1-1-2009

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Recommended Citation

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Keywords

two, sexual, across, cohesion, social, interrogating, neighbourhoods, friendly, australia, queer, difference

Disciplines

Life Sciences | Physical Sciences and Mathematics | Social and Behavioral Sciences

Publication Details

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Received 14 November 2008; in revised form 22 January 2009; published online 26 October 2009

Abstract. This paper examines processes of social cohesion across sexual difference in 'queer-friendly neighbourhoods'—localities that have a heterosexual majority in residential and commercial terms, but where a significant presence of gay and lesbian residents, businesses, and organisations are welcomed. This investigation advances a lineage of work on the development and maintenance of gay and lesbian neighbourhoods, and their role in residents' well-being. The findings also extend understandings of social cohesion, a key theme in neighbourhood and policy research across the West. The context of this study is Australia, where recent projects on social cohesion have focused on public order, economic benefits, and race tensions. However, given that gay men and lesbians are present in Australian social and political debates, sexuality should be integrated into studies about neighbourhood cohesion. To analyse processes of cohesion between heterosexual and same-sex-attracted people, we draw on data from case studies of two queer-friendly neighbourhoods in Australia—the inner-city suburb of Newtown, NSW, and the regional town of Daylesford, Victoria. We discuss the findings in three analytical categories to highlight common processes and characteristics of queer-friendly neighbourhoods: diversity and difference; symbolic landscapes; combating homophobia.

Why investigate social cohesion across sexual difference?

This paper examines social cohesion across sexual difference in neighbourhoods which are espoused as 'friendly' for same-sex-attracted people. We introduce the idea of the 'queer-friendly neighbourhood' to break from earlier academic focus on 'gay ghettos' in Western societies such as the US, the UK, and Australia (Brown, 2008), differentiating queer-friendly neighbourhoods from gay enclaves. The term 'gay ghetto' refers to inner-city neighbourhoods where same-sex-attracted residents predominate—typically white, middle-class gay men (Brown, 2004; Podmore, 2006)—and where many businesses cater chiefly to this population (Levine, 1979; Valentine, 2002). However, we use the term 'queer-friendly neighbourhood' to denote areas with a visible and acknowledged, but not overwhelming, presence of gay and lesbian residents, businesses, and organisations. Such localities have a heterosexual residential majority and commercial focus but, as 'queer-friendly' implies, same-sex-attracted people are welcomed in the neighbourhood. Moreover, diverse same-sex-attracted residents—not only white, middle-class gay men—are apparent. Accordingly, we deploy 'queer-friendly' as an umbrella for the array of same-sex-attracted people visible in these neighbourhoods, most notably gay men and lesbians of various ethnic and class identifications, who are the main (but not exclusive) focus of this analysis.[1] The defining feature of queer-friendly neighbourhoods is that heterosexual and same-sex-attracted residents endeavour to interact in a mutually constructive manner. This is not to assert that social relations therein are problem free: homophobic attitudes still erupt. Rather, despite continuing problems, or perhaps because of them, attempts are made by residents and local authorities to be inclusive

[1] While acknowledging queer's conceptual complexity, in 'queer-friendly' we follow Fortier's (2003) use of 'queer' as pragmatic shorthand for same-sex-attracted people with nonheteronormative identities, particularly gay men and lesbians.

of diversity. While in this paper we concentrate on practices and processes which foster understanding across sexual difference, we truncate romanticisation of queer-friendly neighbourhoods by also considering problems and exclusions.

We analyse integration across sexual difference through data from two queer-friendly neighbourhoods in Australia: the inner-city suburb of Newtown, in Sydney, NSW, and the regional township of Daylesford, Victoria. This discussion was prompted by growing attention to social cohesion in policy and academic discourse. In the 1990s concern with social cohesion emerged in national policy agendas across Western democracies, including the UK, France, and Canada (Markus and Kirpitchenko, 2007). Likewise, facilitating social cohesion is a national research priority in Australia. Accordingly, across the West social cohesion has become a key theme in neighbourhood research (Forrest and Kearns, 2001; Martin, 2003a; Witten et al, 2003). However, recent work in Australia has been limited in two main ways. First, it has been "prompted by fear of the impact of globalisation and other aspects of economic change" (Markus and Kirpitchenko, 2007, page 21): a survey of the Australian Research Council grants database using the search term 'social cohesion' reveals that most of these projects have focused on ensuring public order and economic performance, rather than 'everyday' social connections like tolerance and trust. Second, with the advent of the "war on terror" and "concern over the loyalty of Muslim populations" linked with maintaining public order (Markus and Kirpitchenko, 2007, page 21), attention to social cohesion in Australian neighbourhoods has concentrated on ethnicity and race as vectors of social disintegration and inclusiveness (Forrest and Dunn, 2007; Noble and Poynting, 2007). While these foci are important, there is danger of occluding other politically charged dimensions of difference, such as sexuality. Indeed, the civil liberties of same-sex-attracted people have been at the forefront of recent Australian political and social debates, including disputes about partnership rights, workplace discrimination, tax and medical benefits, and homophobic violence. Yet little work has been done to understand processes that assist supportive interactions between heterosexual and same-sex-attracted Australians.

By focusing on social cohesion across sexual difference we seek to broaden the agenda for policy and academic research. Rather than economic and public order, we are concerned with more profound dimensions of cohesion, plumbing the broader links between interrelationships, tolerance, acceptance, and trust at the neighbourhood scale. In this context, individual and group identities are not founded solely on the classic triad of class, race, and gender, but emerge from the intersection of these subjectivities with sexuality and other social categories (Valentine, 2007). While it is crucial to incorporate sexual difference into discussions of neighbourhood cohesion, we also acknowledge that sexuality intersects with ethnicity, race, class, and gender, inter alia, in sustaining queer-friendly neighbourhoods. Accordingly, while we focus on integration across sexual difference, notice will be given when other subjectivities imbricate with sexuality in queer-friendly processes and exclusions. Indeed, layering of social categories is a key feature of the neighbourhoods analysed here. We begin this analysis by reviewing the literature on gay and lesbian neighbourhoods, and suggest how we should extend this work through examining interrelationships in queer-friendly neighbourhoods. We then review some work on the role of social cohesion in neighbourhood formation and maintenance in order to outline how we define the concept of social cohesion. Subsequently, we introduce the context of the Australian neighbourhoods and discuss data collection, before exploring practices and processes of integration across sexualities in these localities.

