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## **Queers in space: Towards a theory of landscape and sexual orientation**

### **abstract**

Spatial aspects of the various multicultural, lesbian and gay men's communities are becoming increasingly important in terms of both expanding our experience of who we are and for security. Understanding spatial aspects of homophobic intimidation and repression are becoming key for developing new strategies for resistance and for building alliances. This paper reviews some of the major theoretical opportunities for the increasing assertion of queer outdoor space within a framework of difference as related to such factors as gender, race, culture, and mobility. The emerging feminist critiques of architecture and the and frameworks for considering ecological crises are considered in terms of gay men and lesbians. Spatial implications for *de-ghettoization*, one of the tenets of queer theory, are explored. In this decade, concerns for space will play a major role in queer political activities and for understanding nagging forms of oppression that are not simply internalized. Queers in space courses, as part of most university lesbian and gay studies programmes, are inevitable. In short, we will need and demand more outdoor space that is queer, safe and arenas for a growing range of actions, uses, and experiences.



*for Carl Wittman<sup>1</sup> and Alex Wilson<sup>2</sup> who showed us where we have  
come from and where we are going*

Gay male and lesbian<sup>3</sup> use of outdoor space is and has been highly contentious

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<sup>1</sup> Carl Wittman was an early gay liberationist who developed one of the first manifestos of gay men and territory (Wittman 1972).

<sup>2</sup> Alex Wilson's 1992 book, *The Culture of Nature*, is a crucial exploration of the underpinnings of North American landscapes.

<sup>3</sup> It may be that the only commonality between lesbian, gay male, and bisexual use of space is related to homophobia. The implications of transgender individuals and other sexual minorities to a theory of queers

yet very little is written on the topic<sup>4</sup>. In recent decades, queer survival in and assertion of outdoor space has often become a central problem that has tested the depth of our frameworks of "liberation. Until recently, little was written on queers in space and the focus of such cursory discussions has often been on ghettos and gentrification (Knopp 1990), sex in public places (Humphreys 1975), and violence as particularly directed at lesbians and gay men. The feminist currents with postmodernism (Owens 1983 (1992)) have greatly expanded the possibilities of a spatial discourse. The purpose of this discussion is to identify some of the most important lines of inquiry for a theory of queers in space that is grounded in the process of greater control of or "input" into decision-making over strategic sites: at least an environmental planning with a parameter for queer social interaction.

Queer<sup>5</sup> studies involves an implicitly activist stance in academics in asserting a widening range of experiences, needs and possibilities. There is also an additional, intensified engagement to counter homophobia, indeed for our<sup>6</sup> continued existence. These two activisms, of deepening the *experience* (Foucault 1980, 193) of shared outdoor space, on one hand, and deepening recognition of the range of possible *instruments of collective survival*, on the other hand, comprise a primary dialectic for study of gay male and lesbian<sup>7</sup> use and habitation of space. A theory of queers in space can first be constructed around the differences and disparities, in the extent of use and enjoyment, associated with gender, race, class, age, language and culture and secondarily around the dynamics of erotic expression, violence, and social control.

Why create an aspect of queer theory that extends across ecology, geography, psychology, and sociology; across aesthetics, architecture, landscape architecture, and

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in space have not been fully considered.

<sup>4</sup> The most relevant analytical frameworks and surveys for queer outdoor space have been provided in Adler and Brenner (1992), Knopp (1992), and Weightman (1981).

<sup>5</sup> My use of "queer" is as a shorter synonym of "gay male and lesbian" suggests a profound departure from the various lesbian and gay male movements in its implicit and indefinite construction of a "de-centered" 'community of difference' (Duggan 1991, 18 - 19), the positing of a "new stance for opposition," (Duggan 1992, 23) and a project of "de-ghettoization."

<sup>6</sup> In using "our," I am only speaking for myself, am limiting the use of the term to that of a synonym for "lesbian and gay male," and only use it in terms of relatively common forces at work in our lives.

<sup>7</sup> The term "gay male and lesbian" is used consistently in that order because I am a gay male and can speak less knowledgeably about lesbians.

planning? How can we make the linkages that nurture both branches of inquiry so that they empower and collectivize our experience? What are the implications of some of the recent lines of thought in postmodernism (Jameson 1984, Harvey 1989, Wilson 1991, 135 - 159) and ecofeminism (Griffin 1989, King 1989) for experience of space around our bodies and for our collective survival multiple global environmental crises? If sexual desire has such a large developmental component, what is the significance of outdoor space and landscape to the formation of preferences, identities, and alliances? What are the implications of the new emphasis on "site specificity" (Owens 1980 (1992, 55)) to both needs for more functional and safe spaces for queers and for explorations of our individual and collective experiences? How can a model of difference in terms of gender, class, race, ethnicity, and sexual expression be employed in restructuring spatial relationships to increase contact and communication, to minimize isolation, and to obliterate sexism and racism? How can we identify and resolve elements of chauvinism and manifest destiny inherent in some of the North American narratives on "space, the final frontier"<sup>8</sup>? The following are a set of fragments, posed as arguments, for a theory of queers in space.

