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‘Why can’t they meet in bars and clubs like normal people?’: the protective state and bioregulating gay public sex spaces

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State regulation of gay public sex spaces (PSS) has prompted geographers to assess the influence that localised legalities exert in specific micro-spaces of interaction, and to expand this research into cities not considered to be archetypically ‘gay friendly’. Through the lens of Foucault’s governmentality, it is important to consider state-directed *bioregulatory* influences upon toilets and parks as PSS. Such bioregulation, with its aim of producing a ‘healthy’ sexual population, seeks to expose public sex as ‘dangerous’, encouraging a policing of PSS and the men who use them. Part of this bioregulation also enlists men using PSS as responsible for peer-surveillance to ensure anonymity and privacy in PSS. This auto-surveillance develops a ‘common code of conduct’ leading these men to develop their own modes of ‘normativity’ within these hetero-challenging spaces. By consulting with men who use PSS, I unearth oral histories of how changing laws, policy and ‘mainstream’ attitudes towards PSS in Glasgow, Scotland, have impacted upon cruising and cottaging. This paper will provide a place-specific reading of gay urban sexscapes, exploring how state bioregulation encourages the creation of new gay practices, identities and geographies.

Keywords: protective state; governmentality; gay; public sex; regulation; bioregulation

Approaching gay public sex spaces (PSS)

Queer urbanisms have been discussed, contested and re-thought numerous times since their identification in the 1970s. A blossoming catalogue of work on gay¹ urban geographies considers the tense relationship between homoerotic urban spaces and their position within contemporary gay cultures. In this regard, public toilets and parks as public sex spaces (PSS)

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are viewed as hyper-sexualised, offering highly embodied, erotically visceral sites of encounter brazenly distanced from the 'mononormative' desires of romanticism and coupledness (Wilkinson, 2013, p.207). Indeed, the latter are here replaced with sexual lust, as in desire for sexual experiences and sexual acts² (Flowers, Marriott and Hart, 2000). Public sex entails an apparent *misuse* of public space, redefining it as a place of erotic pleasure and anonymous sexualisation; an alternative narrative sitting uncomfortably with the heterosexist ideal of a safe, 'family friendly', public setting free of sexuality (reserved strictly for the private realm).

By using Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality to examine how homosex is curtailed in PSS, I offer insight into how state power and bioregulation play roles in the creation of new identities, practices and politics associated with these spaces. The hegemonic governing of sexuality is arguably one product of 'a normalising society [and] the historical outcome of a technology of power centred on life' (Foucault, 1998, p.144). The power exerted upon and within PSS is influenced not just by statute, but also by the attitudes of key local authorities, including individual councillors and politicians, as they attempt to 'clean up' sexual spaces, bringing those who use them into line with a mononormative, heterosexist template of how to be a responsible sexual citizen. Moreover, the law here only offers a partial guide to how PSS are actually regulated. Indeed, through the generation of social 'norms' *within* PSS, those men who use them also become co-opted as responsible for policing and thereby regulating their own sexual behaviour through common codes of conduct.

This paper investigates these highly transgressive spaces and practices which remain somewhat hidden from the hetero-prying eyes of the state, yet are continuously under surveillance and intervention. As a secondary aim, I contribute to an urban sexual geography which decentres inquiry from the paradigmatic, queer-friendly metropole, focussing upon

Glasgow in West Central Scotland, UK. I add to the as yet very limited field of queer Scottish research, and in so doing challenge a narrative which deems queer life in larger, gay 'friendly' cities as more 'authentic', positing instead alternative gay stories which take place in 'the periphery' of space and sexuality studies (Myrdahl, 2013, p.281). I thread wider concepts together with geographically specific oral histories to offer a nuanced Scottish contribution back into the field of queer geography, giving voice to peoples and places commonly neglected by more hegemonic queer narratives.

Governmentality, bioregulation and PSS

How do authorities deal with non-procreative bodies in heterosexist, urban space? What regulatory strategies, both overt and covert, are adopted by authorities to ensure the 'proper' use of public space? How is sex in PSS restricted by the micro-strategies of the police, and how do the men affected negotiate these changes in the regulation of their own queer spaces? By addressing such matters through the lens of Foucault's ideas about governmentality and bioregulation, I explore how certain attitudes and strategies are attributed to and distributed through mainstream ways of thinking, while also percolating through the gay community itself. I consider governmentality across spatial scales – from national law-making, to local policy implementation, to the regulation of parks and toilets themselves – elaborating this scale-shifting through the notion of bioregulation. This bioregulation reflects 'the regulation of the social body, a *bio-politics*, of a population or of the human species' (Elden, 2016, p.40), and it is dispersed by agencies of the state enlisting individuals (including those who use PSS) to self-regulate their own behaviour, while also sometimes being met with a countervailing eroticism of risk associated with public sex. By uncovering situated knowledges using testimony from men who frequent PSS, I draw from studies in governance studies, while also providing a localised geographical history of hetero-challenging practices

and identities.

The protective state and sexual citizens

Foucault's notion of governmentality concerns 'the art of government' (Foucault, 1990; in Brown, 2000, p.89), and refers to the power-laden relationship existing between the hypothetically all-knowing state and the all-known population. Governmentality can be read at a national scale, as the state seeks to retain control over the population within its borders, while at a local scale individuals within a population are encouraged to retain control over themselves. Foucault (1980-1981, p.286) describes this dual strategy as 'the government of the self by the self and the government of individuals ... by others'. In attempting to shape the behaviours and actions of the self, governmental regimes enlist individuals into being subjects whose aim is to satisfy the productive needs of the state (Huxley, 2007). Foucault, in one of his final interviews, describes this apparatus as such:

Governmentality implies the ... ensemble of practices that constitute, define, organise and instrumentalise the strategies that individuals in their freedom can use in dealing with each other. (Foucault, 1994, p.728)

These measures taken by the state to influence the habits of the sexual citizen are used to promote and ensure a healthy and compliant population, one that is neither too large, outrunning its resource base, nor too small, lacking bodies to work and fight. Such is a vitalist reading of governmentality, echoing Foucault's emphasis upon bioregulation as the regulation of bodies, vital energies, health and, ultimately, life.