From gay ghettos to queer-friendly neighbourhoods

From the late 1970s the relationship between sexuality and space has been a research concern in geography and related disciplines. The delineation of 'gay ghettos' in terms of commercial and residential concentration was an early research theme. During this time researchers began to examine the creation and maintenance of gay enclaves, with particular focus on processes of territorialisation in the inner precincts of US cities by gay men (Castells, 1983; Lauria and Knopp, 1985; Levine, 1979). Levine identified key commercial and residential concentrations of gay men in urban American neighbourhoods, arguing:

> "an urban neighborhood can be termed a 'gay ghetto' if it contains gay institutions in number, a conspicuous and locally dominant gay subculture that is socially isolated from the larger community, and a residential population that is substantially gay" (1979, page 364).

One prominent instance was the Castro in San Francisco, described by Valentine (2002, page 146) as "the most famous example of a gay urban neighbourhood". This was the focus of Castells's (1983) ground-breaking study of gay male territorialisation, in which he demonstrated that gay men were intimately involved in the renovation of commercial spaces and housing stock in the Castro. Importantly, Castells began to conceptualise the reasons underpinning the development of gay urban neighbourhoods, arguing that such commercial and residential concentrations were not only a matter of gentrification and economic need, but a crucial part of the process of claiming a territorial base for political organisation and subcultural self-definition, "to build up a new community at a financial and social cost that only 'moral refugees' are ready to pay" (Castells, 1983, page 161).

Extending this work, Knopp has thoroughly investigated the emergence of gay neighbourhoods in the US and elsewhere. Together with Lauria, he initially conceptualised the goals of gay gentrification, suggesting that inner-city regeneration by gay men was a response to wider social oppression, generating zones that facilitated gay identities (Lauria and Knopp, 1985). Such territorialisation was a means of claiming a space for political and economic power, and transforming and using this space "in such a way as to reflect gay cultural values and serve the special needs of individual gays vis-à-vis society at large" (Lauria and Knopp, 1985, page 159):

> "Gays, in essence, have seized the opportunity to combat oppression by creating neighborhoods over which they have maximum control and which meet long-neglected needs." (page 161)

Subsequently, Knopp explored processes of gay male territorialisation in New Orleans (Knopp, 1990a; 1990b) and other US, UK, and Australian cities (Knopp, 1998). Meanwhile, others have investigated the emergence of gay enclaves in other Western cities, including West Hollywood, US (Forest, 1995), Toronto and Vancouver, Canada (Bouthillette, 1994; Miller, 2005), Manchester and London, UK (Collins, 2004; Quilley, 1997) and Sydney, Australia (Murphy and Watson, 1997; Wotherspoon, 1991).

Since the early 1990s, other analysts have critiqued and complemented this work by examining processes of lesbian territorialisation. Initially, this comprised work on 'unnamed' British and American cities (Adler and Brenner, 1992; Valentine, 1995). These researchers found that lesbian neighbourhoods are often less visible than gay male enclaves because lesbians, like heterosexual women, have less access to capital than do gay or heterosexual men, and "because a fear of male violence deters their willingness to have an obvious presence in the landscape" (Valentine, 2002, page 148). Moreover, due to "the influence of feminism lesbian 'communities' have tended to be more radical, politicised and less materially oriented than gay men which has stymied the development of businesses and bars run for, and by, women" (Valentine, 2002, page 148). But other work

draws attention to the presence of visible lesbian enclaves in New York, US (Rothenburg, 1995), Vancouver, Canada (Bouthillette, 1997), and Northampton, US (Forsyth, 1997a; 1997b). Such studies demonstrate that territorialisation is as important for the formation and affirmation of lesbian as for gay male communities (Podmore, 2006). Indeed, some have highlighted neighbourhoods formed by gay and lesbian coalitions (Bouthillette, 1997).

What weaves through this literature is the idea of a gay and/or lesbian *enclave* as just that—a demarcated neighbourhood with a distinct subculture. Within this tradition, research has focused on community building in place *by and amongst gay men and/or lesbians*, with such neighbourhoods seen as liberated from the restrictive influence of heteronormativity. Some recent work, however, has argued that gay and lesbian neighbourhoods are not so statically fixed, nor clearly separated from the wider community. Podmore (2006), for instance, describes how gay and lesbian neighbourhoods in Montreal, Canada, have shifted spatially over the twentieth-century in response both to internal politics and to broader processes of urban gentrification. Indeed, rather than being a product of gentrification, research on London by Collins (2004) suggests that gay neighbourhoods can be reassimilated into the wider urban fabric by further waves of gentrification. Recent work has thus questioned the ability of gay and lesbian communities to maintain discrete territories. During the last decade there has been growing concern within popular and academic writing about the decline of gay enclaves across US, UK, and Australian cities (Brown, 2007; Collins, 2004), including Sydney's notable gay precinct around Oxford Street (Knopp, 1998; Ruting, 2008). This is seen as both positive and negative. On the one hand, the waning of visible gay ghettos is presented as a sign of greater mainstream acceptance of certain gay and lesbian identities and lifestyles, with enclaves no longer necessary for self-affirmation and community building (Brown, 2007; Ruting, 2008). On the other hand, the decline of gay ghettos is posited as an outcome of colonisation of gay space by 'straight' tourists and marketing organisations who understand gay and lesbian neighbourhoods as part of the cosmopolitan smorgasbord (Binnie, 2004; Rushbrook, 2002). Increasing homophobic violence accompanies the tourist influx, diminishing the safety of these enclaves as territories of resistance and affirmation (Binnie, 2004; Knopp, 1998).

