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Communicating in the Local

Digital Communications Use in
Brighton's Gay Pub Scene

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Summary

Communicating in the Local

Digital Communications Technology Use in Brighton's Gay Pub Scene

This thesis is an analysis of the use and impact of digital communication technology (DCT) in the Gay pub scene in the Kemptown neighborhood of Brighton, East Sussex, UK. The purpose of this work is twofold: to create a snapshot record of the everyday activities in pub spaces at a particular point in the neighborhood's history from the point of view of an American gay man, and to develop an understanding of the impact of digital communications technology (DCT) on the activities in these spaces by investigating the impact of DCT on the idea of "gay space". This analysis is broken down into three distinct areas of enquiry: the implementation of DCT in pub spaces by the landlords/owners of the space, the use of DCT by the patrons of these spaces, and an analysis of those spaces that have not directly engaged DCT, neither implementing DCT as a feature of the location, nor limiting its use within the space.

This thesis utilizes participant observations, auto ethnographic observations, and interviews made over a period of two years and engages with the theoretical arguments around gay space: its history both within the broad context of UK history, and also with Brighton's special historical status as a gay centre within the UK; its current uses; and the potential for its evolution. This investigation of how DCT is impacting on gay space also questions to what extent "gay space" is maintaining a sense of physicality and to what extent an extension of DCT-enabled virtual spaces is altering our relationship to these spaces. The work examines the notion of nostalgia, ownership, and control of space and attempts through its focus on several locations in Kemptown to catalogue the many changes in structure, clientele, locale, and business success that these spaces have gone through in a fairly short time and to determine to what extent the use and influence of DCT has driven these changes.

The project includes interviews with landlords and patrons of eight current and former venues in Kemptown and encompasses a group of three key participants in detail through a series of scheduled interviews and group discussions conducted during the duration of the project, and details their particular relationships to the spaces in Kemptown as well as their uses of DCT in these spaces. These participants act as a focal point for the research by helping to create a frame of reference within the work balancing the author's auto ethnographic analysis with the point of view of a local Brighton gay male, as well as contribute to and support the broader narrative of the vicissitudes of smaller pub venues by helping to highlight the historical changes in the pubs being looked at. The specific questions that this research sets out to answer are:

- How is digital communicative technology (DCT) affecting self defined gay spaces in Kemptown, Brighton?
- How is DCT affecting the behaviours of the patrons and owners /operators in these spaces?
- How are the owners/operators of these spaces adapting to DCT? Is there evidence of owners/operators conforming to Winston's theory on the suppression of disruptive potential of new and emerging media technology (1995)?
- What are the implications, challenges and opportunities presented to those spaces which are not engaging with DCT in their spaces?
- Are 'gay spaces' in Kemptown still relevant with the intersection of digital and physical spaces? Do these spaces meet the same requirements as they have in the past? Does DCT have the ability on its own to maintain the relevance of a venue on its own when faced off against other pressures (such as commercial or demographic pressure)?

The conclusions reached in this thesis draw attention to the potential for DCT:

- acting as a form of disruptive potential of new communication technologies (Winston, 1995),
- the concerns that DCT is suppressing interpersonal communications in favor of mediated discourse (Turkle, 2011,2012,2015),
- that automobility is creating a privatization of pub spaces, along with the creation of 'non-places' (Bull 2004)

However, in the author's analysis, there is evidence of cohabitation, and adaptation towards DCT which is reminiscent of Winston's theory of the suppression of disruptive potential of emerging communication technology, as well as a resistance response with nostalgic overtones. The conclusions are also grounded in the larger narratives of pub culture within the UK and note the challenging culture that smaller, brewer-tied and non-tied gay venues have within these changing demographics and cultural acceptance of homosexuality in general.

This research adds to the broader field of research into the adaptation of communications technology by drawing attention to the effects of DCT on both spaces and their users and also highlights their effects on a subculture.

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This work is dedicated to my late Grandparents, Cynthia and Armand Caruolo and my late Uncle, David D’Aiello. They did not live long enough to see this project finished, but they never doubted it would be.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

October 25, 2009: Participant Observation at The Aquarium: or “Well, that was a surprise!”

Tonight I decided to explore the Aquarium Pub in Stein Street to see if it was suitable for participant observation. Eva¹ offered to go with me to check this venue out after we went to a show at the Marlborough Theatre, so we got in about 10:30PM. My first impression of the pub is that it is small, but absolutely packed for the size of the space. The front of the pub is no larger than 20x20’ and the back is about the same size, with a middle passage where the bar sticks out, narrowing the space between the bar and the wall to about 5’. This part of the pub was filled almost to crush-depth with people sitting and standing and it took me ages to get served.

There were three bartenders working at the time and when I finally got to the bar I realized that one of them is working a computer which is operating karaoke at the far back of the pub. When he got the next singer set up, he stepped aside and came over to serve me and said “Hiya Al!”

I was shocked! “Well I’ll be damned! Tristan! What the hell are you doing here?”

Tristan was a casual acquaintance of mine from our shared love of cameras and photography. I had met him several months before shortly after I bought my DSLR camera from Jessops in Queen Street. He worked there on the weekends as a photo processor and sales person and we started chatting due to my background in running a photo lab back in the USA. We had been discussing photo technique and strategies for taking night shots just the day before!

“I work here on Sunday nights running the karaoke for Michael,” Michael looked up and waved, “and some Friday nights for the cabaret.”

“Wow...”

I should also note that I had found Tristan quite attractive, but never once even guessed that he might be gay, and nothing in my conversations at Jessops would have lead there

“So... are you...” (I had a bit of trepidation about asking him if he was gay)

“Of course! Didn’t I tell you about my boyfriend Bart?”

“No you never mentioned him, but we never really talked personally about things other than cameras and my being American!”

<later, when things slowed down at the bar>

I asked Tristan if he’d be interested in talking with me a bit about my project and he seemed really interested, which I think is just the

¹ Names of participants who I have spoken to during participant observations have been changed.

breakthrough that I need to really get these observations and interviews going.

The chance meeting of Tristan that night in October of 2009 was the beginning of my participant observations at the Aquarium and Tristan ultimately led to many of my contacts in the pub spaces in Kemptown.

1.1 Communicating in the ‘Local’

This thesis is exploring the nature of how gay men in Brighton Kemptown ²are utilizing pub spaces by ‘being local’. Through participant observations undertaken over a two-year period, I have attempted to chart the activities of a very small community of local pub patrons based in Kemptown, a neighborhood in Brighton, East Sussex, England. I am interested in noting what impact that digital communication technology (DCT) has within these spaces and this work contributes to the understanding of local pub culture and to the larger questions of the importance of space and our use of it.

In order to accomplish this, I first analyze the discussions around the significance and creation of gay space, looking at relevant literature from the past 25 years. I have split my observational data, self-reflection, and interview material into three data chapters which highlight the issues which I find important to contributing to an understanding of what is happening within these spaces. The data chapters are structured around the DCT that spaces themselves have introduced to add or structure their spaces; the DCT that the patrons of the spaces have brought into the spaces and what this is doing to communications; and lastly those spaces which

² Early in my research, I discovered a fairly contentious debate around the use of the term “Kemptown” versus the more historically accurate “Kemp Town.” As I will develop later, the name “Kemp Town” refers to a specific development, which actually lies beyond my research area. Thus, I have decided to use the more current name “Kemptown” which is reflected in the name of the Parliamentary constituency which overlays this area, as well as in Brighton & Hove city signage.

are either rejecting the use and implementation of DCT within their pub spaces or are taking a more agnostically neutral approach and not engaging with DCT use.

Throughout this work, I look at the nature of gay space in regards to its importance to the gay men who are frequenting these spaces. In this process, I engage with the ideas of power, control, theatre, and loyalty in trying to analyze the use of DCT as well as the significance that these spaces have for the people who operate and patronize them. In Chapter 2, my literature review, I discuss the historic importance of gay space from the point of view of protection, a sense of identity, and the necessity of spatial control to nurture a sense of gay subculture. I then compare these discussions and analysis to the issues that I have seen within Kemptown and attempt to note the relevance that this more historical analysis has when looking at the convergence of physical and virtual spaces in pubs.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the specific context of Kemptown, Brighton, and the UK context, and my rationale for using these locations as research foci. Further, I give a snapshot view of the venues in which I conducted my observations and gained contacts for my interview participants. I then explain in Chapter 4 the specific research questions and methodological structure that I have used to both obtain and utilize my research data, as well as discussing the ethical considerations of using data of this nature.

Chapters 5-7 are my primary data analysis chapters. I have divided my analysis based on whether or not the DCTs that I am looking at are based as part of the venue (Chapter 5 “Technology of the Space”) or with the individual (Chapter 6: “All Friends Together Gathered Around the iPhone”). In these chapters I will counterpoint three distinct theoretical concepts to analyze my data from the “local” experience. The first theory I will utilize is the idea of “disruptive potential of new

and emerging media technology” as enunciated by Brian Winston (1995). I attempt to determine if his theoretical framework for “suppression” is being met in these spaces and if it is, is it a conscious decision? The idea of disruptive potential interests me from a research point of view because as I will point out later, the suppression of disruptive potential can be seen both as an attempt by businesses to maintain control over their markets or direct technological advancements towards their business. However, this theory can also point towards how the spaces that I am looking at retain relevance and a sense of nostalgia in a challenging market.

The counterpointing theories used in my analysis originate from Shelly Turkle’s *Alone Together* and her arguments around the dangers of isolation, simulated experience, and compartmentalization that DCT use is highlighting, as well as that of automobility, the basis of which is discussed by John Urry in “The ‘System’ of Automobility” (Urry, 2004), and further developed in relation to mobile sound devices by Michael Bull in ‘Automobility and the Power of Sound’ (Bull, 2004).

Chapter 6 will contrast Turkle’s theories of DCT serving as a “simulated togetherness” along with Bull’s theories of “privatizing public spaces” and the concept of creating a mobile private sphere in which a person moves *through* public spaces rather than engaging/interacting with them as they previously had, to help explain how gay men are altering their relationships with the spaces in Kemptown as well as redefining the meaning that the spaces have for the patrons.

In Chapter 7, I will discuss Kemptown spaces which have not exhibited the rise in DCT usage, the reasons for this, and the effects that this has had on the spaces and the patrons. I will refer to the ideas of tradition, as well as the ideas of performance in analyzing the reasons and challenges that these spaces and the men who inhabit them have in “navigating” the DCT environment.

In Chapter 8, I discuss my conclusions and sum up my narrative from both a theoretical and personal standpoint. Throughout this work, I have followed several individuals and discussed with them the implications of my research. Some have been active participants in my research, and others just spectators. I would be greatly amiss if I did not close my thesis with a discussion of what has happened to them over my research time period as these people have had a great influence over my 8 years in the UK and they are people whom with time, in some cases, I have come to think of as friends and colleagues.

I would also like to point out that one of my intentions is to create a historical snapshot of a fairly small community in a period of transition. The pub culture of the UK is rapidly changing due to corporatization and the consolidation of the independent brewery trade. With this corporatization and consolidation there are pressures towards homogenization and a bias towards larger venues which have a higher profit margin. I hope to provide a record of this time and place in light of these changes that can help add to the understanding of what these changes mean to the patrons, owners, and researchers in the future.

Chapter 2: Physical Spaces & Virtual ‘Communities?’

Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the relevant research around the concepts of “gay space”, physical spaces, and virtual spaces. My goal is to frame my own research in light of others conceptualization of the spaces in which I have obtained my data.

The primary issues that this chapter will deal with thus are:

- The differing meanings of “gay space”, and by proxy, the arguments around the idea of a homogenous “gay community and its uses of space
- The meanings of “virtual space” and the impact that these spaces have on physicality as well as that of control.
- The definition of physical and virtual convergence and the impacts that convergence has on gay space.

By outlining these issues, this chapter will lay the framework for my data analysis, particularly the reasons why I have ordered my data in the way I have, as well as the reasons that I have focused on specific theoretical frameworks for analysis.

2.1 The Transitory Nature of Gay Space

One point which highlights for me the necessity of discussing gay spaces in

Kempton and their importance to future groups looking at the gay community in

Brighton is the story of George Street, Kempton.

“In the three years that I have been actively engaged with field work, this location has gone through four permutations, each of which has supported completely different demographics of clientele. Before 2009, the space was known as the Kings’ Arms, a pub with a predominately self-identified, older working-class straight clientele. In early 2009 the pub closed and was refurbished under the same name as a “bear bar”

with the intent that it would cater for older self-identified “bears” and their “fans”. The space was dominated by large plasma screens, dark red LED lighting, black furnishings camouflage netting on the ceilings, and chains in the toilets (!). For commercial reasons (the landlords finally acquired another location under their own ownership), this pub only lasted 10 months and changed landlords (and names), becoming “Kings”, which aimed for a more “traditional English pub” feel (with snooker and darts, warm lighting, rustic pub furniture, carpets on the floor, etc.) while maintaining a predominantly gay clientele. This pub lasted approximately 7 months before closing, due to the fact that the clientele was being drawn from a pub run by the same landlord about 200m away in St James’ St. After about 3 months of the pub being closed, the name changed yet again, this time to “Project 56” and also changed its look completely with an extensive remodel and change again in clientele, this time attracting a younger “beautiful people” clientele with LED lighting, all-white and chrome décor, and dance music.”

This transitory nature of space is nothing new within gay communities in general or Brighton in particular. Castells (1985), Whittle (1997), and Almgren (1994) each note that there is a transitory and ephemeral quality among gay spaces, in San Francisco, Manchester, and Greenwich Village, NYC respectively, while noting that in most cases, the space still remains gay in some new form. However, as this chapter will discuss, gay spaces are critical to ideas such as identity, safety, consumption, and community, thus the very fact that these spaces are so transitory means that to understand what is actually happening in them, a record needs to be made first of their existence, why they existed and why they “changed” or disappeared. This chapter will look at the literature and discussions surrounding the concept of gay space and its implications for my research into the Kemptown gay “community” and the theoretical impacts the constant state of transition has on space use.

2.2 Space and Place, Power and Grounds:

2.2a What is Gay Space?

Defining “Gay Space” is a contentious area because the perspective of the author can vary based on whether they subscribe to the idea that relationships, physical space,

virtual space, community, identity, networking, or control are the most significant factors in defining “Gay Space”. While talking about “gay space” some of the issues that arise are enunciated eloquently by Robert Sember while talking about the history of “queer geography” in New York City:

Histories of queer sexuality almost always include elaborate reference to place, for much of the work of the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender past has involved finding and creating spaces where we can come to know ourselves and be known. Because these projects concern identity and community, our efforts are at once psychic and social...“queer geographies” may be said to reflect discontinuities and sympathies between psychic and physical spaces. (Sember, p. 215)

It is this discontinuity which makes the topic of gay space so contentious because it involves a physical sense of space as well as a “psychic” and virtual sense of space which influences analysis of spaces. Sember’s position points towards looking at the idea of gay space as a unified realm of the physical, psychic as well as for the purpose of my research, the virtual. Several of the authors that I will cite however make a distinction regarding whether spaces are physical or virtual, each discounting the importance of the other with the rise in DCT use among gay men. I disagree with this position, but I feel that at least in crafting my position on this issue, it makes more sense to split the issue into physical spaces, virtual spaces, and how they converge. Because my research primarily deals with the convergence of these two spaces, this chapter will attempt to come to my working definition by looking at literature physical and virtual spaces separately, then looking at the spaces in convergence.

2.2b Physical Gay Spaces

In this section, I will specifically look at physical gay spaces in light of the concepts of self-protection through the creation of safe gay spaces, spatial control, and internal power bases as well as exclusions/inclusions of subgroups. The OED definitions of the noun “space” which covers physical gay spaces for the purpose of my research are “...7b: Extent or area sufficient for a purpose, action, etc.; room to

contain or do something” and “...11f: Any one of a limited number of places in which a person or thing may be accommodated.” (Oxford University Press, 2011) The first portion of this definition generally describes the physical state that gay spaces can be found in, and importantly, does not make any distinction between size, location, type, etc. The second portion of this definition however indicates that when looking at space a sense of exclusion, or limitation, can apply, insofar as accommodation is concerned. It is these ideas of “exclusions” and “accommodation” which my discussion of gay space hinges on because in my analysis there is a power relationship implicit in the term “gay space” versus “heteronormative spaces”, in the context that gay space can be said to define itself by what it is not (the mainstream needs no definition).

According to Paul Hindle:

“[g]ay space is the physical manifestation of gay community; it can include any area which gay’s use, a place where gay people can be ‘out’ and it can exist at a variety of scales from individual premises to agglomerations of those places, and the spaces between them. (Hindle, 1994, p. 11)

Hindle’s argument represents the crux of what a physical gay space seems to be based on my research and academic discourse. It is a space where it is simply appropriate, safe, and possibly advantageous to be gay.

While Hindle’s definition is an interesting place to begin, his definition of gay space raises a further issue because of his combination of two very distinct terms: is “gay space” synonymous with “gay community”? On the face of it, I would argue that his position is not without merit because one facet of a definition of community is its physical representations. However, the idea of a gay community itself is extremely problematic because as Bruce Bawers (1994) argues, there is not a true, all-inclusive gay “community” because in his opinion, anyone who does not subscribe to left-wing militancy, accept all forms of sexual practices as tolerable, and conform

to a homogenous version of a “gay, metropolitan male who likes what everyone else likes, does what everyone else does and thinks what everyone else thinks” (Bawers, 1994) is not part of this community. His position is that the “community” is simply defined by those who protest loudest and are the most visible, taking a very strong view that far more gay men fit into the middle-class milieu and are of the “silent majority”³ rather than the visible representations of left wing and sexual permissive homosexuality. Further, Bawers argues that the idea of community itself is specious because all that gay men have in common is their sexual preferences, and this should be in the private sphere (rather than the very public sphere of protests and Gay Pride Parades) anyway. Thus Bawer’s view seems to take a very Thatcher-esque, “there is no such thing as a “gay community”” position. This is coherent with Bawer’s self-identification as being “motivated by dedication to individual identity and individual freedom and an opposition to groupthink, oppression, tyranny and this theme is consistent throughout his work. However, I find Bawer’s arguments to be extremely contentious because they ignore the basic idea that one of the reasons that gay spaces have come about are needed is for protection (both literal and figural) from the heteronormative society as well as a place for gay men to call their own. It also assumes that gay men simply want to aspire to a heteronormative, middle class world where they are accepted, and Bawers appears to argue that if gay men simply made less of a nuisance of themselves, homophobia would die out. I find this view to be so overly simplistic that I do not think that Bawer’s position makes Hindle’s argument any less valid however, but it does highlight the issue of conflating space and community together.

³ An expression popularized by Richard Nixon in a 3 November, 1969 speech appealing to the perceived conservative-leaning majority of middle class Americans who supported the government’s position in the Vietnam War.

Rather than comparing gay space with community, Stephen Whittle (1994) uses a Gramscian analysis of gay space in which he argues that state power is in a way the most important force in the creation and use of gay space. He argues that gay space is an area which:

(Gay space is) [g]eographical space in which to be a physical presence, and ethical space in which *to be*. In the Gramscian perspective, the geographical space supports a notion of 'being' which in turn supports the state's interests. As such it is safe space in which 'being gay' is welcomed as a contributor to the state's interests through your social and sexual habits...and your economic means...Space is available in those areas which were otherwise becoming centres and meeting places for dangerous forces which challenged that state's interests and power base. (Whittle, 1994, pp. 30-31)

Thus gay space serves as an outlet for gay men to both benefit the state by economic means while avoiding changing the status quo and protecting the other areas of space from the disruption that gay activism could cause. This argument connects well with Hindle's position because it furthers the idea that physical gay space is used as both a shelter from and an adjunct to heteronormative space, if you argue that the state represents heteronormative interests. It also refutes Bawers because it emphasizes the necessity of safety being a prerequisite to a space to 'be gay', which Bawers really does not think is important in his analysis.

Sharif Mowlabocus discusses the idea of place itself rather of being part of a place; inhabiting a space rather than just controlling or having ownership of a space. Mowlabocus takes this idea a step further by discussing how queer people do not necessarily 'fit' into heteronormative spaces but rather their ability to inhabit space is "...predicated on the displacement of queer men and women who do not fit into this landscape" (Mowlabocus, 2010, p. 8) The concept of a 'gay village' then when looked at from the position of inhabitation can then be viewed as a space of "other" whereas Hillis (2009, p. 234) points out "queer people are most often seen as existing 'outside' or 'over there' rather than ever fully here. This raises the question then: Is a gay village a space that is actually gay by its own willful

creation, or is it rather a space of refuge, a space of escape from the larger heteronormative community? Further, what does this say about the idea of gay spaces in general? Do they exist merely at the whim and tolerance of the wider heteronormative community?

Gordon Ingram (1997) also supports the idea of, gay spaces being synonymous with communities however, but from a different approach to Hindle. Ingram makes the case for physical gay spaces being created to help to form a community by arguing that:

A queer(ed) “postmodernism,” especially for environmental design would not be a kind of “cultural relativism”: where certain well-defined and privileged groups of gay men and lesbians are considered fixed subcultures that simply have been over looked. Rather, queer “pomo” nurtures a kind of “pluri-normativeness,” where human relationships and cultural express are considered in terms of their possibilities for benefits and “costs.” Out of these possibilities could emerge more authentic alliances and identities, most of which would have erotic dimensions, as played out in specific communities and “places” Such a shift would cause big changes in how people, including sexual minorities view themselves and their place in the world.” (Ingram, et al., 1997, p. 8)

For Ingram, gay space and community *can* be synonymous, but only if the spaces are created organically, with community creation in mind as part of the project. However, this would be an ideal spatial creation, whereas the reality of an unplanned “gay village” represents a different form of community which is less egalitarian and less “pluri-normative” and more based on “heterosexist” dichotomies of public and private space(s)” (Ingram, 1997, p. 31). Ingram further implies that gay space is made of up of “marginalized and alienated eroticism” (Ingram, 1997, p. 31) and form a segregated space away from the mainstream of public/private spaces where non-heteronormative behavior are acceptable and allowable. In this context, gay space resembles much more of the sanctuary and powerbase that Whittle argues is a true representation of gay space.