### **Environmental inventory as coming out / coming out as environmental inventory**

Where to begin in the construction of a theory of queers in space? We can start with the various points in our lives of *coming out*, in terms of determining identities, desires, and needs involving an indefinite number of ruptures from ingrained patterns and resistance against homophobic control. In coming out episodes, there is the power of new eroticism, of heightened communications, and there is the inevitable dissipation as an individual readjusts to homophobic environments. Each coming out episode has structure, progression, and a spatial context.

Environmental features have had a tremendous influence on our development, our socialization, and our desires. But to simply rework environmental psychology for gay men and lesbians would miss some crucial new historical developments and opportunities. In inventorying the relationships between coming out and landscape, three concentric arenas become evident:

1. what we feel, directly, in our own bodies, what might be termed queer body

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<sup>8</sup> The television programme *Star Trek* repeatedly used this phrase and until recent years also used the term "where no man has gone before." The recent version of the program has substituted the phrase for more gender-neutral language.

space;

2. what we absorb through our parents, families, lovers, friends, what might be termed queer community; and
3. what we have heard and seen through less personalized means including collective activities, such as demonstrations, through media, culture and theory, comprising our queer planet.

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How we experience any of the multitude of our queer identities is, of course, primarily through our bodies and our social relations. But for any minority and terrorized group, cognitive maps<sup>9</sup> (Jameson 1984), which extend out from community to planet and a large portion which is shared information, become particularly key for our well-being and survival.

In beginning to explore the uses and perhaps even the pleasures of a theory of queers in space, we can begin by inventorying the most important events in these three concentric arenas. The diversity of our different personal relationships to space, including that which becomes eroticized, may well be even richer than our differences in sexual impulse and expression. Social position becomes crucial to understanding relationships and can first be clarified. To demonstrate this process of *personal situation*, that is so crucial for queer theory, we can begin with an abbreviated version where you, the reader, are asked to explore your own environmental biography and to redefine these categories of desire in terms of health, in the broadest sense, and desire:

queer situation

gender;

race;

ethnic background;

language;

class;

disability; and

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<sup>9</sup> Mapping areas in terms of knowledge / lack of knowledge, memory / lack of memory and related needs and desires is one of the most important acts for development of a theory of queers in space / sexual differences. Our experience of events, people and objects, across areas, is a kind of coming out that can foreshadow more conscious realizations. The potential of using cognitive maps to compare the experience of different social groups and associated desires has not been fully realized and yet could provide some of the most compelling evidence for the terrorization and ghettoization of particular groups.

age.

But the lesbian and gay male movements, particularly in the first decade after the Stonewall Riots, with their hierarchies of self-definition (Young 1975, 28) emphasizing gender, class and age, and often de-emphasizing race and culture, perhaps obfuscated more telling *differences* (Spivak 1987, Terry 1991, Owens 1992, 218) for a theory of queers in space. The following is an additional set of situational details which have implications for both the range of queer use of outdoor space and the different uses of "queer outdoor space"<sup>10</sup>:

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post-gay liberation movements situational details

year / social and political period of initial coming out;

characterization of erotic relationships;

number of sexual partners;

meeting and sexual activity outdoors:

portion overall sexual activity;

urban;

rural: festivals / gatherings / "arts colonies";

level of danger;

obstacles from disabilities;

survivor of:

incest

childhood trauma

rape

abuse

harassment

homophobic assault;

HIV status:

sick?

exposed? don't know? no?;

lovers / family / friends exposed? sick?

Two of the most important achievements of gay male and lesbian studies in this

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<sup>10</sup> The two concepts of queer use of outdoor space and use of queer outdoor space are differentiated here because of their implications for framing issues of spatial segregation, such as sunbathing areas where the only people who feel comfortable there are gay men, and for considering queer use of a range of sites which have tended to be considered exclusively heterosexual, or at least non-deviant, and which are under increasing pressure to support "multiple use."

decade may be in sorting out the importance of these factors for our various communities and constructing a new framework for decision-making, a sort of *queer democracy*, with its inevitable spatial dimensions. The more interesting question of how awareness of these details can be used to heighten our experience, pleasure, and survival, largely through collection responses, will be covered in subsequent discussions.

