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A place to transform: creating caring spaces by challenging normativity and identity

Silvia Radicioni and Bernhard Weicht

NASP (Universita degli Studi di Torino and Milano), Torino, Italy; Department of Sociology, University of Innsbruck, Innsbruck, Austria

ABSTRACT
Like all spaces, concrete caring places both shape and are shaped by understandings and constructions of normativity and identity. The traditional understanding of care for older people, imagining clearly demarcated dyadic roles, is firmly embedded in heterosexual logics of relationships within families, the own (family) home and institutional support. Social and residential places for older people thus both assume particular gender and sexual identities and contribute to a (re)production of the very normativity. But how can this interlinkage between the construction of caring spaces and the normativity of identities be understood and, possibly, challenged? In this article we discuss the transformative potential of the social (and partly residential) space of La Fundación 26 de Diciembre, in Madrid, Spain, which opened up to specifically support older LGBT people. Drawing on an in-depth case study we explore a space that allows visibility of different forms of living and caring practices of people with different genders, sexual preferences, origins, classes or political backgrounds. Through the daily life narratives of the people who work, volunteer or simply use the centre we discuss the potential of challenging the restricted notions, assumptions and constructions through which particular places gain both social and political meaning. The article highlights the transformative power of the active and collective making of caring spaces through which narratives of care, collective sexual and gender recognition and practices of caring relationships can replace both traditional/informal forms of living together and institutional spaces that provide professional care.

Introduction

The organisation of elder care follows various social logics within which a combination of family-, public- and market-provided services is offered (Weicht 2015).
In Spain care is traditionally provided by female family members, usually in people's private homes, sometimes institutionally supported. This traditional arrangement of care is consequentially embedded in heterosexual families, the emotional primacy of the own home and public policies oriented towards the support of families. However, the imagined patterns of people, places and times of care are themselves part of a situated narrative evolving over time and space (Milligan 2009). Social and residential places for older people, for example, usually assume particular gender and sexual identities and, at the same time, contribute to their (re)production. As a consequence both the imagined traditional relationships and the idealised places are both shaped by and are simultaneously shaping people's understandings of what care resembles. In practical terms this means that people outside of traditional family, gender and sexuality structures find it not only difficult to rely on the primary informal sources of care but also do not feature in public imaginations and arrangements of social care. Furthermore, ‘sexuality blind’ approaches have the tendency to treat older people as a homogeneous group and place them in a social system that not only disregards their sexuality, but also ignores the ways in which sexualities may intersect with the ageing process (Heaphy, Yip, and Thompson 2004; Krekula 2007).

While the ideological relationship between care policies and family/gender arrangements has been studied extensively (Pfau-Effinger 2005) work on care for lesbian and gay older people is still limited (Milligan 2009). A number of studies showed, however, that older LGBT people experience multiple forms of discrimination, not only from social care settings but also within their own communities, due to the stigma of ageing. Areas of risk involve housing and access to care homes, lack of social protection, reluctance to seek healthcare and ongoing stigmatisation, isolation and social exclusion (Commission for Social Care Inspection 2009; Musingarimi 2008). Due to the experience of exclusion and abuse LGBT people often expect discrimination which itself functions as barrier to accessing services (Hunt and Dick 2008). Moreover, services provided for LGBT people may be rendered inappropriate for those who choose not to, or feel unable to identify with these terms (Cronin et al. 2011). Additionally, various other factors, such as class, ethnicity, gender and disability intersect with sexuality and affect the experience of ageing substantially (Heaphy, Yip, and Thompson 2004). Despite significant legislative changes concerning the protection from discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation practical implementation has had limited application (Concannon 2009; Fish 2009). The question thus arises how ageing and care can be organised and situated differently when as Heaphy, Yip, and Thompson (2004, 899) put it ‘[n]on-heterosexuals have […] to develop innovative strategies for living outside the normative framework’.