Governmentality in this vein entails the state attempting to control the procreative habits of the population and, by extension, the latter's sexual habits, health and hygiene. Following Desbiens, Mountz and Walton-Roberts (2004, p.242) on 'state-ing', transgressive sexualities become seen 'a set of practices enacted through relationships between people,

places and institutions'. Crucially, therefore, if these practices and relationships can be identified, corrective – shortly I will say 'protective' – interventions can be plotted against them. Governmentality duly ends up ruling the sexual citizen through methods of 'inclusion, empowerment and recognition' (Cooper, 2006, p.922) directed at homonormative bodies and practices, paralleled by ones of exclusion, disempowerment and unrecognition directed at homo-variant others. The result is states promoting a certain template of sexual citizenship through maintaining 'progressive' policies, while also simultaneously exposing, protecting against and even quashing a more challenging sexual politics (Cooper, 2006, p.923).

The notion of the 'protective state' as a mechanism for controlling and conserving the vital energies of a population holds pertinence for sexual behaviours, and talks directly to matters of biopolitical regulation and sexual geographies. In attempting to protect sexual citizens from dangers – such as the spread of sexually transmitted disease and the risk of homophobic attack, both associated with 'bad sex in bad places' – governmental regimes strive to prevent the use of PSS. This protection brands sex which cannot meet the 'protective' ambitions of monogamous and homonormative ideals as non-productive, harmful and potentially life-ending. Metaphorically, the protective state slips a condom over vexed public health issues, creating a suite of barriers which wraps up, and protects, the 'body politic' (collectively and individually) from those whose sexual habits are deemed dangerous to that body.

Furthermore, Foucault argues that authorities can control what 'we' (citizens) *know*, and therefore influence our understanding of what is right/wrong, bad/good, moral/immoral, thus influencing how citizens come to understand themselves as part of a 'coherent nation' (Brown, 2000, p. 89). However, this government/governed binary is more complex than it appears:

Government attitudes become played out 'on-the-ground' through "policing and discipline that blurs the distinction between state and society ... which aims to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons". (Gordon, 1991; in Brown 2000, 93)

This covert form of regulating a population presents itself not only as the top-down nature of state power, but also creates government-generated epistemologies which are shared between individuals, creating a common code of embodied conduct. This bioregulation – regulation over the living body – leads to an auto-surveillance which allows the state to infiltrate sex spaces, encouraging people to 'regulate their own behaviour in the interests of the social good' (Hubbard, 2012, p.13). It is this establishment of norms, together with polar ab-norms, which prompts the 'practices through which biopower operates' (Brown & Knopp, 2010, p.394). The avoidance of dangerous or deviant sex is fostered by the state as it seeks to protect the lives of the citizen-body, something very obviously embedded into Western laws following the stigmatisation of homosex during the AIDS crisis.

In *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault states that the sexual body must be 'cared for, protected, cultivated and preserved from the many dangers' (Foucault, 1998, p.124). By convincing both the self, and hence the population as a whole, that certain sexual practices should be avoided, the sexual body is bio-regulated by a mixture of 'fear, curiosity, delight and excitement' (ibid.). This protective objective can be realised in ways which extend from the state to be reproduced by entities which sit beyond the state itself. In Glasgow in the 1980s, for instance, the Steve Retson Project (SRP, 2017) began to distribute condoms in gay bars throughout the city to promote sex safety to gay and bisexual men. While the project emerged outwith the local state, the SRP attracted publicly funding for its focus on the prevention of HIV, and on the sexual health and wellbeing of gay men. This bioregulatory self-organisation to protect one's body from those with HIV used the condom as a political tool at 'grass-roots level to meet the needs of people at risk' Crimp (1987, p.256).

Nonetheless, Crimp warns that these needs can be ‘demeaned, distorted and ultimately destroyed when those practices are co-opted by state power’. He argues then that the state is able, through the promotion of safety, to encourage safe, protected sex, while simultaneously sacrificing those bodies which are considered contaminated and dangerous.

Bioregulation means that sexuality, thought of as a private act but policed by a public ensemble of law-upholders, creates a form of knowledge implying that, for the protection of the population as a whole, transgressive practices must be curtailed. These codes of conduct, and the way that the law is upheld by state, police and other agents of governance, generate multiple, if specifically articulated, forms of local surveillance as national laws are upheld and the wider public become implicated in upholding the ‘standard’ use of urban space. In doing so, every member of the population, including those who use PSS, potentially becomes a more-or-less grudging foot soldier and more-or-less prying watcher who upholds heteronormative bioregulation over PSS behaviour and conduct.

Central to the legality of public sex in Scotland is the UK Sexual Offences Act (2003) which demarcates what is considered (il)legal, framing it through the ambiguous notion of ‘public decency’. Considering this act, Hubbard (2012) deploys Douglas’ work on taboo, stating that in Western cities the ‘inappropriate’ use of public city space is what contributes to danger. Seeing sex in the wrong place at the wrong time draws on Douglas’ ideas that transgressing ‘common sense’ boundaried norms, such as having sex in the privacy of a bedroom at night before going to sleep, is what makes the practice seem dangerous. This law does allow individuals to have sex in public places, but only given that there is a ‘reasonable expectation of privacy’ (Hubbard, 2012, p.96). Hubbard goes on to problematise the public-private dichotomy by questioning the legality of having sex in a privately-owned garden where there is a chance that this act will be witnessed by passers-by. Those who engage in public sex are only punished, or come under the jurisdiction of the law, should they be seen;

again, offering insight into the usually 'invisible' nature of such practices and raising questions about the status of police action when officers (or possibly others) put themselves in a position to 'see' things that would otherwise have remained hidden. Furthermore, because of the equivocal use of 'public decency' within law, PSS practices are often policed and regulated quite arbitrarily by individual police officers or by local authorities as place-specific understandings of the law are assembled and performed at a local level.

The Sexual Offences Act (2003) is a governmental technique used to define the boundaries of sexual acceptability, placing it into law and enabling the upholding of such laws to be a distributed responsibility enforced by, for example, local authorities, the police, toilet and park attendants and the public. Hubbard (2001) writes that, in order morally and physically to rid public spaces of unwanted practices and bodies, authorities take action:

Those whose sexual proclivities are adjudged suspect, dangerous or undesirable may find their civil and welfare rights curtailed as politicians and policy makers seek to redefine the moral boundaries of the nation. (Hubbard, 2001, p. 52)

Wilkinson (2011, p. 493) furthers this point when writing about the tightening regulation on 'extreme porn' and the consumption of 'dangerous pictures', such as BDSM and practices deemed too violent. While the consumption of such images is viewed as an intimate and private act, one of her participants worries about 'harassment by the police and other authorities, if [their] identity becomes public' (Wilkinson, 2011, p. 496). This material is considered publicly immoral by the police, and can lead to contradictory policing whereby a private sexual act gets hoisted into the public sphere: again, a very public response to a private act when seeking to control the parameters of not just what is (il)legal, but also what is (im)moral.