This situational framework, while crucial for strategizing for survival, is still largely a reductionist response to complex sets of differences. Attempts to recreate better "situations" (Debord 1970), as based on these variables alone, have not been sustainable. Here is where a theory of queers in space becomes so necessary and transformative. In beginning to delve into the complexities of our current experiences and desires, our memories, our *psycho geography*<sup>11</sup>, and indeed our cognitive maps emerge as more workable and authentic points for charting commonality and divergence. It is in the personal arena that biography, in terms of culture, body and biology, involves so many spatial relationships that they have defied earlier reductionist frameworks for defining our experiences. A common linear framework for analyzing spatial implications of difference, emerging from environmental psychology, is largely unworkable for the construction of an activist theory.

Perhaps only a small number of personal details, related to our environments, "formative experiences" only some of which are directly relevant to our sexual orientations, can be isolated for particular discourses on outdoor space. I will chose three experiences in each arena with which I hope to come out about my relationship to outdoor space. My stories in this highly selective form of self-disclosure, are intended as examples to aid the reader in exploring their own environmental biographies.

### body space

■ As a boy, we lived in the country on Vancouver Island with meadows, oak woodlands and high Douglas fir trees. There was a road (Ingram 1990) and

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<sup>11</sup> Debord (1955, 5) used "psycho geography" as one of the pillars of the Situationist Movement that was formed two years later. His concept of personal spatial relationships was underlaid with a critique of Haussmann's Paris and was inherently activist. His "Psychogeographical Game of the Week" (Debord 1955, 6) was a precursor of some recent tactics by ACT UP and Queer Nation such as "die-ins." As related to desire, he wrote, "We need to work towards flooding the market - driven if for the moment merely the intellectual market - with a mass of desires whose realization is not beyond the capacity of man's present means of action on the material world, but only beyond the capacity of the old social organization."

across the street was an Indian Reserve with people living in shacks. When we walked to school, the Indian kids walked on their side of the road and the "white" and other non-native kids walked on their side. Every spring, Chief Paul would request to burn our field to keep it open and foster edible Camas bulbs. Some of the neighbours thought that my father was crazy to allow "the Indians," the fire, indeed the transgression so there was always a fire truck nearby. After I was out as a young gay man, I searched out a wilder version of the same landscape for my own transgressions and did a Master's thesis on two wild and steep mountains on nearby Salt Spring Island. They have ecological reserves of the same relatively warm, dry, semi- Mediterranean ecosystem type. Over the last 17 years, I have taken friends and lovers to these "sacred groves" countless times and they have become imbued with my own memories and mythologies.

- In high school in California in 1971, I fell in love with a male classmate. We were terrified of being found out so would ride our bicycles for miles into the country in order to camp in remote places and be able to have sex in our tent.
- By the mid-1970s, the core of the gay male area of Wreck Beach, on the outskirts of Vancouver, was formed. The "gay beach" was the least desirable sites being behind a breakwater and log booms. There was already an initial segregation of space with a sunbathing area and an area in the forest for sex. There was a rather strict code of conduct in each area. Since then, things have changed, the "scene" has spread down several kilometers while diversifying across several sites and with people walking naked for longer distances. There are new nodes, some segregation, and new blurring of lines. There is a drive-by area often for older men and there is a "Generation X" / New Kids scene at the base of a recent landslide. This is just below my office at The University of British Columbia.

#### queer community

- My father grew up in Vancouver and had a brother who was a year older. Uncle Allan had lovers from the late 1920s to the 1950s and was known to take boyfriends to a now demolished hotel on Bowen Island. When he got older he moved into a high-rise apartment in the West End with my Aunt Edna. He was ailing and one day he died. My father was called to the morgue. But it turned out my uncle had been raped and beaten in nearby Stanley Park. My father had a heart attack that night and died months later. I imagine a place where

Uncle Allan might have been attacked every time I walk through the park and then I think about my father.

- My first lesbian / gay pride march was in San Francisco in 1976 when I was 20. It was a small group of probably less than 50,000 that marched across the city that day. In subsequent years, the marches become larger and larger. The more risqué wore drag or nothing but jockstraps. There was probably one topless woman - but only for a few minutes at a time. We were terribly nervous about the police.
- When friends of friends and then friends started becoming aware of AIDS, in 1981 and 1982, there was a flight from the gay ghettos. The zones of heavy gay male sexuality seemed toxic. Many gay men moved to smaller cities, even the suburbs. I moved to Rome for three years, avoided the Vatican, and worked in the building that was Mussolini's former Ministry of the Colonies. Things were not much different there. Most of us moved back after a few years - especially as closer friends started getting sick<sup>12</sup>.

