QUEERING THE URBANSCAPE

A COLLECTION OF ESSAYS ON LGBTQ+ INCLUSION IN CITIES

URBAN INNOVATION LAB

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First Published in 2021
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PREFACE

Cities are not just physical spaces but a melting pot of culture. It requires a very human-centric approach to plan, design, develop and manage cities. Without its people, cities are nothing but ghost towns.

We have developed a Diversity and Inclusion in City Ecosystem (DICE) framework. Diversity and inclusion as the key pillars of sustainable cities. We believe it is our ability to observe and adapt to the context that makes our cities great.

We support the Pride Movement globally. This e-book is a token of our support to the community. I am proud of our team to come forward to discuss the cross-section of cities and the inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community. This e-book is an empathic discourse. The essays explore issues faced by the community in urban living. We highlight global examples - related to public policy, spatial planning and urban technology - for building more inclusive cities.

I hope you find prespectives and ideas in this e-book useful. We are here to support you in making cities queer-friendly.

Ram Khandelwal
CEO & Founder
Urban Innovation Lab

ANUPRIYA AGGARWAL

AN EXPLORATION OF URBAN SPACES THROUGH THE QUEER LENS

We live in a world of binaries. 'Males to the left, females are always right' is a trite catchphrase we have seen written outside many public washrooms. It is coupled with signages: stick figures of the male body and the female body. In this heteronormative society that we stay in, dominant gender arrangements dictate every aspect of human existence. From restroom signages, to the type of clothes available in stores, to the preferred clientele of the urban real estate market. The built environment is a construct by the binaries, for the binaries. Then, where do the rest – who do not fit into the either-or scheme –figure?

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT IS A CONSTRUCT BY THE BINARIES, FOR THE BINARIES.

In India, living a life outside the closet is fraught with difficulties. Biases invariably creep in if there are any kind of anomalies. The urban domain allows deviance from the gender binaries and is more embracing of diversity in comparison to villages and small towns. Moving to a metropolis is equivalent to moving away from the omnipresent scrutiny of family and society.

The anonymity of big city life is freeing in a lot of ways: to explore one's identity, sexuality, and political standing in greater privacy. It also provides an opportunity to interact with others on the spectrum with similar experiences.

Having said that, living in the city brings along its own challenges. At a time when unemployment is at its peak and ravaging the general population, to unveil oneself as queer would mean exposing oneself to an additional layer of turmoil. It can negatively impact one's job prospects or even the chances of retaining one's job.

Besides, sustenance in cities is financially draining for the majority of the citizens. But for the queer and other marginalised groups, it is mentally taxing too. The cost of living is already high and hunting for an apartment is an add-on task. The preferred clientele of the urban real estate market is generally prosperous monogamous couples or nuclear families. Landlords too, are incredibly picky of the demographic to whom they are willing to rent. With so many boxes to tick, an openly queer individual is often sidelined, subject to rejection and ostracism.

Many have grown up encountering transgender people, dressed up in gaudy saris and heavy makeup, beg at traffic intersections.

They are described as "special creations of God" or that "their blessings are holy". It is part ignorance and part fear of the unfamiliar that leads young people to accept all that they hear.

Parents and teachers rarely sensitise children on these topics. As a result, transgender people are blatantly abused and discriminated against in an ignorant society. Their place in cities is confined to traffic junctions, and begging has become a way of life for them. Our cities have failed trans-people in terms of providing safe spaces, equal job opportunities, and basic human respect.

A lack of safety in their physical environments has steered the queer community to take refuge in the security and comfort of virtual anonymity. Digital spaces go beyond geographical boundaries. It allows individuals who might be sitting miles apart, to connect and exchange shared experiences.

One such example is Queering The Map. It is a digital archive of queer experiences in worldwide geographies. The LGBTQ+ community can anonymously share personal episodes of love, heartbreak, vulnerability, trauma, oppression, violence, or anything they wish, by simply dropping a pin in any part of the world. This space offers voices to the many unvoiced members of the community. Most importantly, it is a reminder that queerness is not a concept, nor a construct. It exists in the spatial dimensions of all societies and always has. It is a part of human identity and sexuality even if it is oppressed, ridiculed, or criminalised.

