

‘Other than in the hotel, I feel safe almost everywhere’: Hotelized containment, governable (in)visibility and LGBTIQ+ survival in UK asylum hotels

Diego García Rodríguez^{1,*} and Leah Russon Watkins²

¹School of Criminology, Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leicester, Abbotsbury House, 156 Upper New Walk, Leicester, LE1 7QA, United Kingdom

²School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Nottingham, Law & Social Sciences Building, University Park, Nottingham, NG7 2RD, United Kingdom

*Corresponding author. School of Criminology, Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leicester, Abbotsbury House, 156 Upper New Walk, Leicester, LE1 7QA, United Kingdom.

E-mail: diego.garciarodriguez@leicester.ac.uk.

Abstract

Drawing on participant observation and semi-structured interviews with LGBTIQ+ people seeking asylum in England and Scotland, this article explores the role of asylum hotels as sites of governance in the United Kingdom using two connected concepts. Firstly, we use the term ‘hotelized containment’ to explain how hotels are repurposed into quasi-institutional spaces of enforced waiting, everyday control, precarity, managed dependency, and limited autonomy. Secondly, we introduce the notion of ‘governable (in)visibility’ to explain how LGBTIQ+ residents can simultaneously be hyper-visible to the state and accommodation providers while being compelled to conceal their identities in their everyday communal lives. We argue that accommodation is not incidental to LGBTIQ+ asylum governance but constitutive of it by showing how asylum hotels can generate exposure to institutional disbelief and reactive safeguarding. Using queer necropolitics as an interpretive lens, our findings illustrate how avoidable harm becomes normalized within the ordinary operation of asylum hotel life for LGBTIQ+ residents.

Keywords: LGBTIQ+ asylum; asylum accommodation; housing; surveillance; visibility; discrimination; United Kingdom.

Received: 26 August 2025. **Revised:** 15 May 2026. **Accepted:** 10 July 2026
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1. Introduction

It is a cold February morning in London in 2023 and, coming out of the tube, I see a block of recently built luxury apartments on this busy road at peak hour. As I walk towards the asylum hotel where Ayesha¹ resides, I check the property website Rightmove on my phone. I want to know how much an apartment costs here: a one-bedroom flat is selling for over £500,000, revealing the unequal world those like Ayesha inhabit. She is a South Asian transgender woman who arrived in the United Kingdom in 2021 and has since been waiting for a response on her asylum application. While I walk towards the street where her accommodation is located, I notice something that catches my eye. The Animal War Memorial Dispensary, opened in 1932 as a memorial to animals who suffered and died during the First World War, stands in front of me. Two plaques commemorate, among others, 484,143 animals who died on the various fronts, while recording that 725,216 sick and wounded animals were treated in veterinary hospitals provided by the RSPCA² at the time. This celebration of animal compassion contrasts with the indifference that people seeking asylum like Ayesha experience a few minutes away. Leaving this memorial behind me, I pop by a café nearby to grab some doughnuts and chai lattes. While waiting for my order, I see Ayesha through the window. She is wearing a thick jacket and a headscarf that covers most of her face. She is looking around in a vigilant manner, adjusting her veil as if she were hiding from someone.

‘Hey Diego,’ she greets me softly with her eyes moving quickly around the space, “How are you?”

“I’m good, it’s so lovely to see you”, I reply.

I explain that there is a delay with the drinks, and she nods, with her fingers still playing with the headscarf. Later, she will tell me that public spaces like this make her feel nervous, having experienced several transphobic attacks. As a transgender woman seeking asylum, she often finds herself having to evaluate social risks. Finally, with our drinks, we step back into the cold and cross the street to her asylum hotel. At the entrance, a security guard and a receptionist stop us. ‘He’s visiting me,’ Ayesha explains politely. They exchange words in Urdu, a language barrier that reflects my outsider status. Though I cannot grasp the specifics, I can feel the tension in the air. For Ayesha, these interactions are her daily reality, illustrating the constant control that intensifies the already heavy burden of her asylum process. I am asked to sign a visitor form and record the time of my entry. We can finally get in and, as we walk up the stairs, I see posters from organizations such as Migrant Help, advertising services ranging from asylum advice to mental health support. There is information in Arabic and Urdu, revealing the diversity of residents here. A bulletin board lists the names of staff members, as Ayesha tells me, all from her own country, another sign of the dynamics she must navigate.

Inside her apartment, I walk down a short corridor that leads to a kitchen-living room, with a sofa in front of a television and a dining table. On the floor, there is a harmonium, an instrument commonly used in South Asian *qawwali*. The space has large windows facing an inaccessible internal patio, offering a view into other units. Ayesha is under constant observation, by the staff downstairs and by the design of the building, which exposes her space to others. This is not her first asylum accommodation. Before this, she lived in four other locations, which she left due to transphobic attacks. Her experience exposes the contradiction of an asylum system that often reproduces the threats that led claimants to flee their countries. As we settle into her living room to begin our conversation, I think about the contrasting worlds I have navigated to get here: the luxury flats down the road, the memorial’s celebration of compassion and the precarity of the asylum hotel.

Ayesha's case illustrates the main argument we make in this article: UK asylum hotels should be understood as part of a governing infrastructure through which asylum seekers' lives are managed, instead of being analysed simply as temporary accommodation. To develop our argument, we bring together two interconnected concepts. First, we introduce hotelized containment to show what is distinctive about the asylum hotel as both a commercial and quasi-institutional space of enforced waiting, precarity, control and dependency by building on existing scholarship. Second, we use governable (in)visibility to bring together debates on queer asylum legibility and visibility politics by showing how residents may be hyper-visible to the state and accommodation providers while simultaneously being required to hide their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) in their everyday lives. Our goal is to bring existing debates into sharper conversation with one another to explain how asylum accommodation itself shapes the terms on which LGBTIQ+ people seeking asylum live their lives. While doing this, we use queer necropolitics as an interpretive lens to interrogate how avoidable harm becomes normalized within these arrangements.

In what comes next, we first outline the British context, theoretical framework and methodology, before presenting our findings and concluding discussion.

2. Asylum accommodation in the United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, housing for people seeking asylum is governed by legislation and contractual arrangements. The Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 made life harder for asylum seekers by introducing a dispersal policy (Stevens 2001), which moves asylum seekers to areas with few LGBTIQ+ communities or co-ethnic networks, limiting their access to vital support systems. The government defended this approach by stating that spreading asylum seekers across the country prevents any single area from being overwhelmed with the responsibility of support (Politowski and McGuinness 2016). Later, the Immigration Acts 2014 and 2016 extended the UK's 'hostile environment' by embedding immigration-status controls and sanctions across areas of everyday life, including, for instance, private renting, employment, driving, and access to bank accounts (Consterdine 2018). These measures were distinct from the asylum-support regime established under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, through which destitute people seeking asylum may receive accommodation and financial support. The provision of asylum accommodation has increasingly been outsourced by the Home Office to private providers and, since 2019, accommodation and related support have been delivered through regional Asylum Accommodation and Support Services Contracts (Home Office 2019). In 2023, two companies involved in providing Home Office asylum accommodation reported combined profits exceeding £113 million (Taylor 2023), but the British Home Office has no complete record of the full set of companies nor centralized data on their performance (Warnes et al. 2024). Evidence suggests that contractors have failed to meet basic standards of safety and hygiene due to substandard living conditions, security concerns, and the lack of specialized support for those with specific needs (Dwyer and Brown 2008; Kissoon 2010; Yohannes et al. 2024).