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#### queer planet

- I was 13 when I heard about the Stonewall Riots. I loved the idea of getting that angry. I had just run as the NDP candidate for the "premier" of my Grade 7 in Victoria, British Columbia. This was a time when the order of classrooms was rigidly maintained and outside the building prefects watched over our behaviour. My campaign promise was for greater human rights. I received 3 votes and lost to the Social Credit Party.
- When I was 16 and studying in Berkeley, I went to see the 1970 film *Elevator Girls in Bondage* one of the first of the Cockettes films and a spoof on Marxist-Leninist revolution. Divine made his film debut as an abusive hotel owner. After *The Revolution* a cardboard model of San Francisco was trampled by a pet store iguana. At the time, I thought the film was hilarious.
- I did not go to either of the lesbian / gay marches in Washington but the aerial views have left their mark: the capital, the people, the quilt. This mythic

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<sup>12</sup> Geltmaker (1992) provides the most powerful chronicle of the geography of recent organized gay male and lesbian responses to HIV. He states a number of objections to the terms of his own discussion which are very relevant to my own.

placement of symbols fascinates and comforts me.

These few points in my personal narrative are male-centred, North American, and very much grounded in the period between Stonewall and the advent of the AIDS pandemic. The relationships that have been established will probably dominate my personal behaviour in outdoor space for much of my life. Any kind of new queer consciousness will emphasize greater self-awareness of personal "environmental histories" as prerequisites for transformation of relationships and heightened satisfaction.

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### **Junctures of gender**

Any theory of sexual orientation and space, at the present time, must be largely derivative of feminist critiques of designed space. The last decade has seen an explosion in studies of gender and architecture. Louise Mozingo (1984, 1987) looked at the increasingly insecure and uncomfortable position of women in downtown areas. A very contradictory set of relationships of women in the city (Wilson 1991, 6 - 8) emerges as places of both liberation and personal autonomy, on one hand, and sites of intensified repression and conflict on the other hand.

The concept of the *spatial caste system*, and its relationship to gender disparities<sup>13</sup>, was developed by Leslie Kanes Weisman (1992, 23) with "dual realms of male superiority and female inferiority...protected and maintained through man's territorial dominance and control." She notes that "Boys are raised in our society to be spatially dominant." (Weisman 1992, 24) though does not mention the variations, perhaps even exceptions, of sissies and tomboys. For example, tomboys in homophobic contexts are often resented for their unselfconscious use of both body and communal space.

What becomes particularly crucial to the making of queer space, or in the lack of it, is the nature of the social regulation of "the private use of public space" (Weisman 1992, 67 - 84). In this dichotomy, women are forced into their homes and men are given many more opportunities to travel across what are inevitably contentious territory. But what about the often hidden, temporary or isolated women's

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<sup>13</sup> Weisman (1992, 2) notes, "Space, like language, is socially constructed; and like the syntax of language, the spatial arrangements of our buildings and communities reflect and reinforce the nature of gender, race, and class relations in society. The uses of both language and space contribute to the power of some groups over others and the maintenance of human inequality."

spaces and the places of forbidden sex between men? It is these *sites of exception*, in seas of violent misogyny and homophobia, that historically have provided the cores of queer space.

In *Gendered Spaces*, Spain (1992) constructs a framework for analyzing the disparities in use of indoor and outdoor space for women and men. The range of implications for lesbians and gay men, indeed the differences within queerness, are striking and almost constitute a field of inquiry in itself. But the nature of gender segregation, for example, is profoundly ambiguous in the formation of some forms of queer space. Thus, it can be argued that the kinds of gender segregation in more traditional Islamic communities is highly constricting to female development while women-only festivals represent a strategic effort in the creation of *new space*. A notion of spatial segregation in the creation of "gay male space" (Grube 1986) foreshadows the creation of *de facto* sites of homoeroticism (Kepner 1958, Douglas and Rasmussen 1977). Since the Industrial Revolution, the pattern has tended to be that the homophobia, secrecy and isolation of gay male outdoor sites, the greater the obstacles to similar sites to lesbians (Nestle 1983). And the implications for bisexual behaviour in women and men, across space, are worthy of many tomes.