The concept of gay space as a 'power base' for gay men is important from the position of a gay space being part of a community. Beverly Skeggs (1999) points out that in the case of Manchester's 'Gay Village', the idea of a power base arose from the physical: the construction of a purpose-built gay bar in the middle of the gentrifying Canal Street area:

Manto [the name of the new bar] was developed on a space which used to be the Workers' Reading Library, opposite the canal and very close to three old traditional gay bars and two major cottages (public sex spaces of the George Michael kind)... This initial gentrification produced a move from underground to visible over ground for gay leisure commercial bar space. It was so successful that the street on which it began 'Canal Street' has over ten similar high investment bars and restaurants (many funded by global breweries). As the spaces for gentrification on Canal Street have been exhausted the surrounding streets are now being developed with very expensive loft apartments, more bars and restaurants... (Skeggs, 1999, p. 219)

Skeggs argues that the physical manifestation of Manto led directly to the expansion of a gay community in an area already undergoing gentrification. While this is similar to Whittle's argument, Skeggs alludes to a rising social acceptance that allowed for the capital investment and the beginning of a virtuous cycle that accelerated consolidation of the gay community in its own space.

For Lauria and Knopp (1985) gay space in the US context has an element of power-base creation which harkens back to Castell's (1985) ideas around the concepts of "sex zones":

Gay neighbourhoods increasingly place the dual roles of (1) places to which young gay men from the hinterland escape in order to 'come out' or come to terms with their sexuality and (2) bases of community economic and political development. (Lauria, 1985, p. 161)

Though Hindle argues that this is much less the case in the UK when looking at Manchester in the mid 1990's (Hindle, 1994, p. 13) Lauria and Knopp further argue that the community aspect of power base creation is essential, but not the only rationale for gay space:

Gays have done more with space than simply use it as a base for political power. They continually transform and use it 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, 1985, p. 159)

Thus, in this work I argue that physical gay space is a place where the established norms reflect “cultural values” as well as political power of the gay community.

The idea of a “power base” in physical gay spaces is of further importance when one looks at the factors which drive the creation of a segregated “ghetto” space.

According to Pat Califia (1997) commerce and capital, both legal and illicit, is a driving force which promotes the idea of Castell’s “sex zones” and particularly works (again in a manner reminiscent to Whittle’s analysis) to promote a space which is a site of resistance to heteronormative hegemonic social control (i.e.: ‘respectable spaces’) (Califia, 1997, p. 180). This space allocation however is not without its issues: by raising a secondary focus around the discussion of the categorization of differing elements of the gay community into ‘reputable’ and ‘disreputable’, Califia discusses how physical spaces can be marginal even to those who have a claim on the space and force associations even among groups which normally would not come together. Califia does this by classifying behaviours and activities which are considered to be ‘reputable’, such as those which would fit into a middle-class ‘respectable’ space which just happens to be gay, vs. ‘disreputable’ which would include deviations from the middle-class ‘norms’ as well as sex workers, fetish clubs etc. Califia thus points out an internal conflict that is especially apparent because the limited amount of physical space which is available requires a mingling of both the reputable and disreputable elements of the gay community:

It is understandable that sexual minorities would like to sever their ties to the red-light district and model their aspirations upon the primarily white male gay ghetto. Since they are unable to control large amounts of their own social space, the more marginalized sexual minorities attempt to “share” the

protected space gay men have designed for their own use. (Califia, 1997, p. 183)

In this case, the limits on the protected physical spaces available foster a sense of community which otherwise might not exist between disparate groups (echoing Bawer's analysis that all gay men have in common really is the fact that they are homosexual).

However, this *bonhomie* which Califia seems to initially point towards is challenged again by power relationships, this time between the different denizens of gay space themselves.

There is considerable tension between the gay male majority and its "camp followers." Some gay men simply enjoy the opportunity to reverse their usual positions in society, and they attempt to become supercilious elites who have the right to condemn and limit the parameters of other minorities' pleasures. Some male homosexuals are made uncomfortable by the difference between their own sexuality and the practices or appearances of other groups. (Califia, 1997, p. 185)

Thus, within the supposedly safe physical space disputes arise over what is acceptable behaviour for a space. In Califia's analysis, so long as physical gay space can easily be co-opted both externally and internally, the ephemerality of the space continues, and the tenuous nature of space is linked to commerce and capital (both in the fiscal and the Marxist/Lefebvre-ian 'cultural capital' sense of the term), these kinds of tensions are inevitable.

A recent local example of this thesis is visible in a letter to the editor of *GSCENE Magazine* a local Brighton monthly devoted to the Kemptown gay scene, titled "Save Our Scene", originally posted on the *GSCENE* website in January 2011, and republished in the April 2011 print edition:

We have lived, worked and partied on the gay scene in Brighton for over twenty years. We have enjoyed the utter pride of 'Pride', but no more can we call it "gay Pride", because it would seem that Pride is now for everyone and that, to our disgust, includes *our gay venues*. Not only do we have to share our Pride Celebration of being gay with the straight world, but now also *our havens* for socializing... what has to happen for all of the landlords and ladies

of *our pubs* and clubs to realize that they and us are losing the battle and struggle with the straights for our rights to even have these places? (GSCENE, 2011) [*My emphasis*]

In the same issue, a fellow reader responded to the letter in kind:

...I am right behind you guys but, sad to say, the very equality that we have fought long and hard for over the last few decades is actually at the root of the problem. Ironically, equality laws have stripped us of any right we had to exclusively gay places. It is now illegal for public venues to refuse entry to anyone on the grounds of their sexual orientation. Straight and gay venues can no longer restrict admission or they risk prosecution. Straight venues must be gay-friendly, gay venues must be straight-friendly...The days of *our traditional gay-only spaces* are on their way out as businesses comply with the government's directive to make the UK one big, happy, inclusive 'family'. (GSCENE, 2011) [*My emphasis*]

I do not intend to elaborate on the merits or failings of their arguments here (as the topic of the threat that "straights" pose to gay spaces as they utilize these spaces more frequently will come up later in this chapter). Rather, I find it important that in both letters, the connotation of "our space" and the necessity to protect it from change and from what is clearly described as negative external influences directly supports the ideas that Califia alludes to about gays controlling their own spaces from within and being in a majority position, as well as the ideas that Lauria & Knopp, and Castells note when they allude to power bases.

Manuel Castells (1985) gets to the root of the importance of physical gay spaces gay men *by* comparing the major difference in how gay men and lesbians view "space" in general:

Men have sought to dominate, and one expression of this domination has been spatial. ...Women have rarely had these territorial aspirations: their world attaches more importance to relationships and their networks are ones of solidarity and affection. In this gay men behave first and foremost as men and lesbians as women. So when gay men try to liberate themselves from cultural and sexual oppression, they need a physical space from which to strike out. Lesbians on the other hand tend to create their own rich, inner world and a political relationship with higher societal level. Thus they are 'placeless' and much more radical in their struggle. (Castells, 1985, p. 140)

Because of this difference in the rationale and use of space, the *meaning* of such space for gay men and lesbians is ultimately going to be very different. Castells argument of territory versus consensus demonstrates that concept of holding space is just as important to the gay man as what goes on within it. Just as in war there is safety and power in the amount of territory that one holds, it seems that gay space is safety and power through its very existence, irrespective of the networks and connections that are made there.

Kathe Brown expands on the idea of control and power by noting its fluidity and its grounding in Foucauldian elements of control:

Common sense as invisibilised and not necessarily imposed can be understood where power relations incorporate self-surveillance. Foucault's (1977) explication of self-discipline and self-surveillance enables an understanding of the adherence to established (taken-for-granted) orders. Specifically, particular norms are adhered to for fear of the consequences of transgression, or because this is common sense. Normative enactments may not be related to direct policing or even specific surveillance (Foucault, 1977). This form of power is "permanent in its effects if discontinuous in its actions" (Foucault, 1977, page 201). In other words, although those subject to surveillance may not be watched the possibility of being observed means they/we constantly police their/our behaviours, particularly where these may be considered 'out of place'. (Browne, 2007, p. 998)

Browne implies here that spatial mores are somewhat governed by Foucault's ideas around "fear of transgression" and that there is inherent power in the threat of being watched. This could explain some of the behaviours in pub spaces because the behaviours could be a manifestation of "follow the leader" and blending into the shifting roles of the space. Thus, gay space and my analysis of digital discourses going on within them needs to address this situation.

However, while this sense of panoptic control is further expanded on by Browne who points out that there is a performance aspect to both power and the sense of "follow the leader":

Power theorised as ethereal and elusive continues to be 'produced, embodied, and performed'. These power relations are not uniform, imposed, permanent,

or stable; but, through constant repetition networks, can portray an image of stability that is then taken as natural and reproduced as such (Butler, 1990a; 1990b; 1997). In other words, power networks are simultaneously fixed and fluid (Nast and Pile, 1997, page 407). Here, common sense, perceived as given (or fixed), can be understood as resulting from relations and performances which are fluid. Hence, although power is conceptualized as fluid, its 'congealed' forms can be seen as 'fixed' by those (in the mutual sense) who (re)create relations of power. Power, then, matters, and here the congealed materialities of power that (re)create particular gendered and sexualized norms are central (Browne, 2007, p. 998)

This idea of power replicating the structures and relations of “norms” is important to gay space because it means that the control of (and the power *to* control) a space can facilitate a certain sense of perpetuity and inertia against change in the “norms” of a given space. A gay space in Kemptown can be seen as fitting one sort of niche (such as the Kings’ Arms being known as a “Bear Bar” for example) and due to the power and control relationships prevalent within the space, this niche will be difficult, if not impossible, to change without significant resistance by the stakeholders. As I point out later, particularly when looking at the transitions that the Kings’ Arms/Camelford and the Aquarium have undergone with the introduction of DCT within their pubs, this inertia and resistance has caused protracted conflict and eventually brought these spaces to crisis (and in one case, eventual closure).

This level of control and formation of power bases also is evident in formerly “mixed” space. Mark Casey points out in *De-dyking Queer Space(s)* (2004), an analysis of the inclusion and exclusion of lesbians in supposedly “queer space” in Newcastle upon Tyne, space that was previously assumed to be “safe” and “queer” is rapidly becoming “unsafe” and “gay” by the very specific exclusion of lesbians by gay men from “their” space, and also by the somewhat threatening addition of heterosexual women (Casey, 2004, pp. 451-53). According to Casey, this addition of heterosexual women is due to both the social inclusion of heterosexual women friends of gay men (fag hags), or due to the fact that there seems to be a greater

acceptance of gay male subculture versus lesbian subculture, due mainly to gay men's better access to the "pink pound" leading to higher visibility; the Marxist / Frankfurt School idea that greater access to fiscal capital will thus give you more access to social capital (Casey, 2004, p. 451). This argument is again, very similar to that of Califia in regards to the issues of control and to Castells in regards to domination of space. Skeggs points out that this control is fluid; that spaces in some senses need to be both visible and invisible, gay/lesbian/bisexual vs straight at the same time:

So gay spaces can be used as sites for claims for visibility and invisibility, for legitimacy, for avoidance of pathology. But only some groups can use space as a basis for a claim from which to mobilize a recognition politics or as a way of institutionalizing claims for recognition and belonging. There are always limits on spatializing visibility, that is, using space to make a claim for political, social and cultural recognition. The gay village is one such space where different types of spatial occupations (such as bars, employment, bookshops, cafes, hotels, community centre) mark the space as identifiably gay. Yet it is not being used in the same way by different groups. The space is not consistently gay. It is under the process of continual negotiation as different groups try to make claims on it. These claims have a lot invested in them as they form, for some, the basis of identity or dis-identification. The stakes and struggles are higher than they may be in a space which operates through complacent normalization. (Skeggs, 1999, pp. 219-20)

Thus, my argument that I make above about physical spatial control being important to how gay men "use space" is a dynamic one. The control of these spaces is constantly renegotiated and has multiple uses and meanings to different populations at different times.

Finally, as Simon Churchill points out, codes of conduct are of critical importance to the definition of gay spaces

...repetition of action, frequency, and observation by gay men was crucial to the development of these places over time. Learning the regulars, familiarizing oneself with the codes and conduct of the bar, and being able to recognize the argot and signifiers of same-sex sexuality was crucial to participation in these cultural domains. (Churchill, 2004, p. 838)

Churchill notes that these codes of conduct helped to create a sense of belonging and support within gay spaces because it led to men feeling "part of the club" and

being able to negotiate the specific mores of Toronto's gay geography. (Churchill, 2004, pp. 838-9) These codes of conduct however rely on the sexualisation of space that Kitchen and Lysaght talk about as the "sexing of space" and the concept of fluidity:

The sexing of space is in a constant process of 'becoming', _ deconstructing such discourse and practice, and it's resistance, allows us to start to understand the ways in which the sexing of space is constantly being brought into being (2003,page 491)quoted in (Browne, 2007, p. 1000)

This idea of fluidity or "becoming" is important in my analysis of Kemptown gay spaces because as I will discuss again below, these spaces are in a constant state of flux and change, constantly reinventing itself as ownership of spaces change and trends regarding spaces change as well.

2.2c Other factors influencing the creation of physical gay spaces

So far, my analysis of physical gay space has dealt with issues of self-protection through the creation of safe gay spaces, spatial control, and internal power bases as well as exclusions/inclusions of subgroups. These are to some extent driven by what I would call specific internal and external dynamics particular to sexual minorities and gay men in particular. However, physical gay spaces cannot be looked at in exclusion of dynamics other than these when analysing what these spaces are and what they mean. Many of the issues which apply to physical space control and acquisition which apply to society at large also must be taken into consideration when looking at physical gay spaces. When looking at the last half of the 20th century in particular, economic and social changes driven by both the post war economic recovery and the shifts to a post-industrial economy have directly impacted on physical gay spaces, by presenting opportunities and challenges to established patterns of use of spaces in general.

Karen Krahuilk points out in *Cape Queer? A Case Study of Provincetown, Massachusetts* (2006) which looks at the development across the 20th century of the

long-established gay community known affectionately as either ‘P-Town’ or ‘Land’s End’, “white male privilege” clearly worked to gay men’s advantage in the creation of gay space within the town because of the gay man’s better access to fiscal capital as well as social capital in the post-war generation that saw the establishment of a visible gay and lesbian community in the town. (Krahuilk, 2006, pp. 205-6) As Krahuilk points out, though other sexual minorities were not directly *prejudiced* in the post-World –War-Two order of Provincetown (or rather, no more or less than gay men were), they were simply outnumbered and out-financed by the large numbers of gay men (who had greater access to income and still had the ability to “pass” and thereby access patriarchal privilege) which made their settlement in the town possible. Later, in the 1970’s into the mid 1980’s this preponderance of gay men within the town’s hierarchies was codified with gay men being elected into the town government and with the formation of the Provincetown Business Guild in response to the more traditional Chamber of Commerce’s lack of enthusiasm for gay tourism (Krahuilk, 2006, p. 206). Consequently, this has led to an imbalance in the supposedly “queer” community of Provincetown, with it leaning much more towards being a “gay” community. Thus, patriarchal pressures directly influenced the growth and development of Provincetown along with the pressures of homophobia.

Another ‘external’ pressure which has been shown to be an aid in physical gay space creation is that of the shifting economics of the city and of the resort. The primary focus of my research is Kemptown, Brighton; which is a UK seaside resort town and subject to the whims and pressures of changing tastes and economic fortunes of the UK. Since the end of the post-WWII austerity period in the mid 1950’s many UK seaside towns have experienced a fairly consistent drop in vacationers and a definitive drop in hotel/hostel trade, along with the seasonal

vagrities which come with any temperate seaside resort space. In *Daring Hearts: Lesbian and Gay Live of '50s and '60s Brighton* (Brighton Ourstory Project, 1992) one of the interesting elements of gay space that is highlighted is a directory of gay and lesbian spaces which existed in the (then) town. The directory is not comprehensive as the book is composed of personal reminiscences of Brightonians and people who frequented the town at that time. Further, there is a very strong element of discretion on the part of these reminiscences because, up until 1967, male homosexuality was illegal and even after decriminalization was strongly discouraged by police actions and social approbation. However, one recurrent theme in the work is again the ephemeral nature of gay spaces in Brighton. Physical gay clubs/pubs would open briefly then close (or be closed by the police) even after decriminalization. Many spaces could not last through the winter “off season” while some spaces would reopen regularly at the start of the summer holiday season. Thus, there are a lot of commentaries about the shifting patterns of space use as private (read semi-legal) pubs and after-hours clubs would open and close across the Brighton and Hove conurbation.

Additionally, there was very little centralization among gay spaces in Brighton during this time. Most physical gay spaces in Brighton at that time were scattered across the town centre, with only two notable spaces in Kemptown. Many of the spaces fit the pattern that Castells and Califia indicate though as they were in previously abandoned spaces (the *Fortune of War* pub in the Kings Road Arches was a former fishing boat storehouse) or in spaces on the fringes of the main commercial districts (*The Queen of Hearts* for example, was on the edge of the tourist districts).

This use of abandoned spaces is further echoed in Bryant Simon’s (2002) work relating to Atlantic City, New Jersey in the USA. Gay space was able to benefit

from the shifting tides of tourism demographics in the 1960's in order to convert a formerly heteronormative space of bars and clubs centred along New York Avenue (one of the "Red" streets on the US version of the game "Monopoly"). Simon further notes that with the simultaneous rise of the automobile culture, desegregation, more leisure time and burgeoning middle class, Atlantic City began to enter a period of decline in the 1960's from which some would argue it has never truly recovered.

Simon notes that though all of these factors caused this transition, the most important of these seems to be desegregation and the growing middle class with more disposable income:

...once African Americans started to hang out on the Boardwalk, gather in hotel lounges, and sit where they wanted at the movies, straight white families – the staple of the city's tourist industry – started to view the city differently. Many no longer saw it was the World's Playground," as a fantasy world of ornate spender and carefully enforced exclusivity. Instead, they regarded Atlantic City as an all-too-real and frightening "ghetto" world of crime and chaos, as a place to be avoided at all costs (Simon, 2002, p. 313)

This loss of image was extremely destructive to Atlantic City. Why go to a "resort" if you have to be faced with the very same problems that you have at home? Many of the people at this time who stopped going to Atlantic City either were going elsewhere or were going to more exclusive (all-white destinations) (Simon, 2002, p. 313). It is not coincidence that initial planning for the "resort parks" such as Walt Disney World in Florida (opened in 1971) started at this time. These resorts have specialized in the sense of "fantasy world" which excludes the dramas of the everyday from them. When given the opportunity to go to these places for very small additional costs, Atlantic City was doomed.

This colonization of spaces which were being abandoned was also assisted by the social inequities which Krauchick noted when looking at Provincetown, MA. Gays were in the position, due to experiencing the rise in post-war prosperity

themselves, to be able to utilize the changing nature of space use in Atlantic City to further expand and develop their access to space because formerly heterosexual spaces were now available for gays to populate and further their hold on those spaces that they had already acquired by other means. (Simon, 2002, pp. 301-2) In Atlantic City, New York Avenue became the established site of a “gay village” because there were already a couple of gay bars in this space before the demographic shifts of the 1960’s began. Though there is evidence of gays in Atlantic City stretching back to 1896, the first totally gay spaces did not appear until much later. When discussing spaces like Brighton, Provincetown, and Atlantic City, it is important to note that the concept of the “resort” had a draw on gay men long before the physical space of the city became available. Simon points out that one of the reasons why resorts became popular in the first place is that they have always provided an opportunity for people to escape from the social and community structures which limited their behaviours. As Simon notes “... (Atlantic) City’s built environment functioned as a stage on which white middle-class women and men, especially the children of European immigrants, could act out their fantasies of wealth, elegance and getting ahead in America” (Simon, 2002, p. 302) It was also a space for gay men to act out on their desires without the risk of local social approbation as well as being able to experiment with different sexual identities. Simon points out that along with the concept of fantasy, Atlantic City already had a far more favourable climate of sexual freedom than most other places (Simon, 2002, p. 304). Because the concept of acting out a fantasy was already present in this space among heterosexuals who were looking for forms of sexual liberation (or as the British would say, the “dirty weekend”), gay men were not perceived as being as much of a threat to the liberal social order and were at least tolerated or tacitly ignored.

Resort spaces aside, economic transitions have presented further opportunities as well as challenges to gay spaces. The idea of uses of abandoned spaces and appropriation of spaces which previously had a different use is mirrored in Robert Sember's (Sember, 2003) work which discusses the uses of the abandoned piers adjoining Greenwich Village and Chelsea in New York City by gay men. Again echoing Castells' discussion of the concept of "sex zones" these abandoned cruise terminals (known as the "Chelsea Piers"), isolated from the body of Manhattan by the (former) West Side Highway, became simultaneously a safe space for cruising by gay men, as well as a site of commemoration and resistance to the HIV/AIDS epidemic which swept the gay community starting in the early 1980's. These spaces only became available due to the external forces surrounding the transatlantic travel industry in the second half of the 20th century (i.e.: jet travel). This appropriation of space by gay men however was transient: as property values in Manhattan climbed after the decade-long New York recession of the 1970's, waterfront locales would not remain "abandoned" for long: the space was converted into a public park in the late-1990s

What is interesting in looking at queer geographies in this fashion is the idea that a space is considered to be abandoned both if it is not being used for its intended purpose, and more importantly, if it is not being used by a majority community. Why is a space which is being used by a sizeable population of local gay men considered "abandoned" when a park used in a heteronormative fashion considered "in use"? This is where I think the indirect effect of the economy and the more direct effect of homophobia collide in use of physical gay spaces: the gay men using the Piers simply did not count. When mapping the "queer geographies" of the Piers, as well as attempting to document a space and time which were fading, both due to the deaths of many of the original users of the space from HIV/AIDS and the

imminent destruction of the physical location, Sember tries to make sense of this by emphasising the continuity that the Piers were always as space of transition, a place “for negotiating boundaries... a portal between past and present, loss and love, violence and death.” (Sember, 2003, p. 218) and that their redevelopment is another transition in the use of the space. Again however, it is glaring how much physical gay spaces are subjected to factors beyond their immediate control and that until very recently their concerns and needs were not being taken into consideration.