A representation of the spatial dimensions of queer experiences.
Source: Developed by the author with snippets from queeringthemap.com

Despite increasing online queer forums, it is indisputable that the community deserves their footing in the real world. Without an infrastructural network of safe spaces in cities, LGBTQ+ people are vulnerable. There is a need for locating spaces for the queer community, or queerscapes, within the fabric of our cities.

WITHOUT AN INFRASTRUCTURAL NETWORK OF SAFE SPACES IN CITIES, LGBTQ+ PEOPLE ARE VULNERABLE

Most urban sector professionals in India are of a very specific demographic: cisgender, heterosexual, middle-class, middle-aged men. Subsequently, the policies and proposals conceived by them reflect their notions of how society functions and what they think people want.

After all, it is human nature to operate according to one's interpretation of the world. There is often a mismatch between what they presume people want versus what the people truly want. And so, consciously or otherwise, the built environments created are prejudiced and heterosexist.

In the first week of Pride month this year, Justice N. Anand Venkatesh of the Madras High Court issued interim guidelines to various bodies protecting and reaffirming the lives of the LGBTQIA+ community. Before doing so, he underwent a session of psycho-education to question his preconceived notions on the issue and to emerge a more receptive decision-maker. "Ignorance is no justification for normalising any form of discrimination", he said. Hopefully, this will go a long way in inspiring other leaders and policymakers to use their power discreetly and make informed judgments and not be afraid of challenging their beliefs.

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SANJUKTA KUMAR

FOSTERING URBAN EQUITY FOR RAINBOW COMMUNITIES

Cities have become the prime living spaces in this century, with over four billion people living in urban areas around the world. Accounting for over 50% of the global population. But, do we have urban spaces that are planned for everyone? It takes a simple observation to understand that urban spaces today privilege the cis-male perspective.

While there have been continuous efforts made to ensure inclusivity of different minorities, the inclusion of Gender and Sexual Minorities in experiencing urban spaces have gained little attention.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO RETHINK URBANSCAPE TO SHAPE, REFLECT, AND INCLUDE VARIED & MULTI-FACETED QUEER COMMUNITY.

Today, there is a severe under-representation of the queer community in the development planning process. Promoting participatory planning is at the core of inclusivity. It is only through community participation that priorities, demands, and needs of the LGBTQ+ community can be best understood and addressed.

There is a need to focus on policies and laws to combat exclusion. Designing a structured framework to promote inclusion is necessary. This leads to inclusive planning and design processes. Thus, would result in meaningful, effective outcomes and long-term improvements in the status of sexual and gender minorities.

It is common to witness certain neighbourhoods with significant queer proportions. Generally, originating because of socio-political ostracization and the constant threat of physical violence. The queer community utilises this space as a way to reflect their cultural value. They serve the special needs of individuals in relation to society at large.

Understanding the urban pattern of these neighbourhoods gives us a perspective to create an LGBTQ+ friendly community. Considering disparities and privileges within the LGBTQ+ community, there does exist a class difference within the population. A certain neighbourhood or service accessible to one may be out of reach for the other. A harmony between the public authorities and the LGBTQ+ community is the way forward.

For sexual and gender minorities, the sense of discomfort in public can be acute. This might be because of their perceived transgression of gender roles and norms.

In 2015, U.S. Transgender Survey found that 31% of public service staff denied equal treatment, harassed, or physically assaulted the transgenders customers. There are huge portions of the queer population that avoid getting services they need. They make specific decisions about where to shop due to lack of comfort and fear of mistreatment.

Something as simple as including pride flags, rainbow crossings, makes spaces a lot more welcoming. Inclusion of street art focused around queer culture serves the same purpose and is indicative of a safe space. Making spaces visibly inclusive by increasing queer heritage, representation through statues, plaques or even naming streets or plazas. This would emphasize that queer communities, although overlooked for years, have always existed. Thus, helping in undermining public hostility towards them.