At this juncture a focus on queer-friendly neighbourhoods, conceptualised in light of the aforementioned arguments, provides useful insights on shifting patterns of sexual territorialisation. The emergence of queer-friendly neighbourhoods and greater attention being paid to such localities in the (Sydney) gay press (Court, 2004; Domingo, 2007; Farrar, 2005; 2006) might be seen as a particular historically contingent response to the decline and/or colonisation of gay ghettos. While enclaves provide living and commercial options for same-sex-attracted people, ghettoising residents and businesses within particular areas inhibits challenges to heteronormativity elsewhere (Knopp, 1995; Valentine, 2002). Sexual difference is acceptable within certain inner-city precincts, and contestation of the heteronormative social order beyond is contained (Johnson, 2000). But queer-friendly neighbourhoods are different, challenging distinctions between gay and straight spaces, identities, and lifestyles. While notably present in these neighbourhoods, gay and lesbian residents, institutions, and businesses are not dominant, but are welcomed by the heterosexual constituency. In queer-friendly neighbourhoods there is dialogue and integration between heterosexual and same-sex-attracted people and it is acceptable and safe to be gay or lesbian.

This description is foreshadowed by Brown's (2004, page 133) discussion of 'post-gay spaces'—in his case, Spitalfields, East London—"where sexual difference is visible and acknowledged without being the central marker of the space." However, queer-friendly neighbourhoods differ from post-gay spaces precisely because the presence of

sexual difference is not only acknowledged, but interaction and cohesion across sexual difference *is* a key characteristic of these localities. For example, while the gay presence in post-gay Spitalfields is rarely "included in place marketing materials or tourist guides about the area" (Brown, 2004, page 132), the visibility and vibrancy of gay and lesbian communities, venues, and events is a noted advertising point for the Australian neighbourhoods of Newtown and Daylesford (Gorman-Murray, 2006; Gorman-Murray et al, 2008). Queer-friendly neighbourhoods are distinguished both from gay ghettos and from post-gay spaces because there are attempts at the grassroots and policy levels to facilitate cohesion across sexual difference. Before exploring these processes in two queer-friendly Australian neighbourhoods, we define social cohesion in the context of neighbourhoods.

Social cohesion and the neighbourhood
Social cohesion is a key theme in neighbourhood research across the US, UK, Australia, and New Zealand. Researchers have sought to understand the role of neighbourhood in social cohesion (Witten et al, 2003), factors contributing to socially cohesive communities (Forrest and Kearns, 2001), links between neighbourhood identity and social cohesion (Martin, 2003a; Martin and Holloway, 2005), and how social cohesion takes varying contours in different neighbourhoods (Butler and Robson, 2001). A socially cohesive neighbourhood is perceived as having "the absence of latent social conflict and the presence of strong social bonds" (Witten et al, 2003, page 323). Forrest and Kearns (2001) explicate the various dimensions of social cohesion discussed in neighbourhood research, identifying five 'domains' of cohesion at work in neighbourhoods: (1) *common values and goals*, with shared morality and codes of behaviour; (2) *social order*, including intergroup cooperation, tolerance, respect for difference, and absence of general conflict; (3) *social solidarity*, with equal access to public services, finances, and welfare; (4) *social networks*, particularly a high degree of interaction within communities and families; and (5) *a strong attachment to place*, manifested as intertwining of personal and place identity. There are differences between researchers in defining social cohesion but, in assessing these variations, Markus and Kirpitchenko (2007) note that commonalities posit it as a process of generating shared values, responsibilities, and senses of belonging, framed by respect for difference. These are captured in Forrest and Kearns' comprehensive list, and we consequently deploy their schema.

Social cohesion within neighbourhoods is important for groups and individuals. Through examining the role of neighbourhood in social cohesion in Massey, Auckland, New Zealand, Witten et al (2003, page 322) argue that there are "significant associations between psychological sense of community, perceived social cohesion and mental health outcomes." In other words, social cohesion in one's neighbourhood contributes to mental and emotional well-being.[2] Social cohesion also enhances one's sense of physical safety within the neighbourhood (Martin, 2003a). Likewise, Forrest and Kearns (2001, page 2130) suggest that through processes of daily social interaction, the neighbourhood becomes an extension of the home and thus important to one's sense of self and identity: "the neighbourhood becomes part of our statement about who we are" (page 2130). Common allegiance around certain local issues and interests also provides a sense of group belonging which reinforces individual feelings of well-being and safety. Yet, research also suggests that *some* cohesive neighbourhoods lack social, ethnic, and class diversity. Some of Witten et al's (2003) respondents asserted that increasing racial and class diversity had brought social conflict to their neighbourhood.

[2] We recognise cohesion cannot universally embrace every individual in a neighbourhood. While beyond this paper's scope, processes which elide certain individuals within apparently cohesive neighbourhoods demand attention.

Martin (2003b) found that in order to foster a cohesive neighbourhood identity, organisations in Frogtown, St Paul, US, had obscured ethnic and class differences in their documents. And in studying change in three gentrifying neighbourhoods in London, Butler and Robson (2001) found that the most socioeconomically and ethnically diverse neighbourhood was also the least cohesive, with limited interaction between different social and ethnic groups in the area.

The latter examples would appear to go against some of Forrest and Kearns's (2001) domains of social cohesion, most notably tolerance, respect for difference, and intergroup cooperation. Yet, this is precisely the domain of social cohesion which must take precedence in queer-friendly neighbourhoods as defined here—localities where there is interaction and understanding between heterosexual and same-sex-attracted residents. Indeed, as others have asserted, respecting and communicating across difference is not only possible, but desirable in the context of tension between and within divergent social groups. Feminist work on community and difference has been particularly notable. In *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Young (1990) argued for heterogeneous urban spaces which do not suppress difference in the pursuit of commonality, but are containers for 'unassimilated otherness', where social groups appreciate their differences, accept the distance between each other, and work to avoid exclusionary practices. Pratt (1998) applied Young's emancipatory thesis to the neighbourhood scale in North America, arguing that face-to-face communities allow "the potential for cross-cultural communication" (page 44). Analysing respondents' practices and values, she found that commitment to "the boundedness of the local opens possibilities to create relationships across differences" of identity and culture (page 40). Likewise, *Social Cohesion in Australia* (Jupp et al, 2007), a collection of Australian perspectives, foregrounds the importance of fostering understanding across cultural, religious, social, and economic differences at local and national scales.

Our discussion of queer-friendly neighbourhoods contributes to work on cohesion and difference in neighbourhoods by: (1) examining integration across sexual difference specifically, and (2) analysing the processes by which interaction, communication, and cohesion *do* take place. In doing so, we focus on four of Forrest and Kearns's five domains of social cohesion: (1) common (in this case, liberal and progressive) values and shared morality; (2) social order, especially respect for difference and intergroup interaction; (4) social interaction within communities and civic engagement; and (5) a sense of place identity and belonging. Before analysing these processes, we introduce our case-study sites and outline data collection methods.