Alongside these domestic frameworks, international human rights instruments provide protections relating to housing and accommodation. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes housing as part of an adequate standard of living, while Article 11(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognizes the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living, including adequate housing. Additionally, Article 21 of the 1951 Refugee Convention requires states, where housing is regulated by law or subject to the control of public authorities, to accord refugees lawfully

staying in their territory treatment as favourable as possible and, in any event, no less favourable than that accorded to other non-citizens in the same circumstances. Lastly, although the European Convention on Human Rights does not establish a general right to housing, Article 3 prohibits inhuman or degrading treatment, while Article 8 protects the right to respect for private and family life and the home. Accommodation conditions and arrangements may engage these protections.

Those seeking asylum in the United Kingdom normally begin their stay in reception centres, hostels, hotels or other forms of shared accommodation known as ‘initial accommodation’ while their eligibility for Section 95 support is assessed (Home Office 2026; Lenegan 2025). Although intended to be short-term, stays in hotels became increasingly prolonged after the COVID-19 pandemic because of dispersal backlogs and limited housing availability (Guma et al. 2021). When they qualify for Section 95 support,³ asylum seekers remain in initial accommodation while awaiting dispersal to longer-term temporary accommodation, often in flats or shared houses, although they have no choice over the location (Lenegan 2025). However, since 2 June 2026, the statutory duty to provide asylum support has been replaced by a discretionary power under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 (Free Movement 2026).

The recent use of former military sites and barges as contingency accommodation has led to criticism due to their inhumane conditions (Burnett et al. 2024; Davidson 2023). At the time of writing this article in July 2026, the Bibby Stockholm contract (an accommodation barge docked in Dorset) had already ended in January 2025, and the Labour government has committed to ending the use of asylum hotels by the end of the current Parliament (Hansard 2026). Nevertheless, rather than moving away from large-scale contingency accommodation altogether, the government is expanding the use of larger and more basic facilities, including former military sites (BBC 2026). As of July 2026, the latest official figures indicated that just under 170 asylum hotels remain in use, accommodating approximately 21,000 people, compared with peaks of around 400 hotels and 56,000 residents (Hansard 2026).

Parliamentary scrutiny has continued following the Home Affairs Committee’s October 2025 report on the Home Office’s management of asylum accommodation (Home Affairs Committee 2025), which examined the oversight of accommodation providers, contractual arrangements, living conditions, safeguarding, and the continued reliance on hotels. Following the government’s response to that report in January 2026, the Committee pursued further scrutiny in June 2026, focusing particularly on accommodation contracts and plans to expand the use of military sites (Home Affairs Committee 2025; 2026a,b). These developments have taken place while the United Kingdom has witnessed an increasing mobilization of far-right networks, including protests and violent attacks on asylum seekers (Home Affairs Committee 2025). This context explains the extent to which asylum accommodation has become a highly contested arena of contemporary British asylum governance at the intersection of multiple forces, from administrative management to safeguarding, public expenditure, spatial control, and increasingly polarized political debates.

After this contextual background, in the following section, we introduce the conceptual framework through which we analyze how these arrangements govern, and are experienced within, the everyday lives of LGBTIQ+ residents.

3. Conceptual framework

In this section, we have two objectives. First, we situate the article within scholarship on asylum accommodation, queer asylum, and visibility politics. Second, we clarify our conceptual framework. We do not intend to present hotelized containment and governable (in)visibility as concepts emerging outside existing scholarship. Instead, we develop them to draw

together insights which have often remained disconnected: work on accommodation and bordering on the one hand, and work on queer legibility, disclosure, and recognition on the other. Before proceeding to discuss each concept vis-à-vis prior literature, we also want to note that we use queer necropolitics as an interpretive lens. Coined by Mbembe, necropolitics is useful to interrogate what he describes as the ultimate expression of sovereignty, which 'resides in the power and capacity to dictate who may live and who must die' (Mbembe 2003: p. 11). In our study, following both Mbembe (2003) and queer extensions of this work (Haritaworn et al. 2014), necropolitics provides a lens to interpret how certain forms of harm, abandonment, deterioration, and delayed safeguarding become administratively tolerable. Therefore, we use queer necropolitics as an interpretive lens to analyze the wider political logic through which preventable suffering becomes normalized in asylum hotels.

3.1 Hotelized containment

Existing literature on asylum accommodation in Britain makes clear that accommodation is not a neutral background to refugee status determination but a central infrastructure through which asylum is governed. Darling's work (2011) is foundational here because it illustrates how accommodation is organized through 'relations of calculation, regulation and discipline' and can generate a 'politics of discomfort' (ibid, p. 263). According to Darling, accommodation is 'deliberately decoupled from feelings of security and familiarity' (ibid), so that the material conditions of waiting become part of migration control. Instead of providing refuge in any straightforward sense, asylum accommodation operates as an everyday bordering mechanism through which uncertainty and dependence are lived. This is a crucial starting point to situate our conceptual framework because it allows us to understand asylum housing not simply as welfare provision, but as a form of governance infrastructure.

More recent work refines this argument by showing how asylum hotels have become one of the key spatial forms through which this infrastructure operates. Burridge (2023) calls for attention to a 'hotel geopolitics of detention' (p. 1), arguing that hotels have long occupied a partly hidden place within wider 'landscapes of carcerality' (ibid). Jerrems et al. (2023) similarly show that asylum hotels reveal the 'fragmented, discontinuous and malleable nature of contemporary bordering practices' (p. 1050) because they occupy an unstable position between refuge, confinement, quarantine, and temporary accommodation. Through their research in the United Kingdom and Australia, Darling and Burridge (2025: p. 1) argue that the hotel is no longer a marginal or exceptional site but 'a durable, and vitally important, site of bordering infrastructure'. Their notion of carceral hospitality is critical for our research because it names 'the fraught positioning of the hotel between carceral conditions of institutional detention and spectacle, and the hospitable expectations more readily associated with sites of leisure, escapism and relaxation' (Darling and Burridge 2025: p. 2). In other words, the hotel offers shelter while simultaneously serving as an instrument of surveillance and coerced waiting. Related scholarship further unsettles any easy distinction between accommodation and detention. Esposito and Tazzioli (2023: p. 8) argue that in the contemporary UK asylum system 'distinctions between sites of accommodation and detention are blurred'. Their research moves away from a simplistic binary between housing and custody and towards a continuum of confinement that includes barracks, hotels, dispersed housing, and other non-custodial sites. A significant issue to consider here is not only whether a site is legally defined as detention, but also how dependency and everyday control are materially produced within it. Returning to Burridge's account of hotels as hidden carceral sites and Darling and Burridge's work on carceral hospitality, we can observe how asylum hotels

operate via a wider reworking of confinement through spaces that remain formally outside detention while reproducing detention-like effects.