Community solidarity and positive representation are crucial. It is important for mobilisation and activism of LGBTQ+ rights and wellbeing.
Financial aid through municipal corporations could serve as an important step for setting up queer community. Funding of educational programmes, LGBTQ+ specific services, cultural events, preserving venues and historic landmarks also helps in enhancing visibility.

Access to adequate spaces is an important aspect for the sense of inclusion. Gender-neutral washrooms are an important step to incorporate.

Homelessness is an issue experienced at wide range in the queer community. More 'sit-able' spaces and mobile service units need to replace defensive architecture. Harassment in transit, homelessness, bullying and discrimination are other issues that needs focus. Provision of special attention towards mental health is mandatory. As, currently this disproportionately affects gender and sexual minorities.

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THE QUEER COMMUNITY NEEDS ITS VOICE TO BE BROUGHT TO PUBLIC EYES.

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Addressing inclusivity of queer communities is highly intersectional. It recognises the intersection of various social identities and works towards creating spaces that are accessible, safe, and inclusive. Thus, uplifting the marginalised community. Meeting needs of socio-economic subordination of LGBTQ+ communities promotes social equity and inclusion. It encourages the integration of diverse groups into planning, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

It is time to think about what we need to do for social equity for rainbow communities in our cities?

ANUPRIYA AGGARWAL

TOWARDS A COLLECTIVE URBAN CULTURE

It is jarring to note that India, the world's largest democracy, does not have any official demographic profile for the LGBTQ+ population. The government estimates a total of 25 lakh gays (National AIDS Control Organization, 2019). But many believe that this figure might an underreported number and that a lot of queer people still go undocumented.

THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS INCLUSION WOULD BE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE EXISTENCE OF QUEER PEOPLE

Simple changes in demographic survey questionnaires will allow the community to occupy an authentic space within a system that highly regards data and statistics. Planning projects begin by data collection and assimilation. Queer representation through numbers will allow professionals to plan through an accustomed rational approach.

At the same time, documentation must go beyond official records. Although public acceptance of queer identities in India is growing with time, it remains meagre. As per the World Value Survey findings, between 1990 and 2014, the share of Indian respondents who believed "homosexuality is never justifiable" fell from 89% to 24% (S., 2018). For the queer to be interwoven into the fabric of society, documentation of their experiences must find a way to be manifested into cities' art and cultural heritage.

The community's long history of resilience against oppression, deserves a place in public museums of India. The education curriculum here in schools still does not have any text on queer history or politics. Normalisation will begin once people see tangible evidence of the community's existence. Also, children grow up learning about them will help in acceptance. Only then, the topics of gender, sexuality, and queer identities go from being under wraps. These things must be talked about openly like they should.

The freedom to step out of the closet and into the streets will not be easy and definitely not organic. It will come only when policymakers, planners, architects, and designers actively and consciously include the queer perspectives. It is time to invite members of the queer community to the forefront and inculcate their cultural value systems into a participative polity. We would lose the very essence of participation, if the professionals are not receptive to any "deviant" ideas, thoughts, and suggestions.

While devising strategies to make spaces safer for the LGBTQ+ community, it is essential to think about the multiple intersections of queer identity: queer people throughout the expanse of caste, class, religion, disability, etc.

It is time to take on investigations into how the queer community experiences and accesses public spaces. A further inquiry into the types of spaces and conditions the queer community feel safe in is essential. Do they avoid certain spaces and seek out others? Does their behaviour change in certain spaces? How do these feelings manifest spatially?

Till the time we can achieve full social acceptance of queer lives, there is a need to create safe spaces. Spaces for LGBTQ+ to be themselves, interact, and share experiences.

HOW TO EXTEND TO TIER 2 CITIES, SUBURBS, TOWNS, –PLACES WHERE QUEER LIVES GO UNRECOGNISED BECAUSE THEY FAIL TO VOICE THEIR PROBLEMS?

For instance, nightclubs and restaurants dedicated for the queer are important spaces in any city. Here, they can let their hair down, socialise, and express themselves without any fear of hostility or judgement.