Police and local authorities thus play a role in the regulation and desexualisation of PSS, although this role is indeed often place-specific. In the UK in the 1980s, a number of de-

foliating exercises to cut away undergrowth in parks were undertaken by local government authorities (Brown, 2008). Local debate exists over whether this ‘gardening’ was to quash public sex, to provide safety within public parks or as a cost-cutting exercise. Similarly, the majority of the UK’s Victorian public toilets, whether in urbanised areas or in urban green spaces, have also been closed, with similar questions being asked as to why this closure was the case. Hubbard (2012) notes that a desexualisation of public toilets has made cottaging more difficult and increasingly risky. Making toilets gender neutral, adding baby changing areas and installing CCTV have all made it increasingly difficult to avoid legal conflict (Jeyasingham, 2010). Invisibility and anonymity, upon which individuals have depended, is being eroded by an increasingly stringent set of policies and practices which, to one degree or another, restrict the appeal and desire actively to cruise or cottage³ for sex.

Brown (2004, p. 99) notes that on-the-ground, direct regulation of gay sexual citizens and PSS was increased during ‘a period of intense police harassment in the 1980s’, when Western state handling of the AIDS crisis created a moral panic and thrust a ‘private’ issue – that of sex and sexual transmission – into the ‘public’ sphere, the object being to rid society of promiscuous, casual sex, which was seen as the crux of the HIV epidemic. The media, demonising the promiscuous homosexual as causing the spread of HIV, positioned PSS as inherently dangerous, encouraging the wider population to avoid, even to end PSS, for fear of venereal disease. Following this knee-jerk reaction, including the infamous ‘tomb-stone’ media campaign used in the UK (Kelly, 2011), local governments have effectively pursued an agenda of sanitising the public sphere: desexualising possible venues of public gay sex to brand them as fit for wider ‘public’ consumption (Bell & Binnie, 2004).

Policies duly encourage a ‘clearing out’ of such spaces in a pragmatic way to erase what authorities deem to be dirty, dangerous sexualised spaces. Casey (2007, p.128) draws an example from Newcastle-upon-Tyne during its bid to become ‘European Capital of Culture’

in 2008, when a ‘heavily stylised, safe and desexualised gay district’ was used to epitomise an increasingly tolerant and cosmopolitan Newcastle. This ongoing policing from numerous state bodies and institutions means that public homosex activity within PSS is constantly challenged by ‘infinitesimal surveillances, permanent controls, extremely meticulous and orderings of space’ which infiltrate from the state, down to the ‘micro-power concerned with the body’ (Foucault, 1998, p. 145-146). While bio-regulatory epistemologies and legal frameworks can never be disentangled, this twin-pronged attack on the sexual liberties of those who use public space gives rise to very specific practices, negotiations and identities.

Public (in)conveniences

The regulation of PSS by authorities, while imposing upon the behaviour of those who are considered to be misusing public space, also gives rise to an intricate set of codes and behavioural expectations of those who use PSS. By looking at parks and toilets as specific sites where bio-regulatory techniques are deployed against the sexual citizen, it is possible to assess the impacts arising from the local implementation of national law-making in influencing and restricting sexual encounters in PSS. Behaviours based on ‘common sense and civility towards other cruisers and the general public’ (Turner, 2003, p. 164) mean that cruisers occupy a transgressive middle space: a zone where heteronormative uses of public space can be challenged, but one where they are also themselves restricted by urban social norms. A delicate balancing act of being able to signal sexual availability, while still mimicking the ‘appropriate’ use of public space, means that these men hold a ‘dual role’ which impacts upon codes of behavioural conduct (Flowers *et al.* 2000, p. 75). This dualism limits the performance of homoeroticism in public spaces and creates a culture where men’s behaviour which, rather than putting emphasis on the rubbing, touching, feeling and sucking of lustful gay sex, must also be restricted. Writers such as Humphreys ([1970] 2009) describe

this proper/improper behaviour trade-off as a game where the men involved must adopt tactics to maximise sexual reward, while minimising the risks of getting caught. This dialectic of balancing bio-regulatory restrictions against lust with desire for sex adds complexity, further queering the behaviour of men who use PSS.

Brown (2008a) encourages us to question privacy within PSS and to ask how privacy is used not only to reduce the risk of getting caught, but also as a way of replicating homonormative attitudes towards privacy and sex between users of PSS. When do men expect privacy from other men in PSS? Do these men have the right to privacy, given that they are having sex in a 'public' space? What happens if privacy is not given? Gandy (2012) says that, while tensions arise between homonormativity and those men who use PSS, there will always be a politicisation of the use of such *public* sex space. Even between those men who diverge from supposedly 'proper' uses of public facilities and parks, a code of morality allows those who want privacy to have it. The type of sex is also dictated by varying levels of privacy. In toilets, Flowers *et al.* (2000) say that it is predominantly mutual masturbation which takes place at the urinals, while oral and anal sex are usually only performed in toilet cubicles. However, Humphreys ([1970] 2009, p.49) notes that this desire for privacy within the public toilet may be too simplistic. Instead, he argues that some men engage in a common effort not only to protect themselves from unwanted public exposure when engaging in sex, but also to protect groups of men in the toilet from the wider non-cruising public. Men may take on non-participatory roles such as '*lookouts (watchqueens)*' and '*voyeurs*' who may be present to get sexual thrills from watching other men coddle, but are also able to keep watch. It is important to note that these roles are not fixed, and that circumstance and response to risk means that roles must sometimes be swiftly changed.