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There is not a direct queer corollary with the "spatial division of labor" (Spain 1992, 81 - 103) as related to gender segregation except, perhaps, in terms of access to pleasure. Spatial segregation and gender profoundly compounds the sexual isolation of women loving women. The sexual and gender segregation of gay male outdoor space is ephemeral and often is accompanied by threats of homophobic violence. But it would be profoundly reductionist to base a theory of queer space around sites that were not as much about learning, socialization and nurturing as about play.

### **Ecological crises and patriarchy: Homosexual adaptations to dysfunction**

Queer studies is coalescing, along with a framework for difference and more authentic alliances between lesbians and gay men, at a time of unprecedented and global ecological crisis. It is no coincidence that this is also in a period of modest institutionalization of some tenets of modern feminism while there are still increasing disparities between genders. It is an understatement to say that women have tended to feel less safe in public space in recent years and this experience is acting as an engine to analyze space.

Yet women and nature, with all of their spatial aspects, continue to be progressively marginalized (Ortner 1974). Ecofeminism, involving a wide range of cultures, has laid the partial basis for "rehabitation," ecological restoration and

harmony, and "sustainability." The implications of homophobia for body space and queer community in degrading environments have barely been explored.

If the notions of "homosexual" and "lesbian" were largely constructed in the Nineteenth Century, a time of intensifying exploitation of natural resources and indeed of space, there are bound to be some relationships between patriarchy, impoverishment of ecosystems and associated cultures, as well as homophobia. Perhaps queers are still colonized through over-emphasis on adaptation to environmental degradation impoverishment - even when we are associated with gentrification and the middle class. If large numbers of gay men and lesbians have occupied sectors that have been used to mask, decorate, and perhaps heal the more brutish aspects of patriarchy and resource "extraction," perhaps there is the basis for an argument that queer space has been associated with the extremes of the allocation of such artistic arts. Queer outdoor space has often fallen off each end of the resource spectrum - both in the palaces, temples and preserves and in the derelict neighbourhoods and parks.

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As the pace of ecological destruction quickens and as domestic space and natural resources become more scarce and expensive, spatial niches for lesbians and gay men may become increasingly ephemeral and transitory. Feminism, that embodies an analysis of homophobia (Owens 1992), could become one of the central theoretical vehicles for slowing these damaging processes of *delocalization* (Virilio 1986). Herein lies another nagging contradiction for a theory of queers in space: between responses of decorum and those of resistance. The queer outdoor spaces of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries have been less hidden than discounted and ignored. Indeed obscurity and anonymity have been essential conditions to the effective functioning of such queer sites in the Twentieth Century. But now there are new conditions and opportunities for the construction and expansion of queer space. Indeed, conditions are favourable to allow the making of more satisfying places to be a central activity of a queer politic.

### **Hypotheses of queers in space: The West in the Twentieth Century**

In calling for a theory of queers in space, I do not want to begin investigating particular relationships and sites. Rather, my argument is that inquiries into how the *increasing diversity* of individuals, alliances and groups survive in, enjoy and transform the multitude of sites, regions, perhaps one day even the biosphere, is a crucial task in queer studies and curricula. This is at a time when Western cultural hegemony is, on one hand, still being further entrenched and is, on the other, being

confronted by a growing number of voices of difference. The large majority of investigations of queer hypotheses can be grounded in particular experiences, personal situations, cultures, ecosystems, and sites.

In every context with homosexual expression, and related alliances and social groupings, there are spatial dimensions. Queer theory, if in fact it attempts to link these disparate conditions beyond just the West since the Industrial Revolution, must therefore be based on a wide range of contextual factors. There is also a rich range of increasingly assertive non-western traditions and contemporary movements. In such an expanding cultural landscape, I will limit this discussion of suspected relationships and patterns to some of the most important changes in modern North American gay male and lesbian life.

- Gay male ghettos and outdoor meeting places have largely coalesced in urban areas since the Industrial Revolution though there may have been some key exceptions, for example in China, Italy, and west Africa, associated with particular castes, classes and social groupings.
- Lesbian use of urban areas and meeting places has been somewhat less structured along lines of sexual contact and has been impeded by not only homophobia but both violence against women and by poverty. But some of these obstacles may be less effective in the coming years (Hearn 1989) for maintaining this isolation.
- Queer ruralism as a movement has been a persistent element since the emergence of the modern "homosexual" and extends back beyond Edward Carpenter to the utopian movements of earlier in the Nineteenth Century. Queer ruralism and the desire to demarcate and transform "new" space may well have been one of the primary engines of utopianism over the last two centuries. Just as there are ghettos and queer ghetto-making, there have been the *margins*, the anti-ghetto where small networks have functioned in a careful but often provisional combination of isolation and cohesion.
- In pre-Stonewall North America, there was a high correlation between open area sites with high densities of visible gay men and lesbians and homophobic violence<sup>14</sup>. Gay ghettos have not been particularly safe places. This pattern

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<sup>14</sup> Bell (1991, 327) has called for "studies of the spatial distribution of 'gay bashing' and how this limits access to areas of cities by lesbians and gay men."

of intimidation continued into the 1980s until the advent of groups like San Francisco's Community United Against Violence (CUAV).