Newtown and Daylesford: fieldwork and data collection
The two case-study sites are differently situated in Australia: Daylesford is a country town in Victoria, whereas Newtown is an inner-city suburb in Sydney, NSW (figure 1). But arguments about neighbourhood cohesion apply equally in rural and urban areas; juxtaposing these examples is instructive of common processes in queer-friendly neighbourhoods. Moreover, data are drawn from several independent projects in these neighbourhoods, and this analysis thus actualises Valentine's (2006) call to 'upscale' qualitative data.

Newtown, located about 4 km southwest of Sydney's central business district (CBD) in an area called the Inner West, is centred on King Street, a thoroughfare reminiscent of the high streets of early suburbia. When locals invoke Newtown as a neighbourhood, the borders extend from King Street to encompass the surrounding suburbs of St Peters and Enmore (to the south) and Erskineville (to the east). King Street runs through St Peters, and Enmore's and Erskineville's eponymous main streets intersect with King Street. These streets are the neighbourhood's commercial foci, comprising restaurants, cafes, pubs, clubs, second-hand, collectables, and homewares
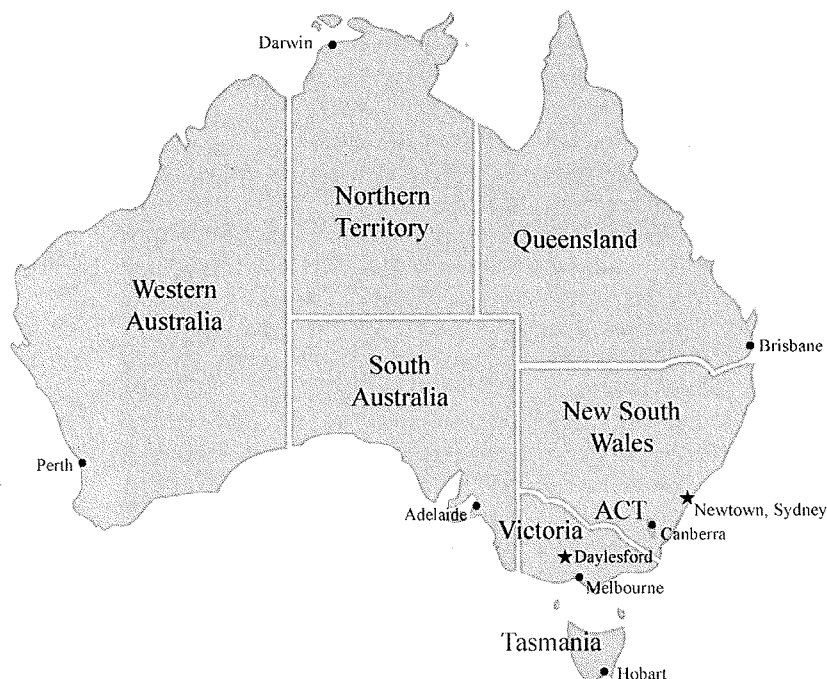
Figure 1. Locating Newtown and Daylesford in Australia.

shops, music stores, and a cinema. The surrounding residential spaces are filled with Victorian terraces, which are popular for renovation (Bridge, 2001). Consequently, the Newtown neighbourhood, which had an existing reputation as working-class and ethnically diverse, is partially gentrifying though, it is important to note, by 'liberal' and 'progressive' incomers (eg 70% of residents in the Newtown wards voted for The Greens, Australia's far-left 'third' political party, at the 2008 local council elections). Overall, the neighbourhood remains socially and ethnically diverse (Bridge and Dowling, 2001). Moreover, located near the University of Sydney, Newtown has historically attracted countercultural types, such as artists, musicians, Goths, and bohemians (Duruz, 2005). Included (not mutually exclusively) in the mix are gay men and lesbians who began moving in during the 1970s (Murphy and Watson, 1997; Wotherspoon, 1991). Consequently, the City of Sydney claims that "the Newtown area has long been a very diverse melting pot" (http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au). Indeed, one interviewee, Peter, asserted:

> "I don't think there's anywhere else in Sydney where there are so many different types of people who seem to get along. There's yuppies, students, ferals, Goths, hippies, gays, and a few migrant groups, too."

Our data on sexual difference and cohesion in Newtown primarily come from two studies by the lead author. One study was part of a wider project on queer home-making in Australia. Between September 2004 and May 2005, thirty-seven gay men and lesbians were interviewed about experiences of making home. They were recruited via Sydney-based gay and lesbian periodicals, websites, and e-mailing lists. Ten respondents—five men and five women—resided in the Newtown neighbourhood, and commented on their experiences of living there as same-sex-attracted people, including interactions with neighbours and feelings of place attachment and well-being. All were white and tertiary educated, though half had grown up in working-class families and communities. Their age range was 28–65 years, and length of residence
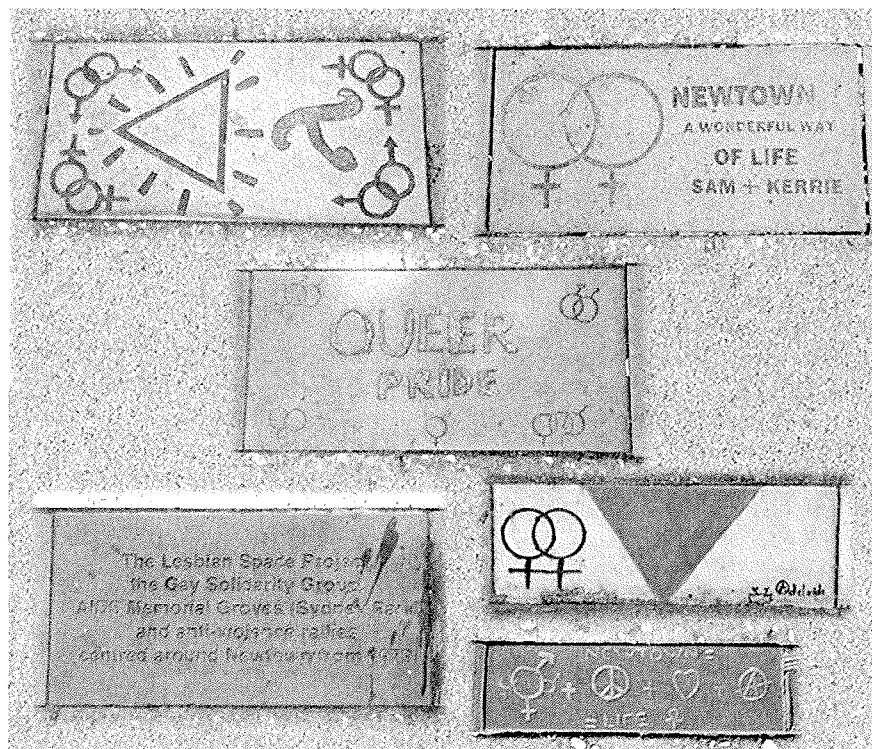
Colour plate 1. 'Queer' dedications at Newtown Square.

