

Sexual Norms: The Self-Policing of Sexuality

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June 2005



Office of the
Deputy Prime Minister

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Summary

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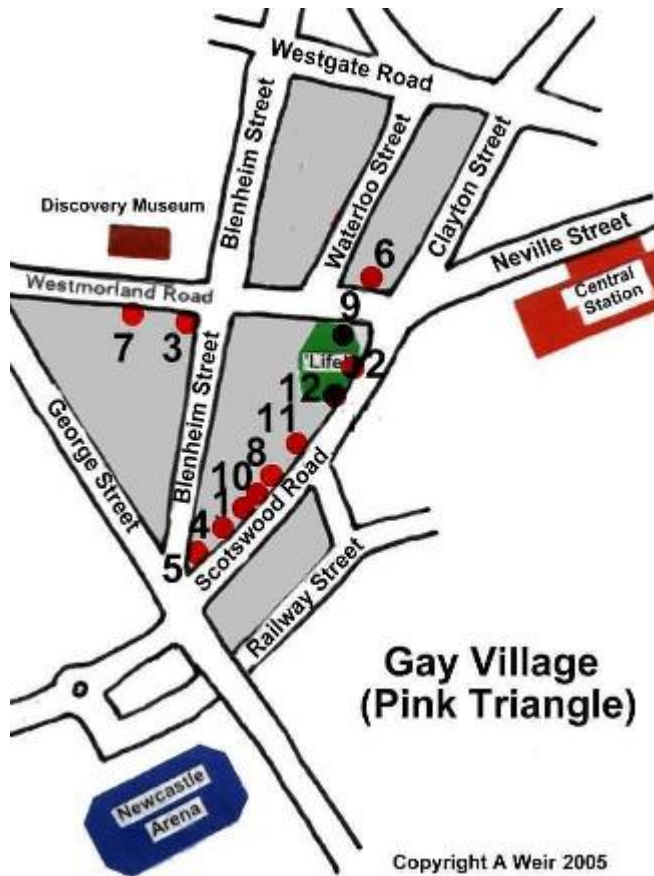
Introduction

- Focus on users practices and behaviour
- Sexuality policed in and through space
- Social/ sexual norms
- Heteronormativity
- Homonormativity
- Gay village: site of liberation/ site of oppression?
- Commodification leading to assimilation?
- Theoretically informed

Case Study Location: Newcastle's Pink Triangle

- Newcastle Upon Tyne's West End
- Degenerative history (Chatterton, 2001)
- NCC Building Bridges Strategy 1999: Regeneration
- St. James Boulevard/ East Blenheim Street area: gay village
- £18 Million invested in 4 years
- 90% entrepreneurial investment
- Commercial facilities

The 'Gay Village' : Map of Facilities



- 1 – The Bank
- 2 – The Baron and Baroness
- 3 – The Dog
- 4 – The Eagle
- 5 - Rockies
- 6 – Camp David
- 7 - Sugar
- 8 - Switch
- 9 - Twist
- 10 – The Loft
- 11- The Yard
- 12 - Zinc

Research Resources

- Link to PhD project
- 10 semi-structured interviews
- 3 months participant observation
- Secondary sources: queer literature

A 'safe haven'/ site of liberation?

- Threat of a naturalised heterosexuality
- Need for own space/ territory
- Foucault's (1986) Heterotopias
- Allowing for difference (Lees, 1997; Harvey, 2000)
- Relaxing self-regulation

- *'The city is not merely a stage on which pre-existing, reconstructed sexuality is displayed and acted out; it is also a space where sexuality is generated'* (Aldrich, 2004: 1722)

The Commodification of Sexuality

- *The interweaving of urban governance and sexual citizenship agendas produces particular kinds of sexual spaces at the exclusion of others' (Bell and Binnie, 2004:1807)*
- Commercial venues: homogenous style/ practice(s)
- Place as enabling
- Place as stifling
- Contrived space leading to contrived identities (Bell and Azzedine, 2000:171)

The Commodification of Sexuality 2



- On display: The role of design
- Out and proud
- Huge plate-glass windows (Tranter, 1994)
- Generational differences
- A window of opportunity?

Homonormativity



- Assimilationist sexual citizenship (Bell and Binnie, 2004)
- Queer cosmopolitanism
- Consumption culture
- Internal marginalisation
- Suitably conformist

Homonormativity 2



- Internal exclusion
- Purification of space
- Displacement
- Limits to hegemonic subversion (Knopp, 1995)

Heterosexual Invasion/Invitation?

- Casey, 'The Crack' (January 2005): All Mixed Up?
- Policing for a straight audience
- Hen nights: Cosmopolitan chic(ks)
- Football fans: Playing away

Time-space Strategies

- Negotiating identity across and through space/ time
- Time-space behavioural frameworks (Valentine, 1993)
- Multiple identities (Probyn, 1995)
- (Per)forming identities (Valentine, 1993 citing Goffman, 1956)
- Space, social norms and social relations: (Re) creating boundaries

Conclusions

- Social norms permeate aspects of everyone's life
- Social and spatial as impossible dichotomy
- Heteronormativity prevails in many life-spaces
- Sexual re-structuring leads to homonormativity
- Idiosyncrasies of space and individuals
- General trends of space and individuals
- Behaviour is altered over and through complex personal geographies
- Policing as (re)action

Final Thought

- *‘Whilst it is important to struggle for, and celebrate, the ever greater choices of safe spaces- venues where queers can (theoretically) be themselves- one must remain sanguine and cynical about the role played by the pink business in gay life’ (Valentine, 1995:186-7)*