As a result of state regulation and peer-surveillance of PSS usage, socially 'cleansed' PSS, with restricted opportunity for overt demonstrations of homosex, germinate new

identities and communities which allow men to negotiate how their own practices can be protected from persecution (Andersson, 2012). Brown (2004, p. 92) suggests that PSS can ‘form new forms of homoerotic communality that can potentially contribute to a reevaluation of meaningful human interaction and community formation.’ This community building embodies the mutual understanding associated with common codes of conduct established between men who use PSS. Such PSS can offer the opportunity for men who are ‘largely disconnected from ... gay culture’ the opportunity anonymously to explore sexuality with other men (Gandy 2012, p.732). A disjuncture seems to exist here between the impact that state regulation exerts on the creation of common codes of conduct and the opportunities which PSS-users have to create communities and new sexual identities, thereby negotiating their own spaces of eroticism. Such a dichotomy can arguably itself be queered, though, by using place-specific empirical research, storytelling and gathering oral histories which unearth localised queer histories.

What’s missing? Decentring (homo)sexuality

Glasgow provided plenty of material that was subversive of good order and discipline.
(Morgan, 2000, p. 287)

Studies considering the fraught relationship between queer urban environments and state regulation are numerous (e.g. Catungal & McCann, 2010; Brown & Knopp, 2014, 2015), but much of this research is situated in places traditionally conceived as ‘gay friendly’ (such as Toronto and London). Myrdahl (2013, p.281) hence calls on researchers to gather oral history narratives from non-paradigmatic cities to avoid using “gay meccas” as an ‘unquestioned’ and ‘unspoken standard of measurement’ of the politics, practices and ‘authenticity’ of queer life in other cities. Bell and Binnie (2004) add that gay urban geographies can be very dependent upon local queer urban histories, changes in the law, social norms and religion,

along with many other factors which coalesce to alter situated social attitudes and, in turn, practices. Flowers *et al.* (2000, p. 81) also state that assuming gay public sex to be the same in all locals is uncritical, and suppose instead that the ‘social and historical organisation of sexual space’ has an important role to play.

Little published geographical research in this vein has been carried out in Scotland. Consequently, by gathering oral histories from those men who use PSS in Glasgow, it will be possible to create a new gay urban narrative which offers nuance to the Stonewallian⁴ traditions and politics often associated with queer research. I will consider below how Stonewallian politics, symbolism and traditions travel, but are often enacted and organised in ways influenced by localised governmental regimes and situated social attitudes. Through this move, I give voice to those Scottish practices and identities which are somewhat overlooked by standing geographical knowledge (Turner, 2003), while also acknowledging the entanglements of sexual politics at different scales. Meek (2015) notes that, although the Scottish Minorities Group (SMG) started in Glasgow in 1969, at the same time as the Stonewall Riots (Our Story Scotland, n.d), both movements fought for gay rights in quite different ways. Rather than being viewed as a liberation movement, SMG desired a policy of assimilation and took a more ‘softly softly approach’, to bring it into line with decriminalisation south of the border in England and Wales⁵ (Meek, 2015, p.90). Meek argues that the politics of SMG proceeded differently because of the comparatively low numbers of men being prosecuted for homosexual acts in Scotland, and also because of the imagined potency of attitudes in Scotland against legalising homosexual acts. By using methods such as letter writing and lobbying of local politicians, SMG was nonetheless often met with frustration by those who sought a more Stonewallian fight for liberation.

Homosexuality, before decriminalisation in 1980 and undoubtedly afterwards, was seen as a threat to the traditionally masculinist image of the strong, working-class Scottish

man, nowhere more so than in the post-industrial city of Glasgow (Johnston & McIvor, 2005). Much has been written about the long post-industrial decline of Glasgow from the 1930s, brought to life in McArthur and Kingsley Long's novel *No Mean City* (1957). Deindustrialisation and high unemployment threatened 'traditional, work-based masculine identities' (Davies, 1998, p. 266) and this threat, along with a strong Presbyterian tradition in Scotland, means that LGBTQ+ equality here has often been fraught with conflict and contestation. Scottish poet Edwin Morgan (2000, p.279) still calls us to search for an alternative Glasgow: one which exhibits transgression rather than testosterone-fuelled masculinity. Queering Glasgow's relationship with 'gayness' whereby men 'who in all probability [had] wives and girlfriends, but who were willing to engage readily... in gay sexual activity', were not considered 'gay' opens up a localised mode of how heterosexuality was transgressed and understood (ibid.). PSS allowed other sexualities to be concealed and revealed at the same time, giving rise to a largely invisible but occasionally disclosed geography of alternative sexual practice.

Geographically, then, the remainder of this paper will expand upon very limited research which has been carried out in Scotland by providing a study with temporal depth charting the use of PSS in a city which has not been historically gay-friendly. As briefly mentioned, regulation by authorities occurs at the local level, so Glaswegian examples of regulation may be useful in order to broaden, and thereby to decentre, sexuality and space research. By using first-hand testimony in a similar way to Brown and Knopp (2010, 2014) and Taylor and Falconer (2015), I expose specificities and give texture to a localised gay sexual history from a city which lacks the queer narrative of the paradigmatic metropole.

The regulation of gay public sex spaces in Glasgow: oral histories

The basis of my empirical research comprises 13 in-depth, semi-structured interviews,

focussing on the stories of gay men in Glasgow from individuals able to provide situated recollections and to reflect upon historical changes in the regulation of the city's PSS. Snowballing was particularly useful in this project because of the largely secretive and hidden nature of practices such as public sex. Before attempting to highlight the experiences of the respondents, I focus on my participants' interpretations of how they are (and have been) expected to behave sexually, spotlighting why their views on public sex do not sit comfortably within hetero/homonormative sexual discourse. The relative normalisation of homosexuality since decriminalisation has reinforced the 'good gay'/'bad gay' dichotomy, so my participants claim, leading to what they regard as a problematic focus upon the 'right' type of sexual behaviour and the avoidance of transgressionary or deviant practices. In the process, Glasgow's PSS have largely fallen out of existence.

One issue which has plagued queer geographies, written about extensively (Browne, 2006; Oswin, 2005), is that of representativeness. Representative sampling of men who use PSS is difficult, it being impossible to gauge the numbers involved, nor typical socio-demographic profiles. Nevertheless, instead of focussing only on the act of homosex itself, Cohen (1997, p. 440) suggests that participants are able to recognise 'multiple and intersecting systems of power' that dictate our social (and sexual) lives. While my participants identified as gay or bisexual, white and between the ages of 43-59, more than half expressed a disconnect from the city's commercial gay scene on the grounds of 'age, appearance ... or other factors', citing this relative alienation as one of the attractions of PSS (Gandy, 2012, p.732). By taking the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1980 as a pivot-point for those men who use(d) PSS, I offer an account of how changing regulation has altered sexual behaviours and created new codes of conduct which uphold the bioregulatory stance of the state, while also encouraging men who use PSS to take self-preserving steps to avoid conflict with the law.