The appropriations of space, along with the lack of centralization and ephemerality of the spaces is discussed by Ron Shields in “Places on the Margin” where he discusses the concept of liminality, both as that of space, but that of experience. (1991). Shields develops the position, specifically when talking about Brighton, England, that spaces which are ‘between’ (in this case physically between the Downs and the sea) and outside of the mainstream (Brighton being a resort town similar to those I have mentioned above) have a sense of being a space where it is safe for exploration, as well as for a form of carnivalesque. In Shield’s previous work “The System of Pleasure” (1990) he discusses Brighton as being “the setting for a life-changing transition” (1990, p. 48). Jaspur Balduk develops this further:

...taken somewhat more broadly, how places may provide the setting for moments of in between-ness and loss of social bearings. So, where the Brighton seashore was first a liminal zone because sea bathing was considered very beneficial – pseudo-religious, perhaps – at the end of the eighteenth century, it later provided the setting where the industrial workforce could spend a “liminal time-out” – because holidays were a new phenomenon, let alone when classes mixed freely in such a gay carnival. (Balduk, 2008, p. 20)

I will develop the idea of physical liminality more later, particularly in Chapter 3 where I set the scene in Brighton, and the idea of social liminality and carnivalesque further in Chapter 5 where I discuss the ideas of DCT’s role in spatial control and how gay men are using Kemptown spaces.

Again building on Castells, David Churchill (Churchill, 2004) notes that along with economic dislocation, gay spaces have flourished in spaces which also had elements of cultural dislocation: "...distance from respectable middle-class culture was an important marker for these queer pathfinders... [a] lack of respectability of the appearance of being "low" and marginal served as signs for gay sites." (Churchill, p. 843) This cultural dislocation is similar to that reflected in Krahulik, Simon and Sember's analysis in that each is discussing spaces that allow for a dislocation from mainstream hegemony.

Along with cultural dislocation however is the nature of cultural *assimilation*. As Gustav Visser points out in "The homonormalization of white heterosexual leisure spaces in Bloemfontein, South Africa" (Visser, 2008), normalization of gay male identities within the larger heteronormative culture has led to a homonormalization of otherwise distinctly gay or straight spaces:

Homonormalized spaces are far more than heteronormativity infiltrating the gay world through a range of consumption-led processes events, or gay male capitulation to such normative hegemonies...It is argued that some leisure spaces are claimed by both hetero-and homosexual identities, simultaneously "gayed" and "straightened..." (Visser, p. 1345)

Visser points out that the line between gay and straight spaces is blurring as well as their meaning to the gay community and that this blurring has a massive "causality in the creation or destruction of gay leisure space" (Visser, p. 1346). This assimilation with the normalization of gay identity is noted in my research and will be discussed later, particularly in Chapter 6 where I talk about gay men's use of technology in pub spaces.

2.2d Physical Conclusions?

As I noted above, the idea of gay space is not simply a space made up of gay men. It is a contested space which is constantly negotiated and renegotiated from both the heteronormative society it exists alongside of and within, as well as from

internal pressures that it experiences as well. I would argue that physical gay spaces can be defined as those physical spaces which at a minimum:

- 1) Allow for safe expression or performance of a gay identity by providing the expectation of protection, both physical and social, from homophobic attack
- 2) Allow for control and modification by the gay men themselves, within the limitations of the larger heteronormative society around it.
- 3) Have an established internalized set of norms and expectations that the users of the spaces are aware of.
- 4) Have the ability to serve as a power base and as a source of community if desired, though the idea of “community” is not inherently necessary for a gay space to prosper.

I disagree with Bawer’s assertion that gay men have nothing in common with each other but their sexuality and thus I would argue that so long as there is not complete equality between the homosexual minority and the heterosexual majority, gay spaces will continue to form a basis for both power and community. However, I do not completely agree with Hindle’s assertion that gay space will give rise to a ‘gay community’ by default, particularly in light of Visser’s argument that homonormalization is reducing the segregation of gay and straight spaces. In later chapters I will point out how the idea that the gay spaces in Kemptown form a community is extremely problematic, and is to some extent a matter of opinion. Finally, I would argue that the very nature of ephemerality that physical gay spaces function under makes the idea of community, control and power problematic as well.

2.3 Virtual gay spaces

When discussing “virtual gay spaces” I am particularly looking at the presence of gay men on the internet. The term that is used to refer to the discursive space which the internet creates is ‘cyberspace.’ Cyberspace as a word is fairly new, having only come into common use over the past twenty years, attributed to William Gibson in his seminal work *Neuromancer* from 1984, however the term actually first used by Gibson in 1982. The OED defines ‘cyberspace’ as: “The space of virtual reality; the notional environment within which electronic communication (esp. via the Internet) occurs.” (Oxford University Press, 2011) It is in this ‘notational environment’ which virtual gay spaces occur. In this section, I am focusing primarily on the works of John Campbell and Sharif Mowlabocus and the discussions that they raise around the idea of virtual space and also the idea of a “virtual self” which exists within this space

2.3a Virtual spaces

Virtual spaces can be defined as those areas which are created by the networked environment that the Internet and other computer mediated communications provide. Howard Rheingold (1993), while looking at Internet Relay Chat (IRC) points out the elements of spatiality in these chats as both can be seen as:

...what you get when you strip away everything that normally allows people to understand the unspoken shared assumptions that surround and support their communications, and thus render invisible most of the web of socially mediated definitions that tells us what words and behaviours are supposed to mean in our societies. You can't see people when you are computer-chatting with them; you can't even ascertain their true identities, and you are unlikely ever to run into them on the material plane or recognize them if you do. Chat systems lack the community memory of a BBS or conferencing system or MUD, where there is some record of what was said or done in your absence. Although words are written and broadcast (and thus can be electronically captured, duplicated, and redistributed by others), they aren't formally stored by the chat system. The discourse is ephemeral. (Rheingold, 1993, p. 180)

David Shaw (1997) elaborates on this idea further:

IRC communication is void of all physical contexts; there is no physical body language, physical appearance, change in tone of voice, of facial expression to enable the intended decoding of a typed message.

Thus, one element of virtual space is the lack of physical identifiers or any physical context in which to anchor the communication that transpires within it.

In order for this form of communication to have a point of reference, a correlation is often made to physical realities. This correlation of virtual spaces with physical spaces, e.g. using terminology and conventions which would be associated with defining physical spaces for virtual entities, is not new and arose out of the first text-based messaging systems which defined themselves based on the physical entity which they were emulating (i.e.: EBBS (Electronic bulletin-board service) for bulletin boards, electronic chat rooms for chat rooms, etc.). Fairly early in the “internet revolution”⁴ Simon Shum described the nature of this comparison between the physical and virtual world as a form of navigation and way of making sense of these new forms of information systems and hypertextuality that was attributable to the use of spatial cognition theory. (Shum, 1990) This correlation of the virtual platform to the physical world is later expanded on by Brian Winston (1995) with the thesis that no new communication technology is born free and clear of the expectations and social structure of the society which it is developed in. Further, as Winston points out, the utilization of new communication technology is usually directly adapted at first to “fit into” the prevailing communication conventions which already exist, rather than creating new forms, or channels of communication in the first instance. For example, Winston points out that when television had been developed to a level of technical proficiency to be commercialized, it was the vested interests who were involved with parallel communication systems, and the Hollywood film industry which initially

⁴ A term that Winston later remarked was a sure sign of a technology being hyped or promoted before its full development had been reached!

capitalized, promoted, and controlled the direction that this new communicative technology initially took, in essence constraining its development in the directions that suited their previous business models. Just as with previous technological developments, virtual spaces were initially defined by their equivalence to their 'physical alternatives' and their development was initially seen as adjunct rather than as a completely new form of communicative discourse.

Virtual spaces however give space for representations of physical spaces as well as alternative spaces which allow for multiple levels of interactivity. Campbell notes that while virtual spaces are often created in an analogue of physical spaces (a view further echoed by Boon and Sinclair (2008, pp. 17-8) in their discussions about Second Life and Facebook) this usage of the physical analogue can serve both to create a sense of grounding and focus as well as a sense of continuity between the physical world that the corporal body is placed in and the virtual space in which the user is operating. Shaw points out that this physical analogue often broke conversations down into separate categories based on body types, or other physical attributes (Shaw, 1997, pp. 135-6) and again further grounds the user in references to the physical world.

This does not mean that people inherently will stick to their *own* physical analogue or category. As Elizabeth Reid argues:

People are free to experiment with different forms of communication and self-representation. From that playground, IRC habituees have evolved rules, rituals and communication styles that qualify them as real culture (cited in (Rheingold, 1993, p. 180)

The critical points for me here are that virtual spaces allow for the user to experience a simulated reality that allows for them to alter their virtual selves beyond the references and links that they have to physical world.

2.3b Virtual Corporality

Campbell discusses how the body can be viewed as either a physical corporeal form-“a corporeal shell containing and confining some ethereal and cognitive self,” (Campbell, 2004, p. 5) as well as the idea that one can have a “virtual” body or presence in cyberspace as well. Similar to the ideas enunciated in the early cyberpunk fiction of *Neuromancer*, the potential arises for the physical body to be nothing but the shell, or even placeholder, in a physical space while the user surfs cyberspace through the intermediary of DCT. The inverse also could occur where a user is active on a system like Grindr in the “background” (waiting for someone to message) while holding multiple conversations in the physical space they are in.

However, even if the user in this convergence of physi-space and cyberspace is in two places at once, I would argue that the individual is still one identity. To look at a physical body and a virtual body separate from each other discounts the ability for the body is “a principal component of our identity- it is one of the predominate means of how we identify ourselves and how we are identified by others- and I would content that this holds true in cyberspace” (Campbell, 2004, p. 12) Unlike *Neuromancer* or *The Matrix*, the person in cyberspace is never able to completely shed their physicality, and as Campbell notes, even when there is an attempt to it is usually limited to the creation of a new body in cyberspace. For example, Campbell notes that the virtual body cannot be separated from the corporal body because the virtual body’s pain can be experienced in the physical world. Campbell notes that “in cyberspace, the text appearing on the computer screen can, like the violent epithet, invoke visceral responses.” (Campbell, 2004, p. 13)

Sadie Plant in 1996 looked at cyberspace as being a locus which would allow for women to overthrow “2000 years of patriarchal control” (Plant, 1996, p. 171).

Campbell raises the point though that in no way does she substantiate this in her

later work and more importantly, she disregards the fact that the same technologies can be used to the opposite effect: to actually reinforce social and patriarchal discourses (Campbell, 2004, p. 11) I would argue that a very important side of the argument that she is disregarding as well is this idea of self-control and the replication of societal structure within cyberspace. For while there is the potential for an unbounded environment free of the constraints that are visible in society within cyberspace, where is the impetus for these spaces to originate from? Further, even if the spaces do exist, do they actually challenge patriarchy or, in my case, heteronormativity? For example, as Campbell points out when looking at specific chat rooms regarding muscle building, homosexuality is only openly expressed within the specific space devoted to “Gay Muscle” and men who try to transcend this space by posting in the general “Muscle” forum run the risk of homophobic attack. This is emblematic of the so-called “real world” where even now gay space and heteronormative spaces are segregated and the mixing of them is frowned upon within the heteronormative mainstream (though this is gradually changing). Thus, cyberspace and cyber-corporeality cannot be seen as having a completely liberating or transcendent discourse, but rather can be seen as having the potential for such discourses to occur.

As much as cyberspace and the idea of separating the corporal body from a cyberbody might be attractive, it is not inherently a utopian victory over patriarchy or homophobia. Cyberspace has an equally powerful ability to reinforce these structures as it does to reduce them. To automatically assume that these new quasi-public spheres⁵ are acting in liberalization imparts a level of determinism on the technology that simply does not hold up under scrutiny. All one needs to look at is the “Great (Cyber) Wall of China” to see that expanded technological resources

⁵ I use the term quasi-public spheres because these spaces are limited to people who have the social capital (to know of their existence) and the fiscal capital to be able to afford access.

can lead to expanded censorship and control. Further, looking at the concept of disruptive potential (Winston, 1995), just as digital communications allow for expanded spaces for discussion, the forces of corporatist and governmental control can use the same technological advances to insure its continued hegemony. Technology in and of itself is not an ends which will lead to these utopian changes.

A clear example that this transcendence through virtual corporeality is *not* truly occurring is noted by (Light, et al., 2008) when discussing the commodification of online profiles on Gaydar. This commodification is defined by age, sexual preference (top, bottom or “vers”), physical characteristics, race, etc. This again anchors the supposedly transcendent virtual body firmly in the physical (and capitalistic) body.

Even though there may not be transcendence, there can still be liberation through performance. David Kreps (2012) defines performativity as:

...a gender constructionism that entails the performed repetition of gender codes, as stipulated by cultural norms, and strips these codes of the very bodily substance they attempt to signify, reducing them literally to codes, whose very existence depends upon their repetition by the performers who are themselves defined by them. (Kreps, 2012, p. 121)

Campbell notes that our very physicality is a form of performance, and performance makes up the very nature in how we communicate: [w]e communicate without bodies through speech, hand gestures, and facial expressions, but our bodies also act as objects of communication in terms of skin color, facial features, and somatotype, which may signify racial, ethnic, gender, or even sexual identities beyond our intent.” (Campbell, 2004, p. 13) Mowlabocus points out that Campbell talks about how physical and digital spaces are ‘far from discrete’ and actually imply that they ‘permeate each other’. I would argue that the infiltration of DCT into Kemptown gay spaces further blurs these lines because specifically with the rise of mobile internet connectivity and the rise of mobile DCT with mobile apps,

the physical space can host the virtual (with men on Grindr looking for dates while chatting up men physically next to them) and the virtual can host the physical (due to GPS capabilities, the virtual spaces have a direct grounding in the physical... a link to a specific point that the gay man is occupying at the time).

However, Judith Butler points out that “the body gains meaning in discourse only in the specific context of power relations” and that “sexuality is an historical specific organization of power, discourse, bodies and affectivity.” (Butler, 1990, p. 92) Her theories on the power of gender identity and the ability of using DCT to experiment with gender performativity is of use here because as I have noted, in spaces in Kemptown and in use of DCT by gay men in these spaces, performance becomes a contested ground and a challenge between the need to perform in a space (Aquarium and Queen’s Arm’s karaoke) and the desire to remove the masks of performance and simply be oneself (the issue of time division and the implications of karaoke in the Aquarium, or the shutting off of technology in the King’s Arms for example). Further, as Mowlabocus points out (as well as O’Riordian), the way we represent our “digital selves” can be completely different from how we are in reality and DCT gives us the space to make these explorations, or fantasies. There are limits to this however as we are ultimately grounded in the physical bodies that we inhabit. For example, if a man is using Grindr to arrange for encounters, no matter what kind of picture that he puts up on Grindr at any time, he will eventually be revealed for who he is in the physical form if he meets with someone. Thus, no matter what, the physical body remains as the basis or reference point for the virtual person on Grindr or Gaydar ultimately because the digital fiction cannot be maintained into the real world.

Unlike a physical identity, an online identity can allow for a bit of performance that would be resisted or disbelieved within the physical world. As Campbell points

out when discussing the idea of ‘stats’ on “#gaymuscle” while someone could enter stats (about muscle mass, bicep size, etc.) which are radically different from their reality, but once they’ve done this, they cannot change these ‘stats’ radically without someone noticing. (Campbell, 2004, p. 123) Even on the visually based services that men are using, there is nothing stopping a person on a service such as Grindr from putting up a photo which is not representative of their current condition (such as a 20 year old photo when they are 40), or not themselves at all, so long as they are not intending on meeting anyone they are interacting with in cyberspace in the “real world”. Once this occurs, the game is up so to speak and the performance ends (most likely badly: according to Tristan who has met guys off Gaydar that have used old photos, the physical realities have left a lot to be desired!). However, as Kreps points out indirectly, by being able to alter your virtual identity at will, “if at first you don’t succeed, try, try again”:

In other words, the options may enable individuals to ‘role’-play at being one of the pre-defined ‘types,’ online, despite reservations regarding such behaviors online. The ability to amend one’s profile later, unchecking some boxes and checking others, indeed allows some element of play with such interests and identities- at least, within the constraints of what is available to be checked. (Kreps, 2012, p. 125)

However, Light et al demonstrate the limits that this alteration can go:

Not surprisingly, we find dominant cultural stereotypes reproduced and reinforced through technological design. This is not to suggest that there is a conspiracy to ‘simply’ part gay men from their money but rather that design choices inscribed within the technology may reinforce a stereotype that is defined with reference to a collective cultural norm of what being a gay man means. In seemingly denying the politics of difference, this is itself a politically charged stereotype in the way it constrains expressions of difference. (Light, et al., 2008, p. 307)

So while there are much potential for transcendence through virtual corporality, I would argue that much of this is an elusive chimera. There are too many links to

physical reality and other elements of social control which nullifies many of radical potentials of virtual corporality, some of which I will discuss in the next section regarding control.

2.3c Virtual Control

As Campbell points out, technology can be a complete double-edged sword when it comes to the idea of social control:

For as Balsamo (1995) suggests, the American hyperawareness and monitoring of the body's organic functions through technological means—"electronic scales, home pregnancy kits, diabetes tests, blood pressure machines and fat callipers" (p.216)—undermines notions that technological embodiment will result in bodily transcendence. Indeed, as this awareness of the biological body extends into society's surveillance of various populations—"random urine testing among high-school teenagers and adult workers, covert blood testing for HIV and genetic fingerprinting" (pg. 216)—the body may be technologically transformed into a self-contained Foucauldian panopticon. (Campbell, 2004, p. 147)

I find the idea that DCT, both in its form and its function; can be used both as a tool with utopian potential as well as a tool for both the replication of hegemonic cultural discourses and dystopian Foucauldian controls, to be one of the most important issues that are discussed in this thesis because for the first time, the spread of DCT into our places of communal meeting and leisure (outside of the home environment) poses the ability to extend both the best and worst elements of these potentials into ever expanding spheres

Campbell and Mowlabocus both touch on the idea of the importance of who controls a space. Campbell when dealing with digital spaces discusses the idea of 'moderation' as the prime form of control, and notes that a lot of spaces that he was looking at were in essence self-moderated by 'interactant volunteers' rather than by entities which have a fiscal interest in maintaining control over the spaces. The idea of space control is one which has a great import for my research as DCT

presents challenges and opportunities to this control within the Kemptown community due to the idea of disruptive potential.

“We must cease once and for all to describe the edicts of power in negative terms ... in fact, power produces, it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production. (Foucault, 1977, p. 194). Power in space control as well as peer pressure play a role in how spaces and technology intersect in Kemptown. From a Foucauldian point of view, the way gay men are using space can be related to this because they have the ability and power to create space use. This power comes from the social collective that gay men have developed through their now-legal visibility within Kemptown and their increased economic potential. Thus, in essence, power *has* created in this case.

Relying heavily on Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, Mowlabocus discusses how gay men ‘immediately became subject to the mechanisms of *examination*:

The examination is at the centre of the procedures that constitute the individual’s effect and object of power, as exact ad object of knowledge. It is the examination which, by combining hierarchical surveillance and normalizing judgment, assures the great disciplinary function of distribution and classification, maximum extraction of forces and time, continuous genetic accumulation, optimum combination of aptitudes and, thereby, the fabrication of cellular, organic, genetic and combinatory individuality. (Foucault, 1977, p. 192)

To what extent then do gay men subject themselves to the idea of tracking and surveillance by voluntary DCT use (particularly when using Grindr which has a GPS location function)? Further, is this an extension of the Foucauldian idea of surveillance because it is for the most part voluntary (i.e.: to what extent does Foucault accept agency in the idea of surveillance)? Lefebvre would argue that the idea of agency is of little relevance here because agency is shaped by our formulated consumptive desires, thus because a gay man theoretically wants the

end result of consuming bodies (by companionship, dating, or sex), he is willing to accept the disadvantages of surveillance in order to continue to consume. It should be noted that even when DCT is left out of the equation, surveillance has/is already occurring. As Mowlabocus (2010, p. 76) points out when talking about HIV/AIDS outreach: “[g]ay men do not ‘escape’ such practices of surveillance in their social spaces; the nightclub becomes the classroom; the sauna becomes a testing clinic.” In Kemptown, the ideas of control are never far from reach: along with the local events magazine *GScene*, and the pornographic promotions magazine *QXMen*, the monthly issue of *F&H (Fit and Healthy)*, an STD prevention outreach magazine by the Terrance Higgins Trust is inevitably available. Though of course there is no compunction to pick up a copy of *F&H to read it*, its very placement has the implication of discipline and a check on behavior; that no matter how hedonistic you intend to be, you should always think about your health.

Again, Foucault also raises the idea of control over the body and this is applicable to the idea of fitness and maintenance of the “perfect body.” As Mowlabocus points out by quoting Foucault: “a body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved” (Foucault, 1976, p. 196). As much as DCT allows for a level of performance to take place both in the physical space as well as in the virtual computer mediated space, because the link to the corporeal body remains, the drive to fit the homogeneous ideas of physical perfection remain.⁶⁷ This level of discipline is akin to the idea that Foucault raises with the Panopticon: you never know who may be watching so you always must be on your best behavior. To fit this into the Grindr/Gaydar context (and to be quite crass!): you never know when

⁷ However, it should be noted that the idea of physical perfection can vary greatly: the specific draw of the bear/otter community would be radically different than that of the clone / muscle community. This exhibits itself in DCT by the differentiation of websites and phone apps which are available for these communities. Again though, there are still standards of perfection which are relevant to each group (i.e.: just having a hairy chest and a beard will not automatically integrate you within the bear grouping)

a shag might turn up, so you need to be prepared to be picked up. Again, though this idea of surveillance can be linked to Lefebvre's ideas around consumption and the pressures to conform to achieve the goal of bodily consumption.