It is crucial to think about how inclusion can happen beyond the metropolitan cities. How to extend to tier 2 cities, suburbs, towns, and villages–places where queer lives go unrecognised because they do not have the lexicon to voice their problems?

Nation-wide urban initiatives might provide an opportunity to realise fundamental changes in the way queer people navigate spaces. Urban renewal and infrastructure interventions in India are currently happening under the government's flagship programme, the Smart Cities Mission (SCM). It extends to 100 cities and thus is one of the largest projects for the development of urban India.

Although SCM speaks of inclusive development, most of its proposals disregard the barriers faced by the LGBTQ+ community, such as accessing housing, employment, and basic services in cities. It only makes an allusion to transgender people. Only in the proposals of Bhopal, NDMC, Rourkela, Saharanpur, and Thiruvananthapuram (Housing and Land Rights Network, 2018), it is observed. There is a need for critical examination of the inclusivity of such projects. This can present feedback and help in evolving comprehensive policies.

Inclusivity is a futile concept as long as topics of sexuality and gender continue to remain taboo in everyday conversations as well as professional spaces of decision-making. If we begin by talking about it, there is hope. We can forge a collective and colourful urban culture in our cities. Then, a part of our society will not have to live in the closet or seek privacy for their basic human rights. Only when we all thrive together, we can consider ourselves truly civilised.

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SNIGDHA DEV ROY

QUEERING URBAN PLANNING PROFESSION AND PRACTICE

Many urban planning and design fields in India continue to be dominated by men and now even women with a near parity (47% female architects are registered under the Council of Architecture as of June 2021), which ultimately reflects a narrow perspective on the urban realm.

The residents of a city do not share a common, universal urban experience which often results in combined forms of exclusion in a city, thereby affecting their ability to access, navigate and participate in it. The way individuals use urban spaces and engage in activities in cities is influenced by their daily life experiences, thus it's crucial to look at how the city responds to their demands.

Even though, most urban spaces have started to facilitate the movement and engagement of some citizens more than the others - women, elderly, children, and disabled individuals, yet the needs and interests of the LGBTQ+ community are usually overlooked.

In spite of having the country's highest court abolishing a colonial-era law that criminalized homosexuality, a truly inclusive society for a LGBTQ+ community still remains a distant dream.

NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY ARE USUALLY OVERLOOKED.

Over the past few decades, urban theorists and practitioners have started to ask - how can we plan cities that work well for everyone and what would they look like?

Answers remain obscure, since, sexual and gender minorities are still excluded from both the professional field and public decision-making processes in planning. Thus, the need for representation of queer voices in urban planning profession as well as in decision-making processes is even more pronounced.

Some of the basic key aspects of the built urban environment – related to mobility, access, safety and security, freedom from crime, climate resilience, health, sanitation, and security of tenure is all that is needed to be focused on, for a city to be queer-friendly.

The same way as it is needed for the new emerging concepts of age-friendly and woman-friendly cities that are already underway.

Details have been elaborated regarding the local designs, safety, and accessibility by a variety of design guidelines and advisory texts in this context such as the *Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning Design* which was recently published by the World Bank.

Yet, again and again, mainstream planners appear unable to comprehend what is being said, usually leading to assumptions around queer's needs and interests and the encoding of conventional gender roles within the built environment. There's a difference between assumptions and reality.

It must be recognized that the LGBTQ+'s lack of involvement, power and influence within the world of the urban planning fraternity is a major impediment to planning cities which are queer-friendly.

Although the World Bank and many other institutions are committed to advancing gender equality, the urban planners lack awareness of the importance of prioritizing gender in the urban planning process, and do not have the specific, on-ground tools or knowledge that are needed to effectively implement queer-inclusive strategies.

What many planners still don't understand or accept is how the built environment and the lack of diversity among the voices shaping it — including the voice of the queer people — also feed into and perpetuate gender inequity.