- The "traditional nodes of gay male activity" (Bell 1991, 326) have been profoundly restructured with the advent of gay liberation, feminism, mass travel, and the onslaughts of sexually transmitted diseases.
- In North America, there have always been outdoor sites associated with singular and particular compositions of gay male and lesbian subcultures particularly along lines of desire as well as race, culture and language, and class. The less established, the more marginalized the group, the more temporary and ephemeral the use of open space.
- Queer sites, particularly when shared with heterosexuals which is virtually always the case, do not function to serve the needs and desires of every lesbian, gay male and bisexual group at equal levels. Planning and design interventions are necessary to reconstruct or maintain sites to equitably function for a range of needs and desires.

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These hypotheses will appear as "common sense" for some of us but there is remarkably little substantiation and exploration of the implications through data, details, inconsistencies, and contradictions. How can we prove or disprove such relationships? More importantly, how can we qualify conclusions as particular to particular groups, conditions, regions, and sites?

### **Empirical methods**

It is near impossible to confirm patterns and relationships when people are trying to hide their identities. It is impossible to define queer space unless some of the users of that space have some kind of gay / lesbian identification and commitment to liberation. Consequently, there have been few viable opportunities to observe. The cursory information from such sources as police records, diaries, and recollection is at best voyeuristic and often so inherently biased and hostile that information relevant to an activist theory is obscured.

A theory of queers in space requires some kind of power of *queer observation*. There are methods of *evaluating designed spaces* (Marcus 1978, 34). But there are problems of context and objectivity as well as what Marcus once referred to as the

*informed critique* conducted with users of particular sites. But why should we bother? Evaluation of space must first be based on our needs and desires. Queer observation is then based on the dynamic of exploration of experience and the persistent imperatives for survival. And the basis for such informed critiques vary radically on the basis of gender, race, class, culture, mobility and individual development.

In queer observation, a secondary dynamic of objectivity and subjectivity also emerges. There is the gay gaze and there is the recognition of sameness. But there is also the basis for continued voyeurism and negation of particular relationships and experiences. The identification of relatively distinct sites for African American gay men has been explored by Essex Hemphill (1992). In such settings, queer but non-black "observation" would be ridiculous and in no way objective nor viable. The "subjects" hold the only key to understanding underlying relationships. In such explorations of communities, spatial inquiries will invariably appear as more subjective and "literary" than as social science but are, in fact, the beginnings of authentic queer inquiry<sup>15</sup>.

The alternatives to the nagging problems of observation are the various forms of *radical subjectivity*, often associated with the movements of the 1970s, and a sort of *queer archaeology* of the landscape. Thus, there can be a less formal, *queer vernacular* of the spatial impacts and traces of our activities. Indicators can extend to purely visual traces. The history of designed spaces are more problematic for the lack of explicit *queer programming*, even when more privileged groups of gay men are involved. This renders most historic and contemporary site planning and landscape design at best ineffective, in terms of creation queer space, and at worst artifacts of particular formations of sexism and homophobia. In this archaeology, there is still a problem of correlating and confirming details of the landscape with queer use, experience, repression, resistance and empowerment.

The nature and implications of class (Becker 1973) and age (Porteous 1977) in queer space have barely been explored. It has been argued that sites of gay male sex, for instance, are places that transcend class relationships but then it can also be argued that those dimensions are simply obfuscated and ultimately intensified. Use of queer

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<sup>15</sup> One of Foucault's more famous pronouncements (Eribon 1991, page 43 quoting Trombador 1981) is useful here: "Research must be held accountable for the choice of its rationality; its basis - which we know is not the established objectivity of science - must be questioned."

public space may be highest with younger adults.

### **The evolution of the gay ghetto**

"San Francisco is a refugee camp for homosexuals. We had fled here from every part of the nation, and like refugees elsewhere, we came not because it is so great here, but because it was so bad there...we have formed a ghetto, out of self-protection. It is a ghetto rather than a free territory because it is still theirs..."  
Carl Wittman, 1972, *A Gay Manifesto*.