Further, Foucault's analysis of surveillance and control helps to show why even within the idea of performance, there is a consistent need to reaffirm one's attachment to heteronormative structures. A survey of Grindr profiles will show a number of men consistently attesting to being "straight-acting" (or str8-acting), which emphasizes the idea that the "straight acting man" is one potential ideal version of masculinity. As Mowlabocus points out, sites such as "straightacting.com" highlights and problematizes being gay and reaffirms a level of normalization of so-called "straight men" and heteronormativity. (Mowlabocus, 2010, p. 78)⁸ I would further question the value judgment that is being made here as well. There is no subtlety to the message being sent that straight acting=good and gay acting=bad. This is definitely seen as a link to heteronormative structures because it is showing that there is a clear priority and emphasis in appearing to be "straight-acting" and fulfilling a particular gender performance rather than appearing as the less acceptable "other."

This is evident in physical spaces in Kemptown as well: participants have indicated that they will not go to certain spaces (in particular the Aquarium or the Queen's Arms) because these spaces have a connotation as being overly 'camp' or 'faggoty' whereas other participants indicated that the idea of going to the Bulldog was far too 'butch' or 'sleazy' for them. Foucault's theoretical approach about control here is as important because once a form of coercion is brought to play (the idea of fitting a heteronormative stereotype), it makes sense that a culture of surveillance

⁸ Again it should be noted that DCT is not the only arbiter of this standard and problemization. The number of traditional print magazines targeted to gay men who regularly emphasize their "straight credentials" is large.

would arise which would work to maintain adherence to these stereotypes and also act as a form of punishment (not fitting in at a pub/bar, not being messaged on Gaydar/Grindr) for nonconformity.

However, as Mowlabocus points out, gay men's relationship with surveillance culture is far more complex than the simple encounters discussed above. The very nature of Foucault's theories on the idea of surveillance points towards the idea of a self-surveillance community where, in this case, gay men maintain their own structure of norms and social control. Even though gay men as a group have been at the receiving end of "punishment" both legally and extra legally/societal, from not fitting into heteronormativity. Thus it seems quite ironic that gay men would subsequently fall into the same trap of imposing supervision culture on themselves.

However, there is also the idea of a "reverse discourse" (Foucault, 1976, p. 101) which looks at the whole idea of deviating from the norm *in spite of* surveillance. This is evident in the concept of cottaging, where the whole idea of "getting caught" makes the whole process far more erotic and exciting for the participants. Thus, while acknowledging what they are doing is counter to the surveillance culture which is constantly present to maintain control over gay men's lives, it uses surveillance to actually engage in a behavior which countervails the accepted practices of a space.

To what extent do gay men subject themselves to surveillance by DCT use? There are three ways that one can look at this question: voluntary surveillance, involuntary surveillance, and self-surveillance.

First, there is an element of voluntary surveillance or, to look at this from Laura Mulvey's (Mulvey, 1975) psychoanalytical perspective, of scopophilia involved with technologies such as Grindr and Gaydar. A gay man will make the conscious

decision to place a profile on these services with their photographs and personal information and will thus subject themselves to being surveyed by a larger external group. Further, as these systems have geographic markers built into the fabric of the program (Grindr and other 3G phone apps are usually GPS-based, though these allow you to opt out from GPS tracking at the price of the software being less accurate) which encourage external surveillance.

There is a high level of involuntary surveillance involved in the use of these technologies because on one level it is unclear what amounts of data are being retained by the service providers who host these program's servers. Thus, once a gay man makes the decision to use a program of this nature, he no longer is in complete control over the data that he has volunteered for his profile. Further, by the very nature of the program, a user needs to make their profile available and is putting their information out there within the semi-public sphere which is using the software. This means that though the initial decision to join the service was conscious, once this is done, the surveillance by other men is largely out of the user's control until the user discontinues use of the service.

Finally, once the profile becomes active, there is a continued high level of self-surveillance. As I pointed out above, Light et al (2008) discuss how men on Gaydar self-stereotype into categories of desire. These categories however, must pay. The commodification of profiles leads to men trying to fit the profiles that they most want to identify with. Men creating profiles then self-surveil themselves, limiting their virtual performance to better fit to an ideal created with a profit motive:

The commodification of difference, in the context of Gaydar, operates through a series of tensions that bring together the need to manage complexity, in a technical sense, the personal management of individual identity, the need to present a marketable media entity and the desire to utilize technology to meet personal needs rather than to support commercial objectives. The tension is emphasized because it is the commercially orientated developer that has initially written the community into being.

However, it is the management of individual identity – the individual inscribing of self including individual difference – that perpetuates and extends the community. The inscribed individual may in turn be antithetical to the aims of the marketable media entity, not an exemplar of a demographic, not a categorical or marketable identity and consequently not readily represented by the Gaydar commodity. (Light, et al., 2008, p. 312)

This is an element of Foucauldian “self-surveillance” and control, which these technologies encourage because they stress a form of conformity to particular stereotypes and identity structures which conform roughly to the other users of the particular DCT space. As Campbell points out, virtual sites, such as the IRC chat rooms that he studied, all have certain cultural mores around them as to what is considered acceptable behavior, as well as acceptable personalities. When gay users of the “gaymuscle” IRC room would attempt to engage in conversations in other IRC chat rooms devoted to muscle building, they would often experience homophobia if they did not adhere to a strict heterosexual more (or theme) in the space. When a user of the space did not self-police their behavior properly, the wider chat room censured them to enforce heteronormality (Campbell, 2004).

I would argue that a typical user of a “virtual space” either on the web or a 3G platform is going to both seek a space that fits his needs, and then after seeing what the mores are in that space (surveillance) make sure that he complies with these. Specific web-based services like Scruff are tailored to men who self-identify as bears and their fans, and due to the mores of the site, users will tend to adhere to a set of specifications around the stereotypes which perpetuate these mores (such as being hairy, predominantly masculine, larger, etc.). Again, the men using these spaces are subjecting themselves to external scrutiny (insofar as “do they measure up to the standards of other ‘bears’ on the service”) as well as the internal scrutiny of maintaining an image that would fit into the expectations of other users (such as not coming across as being too “camp” to fit the ‘bear’ stereotype).

It is important to note though that there is obviously some agency involved in usage of these services. Whereas Foucault tends to emphasize the idea that control functions in society operate subconsciously to maintain the sense of permanent control (the idea of “you never know when someone is watching so you must behave” or the Panopticon), gay men make the choice to submit to the surveillance on DCT services, both in the scopophillic sense as well as the Foucauldian sense.

Surveillance culture has never been far from modern gay men’s lives. Starting primarily with the classification drive in the 19th century which saw the first classification of ‘homosexual’ in 1881 as a deviant state of being (rather than a deviant practice), surveillance and punishment, both legally and socially, have been a significant factor in gay identity and the formation of a gay subculture.

Thus, I find it interesting that with the liberalizations of the past 40 years towards gay men that so many of them are prepared to place themselves at the end of the microscope by engaging with DCT in a fashion that increases the amount of external and internal surveillance of themselves. I surmise that the reason this is happening is because surveillance is inherently pervasive and arises in ways that are not immediately visible as such, and because of the idea that Foucault raises about the body as being a space for discipline and a space for delimitation. As Mowlabocus points out in his discussion about how surveillance has crept into socializing spaces when discussing the idea HIV prevention “...the nightclub becomes the classroom; the sauna becomes a testing clinic.” (Mowlabocus, p. 76)

On one hand, this intervention (in this case by THT) can be seen as being beneficial to the gay community because it surveillance within the gay community can be argued to be a devolution of the former penal surveillance culture.

2.4 Physical and Virtual Space Convergence

In the previous two sections, I have discussed the implications of gay space use in both the physical and virtual world(s) separated from each other in order to clarify the theoretical discourses that my research into the technology use in gay spaces in Kemptown is routed in. However to deal with these spaces in exclusion of each other leaves a critical gap in understanding what is transpiring in the physical spaces when virtual spaces are converged due to the spread of mobile digital technologies (3G and 4G mobile internet access) and the implementation of digital communicative technologies in gay public spaces in particular. Thus, in this section, I am discussing the concepts which surround the impact of physical and virtual space convergence and the impact that each has on each other. This idea of convergence is important to my research because the analysis of my data has shown evidence of ‘geographies of protest’ (Fahmi, 2009) through resistance to the uses of technology in specific spaces as well as the resistance of patrons to the embrace of technologies in other spaces.

2.4a Defining Convergence

The convergence of physical and virtual spaces can be defined as what occurs when it becomes possible to engage in use of virtual spaces in physical spaces where one is not bound by a wired connection or a PC due to the expansion of mobile internet technologies. For the purposes of my own research I find the definition Adriana de Souza e Silva (2006) has developed to be a suitable framework. de Souza e Silva defines a converged space as a “hybrid space” in which

Virtual communities (chats, multiuser domains, and massively multiplayer online role-playing games), previously enacted in what was conceptualized as cyberspace, migrate to physical spaces because of the use of mobile technologies as interfaces. (de Souza e Silva, 2006, p. 261)

This convergence is made possible by the miniaturization of internet-capable devices and further convergence and transition of the mobile phone from a platform

which allows for telephone calls to a device which allows for direct and native access to the internet, along with the spread of 3G and 4G internet protocols and the expansion of Wi-Fi hotspots in urban and suburban areas (de Sousa e Silva, p. 262). Thus one element of this convergence is the ability to utilize digital communication devices within spaces where previously this behaviour would not have been technologically possible.

de Souza et Silva also raises an interesting possibility regarding how physical spaces are perceived with the introduction of ‘always on’ internet:

The possibility of an “always-on” connection when one moves through a city transforms our experience of space by enfolding remote contexts inside the present context. This connection is related both to social interactions and to connections to the information space, that is, the Internet. (de Sousa e Silva, 2006, p. 262)

This convergence of spaces creates a modification of the physical environment and how the user/occupier relates to these spaces both in a contextual sense, and a linear chronological sense (de Sousa e Silva, 2006, pp. 263-4).

The literal convergence of spaces however is mirrored by a behavioural convergence which is noted in the altered use of physical space and virtual spaces due to the altered physical proximity of the user. For example, as de Sousa e Silva (2006) and Winston (1995) each note when discussing the creation of new technologies, the “social meaning” (de Sousa e Silva, 2006, p. 262) of a technology is determined often *after* the technology is introduced, and as Winston notes, is often different to that intended by its inventor or proponents. Thus, the convergence that de Sousa e Silva notes in her work is a product of how the technological advances have been adapted into the society in which they have originated from.

As Gitta Stald (2008) points out, mobile DCT creates a level of adaptation that demonstrates the potential for movement in both virtual and physical spaces:

Young people in many parts of the world are on the move in their local context, and some are on the move in a global context when they travel. They are on the move within and between physical locations but also in virtual spaces, in well-known (as well as foreign) areas. They are processing, digesting, and exchanging information, deliberating what to do, what to choose, what to think. The portability of the mobile phone makes it possible for the user to access and exchange information independent of place, of physical location, while being on the move. We are mobile, the device is mobile with us, but above all information is mobile, meaning that it is available independent of time and space, accessible from wherever you are with your mobile transmitter and receiver. (Stald, 2008, p. 144)

Stald also notes that the very conventions of mobility and space are being altered in their meanings:

In the same way, we should consider the meaning of “mobile” as going beyond movement in physical space. The additional meaning of “mobility” is about being ready for change, ready to go in new directions...Exchange between friends is an important part of the development of identity, because it supports the testing of cultural, social, and individual codes and makes ongoing, mutual reciprocity possible. In this context, being movable, agile and ready to march means being ready to move as a person, too. (Stald, 2008, pp. 145-6)

The conventions and behaviours that are reflected in this convergence then are a combination of previous behaviours that have been prevalent in both spaces as well as a hybridization of behaviours that take into consideration some of the elements of convergence which I will discuss further below.

2.4b Usage of Converged Spaces

It would be difficult and beyond the purview of a work of this type to specify all of the uses that a converged space can be put. Based on my own analysis of converged spaces in Kempton, I intend to focus on the theoretical implications of the specific uses of converged spaces that I have encountered.

Converged spaces, by their hybrid status as a combination of a finite physical space and a theoretically infinite (but in practically bounded) cyberspace can serve as a literal extension of a physical space. For example, Adi Kuntsman (2007), in discussing the use of on-line bulletin boards by the gay and lesbian Russian émigré patrons of Roby's in Tel Aviv, argues that the bulletin board space allows for a

continuation and expansion of the discussions, debates, and in some cases, arguments (through ‘flame wars’ on-line) that would otherwise have ended when the club closed for the evening. The bulletin board simultaneously expanded the space available for the community’s discourse while directly supporting the physical space’s intended purpose of acting as an anchor to the community. However, as this example notes, the expansion of the virtual forum can exacerbate the sense of alienation from the physical space it is linked to because, in this particular example, arguments and disagreements which normally would have been able to be settled in a private manner or with the passage of time are continued. As I will note in later chapters, these senses of expansion and alienation noted by Kuntsman has also been noted in my own research and interviews due to the convergence of the physical and virtual spaces has repercussions upon the patronage of gay spaces in Kemptown and has had a direct impact in the success of venues.

While convergence of the physical and virtual spaces can bring a sense of expansion, it can also cause a sense of ephemerality to the converged spaces as the converged space only exists by its use and for the time that it is in use. Unlike a physical space which is a static locale and a virtual space which exists as a database on a server farm (which arguably give it a physical presence of its own), the converged space comes into existence only when the user is within a particular physical space *simultaneously* within a particular virtual space. de Sousa et Silva notes that this enforced ephemerality creates opportunities for both spaces as it can diversify the use of previously static public spaces as well as further promote the diversification in the use of the mobile internet based technologies that make up the virtual space. (de Sousa e Silva, 2006, pp. 264-5) This is critical to my analysis of Kemptown spaces because as I’ve noted in my observation at the start

of the chapter, physical spaces within the Kemptown scene are ephemeral already. What then are the consequences of a further level of ephemerality being introduced by the convergence of virtual spaces into this physical environment?

Convergence also implies a level of performance or symbiosis between the spaces, the user of the spaces, and the machine. This symbiosis has been looked at from the idea of a cyborg, or the concept of the joining of mechanical parts to the organic body in order to enhance and alter the capabilities of the human. Donna Haraway's 1985 journal article "A manifesto for cyborgs: Science, technology, and socialist feminism in the 1980's" (Haraway, 1985) as cited in (Seidman, 1998)) has developed a theoretical argument of the liberation of the cybernetic being as being a framework for (among other things) a post-patrilachal, post heterosexual world:

The cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity. It is oppositional, Utopian, and completely without innocence. No longer structured by the polarity of public and private, the cyborg defines a technological polis based partly on a revolution of social relations in the oikos, the household.... Unlike the hopes of Frankenstein's monster, the cyborg does not expect its father to save it through a restoration of the garden, that is, through the fabrication of a heterosexual mate, through its completion in a finished whole, a city and cosmos. (Haraway, 1985) as cited in (Seidman, 1998, pp. 84-5)

Thus, the cyborg is both a synthesis of man and machine, but also a transformative experience which will hopefully allow for the person-as-cyborg to transcend patriarchy and heteronormativity.

To some extent, mobile DCT has created this, according to Dholakia & Zwick:

Mobile technologies add another layer of complexity to the process of denaturing of space because the enactment of a space, thus its transformation into a place, is increasingly done by the mobile cyborg. (Dholakia & Zwick, 2003, p. 3)

The implication of this is that irrespective of the direct intent of the user of the converged spaces, literally the act of having a mobile technology present in a physical space can alter its identity. In Dholakia & Zwick's case, they argue that

this results in the space being transformed into a 'place' which I argue mean that the unattended, automatic, or 'cyborg' use of technology imparts added meaning on both the physical and virtual elements of the space. Thus by the human performance as a 'cyborg', and its symbiosis with the mobile device, the converged space becomes more than the sum of its parts.

Converged spaces also see a merging of old and new technological approaches. As Fahmi point out when discussing the convergence of virtual discussion spheres and physical protests in Cairo:

New social movements, with their do-it-yourself approach to information and communication technologies, have nevertheless mixed old and new technologies, merging virtual and physical spaces into "networks of alternative communication (Fahmi, 2009, p. 91)

Again, this is quite similar to my observations which show that the converged spaces which have been created are a blend of technological approaches (both on the part of 'owners' and the patrons).

Fahmi further discusses the fact that these converged spaces can create what he terms "spaces of resistance" and these hybrid physical and virtual worlds have created new geographies of protest. (Fahmi, 2009) While Fahmi is specifically discussing geographies of protest specifically in the political and public sphere sense of resistance to government power, I would argue that this thesis is also applicable to the microcosm scale of gay spaces because as I have pointed out in my discussion of gay physical spaces, the use of these spaces for protest and protection externally to the larger heteronormative community is still an important element of how the spaces are being used.

Conversely, I would also argue that the very creation of converged spaces in one place can lead to the creation of spaces of resistance to the further spread of digital technology in others. Fahmi , de Sousa et Silva, and to some extent Campbell take

a somewhat positivist position in their work which does not adequately discuss the implications of how converged spaces are viewed by those who do not want to engage with either the physical or virtual implication of converged spaces. In my own observations in Kemptown, there is a level of resentment and resistance to this convergence, somewhat rooted in the resistance to change in general, but also rooted in resistance to the implied interference of convergence itself in the behaviours and mores of the physical spaces. The implications of the theoretical broadening of access and creation of spatial temporality (deSousa et Silva) are understood and rejected by the patrons of the spaces which are (in some of their opinions) being converged outside of their control.

2.4c Convergence Conclusions

As I have discussed regarding convergence, the convergence of physical gay space and virtual gay space is not simply the usage of internet technology within physical gay spaces. In keeping with the overall theme in this chapter, it is a contested space which is constantly negotiated and renegotiated from both the heteronormative society it exists alongside of and within, as well as from internal pressures that it experiences as well. I would argue that converged physical and virtual gay spaces can be defined as those spaces which:

1. The merging of physical and virtual spaces creates the potential for a temporal and spatial shift in both the physical and virtual domains.
2. Converged spaces consistently are renegotiated because just as technology's usage is predicated by the society that it is being used in, converged spaces are also predicated by the physical spaces that is part of their creation
3. Converged spaces are ephemeral as on one hand they require a conscious act to site oneself in both the physical and virtual spheres, but can also be created as an extension of the 'cyborg' concept.

Converged spaces can offer a space of resistance, but can also create the same through its own existence.

2.5 Chapter Conclusions

In this chapter, I have highlighted the academic discourse around physical and virtual gay spaces and the issue of their convergence. The changes in gay physical space use is critical to my research of Kemptown gay spaces and will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 5, where I will be featuring my observations of how gay pubs there are implementing DCT and their rationale for doing so, as well as the outcomes of this implementation. I will be building on my analysis of virtual spaces in Chapter 6 where I will be discussing gay men's use of DCT that they are bringing into Kemptown pub spaces.

In order to have a better understanding of the history and geography of my research area, my next chapter will be devoted to a discussion of Kemptown. This will help to develop my rationale for using Brighton and Kemptown as a source for my research data, as well as help to further develop the "story" of this dynamic and changing neighbourhood.

Chapter 3: Setting the Scene:

Brighton Kemptown and its pub spaces

In this chapter, I will be discussing the geographic locus of my research: Brighton and the Kemptown neighborhood. An understanding of the history and demographics of the city and neighborhood will help to support my analysis of the observations and interviews that I have conducted there.

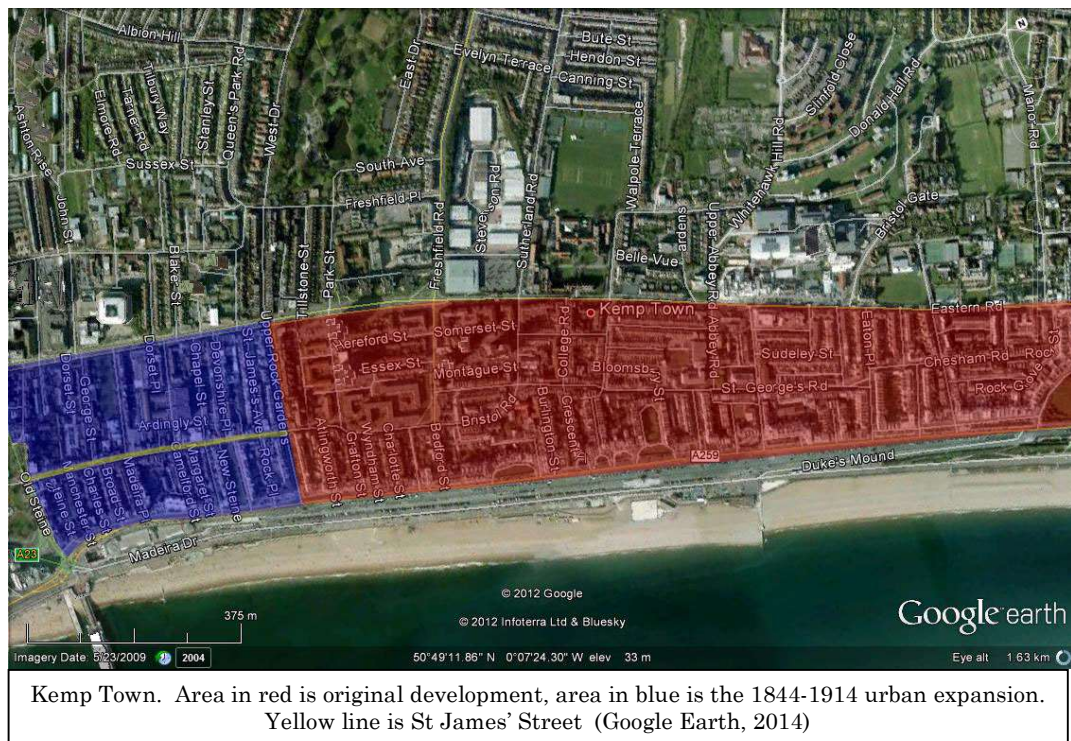
3.1 Why Brighton and Why Kemptown?