Sexpectation: how? where? who with?

Each interviewee has his own nuanced idea of what is central to being a ‘good’ sexual citizen. Bioregulatory attempts central to modern governmentalities have shifted attitudes towards safe and unsafe sex⁶ – about how to have sex, where to have sex, and who to have sex with –thereby placing those who use PSS under unrelenting social surveillance by both PSS users and non-users. Jaguar (55)⁷, a self-confessed ‘bad boy’, whose proclivities openly challenge conventional attitudes towards the importance of safe sex, believes that promiscuity and not having a desire to be in a monogamous relationship leads to castigation as he does not comply with the ‘norm’:

If you’re promiscuous and if you don’t practice safe sex, there’s a lot of finger wagging. That’s why a lot of guys don’t actually admit to what they get up to or how many people they get up to it with. I think that it’s gay people themselves that are judging. The good guys judge the bad ones ... because they think that you are a dirty person. (Jaguar)

Jaguar perceives that the shaming of promiscuity and unsafe sex from within the gay community has led to a distrusting schism between those who are compliant with homonormative values and those who are seen to problematise this ‘norm’.

George (43) mentions that public sex in particular seems to lie outwith the socially constructed realm of acceptability:

Lots of folk don’t admit to cottaging or they just never do it because it’s seen as dirty because it’s a publicly sexual thing. “*Why would you look for sex in a stinking public toilet?*” But at the same time, for a guy like me, that’s where the cocks are so it makes sense. People just see it as dirty and dangerous because you never know who you are going to meet. It’s just for sex. There’s no relationship – there’s no bond. The only reason you’re there is to spunk. You’ll never see that person again. (George)

George highlights a commonly asked question concerning the ‘need’ for men to engage in public sex despite its association with being risky and dangerous: “Why can’t they meet in

bars and clubs like normal people? It's seen as dirty. You're looking for sex and why would you want to do that in a stinking toilet?" Instead, the question should focus on the eroticism and fetishisation associated with risk, which features heavily in Brown's (2008a, p.926) paper where he focuses on the embodied relationships between men's bodies, stained tiles and 'the air (heavy with the smells of stale urine, fresh sweat and amyl nitrate)'. This was something also expressed by George who says that 'It's the risk. You don't know who you'll meet. There's no bond. You're just there with the piss and shit. You're horny and all you want to do is cum'. George acknowledges that what he describes is not considered healthy sexual behaviour, but adds that, 'for a guy like me', the eroticism of this space outweighs and arguably contributes to his sexual desire. While this evocation may be met with disgust by many, the cumulative and sensual experience of cottaging provokes a powerful response. Perhaps what is interesting is the experience of smells and sights normally supposed to be avoided at all times, not just during sex, adds to the embodied excitement of norm-challenging behaviours.

Changes in regulation: pre-decriminalisation

I share the accounts of gay men who have used, or still use, parks and toilets as gay male PSS. Though these spaces have always been difficult for police and local authorities to regulate because of the often secretive and subtle nature of the practices, salient legislative and social changes have occurred. In order to contextualise the de-sexualisation of public conveniences and parks, we can explore the situated history of homosexual public sex, and its tainted relationship with the law, drawing on the oral histories of older Glaswegian gay men in my study.

In Scotland, the relatively late decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1980 shaped queer identities, sexualities and sexual practices in numerous ways. Due to the invisibility of

queer identities, a consequence of heterosexual persecution, parks and toilets – publicly accessible spaces, bringing with them opportunities and risks – were seen as the only places where gay men could meet one another and explore their sexuality. A lack of gay bars and clubs in Glasgow created an underground sub-culture of gay men who took advantage of the anonymity to be exploited in hidden public spaces. Arguably, because of the principle of ‘corroboration’ in Scots law, private acts of homosex were rarely prosecuted as they were difficult to prove; and so ‘prosecutions against consenting adults if they commit the crime in public or in such circumstances as to cause offence to members of the public’ came to the fore in attempts to keep the public ‘safe’ from sexual deviancy (Bowen, 1970 in Meek, 2015, p.94). Participants who were sexually active during this time were hence acutely aware of the risks and ongoing threat of being ‘caught in the act’:

So, there was Kelvingrove Park. I must have been 17 and I used to drive up Kelvingrove and cruise through the park, but you were always aware of the law. Not only was cottaging illegal – you were illegal. Not just the very fact that you were breaking the law by doing what you were doing in public, but also just that fact that you were doing it. You could have been doing it in your own home and you would still have been breaking the law. You were always aware of the law. (Jaguar)

Understood as the only opportunity to meet other gay men, individuals like Greg (53) saw parks as ‘spaces of necessity’. Pre-decriminalisation, the role the state played in actively regulating PSS had a very direct impact upon the shaping of activity and how the men negotiated PSS. The threats of police abuse, arrest or being fined, as well as the social consequences of being branded as ‘homosexual’, meant that gay men craved the anonymity and impersonality which PSS offered. Ironically, it was this anonymous element of public same-sex activity which the men used to ‘protect’ their own lives, while governmentality would insist that the eradication of anonymous sexual encounters is what ‘protects’ the sexual health of the population. Thus, the regulation of homosexuality, with the persistent

encroachment of the state into and across both public and private spheres, gave rise to practices such as cottaging.

A visible police presence enshrined these feelings of apprehension and fear throughout the gay community. Participants recounted being fooled or deceived by the police, since the heavy-handed and pragmatic approach to catching men using PSS was driven by active police *watching* of those spaces. Historically, Greg believes that ‘the police would hide themselves in bushes and leap out on unsuspecting men ... that type of explicit regulation was there’. Participants reported abuse and intimidation from the police:

They [the police] caught me outside the St. Vincent Street toilets with a man. Nothing had even happened yet. We were just kissing. Suddenly there was torch light everywhere. They said, “We’re arresting you for a homosexual act in a public place.”
(Mr. Ripley, 53)

The SMG launched a campaign following the arrest of a Glasgow councillor in 1976, saying that the often brutal handling of cruisers should be ended and notices should be used in toilets to ‘warn homosexual men of the danger of arrest’ (Meek, 2015, p.96).