was 5–20+ years. This paper is the first to extract this group of respondents from the broader project. A second study, that specifically focused on gathering information about sexual difference in Newtown, also informs this case study. This was a study of representations of the King Street precinct in the gay and lesbian media, between 2003 and 2007 (Gorman-Murray, 2006). In addition, these studies were supplemented by information from local council documents.

Daylesford is about 100 km northwest of Melbourne, in the central highlands of Victoria. The administrative centre of Hepburn Shire, its neighbourhood encompasses the adjacent town of Hepburn Springs. The twin towns have a long history as a centre for 'spa tourism': Hepburn Shire contains 80% of Australia's mineral springs, and visitors have been coming to 'take the waters' since the late 19th century (http://www.hepburnshire.com.au). During the late 20th century, this expanded to include a host of associated services, such as massage, aromatherapy, arts and crafts, organic produce, and food and wine. This expansion has gone hand-in-hand with waves of 'alternative' migration and 'marginal' (ie non-middle-class) gentrification over the last thirty years [Rothenburg (1995) and Podmore (2006) discuss marginal gentrification and lesbians' role in the process]. From the 1970s Daylesford became attractive for 'alternative lifestylers', including hippies, artists, gays, and lesbians (Gorman-Murray et al, 2008; Mulligan et al, 2004). Census data indicate that Daylesford has a lower proportion of nuclear families, and more couple-only and single households, than the regional Victorian average, underscoring its differing demographic characteristics from surrounding areas (Clark Phillips Pty Ltd, 2005). Since the 1980s the combination of bohemian energy with unrenovated 19th-century commercial and housing stock has attracted middle-class migrants as well (Mulligan et al, 2004).

Colour plate 2. Rainbow flags on Vincent Street.

On the basis of its alternative populations, Daylesford is recognised as a queer-friendly country town. Gottschalk and Newton's (2003, page 97) study of gay men and lesbians in regional Victoria found a distinction between Daylesford and other Victorian towns: Daylesford is "known to have a large gay population", and "the area is generally seen as a diverse and tolerant community and accepting of the homosexual population." Daylesford is also marketed as a queer-friendly tourist destination via gay and lesbian press publications (Gilbey, 2006; Pope, 2005; Wearring, 2006). This queer-friendliness is manifested through the ChillOut Festival, the largest gay and lesbian festival in rural Australia. 2006 marked ChillOut's tenth anniversary, and attracted around 16 000 visitors (Daylesford/Hepburn Springs' population is around 3500). This event was our avenue for gathering data in Daylesford. Our interest stems from a wider project on the role of festivals in social, cultural, and economic change in rural Australia in a context of shifting demographics, industries, and livelihoods. Over the last decade, tourism, festivals, and cultural events have become an economic mainstay of many country towns. In this case, we were interested in how the success of ChillOut, combined with Daylesford's sizeable same-sex-attracted population (Birrell and Rapson, 2002), contributes to social and cultural change in this town. We collected data in two rounds of fieldwork in March and September 2006: thirty in-depth interviews with residents and festival organisers about ChillOut and social change in Daylesford (comprising eleven heterosexual women, six heterosexual men, eight lesbians, and five gay men; length of residence was 3–40+ years); articles on ChillOut in Hepburn Shire's newspaper, *The Advocate*, 1997–2006; and information from local council documents about the gay and lesbian populations were also consulted.

Despite their different locations, there are similarities between Newtown and Daylesford, suggesting commonalities in the development and maintenance of queer-friendly neighbourhoods. Three salient themes emerged through data analysis: the role of social diversity and difference; symbolic landscapes of belonging; and combating homophobia. We now discuss each of these analytical categories, drawing examples from the case-study data.

Diversity and difference
Social diversity is a fundamental characteristic of both Newtown and Daylesford which, we suggest, crucially underpins processes of queer-friendly cohesion in these neighbourhoods. Not only do both comprise diverse social groupings, but emphasis is also placed on the alternative, nonmainstream character of diversity. Newtown is not only ethnically and socioeconomically diverse, but also embraces countercultural groups—Goths, ferals, bohemians (Duruz, 2005). Likewise, in Daylesford there is strong emphasis on the presence of hippie and arts communities (Mulligan et al, 2004). Both also include same-sex-attracted populations (sometimes overlapping with countercultural groups). Moreover, popular commentaries and our data suggest that new heterosexual residents are seeking diverse communities with a broad mix of alternative groups. Butler and Robson (2001) provide precedence for this contention in their study of three neighbourhoods in inner-city London. They were interested in the heterogeneous nature of middle-class gentrification and how different fractions of gentrifiers are attracted to different types of neighbourhoods. One neighbourhood, Brixton, is known as socially and ethnically diverse with alternative populations, and this was its key appeal for most interviewees. Their statistics also show that eleven of the fifteen interviewees living in same-sex partnerships resided in Brixton; as one of their lesbian respondents noted:
"It's a very diverse population; we don't stick out living here as two women living together" (Butler and Robson, 2001, page 2156).