A question that I have been continuously asked and I feel I must definitively answer here is why have I, an American, decided to engage with research about how (primarily) British gay men engage with space and DCT in a South-Eastern UK city? To answer this, I rely on three points: the history of the gay community centered in Brighton and later Kemptown, the nature of the acceptance of male homosexuality in the UK and in Brighton in particular, the lack of research in this particular area.

Brighton has a long historical association with homosexuality. As far back as 1752, there is clear evidence of a homosexual presence in Brighton (Brighton Ourstory Project, 1992). While the idea of homosexuality as a separate identity is problematic (and will be discussed in a later chapter), the actual act of men coming together for homosexual sex (and being caught *In flagrante delicto*) has a long and fraught history in the town (later county borough and city). Even through the greatest period of overt legal repression, starting particularly in the 1880s (Brighton Ourstory Project, 1992), Brighton had a reputation as being a safe(r) location for these liaisons, and for those interested in those liaisons.

The evidence for Brighton's homosexual past becomes more documented in the post-WWII period. The Brighton Ourstory Project has recorded a set of snapshots

of this period through interviews and reminiscences by gay and lesbian residents and visitors, focused specifically during the time period between the end of the war and the decriminalization of male homosexuality in 1967. These stories highlight a town and a community which was for the most part covert and parallel to the larger heteronormative populations around it, but yet was vibrant and dynamic.⁹ In many ways, this is coupled with the general movements of social liberations which gradually developed in the post-War generation. The visibility of the gay “community” during this time began to become



more overt and somewhat more acceptable, particularly after decriminalization, and I would argue that it is at this point that the Kemptown side of the story becomes significant because it is at this time that the idea of a visible gay village began to form. In looking at maps of venues in *Daring Hearts* as well as from

⁹ Though some of this dynamism was not of its own accord: the Brighton police took a very dim view of many of the spatial venues which the community relied on and would often raid premises on the flimsiest of grounds (often those of “moral turpitude”) thus abruptly shutting down spaces which would need to be recreated (Brighton Ourstory Project, 1992).

discussions with residents, gay venues were evenly distributed across the town centre. While there had been gay venues within the boundaries of Kemptown before this period (the Aquarium Pub, at 6 Stein St, has a notable past as a gay venue during the post-War period (Conran, 2010)), the centralization of venues really did not begin until the founding of the Bulldog pub in 1978 (Bulldog Tavern, Brighton, 2012)¹⁰. From this one space, a gradual adaptation of spaces began with many older venues gradually developing a gay clientele and character (and ownership!) and newer venues opening.

Brighton developed into a tourist destination with Dr Richard Russell's advocacy of taking a 'seawater cure' in 1753. This placed the town firmly within the "spa culture" and it immediately competed with places such as Bath and Tunbridge Wells (later to gain the "Royal" moniker from its role as a royal spa) and it gradually eclipsed both as it was only a day's ride from London (Bath) and it quickly gained a royal following:

The arrival of the Prince Regent in Brighton in 1783 is mythologized as the beginning of the town's growth into a fashionable seaside resort. The Prince's transformation of a farmhouse into an Indo-Chinese palace, now the Royal Pavilion, is often read metaphorically for the transformation that Brighton underwent from fishing village to fashionable destination for the royal court. With the Prince's patronage came parties and balls, and the fashion for strolling along the seafront. Brighton became the place to be seen, and a place that was said to never be out of season. The Prince linked the town with titillation and scandal, secretly marrying Mrs Fitzherbert there in 1785. His character was described by Osbert Sitwell, himself a suitably flamboyant chronicler of Brighton, as " ... a medley of the most opposite qualities ... " (Sitwell1935:103). The description is perhaps apposite for the town itself. (Bassett, 2005, p. 114)

Kemptown was originally created as a property speculation and development by Thomas Kemp beginning around 1815 (Carder, 1990). The initial plan was for a set of crescents within the parish boundary of Brighton, but in essence independent

¹⁰ The Bulldog claims to be the oldest and longest *continuously*-operated gay pub in Brighton, and Kemp Town in particular.

of the small fishing town it adjoined. Similar to the Brunswick Town development just over the parish boundary in Hove, the original community which was envisioned by Kemp was to be all-inclusive with its own services and its own society, particularly the rich who were attracted to the Prince Regent's court at the Pavilion but could not find "suitable" housing in the town proper. What is primarily known (somewhat colloquially and derogatorily) as "Camp Town" or the "gay village" is actually a much later addition to Kemptown, and developed as urban sprawl in the period between the arrival of the London-Brighton railway in 1844 and WWI (Carder, 1990). It is the area centered on St. James' St and bounded by the Madeira Drive to the south, the Old Stein to the West, Edward Street to north, and (importantly) Lower and Upper Rock Gardens to the east. This eastern boundary is somewhat disputed by both the residents and stakeholders in the physical spaces of Kemptown depending on their opinions about the idea of a "gay village". In my discussions and participant observations within the spaces in Kemptown, depending on the speaker's feeling about either the residents of Kemptown or the venues in the St. James' Street area arguments would arise over whether or not calling the St. James' St neighborhood "Kemptown" was either valid from a historical sense or desired. In a conversation I had with Michael at the Star Inn in 2009, he expressed a strong opinion around the topic as a property owner and is indicative of other viewpoints that I heard expressed during my research:

"This neighborhood has *nothing* to do with Kemptown, unlike where I live. *Kemp Town* starts at Rock Gardens and frankly, I *hate* the fact that the gays have adopted this name for this area... King's Cliff *maybe*, but not Kemptown!"

I found this last a bit ironic because we were in a gay bar, the person who I was speaking to self-identified as being gay, and the whole naming convention of "King's Cliff" was actually a Brighton Borough Council scheme to play on the residency of King Edward in 1908 at 1 Lewes Crescent (at the far end of

Kempton) (Carder, 1990). A bit of further discussion led him to state the following:

Kemp Town is such a nice neighborhood... it has *character* and it has *charm*, it isn't a bar filled, drunk and homeless place like St. James' St is. [This area] ruins property values and is rundown. Kemp Town starts at Rock Gardens... (emphasis original)

Thus, it became evident to me that this sense of ownership and the ability to define spaces is an important factor in the story of the gay village and Kempton in general, and one which I needed to explore in order to define the significance of gay space in general and Kempton in particular. In the next chapter I discuss the expectations and issues surrounding control of physical spaces and the meanings that the owners / users subscribe to them in more detail

Another important consideration I made in choosing Kempton as the specific focus of my research is the physical space itself is very small, approximately .5km² but it has a large number of venues in it (15)¹¹ and it has the highest number/concentration of gay venues in Brighton (and possibly in the UK). This small area and concentration makes comparison between venues much easier as demographic factors such as the type of neighbourhood and availability of transport / access is uniform throughout. It is also similar to "gay village" locations in other cities in the UK (particularly London's Old Compton St in Soho, or the newer areas around Vauxhall and Waterloo, Manchester's Canal St., etc.), as well as in the USA.

Thus my focus on Brighton Kempton is linked to the larger academic questions of spatial control, spatial use and spatial meaning, while its physical size makes cross-comparison between venues possible. This is not to say that my conclusions

¹¹ As of January 2012. As will be noted later, some of the venues which I discuss change ownership and name during my research period, but the general number of self identifying gay venues has *not* changed since 2008 (with the opening of the Star Inn).

are invalid beyond the limits of Kemptown, but rather to say that I am attempting to create a snapshot of what is going on within a specific space (community) during a specific moment of transition.

In my research on this topic area, particularly writings on gay space, a tremendous amount has been written on locations with similar demographics (see Hindle (1994) and Hughes (2002) for discussions on Manchester, Califia (1997) for discussions on San Francisco, CA, and for “seaside gay resorts”, see Bryant (2002) on Atlantic City, NJ, and Krahulik (2006) on Provincetown, MA).

Specifically dealing with Brighton, and of particular note to my research, is the PhD thesis written by Elisabeth Bassett at the University of Brighton in 2005 entitled “On-and-offline community spaces: Brighton's lesbian and gay internet” (Bassett, 2005). Bassett’s research looks at the concept of gay and lesbian community spaces and specifically touches on their uses and relevance in relation to the physical spaces in Brighton, as a creative force for community building, and as a point of entry to the LGBT community in the area. My research dove-tails Bassett’s in that I am looking at the effects that DCT have on spaces as well as gay men’s use of DCT in those spaces. As Bassett’s work was written at the beginning of mass-diffusion of web-enabled mobile devices, my work can be seen an extension of hers as I directly deal with the changes that DCT and apps have brought into the pub spaces in Brighton. Further, Browne and Bakshib (2011) discuss the idea of Brighton as a leisure space and using both quantative and qualitative analysis (particularly through the “Count Me In” project) and examine the leisure habits of the local inhabitants.

Thus, I feel that Brighton Kemptown, as one of the popular “gay towns” in the UK, deserves a closer examination both to present an image of the space and

community as it stands at the moment as well as give an example of some of the transitions that it is undergoing.

3.2 The UK Context

Several academics, on both sides of the Atlantic have asked me why I would want to engage with the UK in regards to gay spaces rather than the more prevalent, and better known spaces in the USA. The primary reason is that I want to look at gay spaces and the populations which use them and not have to *dwell* on the social and political ramifications or lack of acceptance of that group as a factor in my research. Of course, these issues come up in my work, insofar as I am dealing with what might be considered to be a subculture which has different levels of acceptance by the larger heteronormative society (from the point of view of people such as Nancy Fraser's conception of "subaltern public spheres" (Fraser, 1990) here in the UK, but what I wanted to avoid was my research becoming a focused discussion about the levels of acceptance of gays in society and the political ramifications of space use, but rather remain as a discussion of the intersection of digital technology within the spaces as they exist and are accepted now.

While the USA is often looked at as the starting point for LGBT rights, and in many ways the social developments of gay rights have been at the forefront the legal situation does not completely bear this idea out. As mentioned previously, partial decriminalization of male homosexuality was enacted in England 1967, with complete legal equalization accomplished by 2003 (Parliament of the United Kingdom, 2003). Decriminalization of male homosexuality (as defined in law as sodomy) in the USA was never enacted by statute, but rather by a Supreme Court decision in 2003 (Lawrence v Texas, 2003). Though the Court declared these laws unconstitutional, many states have still, as of 2012, refused to remove their sodomy statutes from the books. This legal situation is reflected in the vocal minority that

still have a respected voice in the USA which advocate for the constitutional reversal of Lawrence vs. Texas and the restoration of male homosexual criminality. Thus, any analysis that I would make within the USA would need to deal with the very real homophobic attitudes which are still seen to be acceptable within the public sphere, contrary to the situation here in the UK. By basing my work in the UK, this political dimension, while remaining a strong part of the work, does not become the overwhelming basis of my results and instead helps to accentuate the focus on the intersections of DCT, gay men and gay space.

3.3 The Venues and their Location

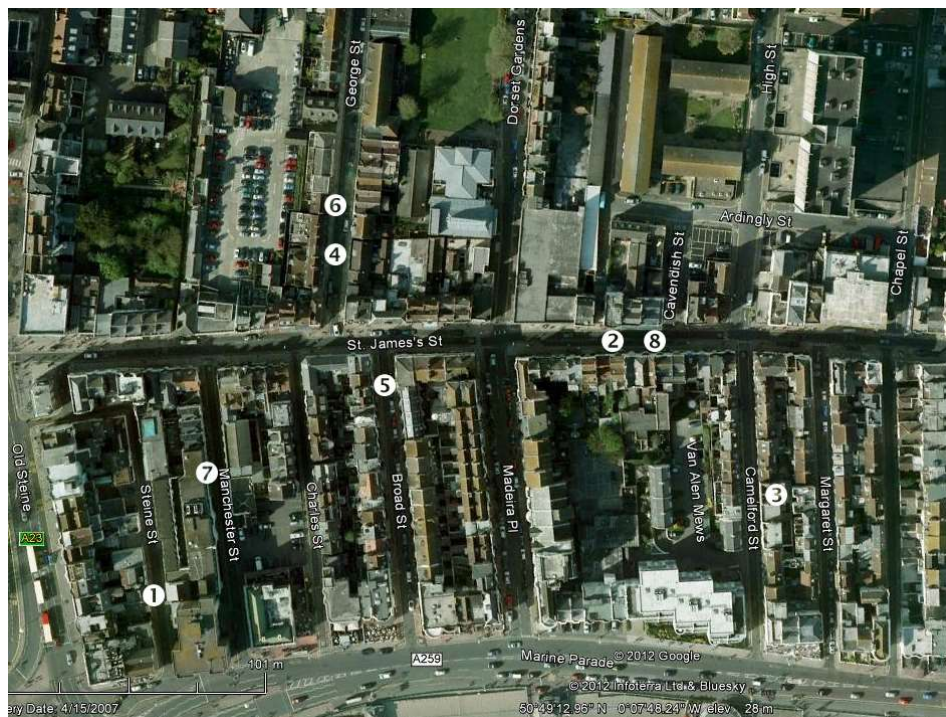
In this section, I introduce the spaces that form the basis of my study. Early on in the research process, I looked at larger spaces in Kemptown. However, I quickly found that the larger pubs would be less suitable to data collection and made a decision to limit my focus on these spaces in favour of the smaller, traditional pubs in Kemptown. The reasons I found them less suitable to data collection were:

1. The larger venues, such as The Amsterdam, Charles Street, R-bar, and Legends, have multiple rooms and spaces which often have different uses (such as the nightclub venue at Legends, the outdoor seating at Charles Street, Legends and the Amsterdam). This is in direct contrast to the smaller venues which have one focus and a much smaller physical presence, and would make any comparison or analysis more complicated and potentially less relevant because the spaces are so different in focus and atmosphere/culture.
2. The larger venues are louder with more of a focus on dance music, dancing, and (in some cases) performance. This makes conversation difficult, and it also makes it difficult to observe what people are actually doing and again, makes the comparisons between spaces difficult.

3. The larger venues are more corporate in nature and have much larger staffs with less owner interaction whereas the smaller pub spaces are landlord owned and staffed. In the smaller venues, the owners have more control over the day to day operations of the spaces.

Thus, the spaces that I looked at are, in the tongue-in-cheek description of my participant Tristan, “back-street boozers” rather than the “mainstream venues”. However, the spaces that I looked at are not really “back-street”: many of them are on St James’ Street, or on George Street (which acts as an extension of the ‘high street’ as it is a commercial area directly off St. James’ Street).

The spaces that I looked at are as follows (in alphabetical order):



Kemptown Venue Map (Google Earth, 2012)

3.3a The Aquarium Theatre Pub (#1)

The Aquarium Theatre Pub (The Aquarium) is located in Stein Street, just off all of the main thoroughfares of central Brighton and Kemptown. It is one block east from the Old Stein, a few buildings in from Madeira Drive, and just down from St. James’ Street. This “just off” position makes the Aquarium interesting in that it



really is not the kind of pub space that people tend to just “drop” into. You need a certain amount of local knowledge to even know that it is there, especially since it does not particularly advertise itself on the

outside of the building (though it does advertise in G-Scene and other local LGBT magazines). There is a small sign on the front of the pub, which is not particularly visible at night (it isn’t well lit). The pub itself is physically small, approximately 20 ft. across, so it does not occupy much frontage on the street either. Finally, the Aquarium shares the street with a single small late night club, and mixed residential housing, which means that as a pub, it needs to be very careful about its noise output and outside activities to avoid the ire of the neighbors. Thus, the Aquarium is not one of the most popular pubs on the Kemptown scene. This is important from a theoretical point of view because according to the staff that I have spoken with, it is one of the reasons that the pub tries to offer so much in the way of entertainment and engagement (such as karaoke, which I discuss more further down). It is this engagement and activities which the Aquarium relies on for survival.

The Aquarium is quite small, with seating for approximately 30 people. Standing room in the pub is always tight, especially on the weekends. The maximum capacity of the pub is probably about 100 people, though a more average crowd is between 50 to 75. The front of the one-roomed pub is devoted to seating, with a couple of small circular tables and a video pub-game machine. The bar itself is unusual for a “theatre pub” because the bar is actually in a semi-circular layout which means that a large portion of the bar obscures the stage. The “stage” is also

is a bit of a misnomer; it mostly exists as a raised dais 3" off of the floor and is only about 5'x5' square. It is just big enough for an upright piano and a singer to stand upon! There is reasonably good theatrical spotlighting of the stage, a blue velvet curtain which can be closed, and great care is paid to the sound quality in the pub, with all of the bar staff for the most part trained to run a 4-channel soundboard. The walls behind the stage are covered with photos of movie stars and musicians, as well as with old 1940's sheet music. A small alcove with a couch and dim lighting on one side of the stage provides a bit of a green room for prep and also a more private environment for guests when the stage is not being used. On the flanking wall is a small coal/gas fire which provides the heat for the pub (though due to the size of the pub, it isn't often needed once there is a crowd in the room!) with a couple of easy chairs. Over the mantel is a large canvas of Audrey Hepburn and photos of Taz, the pub dog.

The staff of the Aquarium varies a bit, with the landlords, Ben and Michael running the pub on most days and some evenings. Much of the pub staff is casually employed on an ad hoc basis, with increased staff on the weekends as well as more formally employed staff during the week. However, the "talent" is almost exclusively paid "cash in hand" which is useful in some ways as it means that if an entertainment idea does not work well in the pub, it can be quickly replaced.

The Aquarium regularly advertises itself as "The smallest stage with the biggest talent." It is part of the Sunday evening drag-show circuit that is present in Kemptown, usually trying to hold its evening entertainment at about 7:00PM. Because of this, the Aquarium is regularly listed in *G-Scene* and other local gay papers. The pub boasts a full repertoire of acts and "nights" with a regular piano evening on Friday, scheduled karaoke performances on Saturday and late Sundays, and a "cabaret act" every Sunday. However, because of its physical size

dramatically limits the type of activities that can be held there. The limits revolve around both the caliber of acts that the pub can afford to pay for, and the caliber of acts that will perform in the “stage conditions” of such a small pub. I think that this is an important point because as Jules pointed out in his interview with me, one of the reasons that Michael and Ben were so interested in implementing the digital karaoke system was to create a more ‘lively’ and interactive atmosphere in the pub. (Jules, 2009)

3.3b The Bulldog (#2)



The Bulldog Tavern, located in St James' Street, considers itself to be the oldest continuous gay pub in Kemptown. The pub has a reputation as being a venue which caters to older men (45+), and to men who are looking to meet people for brief 'liaisons'. Since the Licensing Act of 2003 took effect in 2005, the Bulldog has maintained a 24-hour license

which it regularly utilizes over Bank Holiday Weekends and the weekend of Brighton Pride. However, even on a normal Friday or Saturday night, a closing time of 8AM is not unheard of.

The pub physically consists of 2 floors, the ground floor being made up of a large bar, a DJ's booth and a few bar stools. There are two windows and they are quite small. Along the walls are flat screens displaying erotic (borderline pornographic) photos and the lighting is extremely dim, provided mostly by multi-colored

transition LCD lights. The music that is on is usually trance, drum and bass, or techno. The ambiance of the pub is primarily designed to provide an atmosphere of sexual tension and of erotic potential. It is not unheard of for patrons of the ground floor to engage in public acts which would probably be more appropriate in private.

The first floor however has a completely different feel and purpose. The upper floor has been extensively remodeled over the past 5 years, but it has always been used for stage shows and karaoke evenings. The room is much more open and brighter than the ground floor and has a smaller bar area. The focus here is more around interpersonal interaction, conversation, and leisure. This space is primarily open on weekends and up until its most recent remodel, it had the feel of being an overflow space rather than an integral part of the bar.

3.3c The Camelford Arms (#3)



The Camelford is the final and most recent home of the bear community which at the beginning of my research was located at the Star Inn, then the King's Arms. Located (fittingly) in Camelford Street, its clientele

tends to be somewhat older (30+) men who either identify with the “bear” subculture or like “bears” themselves. The owners of the pub identify with this subculture themselves and wanted to create a pub space which catered to this. According to Jason, a bartender who has traveled with the landlords through all three venues that they have hosted, this pub is ultimately the design of venue that they had been attempting to create in Kempton for 5 years.



The pub itself is one large room, well lit, with windows open to the street. The bar spans the back wall of the room, and there is stool

seating and there are small tables along the wall. The pub can hold about 50 people at a time comfortably, 100 at a full crush load (mostly standing). The Camelford does not host entertainment (drag shows or karaoke) but rather focuses on the more traditional pub entertainments such as pub quizzes. As I will discuss in a later chapter, this is an intentional decision on the part of the landlords as they feel that there are enough venues like this in Kemptown and they prefer to provide something different.

The Camelford has implemented DCT to a much more limited extent than other pubs in the Kemptown area (and to their previous spaces, particularly the King's Arms). They offer free Wi-Fi service, which can be useful because the particular area of Camelford Street that they are located is a 3g black spot for several mobile carriers (such as Vodafone and O2).



3.3d The King's Arms (#4)

This pub existed for a short period of time at 56 George Street, where Project 56 is now. The Kings' Arms was primarily a pub which catered to men who identify with the "bear" subculture. The landlords of this pub 'migrated' from the Star Inn when the formerly 'straight'

King's Arms pub's lease became available. In discussions I had with bartenders of the King's Arms, the main reason for the move was that the physical venue was bigger than the Star and was better suited for the ideal of pub that the landlords wanted to achieve.

The design of the pub was a single room painted in dark grey and browns/reds with a bar on the back wall of the pub. The pub was decorated with "bear" paraphernalia, teddy bears, the "bear flag", Pride flags, and some "Rude Bear" figurines. The ceiling was covered in camouflage netting, to make the low ceiling seem even lower. The pub had dim lighting, black-out shades on the windows and regularly hosted DJ nights as well as fetish "lock-in" nights. Lastly, the bathrooms of the pub as well as the smoking area (in the rear courtyard) were designed for alternate purposes as fetish spaces.