To bring queer perspectives into urban planning is going to take an outreach process. Creating a safe space for queers to be comfortable discussing their different experiences is the key in that process and to any effective, meaningful engagement with the LGBTQ+ community.

In order to plan for a queer-friendly city, one needs to interact with them when exploring ways to support them, help the community sharpen the focus of its vision and learn about queer values, since they have a more intricate insight about their cultural needs and interests.

Cities need to be planned following a 'bottom up' approach, working closely with the queers and encouraging intense communication and dialogue within them so that they are fully informed and eager to influence or agree with the decisions regarding what levels of service they receive. This can also eventually help to address the gendered disparities they face in the built environment that impede them from fully participating in the society and economy.
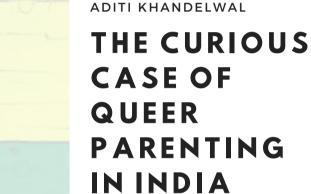
Several cities throughout the world are pioneering queer-inclusive planning, providing invaluable learning opportunities and inspiration. For instance, the American Planning Association has a division specially dedicated to the queer called the *LGBTQ and Planning*. It serves as a forum for the exchange of ideas, interests and information relevant to those in the planning profession who identify themselves as a part of the LGBTQ+ community, as well as anybody interested in LGBTQ+ issues related to planning.

This gives us a learning on how increasing visibility and participation of the queer groups can improve public safety and access, how proper planning through a queer lens can ensure the full participation of underrepresented voices and lastly, how better representation can yield innovative designs that serve them.

The urban planning firms and companies should also introduce the concept of *Diversity and Inclusion (D&I)* in workplaces. Workplace diversity is an initiative that makes everyone, regardless of who they are or what they do, feel equally involved in and supported in all areas of the workplace. It combines different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives, and taking advantage of these differences is what leads to innovation. This can be one of the best ways to reduce gender biasness and encourage greater acceptance and visibility of the needs of the LGBTQ+ community.

The ultimate goal of queer-inclusive urban planning is to advance LGBTQ equity and unlock more inclusive economic and social development. If planning processes become more queer-inclusive, and the built environment more accessible, connected, safe, healthy, climate resilient, and secure for sexual and gender minorities of all ages and abilities, it can also help them make significant economic and social gains and contributions to sustainable development.

They are the hope for a new vision of planning that begins with the lessons of diversity and the experience of emotions and proceeds to find planning solutions that can address the whole human being and human community.

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ADITI KHANDELWAL

THE CURIOUS CASE OF QUEER PARENTING IN INDIA

A google search on the definition of a parent suggests someone that begets or brings forth offspring. From birth parents, foster parents, single parents to gay parents; for raising kids - its the same - they are parents. As a child's caregiver, all parents face similar problems, similar experiences and have the similar emotion of love to share.

There are 27 emoticons that come in the phone's keyboard when you type the word "a mother", "a father" or "a parent". Our virtual graphical world includes no bars in parenting. But the situation is not so sweet in the real world for the LGBTQ+ parents that refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and more rainbow community parents.

LGBTQ+ parenting refers to bringing up one or more children as parents or foster care parents. This includes children raised by: same-sex couples, single LGBTQ+ parents, and opposite-sex couples with at least one LGBTQ+ partner. Queer individuals can become parents through adoption, foster care, donor insemination, reciprocal IVF, and surrogacy. But unfortunately, even today LGBTQ+ parents struggle to get equal respect in our cities.

Nearly, 75% of LGBTQ+ community lives in cities in the United States. Where, 48% of LGBTQ+ women are raising a child in the United States. The inclusiveness in the India states looks like a long-lost road.

According to the Pew Research Center, October 2019, around 30 countries in the world had passed law allowing same-sex marriages

Most of these countries are in Europe, North America and South America, and only one is in Asia - Taiwan. As for same-sex adoption, it is so far legal in around 40 countries. In 2019, Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement estaimted that more than a million gay partners are living together in the United States.

Also, according to LGBTQ+ demographics expert Gary Gates, there are between 2 million and 3.7 million children with at least one LGBTQ+ parent in the U.S. Approximately 200,000 of these children are being raised by same-sex couples. Several recent studies have found these kids are as cheerful and active as children raised by heterosexual parents.