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"we moved from room to room...there stalked, in fact, a multitude of dreams...In the plague city, life goes on" (Persky 1991, 70 - 71)<sup>16</sup>

Sexually assertive gay men and lesbians since the Victorian period have essentially been outlaws. But the nature of this constant "reconstruction of the 'legend' of the homosexual outlaw," (Owens 1992, 218) with its range of opportunities and constraints varies radically with gender, culture / race, class, and site. The latest version of the outlaws construct is AIDS as punishment for militancy with a subtext being once that there is successful manifestation of gay space, inferiority will manifest such as in vulnerability to plague. The notion of the Gay Ghetto with its homophobic Pantheon has been reconstructed with an emphasis on apocalypse and decay, though so far this is not at all been the case, and precluding any inspiration for park establishment, landscape restoration or long-term planning. Queer space, when it is dominated by privileged, mobile, young adult, white, male uses, can be sufficiently negated by the climate of cultural chauvinism, indeed of the inherent contradictions of such "free" zones, to be largely dysfunctional. But because of demographic shifts, such transitional "beach heads" of white, Eurocentric gay men are largely history. Theories of difference will be crucial to the reconstruction, indeed to the planning, of what amount to large-scale reappropriation in terms of diversities of sexual expression, social interaction and representation.

### **Queer urbanism and shifting frontiers: The reappropriation of "public" space**

Sites of queer density have functioned more that just for contact and for nominal safety. Such points and corridors provide opportunities for subversion and

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<sup>16</sup> Persky's 1989 - 1991 pros entitled "In the plague city" is about the changes in San Francisco with the onslaught of AIDS.

perhaps even *deprogramming of patriarchy and homophobia* and as respite from the stifling myths of heterosexuality. Queer spaces in the Twentieth Century have comprised laboratories to both ironically glorify and debunk the myths of masculinity, domination, and heterosexuality. But the price for such experimentation, particularly in terms of risk of attack, has been high. Sites of queer exception are cheap when unrecognized and expensive when fulcra of our neighbourhoods. Gay male, and to a lesser extent lesbian, assertion of outdoor urban space has often been part of the settlement patterns on the cusp of urban frontiers. But "gentrification" is expensive especially for the formerly marginalized groups such as once were referred to as simply "the gay community." This political economy of queer space, indeed its market-driven aspects, are particularly stark in periods of economic downturn.

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In contemporary urbanism, as an increasingly global and integrated process, gay male and lesbian appropriation, loss, and reappropriation of urban space can be gauged by comfort and safety. But in times such as ours, with increasing privatization of space (Davis 1992) and assertion of a wider range of experiences and respective groups, the significance of outdoor space, indeed of the freedoms of behaviour and habitudes, is heightened. But the broader economic context (Knopp 1992), and the ability of globalized capital to both use homophobia and to partially employ such freer enclaves, is an ever present force.

### **Homophobia by design: Implications for site planning**

Queer outdoor space, in 1993, comprises points of conflict and even warfare over safety, comfort, expression, communication and sexuality. Landscape architecture and what is innocuously termed "landscaping" are too often used to retrench mysogonism and homophobia under the guise of balanced design and management. Negative reactions to sex in the landscape are a smoke screen for broader contention around the atomization of individuals through state regulation of public and private behaviour<sup>17</sup>. Bushes are cut down and floodlights are installed to suppress consensual expression while little is done to upgrade areas where assaults are common. Outside of the large university campuses, these disparities with more funds put into dispersing us, in contrast to implementing designs to minimize the chances of violence may still be increasing (a crucial hypothesis to test).

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<sup>17</sup> Jeffrey Weeks (1985, 222) and quoted by Bell (in press) note that sites of male public sex "break with the contentional distinctions between private and public, making nonsense of our usual demarcations...public forms of sex actually involve a redefinition of privacy." And consensual sex, in public space, is one of the least controllable social transgressions.

But to only focus on high risk sites, in a theory of queers in space, would to overlook the places of security, nurturing, and compassion - the refuges that keep us alive. Again, this aspect of the changing lines between public and private space become prominent. In pre-Stonewall North America, a large portion of the queer outdoor space was private and there was some fear associated with any outdoor area. In the San Francisco and New York models there were the dualities between highly controlled outdoor space, such as private backyards and the courtyards of bars, and derelict but relatively uncontested areas such as under-used city parks. Natural areas, such as parts of Fire Island, were a third sphere that allowed more opportunities for relaxation. The boundaries between public and private, throughout these spheres of gay male and lesbian life, have been particularly provisional and temporary in response to fashion, prosperity, and repression. Spatial gains in struggles for queer space have been even more tentative than greater society-wide acceptance.