Butler and Robson's study helps explain the importance of social diversity for cohesion across sexual difference in Newtown and Daylesford. First, these neighbourhoods appeal to same-sex-attracted people because they 'fit' with the alternative mix— not 'sticking out'. Second, many heterosexual residents in these neighbourhoods are liberal, attracted to diverse alternative lifestyles. Our interviews suggest that these heterosexuals esteem social diversity in their neighbourhood, including sexual diversity, and by that very valuation of difference enhance cohesion. For instance, such views were common in Daylesford: both heterosexual and same-sex-attracted residents emphasised the town as 'uniquely' accepting of diversity in rural Australia. Sue, a heterosexual resident, claimed that Daylesford is "different from your average rural Australian town" because of the diversity of social groups who accept each other, while Emma, also heterosexual, believes there is "an ideology of diversity in the town". These sentiments were affirmed by Jill, a heterosexual newcomer, who has lived in many towns across country Victoria but insisted that Daylesford is far more diverse and accepting than other rural communities. She and other respondents believe this cohesive diversity is produced from waves of alternative and marginal migration. Indeed, Chris, a lesbian, noted that cohesion across difference is *normalised* in Daylesford:

"Everyone is just accepting. It's like you'd be almost a little bit like an outcast by being homophobic, racist or whatever in this town because you'd be in the minority."

This normalisation was reinforced by heterosexual respondents expounding Daylesford as queer-friendly. Sue said Daylesford is "definitely known as the gay and lesbian capital of Victoria", and Emma asserted:

"I always tell people we're the gay capital of Victoria because I feel proud of that diversity and I think that's a very healthy way to go in increasingly conservative times."

Likewise, the normalisation of queer-friendly diversity was stressed by respondents in Newtown. Geoff and James, for instance, a gay couple who have lived in Newtown since the early 1980s, provided keen observations on changing social relationships in Newtown over this period. They discussed the importance of everyday interactions over the years with various neighbours on their street, such as talking over the fence, exchanging home-grown produce, and regular home visits, in building relationships across sexual difference and 'naturalising' diversity. They asserted that social acceptance in Newtown has now reached a point where:

"being gay is a bit cool, in a sense that it's a bit important. It's like if we were the only Aborigines in the street. Most people here value things like that, and diversity's quite important to people around here."

Newtown also provides an interesting extension of Butler and Robson's (2001) comparative neighbourhood study. Forrest and Kearns (2001, pages 2134–2135) argue that

"[a]s counterparts to one another, neighbourhoods seem to acquire their identity through an ongoing commentary between themselves and this continuous dialogue between different groups and agencies shapes the cognitive map of the city."

This logic takes a particular form with regard to the 'gay map' of Sydney, which is framed in relation to Oxford Street, Darlinghurst, and the adjacent inner eastern suburbs of Paddington and Surry Hills—the area characterised as Sydney's gay ghetto (Ruting, 2008). Newtown is represented in the gay media by differences from Darlinghurst, and interviewees often compared Newtown and Darlinghurst. Take these examples from one of Sydney's main gay newspapers:

"Since moving from Taylor Square [Oxford Street] to the Newtown/St. Peters border I've celebrated being part of a mixed community. I love living gay. But a couple of years spent drowning in the ghetto has made me appreciate the simple things about

not being a part of it—my street's kooky mix of old Greeks, married queers and
young straight families, the fact that everyone says hello to each other and everyone
knows the neighbourhood dogs by name" (Farrar, 2005).

"Newtown is a culturally diverse suburb and fortunately it is queer-friendly, *not* a
gay ghetto" (Glen, 2005).

"I do not believe that Newtown is a 'gay ghetto'. Granted, it is one of the few places
where I can walk hand in hand with my (male) partner and feel relatively safe.
However, there is a wide diversity of people here, and the LGBT [lesbian, gay,
bisexual, and transgender] community is only a part of it" (Harris, 2005).

These views from same-sex-attracted residents distinguish between a queer-friendly
neighbourhood and a gay ghetto. While the 'ghetto subculture' can be overwhelming,
queer-friendly Newtown is an ethnically and socially 'mixed community' with a 'wide
diversity of people', of which same-sex-attracted people are only part. But in this
mixed, diverse community they feel safe, welcomed, and able to 'be themselves'.
This milieu is especially important for those with sexual identities distinct from those
associated with Oxford Street. Mark moved from Potts Point (near Oxford Street)
to Erskineville (adjoining Newtown) due to its better 'fit' with his particular identity:

"There's a very different sense of community and there's very different ways of being
queer. It's not the body fashions and there's not the focus on all the accoutrements
and the labels and 'must haves'. It [Oxford Street] was all a bit glossy and shiny for
me eventually. And I quite liked the idea of being a 'Westie'. The differences in body
type, ethnicity, religion, age, all of it, it just seemed to be more inclusive and I
actually really like Erskineville as a community. I perceived it as being a little bit
more my style, a little bit greener, lefter, diverse."

The neighbourhood's ethnically and socially mixed population freed Mark from the
strictures of 'mainstream' gayness felt in Oxford Street, enabling him to perform his
sexual identity in a manner more his 'style'. Thus, the diversity within queer-friendly
neighbourhoods also invites diverse same-sex-attracted identities.

Symbolic landscapes of belonging

We found that the material landscape also contributes to cohesion in Newtown and
Daylesford. Interviewees conveyed the importance of visible gay symbols in public
spaces—rainbow flags, 'safe place' stickers, pink triangles, 'queer pride' murals—for
boosting their feelings of belonging in the neighbourhood. The role of landscape
iconography in social groups' sense of acceptance has precedence in geographical
research. Leib and Webster interrogated the implications of flying Confederate battle
flags on capitol buildings in southern US states (Leib and Webster, 2004; Webster and
Leib, 2001) and conflicts over the placement of monuments in southern US cities (Leib,
2002). They argued that public landscapes and their constituent elements—buildings,
monuments, flags—are suffused with meanings which are both reflective and consti-
tutive of social, cultural, and political conflicts and compromises. Thus, the visible
placement of symbols in the public landscape is a form of cultural and political
iconography which contributes to how various social groups define their sense of
belonging. Such contentions are applicable to the symbolic landscapes of Newtown
and Daylesford, where the visibility of gay iconography is seen as a measure of the
acceptance of same-sex-attracted people and enhances their feelings of belonging.