Importantly, care is physically and discursively embedded in concrete places, which, likewise, are linked to social relations (Hanlon et al. 2007). Particularly – though not exclusively – during processes of ageing and care the own home becomes a physical manifestation of associations and imaginations of expressions of identity and intimacy and being cared for (Duyvendak 2011). The literature on
feminist geographies of home highlights the importance of a concrete, well-known space as signifier for both individual status and family relations (McDowell 1999). However, the related moral and emotional attributes (Haylett 2003; Blunt and Dowling 2006) make it, according to Fortier (2003, 115) necessary ‘to decentre the heterosexual, familial “home” as the emblematic model of comfort, care and belonging’. This means that for an analysis of the intersections of queer ageing, home and care, a queer approach to gerontological geography (Gorman-Murray 2013) is required, something that has been largely absent from queer geographical research (Brown 2012; Misgav 2016). For a notion of care that reaches beyond a mere attending to physical needs and also incorporates emotional or psychological needs and needs related to identity recognition, an effective caring space needs to incorporate a focus on the specificities stemming from the intersections of age, gender and sexuality. A notion of home that can become a spatial context of care is thus tied to a possibility of openly expressing gender identities and sexualities (Waitt 2007), and needs and desires arising from them.

In this article we discuss the transformative potential of the social (and residential) space of La Fundación 26 de Diciembre, in Madrid, Spain which opened up to specifically support older LGBT people. Drawing on an in-depth case study we explore a space that allows and supports visibility of different forms of living and caring practices of people with different genders, sexual preferences, origins, classes or political backgrounds. By focusing on the daily life narratives of the people who work, volunteer or use the centre we want to discuss the potential of challenging the assumptions and constructions through which particular places gain social and political meaning. Drawing on this case we investigate the transformative creation of caring spaces which has shown to manifest itself in four interlinked processes: first, a re-definition of needs for older LGBT people, separate from heteronormative and traditional logics and settings. Secondly we investigate how care is organised differently, addressing those reformulated needs. This then provides the means to focus on the concrete material practices of the making of the caring space. Building on this investigation into the care needs and practices we then ask to what extent this active, collective process of space making can provide transformative potential for LGBT elderly people, for the geographies of care and for the definition of care beside traditionalized, heteronormative understandings.

Setting and methodology

The community centre of La Fundación 26 de Diciembre, housed in a former grocery store, is named in order to remember the law that decriminalized LGBT people in Spain in 1978. La Fundación consists of a community centre, which opened its gates in the neighbourhood of Lavapies, Madrid in February 2014 to support older LGBT people and their specific needs. The organization 26 de Diciembre, however, has already existed since 2010, aiming to coordinate all actions necessary to implement the first specialised elderly LGBT residence, which is, along with
many other actions, our main commitment to the dignity and caring for our older LGBT’ (Federico Armenteros, see below). The activities of the community centre are organised around a big multifunctional common space providing for different purposes: dining room, café, office and meeting space, counselling centre and workshop and event space. All the activities of La Fundación are self-organised, with the exception of few professionals responsible for fundraising, project coordination, communication, organization of care and training for volunteers. Two psychologists provide mental support as well as conflict resolution. The kitchen is open every day and allows people with different genders, sexual orientation, origin, class and political views to meet and socialise. The volunteers run activities and workshops, such as liberating talks/gatherings for HIV-positive people, meditation and reiki, workshops on sexualities, language courses, art therapy, theatre or support for people with mental illnesses. In direct proximity to the centre, La Fundación owns three apartments which have been donated for their ‘living-together’ project. In September 2015, eleven people of different backgrounds, age, sexual orientation and gender identity were sharing the spaces. Some of them are in need of care, while others are LGBT people in need of housing. La Fundación is primarily approached by people who face permanent or temporary disabilities or illnesses and who are in a situation of isolation and impossibility to organise care for themselves. The trained volunteers of La Fundación offer both practical help and emotional support. This care work most commonly includes visits to elderly homes, care and company at the hospital, the attendance of medical checks and other daily activities. La Fundación also cooperates with social services of the municipality who contact them especially in the case of LGBT people who are found at the end of life or homeless.

For this research, we applied a participatory action research approach (see Schensul and LeCompte 2016) in which we combine academic interest with artistic and political/transformative motivations. The final film, ‘26 de Diciembre’ (2017) documents the life stories, activism and caring relationships of the inhabitants of the space. For almost three weeks, we have been living at the community centre of La Fundación, sleeping on couches and using the facilities of the community centre. Very quickly, we not only became an integrated part of the centre but were treated as family. Initially we had been without camera in order to get familiar with the space and people. During meals and events we met the employees, volunteers and most of the people who come to the centre. After this early period, the camera has become an integral part of La Fundación, as people expected us to be there, to film and hold interviews. Most of the people were keen to tell their stories and those who did not want to be filmed told us beforehand. Besides interviews with individuals (34 in total) and groups we filmed meetings, the life in the residential apartments and social happenings. All interviews have been conducted in Spanish. The extracts have been translated.