Expanding these debates, existing literature in the field of political economy explains why this scenario cannot be reduced to poor administration or emergency improvisation. Martin's work (2021) on carceral economies shows that privatization is not simply a transfer of functions away from the state, but a 'reorganization of authority' (p. 740). In this context, migration control works through contractual arrangements, delegated powers, valuation practices and forms of commodification that make migrant life administratively actionable and economically exploitable (ibid). Such analysis travels powerfully to the British asylum hotel context, where authority is dispersed across the Home Office, private contractors, hotel management, security staff, safeguarding procedures, complaints mechanisms and sub-contracted routines of everyday control. Hirschler's (2021: p. 4) research on the marketization of UK asylum accommodation extends this point by showing that harm is not incidental to outsourcing but produced through it: asylum housing becomes a field in which 'value is derived from residents' continued destitution'. Hirschler's work illustrates how hotel accommodation acts as a contractual arrangement through which residents are held in a context of managed dependency, exposed to low accountability and governed by actors who are neither fully reducible to the state nor meaningfully separable from it (ibid). While this literature is essential to situate the conceptual framework we introduce in this article, it still leaves us with further questions when it comes to analyzing how commercial hotel infrastructures are lived by LGBTIQ+ claimants for whom sharing a room, co-habiting, everyday interactions and identity disclosure can become sources of danger because of their SOGIESC.

Further research shows how the everyday effects of hotel accommodation are lived socially, racially, and psychologically in intersectional ways. Temporary asylum accommodation can function as a racialized hierarchy of value in which residents are cast as 'undeserving and unworthy' and relegated to a 'racialized zone of non-being' (Guma et al. 2024: p. 758). Petie et al. (2025) have explored hotel accommodation through the logics of hospitality, hostility, and (un)home, showing how people seeking asylum are positioned as 'guests of the state' while being denied the security, welcome, and relationality typically associated with hospitality (p. 28). Spira et al. (2025: p. 11), in turn, show that the mental health effects of British hotel accommodation are structured by 'lack of safety, lack of autonomy, and social isolation'. These studies show how hotel accommodation can increase vulnerability and cause harm. This scholarship is useful to understand the intersecting (e.g., racialized, social, psychological) harms emerging from hotel accommodation, but it does not explore how hotel life can make LGBTIQ+ disclosure simultaneously necessary (when asylum decision-makers expect visible performances of queer 'authenticity') and dangerous (when sharing spaces with people who may express homophobic or transphobic attitudes). Therefore, research on queer asylum is valuable to locate the existing gap in scholarship more precisely and situate our analysis beyond the United Kingdom. In Sweden, Wimark (2021a) conceptualizes queer refugees' search for safety and belonging as a process of 'liminal homemaking.' As he argues, many find themselves in a state of liminal homemaking through which 'non-alignment with norms results in different forms of discipline that can push refugees towards liminal spaces' (ibid, p. 649). As he continues, 'this blurs the border of a specific timeframe of leaving/losing a home (country) and creating a new home since many queer refugees find it difficult to find belonging that fully embraces them' (ibid.) This liminal state, Wimark explains, often becomes perpetual because exclusion is reproduced across families, ethnic networks, receiving societies and queer communities, rather than being limited to reception sites (ibid). Wimark's later analysis of Swedish asylum housing shows how institutional responses to homophobic and transphobic violence have been 'additive rather

than systemic' (2021b: p. 704) since safe houses and LGBTIQ+-friendly placements are introduced without challenging an allocation system organized around cisgender, heteronormative assumptions. As Wimark argues, 'these practices indicate that the nation is widely engaged in domesticising practices of sexuality and gender to align with heteronormativity.' (ibid). In the German context, Schröder's (2026) study of the 'Berlin model' cautions against treating specialist queer accommodation as an automatic solution. The model recognizes LGBTIQ+ applicants as 'particularly vulnerable' and provides dedicated accommodation and support, but access depends on becoming institutionally legible as queer, while overcrowding, inadequate privacy and racialized, classed and cisnormative hierarchies can persist within allegedly safer spaces. As Schröder explains, 'cisheteronormativity might lead to transphobia, making these queer refugee support spaces less welcoming for trans individuals' (2026: p. 251). These studies help us consider how accommodation regimes govern the forms of queerness that institutions recognize, which is valuable for us to examine, focusing on the UK context in this article, how these dynamics are produced through the surveillance, visitor controls, commercial relationships, precarity, and enforced temporariness of hotel infrastructure.

It is in the context we have explored so far that we introduce the concept of hotelized containment. We do not propose this term to claim a wholly new discovery, but to specify more precisely what the literature above already makes visible when read through contemporary British asylum hotels while focusing specifically on LGBTIQ+ experiences. We use this term to refer to the conversion of commercial hotel infrastructures into quasi-institutional asylum spaces that govern everyday life through constant monitoring, managed dependence, restricted autonomy, uncertainty, precarity, selective protection and fragile accountability, while continuing to be represented as temporary accommodation rather than detention. Our concept is valuable to identify forms of containment that are neither reducible to formal detention nor adequately captured by the language of emergency housing. Therefore, what we seek to add to existing scholarly debates is a more exact account of how contemporary asylum governance works through the hotel as a distinctive spatial, contractual and affective geography where detention-like environments and feelings are generated through ordinary practices (e.g., to name a few, room-sharing, visitor controls, food schedules, security presence, complaints procedures, and forced moves). In other words, hotelized containment is not meant to name confinement in general, but how containment is produced when spaces normally associated with transit, privacy, and service (such as hotels) are repurposed into sites of asylum governance. This can then allow us to interrogate the hotel as an infrastructure that actively shapes dependency, social relations, movement, and the conditions of everyday LGBTIQ+ survival.

3.2 Governable (in)visibility

Having introduced hotelized containment, in this section, we situate the concept of governable (in)visibility by building on scholarship that argues that visibility is not simply the opposite of invisibility, nor an uncomplicated advantage for queer and trans people seeking protection. Instead, visibility is politically organized and linked to recognizability within state and humanitarian regimes. Shuman and Hesford argue that sexual minority asylum is shaped by a 'privileged visibility' in which claimants are expected to become intelligible through normative forms of legibility, even as asylum systems continue to produce some subjects as unrecognizable (2014). As they argue, 'rendered unintelligible, invisible, and unrecognized in the political asylum process, sexual minorities attempting to "get out" are faced with the ultimate exclusion, without any safe place to go' (ibid: p. 1030). Similarly, based on research in

Malaysia, [de Vries \(2016: p. 890\)](#) argues that refugee politics are structured by the paradox of 'blending in, remaining invisible, and claiming a presence'. As de Vries states, 'governance-resistance is also a play of (in)visibilities, whereby visibility is either a matter of seeing visually and/or of becoming knowable, and hence governable' (ibid: p. 893). Focusing on the figure of the 'suffering Syrian gay refugee', [Saleh's research \(2020\)](#) makes a related point: visibility regimes do not only reveal pre-existing lives, but actively privilege some narratives over others, especially those compatible with humanitarian legibility. Drawing upon these debates, we introduce governable (in)visibility to define a condition in which LGBTIQ+ people are not simply seen or unseen but also made visible through institutional structures that simultaneously discipline what kinds of selfhood can appear and what must remain hidden or partially shown.

This is especially important within queer asylum scholarship considering that a critical challenge faced by LGBTIQ+ people seeking asylum has never been visibility alone but the demand for normative legibility. [Lewis's \(2013\)](#) analysis of lesbian asylum claims is useful here because it shows how applicants are produced as 'deportable subjects' when they fail to match dominant and culturally intelligible narratives of sexuality, warning that authenticity cannot be measured through easily recognizable performances of lesbian identity. She employs the term 'deportability' to refer to the 'lived experience of the constant threat of removal, as well as to the ways in which immigration laws and policies render specific migrants legally vulnerable to deportation' (ibid: p. 176). In later work, [Lewis \(2014\)](#) further demonstrates how asylum decision-making is shaped by a lingering 'discretion logic', whereby non-heterosexuality is at once expected to remain private and yet be made evidentially visible to the state. These studies reveal that asylum systems do not simply ask whether a claimant is visible, but whether they are visible in their expected way. When we use governable (in)visibility, we seek to conceptualize this pressure to regulate one's disclosure, behaviour, lived story and evidence vis-à-vis everyday life in asylum hotels to become recognizable without being perceived as incoherent or suspicious.

Early work on SOGI asylum shows that LGB claims are often filtered through highly particular expectations about coherence, disclosure, identity development, and emotional truthfulness ([Berg and Millbank 2009; Millbank 2009](#)). [Spijkerboer \(2013\)](#) explains that sexuality-based asylum claims are structured by demands that are difficult to reconcile with the realities of fear, shame, cultural difference, and strategic silence. This initial literature has since been extended by work exploring how credibility is organized through assumptions about what a 'truthful' queer account should look like, even though such assumptions sit uneasily with the diversity of sexual and gendered lives ([Dustin and Ferreira 2021](#)). [McGuirk's \(2018\)](#) analysis of 'permissible LGBT asylum seeker identities' shows that NGOs and legal intermediaries do not simply assist claimants but can also help translate them into institutionally acceptable subjects. Recognizability is produced not only in the interview room, but also across the wider spatial conditions in which claimants live while waiting for a decision. In this context, [Danisi et al. \(2021\)](#) show that the legal and social experience of LGBTIQ+ asylum cannot be separated because access to support, place, mobility and community shapes whether claimants can disclose their SOGIESC. [Dustin and Held \(2021\)](#), together with [Held's \(2023\)](#) work on ambivalent queer spaces, also reveal how LGBTIQ+ support groups can improve wellbeing, reduce isolation, and sometimes even affect legal outcomes, yet they are also shaped by unequal power relations, racialization, gendered exclusions, and expectations about what kind of queer subject can be recognized. Dispersal policies and fear within shared housing can force claimants into a 'new closet' and limit access to the networks that decision-makers may later treat as evidence of authenticity ([Danisi et al. 2021; Dustin and Held 2021; Held 2023](#)).

In the UK context, scholarship on LGBTIQ+ asylum has explored how recognizability is simultaneously narrative, moral, and material. Giametta (2017, 2014) shows how claimants are pushed to produce coherent biographies in which gender expression, sexual identity, and histories of suffering appear mutually confirming, ‘thus often reconstructing themselves as archetypal asylum seekers’ (2017: p. 1). In this context, failing to translate one’s sexual citizenship into the British geopolitical context has material consequences (ibid, p. 13), contributing to legal precarity and lives suspended within asylum administration. Also in the British context, Greatrick (2023) complicates the secular rescue narrative embedded in these expectations through his concept of ‘transformative accommodations’. He uses this term to demonstrate that religiosity and queerness are not necessarily opposing affiliations, and that faith communities can provide support and belonging throughout the asylum journey. At the same time, maintaining such relationships may involve strategic concealment (ibid, p. 1935), which, Greatrick argues, ‘troubles binaries of freedom/visibility and oppression/concealment’ (ibid, p. 1920). This analysis is valuable to unpack our concept of governable (in)visibility by helping us consider how what claimants reveal or withhold must be understood in relation to the material and relational conditions in which disclosure occurs, rather than measured against a singular model of liberated queer life. In the context of Denmark and Germany, Lunau and Schröder’s (2025) account of ‘colonial surveillance’ reveals how institutional assessments of queerness draw upon racialized and colonial archives of knowledge, while support organizations may both resist and reproduce these evaluative logics (p. 2178). Inspired by this literature, when we introduce the notion of governable (in)visibility, we seek to bring these scholarly debates into the asylum hotel, where recognition is negotiated both in front of decision-makers and support providers and through everyday encounters with staff, contractors and co-residents.

Recent legal scholarship shows how asylum procedures flatten queer and trans lives into administratively manageable categories. Danisi and Ferreira argue that, in SOGI asylum claims, ‘the lack of past or present relationships may result in asylum claims being rejected, while there is a strong correlation between “credible” intimate relationships and overall credibility of SOGI claimants’ (2022: p. 11). Ferreira (2023) also shows how late disclosure of sexuality should not be read as inconsistency or deceit, explaining that it is shaped by shame, fear, trauma, mistrust, and by the confessional structure of asylum itself, which pressures applicants to narrate their ‘truth’ in state-legible ways from the outset (p. 23). These studies show that (in)visibility is frequently produced by procedure since applicants may suppress or stagger disclosure because the conditions for a safe and intelligible appearance are highly constrained. Scholarship on trans-specific asylum extends this analysis beyond verbal disclosure to categorization and administrative surveillance. Camminga (2024: p. 2) argues that asylum is ‘premised on heightened surveillance’ and shows how the documentary demands placed on transgender claimants can reproduce misrecognition rather than resolve it. Here, recognizability is about inhabiting bureaucratically acceptable gendered classifications, often through institutional records that may expose applicants to further vulnerability. This is especially valuable for our argument because it highlights that governable (in)visibility is not reducible to speech, but, instead, it is also spatial, documentary, embodied, and embedded in the ways authorities, accommodation providers, support workers and co-residents respond to queer and trans asylum seekers. Considering these debates, both hotelized containment and governable (in)visibility bring attention to how the spatial management of LGBTIQ+ asylum claimants shapes the conditions under which they become visible, hidden, credible, doubtful, supported or administratively manageable.

We use governable (in)visibility to bring these strands of scholarship into conversation with the specific spatial politics of asylum hotel accommodation. In line with existing

research (Marhánková 2019; Robertson 2017), we retain the parenthetical form (in)visibility deliberately. As noted above, our analytic argument is not that invisibility replaces visibility, but that LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers in hotels are often caught within both at once. In that sense, governable (in)visibility builds on earlier work rather than displacing it. Scholars such as Shuman and Hesford (2014), Lewis (2013, 2014), Saleh (2020), Ferreira (2023), and Camminga (2024) have shown that visibility in queer asylum is conditional and tied to normative recognizability. Inspired by this body of work, we aim to show how these dynamics are reworked within hotel accommodation itself. The hotel is not the background against which legibility problems unfold, but one of the spatial conditions through which visibility becomes governable. Therefore, when we use governable (in)visibility, we describe the context in which LGBTIQ+ people seeking asylum are expected (and required) to become visible to institutions in ways that are recognizable and legible from a Western-centric LGBTIQ+ identitarian framework while often remaining unable to be openly visible in everyday life. The concept of governable (in)visibility allows us to capture how visibility is not only about being 'seen' by others, but also about being made legible through state, legal, humanitarian and accommodation systems that determine which sexual and gendered lives become intelligible and which remain unintelligible (Tazzioli and Walters 2016). Simultaneously, we seek to clarify how invisibility can become a strategy of survival within spaces where disclosure may produce harm. Therefore, governable (in)visibility is useful to analyse the tensions through which LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers manage disclosure, evidence, behaviour and self-presentation in order to be believed by the asylum system, while also navigating the dangers of being known by staff, contractors, co-residents and other stakeholders in asylum hotels.

Therefore, while hotelized containment helps us interrogate the infrastructural and institutional arrangements through which claimants are housed in spaces of enforced waiting, governable (in)visibility is useful to conceptualize the regime of appearance produced within that arrangement by capturing how residents may be hyper-visible to the Home Office, contractors, and hotel staff, while simultaneously having to hide their SOGIESC in everyday communal life.

4. Methodology

Our empirical analysis draws on qualitative fieldwork with LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers and refugees across England and Scotland, which involved participant observation and semi-structured in-depth interviews between 2023 and 2025. This article is co-authored. The first author designed the study, conducted the fieldwork, analysed the data, and led the writing. The second author's contribution was limited to supporting the development of part of Section 3 during an internship at the University of Nottingham, when she completed a mini literature review. The first author subsequently revised, substantially developed and integrated this material into the article's broader conceptual and analytical argument. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the University of Nottingham's Research Ethics and Integrity Committee (Reference 95233).

Fifty-one interviews were conducted by the first author working in solidarity with local organizations. Prior to commencing data collection, the first author shared information about the study with NGOs and asked whether they had any specific areas of interest so that the study could generate findings that would benefit their goals. Following conversations about the study, organizations discussed the research with their service users, some of whom contacted the researcher directly to express an interest in participating. The first author also attended organizations' in-person meetings to discuss the study, and potential participants had an opportunity to ask questions. All participants received a participant

information sheet, provided verbal and written consent and were compensated with a £10 gift card. Interviews were planned to last 60 minutes, but the duration ranged from 45 to 120 minutes. Most sessions were conducted one-to-one, except for one that included two participants who were former partners and still lived together. Interviews took place at locations selected by the interlocutors, which included, among others, separate rooms at cafés where no one could hear us, their own homes or asylum hotels and NGO offices. All interviews were conducted in English, apart from one in Arabic, for which a professional LGBTIQ+-friendly interpreter was hired, and four in Spanish with Latin American participants, which were translated by the first author.

Throughout the study, the first author maintained a reflexive stance regarding his positionality. As a cisgender, white, gay man and an economic migrant who moved to England for professional reasons, he held a position that combined affinity and distance from his interlocutors. Their shared positioning within LGBTIQ+ communities and experiences of speaking with non-British accents sometimes facilitated rapport, yet they did not share lived experience of forced migration. Considering this, the first author critically examined his positionality and privilege as a researcher, sought feedback from participants on interpretations and became a volunteer and trustee with a UK-based LGBTIQ+ refugee charity. His role as researcher and activist improved his understanding of community needs and helped ensure that the research findings were oriented towards achieving impact. It also raised the risk of over-identification, which he mitigated by separating support and research roles where possible, and inviting participants to comment on the findings. All participants were sent their interview transcripts before data analysis. Four requested changes or deletions, which were implemented, and further decisions were made by the first author to omit information that could lead to their identification. Following this, the first author imported interview transcripts, fieldnotes from visits to hotels and NGO spaces and reflexive memos into the data analysis software NVivo and conducted thematic analysis. Initial open coding was followed by grouping codes into themes, which were refined through several returns to the data. To protect anonymity, all names have been changed and identifying details about countries of origin, accommodation sites and organizations have been minimized or removed. The table below presents the demographic information from the nine participants in this article using pseudonyms. They were purposively selected from the wider set of fifty-one interviews because they provided detailed accounts of their lives in asylum hotel accommodation, while reflecting variations in terms of gender identity, sexual orientation, and region of origin (Table 1).

Table 1. Participants’ background.

Pseudonym	Gender identity	Sexual orientation	Region of origin	Age range
Ayesha	Transgender woman	Heterosexual	South Asia	30s
Bahman	Cisgender man	Gay	Western Asia	30s
Jolly	Cisgender woman	Bisexual	Southwest Africa	30s
Zaman	Cisgender man	Gay	South Asia	20s
Judeline	Cisgender woman	Lesbian	Southwest Africa	30s
Larry	Cisgender man	Bisexual	East Africa	20s
Salome	Cisgender woman	Lesbian	East Africa	40s
Fajar	Cisgender man	Gay	Western Asia	20s
Laura	Transgender woman	Bisexual	Latin America	30s

5. Findings

Our findings are organized into two thematic sections. The first examines how routinized control and dependency structure everyday life in asylum hotels. The second explores how exposure, disbelief, and reactive protection shape the conditions under which LGBTIQ+ residents seek to survive within these geographies. Across both sections, we use hotelized containment and governable (in)visibility as analytic tools to illustrate how asylum hotels both produce hardship and help organize the forms of control, recognition, concealment, and harm that our interlocutors describe.

5.1 Routinized control and dependency

In this section, we examine how routine hotel practices generate dependency and limit the autonomy of LGBTIQ+ residents. We explore how these conditions shape movement, intimacy, social relationships, and decisions about one's SOGIESC disclosure. Ayesha's words capture this:

Whenever I go out, they write my name. When I come back, they write my name, my room number, and the time again, like I am a criminal. If I am away for like a day, or if I'm late, they call me, "Where are you?"

What we want to highlight from this example is how regular administrative practices are experienced as 'criminalizing' by LGBTIQ+ claimants and how they ultimately collapse the line between shelter and surveillance. Ayesha's case is aligned with scholarship exploring how hotel spaces can blur accommodation and carcerality in everyday life (Esposito and Tazzioli 2023; Jerrems et al. 2023). Participants like Ayesha, and others who felt constantly 'watched', illustrate how the hotel is perceived, despite the lack of formal detention powers, as a generator of detention-like outcomes through practices that include questioning absences, tracking room numbers, logging departures and returns and other invasive actions that generate a regime in which autonomy is made conditional and subject to constant scrutiny. Hotelized containment therefore operates through ordinary administrative rhythms rather than explicit coercion, since residents are not 'locked up' in a legal sense, but their movements, their time, visits, and behaviour are knowable and manageable by the hotel infrastructure. Jolly, a bisexual woman from Southwest Africa, described how leaving the hotel felt like moving through a securitized environment:

We thought, "Is this thing a reality or a nightmare", like really being in jail. Because every time we wanted to leave the hotel to take a walk, we had this alarm device, something that you had to press when you saw danger, when you saw someone [who] could attack you. Every time we were going out, we were told to take it with us because apparently people in [anonymised name of an English city] had problems with asylum seekers.

This example shows that containment is not exhausted by what occurs inside the hotel building. Instead, both the hotel and its surrounding environment constitute a wider geography of managed danger. Any potential threats that residents could face outside are folded back into the hotel's internal governing logic, which intensified their dependence on accommodation providers while normalizing the idea that their movement must take place under conditions of alert. This helps explain why our interlocutors so often described the hotel as both a place of refuge and a place of fear. Petie et al.'s (2025) formulation of '(un)home' is useful here

because it captures how asylum accommodation can formally house people while stripping that space of the affective qualities usually associated with safety and comfort. As they argue, the poor 'management of hosting arrangements is fuelling fear among hosts as well as guests, which undermines social trust and can cause social harm' (p. 14). As they continue, 'the development of social relations within the home, including the space around hotels which constitutes part of that home, is critical to enable hosts' and guests' feelings of home' (ibid). For queer and trans residents, this contradiction is even sharper because safety is never fully found inside or outside the hotel since going out, staying in, being seen and avoiding attention can all be potentially risky.

A further feature of everyday life under hotel rule is the way the system limits residents' social lives. The prohibition on visitors emerged as one of the most significant routine restrictions discussed by participants. Bahman, a gay man from Western Asia, explained:

I asked the accommodation provider why people aren't allowed to come in because it's more important than people think. Because once you are out there communicating with other people, with English people, the first thing they ask is, "What's your name? What do you do?" (...) And the third question is, "Where do you live?" And if you're living in a hotel where no one can come visit you, that raises other questions, so you have to go through your situation with them and that makes people take distance from you. So, you can't really socialise with the real society in that position.

This example illustrates how visitor restrictions reconfigure the social meaning of the residents' address and attach stigma to everyday interactions beyond the hotel, while also exposing how hotelized containment works through forced explanation. As we can see, the hotel does not simply isolate residents by preventing them from having visitors but also forces them to explain why their lives do not conform to ordinary social expectations, which creates, for many, feelings of shame and anxiety. This is especially harmful for LGBTIQ+ claimants, since chosen family and trusted social ties can be fundamental to survival. In line with this, [Danisi and Ferreira \(2022\)](#) have shown how asylum structures often normalize the erasure of queer intimacy. As they explain, several factors undermine 'SOGI claimants' ability to freely live their love and family bonds', with accommodation denying individual experiences and producing 'systematic, but yet invisible and unaddressed, violent effects' (ibid: p. 13). In our material, the ban on visitors restricted the conditions under which belonging and community support could be sustained. Ayesha illustrated this point by saying that:

My friends cannot stay with me. My partner cannot stay with me. I cannot stay with my partner. I'm fighting with my feelings and with my system.

Her words reveal how hotel rules shape affective and intimate life. Complementing their physical separation from others, residents' intimate lives are governed through a regime built for temporary management instead of long-term liveability. Here, hotelized containment emerges through immobility, organized dependence and the withholding of the conditions that make ordinary emotional life possible. Our interlocutors often described how they worked around these restrictions by meeting people outside of the hotel, trying to spend the night with friends who had their own apartments, secretly bringing visitors inside the hotel or socializing through LGBTIQ+ groups. However, these strategies required time, money, concealment, and emotional energy. Returning to [Wimark's \(2021a\)](#) account of liminal home-making, we can see how these restrictions interrupt residents' social lives by obstructing any possibility of creating comfort and belonging. Prohibitions on visitors, precarious living

conditions, the absence of private space and the constant shifting demands between visibility and concealment make it difficult to establish a home in a relational sense, leaving LGBTIQ+ residents to seek fragments of belonging across spaces that are financially, socially and institutionally difficult to access. As Wimark argues, 'they are left to create belongings in-between-in liminality-if they do not adjust to expected ways of being' (ibid, p. 662). At the same time, as [Greatrick \(2023\)](#) explains, the relationships through which LGBTIQ+ claimants survive should not be understood through a binary between oppressive co-ethnic/religious ties and emancipatory queer ones because experiences of support, danger, (in)visibility and belonging may coexist within the same relationships. Hotelized containment intensifies this uneven and negotiated process by narrowing the range of spaces and relationships that residents can safely access and sustain. In doing so, it makes both disclosure and (in)visibility more consequential because LGBTIQ+ residents often find themselves having to continually assess where, when and to whom aspects of themselves can be made visible, and at what cost. Bahman, for example, described the hotel as the place in which he felt least safe:

I feel safe when I'm visiting my friends in other towns. Basically anywhere, apart from the hotel because it's just ... I feel like overall this area, but specifically this hotel that I'm in ... The people who live there, they are homophobic freely because they believe it's a free country, but they just misunderstand it. Other than in the hotel, I feel safe almost everywhere.

Bahman's words reverse the official logic of accommodation since the hotel, which is supposed to act as a place of protection, is experienced as more threatening than public space elsewhere. This helps explain why many LGBTIQ+ hotel residents described hiding their SOGIESC identities through concealment as a practical response to risk. We understand concealment here as a modality of governable (in)visibility, observable through a set of self-managed practices by which residents attempt to regulate what can be known about them in response to the forms of externally imposed visibility produced by the asylum system. Concealment, in this sense, should be understood as a situated response to an environment in which visibility can carry significant social and material consequences. As Judeline, a lesbian woman from Southwest Africa, explained about her time in a hotel, 'Most of the time I was always in my room.' Other participants described similar experiences, revealing how hotelized containment restricts one's autonomy and produces social disconnection, leaving residents more exposed to fear while cutting them off from the support networks that might mitigate these risks. Larry, a bisexual man from East Africa, said:

I didn't mention my sexual orientation to anyone [in the hotel] because of my past trauma. I just arrived there without knowing what to expect, so I didn't wanna leave myself vulnerable, so honestly, I just kept it to myself.

His case resonates with scholarship arguing that strategic silence is often a consequence of asylum conditions rather than a sign of implausibility ([Ferreira 2023](#); [Jansen and Spijkerboer 2011](#)). Hotel residents find themselves calculating what different forms of legibility might expose them to among co-residents and staff. Governable (in)visibility arises here as part of everyday life under hotel rule when residents remain institutionally reachable and administratively visible while trying to minimize any recognizable difference in everyday interactions. Salome's experience shows how far this can extend into social withdrawal:

No one knew about me being a lesbian, it was none of their business. People tried to get close to me, but after what I went through, I just prefer to stay away from people.

Even in our group, you know, in [LGBTIQ+ asylum group's name], everyone is nice, but I have to stay away from people. I've never felt like this before. I've always had many good friends, and people around me. But now, I just feel like being alone is a bit safer, you know?

Concealment exceeds the hotel walls and shapes trust even in affirming environments such as LGBTIQ+ spaces. This is where the overlap between regular control and visibility becomes analytically important because the hotel's rules, social relations and everyday uncertainties concurrently restrict movement and produce (in)visibility. In this context, withdrawal becomes a safety strategy resulting from conditions that ultimately intensify isolation and increase distress. If we analyse this scenario through a necropolitical lens (Mbembe 2003), these dynamics point to forms of attritional harm through which the conditions necessary for socially and emotionally sustainable lives are progressively diminished. The result is a thinning of liveability since ordinary needs for privacy, intimacy, recognition and comfort become difficult to meet without risk.

In this section, we have shown how the harms generated by asylum hotels are not only related to poor standards of living, but also, and importantly, to the production of a managed everyday life structured around precarity, waiting, dependency and restricted autonomy. This is where hotelized containment offers analytical leverage as it helps us interrogate the geography of the asylum hotel as a governing arrangement that structures, among other issues, eating, sleeping, mobility, privacy, intimacy, and access to support through routines that seem mundane but are politically consequential. At the same time, these conditions also shape governable (in)visibility because shared rooms, surveillance by staff, dependency on contractors, and the absence of private space affect how residents present themselves and how they navigate the constant risk of becoming visible in the wrong way. Consequently, the asylum hotel emerges as a geography that organizes both everyday life and the terms of LGBTIQ+ recognizability.

5.2 Exposure, disbelief, and reactive protection

While Section 5.1 examined how hotels govern residents' lives through everyday routines and the management of (in)visibility, in this section we consider how those same arrangements shape institutional responses once danger becomes explicit. As we will see, harm is made more likely by the structure of hotel life, but institutional action often depends on such harmful experiences first becoming legible in the right way. Zaman, a gay man from South Asia, explained:

I have gone back and forth with the Home Office about my circumstances and how the accommodation that they put me in isn't good for me. And how I can't be sharing a flat with them even though I would have my room. I explained the whole situation three times to the Home Office, and to my MP, but they just don't care. Basically, what they're saying is that an assault must happen first. I know for a fact that if I wear what I like to wear, it's gonna happen.

Even though risk had been explained repeatedly, Zaman found a lack of institutional willingness to act preventively. This case exemplifies the logic of reactive safeguarding: protection is deferred until danger has already materialized as an event that can be documented and evidenced. This type of dynamic demonstrates how governable (in)visibility is valuable as an analytical tool. To avoid harm, residents habitually hide their SOGIESC, but to be believed, they often need to have experienced an actual attack or present an externally validated

record of distress. This results in a contradictory situation where silence may become necessary for survival while forms of visible and institutionally legible LGBTIQ+ life may simultaneously acquire evidentiary value within credibility assessment.

This dynamic appeared repeatedly in participants' descriptions of daily self-management. Larry's earlier excerpt about keeping his sexuality to himself because he did not want to 'leave myself vulnerable' illustrates this, as well as Salome's explanation that 'being alone is a bit safer'. Both show how becoming 'invisible' can constitute a practical response to life in accommodation when LGBTIQ+ individuals find themselves in unwanted proximity to hostile residents without adequate protection. While this aligns with wider literature on delayed disclosure and the pressures of queer asylum narration (Ferreira 2023), our findings show that asylum hotels add a further layer of immediacy. We therefore extend existing work on how asylum interviews shape disclosure by showing that the spatial organization of hotel life (e.g., rooms, corridors, dining halls, reception desks) also plays a critical, and unexplored, role. Fajar described an incident involving the person with whom he shared a hotel room:

At that time [when living in the hotel] I didn't open up about being LGBT, but Micro Rainbow⁴ held an event, so I went home wearing a rainbow T-shirt. I think he was from Afghanistan, he couldn't understand English, and there was a communication barrier, but that day he was so furious when he saw me wearing that, so he was going to talk to me, to ask if I was gay. I was terrified. I was scared he'd bring his friends to the room, and I noticed that people were looking at me differently afterwards, that people didn't like me, so I had to report this to the hotel manager because it was very difficult. They changed me to another room which was smaller, but I was by myself. When I told the hotel manager, he thought I was lying, he said, "You just want to have a room for yourself, you can't be gay". They didn't accept it until I mentioned the issue to the NHS doctors who came to the hotel, and the doctor wrote a letter saying this was affecting my mental health.

Fajar's experience provides a particularly clear illustration of how governable (in)visibility and hotelized containment operate together. His participation in an LGBTIQ+ event was important for him to find a space of belonging, while also contributing to the forms of visibility through which an LGBTIQ+ asylum claim can become institutionally legible, but the visible evidence of participation (in this case, his rainbow T-shirt) made him vulnerable within the hotel as it led to a threatening encounter. In a single day, Fajar witnessed how visibility can operate ambivalently. It facilitated belonging and recognition at Micro Rainbow's event, while generating exposure and risk in the hotel. However, this visibility was not sufficient to make Fajar's concerns credible to hotel management. When we discuss governable (in)visibility, this is exactly the tension we are pointing at. Signs of LGBTIQ+ life, such as clothing, can expose residents to hostility, while institutional gatekeepers demand further proof before acting. The manager's response illustrates how accommodation staff can reproduce wider asylum credibility logics by translating a safeguarding request into a suspicion of manipulation. His experience became institutionally actionable only once it was validated by an NHS doctor and reframed through the language of mental health. McGuirk's (2018) analysis of 'permissible LGBT asylum seeker identities' is especially useful here, as it demonstrates how institutions distinguish between credible and non-credible queer subjects through moral and narrative assumptions about how LGBTIQ+ identities should be narrated and evidenced. Ayesha's description of direct violence makes a similar point:

The transphobia was continuously happening. One day, I was playing guitar with my lesbian friend, and an Iranian guy, he was an asylum seeker, came to us, he said he

could play an instrument. “Can I jam with you guys?” My friend said, “OK, yeah you can come”. (...) Then, he texted me and said, “Why isn’t your friend replying to me?” And I said, “I don’t know why she’s not texting you”. And he said, “Tell me, is your friend a lesbian?” I said, “Why are you asking such personal things about my friend? If you have any questions, you can ask her directly”. When he discovered that my friend was a lesbian, he became homophobic against us. And one day, he attacked me. He tried to burn my hand. He tried to cut my hair. He tried to sexually abuse me, and he said he was gonna kill me.

Ayesha’s case illustrates how accommodation structures place transgender people into everyday proximity with others while offering limited protective mechanisms once threats escalate, which creates situations where danger is common but under-recognized. Laura, a transgender woman from Latin America, described how:

At the hotel, I was harassed a lot. They [other residents] asked me where my room was, if they could come and visit me in my room, if I was alone, if I was in a relationship.

Some of the participants above were moved to other hotels after experiencing violence, but this did not transform the conditions that produced such violence. This is reminiscent of [Wimark’s \(2021b\)](#) analysis of Swedish responses to harm as additive rather than systemic, which we explored in Section 3, through which even when supposedly safer placements were created, the heteronormative organization of the wider accommodation system remained intact. In our research, Zaman’s repeated requests and Fajar’s eventual room move show a similar pattern, since protection was individualized and activated only after risk became demonstrable. When considering ‘safer’ alternatives, [Schröder’s \(2026\)](#) research in Berlin provides an important lesson: even purpose-built queer accommodation can generate discriminatory spaces and reproduce cisnormative hierarchies. These examples show the need to pay attention to residents’ specific needs and to consider proactive action when designing accommodation and safeguarding strategies to avoid requiring them to perform fixed, institutionally recognizable forms of vulnerability.

When analysing the experiences of our interlocutors through the notion of hotelized containment, we can see how the same infrastructure that governs room allocation and everyday movement also organizes exposure to violence. From the angle of governable (in) visibility, suspicions and the discovery of someone’s queerness can transform an already precarious social environment into an explicitly dangerous one. However, the result is often not immediate protection but an evidentiary struggle over whether the person’s fear is documentable enough to warrant action. This scenario clarifies why necropolitics is useful as an analytical lens: our point is not that asylum hotels are identical to sites of sovereign violence in Mbembe’s sense (2003), but that they distribute vulnerability in ways that make certain harms preventable and administratively survivable for the system. While protection is not entirely absent, it is often delayed. While our interlocutors’ complaints were sometimes heard, action was often taken only after an assault had taken place or become medically legible. The system governs through exposure as much as through care since LGBTIQ+ residents are required to live with risks that, while known, are not treated as sufficient grounds for preventive action.

The institutional disbelief and reactive safeguarding we have discussed in this section should not be read as secondary problems added to poor accommodation, but, we argue, as governing technologies. The same regime that normalizes everyday surveillance, precarity, dependence, and restricted social life also generates a credibility economy in which LGBTIQ+

residents must navigate whom to trust and how to make harm believable. Hotel life produces the conditions in which governable (in)visibility becomes necessary, and the management of visibility then shapes how institutions interpret or delay protection.

Our findings complement the literature discussed in Section 3 by demonstrating that, within asylum hotels, LGBTIQ+ residents find themselves inhabiting a contradictory visibility regime where they are expected to be legible to institutional actors while living in an environment that pushes them to hide their identities to stay safe. We therefore argue that LGBTIQ+ violence and safeguarding in asylum accommodation can be better explained through the combined analytical lenses of hotelized containment and governable (in)visibility. Governable (in)visibility captures the institutional conditions under which residents must become 'intelligible' as LGBTIQ+ subjects through normative forms of recognition, even when being visible can expose them to violence and still fail to secure adequate protection. Hotelized containment, in turn, situates these issues within the institutional organization of hotel life, where, as we have seen, issues like communal living, dependency, unequal access to support and the absence of safe private spaces intensify exposure to harm. Applying a necropolitical lens, we can observe how harm becomes normalized when incidents are treated as incidental consequences of accommodation policy rather than as politically produced results.

6. Conclusion

In this article, we have argued that UK asylum hotels should be understood as part of the governing infrastructure of LGBTIQ+ asylum through two interconnected concepts. Firstly, hotelized containment helps us name the specific configuration through which commercial hotels are repurposed into quasi-institutional environments of dependency and control. Secondly, governable (in)visibility captures the resulting regime within these spaces, whereby LGBTIQ+ residents are simultaneously made administratively visible while being compelled to suppress their SOGIESC. As we noted before, our aim has not been to introduce entirely new theories of confinement or (in)visibility, but to bring together debates on asylum housing and queer visibility politics to show how accommodation is not incidental to asylum governance but constitutive of it. Specifically, we have shown how hotelized containment identifies what is distinctive about the asylum hotel as a governing arrangement organized through managed dependency and routinized control, while governable (in)visibility reveals how that arrangement shapes the conditions under which LGBTIQ+ residents become legible, (in)visible, exposed, or disbelieved.

The policy implications of our findings extend well beyond the improvement of incident-response procedures. Meaningful reform requires a fundamental reconfiguration of the asylum accommodation regime itself, recognizing allocation practices, room-sharing arrangements, visitor restrictions, complaint mechanisms, staff training, privacy protections, and access to safer placements as constitutive elements of safeguarding. For migration studies more broadly, our findings position asylum accommodation as a key site of bordering, where, among other issues, visibility, mobility, intimacy, and credibility are regulated through the active management of LGBTIQ+ lives. We conclude by calling for further research to analyse asylum accommodation as a central component of contemporary asylum governance through which bordering is reproduced in everyday life.

Acknowledgements

We thank the participants for their time and trust, and the staff and volunteers of the NGOs we worked with for their support with research suggestions and recruitment.

Conflicts of interest. The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Funding

This research was supported by a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship, and the corresponding author was completing a UKRI Future Leaders Fellowship at the time of finalising this article (Project Reference UKRI3433).

Ethics approval

This study received ethical approval from the University of Nottingham's Research Ethics and Integrity Committee (Reference 95233).

Notes

1. This and all subsequent names have been anonymized.
2. RSPCA stands for the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.
3. Section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 allows the Home Office to provide financial and housing support to asylum seekers who are destitute or likely to become destitute (Crawley et al. 2011).
4. Micro Rainbow is the leading UK non-profit providing safe housing, integration, and social inclusion support for LGBTIQ+ refugees and asylum seekers.

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