### **Contested space / contested representation**

Sites of sexuality, conspiracy and remembrance have been particularly contentious both within our communities and within broader society. By now in virtually every neighbourhood in North America and Europe, with sizable lesbian and gay male communities, there has been at least one major controversy about the conception, the symbolism, the interpretation, and the delivery of sculptural and pictorial information, if not the broader programme, for a site. Memory in the landscapes of lesbos and the forests of faggotry is almost inherently fractured and problematic.

The Stonewall Riots transformed our notions of queers in space forever. The riots marked a new cohesion, perhaps even a kind of militarization (Virilio 1986), that has been about aggressively contesting and reappropriating public sites if only for short periods. The ritual quality, and indeed the power, of these episodes, these demonstrations, to groups so culturally, emotionally, ghettoized and marginalized should not be underestimated. But there has been more than just the temporary assertion of control over points and territories. The experiences, the rules, and the vocabularies that have been asserted transform how we view ourselves, our communities, and our inherent rights.

The end of the Twentieth Centuries is seeing "the crisis of cultural authority" (Owens (1983), 1992, 166) with the representation of gender and landscape (Watson 1992) at the of centres increasingly politicized conflict. Indeed the acts of

representation and *appreciating* the widening differences and the uniqueness of sites; even the needs and opportunities for queer space on an increasingly degraded planet, becomes problematic. In the gay male and lesbian communities our multiple representation systems of people and sites have never been neutral and invariably make statements in relation to contested resources, places and indeed to the access to sites and the distributions of costs and benefits of fluctuating patterns of use.

### **Interventions: Queer activism as architecture**

"Architecture is the simplest means of *articulating* time and space, of *modulating* reality, of engendering dreams...The architecture of tomorrow will be a means of modifying present conceptions of time and space. It will be a means of *knowledge* and a *means of action*." (Chtcheglov 1953 (1981), 2)

One of the most exciting developments in the formation of the postmodern queer has been the new and increasingly creative uses of space, both outdoor and indoor, for both resistance to various power structures and for redefinition and strengthening of alliances. The 1990s are about *spatial articulation* of our collective experiences and this is light years beyond the impulses for interior decorating of the 1950s and 1960s and the layout of "bedroom suburbs" in the 1970s and early 1980s. Our collective body, our *queer corps*, is too vulnerable and yet too unstoppable to not see an expansion in all spheres, both public and private.

Some sites, particularly associated with ghettos, will continue to be strategic. Infrastructure takes on crucial roles in both the transportation of information and the formation of new metaphors and experience, including experience of the body (Grosz 1992, 243 - 244). Points of spontaneous social contact, a mainstay for sectors of the lesbian and gay male communities, will continue to boom.

The demonstration, particularly lesbian / gay freedom marches and more site and issue-specific events, will continue to take on symbolic and educational significance. Our bodies, our formations, and our signifiers will reach ever closer in to the more reactionary heartlands. Indeed, urbanism in both North American and Europe is being increasingly defined as having some obvious gay male and lesbian content.

In this era, how can demonstrations deepen our lives as well as function to counter, educate, embarrass, denounce and celebrate? Ritual becomes crucial and relatively permanent sites, albeit reappropriated, take on strategic importance. Sites

of memory, indeed the power to be alive and remember, will take on increasingly strategic importance as will their treatment and use.

### **Conclusions: Beyond sex and safety**

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As for courses in queers in space as part of university-level, lesbian / gay studies curricula, they are inevitable. Queers in space topics can comprise modules in geography and planning, landscape architecture and architecture courses, can be offered in conjunction with seminars in gender, space and design, or can be part of larger cultural discussions.

Representation and space, indeed signifiers of memory and territory have become major fronts in the current guerilla wars to protect and expand our communities. In many urban and even some rural contexts, the needs and desires of our communities simply no longer be ignored in planning and design programming.

What we will be seeing in this decade takes the discourse on queers in space well beyond how it could be conceived at the time of the Stonewall Riots and the advent of the modern gay liberation movement. The inevitability of places for sex and meeting and the increasing need for security in order to survive have been profoundly augmented by the issues of access, demonstration, memory, and representation. And these new sites of queer power will in turn transform our communities and the definitions of ourselves.

In closing, I would like to invoke Aldo Leopold's reflection that the trouble with being an ecologist is that one lives in a world of wounds. The trouble with being a faggot environmental planner who has survived the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s is that one lives in a landscape with ghosts of many dead lovers and friends; with nagging dreams and fleeting visions that go back to the exuberance of past decades; and with a very complex spatial agenda in terms of home, community, and territory.

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