Such iconography is most evident at an everyday level in Newtown. One way in
which overt gay symbolism is manifest in Newtown is the visible presence of gay and
lesbian bars, businesses, and institutions. There are bars and businesses specifically
targeted at gay and lesbian patrons, such as the Imperial Hotel, Newtown Hotel,

Sly Fox, and Froot Shop, while other bars cater for 'mixed' (equally heterosexual and same-sex-attracted) clientele, such as the Bank Hotel and @Newtown. Many gay and lesbian community services are also located in the neighbourhood, including the Pride Centre, New Mardi Gras, Gender Centre, Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service, Twenty10 Youth Service, and Metropolitan Community Church (Wearring, 2004). Moreover, gay symbols, such as rainbow flags, are embedded in the neighbourhood's public spaces, and 'safe place' and rainbow stickers appear in many shopfronts. Newtown Square includes engraved dedications to 'queer pride', an initiative established with council support (colour plate 1). Many interviewees said the visibility of gay and lesbian bars, businesses, organisations and symbols enhanced senses of acceptance and belonging. Tom said:

"I feel at home walking down King Street",

and Lyn asserted:

"That's part of what's important about Newtown for me. It just creates that sense of it being an accepting community and it being a place you don't feel out of place."

Daylesford lacks overt gay and lesbian bars, businesses, and institutions. Nevertheless, many shops and cafes display 'safe place' and rainbow stickers to indicate their support for the local gay and lesbian communities (Gilbey, 2006). (Indeed, many businesses are gay-owned.) Respondents said that these symbols affirmed their sense of belonging to Daylesford as an accepting community. As Linda asked, "How many small country towns with populations of probably only around 5000 have a rainbow sticker on the window of every third shop?" Moreover, during ChillOut these symbols proliferate: festival organisers supply rainbow flags to the businesses lining Vincent Street, the main thoroughfare. During the festival weekend, most businesses deck their awnings with rainbow flags, while some create window displays with 'gay' themes, and larger rainbow flags adorn some prominent public buildings, like the post office (colour plate 2). Same-sex-attracted and heterosexual respondents said that the boulevard of flags enhanced feelings of cohesion across difference in Daylesford. Indeed, for some, the display of iconography transformed the town into a "beautiful, magical place" which embraced its gay and lesbian population. As Sue said:

"I walked down that street on that Saturday morning and when I saw all those rainbow flags I just thought, 'I want to be a part of this, absolutely I want to be a part of it.'"

But simultaneously, the presence of gay iconography is more contested in Daylesford than Newtown. This contestation emerged through debates about displaying the rainbow flag on Daylesford Town Hall during the 2006 ChillOut. The festival organisers had sought permission to fly the flag from the Town Hall for the duration of the festival. The objective was twofold: to encourage the local council to show support for ChillOut; and, at a deeper level, to ensure the diversity of the local community, including the gay and lesbian communities, was represented through this most symbolic of public buildings. These were important considerations for the festival committee and the wider same-sex-attracted population—local government buildings and their flags potently symbolise the local community (Leib and Webster, 2004). While the council initially agreed to fly the flag on the mayor's balcony, at the last minute a majority of councillors withdrew support and removed the flag. Later, in May 2006, the council introduced a 'Flag and Banner Protocol' which prohibited the display of any flag but the Australian flag from the Town Hall.

Although all local festivals were affected, the events around ChillOut were the catalyst. This sparked charges of homophobia against the council, expressed by residents in the local newspaper. ChillOut organiser Jim Culbertson stated:

"Flying the Rainbow Flag from the town hall does far more than demonstrate
council's support of ChillOut to the many visitors to the shire during the festival,
which is important—it also reinforces to our local community that this is a
government that values diversity and equality within our community. This is an
embarrassment to our entire shire but, in particular, to the large number of gay
and lesbian families that live here and the many local gay and lesbian business
owners" (Williams, 2006, page 6).

In the wake of this event, in September 2006, we interviewed eight heterosexual and
four same-sex-attracted residents. Eleven stressed that removing and banning the flag
from the Town Hall countered the inclusion of same-sex-attracted people in the shire's
collective identity. Several letters to the editor in *The Advocate* expressed like senti-
ments. These interviews and letters indicate the key role of gay symbols in the landscape
as markers of cohesion across sexual difference.

Combating homophobia
As this 'flag furore' suggests, problems of homophobia continue in ostensibly queer-
friendly neighbourhoods. In Daylesford, Natasha gave the example of the "man up the
road" who "said that all gay people should be left on an island to starve". Sarah
described how her gay son had to finish school in Melbourne, having suffered homo-
phobic abuse from peers. Both she and Rachel, a lesbian mum, pointed out that
ongoing homophobia makes it as difficult for young people to come out in Daylesford
as elsewhere. Likewise, council documents indentify discrimination in places of
employment and schools in Newtown, the latter directed against same-sex parents
and their children (City of Sydney, 2006; Marrickville Council, 2004). Moreover, there
are reports of increasing homophobic abuse and violence, reportedly perpetrated by
nonresidents.

Such incidents of persistent homophobia seem to contest Daylesford and Newtown
as queer-friendly; it seems counterintuitive to raise this as characteristic of queer-
friendly neighbourhoods. But there is more to this description: we point to continuing
homophobic actions and attitudes to indicate that maintaining cohesion across sexual
difference is an ongoing, partial process. This means that generating social cohesion
requires various tactics at both the grassroots and policy levels, such as everyday
interactions between residents, and social plans which promote antihomophobia legis-
lation and integrate same-sex-attracted people into council operations. In this sense,
combating persistent homophobia, rather than doing nothing, is an attribute of queer-
friendly neighbourhoods. It is in these processes that we find the biggest difference
between Daylesford and Newtown. In particular, the local councils which govern these
two neighbourhoods diverge in their attention to cohesion across sexual difference.

Acceptance of sexual diversity is promoted in policy frameworks and practices
by both local councils responsible for Newtown. The neighbourhood straddles two
councils: the City of Sydney Council incorporates north Newtown, Camperdown, and
Erskineville; Marrickville Council includes south Newtown, St Peters, and Enmore.
Both councils' social plans identify gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT)
people as a target group with 'priority needs' (City of Sydney, 2006; Marrickville
Council, 2004). This point is critical. The NSW Department of Local Government,
the authority responsible for regulating councils' social planning, specifies that councils
must address the needs of seven groups in their social plans: children, youth, people with
a disability, older people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from
culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and women (NSWDLG, 1998). How-
ever, Marrickville and Sydney councils have included GLBT people as another group
in their plans because of sizeable same-sex-attracted populations in their jurisdictions.