During the individual and group interviews we encouraged reflections on the significance and meaning of La Fundación for older LGBT people and their
community. In particular, we enquired about the needs, objectives, dreams and utopias of people living, working and gathering at La Fundación. The participatory action-oriented approach therefore tried to engage with the aims of the initiative itself by providing a way of expressing ideals and visions for people’s individual and communal lives and practices. We sought to investigate how needs and practices can be translated into a working elderly care community and whether and how this model can function as example for transformative practices of collective making of caring spaces. The fact that most people at La Fundación wanted to have their stories shared allowed us to explore also deeply personal and sensitive topics. At the same time, however, the camera and our presence also encouraged people to perform and sometimes there was little space for confidentiality and anonymity. In this regard the reflections and analyses in this article do not provide conclusive accounts of individual stories; they rather reflect on shared ideas of communal living and caring. The empirical vignettes used to introduce each theme should function as both concrete illustrations of the broader processes being present at such a location and gateways into the understanding of individual and collective struggles that comprise this centre.

(Re-)defining needs

Maria

Maria lives alone in a small apartment in Lavapies and regularly visits La Fundación. Due to rheumatoid arthritis she needs crutches to walk. When we meet her, she explains how BDSM practices came into her life as a way to overcome the consequences of her disability, as a tool to express the potentiality of her body and eventually find herself. She does not speak about her disability; but she talks a lot about her body, about things that make her feel good. She is supported by friends (especially from the BDSM community), her daughter and people of La Fundación. She has recently lent her face, her body and her crutches to a campaign of La Fundación. While Maria had not been active in LGBT politics in the past she now often attends the women group of La Fundación, where she is holding workshops on sex toys and consensual relationships in order to make BDSM practices visible within the centre.

At La Fundación I feel like being at home, it is a second home. I feel cared for, very welcome. There are of course people there that do not understand this (BDSM) but then I make fun of the situation too. … I like this familiar atmosphere there, the fact that there is a lot of care and tenderness in dealing with everyone. I also like that people can switch from making jokes to having a very serious conversation with you five minutes later, by asking ‘do you have any problem Maria? Did you solve it already? Do you need help with something?’ and I feel totally protected by them. (Maria)

Maria compares the right to different forms of sexual practices to other rights such as housing or work:
We have the right to express our sexuality, like it is for two men kissing each other on the street … I want to imagine a future where I can walk on the street hand in hand with my slaves without people to be shocked. (Maria)

While Maria requires care and support her (care) needs only partly stem from her body and her age. In order to live a meaningful and satisfied life in older age she needs to draw on recognition and acceptance of her as a full person. In particular, the possibility of expressing sexual identities becomes an integral part of her needs in order to feel cared for. Misrecognition of (certain aspects of) one’s identity contributes to feelings of insecurity, marginalisation and discrimination (Fraser 2003). Importantly, for Maria and other people related to the centre, this recognition needs to be thought of as process in which older age intersects with other categories such as disability, gender, sexuality, class and race. The space people use becomes the site in which this recognition for all aspects of the person and the body is sought. Furthermore, the integration of gender and sexuality into the concept of needs also means that individual expressions can contribute to satisfy others’ potential needs. By being at La Fundación, people such as Maria have the power to manifest the right to value different forms of sexualities within the LGBT spectrum and beyond. By being part of the public space and showing her body for a public campaign, Maria attempts to empower others to reclaim the space to struggle for the recognition of identities, the beauty of different bodies and the reciprocity of care.

The Rosieras

At different moments in time and in particular during social events we meet a group of gay men, among others Elianne, Antigona, Israel and Picobello, friends who are former drag performers (the Rosieras). After having performed together during the 1970s and 1980s they lost contact but more than 20 years later met again at La Fundación. They created and regularly attend the big Sunday lunch, called Comida de la Abuelx (‘the granny’s lunch’). This always very crowded gathering attracts around 40 people every week. We get to know most of the people through the Comida, which is not only a moment to socialise but also to care for each other. Eating together is an effective way to get involved in each other’s lives, to enquire about (health) needs and the problems of the community: the first step of inclusion. During this lunch, the Rosieras recap episodes of their past and recreate scenes of their performances. They tell us how being there makes them feel being part of a community that has a past but also a present and a future. For the interview the Rosieras express the desire of recreating a scene about their experiences as drag performers during the years of the dictatorship. We agree on staging the interview in which they are sitting around a table, playing cards, chatting and laughing. Besides talking about their costumes and performances, they also touch on the topic of police violence during those years. Some stories, which were never even told to each other before, enable them to unveil traumas
and experiences of abuse during the dictatorship. They describe detailed scenes of the police breaking into bars and the abuse they suffered and emphasise the significance of these stories:

All of this is very hard to remember. Why this … persecution, why have we been pushed to the wall threatening us with guns. We need to preserve the memory of it. (Elianne)

It is not easy to talk about those times, we never wanted to do it … But we are still here, beautiful and proud, to tell who we are, to tell people to be proud of themselves, to remember what happened so it will not happen again. (Picobello)

This incidence emphasises that attention to physical and/or emotional needs is not limited to the present circumstances but also needs to involve the processing and sharing of past traumas and experiences. By securing that, the space of La Fundación represents the ideals of and longings for a home as ‘a familiar and “safe space”’ (Milligan 2003, 461, 462) which allows the sharing of feelings and thus fosters a healing process. The stories also show the complexity of needs caring spaces must cover. In the following section we explore further how these processes manifest themselves within concrete practices.

(Re-)designing care

Y. and Alberto

After his coming out as gay, Y. migrated to Madrid where he was homeless until he found support at La Fundación and met Alberto. They became friends and lovers and Alberto supported Y. economically. A few months later Alberto was diagnosed with Hela, a disease which paralyzed most of his body. Y. became his care worker and they moved together into one of the apartments. Alberto requires round-the-clock care and is unable to talk and can only move his head. Only because Y. understands his eyes and movements Alberto is able to communicate with the rest of the world. Y. describes how their relationship has changed: he now takes care of Alberto, supporting him, giving him love and affection. They never had a classical ‘love relationship’, but when Alberto’s condition deteriorated, Y. became his eyes, legs and hands. Alberto, by providing financial stability, made it possible for Y. to have a home, a safe place. Y. says that what he is doing for Alberto is a way to reciprocate for what he did in the past. Alberto’s need for care and affection at the end of his life and the need for home and security of Y. brought them into a relationship based on consent with a clear demarcation of boundaries and responsibilities. While classical gender roles are reinterpreted through actual practices, their relationship is defined by an exchange of varying elements of physical, emotional and financial care.

Jose Antonio and Jose Luis

Jose Antonio and Jose Luis are old friends who have been taking care of each other for many years. Three years before, Jose Luis was diagnosed with cancer and
Jose Antonio took care of him during his therapy. At the moment, Jose Antonio is recovering from heart surgery and needs daily support, so he moves into Jose Luis’s house. Through the facilitation of La Fundación they receive financial support which enables them to provide care work to each other. While they explain their situation, they joke about their relationship, how they met more than 40 years ago, through their female partners. Their care relationship draws on friendship but becomes visible and supported by the rest of the community and the institutions. Having personal, intimate relationships embedded within communal structures and spaces allows for the possibility of deep personal commitment and communal support.

These two stories illustrate relationships that at the same time reconfirm and challenge classical care relationships based on the dichotomy, where the carer is a (feminised) active, able-bodied person and the care receiver is a passive recipient of care. While aspects of this traditional dyadic image (Tronto 2013) are present in both cases, both couples emphasise mutuality and reciprocity within their evolving relationships. However, the asymmetry of roles and the different power dynamics at a given moment, are complicated and partly challenged by the narrations of forms of love and affection and the very conscious choices of establishing relationships based on care, affection and commitment. The practices of consent and negotiation of duties and responsibilities link instrumentality and support with care and love and thus challenge the often imagined irreconcilability of intimacy and functional or financial exchange (Weicht 2015; Zelizer 2005). Taking up Williams’s (2004) definition of families as social practices, we can argue that these caring relationships are established by how people actively relate to each other rather than how they are defined as couples. Both individual and communal practices of care are not confined to duty and commitment but can be seen as active and voluntary expressions of love and friendship allowing each individual to regain ‘the realm of the “magical” and transformatory which imbues much of daily life with meaning’ (Smart 2007, 78). This transformatory potential, however, relies on constant reflection on the particular needs of each individual and the resulting relationship of the couple. By collapsing somewhat arbitrary differentiations between care, support, love and friendship the practices can give care a new meaning.