As well as this blatant, highly embodied regulation by authorities, the police also employed more surreptitious micro-strategies to regulate ‘homosexual acts’ in public space and to deceive men into getting caught. This action increased suspicion among men using the toilets, making it increasingly risky to use cottages:

You would just go down to someone that you thought was interested. Of course, the person that was hovering there for a long time, that looked quite good, might have been a policeman. They were acting as *agent provocateurs* and there were even lots of toilets that had hidden cameras and that had policemen hiding in the lofts. (Sparky, 50+)

Other participants drew attention to police raids on toilets, particularly the endearingly named ‘Palace of Lights’⁸, and ‘recording the car number plates’ (Greg) of those suspected of cruising public toilets. While the police as an institution was dutied with upholding the law,

power also diffused to individual police officers as they pursued individual acts of 'persecution'. The law presented cottagers with an ongoing threat as homophobic, clandestine imposition of the law was carried out 'informally' to 'assume the action of the norm' (Foucault, 1998, p. 144). This occurrence, however, also left men susceptible to the micro-strategies of individual policemen.

Conversely, participants explicitly mentioned that this overt police regulation added excitement and a dangerous eroticism to the experience, with Jaguar nostalgically adding that 'I had some great times. The danger meant I had some of the horniest times I've ever had'. The embodied sense of adventure has been fetishised for those who still use toilets and parks, despite the establishment of more conventional gay spaces, such as bars and clubs, following decriminalisation. Sparky indicates that this is not only because he does not see the commercial gay scene as being accepting of older gay men, but also because:

... the cottage offers me something bars can't. I didn't go to the cottage to chat; I didn't go there to make friends or be with my own folk. I went because it was dirty, it was exciting. You never knew if the next guy that came in would be your best 'trade' yet, or if he'd be there to catch you.

Decriminalisation comes, yet bioregulation remains

Following decriminalisation in 1980, the approach of police and local authorities changed, yet regulation was undeniably still in force to deal with the 'problem' of gay public sex.

Government policy was again central to the shift in practices taking place in PSS, but, rather than direct policing 'protecting' the public from the prosecuted 'problematic' gay, regulation began to play a larger role in curtailing the sexual liberties of those who use PSS. Post-1980, Ronnie (49) believes that there was a relatively safe period when 'park gates were closed and chained up at night', presumably to stop unwanted behaviour such as cruising, albeit this change made public sex easier for men as 'it actually kept the police out'

Following the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, however, compulsory access to the countryside and urban green spaces at all times, increased the risk of being caught by police or by passing members of the public. Authorities also undertook more covert policies to regulate park space, such as Glasgow City Council undertaking a ‘massive bush clearing exercise’ (Greg) in Queens Park and Kelvingrove Park, popularising this move as an attempt to reduce crime. Echoing claims made by Andersson (2012) about Bloomsbury Square in London, this defoliation was met with scepticism from the gay community, who questioned whether it was a direct attempt to eliminate hidden spaces in which sex might take place:

They installed CCTV in the park and were also active in cutting down tree bushes and coverage, and said it was to stop people from being mugged. That made it more difficult to get away with it [public sex], but may also may have been to stop people being seriously assaulted and in some cases murdered. There is a sort of a ‘two birds one stone’ situation there. Was it to stop criminal activity or was it to stop the deviant sexual activity? (Sparky)

This process was ramped up in 1995 following a high profile attack on three gay men in separate incidents affecting Queen’s Park, Glasgow (*Herald Scotland*, 1996).

The role of the police also changed following decriminalisation. Many participants now believe that the police ‘turn a blind eye’, with many of them supposing that, given a reasonable expectation of privacy in accordance with the Sexual Offences Act (2003), police presence in parks was meant merely to scatter men from the parks, rather than to arrest them:

The police car would drive through [the park]. It didn’t seem to be their game to catch people. More just to scare them off. They just seem to be a deterrent by showing face from time to time – just enough so that you’re always aware that they are there. It was just to scare people off. (Ronnie)

If you were to go to Kelvingrove Park at 2am and had sex with someone, it’s fairly likely that you’re not going to get the jail. The woman at the police that I once spoke to about it said, “if no one complains, we won’t do anything.” It’s not causing anyone any harm. (Stuart, 48)

While public sex that adopts a sufficient level of privacy may be considered a ‘victimless crime’, with no viewer to be offended, the lack of defining laws still leave men who engage in cottaging and cruising vulnerable to the whims of individual law-keepers (Andersson, 2011 p. 89). By acknowledging the legality of public sex, police not only become part of the apparatus of *bio*regulation in public sex, but additionally are portrayed as ‘guardians against homophobic violence’ (Goode, 1995 in Andersson, 2012 p.5). Despite this ambiguous approach, Criz (50), a representative from ‘Police Scotland’, believes that the police have readdressed their approach to dealing with public sex following relaxations in both national law and shifting Glasgow City Council policies:

The easiest way for us to do it is through prevention. Maybe it’s a good idea to go to the gay community and say, “Look we know that this is happening as policemen – don’t take your mobile phone, don’t take your house keys, make sure that someone knows where you are going. Use a bit of common sense.” The reality is, though, that it does need to be policed, but a new attitude would be one which is much more based on personal decisions. (Criz)

The questionable liberty afforded by the protective state, allowing individuals to make decisions about their sex lives, can often be challenged by state and police. Despite this shift in the policing of gay PSS over the last 30+ years, there are still instances where being associated with public sex practices can still impinge upon an individual. Individuals have reported crackdowns in public sexual activity and have often faced increased accusations by police should a crime be committed within these spaces. Stuart says, ‘they did start to take a more active stance against public sex when there were a couple of assaults in the park’; with Mr. Ripley adding that, ‘if a rent boy got murdered, they would start with the list of people they know have been arrested for outdoor sex ... as suspects.’ It seems that, while police have become more tolerant, irregular strategies of controlling PSS continue in attempt to curtail, public sex.

Bioregulation and auto-surveillance within PSS.

It is important to consider Brown's (2008a) ideas about the creation of a 'code of conduct' that gay men expect from each other, regulating their own and others' behaviours, particularly with regards to the expectation of privacy. This peer surveillance means that power is exercised to protect and limit the impact that their practice has on the general public as they attempt to stay hidden. This intimate bioregulation gives power 'access even to the body' and develops embodied restrictions and rules on the way that sex can be practised (Foucault, 1998, p.143). Interestingly, although interviews were conducted independently, many of the 'unspoken rules' of how 'one' is expected to behave in PSS were common across interviews. First, attention was drawn to the 'sniffs and coughs' (George) used between cottagers as a means of alternative communication to avoid unwanted attention being drawn to homosexual practices within non-homo spaces and in order to stay invisible to non-cottagers. This clandestine form of communication is also used to instigate any potential 'trade' in the toilet, as noted in Brown's (2008a, p. 920-921) paper, where he describes a 'complex choreography' of subtle movements, gazes, raising of eye-brows and a 'mirroring' of gestures and movements.