Technologically, on two walls were large LCD screens, used to display erotic images, bar promotions, and (on fetish nights) pornography. The space also featured a free digital juke box which was connected to Spotify and allowed for patrons to pick from an almost unlimited selection of music. I will discuss this system in detail in a later chapter, as well as why when the venue again moved (this time to the Camelford Arms), the digital jukebox was discontinued.

3.3e The Marine Tavern (#5)

The Marine Tavern is located in Broad Street, about 50 ft. off of St James Street is the smallest venue which I looked at by size. The bar takes up half of the space in the long, narrow single room. The room is wood-paneled and has very low ceilings, with seating along the bar as well as two tables in the back of the room. The room can hold probably 45 people maximum, and this venue, more than any others lends itself to quiet conversation. The pub does have music playing at times, but it does not host live music, cabaret, or karaoke evenings.



The bar has been run by Steve and Nat for 13 years and has a small but regular clientele. The age group of the clientele in the space tends to be over 30 years old and it is not unusual to see Steve's mother chatting at the bar.

The pub is very cozy and is known to be a quieter venue and a place where one can go for a "quiet drink." This gives the pub a certain reputation as being a pub where older men who are

not inclined to go to the "rowdier" venues congregate, as well as a venue to start the evening off and have a quick drink before going to one of the livelier venues. Further, the lack of entertainment and physical layout (the room is long, narrow and dominated by the bar) tends to encourage interaction between the bar staff and the patrons, as well as between the patrons themselves. This venue was useful for me in many ways (as a later chapter demonstrates) and was a location where the 'snowball method' for gaining contacts and participant observation was most effective as it is extremely easy to start conversations here as well as be heard and understood.

Finally, it is important here to note that in my discussions with Steve and Nat, their viewpoints on DCT's intersections with their pub and their conscious choices on whether or not to implement it within their space helped me to frame exactly what is at stake for spaces such as theirs as well as for the larger Kempton pub

community. Thus, the Marine Tavern, for being the smallest venue, plays a large role within my research.

3.3f Project 56 (#4)

Project 56 was the final ideation of the former “Kings Arms” space that took over after the landlords of the King’s Arms moved to the White Stag location, renaming it “The Camelford. This space became a bistro/pub during my research and it went through several different formats while trying to establish itself within the Kemptown area.

3.3g The Queen’s Arms (#6)



The Queen’s Arms is located in George Street, directly off St. James’ Street. This pub has a fairly-long history in the St James’s Street area, having opened under the

current owners in 1992. The pub is known for drawing a diverse crowd, and has a stereotype of being “fit for Queens!” (according to several of my participants).

There is regular entertainment, drag shows, and karaoke is hosted on the pub stage 4+ nights a week. The pub is made up of two small rooms, the front room containing the bar, the back room acting as a smaller, more intimate lounge space.

3.3h The Star Inn (#7)

The Star Inn in Manchester Street was the only pub in Kemptown that catered to the ‘bear’ community in 2006 when I began working on this project. From 2006 to late 2008 the Star was a single room pub, in keeping with almost all of the gay pubs that I utilized for research in Kemptown. The windows were intentionally covered with blackout shades in order to encourage a more “dark room” feel to the bar (according to the landlords) and hosted traditional pub nights such as quizzes



and small venue shows.

However it also held theme nights of a more erotic nature which were open to the public but predominately catered to pub regulars and those who were on the e-mail membership list. These evenings were usually well subscribed and utilized the

extended opening hours for these evenings (whereas the pub normally closed at 12AM).

Like most pubs in the Kemptown area, its largest crowds were limited to below 100 patrons at a time due to space, but could become quite crowded on the weekends and bank holidays. There were several issues with noise abatement due to Manchester St being primarily residential in nature, but ultimately, the pub was not big enough for what the landlords wanted to create, thus when the lease on the Kings' Arms became available, they sold their lease on the Star Inn and moved their venue to that location. Though the new leaseholders who took over the pub in late 2008 initially tried to maintain the venue as a competitive 'bear friendly' space, the loyalty of the patrons to the original landlord meant that the new leaseholder did not have much luck in this regards. The pub has since changed hands and theme to become a 'gay friendly' wine bar space that is more in keeping with the other businesses in the street (2 restaurants) and bills itself now as an upscale pub/dining venue.

3.3i The Zone Pub (#8)



The Zone pub is located on St James Street, at the heart of the Kemptown pub area, located between the Old Stein in the west and Rock Gardens in the east, separated by one storefront from The Bulldog. The Zone was the first pub that I began to do observations in in 2006 and

since then the pub has changed hands once and undergone two major remodels.

This has not changed the theme of the pub space much however, nor has it changed the overall clientele that much.¹²

The Zone is similar to a lot of the pubs in the Kemptown area in that it is a small, one room affair. When I first started going to the Zone, the layout of the pub was a bit awkward, with a very small bar along one wall with 4 barstools; a piano and stage at the front of the venue, with floor to ceiling windows; and seating (couches) up the opposite wall to the bar; with toilets at the back. In mid-2006, the pub was renovated, moving a staircase from the pub floor to the back. This primary change

¹² I think it is important here however to discuss the loyalty of “punters” to their landlords in pubs in the Kemp Town area. The clientele of the Zone pub *did* change somewhat when the first landlord (O & C) that I knew in my participant observations left under suspicious circumstances and another landlord(R) took the lease over. A sizable minority of the punters (or patrons) left the Zone at that time and moved to the Marine Tavern, the Queens Arms, and later the Aquarium (following Michael who had been a bartender at the Zone before buying the lease to the Aquarium) specifically because they did not like R who took the lease of the pub over. Further, when R took over the Queens Arms, they left *that* pub and began to go to the Aquarium exclusively. Conversely, when the R took over the Zone, a new group of punters followed her to the Zone and became regulars there. I have seen this shifting of loyalty happen at several other pubs in Kemp Town, such as the Star Inn to the Kings Arms to the Camelford (formerly the White Stag) as well, with some of the bear clientele following the landlords through their several leases in the village. The importance of this is that there is fluidity within the Kemp Town community which is not readily apparent when you observe the different pubs. This fluidity and fixed loyalty to people versus place makes it all the more important that pubs do something to induce both new and returning customers into the pub space.

engendered a rise in popularity in the venue because more people could fit in at a time. Before the renovation, the pub could hold about 75 people, the majority standing; after renovation the pub could hold closer to 125 people standing.

The pub bills itself as a theatre/music pub, and at the time of the 2006 renovation, musical instruments adorned the walls, with a violin and sheet music hanging next to a balalaika and an alto saxophone on one wall, and a musical notation border around the ceiling molding. The stage at the front of the Zone is a fairly large raised dais (about 3"), about 15'x5 along the front of the pub by the floor to ceiling windows. The windows in the summer months can be fully opened and drawn to one end, meaning that the stage is opened to the pavement of St James Street, which has led to some interesting interactions between the acts on stage and the 'acts' in the street! On one end of the stage there is a black upright piano with a chic lamp on it, along with a 4-channel sound system. In 2006, this was a fairly primitive system compared with the other "theatre pubs" in the area (The Queen's Arms, Legends, The Aquarium) which I found interesting because they used to host big-named acts in the local drag-cabaret circuit, as well as those from London and by comparison with their competition, they had the largest venue and stage by far, but not much was invested in. Near the back of the pub, an early flat-screen LCD television was installed at the time of the renovation (which was the first flat screen I'd seen in a Kemptown pub). Interestingly, the pub did not have the appropriate pub license to play music *videos or movies* (though they could play CDs as well as have live entertainment), so they had to keep the volume off on the TV whenever they played music videos! The plan with the TV at the time was to use it to simulcast the stage acts so that people at the back could see the shows being presented as well as run ads for the pub, though the video function was not implemented during the time that I was observing there ("O", 2006)

On a weeknight, the pub could be a quite cozy place, with soft “theatre music” (musical standards and gay anthems. As with many of the pubs in the area, weeknights were punctuated by specific “nights” with karaoke being held on Tuesdays and Thursdays, Piano acts on Wednesdays and Fridays and a Cabaret on either Saturday or Sunday. It seemed at the time that the Zone pub utilized event nights to try to draw customers in, but there was a core base of customers who would either come in every night, regardless of the events, or would *only* come in when nothing was on. I find this point to be important because these same people used to regularly confide in me that on the nights that the Zone was holding an event, they would avoid it: “It’s far too crowded when an act is on, and it is *far* too noisy when the karaoke is playing!! (Steve, 2006) “All I want to do is come in here to chat, why does it have to be so loud I can’t hear myself think?” (Steve, 2006)

3.4 Final Thoughts

One point which arose throughout this project was how was I limiting my research and whether or not the boundaries, both in the physical and intellectual sense are arbitrary. To some extent, I concede they are. For example, there are many gay pubs outside of the Kemptown area that could theoretically be included within my study, and there are larger venues within Kemptown that I have excluded after initial evaluation. My answer to this is that my particular interests in the intersection of digital communications, gay men and gay spaces demands a research area of a manageable scope, and I find that the historical context of Kemptown and the issues within the “gay village” to play a large role in how DCT is implemented or not implemented within these spaces. Many authors ((Campbell, 2004) (Brette, 2003) (Winston, 1995) in particular) agree on the point that communicative technology does not exist in a vacuum but is directly influenced by the spaces (environment) it is used in, thus my work is attempting to

tell the story of how this technology is both effecting and being affected in Kemptown.

The other boundaries that I have made in relation to participants, and spaces will hopefully become clear in the subsequent chapters as my theoretical arguments are laid out in detail.

In this chapter, I have discussed my rationale for conducting my research in Brighton Kemptown. I have also given an abbreviated history of the neighborhood, as well as a discussion of the venues that I have engaged in participant observations and interviews in. I will further develop my rationale for using these venues and my methodology in the following chapter in which I look at the different considerations that influenced my project.

Chapter 4: Methodological Process

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss how this thesis came to be, the methodological process that I used for this, and highlight the rationale for the participant observation format as well as the ethical considerations that arose.

4.2 How the project arose

July, 2003

At the Harlequin Bar, the DJ has installed a PC with a local version of AOL Instant Messenger on it at the foot of the stairs, by the lower dance floor. I can send a message directly to the DJ with a song request and dedication if I want. There is a queue at the machine to send in requests! (D'Aiello, 2003)

My thesis originates in the intersections between physical gay spaces and technology. This interest began shortly after the completion of my MA at Sussex in 2003 when the above mentioned incident occurred in a small gay nightclub which was being run in a premise called the Harlequin, located off of London Road in the (newly named) “New England Quarter” as a sister venue to the Marine Tavern. I was quite surprised to see a computer pop up in a club which was much better known for cheap drinks and drag revues than it was for any sort of technological innovations. I was further interested by the amount of interest that the machine brought to the patrons. However, in what might be seen as a metaphor for some of the ephemerality I encountered in my later research in Kemptown venues, the messaging computer did not last very long. By the time I left for the USA in mid-December 2003, the computer had already been removed, due to a combination of unreliable technology and lack of interest beyond its initial introduction.

When I returned to Brighton in 2006, I discovered that digital technology had penetrated most pubs in what was going to become my research field, which mirrored the general expansion of digital technology throughout society. Every

pub that I was interested in looking at had a web page (though already at this stage, social media were beginning to take the place of the stand-alone website created by the pubs, specifically MySpace), and many pubs were utilizing MP3-based music. I found the placement of a desktop computer behind the bar to be somewhat incongruent with the image of “a British pub” which I, as an American, had. In my first year living in the UK in 2002-3, I had noted that there was a difference in what activities and behaviors that would go on in a “pub” and a “nightclub/private members club” which was based both in licensing (see the Licensing Act of 2003 (HMSO, 2003) for the most current statutory definition of a “public house” versus a “nightclub”) as well as in the expectations of the customers in the space. The addition of the computer I noted, demonstrated evidence of a blurring of roles between a “pub space” and a “night club/ entertainment venue” as the use of a computer allowed for more complex entertainment choices to be presented (e.g.: videos) which previously had been unavailable.¹³ This observation stimulated the research questions behind the first chapter on how pub spaces utilize digital technology and some of the rationale for why these venues were going to the (not insignificant) expense of bringing in Internet service and PCs for music provision, and later (beginning in 2008) Wi-Fi and plasma/LCD screens (late 2008) for on-line karaoke provision.

As time progressed, my project began to develop away from a simple analysis of space and the technology being brought into the space but developed a further dimension, which was what were gay men doing with digital technology that they

¹³ This actually caused one pub to be accused of violating its premises license. In 2006, the Zone Bar began to regularly show clips from musicals on a rotating basis, on a computer-linked LCD television, which was in keeping with the theme of the space. However, shortly after they began doing this, they were forced by the city Licensing Board to either show the video with the sound muted, or play the music without the video as they did not have permission in their premises license to play movies *with sound*. While the venue was well within its license to present live music, recorded music, and video, the combination of audio and video was illegal(!). This was just one of the pitfalls that the implementation of digital technology “behind the bar” would encounter when posed with an archaic 75-year old licensing system!

themselves were bringing into the spaces, and further, what was this doing to the space and how it is being used and its further significance to the values that the users and owners/controllers of the space are putting upon it? This is the subject of my second data chapter (Chapter 6) which discusses how gay men are using digital technology within these spaces and which tries to present an argument as to why user-based technology in these spaces is important, why it has a transformative potential on the space, and what is happening in these spaces are in a state of flux.

As my research continued, I discovered that there were a few pubs within my focus area that were “bucking the trend” of technological implementation and use that I was seeing in the majority of spaces. These spaces were interesting because based on my observations around how successful the other spaces were, these “holdouts” (a very loaded term, but one which I use to explain how my line of analysis developed) should have been showing signs of failure; of being left behind. However, they were (and in the case of one of them, still are) thriving even though they were not following the patterns of many of their compatriots. This led to my last category of spaces, those where digital communicative technology and use of DCT is minimized and indirectly discouraged.

4.3 My Research Questions

- How is digital communicative technology (DCT) affecting self defined gay spaces in Kemptown, Brighton?
- How is DCT affecting the behaviours of the patrons and owners /operators in these spaces?
- How are the owners/operators of these spaces adapting to DCT?
- What are the implications, challenges and opportunities presented to those spaces which are not engaging with DCT in their spaces?

- Are ‘gay spaces’ in Kemptown still relevant with the intersection of digital and physical spaces? Do these spaces meet the same requirements as they have in the past? Does DCT have the ability on its own to maintain the relevance of a venue on its own when faced off against other pressures (such as commercial or demographic pressure)?

One of the key goals of my project is to attempt to document the transitions that DCT entering these spaces is making to the usage and behaviours in the space. Further, as I discussed earlier in my literature review, with the rise of virtual spaces and the potential for the intersection of the physical and the virtual, there is a question on whether there still evidence of a need for specific ‘gay spaces’ in light of the fragmentation that these trends can be seen to induce.

4.4 How I engaged with the research

I began my project by immersing myself into the Kemptown gay ‘scene’ starting in 2006. In order to frame my research project and plan, I started with a limited data collection process which was primarily focused on The Zone Bar. During this period I utilized the Zone Pub as a base in Kemptown while I critically reviewed and compared several venues in Kemptown in order to see both what sort of methodological approach would best suit the *environments* I was intending to work in, as well as what approaches would suit the *questions* that I was beginning to format. This trial period saw me beginning with 3 formal participant observations in each of the following pubs: the Star Inn, R-bar, Charles Street, and the Amsterdam (for a total of 12); as well four informal interviews with the landlords of the Zone Pub, the Bulldog Tavern, and the Marine Tavern. With the exception of anecdotal evidence, the data collected in this trial project has not been used except to frame the research questions and for targeting venues for participant observations and individuals for interviews.

The Zone Pub was ideal in many ways as a “base of operations” in Kemptown for this initial foray into the field due to its physical centrality as well as the networks that I was able to develop through participation observation and just being active socially at the pub. I got to know different people within the pub that had connections to the other pubs and nightclubs in Kemptown and this helped give me access to these spaces. Further, as the Zone had a very diverse clientele, it meant that I met and had access to a large cross section of the men who were active at that time in the pub ‘scene’ and was able to begin to formulate an approach to gather data.

My research questions as well as the methodology I used in my formal research project were directly influenced by the experiences that I had during the trial phase. I had begun working with participation observation in an organic manner (i.e.: in just exploring the scene and taking notes I was engaging with this method). At the end of the trial period however I settled on participant observation as a formal methodology since the data I wanted to work with was qualitative in nature. Specifically, as Jorgensen (1989, p. 7) points out, participant observation is a “humanist” methodology which is seen as being most suitable for the creation of narrative (as opposed to qualitative research) and I ultimately wanted to create a narrative account of the people, time, and place that I was researching, I determined participant observation to be the most suitable methodology to follow. To this end I began a formal process of participant observation in the Fall of 2009 and continued until the Fall of 2011.

While engaging with participant observation I found that my role often varied based on who in the venue knew me and knew about my project. Atkinson and Hammersley discuss the variations of typology which tend to occur in participant observation:

More subtle is the widely used fourfold typology: complete observer, observer as participant, participant as observer and complete participant (Gold, 1958; Junker 1960). Even this tends to run together several dimensions of variation such as the following:

- Whether the researcher is known to be a researcher by all those being studies, or only by some, or by none
- How much, and what, is known about the research by whom
- What sorts of activities are and not engaged in by the researcher in the field, and how this locates her or him in relation to the various conceptions of category and group membership used by participants
- What the orientation of the researcher is: how completely he or she consciously adopts the orientation of insider or outsider (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, pp. 248-9)

In my participant observation process, I found that I often fell into the role of participant as observer in that I was both engaged with observing as well as taking part in the activities and conversations in the venue. This best equates with the evenings that I was in the venues with my notebook visible rather than those evenings in which I would record my observations later. On evenings however when I did not have my notebook with me, I found that I was more engaged as a total participant insofar as there was no separation made by either myself or the other people in the venue that I was there for research; I was simply taking part in the activities in the venue.

Jorgensen points out though that one of the critiques of this methodology is the perception that the results of data collection are subjective and can be seen as not being fully subjected to academic rigor (Jorgensen, 1989, p. 9). I had already determined that simply engaging with participant observation would not give me enough detail in my data to achieve the results I wanted from the project because while the goal of my project was to “tell the story of what is going on in these venues” by gathering information from my own observations, the project required more grounding, as well as background information, which only formal structured interviews could provide. I added formal interviews to the process shortly after the

beginning of participant observations. The interviewees were initially picked from individuals who I met during my participant observations (and who were willing to participate). This led to networking which allowed me to interview landlords and bartenders in the pubs that I was working in. I obtained a total of 12 formal interviews which were structured around questions of technology use in gay spaces, as well as contextual questions which I targeted to individual participants (asking landlords specific information about their pubs for example). The interview questions are included in this work's appendix.

In addition to the formal interview process, there were approximately 20 individual conversations that I engaged in during participant observations in which I obtained quotes and asked questions. In some cases, these were partially recorded, with full consent. These differed from the formal interviews because they were not structured around a formal question set, but originated out of events which I was a party to in the venues. These conversations gave me insight into what the individuals in these spaces thought about a particular situation, as well as about issues which I solicited their thoughts on.

A further outcome from this initial trial project was to determine which venues would be useful to focus on as well as those venues where data collection may not be possible. As my supervisor, Andy Medhurst, pointed out to me at that point in the process, there were some places in Kemptown where taking a notebook or a voice recorder would be "impractical, to say the least," referring to spaces such as saunas or clubs which class themselves as "fetish clubs." Meanwhile, as one of the key objectives of this project was to analyse the changing nature of communication among the patrons of these pubs, the ability to converse was critical. For this reason, I made a distinction between small physical spaces with seating and low volume levels versus larger physical spaces with seating and higher volume levels

versus larger physical venues with limited seating and higher volume levels.

While I do not want to imply that there is a lack of communication in the larger standing venues with louder music levels, the act of communication in these places is hindered by a loud atmosphere which makes it distinct from the smaller, more intimate spaces in Kemptown. In my trial in 2006-7, I found that bars such as R-bar, while providing ample seating, made for difficult conversation (and by proxy difficult observations) due to the volume levels, while venues such as the Revenge club and the Amsterdam Bar(before its remodel) had limited seating and again, very high music volumes which made conversations limited and observations difficult. Thus I decided to focus on venues with a focus on seating and conversation, with music levels which were low enough to engage in both conversation and observation.

Early in my work, I made a distinction between observations where I would be noting data down in the spaces that I was working in and observations where I would not have my notebook with me and instead have a write-up at the end of the observation session. The reasons I made this distinction are:

- 1) Some spaces that I worked in were not conducive to literally being seated with a notebook and writing notes (particularly the Bulldog, which has few tables). I would also have stood out too much in these spaces and thus would have isolated myself from being a “participant” and brought too much focus on myself, thus altering the interactions I was trying to observe.
- 2) When I was using my notebook approach, I tended to engage more in one-to-one conversations with patrons (who in some cases became participants). The data I would then get would usually be quote/remark-based. When I would be without the notebook, I would be engaging more with the group as

a whole and looking at the environment collectively and I would then gather environment- specific research.

Thus, there are spaces that I researched in Kemptown where I did not use a notebook as a rule, such as the Bulldog. This accounts for the lack of direct statements from patrons from these places in my research, instead relying on observations which I wrote down outside of the field. If I was using my notebook and looking for comments or conversations with patrons, I would always utilize informed consent. I would specifically ask for consent to take notes and to directly quote conversations within my study. If this was not specifically given, but the person was amenable to talking with me in general terms, I would instead paraphrase the remarks within my notes to remove any reference which could possibly lead back to the original situation. The only detail which I would not change is the venue where the specific situation occurred. This of course led to some data which was not used in this project.

As people began to get to know me in Kemptown, either by meeting me or hearing about my work, some resistance was created:

November 28, 2009:

Today I had an 'interesting' incident at the Aquarium. Two guys saw me in there with my notebook writing up some thoughts that had come to me from the night before and said quite loudly: "Oh God, he's here again with his notebook!" His friend then jokingly remarked: "Be careful, he's going to take our conversation down!!"