The 'priority' for both authorities is to ensure continued acceptance and integration of same-sex-attracted people by such means as the provision of services for GLBT residents, antihomophobia education, and the inclusion of GLBT needs across the range of plans, policies, and operations developed by the councils. Both councils employ staff to facilitate these goals. These council officers consult GLBT residents, and liaise with GLBT and state agencies at advisory meetings, to enhance social and legal inclusion. Table 1 summarises the councils' initiatives. The councils' activities and plans seek to combat ongoing homophobia and provide policy frameworks, processes and official practices to encourage and manage social cohesion across sexual difference in the Newtown area.

Table 1. Local councils' actions for Newtown's GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender) residents.

City of Sydney Council
GLBT residents/community a 'priority group' in social plan
Full-time GLBT Project Coordinator
Regular advisory committee to consult GLBT residents
Liaises with GLBT and state organisations to assist legal and social inclusion: AIDS Council of NSW, NSW Police, NSW Attorney General's Department
City of Sydney Relationship Declaration Program: same-sex couples' relationship register

Marrickville Council
GLBT residents/community a 'priority group' in social plan
Full-time Gay and Lesbian Liaison Officer
Quarterly Gay and Lesbian Liaison Committee to consult GLBT residents
Liaises with GLBT and state organisations to assist legal and social inclusion: New Mardi Gras, Gender Centre, Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service, Twenty10 Youth Service, Metropolitan Community Church, Pollies Social Club

Hepburn Shire Council, however, has no policies or dedicated staff to encourage integration across sexual difference. Unlike Marrickville and Sydney councils, Hepburn Shire Council has not included GLBT people as a priority group in its social plan (Clark Phillips Pty Ltd, 2005). There are gay men and lesbians acting as councillors and working as council staff who do promote GLBT needs in the local government: for instance, the council was not unanimous in its decision to remove the rainbow flag from the Town Hall and introduce the 'Flag and Banner Protocol' (Hepburn Shire Council, 2006). But the absence of GLBT people as a priority group in the social plan means there is no requirement for the council to introduce policies addressing their needs. Extrapolating from the example of Newtown, greater council support could assist cohesion in Daylesford, rendering visible same-sex-attracted people in council policies, promoting their needs in the community. Yet, despite little council proactivity, homophobia has been addressed in Daylesford at a grassroots level. Respondents noted that overt homophobia had decreased markedly over the last fifteen years through everyday interactions between heterosexual and same-sex-attracted residents. This may be partly encouraged by the economic value that ChillOut and gay and lesbian businesses and tourism generates for the community; a few interviewees suggested that 'conservative' councillors and residents were tolerant because of the windfall from the 'pink dollar'. Nevertheless, as noted earlier, through the efforts of progressive heterosexual residents, including our respondents, shared values and inter-relationships are changing in Daylesford from the grassroots up.

Queer-friendly possibilities?

In this paper we have investigated social cohesion across sexual difference, contributing to academic and policy research. First, we extended literature on gay and lesbian neighbourhoods by examining 'queer-friendly neighbourhoods'—localities where same-sex-attracted residents, businesses, and institutions are welcomed in a dominantly heterosexual milieu, and intergroup interaction fosters dialogue. Second, by concentrating on sexuality we added a new dimension to research about integration in neighbourhoods, which has recently focused on racial and ethnic difference. This is crucial given ongoing debates about 'gay rights'—partnership, medical, taxation, and superannuation entitlements—and the decline of gay ghettos. Third, through this focus we sought to reorient understandings of broader policy meanings of social cohesion. While many recent projects have addressed public order and economic performance, this paper broadens the research agenda by considering the more profound dimensions of cohesion, that is, broader links between relationships, tolerance, acceptance, and trust in diversity at the neighbourhood scale—or simply mutual understanding.

The comparison between Newtown and Daylesford revealed some characteristics of queer-friendly neighbourhoods, presented in three analytical categories: diversity and difference, symbolic landscapes of belonging, combating homophobia. These categories have significant conceptual and policy implications beyond these neighbourhoods. Maintaining diversity, including ethnic, class, countercultural, and sexual diversity, is an important investment both for heterosexual and for same-sex-attracted residents, and demonstrates that respect for difference is sustainable at the neighbourhood scale. Diversity provides a spatial context for same-sex-attracted people to 'fit' as part of an array of social difference. Liberal tolerance of sexual difference alone, however, is insufficient for cohesion. Rather, our analysis shows that intergroup communication is essential for establishing trust in the context of difference and thus maintaining cooperative and supportive relationships. This happens through everyday face-to-face interactions between heterosexual and same-sex-attracted neighbours—simple practices like conversing on the street, visiting each other's homes, and mutual participation in neighbourhood activities and organisations. Hence, commitment to local diversity realised through such grassroots actions underpins social cohesion.

Encouragement by local authorities and institutions of residents' common investment in progressive values also fosters cohesion across sexual difference. We found two ways in which this happens. First, landscape symbolism enhances same-sex-attracted residents' connectedness to neighbourhood: 'gay iconography' materialised in town squares, public buildings, and shopfronts creates a sense of acceptance—especially when encouraged by heterosexual residents, businesses, or council staff. Political and economic investment in a built environment reflecting social diversity expresses a valuation of difference at the neighbourhood scale which reinforces feelings of belonging and well-being for same-sex-attracted people. As the Daylesford case shows, such symbolism can simultaneously elicit ongoing social divisions, but raising hidden antagonisms provides opportunities to tackle them. This leads to the second mechanism we want to highlight. Proactive leadership from local councils assists in addressing ongoing social conflicts and homophobic attitudes, generating discussion and the chance for better understanding. This is evident in Newtown, where councils actively integrate GLBT needs into protocols, policies, and practices, and facilitate dialogue between residents, GLBT organisations, and state agencies. These actions seek to normalise respect for diversity, encouraging cooperation in everyday engagements. Such initiatives are being implemented by other local councils: for example, Bega Valley Shire, in regional NSW, has targeted GLBT people in social planning. There is hope, then, of engendering

queer-friendliness across various metropolitan and regional neighbourhoods both through council plans and through grassroots interaction.

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