Some interviewees also mention an element of camaraderie between men, who seem to have an empathy with one another, given the difficulties and risks associated with cottaging. Criz says, 'Someone's always got your back. It's just a sort of understanding'; with Ronnie adding, 'There's a guy that I've known for years. We often stop to chat. He's got my back. There's a lot of respect for one another.' I do not want to 'romanticise' this relationship, however, which is something which would indeed sit uncomfortably with cruisers in particular because of the desire for anonymous, *aromantic* sex. Central to many of my conversations were the unwritten rules surrounding anonymity and privacy. While Brown

(2008b) questions the compatibility of privacy with such PSS, many participants identified it as being central to behaving the 'right' way in parks and toilets:

A friend of mine, J, had a young guy sucking him off at the urinal when an old guy came in and proceeded to stand and watch. After a while the young guy was like, "fuck this!" and he pulled his trousers up and left. J was furious. There are rules. You just don't stand and watch someone. You give them privacy and let them get on with it. (George)

You need to give people their privacy. If someone is sucking you off, you expect the person upstairs to be keeping an eye. Another unwritten rule is that, if you see that person in the pub the next week, you don't start waving over and talking to them. You just don't do that. Even if a guy was my friend, I would never go over and speak to him in there. (Ronnie)

A lot of it is about not being too obvious. The knocks and coughs aren't meant to be noticed by people who aren't listening for them. Anything more than oral is a bit dodgy. It's difficult to get away with and I won't have anal without a condom now, so that all takes preparation and that sort of ruins the moment a bit. Also, if you get caught doing it then you're in bother. Someone will have a go at you for that now. (Mr. Ripley)

Mainstream attitudes concerning sex and privacy paradoxically circulate through PSS too, with many participants sharing the attitude that sex is something which should still be done in (relative) privacy. This interesting auto-surveillance of behaviour for the common good (Hubbard, 2012) also focuses on discretion in order to avoid confrontation, not only with non-cottagers, but also with other men using PSS. Cruisers and cottagers expect themselves, their sexual partners and other men to behave in a way which does not stray too far from 'normal' behaviour. Conduct which is too 'out of place' is a risk to the practice itself, drawing unwanted attention to the challenging of heteronormative normalities:

Don't be too obvious. There's a conduct of how to be discrete. If you meet someone ... find somewhere quiet and don't do it in the middle of the park – even if it's two in the morning. In the toilets too, don't do stuff like have your trousers round your knees and you're not expected to just stand about because that's not normal. People say that you

shouldn't have full anal in toilets either because that's just asking for trouble. Other guys don't like you doing that. If you've done something seriously wrong, then you'll be told. You just have to kind of learn and hope that you don't make a mistake. (Stuart)

Though public sex practices have long been regarded as a challenge to heteronormative practices – claiming spaces for homosexual acts – the influence of this challenge may be limited. Because of the threats of being caught, breaking the law and being overly visible to the public, discretion and anonymity remain more important than any kind of political statement about (re)claiming space from heteronormativity. These methods of protecting PSS users from the eyes of the state can also be reread at the scale of the body. Perhaps, as each of my participants describes what they are willing to do or not do in public, this shows infinitesimally fractured way of regulating one's own behaviour. Due to the individuality and anonymity of public sex, men firstly seek to protect themselves, before any community, and in this individualistic comportment develop an understanding of normativity within PSS which can only ever be locally and temporally fluid. However, positioning the self as 'other' while also so fondly recollecting the embodied experiences of past cottaging can still foster new-ness, transgressiveness and radical new identities. As these identities fuel a pseudo-community of alternative sexual practice, some shared responsibility to stay hidden drives a normalised way to use these spaces. The upshot, though, is arguably a self-regulation which limits the freedom of sexualisation in PSS, thereby satisfying the protective state and even contributing to the desexualisation of PSS. This self-regulation entails common codes of conduct between gay men themselves, encouraging them to negotiate PSS in something approaching, if not exactly replicating, a homonormative, discrete and 'clean' manner.

It would nonetheless be limiting to suggest that the creation of such codes of conduct has occurred unquestioningly in and by an obedient PSS community. As Brown (2009) states, the homonormative way that various gay cultures use urban space should not be seen as

hegemonic. Cruisers and cottagers still use PSS and public sex practices as a form of politically rejecting the homonormative use of public space, while the dynamism and changeability of the spaces where public sex takes place offer a constant provocation to what homonormativity looks like within certain communities and spaces. Practices also change to reflect changing laws and regulation, and this change has been used, and in some cases exploited, to develop new micro-methods of self-preservation, giving rise to ever changing and fluctuating local geographies of gay public sex. By exploring Glasgow's specific gay history, it is clear that the relatively late decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1980 did not end state imposition and prosecution of those who use PSS. Instead, power has since been exerted in a more distributed and decentred way, with auto-surveillance continuing to develop a normalised and meticulous way in which gay men must negotiate PSS to ensure that homonormalised public space is not molested.

Conclusions and discussion

PSS undoubtedly sit at odds with hegemonic norms of sexuality and sexual encounter. While mainstream attitudes towards sex obsessively strive to tick the 'healthy relationship' box (Wilkinson, 2013, p.207), public sex – dependent upon anonymity and promiscuity – uncomfortably challenges the functionality and use of normative urban environments. In this paper, I have shown how PSS not only challenge heteronormative urban spaces, but also cause friction within homosexual communities. By using Foucault's idea of governmentality, I have begun to assess to what extent the state – nationally and locally; through law, police and other agencies – influences public sex behaviours. Rather than looking at governmentality as a way for the state to eliminate public sexuality, it is better to conceive it as responsible for exposing public sex: bringing it into public consciousness, thereby allowing it to become ordered and regulated. This exposure of sexuality is necessary as the protective state seeks to

care for, cultivate and preserve sexual bodies from danger in attempting to secure a healthy population, thus creating a regulatory 'technology of sex' itself (Foucault, 1998, p.124).