I moved over to them and chatted with them about what I was doing and showed them the notes that I had just taken what details I was writing down (as there was no personal data whatsoever in them), which seemed to mollify them. I told them a bit about my work and the fact that I was anonymize my data unless I had specific permission to use names and conversations. After this encounter, the two men became participants in my work, even giving me anecdotal observations.

If I was not using my notebook, I took the position that I was within a public space and so long as I did not note direct quotations, the persons involved, or give any information which could link the situation to the people involved in any fashion that there was no ethical or consent issues to be dealt with. In this regards, I would make general observations about behaviours and incidents, noting the location and the date.

4.4a How did I obtain participation and interview subjects?

The main objective of this project was always to tell the story of digital convergence/intersections within Kemptown's gay spaces from an insider perspective. However, this same level of insider-ness meant that it was essential to move beyond my own circles in order to obtain objective participation. To this end, I utilized a method similar to Kathe Browne's "snowball method" (Browne, 2007) whereby my data collection was assisted by participants and their friends, and by word-of-mouth within Kemptown. There is a relatively small group of 'regulars' who patronise the pubs that I worked in so word about my research travelled ahead of me. This was a positive development because it meant that people who were interested would seek me out to talk with me about my work and their own experiences. However it also discouraged potential participants due to privacy and a misunderstanding of the nature of my work. Thus, after a certain point, it became difficult to separate my data collection experiences from nights out in Kemptown because people would automatically assume that I was collecting data rather than being social. The "snowball method" then was a double-edged approach because while it made interviews and direct conversations easier, it made participant observation somewhat more complicated as it was difficult to act as a participant without the constraints of others knowing what I was engaged in and potentially changing how they reacted to me in the spaces.

4.5 Ethical considerations

Participant observation presents Gay spaces, particularly social spaces such as pubs and bars present complex ethical considerations in regards to anonymity of participants and informed consent. Kenneth Pimble (2002, pp. 191-193) makes the assertion that when engaging with *any* type of research that involves human participants that three initial questions need to be asked: is it (the data being collected and the research project itself) true, is it fair, and lastly is it wise?. I engaged with these questions on a regular basis during my data collection as well as in the report write-up process. I have therefore structured my discussion about the ethical implications of my work around these questions utilizing Pimble's work as a framework and guide to my rationale.

4.5a "Is it true?"

Pimble's discussion about the issues of "truth" in research are at the surface obvious; in that they are asking whether or not the project and data collection method will obtain data which is accurate and is a valid representation of the circumstances. (p. 192) However, I would argue that "true" in my work goes a bit beyond this as I am dealing with multiple groups of individual in multiple spaces during a limited time period. I would add to Pimble's discussion the idea of being "true" to the participants in the project. One of the considerations that I have already discussed above was the limitations that notebook use in the spaces during participant observation raised in my interactions with the different people within this space. However, there is also an ethical consideration of making sure that my record of the observations were accurate and represented a true discussion of what I had observed, particularly on those occasions that I was *not* using the notebook. The ethical consideration is whether or not the data that I was obtaining was both truthful from an research analysis point of view, but more importantly due to the

fact that I was working with participants, whether or not the record was accurate in representing them and the duty that I felt I had to them as a researcher telling their story.

As I have pointed out, though decriminalization of male homosexuality occurred 45 years ago, levels of social acceptability have varied and it is only relatively recently, within the last 20 years or so that full visibility of gay men has been common and the risk for being so has diminished. Thus, I was particularly aware of the sensitivities of both engaging in research within these safe spaces and with potentially vulnerable individuals. I approached these concerns in two fashions relating to whether or not I was using my notebook in the space.

Before I began my work, I spoke with the landlords and bartenders of the venues I was working in, both for ethical considerations as well as for courtesy. I was following a similar line of logic of informed consent and dialog between the researcher and the participant that Ellen Whiteman (2007, pp. 96-97) notes has become part of the Canadian Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans. In each case I gained permission with a brief explanation of what I was trying to achieve. The only concern which any venue had was that of annoying patrons, and to that end I was careful to make my observations as unobtrusive as possible.

Whiteman also notes that there is a difference between research which is gathered in participant observation that is specific and is directly attributable to an identifiable individual, and “naturalistic observation” within an environment where care is taken to record data and report on it in a fashion which would anonymize the individuals (Whiteman, 2007, pp. 96-97). In many cases, particularly in pubs that I had newly begun observations in, this process was

reasonably straight-forward as I would not know many of the individuals. These “naturalistic observations” make up much of the work as I have stated before I am interested in the general dynamic of these spaces rather than the *specific* behavior of individuals and occurrences. However, in the cases where I *did* know the individuals, particularly if they were one of my key informants (who I discuss in my next chapter setting the scene in the spaces in Brighton), the situation became more complicated. If I wanted to quote an individual, I would obtain specific consent. In some cases I was given permission to quote the person only if I would otherwise render them anonymous by not using their name or description and I would follow this request.

4.5b Is It Fair?

Pimple’s discussion of the fairness of participant research and how it is treated can be distilled down to the following:

The second question, “Is it fair?”, concerns social relationships within the world of research. In this category belong issues such as relationships among researchers (authorship and plagiarism); between researchers and human subjects (informed consent); between researchers and animal subjects (animal welfare); and relationships between researchers, their sponsoring institutions, funding agencies, and the government. For example, although true reports can be published without citing previous publications, or without securing informed consent from human subjects, these are not *fair* research practices. (Pimple, 2002, p. 192)

For the purposes of my own work the issue of informed consent and maintaining an appropriate relationship between myself and my participants are key. While Pimple sees the issue of informed consent as being an issue of fairness, I see it as an overlap of an issue around truth and I have already elaborated on this. The issue of maintaining an appropriate relationship is thus the crux of what I would argue is defined as “fairness”.

Through the process of research and getting to know the community in which I was working, I have developed a distinct fondness for the people and places of

Kempton. It would be disingenuous of me to state otherwise. This has induced me to be very cognisant of the pitfalls that this fondness might engender in regards to objectivity.

A key problem I had was the idea of being an “insider”. For example, as Hovland (2003, p. 1) points out, in my case, I could not distance myself from being a gay man and a resident in Brighton, but the very act of researching gay spaces meant that I was placing myself somehow outside of the group. Further, as Simone Hary points out in her ‘insider’ research of second-generation Korean-Germans, “insiders can never be expected to be ‘objective and scientific’, and for another, the process of studying an alien culture is missing.” (Hary, 2012, p. 20) This presented me with a problem which I have been negotiating and renegotiating constantly throughout my data collection period as well as my ‘writing-up’. How do I avoid painting a “rosy picture” of what is going on in Kempton because of my own feelings and sentiments about the people involved, or on the contrary, how do I avoid painting an overly cynical picture of the situation in an attempt to remain objective?

Atkinson and Hammersley (1994, p. 249) point out that being an insider does not necessarily preclude the researcher from looking critically at a subject area, and as Harry (2012, pp. 20-1) points out, this “insider access” can actually give a level of access and insight that would otherwise not be possible. In my experiences I found that the advantages posed by “insider status” allowed for a level of access which was critical to obtaining data (particularly in the “informal conversations” which I had). This status thus was quite critical to access as well as being able to give a critical analysis of the data I obtained.

My first attempt to analyse the data which I obtained from the Marine Tavern helped me to further explore the issue of objectivity. In my pilot project which

involved data collection and analysis of the Marine Tavern , my initial analysis pointed towards the Marine Tavern as being a digital hold-out against the trends that I was observing in the other Kemptown spaces that I had been reviewing. However, a criticism made of my arguments was that I was taking a highly technologically determinist position, in essence taking the side of those spaces which were implementing DCT against the more traditional approach of the Marine Tavern. Thus, when I later reanalysed my data in relation and in correlation with the main body of data that was gathered in 2009-2011, I was now aware of my own bias and I looked further at the ideas of technological determinism(see (Brette, 2003))and applied this to my analysis. Thus the first argument I would make about objectivity is that as a researcher, I am aware of the bias that I have and feel that this has been addressed in my analysis and in my conclusions.

Further, I am driven by the desire to present a “snapshot” of what is currently happening within this community. I would rather present the developments and my analysis of this as accurately as possible than the alternative of creating a project that simply represents a best-case scenario for the area. The first tactic I used was to clearly define the situations which I would be ‘in the field working’ and the situations in which I would be socializing. This was partially successful, as I would make it clear to myself and the people that I was with that I was either ‘working’ or ‘out for the evening’ and would treat the evening accordingly.

Thus, in my work I view fairness as being an issue of objectivity to my topic and research as well as that of informed consent.

4.5c Is It Wise?

Pimble’s definition of the wisdom of research revolves around the ethical considerations of the research work in the context of the greater world around it:

The third question, “Is it wise?”, concerns the relationship between the research agenda and the broader social and physical world, present and future. Will the research improve the human condition, or damage it? Will it lead to a better world, or a worse one? Or less grandly, which of the many possible lines of research would we be better off pursuing? (Pimple, 2002, p. 193)

As I have previously mentioned, I am very cognisant of the potential for harm which could come out of any research in spaces such as those where I have engaged with interviews and participant observations. Even with consent, there is a responsibility implicit within my data analysis to avoid any harm to individuals as well as avoiding any potential for embarrassment of a participant based on what I have observed and how I use it. As I have noted, much of my data has been gathered as “naturalistic observation” which means that the risk is low due to the anonymity of the observation process itself. However, there have been events that I have noted with my key informants which, even though I have consent to discuss them, *could* have the potential to impact on those individuals within the greater Brighton community. For this reason, I have decided to change the names and some physical attributes of these individuals in order to adequately protect their privacy but also discuss the events which they participated in and I was privy to.

With interviews¹⁴, I obtained informed consent on the recordings that I made as well as written consent in cases where I would be utilizing quotes from the individual directly and I informed each of my participants that they have every right to withdraw their interviews from my project up to the point of submission.

Within the idea of the “wisdom” of pursuing this research is the argument which was made to me by a patron of the King’s Arms while I was making a participant observation in December of 2009:

¹⁴ I should also make a distinction between interviews which I conducted with landlords and pub staff and those with key participants. Landlords and pub staff gave me interviews about both their own personal experiences as well as a general discussion of the pubs that they operated. In these cases I have consent to use their real names and I have minimized the use of any personal information that I would feel would otherwise require the person’s name be changed.

I had an older gentleman in the pub today ask me what I was up to while I was writing some notes about the digital jukebox in the King's Arms. When I told him about my project he was a bit put-off by it. He couldn't understand why anyone would really be interested in this type of work and he remarked that it would just perpetuate the stereotype of gay men being more interested in "things"... he assumes that I'll be painting gay men in a bad light.

This idea of portraying gay men in a "bad light" has been an issue that I have found quite problematic to deal with and it raises a more fundamental question to me as well: will this research be of a benefit to our understanding of gay spaces and the interaction of DCT on them, or will they just serve to reinforce preconceived notions of these spaces? Aside from the fact that I need to avoid making suppositions on how my research will be received, I am aware that the project needs to be handled in a way which is mindful of the research environment as well as the larger social environment which will ultimately context. I believe that the nature of my research approach as well as my analysis fits this role and is both academically critical while being mindful of the questions that I have noted.

In conclusion, the ethical considerations that I have used in this project have been influenced by Pimple's three questions as well as by the Belmont Report (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2009) which details the policy adopted by university researchers in the USA regarding the use of human subjects.

4.6 Conclusion

The past three chapters have served to explain where my research rests within current academic discourse, set the environment in which I completed my participant observations and interviews, and finally, this chapter has set out my rationale for conducting this project, as well as my specific research questions and the methodological process and ethical considerations that have arose in the project. I am now moving to analyse my research in light of the material previously discussed. As I have mentioned previously, I have divided my research

into three specific areas: research into how the *spaces* in Kemptown have implemented DCT and the effects of this on patronage and the theoretical considerations that this has on space use, research into how the *gay patrons* of these Kemptown spaces have used the DCT that they are bringing into the spaces, and the implications of how these patrons are using the spaces, and lastly looking at those spaces which have eschewed both the implementation of DCT in their pubs and have discouraged the use of personal DCT in those spaces as well.

With this in mind, the next chapter will utilize my participant observations to analyse the usage of DCT in gay pub spaces in Kemptown and will examine the theoretical implications that this has for the spaces and the greater academic discourses around the intersection of spatial use and DCT.

Chapter 5: Technology of the Space

5.1 Introduction

In the past 4 years that I have been observing pub and bar spaces as a participant and as a researcher in Kemptown, the vast majority of these have remodelled (and in some cases changed hands), and along with this cosmetic updating of the spaces, there has been a concurrent implementation of digital communicative technologies being offered for the patron's use. These upgrades (cosmetic and technical) are motivated to increasingly maintain market share in a very competitive pub/bar market. Further, these upgrades are also geared to encourage increased consumption, both of the spaces and the services which are provided. Whereas cosmetic upgrades are useful to keep current customers and draw new patrons into a pub/bar, digital communicative technology (DCT) offers the potential of a transformative dynamic for how these spaces are used. This chapter will discuss and critique that potential by examining the changes in space use in pubs/bars such as The Aquarium, The King's Arms¹⁵, and The Camelford, from the perspective of the benefits and costs that DCT implementation has engendered.

This chapter will be structured around the different DCT implementations in use in the gay spaces in Kemptown and how these are affecting and helping to determine the activities and behaviors in the space. The specific implementations I will discuss are that of digital streaming karaoke in the Aquarium Theatre Bar; the use of streaming music, the digital jukebox and the streaming video jukebox in (respectively) the Aquarium, and The King's Arms; the use (and failures) of streaming video and performance recording in the Aquarium and the Bulldog; and lastly, the implementation and uptake of open Wi-Fi use in the above spaces.

¹⁵ During the period of my observation, the King's Arms was under different management than it has now, with a completely different focus and theme in the same venue, as I will discuss further.

While analyzing the different technologies in use, I will look at the multidimensional aspects of the relationship between DCT and activities in the spaces mentioned. While focusing on the Aquarium Theatre Bar, the potential for experiencing the “pub away from the pub” by the use of webcasting and YouTube as a method of time and space-shifting will be explored. Exploring the Camelford, I will discuss the contradictory nature of DCT in these spaces, insofar as in some spaces DCT has become a feature of the space while in others it is an “unobtrusive addition.” (Behan, 2011)

Issues of ‘who controls the space?’ will be discussed in my third section while examining the Kings Arms, where a free patron-operated digital jukebox linked to Spotify gave patrons the ability to control the music played in the space, as well as the plasma screens. Unlike a typical jukebox, however, the staff could readily override these machines (from behind the bar) and thus reassert control over the atmosphere of the space.

The section entitled “To make the space more cruisy, we shut it all off...” will discuss how the removal of DCT use in the Kings Arms was seen to be essential to maintain the right ‘atmosphere’ on ‘theme nights’ when the landlords wanted to achieve a particular effect. I will discuss the concept that DCT is viewed as an isolator and an obstruction to interpersonal relationships in these circumstances.

The use of DCT in larger pub/bar spaces will be discussed, with special emphasis paid to the idea that the larger nature of the space makes the potential for less social interaction in the physical space, but for *more* interaction possible due to the expansion of communication possibilities.

Lastly, I will discuss the impact that DCT implementation in the pub spaces has on the men that I followed throughout the process of the project and reflect on my own relationship with the technologies in these spaces.

5.2 Modernizing and the link between cosmetic renovation and DCT implementation

Throughout my fieldwork and beyond in the Kemptown area, a recurring theme of coordinated cosmetic renovation and DCT implementation was noted. As each pub/bar/club refurbished itself cosmetically, there was a concurrent implementation of DCT technology in the space. In discussions with landlords in the area, many (such as Michael of the Aquarium and Jay of the King's Arms) expressed the belief that pubs/bars/clubs need to continually modernize in order to keep abreast of the ever-changing entertainment market in general. Particularly, the landlords saw the implementation of new technology as assisting in refreshing the space and in offering more incentive for patronage of the space. As I will discuss below, in some cases this implementation of DCT has been a major feature of the environment of the space such as in the Aquarium, but in other instances, it has been a "minor addition" or rather, a more subtle feature to draw in additional clientele, such as in the Camelford Inn.

It is interesting that in the process of renovation and refurbishment, DCT has been seen as a necessary addition to the space, just as recorded music was seen as an important addition to pub spaces in the 1980's. When looking at these changes from the point of view of consumption, the changes roughly correlate to the rising percentage of UK household income being devoted to "leisure activities", assuming that the trend noted by (Ransome, 2005, pp. 81-83) for UK household expenditure between 1976 and 2002 has remained constant, almost 20% of UK household income is now devoted to these activities in 2010. This correlation however does not take into consideration the potential for economic difference specifically within

same sex households, but with the consistent rise in spending and consumption of leisure activities in general, this points towards an expansion of leisure spaces to meet the rising consumptive demand. Consequently the demands on gay space for renovation and the offering of new services has been keeping pace with this rise in consumption. This theme continues to arise throughout my analysis of technology of the space.

5.2a Disruptive Potential

Throughout this chapter, I will continually return to this correlation between these ideas as well as the fact that Winston's (1995) thesis on the 'suppression of the radical disruptive potential of technology' seems to demonstrate a constant limiting factor in the exploitation of DCT and explains some of the particulars of DCT use in these spaces.

Winston's thesis revolves around the idea that new and emerging media technologies present a potential to disrupt the status quo in a vested and stable media environment, as well as the status quo in a stable society. The actions of specific vested interests serve then to protect their interests from this potential and forms a "law of suppression" which restrains a technology from being adapted until such time as it can be fully exploited by these vested interests in a way that perpetuates their dominance in their respective fields.

This concept manifests itself in the explicit suppression of "radical" uses for a technology. In this sense, Winston is placing a double meaning on "radical potential" because on one hand he emphasizes that

...We need to remember at this point once again that the technologist is a social being and that all this is taking place within the social sphere. The scientists conceptualizing necessary fundamental understandings are as much social beings, exponents of and *prisoners of the culture that produced them*, as are the technologists who have ideas for devices and build prototypes. (emphasis added) (Winston, 1995, p. 5)

This limitation means that when a new media technology is emerging, it is going to be fit into the prevailing society which exists around it, so the technology is inherently limited by the imaginations of its creators and promoters.

The other meaning that Winston attributes to the idea of “radical potential” is the ability of a technology to radically disrupt or change both the society it exists in and the industries that are based around older, vested technologies. Winston’s work tends to focus on commercial aspect much more than the social aspects of “radical potential” and by proxy, he seems to take a Marxist viewpoint that ultimately the industrial control of the technology has more to do with how the technology develops than the social constraints placed upon it by the society it is “born” into.

Winston discounts the idea that a new technology has the capability *on its own* to act as “radical potential” for social transformation. For example, he discusses the “hype” around the signing of the first treaty regulating satellite communications in 1969, where Arthur C. Clarke famously stated that the signers “...have just signed the first draft of the articles of Federation of the United States of Earth” (Winston, 1995, p. 292), as being the perfect example of expecting technology in and of itself to be able to overcome societal pressures, in this case the pressure of nationalism, and engender “radical potential” for change. Of course, as of 2011, satellites have *not* lead to a United States of Earth, and as Winston points out, satellites in themselves have in many ways been rendered redundant by technological advances in an older, vested, technology that satellites were supposed to replace: submarine cables.¹⁶ Thus, Winston argues that technology is not capable of inducing a

¹⁶ . With the advent of fibre optics and ever expanding data bandwidths, satellites have almost entirely lost their PSTN telephone traffic, and have really been relegated to the use of live television and mobile telephone systems, which while not a small amount of traffic, is very small compared to

“radical transformation” in a society simply by being brought into existence.

Rather, any change that a technology will be capitalized and exploited by those vested interests in both industry and society to maintain their position and status.

Winston’s key example of the shift is his analysis of the shift from an aural media culture to an aural-visual media culture (the shift from broadcast radio to broadcast television) beginning between 1936 (UK) and 1941 (USA). Winston points out that the technology for television was commercially viable by 1936, but was not standardized in the USA until 1941 and did not take off and become a mass medium until the period between 1948 and 1953. The introduction of the technology did not create a “radical” transformation, which would have been exemplified in the virtually instantaneous gutting of radio audience in the USA and UK, but rather it took specific events to push the market forward. These social factors, coupled with the introduction of a new technology ultimately led to what Winston argues was a step-change in the mass media industry. In the USA, it specifically “Uncle Miltie” (The Milton Berle Show) on NBC starting in 1948 and “I Love Lucy” on CBS (1952), and in the UK the Coronation on BBC-TV in 1953 that made TVs a *socially* imperative item; one which each household *must have*. The social pressures which were exerted drove the industry forward in this case.

As Winston continually emphasises however, this social pressure was induced by an industry (in the US example, RCA, which held patent control over the technology) which was ready to exploit the demand for this new technology and profit from it. Television could not take off as a medium until the vested interests were capable of exploiting it fully. The same “players” involved in broadcast radio,

the original expectations of their developers in the 1950’s and ‘60s. (Winston, 1995, pp. 297-8)

(NBC and CBS in the USA and BBC in Britain) had all made a successful transition to television at this time and the film industry, had made this transition. Thus, for Winston, the limits on “radical potential” specifically revolve around limits of ideation and limits around exploitation, insofar as the vested interests in a field will block the disruptive nature of radical potential.

Whereas Winston discusses his theoretical approaches on a macro scale, covering whole industries and branches of media, I would argue that there is relevance in utilizing his theoretical frameworks on a micro, local scale. In the case of DCT use in pub spaces, I would argue that Winston’s premise explains some of the pressures both to adopt DCT on one hand, but to limit its use to specific areas on the other. As I will discuss later in the chapter, in some of the spaces that I have observed, DCT has been implemented specifically to bring a focus to the space and to allow for a usage pattern to emerge around the technology (karaoke use) which drives the activities within the bar. At the same time I will show how DCT has been specifically limited in spaces to ensure a continuation of the more traditional usage of the space and to make sure that the pub/bar owners are able to continue to capitalize on their current business model (by maintaining clientele numbers). This is consistent with Winston’s premise that technology cannot be completely disruptive to the operation of the environment.