NEARLY, 75% OF LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY LIVES IN CITIES IN THE UNITED STATES

But how many queer parents do we come across at adoption centers, parent-teacher meetings or at restaurants?

Also, the discrimination against LGBTQ+ parents in India is not even a part of the public interest.

The Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) details that a parent needs to be physically, mentally and emotionally stable, financially capable and not have a life-threatening medical condition. Also, the prospective age difference between the child and the parent or either parent should not be less than twenty-five years. But sadly, none of the conditions of the adoption talks about grey area - LGBTQ+ parents.

The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, passed by the Union Cabinet in February 2020 outlawed commercial surrogacy. Yet, altruistic surrogacy is being allowed for Indian married couples, Indian origin married couples, and Indian widowed or divorced women. This bill completely excludes live-in couples, most single parents and the LGBTQ+ community.

In India, even today, most rights relating to family law, such as adoption, surrogacy, succession, guardianship, and so on, need a valid marriage certificate. The decision-makers always excluded the LGBTQ+ from the right to marriage. Thus, access to all the other rights and laws is being compromised.

The pride movement started with decriminalizing Section 377.

There is a need to give LGBTQ+ parents the respect they deserve otherwise, the battle remains half won. According to UNICEF, 2018, India is home to 30 million orphans and abandoned children. While these children struggle to find home, many LGBTQ+ couples are waiting to start a family.

The subject of parenting is being talked about across social media like never before. It's time we should also put efforts into welcoming all families with the love and respect they deserve. This pride month, let's pledge to be there for each other. It's time that we break stereotypes and move ahead in our parenting virtues. The rainbow families are as beautiful as any other family. Kids need parents, regardless of their gender or sexual preference - two moms, two dads, a mom and dad, one mom, one dad. Does gender really matter as long as someone is there to love and take care of the child?

SANJUKTA KUMAR

WILL TECHNOLOGY LEAD SOCIAL CHANGE FOR QUEERS?

Technology has enormous power to instill social change. It is a rising wave in the development sector. Be it decriminalizing homosexuality in India or the issues of workplace discrimination. In the US, the technology has gained spotlight in supporting campaigns for social change.

It has enabled the queer community to connect beyond geographical and physical boundaries. Technology has empowered the queer community by promoting acceptance within the society, increasing debate on the social issues and moving towards a more inclusive community.

Technology has fostered global platforms that facilitate forums to discuss issues, interact, share experiences, ideas and viewpoints of the like-minded people. It helps in reducing the feeling of isolation that is commonly noted in LGBTQ+ community. Building a community also enables celebration of identities and empathic dialogue within. Interacting and educating creates better understanding in the community. This has helped many to come out of the closet.

Empty Closets is a monitored online community, for individuals above 13. It provides spaces like forums and chat rooms. It gives access to experts and resources on coming out and sexual health. The Tribe offers a peer-to-peer LGBTQ+ support group.

It aims at providing transitioning or questioning individuals with a safe place to discuss the challenges they face and find a sense of online community.

Online communities like Meetup provide a platform for LGBTQ+ people to discover one another and meet under safe circumstances that might not otherwise be possible in public. Today, there are many more online forums working towards the upliftment of the community.

HOMOSEXUALITY IS CRIMINALISED IN 70 COUNTRIES. THEY ARE NOT GRANTED EQUAL RIGHTS AS THE HETEROSEXUAL COUNTERPARTS.

There have been cases of harassment, hate crimes, and discrimination. Which originated out of prejudices for the community. One can see significant progress in the queer rights arena. Yet, homosexuality is still criminalised in 70 countries. They are not granted equal rights as the heterosexual counterparts. LGBTQ+ people and their families deserve to be safe and secure, no matter where they live, work, study, pray or play.

PFLAG aims to achieve security through providing support, education, and advocacy. Along with providing resources needed to help queer communities thrive.