'Progressive policies' (Cooper, 2006, p.923) such as the Sexual Offences Act (2003) allowed public sex to occur, given a reasonable expectation of privacy. However, this meant that practices such as cottaging and cruising, and the bodies which engage in them, come under constant surveillance – including sometimes arrest, other times mere scattering – as PSS are meticulously ordered in attempt to protect the healthy sexual citizen.

State regulation has been central to much of the conflict around public sex practices in Glasgow. While geographers such as Andersson (2011) and Mitchell (1995) agree that legislation imposed upon PSS does not seek to prevent crime, but rather to invent it and to prosecute in the case of what are otherwise victimless crimes, public sex practices often occupy a grey legal area: something which is to be cleansed and controlled. However, following the decriminalisation of homosexuality in Scotland in 1980, policing of public homo-sex altered. The law, allowing men over the age of 21 legally to enjoy same-sex activity, meant that the police could no longer arrest men simply for engaging in gay sex. Instead, those who used PSS became much more at risk from the whims of law-upholding individuals and institutions. As laws changed, so did the regulation of PSS. Micro-strategies used by police, park attendants and the general public, among numerous others, were adopted to reflect changes in governmental regimes. Actions such as clearing urban vegetation, redesigning and closing public toilets, installing CCTV and employing toilet attendants were all adopted when attempting to make public sex more difficult. While homosex was legal, public sex in particular was still perceived, through institutions such as the police and media, as being 'dangerous' and a threat to healthy (gay) sex.

In response to changing laws and the micro-strategies used by individuals to control PSS, men began to adopt new ways of negotiating the risks of being caught, while also

aiming to maximise sexual gains during cottaging and cruising encounters (Humphreys [1970] 2009). In attempting to escape the jurisdiction of law, whereby sexual encounter is deemed out of place in PSS, common codes of conduct on privacy, sex and about 'not being too obvious' have all altered the behaviour of people using these spaces as they attempt to balance normative baggage with the eroticised riskiness of danger and sexual liberation. A common understanding and comradery shared by the men concerned is now key to developing new identities, practices and spaces used, while also being instrumental in upholding the social differences and contestations which exist between the cruising and non-cruising publics. Even so, as individuals develop a vested interest in protecting the practice of public sex, a regulatory peer-surveillance emerges, where men in PSS also take on the responsibility of regulating their own and each other's behaviour to ensure that privacy protocols and behavioural expectations are upheld. This paper has contributed to literatures exploring the relationship between governmentality and sexuality, asking how governmental regimes – those of the protective state – becomes decentred, trickling down to develop a form of bioregulation which impinges upon the freedoms and sexual experiences of those who use PSS. By looking at the bioregulation which exists within these spaces, it can be assessed to what extent state-constructed hetero/homonormative values and moralities became dispersed throughout a peripheral 'community' of gay men who seemingly do not adhere to such values.

I have also provided an empirically-driven Scottish example to add to the map of geographies of sexuality. In doing so, I hope to have answered Brown & Knopp's (2010, p.21) call for queer research to be carried out 'particularly in the context of smaller cities' which hold less of a homo-centric history. By using oral histories of gay men who have used Glasgow's PSS over a number of years, I have been able to thread together an account of how Scottish-specific laws and Glasgow-specific bioregulation have created a contemporary and

nuanced sense of public sex at odds with a commercial and heavily regulated gay 'scene'. Finally, I have presented a Scottish example which decentres sexuality to create academic space for a localised history of gay urban space. I have been able to give voice to men who have been unheard and as yet largely unincorporated into mainstream gay urban geographies. In queering Scottish geography, I have been able to expose identities, practices and positionalities which not only sit at odds with hetero/homonormative sexual parameters, but also inhabit their own conceptual space within wider conversations on the bioregulation of sexuality.

Notes

1. I will use the word 'gay' throughout the paper. While 'gay' may be used by/about lesbians, and perhaps as a questionable substitute for LGBTQ+ identities, here I will restrict 'gay' to a focus upon male-orientated space. Furthermore, I use 'gay' as a label, not unproblematically, of sexuality, rather than sexual orientation, thereby also covering men who have sex with men (MSM), bisexual men, men who identify as heterosexual and other queer identities.
2. PSS can also be heterosexually orientated spaces. Practices such as 'dogging', which centre on 'public sex, voyeurism and exhibitionism, 'swinging' group sex and partner swapping' also instil 'moral panic' (Bell, 2006, pp.388-389). Panic is not only produced by the bodies or the sexual orientation of those partaking in public sex, but rather by the public-ness of the practice. Homo-PSS nonetheless attract greater scrutiny, not only because they challenge the assumed 'proper' use of hetero-city space, but also because it is seen as more central to 'gay' culture and history precisely due to intense regulation of homo-sex in – and effective ostracism of it from – more conventional spaces.
3. The 'cottage', or 'tea room' in the USA, is the gay-slang term given to a public toilet which is used as a location where men engage in (usually) anonymous sex.
4. I use 'Stonewallian' to refer to the importance given to the Stonewall Riots which took place in New York in 1969, and which are widely heralded as the trigger of the LGBT civil rights movements in the USA (The Leadership Conference, 2009).
5. While homosexuality in England and Wales became decriminalised in 1967 with the Sexual Offences Act 1967 (www.legislation.gov.uk), decriminalisation in Scotland did not take place until 1980 with the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 (www.legislation.gov.uk).

6. The common use of 'unsafe sex' is uncritically attributed to sex without the use of a condom. The condom as a technology for controlling sexual encounter and being promoted as a way to protect the sexual body from venereal disease is one method adopted by the state to ensure the healthy population is to exercise mastery over life protection itself (Foucault, 1998, pp145-146). This promotion of condoms as a way for gay men to have 'safe' sex became especially pertinent during the AIDS crisis of the 1980s (Sonenstein, Pleck & Ku, 1989). Hence, my coining of the term 'protective state' in this regard.
7. Participants are identified using a pseudonym which was chosen by them, in order fully to ensure their anonymity. Ages are given to highlight those who experiences clearly straddle decriminalisation.
8. 'The Palace of Lights' was the name given by gay men to public toilets found on St. Vincent Street, Glasgow. Affectionately so named because of the lighting which 'shone through the translucent pavement tiles' (Ross, 2011), it was a popular cottaging spot for men from the 1950s until its closure and refurbishment in the mid-1990s.

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