formation of qualities as a practice, and how to think about things, which is very beneficial in some ways, also, perhaps, kind of categorises and constrains the ability or kind of channels. No, is that the word? I guess it is. Sometimes it can then mean that when things articulated in the qualities issue, they get then taken up and understood and kind of implemented within certain ways, which maybe means that wider transformative ways that things can be included or kind of not thought about. That's not a great articulation.

1:03:27

No, that makes a lot of sense. Yeah. Moving the equalities, channels and you know, in its worst, it could just be a tick box. No, we're not affecting this group, detrimentally. But even when it's better, it's still within those limits, isn't it? Yeah. And there's a certain, I think there's a there's a sense of how things articulated with inequalities that then means you have to give kind of an equal consideration to all the different groupings and not them giving an unfair privileging of any certain group within that, which I think is maybe a tricky way of thinking about it, or because it's kind of thinking, often it becomes like a kind of what's the word like? It's like it's thinking about different forms of equalities, groupings, whether that's around something like gender, race, sexuality, ethnicity, or they kind of its, is thinking about these things in a more competitive way. And so they're not giving a particular pillaging to certain groups, instead of coming at it from the issue, perhaps of like power differentials, and existing marginalisation and ways that can overcome that, again, to kind of focus on increasing people's experiences and liveability rather than just kind of like making sure every group has been considered in some way.

1:04:54

Oh, yes. And so many people have multiple identities as well. Yeah.

1:04:58

yeah, exactly. Yeah. Oh, wow.

1:05:02

I'm actually well aware that we've, yeah, we've been talking for more than an hour. We've got some really exciting stuff that I've also went I haven't been following these questions. So, I'm wondering if there's stuff you wanted to say that you haven't had chance to leave I guess there's only one thing from my notes, which hasn't haven't said, which is thinking about how maybe the choice of methods for research but also whether that's then for like, engaging in forms of engagement and consultation, around planning, but how that kind of shapes and informs the kind of the knowledge is that can be produced. So as the kind of like methods really taking it as a choice of like ethics as a, as a kind of, I guess methods as a, an ethical, no. Thinking through like the methods you choose as the kind of the ethical implications of how they mediate yourself between both you and your research and the participants, but also the forms of like, kind of knowledge that can be produced. And one of the main things was really, the two parts of the research one was kind of like using methods to do that critical engagement with planning policy to and then understand how planning Oriented things towards its ways of knowing and doing and then the other way around as hell to have methods which enable a kind of production of knowledge is oriented around trans people's lives, in order to then think about how planning can be better oriented. When you start at lived experiences of trans people, rather than kind of like, an additional endpoint to be considered later on.

Yeah, I guess that's, there was one bit where in thinking through trans infrastructures, there's a nice little quote, which Cal Batu uses from, I think it's fun to lose that awful voice search. Jargon laden nonsense most of the time. But it's kind of call-back, she said, echoing the words of Deleuze how concepts are like bricks. And you can either use them to build a wall or check them through a window. And I guess the idea of trans infrastructures, I'm trying to like build a better platform from which trans people can throw bricks. That's my kind of interpretation of it as a kind of a productive critique as a concept.

1:08:03

That's fantastic. Oh, actually, the world's one other thing that I've been meaning to ask you I haven't written down with about when in the RGS IBG talk, I seem to remember you're talking about kind of Age of city locations. And I just wondered, I was I was kind of quite intrigued by that part, because I like them myself. And I just wondered if you wanted to say anything about that the role of HSCT locations?

1:08:24

Yeah, I guess that was one of the surprising things that came up in the kind of from the creative mapping was how for some people, there was the use and experience of green spaces as freeing spaces or associated with ideas of freedom and feeling freer. And that was kind of also intertwined with the kind of impart like a less of a kind of, or that was down to the experience of not being or feeling like being watched or surveilled by other people. And so there's the kind of like interesting way that these kinds of fringe green spaces and Brighton Hove you know, it's between the South Downs National Park and the sea.

And so, you've got a kind of surrounded by this little bit of green space at the top. And people's in use of those spaces to kind of just feel a bit more freeing and feeling less watched. And being able to then kind of like, perhaps forget about some things and forget about Yeah, that kind of that that sense of like, people reading you or you being read around your agenda. And I guess that was perhaps unsurprising in some ways, because the kind of ways that COVID has a COVID 19 pandemic has changed how we to kind of interact with our local surrounding spaces, and particularly our green spaces.

But it was also kind of the ways in some of the literature kind of privileges the idea of anonymity within urban space in the city, particularly for LGBTQ people, and the city space as a space of anonymity. And I guess it kind of it was less that the more typically urban spaces were those spaces of anonymity, and really the spaces of anonymity were those fringe green spaces. And I thought that was kind of very interesting as a kind of rural, urban, non-binary space for non-binary people.

1:10:43

We might be when I was talking to people I just met in the actors last night, and one of them said, Oh, everybody knows her property here.

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This is both a good and a bad thing by and depending on different networks. And yeah, particularly when you find out when you if you're within a queer dating scene or something, and it turns out, everyone's already dated each other. There is that sense of the kind of people enjoying the smaller compactness, often of the city. And that came up in another research project I was involved with, with Sophie Bowden, and Nick McGlinn, around LGBT migration, mental health to the city. And the kind of like the that features as well in terms of how people wanting access to then particularly those services we talked about, which often located more centrally, but then also, there's different mobilities that people have in order to then access those and depending on which part of the city, but also finding that often. You could like, a lot of things were a lot closer or like a lot easier to reach than perhaps coming from other locations, particularly London prisons or something. Yeah, different scale.

1:12:05

Yeah, It’s there anything else that you wanted to add before we?

1:12:35

I guess the last thing would be around the kind of like, No, I've come up, or like, you know, I've using this idea of trans infrastructure as a kind of bridging concept. But it's really just a way to then kind of articulate, perhaps in use to more substantially articulate trans people's experiences and voices, that would be done in a way that has potential kind of usefulness, but also like transformative potential for planning. But I guess like my kind of recommend not recommended my kind of, I guess, coming out of this research, the ways to kind of advice for would be for whether it's for researchers or kind of local planners or planners work at national scales to kind of just think understanding, engage more substantially with trans people's experiences and voices. And seek to understand also how perhaps your practice is articulating different forms of social difference, and will the way it's being done actually increased liveability for those groups at the moment?

1:13:47

Or is it that kind of does that in order to do that? Do you have to have more,

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have more transformative? Do you have to transform how you're going about kind of thinking and, and doing thinking of doing? How to transform kind of planning practices? A bit more substantially? Yeah. I think that was a that's not great. No, that is, so that's, yeah. I mean, it's, it's, it's all it's all great. Thank you. Thank you.