Public transit is a prime location of harassment for the queer community. In Mexico, the World Bank partnered with a private bus operator Corevsa to offer a custom smartphone app. This app encourages reporting harassment and abuse that one experiences or witnesses. GeoSure is a travel safety app. It covers more than 30,000 cities and neighbourhoods across the globe. GeoSure provides a neighborhood-level LGBTQ+ safety rating feature. This helps one to understand the likelihood of harm or discrimination against LGBTQ+ persons or groups and level of caution required at that location.

It is important for the queer community to enhance visibility and create supportive allies. Educating the local community on LGBTQ+ identities need to be the priority, along with positive representation. LGBTQ+ Experiment is a website that aims to answer questions about sexuality, gender and sexual orientation in an open, non-threatening environment.
Technology has served inclusivity in queer communities in various forms. Gaycities is an interactive map that locates LGBTQ+ friendly businesses and events in 242 cities around the world.

The LGBTQ+ token is a form of cryptocurrency that hopes to empower LGBTQ+ individuals in places where they face the threat of economic persecution.

The Rainbow Campaign is a global LGBTQ+ crowdfunding network that provides a platform for growth that supports businesses and individuals looking to empower the community.

Many corporates have put in place diversity and inclusion policies to address the issues faced by queer workers. There are various technology companies that launch special edition products targeted towards the welfare of the community, especially during the pride month. These initiatives bring in a sense of inclusivity for the LGBTQ+ community.

Technology has played a supportive role in improving the queer experiences. But, there is a lot the society has to do throughout. It is the continuous effort to strive towards an environment that values, contributions from all perspectives and backgrounds. We need a society where everyone has value, and respect. A society that is free of prejudice and hate. We need to ask what will make a real impact in the fight to create a safe and inclusive environment?

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AUTHOR

Aditi Khandelwal is a minimalist parent and sustainability enthusiast by heart. Proud in her parenting perspectives as an Urban Sector professional with more than eight years of experience Aditi believes in working for a cause and raising a kind future generation that acknowledges love as a human right. As a Digital Strategist with Urban Innovation Lab, Aditi extends her love and support to rainbow families worldwide.

Anupriya Aggarwal is an ally of the LGBTQ+ community and prefers the pronouns she/her. She is in the process of unlearning and learning about gender and its many connotations in the built environment. She is pursuing urban planning at the School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi and currently working at the Urban Innovation Lab as a summer intern.

Sanjukta Kumar (she/her) actively advocates for social, spatial equity, and inclusion of the LGBTQ+ community. She is a final year planning student at Maulana Azad National Institute of Technology, Bhopal, and is currently working as a summer intern at Urban Innovation Lab.

Snigdha Dev Roy (she/her) strongly advocates for LGBTQ+ rights and their inclusion into the communities. Written with pride, she has attempted to pave a way for more queer awareness in the field of urban planning among the readers. Currently interning with the Urban Innovation Lab, she is a final year Planning student at the School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi.

EDITOR

Ram Khandelwal
Rithvika Dara

DESIGN

Jhanvi Shah
Snigdha Dev Roy

ABOUT **URBAN INNOVATION LAB**

We are an innovation company. We develop ideas, knowledge products, and technology solutions to influence the urban stakeholders for a better future of cities. We partner and collaborate with students, professionals, researchers and organizations to solve urban problems. Our Mission is to 'Innovate Urban'.

CityX is our platform for carrying out experiments in the city ecosystem. We identify urban problems, test hypotheses and carry out experiments to validate the results.

GrowU is our platform to incubate and accelerate UrbanTech startups. We provide an ecosystem for startups on their journey from idea to implementation.

We explore new approaches and solutions to tackle urban challenges. We develop ideas, knowledge, products and solutions to influence the city stakeholders for a better future of our cities.

We use multi-disciplinary approaches from fields such as architecture, planning, engineering, public health, industrial design, information technology, artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics, user experience, environmental science, social science, and human behavior.

We strongly believe in the idea of collective consciousness. We network and collaborate with individuals and organizations.

JOIN US IN OUR VISION FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE.