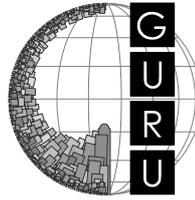


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**School of Architecture, Planning & Landscape  
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**The Lesbian & Gay Communities  
Reconciliation in the Built Environment ~  
A Planning Obligation**

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## **Abstract**

This paper highlights the lack of attention given to the lesbian & gay Communities by planning academics, policy and practice, and attempt to indicate their growing importance to the contemporary urban planning arena. The differences between the US and British experience of lesbian & gay movements in the 1990s illustrates that Britain is on an essentially assimilationist course, creating commercial lesbian & gay Scenes which are having increasing spatial and social impact in city centres across the country. By unpacking this conscious reconfiguration that is occurring in many spatial Scenes, the characteristics of visibility and clustering are seen to be creating vibrant commercial enclaves within many city centres, with specific sexualised identities, which are drawing lesbians & gay men towards the city centre at times when planners may not be around to notice them. Further, these leisure oriented areas are becoming increasingly enticing to mainstream society who are adopting them as marketing tools for the towns in which they have quietly grown. It is now the time for planners to harness the positive effects of the creation of Scene enclaves, and at the same time, fulfil their obligation to the Communities which created them by dealing with their particular spatial and land use aspirations. This will assist the changing face of urban regeneration policies, especially cultural policy and community development. By highlighting a case study in Manchester, it can be seen that where consideration is not taken during planning proposals, the increasingly politically, socially and spatially aware urban lesbian & gay Communities can retaliate vociferously and with pride. Planning needs to make itself more aware of the diversity of groups within cities if it is to adopt a more reconciliatory role as interest mediator in the urban arena.

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With pride.

## Abbreviations

See also the Terminology & Glossary section of Chapter 1.

CMDC	Central Manchester Development Corporation
LGB	Lesbian Gay Bisexual
MCC	Manchester City Council
MESMAC	MEN who have Sex with Men - Action in the Community (National network of sexual health projects for men)
NCC	Newcastle upon Tyne City Council
PSE	Public Sex Environment
SPCAG	Sackville Park Community Action Group
TWDC	Tyne & Wear Development Corporation
UDC	Urban Development Corporation
UDP	Unitary Development Plan
UMIST	University of Manchester Institute of Science & Technology
WCR	West Central Route

# Introduction

## Planning and The Lesbian & Gay Communities

### *Introduction*

This paper is concerned with fundamentals in urban planning practice. It is concerned with land use and use-value, location and place, design and spatial form - the physical and social characteristics of private and public use of urban space. It is also concerned with the many and varied elements which make up the fusion that contemporary urban planning is - sociology, politics, law, psychology, community, market, private sector. It is a study of the sort of everyday events experienced by planners in local authorities throughout the UK, from formulation of urban regeneration strategies, to community participation, to personal encounters on the telephone.

These are the bones of the paper; its subject matter is the lesbian & gay Communities of the UK. Not, perhaps, the first choice of discussion amongst planners in council corridors across the country. The interaction of the planning profession with the lesbian & gay Communities is not only absent as an area of active policy formulation, but indeed, has yet to be recognised as a field of research in planning academia. This paper intends to show how relevant the lesbian & gay Communities now are to many urban planning authorities, and as such is aimed towards the practising local authority planner who may not be aware of the lesbian & gay Communities within the population they serve.

Planners have a huge responsibility contained within their remit to effect progress - an obligation to all those within the urban environment - and it is these people, and their aspirations for that environment, that the planner should ultimately have regard. But the people is such a heterogeneous entity, that the fulfilment of this responsibility is infinitely unattainable. Nevertheless, planning is well equipped to attempt to meet this challenge - it is a complex combination of management and mediation, of expertise and inadequacy, of authority and deference - and the author believes that there is but one process which is present in the planner's palette of skills which should guide everything we do - the process of reconciliation. By the recognition that reconciliation is the basis of everything a planner does, the possibility of the fulfilment of this obligation to the people is increased.

Beyond a level discussion of the weaknesses of the current planning system, it is hoped

that important questions will be raised in the planner's mind. Planning is a maturing profession, and as it grows it is necessarily questioning and refining its aim and purpose. The paper intends to highlight that this process should not occur solely at the academic level or within the RTPI, but that self-inquiry should be an inherent activity of every planner. The ultimate purpose of this paper is not to raise eyebrows, but to raise debate.

### ***Structure of the Paper***

It is the basic tenet of the paper that only through self-education and a desire to learn about and recognise others will planners be able to fulfil their role of the reconciliation of conflicting ambitions for the urban environment. The paper will show that there has yet to be any strong recognition in planning literature of the existence of the lesbian & gay Communities within urban society. There will be a summary of the literature which does exist in other related fields dealing with sexuality and space, which will serve to indicate the need for planning to catch up with its professional colleagues in recognition of lesbian & gay issues.

Chapter 2 is a brief discussion of some of the subtleties of the lesbian & gay Communities, but it is intended that by reading the paper as a whole, a clearer idea of the characteristics of this enigmatic community will be gained. Chapters 3 and 4 deal with the claim that the lesbian & gay Communities are now more relevant than ever before to planners. It reveals how the lesbian & gay Communities are becoming more established within urban society and are developing physical and spatial expressions of this stability on the built environment through clustering and visibility. It will be shown how the characteristically proud and vociferous lesbian & gay Communities are adding new use-values to particular areas of our towns and cities through place claiming, and are creating enclaves which are at once enticing and alarming. Finally, the relevance to two areas of urban regeneration policy, community development and cultural policy, will be illustrated.

Chapter 5 consists of two case studies. The first concerns Manchester City Council's dealings with the city's well established lesbian & gay Communities over the refurbishment of a public park in the city centre. The second is a more hypothetical discussion of the complete lack of debate over the likelihood of the obliteration of the lesbian & gay Scene in Newcastle upon Tyne by major redevelopment plans. The studies will serve to highlight that the particular needs and aspirations of the lesbian & gay Communities are not being understood by some planners despite honest and commendable attempts to do so. Also that there can be a complete lack of knowledge

by many planners that thousands of people, within the town or city they are planning, have developed specific spatial dimensions to their existence, and that even if some knowledge is noted, acting upon it is unlikely.

By examining these studies, it is hoped that planners may become more aware of the social use-values which are being created in city centres by the lesbian & gay Communities, especially at times when, and in places where, planners may not normally be around.

Chapter 6 provides some conclusions which can be drawn from this study and will include an exploration of the some of the feelings which accompany the recognition of such places. To identify with the subconscious guilt which may accompany acceptance of the bounty discovered in these places with a rejection of the baggage of taboo which inextricably goes with them, may help to awaken planners' feelings on this subject. They will also relate to current debates on the future of city centre peripheries, the changing pluralistic structure of urban society, and the future direction of planning itself.

### ***Terminology and Glossary***

The use of terminology to define the groups of people with which this paper deals is in itself a huge area of conflict. The diversity of the lesbian & gay Communities is vast (eg. lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, ambisexuals, transvestites, transsexuals, queers, drags, hermaphrodites, androgens, and a myriad of other untagged identities) and a planning research paper is not the place for a debate on whether sexuality should be labelled in such a way that highlights difference in the first place.

As sexuality is about as personal as one can get, perhaps here, more than anywhere in today's society, toes are waiting to be trodden on, and it is certainly not this paper's intention to do so. The term queer has been adopted, especially in the United States, to proudly represent the entirety of sexuality and lifestyle "perversions" which manifest themselves within their society, but its use in the UK remains controversial and a certain extreme connotation may negate its suitability for a planning dissertation. The newly adopted title for the Communities' annual awareness celebrations in London - Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride - is pretty all-encompassing, but is somewhat unwieldy for use here. Therefore, the use in this paper of the terms *lesbian & gay* or *LGB* Communities is purely for ease of use and implies no prejudicial exclusion or simplistic dualism in sexual identification. The consistent use of the ampersand (&) implies a level of unity, whilst the use of the *Communities* in the plural helps to signify the diversity of those who identify with the differences in their

sexuality. The capital letter, as with the Scene, helps with semantics to avoid confusion with more general meanings.

Other definitions include the following. The term *straight* is used to imply heterosexual, and the opposite of anything experienced within the Communities (eg. a club, a business, a lifestyle). It is not derogatory and is used solely for dexterity to avoid the use of scientific terminology such as homosexual and heterosexual which can soon become taxing. *Homophobia* means the fear of people, practices or symbols identified by the phobic as homosexual. *Heterosexism* has a wider significance and implies both denial and bias - it is seen as a general system of governance, State and society that reinforces the view that everyone is or should be heterosexual, and secondly that through this process heterosexuals are, either deliberately or unconsciously, privileged.

The *closet* is a form of prejudice which has been perpetuated by heterosexist society forcing most lesbians & gay men to keep their sexuality secret until such time as (if ever) they feel prepared enough to *come out*. In doing so it preserves isolation and prevents social interaction with peers. The secrecy and invisibility which results can lead to low self-esteem, self-denial, frustration, anger and frequently suicide. The closet is an often mocked metaphor, but for most of the lesbian & gay Communities it bears a humble respect that can only be felt by someone who has experienced both sides of the closet door. Anyone who understands the self-control it takes to keep just a small secret from someone who should know, might begin to appreciate the frustration of being forced by family, society and State to live a life in the closet.

Public Sex Environments (*PSEs*), otherwise known as *cruising areas* or *cottages*, usually consist of secluded urban locations where (predominantly) men meet to have anonymous sex. They can be public toilets, parks, or empty buildings and plots. There are various sociological reasons why such places do (and indeed should) exist, but basically for many men who have sex with men the only place where they can fulfil their desires is in secret, away from the lives which they otherwise lead. Invariably, those who frequent PSEs are married or live in otherwise heterosexually oriented lives. PSEs are therefore a product of the societal prejudice and ignorance which compels some men who would otherwise identify themselves as gay or bisexual, to remain in the closet and live, as it were, double lives. PSEs are uniquely significant to gay Communities and form a controversial but routine facet of the Scene in many towns and cities.

Further clarifications will be given throughout the paper (notably of the *Scene* in Chapter 3), and the main introductory chapter will attempt to provide a more general

insight into aspects of the lives of members of the lesbian & gay Communities of which many may not be aware.

## *A Planning Obligation?*

This work is related to a very wide spectrum of theoretical subject matter. There has been considerable research into sexuality and spatiality in the fields of geography, sociology, psychology, anthropology, cultural studies and lesbian & gay studies. What is missing is literature directly related to planning. The author was unable to find any consideration of the lesbian & gay Communities in the popular everyday planning field, and that which does appear in broader, more academic publications, is written by certain pioneering, forthright social geographers, and is consequently not grounded in the language of planning policy or practice.

The breadth of the subject matter is obvious. Being lesbian or gay can be such a fundamental part of a person's life that it tends to affect its every facet (Knopp 1995:149) - employment, housing, personal safety, income, migration, lifestyle consumption, leisure activities, voting behaviour, etc. As Knopp explains, "in a world ... in which sexuality, race, class and gender have been constructed as significant axes of difference, it should come as no surprise that struggles organised around these differences feature prominently in a process like urbanisation" (1995:159). The fact that planners have yet to spend time and effort in researching the dimensions of lesbian & gay sexuality which may affect them, as it has with race, class and gender, really is rather surprising to this author.

Two succinct literature reviews can be found which outline the direction that socio-geographical studies have taken. Jacobs (1996) highlights sexuality and cities in her review of qualitative approaches to ethnography, and Bell and Valentine's seminal book, *Mapping Desire* (1995), reviews a wide range of existing literature providing the basis for their introduction to "the spaces of sex and the sexes of space" (Bell & Valentine 1995:1). The next two paragraphs are guided by these sources.

Some of the first geographical work on homosexuality dealt with migration patterns and the creation of gay ghettos (eg. Levine 1979, Lyod & Rowntree 1978, Weightman 1981), most of which has since been discredited for its heterosexist assumptions, poor sources of data, and patronising approach to lesbian & gay sexualities. Lesbian location has been studied and initially rejected as not having sufficient representation to allow research (eg. Castells 1983, cited in Bell & Valentine 1995). But further research (eg. Rothenberg 1995, Valentine 1995) shows a distinct if invisible representation of lesbian spatiality in urban areas. The design of built spaces has been dealt with in as much as there are papers on the home and its nuclear family bias (eg. Bell 1991, Wigley 1992, cited in Bell & Valentine 1995). The experiences of rural lesbians & gay men have been quite broadly developed (eg. Humphries 1970, Anlin 1989, Krammer

1995) and tied in with the escapist connotations of living a life away from mainstream society.

These geographical area studies have now been augmented by new identity research from cultural and lesbian & gay fields of geographical study (Bell & Valentine 1995:6). Differently tagged sexualities are being researched spatially (eg. Bell 1995, Cream 1995, Hemmings 1995), as is the sexualised and gendered body in time and place (eg. Johnson 1990, 1993, Cream 1993, cited in Bell & Valentine 1995, and Cream 1995). Further, the politicised sexualised body is being tied in with other politicised bodies, such as the disabled, the pregnant and the elderly, whose politicisation also often comes from an experience of space (Bell & Valentine 1995:9).

Most significantly to the field of planning has been the association of lesbian & (especially) gay spatiality with urban revitalisation or gentrification (Jackson 1996:836). The work of Knopp (eg. 1987, 1990a, cited in Jacobs 1996, and 1990b, 1994, 1995) and others, is the closest that research so far has come to identifying the implications from a planners' point of view of lesbian & gay spatiality on the built environment. Further discussion of this aspect will be taken up later.

These discussions do indeed deal with the city. But their context is most definitely in the non-corporeal, the political, the societal, the theoretical, the macro - the constructed private and public experience of urbanisation. Planning, despite its necessarily decreasing focus on the physical, is nevertheless grounded in more tangible fundamentals of location, community, place and social interaction in the built environment. This is no criticism of either field, it is the author's interpretation of the facts, which illustrates the obligation that planning has to catch up with its peers on this topic.

Throughout this paper, reference may be made to this macro, ethno-spatial debate on the future configuration of sexuality and space, and the conclusions are certainly more theoretical than practical. But this paper is embedded in the specifics of urban places in the 1990s, not just spaces - the situation, literally, on the ground today. The author wants planners to be provoked now, to see this study as a mere drop in the ocean of the situations currently alive in planning departments across the country which affect lesbians & gay men like no other minority, and which need to be seen from a sharp new angle to ensure a societal group of growing visibility is not planned out of the future of its own urban lives, either by prejudice or ignorance.

# **The Lesbian & Gay Communities**

## **A Brief History of Social & Urban Interaction**

### ***Introduction***

The history of Western lesbian & gay sexuality is a fascinating maze of pride and prejudice. Before the 18th century, when it was perceived as a disease of the mind, homosexuality was largely undefined. Effeminacy, same-sex friendships and androgyny were less of a conspicuous shock than in later, especially Victorian, times, and "the homosexual" was lumped in with other forms of deemed perversion. It was not until the moralistic pigeonholing of the 19th century that homosexuality became freakish and the height of unacceptability (Aries 1985:65).

But the taboo surrounding homosexuality means that homophobia is sparsely documented compared to, say, Black oppression or Jewish persecution. Certainly links with such historical prejudice can be found. For example, gay men were persecuted during the Holocaust by being tagged with a pink triangle, a symbol now reclaimed as an ironic sign of "secret" recognition and pride. Nevertheless, the homosexual world (of the 19th and early 20th centuries especially) remains largely forgotten and indeed actively suppressed (Chauncey 1994:1).

### ***Post World War II***

The covert days since World War II were still times of social and legal repression, and it was not until the emergence of the Western Gay Liberation movements in the late 1960s that homosexuality turned gay, and began to become more visible. Knopp (1995:159) shows how this continuous historical construction of difference by the use of markers in sexualities results in power struggles. For example, a 1967 police raid on a New York bar, the Stonewall, resulted not only in riots and a political and public backlash, but as a result, the start of the official recognition that lesbians & gay men existed as real communities in urban areas. The Stonewall Movement began to push back the barriers which were preventing lesbians & gay men from living openly in the towns and cities which they inhabited.

Meanwhile in Britain, the 1957 Wolfenden Report eventually led to the Sexual Offences Act of 1967 which, by decriminalising homosexuality, allowed freer expression by gay men of the way they lived their lives. Lesbians continue to be

invisible in the eye of the law, which is one reason why the Communities, originally born out of the fight against legal oppression, are dominated by men. The 1967 Act made possible the opening of pubs and nightclubs specifically for gay men, and it was this opportunity which began the positive and deliberate interaction of the lesbian & gay Communities with the built environment.

### ***Contemporary Lesbian & Gay Life***

Today legal oppression still exists. For example, there is no anti-discrimination legislation on the grounds of sexuality in UK law. State or religious recognition of lesbian & gay relationships is absent leading to heterosexism in housing, property ownership, pensions and taxation. Despite the lowering of the age of consent for gay men to 18 in 1995, equality is still elusive. And Clause 28 of the 1988 Local Government Act perpetuates general ignorance by preventing local authorities from promoting homosexuality as an alternative to heterosexual family life. Certainly the immediate future for legal liberation does not look impressive as recent debates over the ban on lesbians & gay men in the armed forces confirm.

In day to day life, lesbians & gay men can suffer police harassment, bigotry from neighbours, unprovoked queer-bashing, rejection by family, eviction by landlords, ridicule at school, and intolerance at work, simply because of the perceived differences in their sexuality and the constructed baggage which is carried with the exaggerated aversion to lesbian & gay sexual acts.

Nevertheless, other areas of British society are becoming gradually more accepting of "the homosexual way of life". In Public life, lesbian & gay issues have come forward ideologically on the agenda. The increasing (and maturing) exposure to lesbian & gay culture through the mass media (prime-time television, mainstream films, broadsheet newspapers) is a remarkable sign of growing acceptance. The Police, The Bar, and The Church have all had open and positive lesbian & gay debates in the last 5 years, and the number of people in the public eye who are choosing to come out of the closet is increasing rapidly (Edge 1996:19). It seems that these days, as far as popular lesbian & gay culture goes, familiarity breeds consent.

Further, and more importantly here, has been the phenomenon of the pink pound - the perceived spending power of the lesbian & gay Communities. Although there is justified debate as to how much the spending power of lesbians & gay men actually differs from straights (eg. Short 1992, Binnie 1995), there are now drives to directly target the lesbian & gay Communities with particular products and services. Alcohol, holidays, clothes, and cosmetics all vie for attention in the lesbian & gay market along

with more home grown products like books, videos and sex toys. "The commercial flowering of gay-oriented services has provided a wealth of other ways for gay people to make positive expressions of their sexuality" (Edge 1996:20). Lesbian & gay sections in major record and bookshops, straight sponsoring of lesbian & gay events, and straight advertising in the Scene press are further examples of how mainstream society is becoming acquainted, however superficially, with the lesbian & gay Communities (GBA 1996).

### ***Social Dimension ~ Revolution v Assimilation***

In recent years generally, there has been a shift in lesbian & gay politics away from revolution and the radical pursuit of fundamental change, towards assimilation and the more immediately plausible demands of equality and recognition. The position is more complex than a political dualism can convey (eg. Derbyshire 1994, Manning 1995), but broadly, identity affirmation has replaced sexual deconstruction (Cooper 1992:24). This is closely related to a fundamental debate in the lesbian & gay Communities based around the closet and coming out in general, a debate creating notorious divisions. Some say that secrecy is strength - once an individual is out, then they are far more open to institutional and personal attack - and the view that it is better to remain substantially in the closet in our heterosexist society is still the norm.

On the other hand, many agree that out confrontation with the "heterosexual establishment" will eventually create dialogue through mutual regard. This confrontation can range from the sober debate of the UK's Stonewall lobby group, through the exuberant displays of sexuality refined by drag queens, to the civil disobedience of militants such as OutRage. The consequent creation of mutual regard is thus expected through mature respect, tongue in cheek approval and revolutionary submission respectively. All have their proponents and opponents, but all are undoubtedly to continue to increase the social visibility of the UK LGB Communities.

### ***Spatial Dimension ~ Ghettoisation v Enclavism***

This shift towards assimilation has also resulted in increased spatial integration. As society becomes more accepting of the concept of openly lesbian & gay people, so lesbians & gay men become more open to expressing themselves in society. But this spatial integration can manifest itself in different ways. In the US and Canada, there is evidence of an altogether more comprehensive grouping of the lesbian & gay Communities, where what could be seen as ghettos of lesbian & (especially) gay rootedness developed as a result of Western Gay Liberation. West Village in New

York and the Castro in San Francisco are classic examples of where the Communities form a large proportion of the population [and] control much of the trade, the housing and the labour market (Pollack 1985:55). Today, many cities in North America can be noted for their particularly high concentrations of lesbian & gay residents (eg. Knopp 1994, Forsyth 1996).

Certainly much of the life experience of North American and British lesbians & gay men is similar, but today, a distinct parting of the ways has been noted in the narrative of their lesbian & gay advancement. Derbyshire explains the dramatic significance of the AIDS pandemic in USA resulting in "a nightmare world" which has "devastated the American gay community" creating a "culture of death and mourning" (1994:41). This depressingly accurate description highlights how the AIDS pandemic has impacted on the daily lives of the American Communities, and has helped create the radical, highly charged Queer identity which so many have adopted in the US. The catalyst of this identity, guided by anger, rejection and cynicism, is the broad ring-fencing of the US urban lesbian & gay populations, socially, culturally, and spatially, increasing their ghettoisation. Such macro levels of spatial marginalisation have not been felt so strongly in the UK, which has experienced a less frantic response to AIDS, and a stronger recognition that there is a risk to the greater population (Derbyshire 1994:43).

Markedly different in the UK, then, is the shift towards assimilation and the consequent growth of a commercial lesbian & gay culture which has led to the clustering of businesses and services, supported by a greater level of tourism to get to these commercial clusters from the places where lesbians & gay men may live. Less residential ghettoisation and more commuting are therefore resulting in greater spatial integration with the built environment in the UK - what might be termed *enclavism* - characterised not by segregation, but by a more positive approach of participation *within* a surrounding district.

There is however evidence of some migration in the UK, forming geographical concentrations of members of the lesbians & gay Communities, especially men. A major study of sexual lifestyles by Johnson *et al* statistically illustrates a greater concentration in conurbations than more rural areas (1994:195), noting the striking significance of London as being caused by a migration to the capital to find lesbian or gay partners. Such an urban influx is simply due to the greater choice towards living an openly lesbian & gay lifestyle, greater acceptance and greater anonymity (as distinct from invisibility). The process is also undoubtedly exponential.

Better cultural, social and welfare Scenes have developed in urban areas, and it is the pull of these strong networks rather than necessarily the push away from an oppressive

home life, which is now urging members of the lesbian & gay Communities to express their sexuality in our major towns and cities. The next chapter will unpack the significance of the Scene to the Communities and planners, and deal further with the issues of social and spatial integration in the urban environment.

## Setting the Scene

### Lesbian & Gay Places in our Towns & Cities

#### *Introduction*

The Scene is a phenomenon which has earned itself a kind of mythical status amongst the lesbian & gay Communities. It is at once seen as the Utopian ideal towards which lesbians & gay men strive - to create their own community, both cultural and material, which operates and is respected within both local and global society - and, yet, it is also seen as the rather seedy manifestation of the coming together of lesbians & gay men to socialise, find partners and have sex. However, far from being a failure of its own potential, the Scene is fast becoming not only a proud and visible element of lesbian & gay urban lives, but also an enticing part of the urban lives of those outside the Communities. Hindle sums up how

gay men in particular have made themselves a home within our cities: how they have centralised themselves within our urban environments, and how they have made themselves belong, be important and become essential to the economies of our cities, particularly to the night time economies. (Hindle 1994:2)

It is clear from this alone that planners should become aware of the lesbian & gay Scene in their area. Chapter 3 will attempt to demonstrate this importance.

#### *The Non-Spatial Scene*

The Scene is the name which has been adopted to capture both the spatial and non-spatial representations of the engagement of lesbians & gay men with each other. It began as the simple definition of pubs and clubs (eg. MESMAC Tyneside 1994), but it is now argued that the Scene represents a far wider concept (eg. Short 1994). It is used to describe both the actual place where lesbian & gay spaces exist, and also the more abstract network of links and organisations which creates the sense of community, and provides a "home". Short (1994:83) describes the Scene as "any place where some aspect of gay life is carried out", but although this is its general direction, the Scene here retains both an urban and an out dimension. Nevertheless, there is one principle of the Scene which unites everyone - the sense of home. For the essence of the Scene is to provide somewhere or something to which lesbians & gay men can belong.

Many lesbians & gay men have great difficulty in coming to terms with their sexuality let alone society's prejudice to it, and in this climate of exclusion, it is difficult to find something sufficiently stable and receptive to allow personal development. Consequently, by the banding together of such "social outcasts" (usually only once one is partially out), a feeling of security is nurtured, leading eventually to strength and pride. This congregation can be in the form of non-spatial representations such as social links (eg. a student society), health and welfare support (eg. a sexual health project or a commercial therapist), information dissemination (eg. safe sex leaflets or national press like *Gay Times* and *The Pink Paper*), commercial goods and services (eg. mail order catalogues and telephone lines), contact facilities (eg. soft porn magazines), and cultural expression (eg. films, local radio, etc).

However, as people get together in a fellowship created and supported by non-spatial networks and links, it becomes inevitable that spatial manifestations will be borne out of this stability. So, as the built environment becomes part of the Scene, a certain momentum is created, and before long, the Scene then becomes part of the built environment.

### ***The Development of the Spatial Scene***

This is the process which has occurred in towns and cities across the UK since the late 1960s, and which has increased rapidly in some areas since the start of the 1990s. As we have seen, the initial open interaction of the lesbian & gay Communities with the built environment came with the opening of bars and nightclubs. This emphasis on leisure has been perpetuated over time, and its origins are easily explained. Living a closeted life of frequent frustration, lesbians & gay men tend to seek pleasure away from the source of their frustration. Escape can come in the form of socialising, drinking and having sex, and this is main the reason why bars and nightclubs are so popular amongst lesbians and gay men of all ages. The night time basis of the Scene is indeed one of its key strengths to the planner.

Similarly, in an account of the lives of gay men in pre-World War II New York, Chauncey (1994) describes how cafes and restaurants were adopted during prohibition as places to remove themselves from their everyday working lives. Hindle explains how important bars and clubs are to gay men especially, by acting as "gay ghettos for those who feel that they can only safely be out in such places" (1994:11). Hindle also cites Hoffman who explains the initial impact of experiencing a disco for gay men as the first realisation that "there are many other young men like himself and, thus, that he is a member of a community and not the isolate he had previously felt himself to be"

(Hoffman 1968:16, cited in Hindle 1994:11).

Hindle's appreciation that it is only those who feel they can go to these places is the cause of some debate about the bias of today's Scene. It tends to provide an outlet only to those who can afford it, and who want to socialise in this way. The commercial Scene tends to be populated by young white men with high discretionary income - another reason why the Communities are dominated by men - and this important aside is necessary to explain that visible users of the commercial Scene are a minority within a minority - "Queer culture in the 1990s ... is off-limits to those who ... don't conform to a certain conception of what "gay lifestyle" is" (Binnie 1995:199). Assimilation undoubtedly has a separatist down side.

### ***Traditional Locational Characteristics***

#### *Peripheral & Nodal*

Traditional pub and club Scenes have tended to develop in areas which are peripheral and nodal, and are characterised by marginality and entrepreneurial ability. A predominant feature of spatial location is that many Scenes have developed near nodes of transport. Proximity to a train or bus station, or to major arterial roads, not only offers easy access to facilities for the many who travel some way to use a Scene, but it also allows for a higher level of security at the end of a night - the shorter distance there is to walk to transport home, the less chance there is of being recognised, harassed or assaulted. Both Newcastle and Manchester are good examples of this, with the classic example being the growth of the country's leading lesbian & gay nightclub, Heaven, beneath London's Charing Cross station. Nodal and peripheral location are key characteristics of a Scene which can become benefits to the urban planner.

#### *PSEs*

Active Scenes have also tended to develop where more informal spaces already existed. The use of urban PSEs has been evident in many towns and cities across the country (Hindle 1994:13, MESMAC Tyneside 1994:14, Taylor *et al* 1996:187), which have establish themselves in quiet, anonymous locations, such as public toilets, back alleys and parks. The development of a Scene close to existing PSEs is a clear indication of the importance placed on the informal employment of urban space which many do not know about. However, to insist that planners should positively act upon such uses is perhaps foolish (although many local officials such as the Police and social workers should indeed act positively upon the significance of PSEs), but their secret existence

serves as a good example of the sort of uses of space which go beyond traditional land use definitions, which planners should at least be aware of.

### *Marginal & Entrepreneurial*

Entrepreneurial members of the Communities are often willing to take on areas within towns and cities which other sectors of the market will not tackle. Locations of older disused property on the outskirts of the central core but not quite within the inner cities, sites of marginal commercial activity, and areas blighted by development proposals are perfect locations for a Scene to grow. The reasons for this are that firstly, low property prices would encourage entrepreneurs to take advantage of an opportunity for a new lesbian & gay bar in their area. Secondly, as has been shown, quiet areas rarely visited by the mainstream urban community are perfect for secluded growth of strength and pride, and such areas are often beyond of the mental map of the mainstream urban dweller. Thirdly, the existence of a guaranteed clientele and the likelihood that community philanthropy outweighs commercial logic means lesbian & gay entrepreneurs may be more willing to operate a bar which has a lower level of economic stability. A good example of this is the fact that Strings bar on the Newcastle Scene has been blighted by road proposals for over five years, and still continues to operate despite its original owner selling up apparently for this reason. The proposals have not prevented the bar from continuing to be a mainstay of the Newcastle Scene. Hindle agrees that bars are frequently "transient features, here today and closed tomorrow" (1994:11), and the description of the reconfiguration of the Scene below describes how Scenes have reshaped themselves over time. Again, the importance to planners of these entrepreneurial and marginal dimensions will be highlighted.

### *A Conscious Reconfiguration of the Scene*

It has been shown through a discussion of traditional locational characteristics how lesbian & gay Scenes have adopted marginal spaces within urban areas, and that with the general shift towards assimilation, and the increasing concentration of the pink pound, Scenes have gradually developed a strong clientele who are creating use-value in these spaces, above and beyond traditional land use identity. However, what has become more important since the start of the 1990s is the reconfiguration of that occupation, characterised by the key notions of *visibility* and *clustering*. Parts of our urban landscapes are being transformed into "villages" by the creation of new lesbian & gay enclaves through the clustering of pubs, clubs and now other businesses and residences. This process is turning spaces into places.

It is speculated that visibility and clustering are now the key characteristics which can be employed to sustain the growth of Scenes which are socially and spatially significant to people both within and outside of the Communities, and they can be used to describe the spatial manifestations of the lesbian & gay Communities across the country.

## ***Visibility***

### *Tourism*

Visibility is one method of viewing the strength and permanence embodied within a Scene. For example, the favourability of a Scene within the Communities can be judged by the level of tourism it attracts. As we have seen, lesbians & gay men, frequently driven by boredom with the lack of choice in one town's Scene, may travel to other Scenes for a night out or weekend away when a particular Scene has a good reputation and is well advertised by the Scene press. London, Manchester, Blackpool, Edinburgh, Bournemouth and Brighton are classic examples of such Scenes which are highly visible within the Communities, and therefore attractive to those with the spending power to visit them. A well developed grapevine within the Communities, undoubtedly an extension of word of mouth circulations of less visible days, also contributes to the spreading reputation of places around the country.

### *The Press & Club-nights*

Visibility has increased on other levels both within and outside the Communities. The expansion of the lesbian & gay press has enabled a far greater degree of advertising to occur for Scenes around the country, and for this advertising to reach a wider audience than five years ago. Many Scene publications, such as *Gay Times*, *Diva*, *Boyz UK* and *APN* have Scene focus sections which highlight the facilities available at a certain town or city around the country. Coupled with related advertising including lesbian & gay hotel accommodation, the possibility of touring becomes more appealing as a particular Scene reveals its existence to a wider audience.

Similarly, the phenomenon of the travelling club-night has helped to increase the knowledge of elements of some Scenes around the country. Many DJs (also in the straight club scene) now operate by building up a reputation for a particular style of music and atmosphere at a club-night, which can then be transported around the country to different venues. As this reputation widens, so does that of the original venue and the town where it is located, so visibility within the Communities is increased.

### *Accommodation*

Visibility to the outside world has also expanded. The general characteristics of the spatial location of a Scene have already been discussed, but in addition, the accommodation used and its configuration have also changed for the better. In the 1970s, clubs and pubs used to be located behind well disguised facades, perhaps appearing to be a quiet straight venue, or more often, locating in hidden spaces such as basements, side alleys, back rooms, and upper floors. Windows would frequently be blacked out and clubs would operate an entrance policy of knock and wait. The overall appearance of many lesbian & gay venues would be seedy, restrictive and foreboding.

Much has changed since those clandestine days. Many lesbian & gay pubs, especially those which have opened in the last five years or so, are more obvious about their purpose and have designed out any ambiguity, appearing more comparable to their straight counterparts. Good examples which have treated their design as simply another new pub include the Manchester bars Metz (with a bright footbridge and flower-bedecked canal pontoon) and Via Fossa (with French windows and a dramatic Gothic interior), Queens Court in Leeds (a bright spacious interior and an open courtyard at the front), and Jo Joes in Birmingham (with a full glass frontage). Other new bars around the country (such as Freedom and The Old Compton Cafe in London, Route 66 in Birmingham and Manto in Manchester), have incorporated solid glass frontages which prevent any mystery about the style and clientele involved.

It is representative of the less visible Scene in Newcastle that the most fashionable of the two new bars to open there in the last five years, Heavens Above, whilst having a highly progressive interior (for Newcastle at the time), still operates from a first floor in a side alley with a false name above the door. Elsewhere refits of existing bars and clubs have also brought vibrant and conspicuous faces to many Scenes, such as Edinburgh's light and airy Cafe Kudos, previously a noticeably dark and enigmatic disco bar, and The Rembrandt (the oldest lesbian & gay pub in Manchester) which is to incorporate French windows at the front allowing freer access and unobstructed views from the outside.

### *Exterior, Open and Public Space*

For this is perhaps the one key element involved in the whole progression to redesign lesbian & gay bars. The use of large windows and attractive interior designs, and the increasing employment of exterior areas as overspill space, is more to do with visibility from the outside in than the inside out. The level of pride with which some new lesbian

& gay bars are reconfiguring their public faces is remarkable, confronting the passer-by not only with an uncompromising display of the purpose of the bar, but also of the clientele. Indeed, to some lesbians & gay men, the act of being seen sitting in the window of the most popular new bar on the Scene is the most accessible form of public awareness that can take place. Visibility encourages observation which, in theory, encourages informed education.

Other aspects of visibility have a temporal dimension as well as a spatial one. For example, the use of exterior space in some places might only be noted at certain times. Several bars on the Manchester Scene have tables and chairs outside with use governed only by the weather, whereas in Newcastle the use of the pavement outside Strings (which lends itself readily to overspill space) is generally only used at night. There is a substantial adoption of external space by the Newcastle Scene, but this may only be seen late on a busy night when the streets outside the Scene's two nightclubs are swarming with lesbians & gay men enjoying their evening.

It is highly significant that space is used in this way. Firstly, it is an obvious example of how safe lesbians & gay men feel in numbers, and secondly it is an excellent representation of the way that social groups can adopt localities for their own expression, even if it is only at night time. People are greeting friends, making new ones, waiting for taxis, eating pizzas, swapping numbers, showing off, larking about - generally creating a lively and, most importantly, lesbian & gay atmosphere. As anywhere, alcohol may prevent a totally action-free night, but the general feeling is one of animated contentment. Quite literally, in the original sense of the word, gay. It is this vibrant and commercially oriented use of space which planners should become aware of, and actively harness.

Visibility can be less profound during the day, but certainly there is evidence of an increasing use of public space by the lesbian & gay Communities beyond the spatial Scene. Walder's description of the use of public spaces in London (1995) is a clear indication that lesbians & gay men in general are feeling braver about expressing their sexuality in the built environment.

You can meet the world in London's streets, parks and open spaces ... and like a lot of gay men, I seek a more sedate outdoor setting away from the hurly-burly of the common herd. A place to soothe my shattered nerves and rest my tortured soul. (Walder 1995:88)

Tongue in cheek maybe, but this is the basis for the use of public space by lesbians & gay men - it must feel safe either through seclusion or by numbers. Certainly, this type

of experience has moved on from the traditional cruising activities of gay men (picking up for sex), and people are now

simply enjoying the excitement, voyeurism and relative safety offered by a gay space. This is a new gay thing to do that need no longer be furtive ... and for me it beats the smokey din of bars and clubs anyway. (Walder 1995:90)

Visibility is now becoming a strong and growing element in lesbian & gay life. But as the Communities come, in varying degrees, further out of the closet, the notion of safety in numbers is having more significance. As visibility increases, so does the process of clustering.

## ***Clustering***

### *Commercial Clustering*

It has been seen how lesbian & gay ghettos have been identified in North America based around residential partition. But the more commercially oriented UK Scene is developing a different, more integrated type of clustering, enclavism, which is becoming evident in Scenes around the country as part of the conscious reconfiguration of the Scene.

The most obvious example of this clustering effect is the growth of part of the London Scene in Old Compton Street, Soho. For some years, Soho has managed to remove itself from the rather seedy image it possessed in the 1960s, due not least to Westminster City Council. But more importantly, the actions of lesbian & gay entrepreneurs during the recession of the 1980s has helped to create the vibrant cosmopolitan feel that parts of Soho now have (Smith & Richardson 1995). Two new cafe bars opened in the mid 1980s within three minutes walk of each other, Village Soho and Village West One - bars which were out and openly marketed as an attempt to create a homebase for lesbian & gay clustering. This innovative attempt worked, and Old Compton and Wardour Streets are now the hub of the commercial and visible Scene in London with dozens of lesbian & gay bars, cafes, restaurants, boutiques and shops, plus a wide range of businesses and services, finding a lucrative niche market within five minutes walk of each other.

Straight accounts of the general growth of Soho expound the "pink" nature of this growth (Wroe 1996), and attribute Soho's rejuvenation to those living a "slightly theatrical life" (Van de Post 1996). However, the lack of a strong residential

population nearby, and the restraint sometimes necessary in such a heterosexually based environment as Soho, may prevent a more everyday enclave from developing there (Smith & Richardson 1995).

Clustering is also evident in the mainstays of the lesbian & gay Scene nationally - Blackpool, Brighton, and Edinburgh etc - and in Newcastle, the Scene is taking on a far stronger locational perspective. The visible congregation of night time socialisers described above has lead directly to the commercial support of non lesbian & gay owned and run businesses in the area, notably a taxi firm, a number of other pubs, a European-styled cafe, and several fast food outlets, a number of which have recently opened or refitted to take advantage of the potential trade.

### *The Lesbian & Gay Market*

Commercial clustering is a fundamental point of this reconfiguration of the lesbian & gay Communities - it is also a point of fundamental locational order which to a planner may seem obvious. Nevertheless, it is a point which, like so many others in this paper, needs to be re-made with reference to the lesbian & gay Communities to clarify their position in the urban arena, and demonstrate their existence to the wider planning profession. For example, elements of town centre retailing are renowned for locating close to one another to increase competition, and thus create a more active and profitable market. Jewellers, shoe retailers and speciality shops are classic examples of such commercial clustering.

The non spatial lesbian & gay Scene caters for a niche market which is very proud of its growing stability, and wants to support it financially. Short explains that, the pink pound aside, "the true gay market place ... is not necessarily measured by its wealth, but by the commitment of its consumers to keep it going" (1992:20). This means that commercial ventures other than pubs and clubs may be seen as part of a niche market of various goods and services which are marketed solely at the lesbian & gay Communities (much like speciality shops). There is therefore a distinct advantage to locating such a business where lesbians & gay men will be aware of it through advertising and by word of mouth.

Another obvious reason that clustering takes place is that, since the commercial Scene is dominated by pubs and clubs, the universally practised phenomenon of the pub crawl is a major part of the social lifestyle of those that frequent the Scene. Proximity, and a reduction in dead "straight" space between venues will therefore increase this profitable pastime, further supporting strength and permanence.

### *A Wider Sense of Enclavism*

Compared to Old Compton Street, Manchester's Scene seems to provide the requisite seclusion for clustering to take hold more permanently. There is now far more to the Manchester Scene than simply the clustering of pubs and clubs, of which there are well over a dozen. There are restaurants, cafes, a solicitor, bookshop, doctor, dentist, hair dresser, taxi firms, all lesbian & gay owned and run. The general atmosphere is one that lends itself to life beyond the night time orientation of its origins. Carol Ainscow and Peter Dalton are a local lesbian & gay man partly credited with the creation of the clustered Scene in Manchester. They are not only entrepreneurs responsible for a wide range of commercial enterprises in the Village, but are also converting warehouse property into Village residences for lesbians & gay men. There is also the possibility of the construction of a lesbian & gay shopping centre with 14 retail outlets, continuing to orientate the Manchester Scene towards the wider everyday lesbian & gay lifestyle.

### *Place Claiming & Territoriality*

But there is more to Scene clustering than the simple economic benefit of proximity to similar traders. There is something altogether more subtle and fundamental about the way lesbians & gay men are adopting certain areas within city centres as spaces where they feel able to express their sexuality safely and with pride - there is a dimension of territoriality to it.

There is copious literature relating to territoriality and place claiming, but very little relating directly to the lesbian & gay Communities. Certainly there are useful descriptions of the relationship between society and space dealing specifically with "outsiders" (eg. Sibley 1992), but the work tends to concentrate on race and socially constructed minorities such as the mentally ill. A more general discussion will aid the recognition of the Scene as a space which is being claimed as a specific place of lesbian & gay identity. Ley (1989) describes how the power of place is created from space by the installation of symbolism.

Space becomes place through the implantation of people and events in the creation of an historically crafted landscape. (Ley 1989)

He describes how post-modernism has taken away the placelessness of the anonymous modernist era by bringing about a philosophical reorientation in society, including the use of art, culture, social movement and political activism. As the diversity of urban subcultures increases, spatial specificity increases through the rediscovery of cultural symbols embodied in the built environment, and there emerges a renewed sensitivity to

urban place making (Ley 1989).

The basic tenet of Ley's work can be seen in today's society, and in relation to the city centre, many urban cultures are indeed embedding themselves in the built environment by way of symbolism. Chinese communities, for example, have created dozens of examples of spatial identity through cultural symbolism. Most cities and many large towns in the UK now have a Chinatown, and this is invariably recognised by the use of Chinese symbolism - lanterns, Oriental additions to facades and rooflines, redesigned street furniture, brighter and bolder advertising, and, in some places, the erection of a Chinese arch (a gateway - perhaps the ultimate symbol of territoriality). Other examples of subcultural place claiming include: the existence of nearly fifty Indian restaurants and shops on one stretch of the Wilmslow Road in Rusholme, Manchester; the commemorative artwork in Jarrow celebrating the march against unemployment and poverty in the 1930s; and more broadly, the use of historical association to guide symbolic representation, eg. urban waterfront redevelopments, or London's Covent Garden Market refurbishment.

The purpose of such symbolism is to create a series of lifestyle signs which identify the people and uses as distinct. Sack (1986) defines territoriality as

the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence or control people, phenomena and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographical area. (Sack 1986)

In other words, a geographical area becomes a territory if there is an attempt to mould the behaviour of those within it and control its boundaries. Lesbians & gay men are indeed attempting to afford some control over the space they are claiming by controlling their boundaries and altering the behaviour of those within, not by something as tangible as a physical boundary point, but by matters more subtle and ephemeral.

For example, it has been shown that the use of exterior space and glass fronted bars is designed in relation to the passer-by rather than necessarily the socialiser. Body language is used in a similar confrontational way. Two men walking hand in hand down the street, or a number of lesbian & gay people engaged in open expression of their sexuality (by doing anything that straight people might do whilst socialising in a pub, only not necessarily with the opposite sex) confronts the straight passer-by with an attempt to alter (or withhold) possible prejudices which may, in other places, become manifest in verbal or physical abuse. Similarly, and with greater immediate effect, the presence of more animated expression of lesbian & gay lifestyles, such as a Pride

festival, or simply the visible presence of drag queens or transvestites socialising with their friends, confronts the straight passer-by in a similar way.

### ***Conclusions***

Other studies have shown how simultaneous growth of different uses of space have gone unnoticed side by side with more obvious economic uses. Brown's study of HIV prevention in Yaletown, Vancouver, shows how "Yaletown is at once an intense site of ... economic development [and] the site of the new urban politics of HIV prevention amidst an alternate social geography of sexuality" (1995:261). He concludes that "the tremendous attention paid to local economic development matters blinds students of city politics to the other, often highly concealed ... politics in cities like Vancouver ... In a single part of the city there can be multiple spatialities, as well as multiple politics" (1995:262). Similarly, Davis recognises that a "politics based on visibility and the interruption of the dominant meaning of many spaces" is becoming important to the lesbian & gay Communities (1995:303).

The sense of a secluded "village" lifestyle is what is becoming increasingly attractive to the straight populations in many towns and cities with visible and clustered Scenes. The potential trade in the Manchester Village has welcomed many straight businesses to the area, including many totally unrelated to the lesbian & gay market, and the lunchtime pub trade is burgeoning as a result of the pleasant, enticing surroundings. The consequences of such place claiming are the reinforcement of the post modern texturing of the increasingly pluralistic urban environment (Anderson & Gale 1992:1), and the bolstering, through feelings of security and permanence, of the consumerist approach to growth that the Scene has developed. The process is evidently self-perpetuating, and it seems that lesbian & gay Scenes can now become far more important to the landscape of our urban areas than they could just five years ago.

It is therefore important for planners to recognise that it is not just that lesbian & gay pubs and clubs exist, as this in itself is not enough for a strong and permanent Scene to be fostered. These places have particular locational histories, spatial configurations and design characteristics which help to determine their identity and use beyond their definition as pockets of leisure - characteristics which can be harnessed by planners to, amongst other things, aid urban regeneration.

# **The Scene & Urban Regeneration**

## **Some Implications for Urban Policy**

### ***Introduction***

The object of this paper is broadly one of awareness. By highlighting the lives of the lesbian & gay Communities in the UK, it is hoped that planners can become more familiar with some of the people they are meant to be planning with. Simple clarification of the locational characteristics of the Scene, and the importance of visibility and clustering, can help to bring such uses forward in the minds of planners, to the point where consideration, however modest, may be given in the formulation of policy and proposals for urban regeneration.

Chapter 4 highlights two areas of urban regeneration policy that can encompass positive consideration of the lesbian & gay Communities, community development and cultural policy, before Chapter 5 illustrates two case studies where consideration has been shown either insufficiently, or not at all.

### ***Urban Regeneration***

#### ***Introduction***

Urban regeneration has taken many and varied forms over the past 30 years since the term was first used to describe the work needed to bring about the rejuvenation of those run down areas of our cities which had suffered from an exodus of people, employment, investment and life. During the 1970s it was realised that financial rather than pathological causes were the root of the problems in the inner cities, and the focus of policy and research was changed from affliction to economics. During the 1980s, tactics revolved around inward investment and capital projects based on a centralised enterprise theory of property led regeneration.

Now during the 1990s, as part of the more recent drive to widen the horizon of possibility for inner city areas, many new policy areas have been developed to aid urban regeneration and combat the continuing cuts in central funding for urban regeneration policies in the UK. There has been an increasing use of partnership approaches to inner city growth, a combination of community bottom up techniques, other policy areas, and a more profound local government input. New policy areas are

helping to give a renewed focus to urban regeneration strategies and new hope for many areas of British cities still left behind since the economic and employment restructuring of the 1970s and 1980s.

### *Urban Regeneration and The Lesbian & Gay Communities*

One of the most enduring uses of a city's peripheral locations may be a lesbian & gay Scene. The traditional locational characteristics of the Scene have already been discussed, and it is these characteristics that are enabling some members of the Communities to do exactly what regenerating authorities have been unable to do for years - create economic and social use out of marginalised spaces. The fact that Scenes have developed in peripheral locations, in otherwise commercially unviable districts, and have continued to use buildings where others have left, must be seen as attractive to the planner. The reason why this continued and strengthened use is evident is simply because of the social and community ties that bond the users of the Scene together - the existence of the non-spatial supports the development of the spatial.

It is therefore up to planners to realise that these non-spatial uses are continuing to make commercial sense in otherwise marginalised locations, and it is exactly these uses which should guide the regeneration of those locations, not some imposed vision of what should fit in there to create rejuvenation. The case study of Newcastle which follows highlights this point.

In North America, several studies illustrate the gentrification powers of localised communities of lesbians and gay men. Knopp (1990) maintains that the development of certain gay male identities and communities can be crucial to a gentrification project's success.

The homosexual relations and identities involved in these instances are in the main perfectly consistent with, rather than threatening to, both capital accumulation and male privilege. (Knopp 1994:644)

In San Francisco, affluent gay male professionals employing others to renovate and design, and the less well off refurbishing their own homes, are seen as important parts of gentrification in some residential districts. The reputed higher disposable income, and less importantly, the legendary (yet exaggerated) stylisation of the lesbian & gay quest for beauty, taste, cleanliness and homeliness (witness the occasional adoption of terminology like village, camp, cottage, pink, tea-room, rainbow, etc), may support this theory of the benefit of the Communities to urban regeneration. Further, the gentrification of commercial areas allows them to function not only as service cores for

nearby residential neighbourhoods, but as recreational service cores for outsiders from across the region (Forsyth 1996:8). This is exactly what has happened in Manchester's lesbian & gay Village.

### *The Manchester Village*

Lesbian & gay venues were originally dispersed throughout Manchester, but eventually the area now known as the Village began to grow around a number of pubs in a generally forgotten periphery of the city centre. During a particularly 'dynamic moment' in Manchester's history during the early 1980s, and within an oppressive policing climate at the time, there was general a withdrawal into the lesbian & gay Communities, creating the opportunity for entrepreneurs to begin the renovation of a distinct urban territory which others had avoided as unfeasible (Taylor *et al* 1996:183). The area's location within a district of disused Victorian buildings, proximity to train and bus stations, known PSEs, and other leisure uses, enabled a spatial identification of sexuality to take hold.

It is instrumental that the Village area has met with 'wholehearted approval of key figures and agencies in the local "growth coalition" (Taylor *et al* 1996:185) and their support through paving, lighting, canal work, signposting and cleansing has therefore accepted

an implicit cultural geography of leisure use of different space and territories by different publics at different times of the day and night. (Taylor *et al* 1996:186)

The Village is supported by a strong non-spatial Scene including a local sexual health project, Healthy Gay Manchester, and an HIV and AIDS organisation, The Village Charity, which act as focal points for parts of the non-spatial elements of the Communities within Manchester. The annual Mardi Gras festival, a three day carnival over the August Bank Holiday similar to the annual Pride festival in London, is the main element of the Village's cultural Scene. Indeed, Mardi Gras is now the largest annual event of any kind held in Manchester and is recognised by the council as a major example of the multi-cultural status they are proud of. It is fast becoming a mainstay of the city's annual tourist calendar.

The Village is now a thriving area of urban renaissance confident of its overt difference, easy to move around in, increasing Manchester's 24 hour city potential, encouraging (straight and lesbian & gay) tourism, and actually creating a competitive market for space amongst the lesbian & gay venues which want to take advantage of

this key node within Manchester. It is undeniable that the Village now has national importance as a unique urban enclave.

### *The Crisis of the Scene and Regeneration*

Gentrification in its more political sense (of the upgrading of an area which in turn pushes out indigenous populations and financially or socially prevents them from benefiting from the upgrade) is what many British lesbians & gay men perceive is being perpetrated on their Scenes by others. The authorities are coming in and drastically altering the environment they have created, purportedly for the better of the local population. This has recently been experienced in Birmingham, and described as follows

As part of a programme of inner city redevelopment, the local council have literally moved motorways to open up the area to pedestrians and this has triggered off a straight leisure industry boom of gold rush proportions. (Short 1995:94)

Simple and perceptive insight from a regular of Birmingham's Village Inn sums up the situation

Problem number one is that the council and straight companies have colluded to develop the whole of this area. Problem number two is that the council never consulted the lesbian and gay community because they don't recognise us as a community. (in Short 1995:94)

The characteristics of the Scene and the Communities as a whole which the planner can afford to utilise in working towards urban regeneration policy are evident, and the result if they do not, is a displaced and angered community. As part of the wider construction of urban regeneration policy in the 1990s, community development and cultural policy are two areas which can be adopted to enable this utilisation.

## ***Community Development***

### *Introduction*

Community development is about ensuring that changes to the built environment occur to the benefit and welfare of the local populations at large, and to ensure that local voices are heard and needs fulfilled. More importantly, it is concerned with enabling local populations to take action for themselves and to achieve change in line with their

own goals (Blackman 1995:142). Blackman shows how community development is concerned with

taking action together and developing the knowledge, skills and motivation to express their needs and improve conditions, either in a particular geographical neighbourhood or for a particular "community of interest" such as black people or young people. (1995:142)

It is embedded in the democratic basis of local government, and as such involves strengthening representation and participation where barriers exist, and goes a lot further than simply instigating an equal opportunities policy in the processing of civic services. It is obvious from the definition that the lesbian & gay Communities are a community of interests, because, as has been shown, their clustering is evident only in the commercial sector, and residential clustering is not so strongly felt (although there is bound to be evidence of such clustering in towns and cities across the country). What is important here is that, as spatiality becomes more important to the Scene, the Communities are merging to become both a geographical neighbourhood community *and* a community of interest.

Blackman delineates between three different types of community development which can be related to planning:

- i Community work is carried out by professionals employed by local institutions to promote community development in general through education, information, advice and support.
- ii Community service is the organisation of voluntary action by local people to provide services not met by either the market or the local institutional providers.
- iii Community action is normally aroused through the fight for a particular cause or concern, and may lead to a greater level of either of the above two.

Community service is what the non-spatial Scene is based upon, and community action is that highlighted by particular concerns over the distribution of power and resources (Blackman 1995:145), such as the Sackville Park proposals in the Manchester case study to follow. Community work is what is missing in the lesbian & gay arena, ie. official recognition and support of the Communities as having an interest in the planning of their localities.

### *The Ladder of Citizen Participation*

This recognition could most easily come in the form of sincere local involvement of the Communities in the execution of change through the planning system. The possibility of different levels of such public involvement has encouraged academics to draw up typologies of community development and public participation. For example, "The Ladder of Citizen Participation" has been used to show the various steps that institutions of local government can take to include the input of local people in service provision (Arnstein 1969). Arnstein examines the work of three American federal social programs including urban renewal, and ranges their level of public participation from "understated euphemisms and exacerbated rhetoric" stressing the frustration of participation without power, to the "redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future" (Arnstein 1969:216).

Arnstein gives the metaphor of an eight rungged ladder, ranging from non-participation, through different levels of tokenism, to ultimate citizen power. Rungs 1, Manipulation, and 2, Therapy, are not strictly participation at all as they consist of arrogant and dishonest public relation exercises which patronise and under-value the attitudes of the citizens involved. Rung 3, Informing, is the first step towards direct participation, but is generally one-way and dissuades questioning or analysis. Consultation, rung 4, is about inviting local opinion through meetings, hearings and surveys. This is a great step forward from simply informing the public what has been decided, but can also consist of an amount of lip-service if it is not combined with a remit to heed the voices that are heard. As Arnstein points out, "even the best intentioned among [technical officers] are often unfamiliar with, and even insensitive to, the problems and aspirations" of the citizens involved in a consultation (Arnstein 1969:220). Placation, rung 5, is where citizens begin to have some decisive power through the operation of combined representative boards, and Partnership, rung 6, allows for the redistribution of power through negotiation right from the start of a programme of work. Rungs 7 and 8, Delegated Power and Citizen Control, are the uppermost levels of power for the people involving dominant decision making opportunities for citizens through organised community committees (with their own financial and technical resources), and the governing abilities to be in full charge of programmes over and above local officials.

### *The Ladder of the Lesbian & Gay Communities*

Throughout all of this, Arnstein stresses that "'nobodies' in several arenas are trying to

become 'somebodies' with enough power to make the target institutions responsive to their views, aspirations, and needs" (Arnstein 1969:217). By recognising that the lesbian & gay communities do have a community dimension, and one which is increasingly locally geographical as well as "of interest", planners can afford to climb this ladder with the Communities and aid their integration into the public planning sphere, especially in relation to the regeneration of urban areas which they call home.

## ***Cultural Policy***

### *A Contemporary Construction of Culture*

The British, especially English, interpretation of culture tends to be restricted to the traditional arts, particularly the "high" arts, which suggests an image of expensive exclusivity and upper-class sobriety. A far wider definition of the concept of culture, more prevalent in Continental Europe and in forward-thinking local authorities in the UK, encompasses not only the performing and visual arts, but also cultural industries like electronic arts and music, the media, advertising, publishing, fashion and design. This has been created by two major forces in socio-economic restructuring of western European urban life since the mid 1970s - the decentralisation of cultural funding and responsibility from central to local government, and the politicisation of cultural policies as a result of the rise of new urban social movements (Bianchini 1993:5). Firstly, for example, despite the general reduction in local power and autonomy of UK local government in the 1980s, cultural policy was singled out as being worthy of decentralisation to reverse the tendency of funding focused on London. Regional Arts Boards have consequently become powerful strategists of cultural funding throughout the country, augmented by many recently developed local authority arts and leisure departments.

Secondly, and more importantly here, the reorientation of cultural policy towards more radical and controversial political credentials has resulted in the lowering of the focus of mainstream cultural popularity from the "higher" levels of society to create fresh and innovative involvement from the lower and more marginalised sectors of society which may have previously had negligible interest. This reorientation has been influenced by the rise of urban social movements such as feminism, community action, environmentalism, ethnic minority campaigns, and lesbian & gay liberation (Bianchini 1993:9), and the increasingly pluralistic society which they have helped to create.

## *The Growing Significance of Culture in Urban Planning*

This more contemporary construction of the scope of cultural policy allows a far more radical boundary to be drawn around the influences and consequences of its authority. In the UK, Bianchini shows (1993:10) how new left politicians have been partly responsible for the widening of the influence of cultural policy, and its firmer rooting at a grassroots level. This is despite media criticism of such "loony left" councils during the 1980s for their institutional and financial support of alternative cultural scenes such as experimental theatre, independent film making, community radio stations, and street entertainment, all areas where the lesbian & gay Communities frequently express themselves.

The consequences of such growth and diversity have been twofold. Firstly there has been a grassroots expansion through greater accessibility to many people not previously associated with involvement in the arts and culture. Bianchini says

in response to increasing differentiation in urban lifestyles and growing socio-economic inequalities within cities, policies on culture and leisure are also used to encourage face to face interaction and promote community rebuilding. (Bianchini 1993:10)

Bianchini shows how such wider cultural involvement can reaffirm the function of the city centre as a catalyst for civic identity and public sociability, and can help further by

rediscovering and celebrating, as a reaction against the negative effects of functional zoning in land use planning, physical features of the pre-industrial city like density, walkability and the overlapping of social, cultural and economic uses. (Bianchini 1993: 10)

Re-motivation of local community towards their environment via culture can help to counter the decline of traditional industrial communities, in terms of "dead" space, time and spirit.

Cultural expression can help create the need for physical change to the environment in which it is occurring. The creation of new public spaces, pedestrianisation, lighting and other physical changes can help to provide the incentive for communities to be more proud of their surroundings, and thus further celebrate and promote them through cultural expression. A more legible city scene can help communities reclaim city centre areas for group use and provide them with a spatial identity which is their own. These processes can be even more profound at night time as more traditional leisure and pleasure uses can then become integrated with the newer expressions of cultural

diversity. For example, a community festival, or other more sustained cultural animation, can provide the catalyst for increased use of existing pubs and clubs, thus creating a direct increase in interaction of community with locality through cultural expression. A more precise description of some of the effects that the Manchester lesbian & gay Scene has had on its built environment could not be found!

In other areas in the 1980s, the more fundamental repercussions of economic and social restructuring of the period have created the second consequence of the growth and diversity of cultural policy in urban governance. Cuts in local government funding have forced a fundamental reorientation from social to economic objectives, evident through more private sector involvement, increased monitoring and better administration efficiency. Bianchini shows how this has created opportunities for positive expansion of cultural expenditure in new fields.

The 1970s emphasis on personal and community development, participation, egalitarianism, the democratisation of urban space and the revitalisation of public social life was replaced by a language of highlighting cultural policy's potential contribution to urban economic and physical regeneration. (Bianchini 1993:13)

City marketing strategies and the increasing international competition for inward investment have created the political space for cultural expression on a grander scale to be used as a positive tool of urban promotion and growth. The quality of urban life and the liveliness of the urban culture milieu are increasingly seen by European urban policy makers as important elements in place marketing. For example, the use of cultural pride and expression in Glasgow, Sheffield and Liverpool during the late 1980s has helped to create physical changes to their built environment and raise their status as provincial cities worthy of international recognition and investment. The mobilisation of culture to the cause of city marketing is one of the most recent ways in which cultural policies have become an established and legitimate part of urban regeneration strategies in western Europe (Bianchini 1993:18). Similar policies in Newcastle upon Tyne have been in the pipeline for many years in the form of a Theatre Village & Chinatown development which has been proposed for a large stretch of the city centre. Although these proposals have somewhat disappeared from the public eye at present as progress has slowed, this direct use of cultural expression as a tool for urban regeneration is a classic example of the way cultural policy has diversified and reoriented itself in the eyes of local institutions and the public who will use it.

### *Cultural Policy and The Lesbian & Gay Communities*

The influence on the built environment of these two consequences of cultural policy diversity is evident. Problems of reconciliation between the first, community oriented expansion, and the second, more internationally-minded expansion have partly clouded the success that cultural expression has had in enlivening space and spirit in many areas of urban deprivation and decline. Nevertheless, it is the assertion of this paper that an open lesbian & gay voice can be a part of this more diversified cultural expression which can provide a more integrated future for many areas of our city centres. The direct and visible location of lesbian & gay culture within the built environment can provide a catalyst for city centre space to be revitalised and used by a wider public. Consideration must be taken to ensure the right direction is taken in involving such localised minorities, as will be explained in the Newcastle case study.

The discussion of the debate surrounding integration or ghettoisation has shown that this issue will probably never be resolved. However, the increasing mainstream acceptance of lesbian & gay expression in urban society can no doubt be capitalised upon by urban policy generators, and cultural expression is one way of doing this. By mentally aligning the non-spatial lesbian & gay Scene in one's mind as simply another manifestation of societal diversity and identity assertion, then cultural expression of difference may not necessarily be so restrictive. Through the processes highlighted above, such cultural expression will then be influential on the built environment in which it is occurring, and create the possibility of integration within wider urban regeneration policies.

## *Conclusions*

It is generally regarded that urban regeneration policies over the last fifteen years have not produced the expected results. In a retrospective of these policies, Lawless highlights four processes of change which would enable a successful urban policy to emerge (1996:28), based fundamentally around the incorporation of social strategies with physical ones. He explains the need to replace competitive incremental pragmatism with coherent local strategies; a new locally focused regime encouraging empowerment, and proactivism; the augmentation of the role of the private sector with other local representatives, especially those from the non-profit sectors of local networks; and the recognition that politics should sometimes rise above the rhetoric of partnerships. He concludes by signalling that

At the very localised level there is growing awareness that community based initiatives can reap limited but real gains. (1996:38)

The integration of the lesbian & gay communities into urban regeneration strategies would be essentially easier with such broad changes, and indeed, positively commensurate with the processes of change which urban policy is to experience in the future.

## **Case Studies**

### **The Scenes in Manchester and Newcastle upon Tyne**

#### ***Introduction***

It can now be seen that the increased use of urban space by the lesbian & gay Communities can be readily related to the broad spectrum of planning, and specifically to some aspects of the changing face of urban regeneration. In development control, such social uses may indeed not be a planning matter, but the following case studies show that urban planning policy should be aware of, and act upon, the wider reference of social and cultural significance that goes with land use. Planning can thus continue to move forward from its origins as a logical tool for urban change to become a more informed and discerning forum for the processes of urban interaction to be reconciled.

#### ***Methodology***

The case studies were carried out by augmenting personal insight and press coverage with interviews with members of the Communities and local planning authorities. Only a few people are directly quoted as the author does not feel it fair to name individuals whose quotes on such an emotive subject may be taken out of context. In addition, as will become clear, the general feeling in Newcastle was that most conversations were to be regarded as predominantly "off the record".

# **Sackville Park, Manchester**

## **Local Lesbian & Gay Involvement in Urban Planning**

### ***Introduction***

The first case study deals with the interaction between planners in Manchester City Council (MCC) and the lesbian & gay Communities of Manchester concerning the refurbishment of Sackville Park, a small urban park spatially (though less so non-spatially) within the Village. The case study aims to show how sincere attempts were made by MCC to incorporate the Lesbian & Gay Communities that use the Village in the proposals for the park, but that in not fully appreciating some of the characteristics of this community of interest, they failed to avoid confrontation and mistrust between the two parties. The comparatively excellent record in recent years of interaction between MCC as a whole and the Manchester lesbian & gay Communities, and the efficient refurbishment of valuable open space in the city, were therefore both jeopardised. It also shows that more co-operative levels of community partnership in such plans could result in a reduction of unnecessarily complex and protracted interaction between parties who may well have agreed in the first place.

### ***The Village and Sackville Park***

It has already been shown that the Village carries with it a higher level of social and cultural significance beyond its physical presence as a developing leisure, amenity and now residential area, and so it is unsurprising that proposals for redevelopment of land within it would create a higher level of public concern than elsewhere in Manchester city centre. Since 1990, Sackville Park had had a variety of potential refurbishment proposals from Central Manchester Development Corporation (CMDC), but each in turn had gone to the bottom of the pile due to funding and timing constraints.

However, it was still recognised that Sackville Park was a wasted resource. Built by the Council in 1903 to protect views of the then technical college, it grew as a typically formal Edwardian park used by the textile industry and nearby residences at the turn of the century. As with many urban parks, lack of maintenance has resulted in its failure, compounded by the decline of the city centre as a whole during the 1960s and 1970s as a result of the demise of Manchester's industrial and employment base (Taylor *et al* 1996:61). As one of only a few green spaces in the city centre, its under-use eventually lead to calls for refurbishment.

As a trustee of the Village Charity and a routine user of the Village facilities, Roy Jackson was aware personally, and from general sentiment garnered from his work in the Manchester Communities, of the potential for the refurbishment of Sackville Park as more contemporary part of the Village - literally as a village green. In 1994 he began to correspond with CMDC and councillors on MCC who had been supportive of the Communities. The correspondence was clear in its attempts to involve the "local community" as much as possible in the proposals for Sackville Park, and for the "local community" to have as balanced an engagement with the work as the Council. Throughout, Jackson was pressing for meetings with MCC/CMDC to work together to create proposals for the park for the benefit of the Village. Put simply, Jackson wanted to "come to an agreement about it" not simply be consulted (Jackson, interview with author 25 August 1996).

### ***The Process of Interaction***

It is the definition of "local community" which is the crux of this case study, and a look at the narrative which followed Jackson's approaches will help to highlight this point. For reasons of legitimate political expediency and institutional momentum (and not, it seems, as an attempt to step over any potential lesbian & gay political involvement), MCC were keen to complete proposals as soon as possible. A feasibility study was carried out at the start of 1996 with CMDC funds, and the announcement of the Urban Parks Programme by the Heritage Lottery Fund established the most likely source of major funding. A plan for the refurbishment of the park was drawn up by MCC's conservation officer.

Meanwhile, a substantial amount of debate had been created by Jackson and others about the park, and a steering committee, the Sackville Park Community Action Group (SPCAG), was created in February. This had the dimensions of both the local geographical community and the "community of interest" within its representation, and significantly, there were also a number of Manchester city councillors strongly associated with it. SPCAG had the ability to represent quite honestly the feelings of the "local community" as a whole, including the wider Manchester LGB Communities.

SPCAG became highly organised in a short space of time, and it was they who called the first public meeting. This was also attended by officers from MCC who bought with them their plan. After a great deal of debate, it was immediately obvious that there was almost no support for MCC's conservation oriented plan. A consultation and design strategy had been compiled and was presented to MCC at this meeting as a realistic option for the ensuing public participation process. It stated the following:

In order to maintain the impetus and enthusiasm this project has already generated, it is vital that consultation is carried out in a fair, thorough and professional manner. ... The only thing worse than no consultation is bad consultation (SPCAG Consultation & Design Strategy, March 1996).

The strategy stressed the need for there to be sense of ownership and responsibility for the community, and potential fears and mistrusts to be waylaid. It placed the community who live, work and visit the park on a par with the Council who own and run it, and so concluded that consultation should be carried out by an independent facilitating group representing both parties - a partnership. As well as a specific reference to the wider lesbian & gay Communities, it concluded that

The principles of informing ... involving ... and being accountable to the community must be paramount (SPCAG Consultation & Design Strategy, March 1996).

The opportunity for this blank sheet approach to deciding the future of the park had already been forfeited by MCC by the production of the conservation officer's plans. In a full report to the Policy & Resources Committee in April, the Central Policy Unit of MCC acknowledged the importance of the park to the Village:

ideally, [Sackville Park] should act as the focal point for a range of community uses to complement and boost existing activity (MCC Central Policy Unit, report to Policy & Resources Committee, April 1996)

But although MCC's "community" included residents, local workers and other city centre users, and it recognised the cafe culture and Mardi Gras as important to the park's future, it did not expressly recognise the importance of the park's use by the wider lesbian & gay Communities in Manchester who travel to be in the Village. Further, despite agreeing that there was strong support for the principle of refurbishing the park, it rejected SPCAG's independent facilitation strategy as too costly and protracted.

The report proposed what MCC saw as a more appropriate

wide-ranging consultation exercise based on the design concept outlined in this report [ie. the plan already drawn up] (MCC Central Policy Unit, report to Policy & Resources Committee, April 1996)

This annoyed SPCAG by not only sticking with the plan which had already caused almost unanimous concern at the public meeting, but also by stressing that the project

would be subject to "pressures and constraints outside the control of those who would be involved", implying the decision of a City Centre Working Party meeting earlier in March, that consultation would only be carried out during the usual development process.

SPCAG now felt obliged to complete their own plan (with the advantage of a qualified landscape architect in the group) after carrying out their own consultation process involving a broad and widely distributed questionnaire including over forty points about the park's present and future configuration. The plan was displayed at a focal point in the Village, and comments invited officially and on the grapevine.

MCC began to carry out their consultation process involving a copy of the unaltered plan and a letter, which did not accredit any community involvement, requesting written replies. Anecdotal evidence from SPCAG describes a Council worker with a pile of letters in one hand and a map with a red ring on it in the other, being told to post a letter through any letterbox that could be found within that area. This instantly makes void any possible consultation of the wider lesbian & gay Communities who do not have a letterbox in the area, despite the letter ironically recognising the park's "greater contribution to the lives of people, business *and visitors*" (author's italics) (MCC 1996a, public consultation letter to letterboxes around Sackville Park, 7 May 1996). Further, the letter indicated that only if a "good deal" of organised debate were created by their letter, would further meetings be held. SPCAG took this as a slap in the face for the attempts that they had made to work closely with MCC and provide them with views into what the entire community who uses the park wanted from the refurbishment.

A series of correspondence ensued between SPCAG and the Chief Executives office and the planners at MCC, which began to create tension, disagreement, confusion, and mistrust. However, the air began to clear at the end of June, and three public meetings were held by MCC (advertised both locally and significantly in *The Pink Paper*) which began to debate more openly the future of the park. A new plan was drawn up by MCC which was dramatically different in its design, incorporating several elements of SPCAG's plan which had been very well received by the Village and the Communities at large. A further public meeting was held at which approximately 40 representatives of the all parties involved took a vote on the two plans, easily out-voting MCC's new plan for SPCAG's. The situation as at the middle of August 1996 is that, despite SPCAG's unconditional offer of their own, further adapted plan, MCC are still attempting to alter their own plan in time for the Council Committee and funding bid deadlines. Dogged frustration is still evident on both sides.

## *Conclusions*

It is the definition of "local community" which is the crux of this case study. The community who have geographical interests in the area include UMIST, residents of the apartment blocks on Whitworth Street (some of whom happen to be members of the lesbian & gay Communities), Sheena Simon College, student residences, and large variety of straight and lesbian & gay businesses and services contained within and around the Village area. It is, however, recognised that the main users of the Village and the park (in terms of numbers and visible presence) are the lesbian & gay Communities. As we have seen, the Communities have some configurations of spatial clustering, as represented very strongly by the Manchester Village, but this spatial Scene is based primarily on commercial businesses and services. There is very little residential clustering in UK Scenes. This means that the Village has a high proportion of users who do not live in the area but still regard it as their "home". These visitors form as tangible a part of the "local" community as those others who reside and make their living in the Village. In other words the "local community" is both one of geographical area and, very strongly, one of interest. This is the point which seems to have evaded MCC in their attempts to consult the "local community".

The second point which analysis raises is to do with community development and public participation. It is obvious from Jackson's initial input that he was attempting to allow the "wider" local community to reach rung 6 on Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation - Partnership (see page 33). SPCAG operated a community action drive which it hoped would allow (from the start) a partnership to control the decisions made concerning the park's future, solely because it saw this as a major factor to the continued growth of the Village. MCC seemed to be avoiding this possibility and were stopping with Consultation at rung 4, with substantial signs, at some stages (eg. the initial letter) of simply relying on the Informing process at rung 3.

The reasons for this were initially that the level of community participation that SPCAG were calling for in their consultation and design strategy was far beyond what MCC were intending or had expected. This is indicated by the fact that they had already drawn up plans for the park before the first public meeting was held. Further, it is unlikely that this level of interest and desire to participate would have come about were it not for the presence of the Manchester lesbian & gay Communities, and by not recognising the particularly vociferous stance that the Manchester Scene now takes on spatial and physical aspects of its life, MCC were unprepared for the community backlash. This is perhaps demonstrated by the subsequent involvement of the Chief Executives office, over the planning department.

It is important to note that at no time did MCC deliberately intend to avoid the participation of (their definition of) the local community. The hand-delivered letter is indeed perfectly satisfactory as a consultation process in the majority of planning issues of this nature. Their immediate recognition of some of the cultural traditions of the Village, and the desire to incorporate a feature of relevance to the Village in the park's redesign is evidence that they know they are dealing with a rooted and respected community group. There are several officers and councillors who are noted by SPCAG to be particularly receptive to the lesbian & gay Communities and their interests, and it is undeniable that MCC had good intentions from the start. However, what this case study has shown is that in the case of a visible and clustered Scene like the Manchester Village, additional consideration should be taken of the nature and characteristics of the community involved. As has been seen by the parties, SPCAG were able to give valuable insight not only into particular physical configurations of the park's redesign which have since been adopted by MCC, but also were able to persuade the planners that the community vision was better. A knowledge of, and a willingness to work with, the lesbian & gay Communities, on an equal footing with the other communities involved, would have resulted in a more efficient and less tense process of development.

# **The Pink Triangle, Newcastle**

## **Ignorance v. Apathy on Newcastle upon Tyne's Scene**

### ***Introduction***

The second study deals with the lack of knowledge of the existence of the local Scene in Newcastle upon Tyne which is contained within an area of comprehensive redevelopment proposals. It is necessarily more hypothetical than the study of Manchester for two reasons. Firstly, although the Newcastle Scene is relatively clustered, it is not visible, and there is a consequent lack of an "everyday" community feel to the Newcastle Communities. In particular, there is a notable level of political apathy. Secondly, the author was unable to reach a substantial level of dialogue with local planners in Newcastle upon Tyne City Council (NCC) or the Tyne & Wear Development Corporation (TWDC) on this topic, and it is the conclusion of this case study that the planning regimes themselves are fundamentally to blame for this ignorance. These reasons alone are proof of the lack of consideration of sexualised uses of space in Newcastle.

### ***The Pink Triangle in Newcastle***

Newcastle's spatial Scene consists mainly of five bars (Strings, Rockies, The Village, The Courtyard and Heavens Above) and two clubs (The Powerhouse and Rockshots 2, which is only partially lesbian & gay oriented). They form a neat triangle (hence the occasionally adopted name) in a backwater of the city centre directly to the west of the Central Station. They are relatively clustered but have walking distances of one or two minutes between some venues. Additional pubs and cafes in the area also, from time to time, form part of the spatial Scene.

There is a good non-spatial Scene, but one which has very little political basis, consisting mainly of sexual health and welfare networks (eg Lesbian Line, MESMAC Tyneside, Newcastle Friend) and a high student presence. Newcastle acts a "first option" Scene for lesbians & gay men from a wide hinterland (Scottish Borders to North Yorkshire, Cumbria to Cleveland) but is characterised essentially by its non-progressive, relatively invisible status.

## *The Potential Crisis on the Newcastle Scene*

The study area is part of a wider stretch of city centre land which is under-invested, contains a high level of vacant buildings and lots, and visually a poor entrance to the city - these are of course the reasons why the Scene has emerged there. It is also a huge wasted resource and undoubtedly requires substantial regeneration. Current proposals consist of two main elements - the upgrading by NCC of road access from the river to north of the city centre (the West Central Route - WCR) and related property acquisition including Strings bar; secondly, the development by TWDC of a £54 million complex, the International Centre for Life (conceived as a cross between a research and development facility, an office centre, and an international tourist attraction) which would eventually acquire The Courtyard and Heavens Above, and cut off Rockies bar from the remaining Scene.

The jolting effects would not only be to obliterate physical elements the Scene, but also to severely destabilise the sense of security, seclusion and "home" which has been adopted there. Despite the ephemeral nature of the spatiality of many Scenes over time, Newcastle's has managed to maintain a strong foothold in this part of town and create its (relatively invisible) Pink Triangle identity. Once this is challenged one of two polarised effects is likely to be felt. Either the Scene will disappear underground until momentum allows its re-emergence at another quiet marginal node (leading to the possibility of the whole process being played out over again), or it will be kick-started into establishing itself as a clustered and visible part of the city centre.

In theory the latter is more desirable, not only obviously for the Communities, but also because just to the north of the Scene is a proposed mixed use redevelopment of a large area of predominantly vacant buildings known as the Theatre Village & Chinatown. This comprehensive development strategy, now within the city's UDP, is designed to encourage "a diverse, vibrant and attractive mixed use environment, and to develop and consolidate an arts/leisure base in the area" (NCC UDP, Action Areas Supplement). The adoption of lesbian & gay space within this, along with all the positive benefits which this could bring, would seem entirely appropriate and a positive enhancement for the "village" atmosphere which will be attempted here.

Certainly there is no reason why Newcastle's Scene should not become as politically and socially aware as in Manchester. The Village in Manchester was borne out of entrepreneurial ability, political dogma, commercial activity, a strong general youth culture, vibrant city-wide arts and culture innovation, and institutional support from MCC. All but the last two of these elements exist in Newcastle but not necessarily in the required concentrations. The main missing elements are institutional support from

local authorities (through ignorance), and a political drive on the Scene itself (through apathy).

### ***Ignorance at NCC***

Newcastle is quite a *cosmopolitan* place in that there are elements which can go to make up the modern European city. It is a regional capital with a diverse and dramatic city centre, an efficient rapid transit system, two large universities, a high level of non-local residents, good arts and cultural prominence, a growing city centre population, massive retail capacity, and an exploitable history and character unique to the Geordie people. However, local politics retain a traditional Labour stance, and there is little modern or radical expression in Tyneside as a whole. Gender and capital relations particularly continue to be governed by post-War attitudes. The predominant cultures centre around traditional heterosexual orientations like football, alcohol and a strong sense of family life (Lewis 1994:87). This is the main reason why the city has not yet got to grips with the trend of becoming a *metropolitan* city of the 1990s despite the requisite building blocks.

Such institutionalised constructions of local society have come to light in related debates. For example, Mo O'Toole, a former NCC councillor and local academic, was involved in two separate attempts in the early 1990s to persuade NCC to recognise spatial and social minorities within the city centre. The first involved the demolition of an arcade with an identity and use-value created by a beatnik group of hippies, bikers, and 'greens', which NCC could not be persuaded to recognise before its acquisition. The second was the "fiasco" (O'Toole, interview with author 23 July 1996) over funding of the independent Tyneside Cinema (a major cultural element of the city centre) and the implied support that this would give to the cinema's annual Lesbian & Gay Film Festival. O'Toole illustrated how on the surface, such as during the Euro 96 football championships, there can be a thriving and indulgent atmosphere in Newcastle, but when the surface is scratched, true sentiment easily overshadows good intentions.

Lesbian & gay interests are undoubtedly recognised by NCC social services (eg. their financial support of MESMAC Tyneside) but this is in sharp contrast to evidence found in the planning department. This author attempted via a telephone call to create dialogue concerning the spatiality of the lesbian & gay Scene with the local planner for that area, who was also involved in the buildings around the WCR line. It was obvious from the outset that the planner was totally unaware that the area contained several lesbian & gay venues and that it could be termed a Scene.

Even more surprising was the fact that Strings bar, which is to be acquired for the

WCR, was believed by the planner not to be a licensed property, but another vacant warehouse. When this author informed him that it had been a lesbian & gay bar for nearly ten years, the planner retrieved a map which apparently did not indicate the building as a pub, and he respectfully questioned my sources.

It is of course possible that the planner was caught unawares. Nevertheless, this kind of ignorance is not only surprising but must be seen as embarrassing. When the local planner for the area is unaware of the use of a threatened building as a pub, and depends upon a map rather than accumulated personal perception to dispute a point of land use, it is perhaps time to ask questions about the acquired knowledge available to planning officers of the town in which they work. How often are visits made to the area? When are visits made? What is observed? Who is noticed and what are they doing?

When asked about business relocation from the WCR line, the planner was justly proud of the proactive attempts made by NCC to work with Asian textile businesses and another (straight) pub also in the WCR line, towards agreeing their needs. The planner had no knowledge of any attempt to converse with the lesbian & gay businesses in this way. O'Toole maintains the higher visibility and known economic and employment power of the Asian textile community are reasons for this contrast. NCC is obviously not aware of, or do not recognise, the importance that the Scene has to thousands of lesbian & gay people in Newcastle and beyond, and the economic power that can be present in such a clustered commercial community. In this climate there is unlikely to be institutional support for the active reconciliation of the Scene's potential crisis.

### ***Ignorance at TWDC***

TWDC has a well respected community development policy (CLES 1992, cited in TWDC undated: 2) based around the use of independent Community Monitoring Panels where "local people have a voice in deciding how redevelopment takes place [by meeting] with the Corporation and developers to make their views known on major developments" (TWDC undated: 4). But these panels only operate in three areas where there is a high resident population. There is no panel for the Centre for Life area, and therefore no direct way that people can become involved.

A tear out and return slip was present in a recent edition of TWDC's quarterly information magazine, but this asked only three questions designed to orient the Centre's marketing strategies once built. Indeed, it is apparent that the politics of the Centre for Life have overtaken the planning. An exaggeration of events may perhaps have occurred as follows: TWDC nears the end of its life and proposals for this land

are not forthcoming; they are aware of NCC suggestions for a large mixed use scheme, based around office anchors, and designed as a gateway to the city and Theatre Village & Chinatown; TWDC see this as a threat to the prosperity of their East Quayside development and realise they have to come up with something quickly to ensure concrete plans before their demise; TWDC brain-storm a current buzzword, "genetics", and mentally link it to research at Newcastle University; they develop the concept, plans, and funding with very little debate.

This may be a somewhat cynical view of the process, but the image of a flagship development being rushed through by "men in suits" to avoid institutional embarrassment is perhaps not too far fetched. In the process, very little consideration would be taken of the use-values already in place in the area which are presumably seen as expendable, and it is highly probable that many of those on the Corporation board are as unaware of the Scene as the local planner at NCC.

### ***Conclusions***

It would be wrong to assume that similar levels of ignorance are evident throughout both local planning authorities, as discussions with members of the City's Arts & Leisure Department and the Corporation's Community Development Department indicate. However, there is obviously not a productive level of knowledge about the existence of the lesbian & gay Communities in Newcastle, their social significance to parts of the city centre, their spatial configuration, or the commercial support activities and tourism pulling power that the Newcastle Scene possesses.

It is clear that the planning regimes in operation are partly to blame. The UDC, which is not directly answerable to the locale in which it works, is part of a more centralised approach to growth from the 1980s (Rydin 1993:201), and forms an element of the fragmented, *ad hoc* corporatist regime of urban planning resulting from neo-liberalist governments (Lawless 1996:26). What has also become apparent is that those in power in such a regime are not necessarily primarily interested in the micro political, social and spatial aspects of their remit, and due to an increasingly competitive approach to progress and success, they may be more interested in place marketing initiatives and image management for their area and their organisation (Wilkinson 1992:202).

In a discussion of image improvement techniques in Newcastle, Wilkinson concludes that despite an "attempt to restore meaning, rootedness and humanizing qualities to the city" (1992: 196), the blind attempts of non-locally rooted agencies result in the superimposition of "a manufactured image on the city rather than encouraging an urban renaissance to develop from within" (1992: 203). Hence, there is an inherent lack of

attention to then finer points of locality, and consequent oblivion to spatial uses such as a lesbian & gay Scene. Were regeneration projects more firmly grounded in the social and spatial communities which already use the space, then a more realistic attempt could be made to create the vibrant, varied and dynamic vision that is sought by TWDC and NCC alike. By not allowing the communities which use the places which are to be regenerated to have more than simply information, marginalisation will continue to be exaggerated.

Of more immediate importance is the future of the Pink Triangle when the proposals go ahead. This author increasingly believes that planners can be seen as the link between those that run the country, and those that live in it. It is the realisation of this growing role as intermediary which could enable Newcastle planners to take the lead to avert a potential crisis on the Newcastle Scene. Discrete but productive discussion could be made on an informal basis regarding where the spatial focus of the Scene might be encouraged to relocate. Scene leaders have insight into the Communities' desires and concerns, and planners have the necessary ability to suggest, develop and create a strategy of planning permission, license grants and unwritten spatial identification to allow subtle changes which may ensure the future of the spatial Scene.

This not only requires education on the part of the officers at NCC (whom, it would seem, would need to be involved before TWDC), but also a major awareness drive within the Newcastle Communities to prevent the only Scene leaders available, being those guided predominantly by private commercial gain. There are rumblings in the Newcastle Scene (the rumoured opening of a new venue on Clayton Street, the now annual Pride on Tyne celebrations, the proactive relocation of two women-only nights to a previously straight pub), and it is this potential which must be harnessed before it is too late. Otherwise, the inherent secrecy of the Pink Triangle will be stripped away, the organic stability nurtured over several years of growth will be unsettled, and the cosmetic alterations that an uneducated planning department might provide would not contain the sense of home grown strength and pride which a Scene naturally possesses.

# **An Obligation to Reconcile Lesbian & Gay Communities in the Built Environment**

## ***Minority Interests in Planning***

The concept of equal opportunities is one which has grasped the imagination of planners quite readily. The RTPI established a joint working party with the Commission for Racial Equality to investigate the multi-racial dimension of planning in 1978, and people with disabilities have received more attention from the planning system than many other minority interests. However, the topic of planning and gender, perhaps the one field which can be most readily tied in with lesbian & gay issues (although as Bell & Valentine explain (1995: 12), they should be progressed separately to avoid generalised definitions), has received less attention until recently. Cullingworth & Nadin (1994: 250) explains how there has always been a general lack of explicit social policies in plans, which have continued, since their evolution from land use blueprints, to concentrate on the "physical" rather than the "social".

Nevertheless, a suitable framework for research into minority interests and planning already exists due to the growing output of reports on work with other groups, be they statistical minorities such as people with disabilities, or constructed minorities such as women. There is therefore no academic or empirical reason why research into the planning system and its interaction with lesbian & gay Communities as a minority concern should not expand as part of the realm of "planning for people".

## ***Social Justice & the Planner***

A 1994 special issue of *Urban Geography* deals in depth with the concepts of social justice, democracy and the transformation of the public sphere. Apart from the significant inclusion of Knopp's article *Social Justice, Sexuality and the City* (sic), general discussion is made of the way government programmes worldwide are becoming fragmented, insular and uncoordinated (Lake 1994:601). In the same issue, Laws concludes that, as far as urban geographers are concerned,

the sociopolitical construction of our cities brings together many social groups, each making claims, often conflicting, upon economic, environmental, and political resources. The problem for the post-structuralists is how to adjudicate between these competing claims. (1994:

This process of reconciliation is also the direction in which planning is heading. The fundamentals of pluralism which underlie this paper have their basis in the grassroots social movements of the 1960s and 1970s which attempted to prevent an elite, centralised, corporate form of administration from imposing on a public of diverse interests. The role of the planner as mediator of these interests has been refined over the decades to pass beyond the negotiation and mediation tactics of the project-led 1980s, towards a process of consensus building and reconciliation through interest empowerment. There is now a far greater possibility that a win/lose negotiation can be replaced with a win/win reconciliation.

This further supports this author's view that the planner can be seen in this way as the link between those that run the country, the State and the private sector, and those that live in it, the people. Planning is constantly urged to take a leading role in many aspects of contemporary life which have a far wider impact on society than simply town and country planning. For example, planning has now been adopted as a main tool of progressing environmental sustainability in the UK, despite the fact that there are aspects relating to money, time, commitment and sincerity requiring societal and ethical changes which are way outside the planning realm. Gans explains how planners have often fought for "land use and location decisions closer to the public interest than those made by politicians, whose first priority was often to enrich the political machine" (1969:370). Being, in this way, between a rock and a hard place therefore has the possibility of becoming a planner's strength.

In other words, planners can be prepared to grasp nettles, for what ever reason, where others are not. It could be completely in accordance with this professional climate for planners to take the moral high ground on a topic like lesbian & gay spatiality, and take proactive steps to involve themselves, even at quite an arms length level, with issues such as those described here in Newcastle. The question should not be "Why get involved?", but "Why not?"

Gans explains the need for planning to take a closer look at the societal structures, institutions, culture and sub-cultures which are the fabric of our society, as opposed to solely the natural and man-made (Gans 1969: 363). He highlights studies which show that physical environment *per se* does not shape human behaviour - rather this is done by the economic, cultural and social relationships within the environment (1969: 371). The descriptions of lesbian & gay territoriality in this paper are an excellent example of this. He concludes that

these social processes and non-spatial ends, people's lives and their lifestyles, are determined by their income, occupation, and education, by their age and sex, and to a lesser extent by their ethnic, religious and political allegiances. These characteristics and allegiances are expressed in their behaviour, their goals and their problems, and in the social, economic and political environments in which they live. If the planner wants to affect people's lives, it is these environments for which he must plan. (1969: 373)

By adding sexuality to this list of characteristics, the planner's role in lesbian & gay spatiality becomes clearer. Lake's editorial to the special *Urban Geography* issue rallies those within the urban policy realm to grasp a wider nettle of alarming societal change. He describes the looming worldwide climate of intolerance and dogmatism articulated for example, in anti-immigrant referenda, anti-gay ordinances and "a frightening anti-intellectualism that forecloses the possibility of reasoned debate" (1994: 601). He appeals for a role of reasonableness which, like reconciliation, moves away from the methodical to the civilised by encouraging tolerance, respect, persuasion and a willingness to listen and learn. These are the skills that a planner should master in taking the moral high ground, to adopt a reconciliatory role in everyday practice thus enabling constructive, inclusive and empowered debate.

## ***Practical Hurdles***

But there are obvious practical problems in planning with lesbian & gay people. As has been hinted, sexuality is perceived by most to be perhaps the ultimate personal secret. The question "Are you gay?" carries with it far greater baggage than does, say, "Are you disabled?" For this reason, many see unilateral inquiry regarding a person's sexuality as difficult at best, offensive at worst. Herein lies one of the main difficulties for planners - how to begin a proactive approach towards the Communities without raising difficulties or causing offence.

Secondly, as has been illustrated here, planners may be totally oblivious to the importance of some of the use-values being added to spaces in their area, not only to the people creating the use-value, but also to the future of the area itself. As one planner in Manchester encouragingly admits, the middle-aged, middle-income, middle-England planner that drives in from the suburbs at 8 o'clock in the morning and goes home again at 5, is not likely to have any idea about what goes on in the city when they are not around. If the 24 hour city is to take hold as a workable concept for the future of many areas of our city centres, and if lesbian & gay places are to form an exciting and enticing part of it, then planners will have to educate themselves to their surroundings. Go for a drink after work to a European-styled cafe bar; take a daytime trip to parts of the city which may appear barren to you; read the listings and find out where the most fashionable nightclubs are in your area; drive around places which have a reputation for being empty at night; investigate where the lesbian & gay venues are in your town; drive past at closing time and take a notebook!

It is certainly worth attempting to progress with proactive interaction with lesbian & gay communities, or the stronger they get politically, socially and spatially, the greater the chance of only an angry voice being heard. The lack of a unilateral recognition of the increasing visibility and importance of the lesbian & gay Communities in an urban area may eventually result in planners being blamed for not taking such a step in the first place, as in Manchester where a contented course of regular planning process raised frustrated concern amongst Scene leaders. It is therefore up to planners to educate themselves, approach lesbian & gay issues positively, and assist their passage into the planning arena.

## ***Suitability of Planning Regimes***

On a wider scale, the adaptability of current planning regimes which have developed over the last fifteen years, for the inclusion of peripheral subjects like lesbian & gay

spatiality is questionable. Huw Thomas' incisive article *The New Right: "race" and planning in Britain in the 1980s and 1990s* (1994) dissects contemporary planning in relation to black and ethnic minorities to expose its (ostensibly) unintentional bias against these groups through its conception as a tool to essentially enable physical development to occur.

He explains that the Thatcherite construction of planning as a burden and its consequent utilisation as a market supportive tool have led to "the failure to recognise that black and ethnic minorities will have needs and aspirations which relate to land use and hence the concerns of planning" (1994: 358). Similarly, the continued construction of black and ethnic minorities as creating social problems has not encouraged planning authorities to conceive their role as creating social justice. Initiatives like the stifling of development plans, reduced requirements for public consultation, compulsory competitive tendering, and the instilling of a general sense of urgency in the decision making process all prevent the planning system from being sensitive to the needs and aspirations of minorities (Thomas 1994: 363).

It is perfectly acceptable to transfer this argument to other minorities like the lesbian & gay Communities, despite the lack of empirical evidence yet to prove it in the way that Thomas illustrates, for example, Asian planning applications in Leicester. The general argument is the same, and the debate around TWDC in the Newcastle case study supports this view that planning is not equipped to deal with such issues of social injustice.

### ***Bounty v Taboo ~ A Moral Dilemma***

More sinister is the ideological unpacking of the direction that many spatial Scenes are now heading - that of a stronger integration of the straight scene with the lesbian & gay. This is happening on many levels. Most obviously is the way that straight socialisers are using lesbian & gay places instead of straight ones. For example, many Village venues in Manchester accept the young fashion-conscious crowd, whatever their sexuality, seeing a mixed, but most definitely safe, future as the way forward (Manning 1996: 14). Daytime trade may rely on a straight influx due to reduced levels of visibility of lesbians and gay men, and location within the everyday working life of a city centre (Manning 1996: 14). Women especially feel more inclined to avoid some of the more uptight, aggressive and swarming straight night time venues which can feel oppressive (the recent unfortunate Manchester Village related murder of a woman socialiser (Lyle 1996) should not be allowed to cloud this positive opportunity for women), and the existence of strays (*straight people in gay places*) is now a generally accepted part of many Scenes, as long as they know they are to remain the minority, and agree to learn the rules (Fry 1996: 12).

More generally, the lesbian & gay cultural Scene has a history of providing the lead for the straight (most obviously in progressive popular culture like music and fashion, eg house music, Levi's jeans, jewellery for men), and as a lesbian & gay lifestyle becomes more enticing to the modern disillusioned straight individual, the Communities find themselves in a society which wants to imitate or be part of what they have (Pollack 1985: 58). The grass is always greener. This can be seen in the spatial Scene where, by creating a special place for themselves, lesbians & gay men have created an asset which others see as not only enticing, but useful for the future. As we have seen, Manchester have acknowledged the importance of the Village to the future of the city centre, and indeed market it in their City Guide, with its lesbian & gay identity, as "the place to be seen" (MCC 1996b: 14). This is the "bounty" - the exploitation of the spatial Scene as an asset for the general public.

Conversely, the related geography of exclusion (Sibley 1995: 1) is easily deconstructed. Generally, the perceived difference of others from the norm results in the creation of stereotypes through fear, which can lead to their securing spatially away from that norm as a defilement and intolerance of difference - "the idea of society assumes some cohesion and conformity which create, and are threatened by, difference" (Sibley 1995). Further, the norm controls knowledge about such difference as it is perceived to undermine the moral consensus.

This knowledge becomes dangerous and threatening when it is brought into

the centre and presented as a legitimate perspective on social relations.  
(Sibley 1995: 132)

This can be seen as the creation of taboo around the stereotyping of homosexuality. A moral dilemma is thus created. How is it possible to accept the best of what a spatial Scene and its accompanying lesbian & gay lifestyle has to offer the straight world without confronting and dealing with the taboos which surround lesbians & gay men?

It would be easy to suggest that this already takes place in relation to many other perceived differences and created taboos. For example, the almost sinister, sub-conscious motives of keeping a misunderstood ethnic minority located in one place, to prevent them from spreading towards other city centre land users is one way of looking at the creation of a Chinatown (the taboo), and the use of Chinese symbolism is simply gift wrapping to provide a more exciting environment in which to develop a lucrative tourist-trap based around Chinese restaurants (the bounty). Thomas' article backs this up

The focus of British planning on urban containment and rural conservation can plausibly be portrayed as unwittingly bolstering a view of Englishness which is inherently racist. (1994: 354)

It is therefore highly probable that many more situations like those portrayed in the case studies have, do and will exist in planning offices around the country. The heterosexually created baggage of the lesbian & gay Communities is inextricable from the homosexually created Scene. If lesbian & gay Communities are not considered as relevant and tangible communities to actively include as part of a forward planning regime, whilst at the same time their spatial creations are opportunistically appropriated as marketing tools for a metropolitan way of city living, then prejudice, ignorance and inequity will continue to result. In this climate no-one can blame the Communities for vociferously fighting back with pride.

## ***Conclusions***

The increasing spatiality of the lesbian & gay Scene is something that many planners may not be aware of. Certainly there are exciting and encouraging exceptions to this rule, but in general this rule is, as rules tend to be, straight.

The conscious reconfiguring of the Scene is resulting in clustered and visible enclaves of city space which are becoming more relevant to mainstream life, aspects of urban regeneration and everyday local authority planning practice. The temptation to exploit

these spatial creations and the cultural Scene from which they were borne, without acknowledging what straight people may see as the more alarming and undesirable aspects of lesbian & gay life, must be avoided.

Now is the time to broaden the horizons of planning research. The opportunity is presenting itself to include areas of urban society which have yet to be approached in any detail, if at all. The increasing visibility of the commercial and spatial lesbian & gay Scene in many urban areas is being intensified by a post-modern society's greater acceptance of lesbian & gay politics and culture in general. Research in related fields is taking on a more comprehensive dimension, widening the fields of study and blurring the boundaries between geography, sociology, history, and culture, elements from planning's past which are becoming increasingly important to its future if we are to continue to expand in remit, professionalism and respect.

Ultimately, the acceptance of others and the creation of space (both mentally and physically) for minority groups to continue different lives from the mainstream, is seen as an important step forward for planning with people, not just for people. It is the linked actions of planning academics, the continued lesbian & gay awareness work being developed in the institutions of governance, and the determination of the lesbian & gay Communities to produce economic and social strength, that will bring this area of urban life to a more rounded and certain future of managed integration and reconciled acceptance. As the lesbian & gay Communities increases in size and visibility, planners should not only be aware that there are issues which affect these Communities *like no other*, but that they should also be seen as a minority sector whose interests are waiting to be recognised and planned for *just like* any other.

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