Collective space making

So far the discussion has focused on individual practices that try to accommodate diverse and intersecting needs by providing reconceptualised forms of care. Until now we have only hinted at the significance of the spatial, structural and institutional context required for the possibility of these processes and actions. Turning towards the spaces of care, however, it will become obvious that La Fundación should not be analysed as static structure but rather forms a continuous project of space making or, more precisely, caring-space making practices.
Josete

When we first arrive at La Fundación we get a tour of the space and one of the first names we hear is ‘Josete’. There are photos of him all around. He was the one who inspired the group to implement a voluntary-based project that supports older people in need of care in their homes, as Federico, the president of La Fundación, explains:

He was only waiting to pass away, alone, in his house. His partner died years ago. He was very much afraid he had at some point to be hospitalised … We were going to his house two times per week, and we built a strong connection with him, we became friends … He wanted to pass away in his house. For us that was not an easy situation, the social services did not recognise the situation and we had to organise among each other … He was also really scared and afraid of dying. We told him that he was not going to die because the memory of him was in our heart. We are going to give his name to one of the places we are going to renovate. We told him that he was going to be part of our talks, our memories, our writings. His name will not be lost … We need to give them the importance that no one ever granted them and that they deserve. (Federico Armenteros)

The story of Josete has been fundamental for people at the space. Not only for the personal connection but more broadly, for the meanings that memory and recognition have for that particular space and community. It is one of many stories of LGBT people who find themselves at the end of their life without the support of social care and in a situation of isolation. By taking care of the memory of Josete, people at La Fundación aim to preserve and recognise LGBT people's experiences and struggles. The space of La Fundación becomes an important storyteller itself. Its walls are covered with pictures and posters; objects and art tell the stories of those who inhabit it and those who recently passed away. The space thus becomes a continuously evolving and changing project of collective space making through which places gain meaning and history – they are being created and shaped by people (Massey 1995; Easthope 2004). Blunt and Dowling (2006, 245) similarly emphasise this procedural approach:

home is a process of creating and understanding forms of dwelling and belonging. Home is lived as well as imagined. What home means and how it is materially manifest are continually created and re-created through everyday home-making practices, which are themselves tied to spatial imaginaries of home.

Also the Rosieras are visible at the walls of La Fundación, which are covered with photos and posters of performers and activists who from the 80s onwards took part in the public cultural life. Many of these artists and activists are now volunteers or regular visitors of La Fundación. The history of criminalization of LGBT in Spain, the experiences and stories of the individuals and the development of the movement not only become visible in the space but really constitute La Fundación and its caring practices. Since an idea of home is also strongly linked to sensory, embodied experiences of a certain place (Pink 2004) the practices of La Fundación, i.e. the various elements of home making allow an establishment and continuation of a
shared identity. These practices parallel Cvetkovich’s (2003) description of LGBT narratives as collections of stories and artefacts leading to the creation of archives that belong to emotional, political and therapeutic cultures. In fact, particularly affects, traumas and related experiences often provide a foundation for the formation of queer public culture. Speaking with Milligan (2003), drawing on Augé (see below), La Fundación actively seeks to create anthropological spaces, as embodiment of identity and self-expression, providing security and safety. Workshops, lunches and cultural events seek to engrave the particular spaces with meaning and pictures, posters and artefacts establish home through the display of people’s personal lives and identities (Williams 2002). Through these space making practices, which recognise diverse histories, identities and experiences, real care becomes possible:

As the embodiment of identity, the anthropological place of the home further places limits on the extent to which an individual can be objectified and depersonalised – stripped of their history and identity – to become anonymized within a collective (institutional) regime. (Milligan 2003, 462)

Additionally to the space undergoing transformation by addressing personal issues related to love and sexuality, the very spaces also inform and define people’s actions, interactions and identities (see Browne, Lim, and Brown 2007). By that, queer communities also attempt to constitute different, novel understandings of what is public and acceptable.

**Transformative potential**

**Belen, Edoardo and Saray**

Belen and Edoardo can often be seen chatting at La Fundación – they share a common vision regarding participation and education. Belen is responsible for communication and contacts with other LGBT organizations but, as all employees, she is often called to help with the numerous problems at the centre and the apartments. Her workspace is the social space itself and she personally knows all the people at La Fundación. Edoardo is 65 years old, from Uruguay and lives in one of the apartments, together with a couple of gay men from Venezuela and Saray, a transwoman from Sevilla. Saray was homeless for a few months before moving into the apartment and she is going through transition at the age of 50. She shares many stories of abuse, violence and discrimination. Saray finds it difficult to handle bureaucracy, especially in relation to her transition, and she often asks for help at La Fundación. She also often expresses the will to share her story and experience and to make the space safer for herself, for example by avoiding moments of misgendering. She says she does not receive the support she would like from her housemates because they are gay men, and she would rather share the apartment with other women. Edoardo, on the other hand, suggests that Saray is not used to share spaces and she does not understand others’ needs of privacy.
At the same time, however, he also underlines the positive effects of living in a diverse apartment. He describes how Saray’s gender performativity challenges him and his housemates in a positive way:

We can live together. We all have ideals of gender and when someone messes it up we are all messed up and people laugh as an answer. But we learn from each other and from the dynamics that we produce by living together. (Edoardo)

Every week the people who live in the apartments meet with Belen and discuss issues and tensions and seek solutions with the support of professionals. In this, the practice of care is extended even beyond the themes of reciprocity and recognition; rather, care here includes a political function and practice. In particular, Edoardo recalls the importance of being conscious about the gay masculine presence in the space, its mechanisms of silencing other groups and individuals, and its reproduction of gender hierarchies. Supported by the social centre, Edoardo and his co-residents are in the process of establishing a community of affection and affiliation in difficult and challenging circumstances. Their experience also points to an often-implied role of the physicality of home as being already healing or caring. While a particular space can indeed function as safe space or even healing space (Conradson 2003), places can only gain this meaning through the social relations they foster and entail (Blunt and Dowling 2006). How people relate and interact with each other shapes the caring potential of a particular context, be it in the private home or an institutional setting. Importantly, the very interactions are also representations and reproductions of existing gender and sexuality relations (Parks 2002), an aspect that makes the conscious, active and inclusive space making practices even more significant. The apartment in which the group lives entails both the private and public characteristics of home and challenges those accordingly (Varley 2008). This means that their active, consciously chosen practices of care challenge the traditional ‘identity and subjectivity embodied in the patriarchal ideology of home’ (Young 2005, 130) and, thus, shape the political potential of caring spaces.

**Federico Armenteros**

Federico is the president and one of the founders of La Fundación. He is the first person we have been in contact with and the one who welcomes us. He lives together with his partner, Ino, a volunteer, and the ageing parents of Ino. We are interviewing Federico at different occasions, at the centre, in his apartment and during his meetings with institutions and LGBT groups. Federico comes to the centre every day and spends a lot of time socialising. He tells us about difficulties of securing funding and the efforts to arrange meetings with institutions and donors. The organisation is planning to create more residencies for older LGBT people. As has been implicit in the discussion earlier, the need for housing extends beyond the presence of a roof and four walls but requires a space that allows care,
intimacy and recognition. Clearly, for the potential of being able to create this ‘real home’ material, political and cultural restrictions apply (Young 2005). Traditional (institutional) care spaces are often marked by the absence of personal histories, narratives, feelings and identities (Milligan 2003; Varley 2008). With Augé (1995) these spaces could be described as non-places where everyone has to live according to ‘the same code as others, receives the same messages, responds to the same entreaties. The space of non-place creates neither a singular identity nor relations; only solitude and similitude’ (Augé 1995, 83). Through its processes and practices, La Fundación, on the other hand, tries to actively create ‘anthropological spaces’ in which individual and collective identities are recognised and can flourish.

We follow Federico while he is preparing for a meeting with the president of the Community of Madrid. On his way to the municipal council, he explains his views regarding the importance of participation and collaboration with institutions such as political parties and municipal and national institutions. From his perspective the visibility of LGBT organizations and their broader participation is only possible if people are organised and he wants the topic of older LGBT people’s rights reaching the political agendas. Federico also shows us buildings that are empty, most of them historical places which he desires for La Fundación to acquire and renovate. By being able to live in historical buildings, the LGBT community would gain recognition of their historical importance, their existence and their history of discrimination. Many of the buildings around Puerta del Sol are owned by the municipality and are used for meetings, some of them are empty. It was in those spaces that LGBT people were arrested, detained and tortured during the dictatorship. These spaces are thus filled with symbolic value and Federico is proud that now LGBT organizations are present in the very same buildings and participate in shaping their future. As argued above, awareness and remembrance of both collective history and individual experiences form an inherent aspect of care and become, as the story of La Fundación indicates, a political exercise. What is at play in such space making and space claiming practices is the power to define who and which bodies are allowed the right to care and be cared for, to live in affordable houses, to have a proper meal and to live a valuable social life. It suggests how imaginative, utopian spaces become materially relevant to make a difference to people’s lives. By placing caring practices at the centre of the revindication of spaces, those actions produce practices of ‘caring democracies’ (Tronto 2013) based on different gender and sexual norms.

Conclusion

In this article, we use the case study of La Fundación to explore the transformative potential to imagine care and intimacy in diverse settings. Focusing on the practices of an LGBT community several assumptions of both care and places have been challenged throughout. First, caring needs have been reinterpreted according to the intersections of various identity markers, to include claims for
recognition and diversity and a component of memory and remembrance. This extended notion of possible needs of LGBT elderly people has then been shown to be met through caring practices that move beyond the classical distinction of carer and cared-for by focusing on interdependence which also challenges moral distinctions of intimacy and material exchange.

Exploring how the people at La Fundación attempt to use the spaces and the materiality of the settings to provide a form of inclusive care we identified space making practices that explicitly seek to reimagine and recreate a home, despite the latter's often oppressive connotations (Elwood 2008). Using the centre's walls to document the movement's history, for example, brings together questions of sexuality, materiality and home (Pilkey 2014) that allow and foster a continuous re-creation of communities of affinity and affection which even reach beyond individuals' deaths by preserving their memory. Finally, it has been shown that the active home making and care space making practices are inherently political processes that include a creative imagination of ageing and people's relationships. Sharing the activities of home making and care with each other the inhabitants and visitors of the centre challenge their own assumptions, expectations and ideologies while, at the same time, providing a public example for transformative forms of living and caring.

Due to its focus on LGBT elderly people La Fundación can serve as an illustration for how the persistent interlinkage between gendered practices of care, the heterosexual family and the space of the family home can be challenged and how both care and caring spaces can be actively redefined. This analysis can thus contribute to a rethinking of gendered caring practices by first, calling for an inclusion of (sexual and gender) identity recognition and remembrance into the needs of elderly people; secondly, arguing for the recognition of a consistent dilution of the caring triad of the professional, the family carer and the cared-for by focusing on the active negotiation of various forms of interdependencies and, thirdly, perceiving of caring practices as political acts that personally and publically present different forms of living and relating. Additionally to Misgav's (2016) observation that gay elders' cultural performances can shape political resistance and activism, the case of La Fundación shows how intimate caring practices can function as political interventions.

The case study can furthermore inform feminist or queer geographies based on active space making practices. Caring spaces and, in particular, the home have been interpreted as sites of resistance earlier, often in the light of a racist and sexist reality (hooks 1990). Similarly, the space making practices of La Fundación resist traditional and commonly assumed notions of public and private and the ideology of the home. Rather, home becomes the spatial and material context through which individual and collective needs, gender and sexual identities are expressed politically through caring practices. The result can be seen as achievement of self-active, conscious human agency by which home-making practices transform the concept of the traditional (caring) home altogether. In other words,
the caring practices themselves create anthropological, meaningful places for people with diverse gender and sexual identities. This article has thus shown how inclusive caring practices can create meaningful places and, at the same time, how space making (or home making) practices can create safe, healing caring spaces.

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Notes on contributors

Silvia Radicioni is a PhD candidate at NASP (University of Milan and University of Turin), Italy. She has been working as a social worker and researcher for women’s organizations in Italy and Austria, working on the issues of gender, sexuality and community building. After moving to the Netherlands, she focused on the intersection of gender, aging and care. She is now interested in comparative research on care for gender and sexual minorities in contemporary Europe, in particular by looking at self organised communities and networks.

Bernhard Weicht is Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Innsbruck, Austria. He has studied (Social) Economics in Vienna/Austria and Social Policy in Nottingham/UK. He holds a PhD from the University of Nottingham where he researched the social and moral construction of care for elderly people. He continued his work on care and ageing as a Marie Curie Fellow at Utrecht University, Netherlands with a project on the intersections of care and migration regimes. Bernhard has published on the construction of care, ideas of dependency, migrant care workers, the intersection of migration and care regimes and the construction of ageing and older people. He is the author of The Meaning of Care (2015) and co-editor of The Commonalities of Global Crisis (2016), both published by Palgrave Macmillan. He is chair of the European Sociological Association Research Network ‘Ageing in Europe’.

ORCID

Bernhard Weicht http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6886-5594

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