5.3 Case Study: The Aquarium

5.3a Setting the Scene

As I describe in Chapter 3, The Aquarium Theatre Pub (The Aquarium) is located in Stein Street, just off all of the main thoroughfares of central Brighton and Kemptown. Tristan worked at the Aquarium most weekend nights and some weeknights, so I had frequent interaction with him throughout my many participant observations in the Aquarium. Bart would come down frequently on

Saturday nights, but Adam would seldom come in, at first. As he repeatedly pointed out, he wanted something a bit livelier if he was going to go out, but as time went on, he would stop in more frequently, and often take Bart with him to the clubs later in the evening.

On a typical evening in the pub during my observations, the pub was full, with a relatively high turnover of patrons of mixed ages, from 18 to 70. When I would come in, I would be acknowledged as a regular and most people in the pub knew of me. The banter in the pub was usually defined by several small groups knotted together throughout the pub and the atmosphere was often loud, with show tunes playing softly in the background. Michael would often come down and turn up the stereo when there was something that he was particularly fond of, and if there was a receptive crowd, he would put on the karaoke and sing several songs in a mini-performance.

As the evening would wear on the crowd would often shift, becoming younger and more boisterous as the older regulars would head home for the evening. On nights when karaoke was a scheduled event, a second bartender would come in, often to act as an emcee/backup bartender to organize the karaoke. Unlike other venues like the Queen's Arms and The Bulldog, there was no separation between emcee and bartender and both work behind the bar in range of the taps and the soundboard.

5.3b Installation of DCT at The Aquarium Theatre Bar

In November of 2008, the Aquarium installed a PC behind the bar and several video monitors, one facing their small stage, another in the front end of the bar where the patrons could see it, as well as a third near the sound system. With the PC, the Aquarium subscribed to broadband service and installed a wireless router, to allow for the patrons to utilize the broadband connection as well. Along with the

PC and internet connection, a more advanced audio mixer board was installed to allow for music to be played from the computer and the minidisk/CD player, as well as having two wireless microphones available for use. At the same time, the landlords of the pub, Michael and Ben, hired an IT consultant on a part-time basis to maintain the PC and the video screens, as well as a web page for the Aquarium and a PowerPoint slide presentation of photos and notices for upcoming events to play on the video screens. However, the primary use of the PC system and the internet connection has to stream karaoke tracks from “Sing to the World” on-line karaoke (<http://www.singtotheworld.com/>). It is this implementation of DCT which I will be focusing on in this section.

In my interviews with the consultant, Jules, we discussed the main rationale for DCT being introduced. He indicated that the primary considerations which Michael and Ben interested in were to improve on the cabaret acts that the bar regularly held on the weekends, to provide for better sound control for the acts on stage, and to begin to host regular karaoke nights without having to bring in specialized equipment, or hire an outside contractor to run the equipment. (Prost, 2009) The Aquarium Bar used to hold karaoke nights regularly, but as part of an advertised rotation around cabaret nights of drag shows and vocal acts and “piano bar” evenings with several local performers playing requests. These nights were scheduled in advance (usually occurring on Saturday nights and Sunday nights after the 7PM cabaret), and previously required a karaoke machine with a library of disks. These karaoke nights were very popular and the main limiting factor in them was that they were only being held at the most once a week. As Michael had pointed out however, the whole point of a “theatre bar” is to create a theatrical atmosphere which is similar to a cabaret club, with regular shows and audience

participation. This led to the landlords looking to try to expand on their theatrical offerings, and thus the idea of streaming karaoke was born. (Conran, 2010)

The implementation of streaming karaoke made a lot of business sense to the Aquarium because even when considering the initial startup overhead of the computer and three LCD video screens (£600), and the continuing overhead of the karaoke subscription (£50 pa) and the broadband connection (£120 pa), because the system provides an unlimited amount of flexibility in use. I have observed the karaoke system in use all 7 nights in a given week, particularly outside the scheduled “karaoke nights” on Saturday and Sunday evenings. This is particularly evident due to the close interrelationship between the Brighton and Hove (Actually) Gay Men’s Chorus (BHAGMC) who frequent The Aquarium after their concerts and rehearsals. On these evenings, the karaoke can be made available at the bartender’s discretion for the group.

The system is very user-friendly, being web-based, so anyone who is working behind the bar can operate it upon demand. This demand varies based on who comes into the pub on a day to day basis. However, as Michael noted in a conversation “...people who enjoy singing come here (the Aquarium) because they know we have a good system in place, and that they can sing *whenever they want...*”(emphasis added) (Conran, 2011), thus the availability of karaoke ‘on-demand’ is, for the desired clientele, a draw factor to coming to the Aquarium.

Further, unlike the previous system of using an external contractor to provide the service, karaoke emcees are hired as staff by the bar and thus are able to work both as an emcee and a bartender. These members of staff are usually only brought in on a busy evenings where there is a scheduled karaoke night. Instead of having to have two bartenders working *and* an emcee, the bar only needs to employ one

bartender, and one dual-purpose bartender-emcee. This leads to a higher profit margin for the evening by having one less person to pay. The emcee is also expected to perform a bit themselves and is hired both on their ability to operate the fairly simple equipment and talent.

5.3c Further uses of DCT in the Aquarium

Within the past year, the Aquarium has begun phasing out their use of mix CDs and professionally recorded CDs in favor of using Spotify (www.spotify.com), a free commercial-based streaming music service which allows you to create your own playlists from a large catalogue of music tracks. This shift, according to Michael, was prompted by both the utility of not having to change CDs throughout the day, as well as the large catalogue of music available. It also has given each bartender the ability to have their own playlists in the pub, as well as being able to better tailor the music selection to the particular clientele in the pub at the time. For example, when the BHAGMC is frequenting the pub *en masse*, I have observed that the music selection is changed to show tunes, particularly from *Les Miserable* or *The Phantom of the Opera*.

The Aquarium utilizes PowerPoint to create an interactive bulletin board, listing upcoming events as well as photo and videos from recent events at the bar. It is important to note however that this is not in use all of the time for technical reasons, as well as for lack of updates.

5.3d “I won’t turn it on before 6”: How technology changes the nature of activities at the Aquarium

In this section, I will discuss how the interaction between DCT and the clientele of the Aquarium can change the nature of activities at the Aquarium. Further, I will discuss the idea of time division in what activities are accepted and expected at the Aquarium and the contradictory role that DCT has in eroding this division, depending on the clientele, and the pressures that the idea of “performance” brings

to bear in how the clientele utilize the bar. Finally, I will discuss how the theory of the disruptive potential of new technology, as enunciated by Brian Winston impacts the behaviors and expectations of the clientele and staff members at the Aquarium.

Time Divisions

In a conversation with Ben, he expressed to me what he sees as a major issue with technology use in the Aquarium:

I won't turn it (the karaoke system) before 6, even if I get a bunch of people in who want to sing. While I am behind the bar, I want to keep things quiet in here...it changes the whole nature of the space and I don't like it...it's fine at night but not during the afternoon... (Burt, 2010)

I had frequenting the Aquarium for about 2 years by this point and Ben was familiar with my work, so I suspected that Ben's particular turn of phrase was motivated by this, so I questioned him further:

A: You put that that way for me because you know about my research, didn't you?

B: Yea, but I still feel the same way. The whole flavor of the bar changes when we do karaoke...it becomes more like a theatre and less like a pub, and that's fine, just not during the afternoon.

A: What does time have to do with it?

B: People coming in here during the afternoon are usually looking for a place to chat, looking for a place to socialize, and the karaoke is just too loud for that...at night, people are looking to party, you know? (Burt, 2010)

I asked Ben if he liked the karaoke system in the bar, to see if his opinion was based on a dislike karaoke, and he indicated that he did, and liked what was happening in the bar in the evenings, but that he also liked the quieter times that simple background music provided in the bar. More importantly, he indicated that the clientele of the bar shifts completely between 6 and 8 PM. There are people who come in the afternoon who will never come in at night specifically because "it

isn't their scene." In my observations, I found that there were several "regulars" who frequented the bar in the afternoon who would not do so at night. According to Ben, he sees a clear time division between the afternoon and evening, and sees the bar as serving different functions as well as clientele between those two times.

I spoke with some of the "afternoon regulars" in conversations and most of them indicated that the reasons that they did not frequent the pub at night had a lot to do with the noise ("not being able to hear myself think!") as much as the crowds. The afternoons provided a different atmosphere for them and it focused much more on talking with other patrons and the bartender (who is Ben most of the time during the week). Ben elaborated on this: "My friends come in the afternoons. They want to talk, not sing...Michael's mates come in at night, what with the Chorus and all." (Burt, 2010; Whittle, 1997)

However, even this idea of time division is not definitive among the different bartenders/landlords. In speaking with Michael, he said that he did not have as rigid a rule about turning on the karaoke in the afternoons. As he works on some Saturday and Sunday afternoons and will put on the karaoke if there is a demand for it. Michael's position on this is that the customer is always right, so if there is the demand, he is willing to supply the service. For Michael, the space is meant to be variable and it is part of the nature of the pub trade that this variability be recognized (Conran, 2010).

Ben's idea of time division and multiple uses of one social space use is echoed in David Churchill's discussion of queer spaces in 1950's Toronto, Canada. In his examples, public parks and bars in Toronto had a very strict time delimitation between user populations, during the day the spaces were used predominantly by heterosexual couples and at night by single homosexual men and heterosexual

couples engaged in “transgressive behavior.” (Churchill, 2004, p. 830). As Churchill points out about the Toronto spaces, this form of utilization and time division means that the space can serve two distinct groups by allowing space for both activities. I would argue that the Aquarium does just this by disallowing karaoke in the evenings before 6PM because it allows the space to serve as a meeting point for those men who are not interested in singing or performance to use the space while allowing for a different clientele to utilize the space as a theatre bar after that time.

This is not to say that there is not tension between the interests of the different clientele in the space. As I note below, there is constant pressure to turn on the karaoke during the day as well as constant pressure at night to leave the karaoke off in favor of music and conversation. As Churchill points out:

Men seeking to participate in gay subculture were particularly adroit at using a variety of urban spaces in ways that subverted their intended use. These men’s “ways of operating” helped constitute what Michel de Certeau calls “the innumerable practices by means of which users reappropriate the space organized by techniques of sociocultural production” Thus the tactics used by the men in gay sites formed a network of antidipline" that resisted the dominant ordering of social space. (Churchill, 2004, p. 830)

In the Aquarium, there is constant tension over what could be termed to be the “dominant ordering” of the space. It is not always a harmonious transition between the usage of the space after Ben’s 6PM watershed and both of the clienteles have indicated in discussions (and simply by walking out of the bar) that they either find the lack of karaoke boring, or its use to ruin “their space”. Again, the idea of “who ultimately controls the space” is occurring here because though the clientele can express preference, it is ultimately up to the bartenders and owners to determine what activities will be going on within the space. What is important to note however is that due to the permanent availability of DCT based karaoke, DCT

is having the effect of blurring and eroding the previously strict delimitation of space use in the Aquarium and increasing the space use confrontations.

Michael's desire to satisfy demand has led to the strict sense of time division being eroded and it is showing a tendency towards the Aquarium becoming a more homogenous space. I do not argue that DCT is the only factor in this change in the use of the space. There is definitive human agency in how DCT is used which makes this change possible, but what is important to note is the flexibility that DCT brings to allow for this change. The difference between Ben and Michael's position highlights this change in the use of the bar space when DCT is brought into use. During the afternoon, when the karaoke is kept off and music is only streamed, the space is more convivial to conversation and interpersonal interaction. At night, when the karaoke is streamed, the space becomes dedicated to performance.

5.3e The performances aren't just on stage...

The idea of "performance" harkens back in many ways to the links between gay male subculture and the theatre, and in some sense, the Aquarium sees itself as a continuation of the theatre tradition. The décor, the stage, and the small theater stage all are in place to encourage patrons to engage in performance in the bar. As I have noted, many of the evening patrons specifically come to the bar in order to participate in karaoke or cabaret (the karaoke emcee even says "Don't think of this as karaoke, but rather as your own personal cabaret!"). This overt performance however masks another (formerly) vital function of gay spaces.

In Daring Hearts, local men talk about their experiences with gay spaces in Brighton in the 1950's and 60's and one of the points that comes through is that gay spaces were viewed as a space where men felt safe to be open about their sexual identity and not have to "act" straight, as they did in their everyday lives.

In my conversations with patrons at the Aquarium, many patrons expressed the same desire for going to the bar. Gay spaces have had a long history of being a space where gay men could simply be themselves and not need to camouflage their homosexuality as a means of protection from discrimination. The Aquarium was seen as a conducive atmosphere to socialize and interact with other gay men. It is still a very recent social change that has led to higher social acceptance and visibility of gay men. My observations and conversations with patrons demonstrate that patrons come to the Aquarium *both* to perform in the literal sense of the term, but also to get away from the idea of performing in their everyday lives. The Aquarium, being a predominantly gay-only venue, provides a sense of safety from judgment that straight or mixed venue spaces may not provide. But this freedom *from* constant performance is diametrically opposite of the “theatre-performance” aspect of the bar and I would argue helps to create a bar which has two very distinct personalities. However, these distinct personalities are under threat.

DCT has opened a new level of variability because it has allowed the blurring of the clear time delimitation of activities in the bar. Since it is now possible to put on karaoke at any time of day, without limit,¹⁷ the previous strict time-shifting of activities based on scheduling and access to the karaoke equipment has been ended. This flexibility has led to tension which is created is quite visible at times. I have observed patrons leaving in aggravation in the afternoon when the karaoke is turned on due to a request by another patron, and I have noted evening patrons leaving out of boredom in the evenings when there is no cabaret or karaoke going on. When I have questioned patrons about their behaviors they indicate that it is the karaoke which is either drawing them and repelling them from the space.

¹⁷ Except for those mandated by the bar’s licensing conditions

I find the differing opinions of the two landlords to be extremely interesting because it shows both a differing idealization of what the Aquarium should be as a space, as well as a different concept of nature of customer control of the space. Ben has shown in my discussions that he is much more rigid in his view that the bar should be for interpersonal discussion during the day and a theatre/karaoke space at night, whereas Michael is far more fluid in his views and will allow the customers to define the activities within the space. As I will discuss further later, in many spaces Kemptown, the use of DCT has created a

As noted above, with the implementation of DCT, the Aquarium no longer needed to contract out for karaoke services and had 24 hour access. This flexibility has led to karaoke being used more and more over the time that I have observed the bar, but only after 6PM

5.3f Taking the bar home with you: the YouTube “souvenirs” and simulcast experiment

In this section, I will discuss the experiment that the Aquarium undertook to expand its presence on the internet both with recorded video clips of performances and live streaming video. This experiment claimed mixed results (which I will discuss further) and has been partially discontinued, but it is important because it demonstrates some of the limitations of the transformative potential of DCT on spaces such as the Aquarium. It also shows the importance that physical space still plays in regards to bar and pub space in Kemptown.

Shortly after the installation of DCT in the Aquarium, a web cam was added which would allow for direct internet streaming of video and audio from the stage area. These additions were brought in with the idea that cabaret/karaoke performers would be able to record their performances live, which could then be posted on-line (on YouTube) or streamed live to patrons at home on their PCs. This experiment

was advertised on the bar's web site as a way to catch up on the happenings in the bar, even on nights that you could not come in. The expectation was that it would help to foster goodwill among regulars who would have a chance to watch performances that they otherwise would have missed, as well as acting as an advertisement for the kinds of acts that normally go on at the bar. (Prost, 2009)

The first use of the webcam in the pub was in conjunction with the karaoke evenings. The original idea behind the webcam was not to provide a "live" performance, but to capture a video "souvenir" of your karaoke performance.

Performers would have their performances recorded, and then Jules would upload these performances to YouTube, under a specific "Aquarium" channel. On request, a patron could get the performance on disk or by e-mail for their own records from Jules. A secondary use of the webcam recordings was to provide promotional materials for the pub. Clips of the performances have been used in the PowerPoint advertising presentations in the pub, as well as on the Aquarium website, as well as stills from performances. From time to time, karaoke performances which were recorded would be displayed as well (with the singer's consent).

Initially the recording of the karaoke performances was done off-line, that is not streamed or podcasted live. This had more to do with technological limitations than with any sort of commercial concerns (the PC could not multitask for streaming video out while using the streaming karaoke site). However, Jules ensured that these performances were usually available on YouTube (and later Facebook) *before* the performer arrived home. (Prost, 2009) However, when the streaming karaoke was not being used, there was no reason why video and audio could not be streamed directly from the stage. When cabaret acts would perform at the Aquarium, they would usually use CD backing tracks, or a live piano accompaniment, thus it was these performances which were first webcast.

Webcasting at the Aquarium actually arose first as a solution to an issue with the layout of the pub. The shape of the bar at the Aquarium means that the stage is only visible from about ½ of the barroom, and even in the spots where the stage can be seen, the view can easily be obscured (by standees, etc.). The LCD screens however are readily visible from most seats in the bar. Thus, by shooting the performance and displaying the output on the LCD screens, the whole bar could be covered. This practice is still used on evenings when the pub is particularly crowded.

Initially, the webcam system was used for an in-bar “broadcast” only, but Jules, with the consent of the performers and the landlords, began to experiment on live streaming of performances on evenings when he was in and could emcee (and run the computer system). Several performances by local drag and cabaret acts were streamed live from the Aquarium over a period of two months. These webcasts were not particularly well advertised (word of mouth in the pub) and had a very limited audience. From a technical point of view, the webcasts were not well received. The webcam in use was of a low resolution and frame rate, and the lighting in the bar is suitable for a performance, but not for broadcasts. Coupled with the inevitable image degradation from digital compression, and bandwidth issues which can occur at any time on the internet, the quality of these webcasts were extremely low, even for the standards of the time. Based on this and some of the questions which were raised (as I discuss below), the live webcasting experiment ended with Jules and Michael feeling that the results did not warrant the effort.

5.3g Making it pay: how to get them in the door

Even before the streaming experiment was begun, there was a question of how could the Aquarium benefit by broadcasting acts out of the pub that they would

receive no revenue for. This was especially important for the cabaret shows because unlike the karaoke where there are only the fixed monthly costs for the service and infrastructure, the Aquarium has to pay the going rate for these entertainers. The original business argument that Jules gave in offering the streaming service was that it would be for “regulars” who were unable to get into the bar on a particular evening, so that they would not miss out on a show that they wanted to see, as well as an advertisement for the bar (Prost, 2009). However, it was very difficult, if not impossible, for a small bar operation like the Aquarium to quantify the benefit that such a service would provide. It would also be impossible for the Aquarium to limit the reach of these webcasts, both in live audience and in replays. Further, the drawback to streaming was immediately evident: why go to the pub and pay a higher premium for drinks when you could enjoy the “same” experience with a cheaper drink from your home? There was no real suitable answer to this question, as the idea of pay-per-view and creating a membership site was far beyond the purview of a bar which holds a cabaret evening.

There are several theoretical issues which are occurring here however and they revolve directly around the idea of making the idea of streaming pay in some form or another. The decision to discontinue the streaming experiment shows strong evidence of being a micro-scale example of Winston’s (1995) ideas on the “suppression of the radical disruptive potential of new technology.” As I noted above, “disruption of radical potential” could have both an economic and social meaning. In this case, the disruptive potential of the new and emerging technology of streaming is that it would risk making the physical space of the bar redundant if the only reason that the clientele is frequenting the bar was to see the cabaret, thus destroying the business model of the bar. The suppression aspect

comes across in two ways: there is no way to make the technology pay for itself and it is potentially supplanting and disrupting a business model which has worked to date (having cabaret shows as a draw into the physical space).

While live streaming has ended, karaoke performances have continued to be recorded on request. I argue that this is again a micro-scale logical consequence of Winston's thesis: a technology will come into common use once the vested players have been able to adapt to the technology and exploit it, either within current business models, or by positioning themselves in a new arrangement which allows them to profit from the technology. In this case, the Aquarium is able to offer an added service to its clientele without any risk from the technology to its business model because the clientele have already bought a drink, and the technology is already paid for. Thus the webcam can be used "for free" to create a video of a karaoke performance which would encourage repeat patronage.

These arguments about disruptive potential do not take into consideration the non-technological amenities that a pub/bar space offers for socializing. Thus they only tell a small part of the story of why the live streaming experiment was discontinued at the Aquarium. Michael Bull's (Bull, 2004) discussion on the use of the Walkman, the idea of the extension of the private space into public spaces created by technology also has a role in this situation. I would argue that this experiment could be construed as an example of Bull's theoretical approach in reverse, whereas Bull argues that the Walkman helps to bring a small amount of the private into a public space such as a bus or a street, I argue that webcasting by the Aquarium has the potential to bring a portion of the pseudo-public bar space into the private home space. While this is somewhat similar to a typical broadcast model for public events such as a football game, one major difference is scale: a football game is viewed by millions and is in a large stadium, while the Aquarium

could never aspire to either. Further, the Aquarium as a private bar, catering to at most 75 patrons at a time, is not a true public space in the same sense, nor is a small scale cabaret show. Thus I would argue that streaming would be more akin to the extension of a pseudo-public space into a private space (such as a home). However, Bull talks about the Walkman as having the ability to isolate you from the public space around you, whereas the streaming idea was specifically to take a part of the bar home with you, which is inverse to how technology is being used in Bull's example.

Again, this theory does not tell the whole story of the failure of the streaming experiment because the issue arises: if I can take the bar home with me, why would I need to go into the bar and pay for drinks to see a show? The answer from my observations and interviews is in some ways very obvious: patrons are going to the Aquarium for the whole experience, not just for the shows. Ephemeral situations cannot readily be transmitted, broadcast, or streamed in a fashion to give you the full experience of being in the space, and there is something intrinsic about being *in* the physical space of a bar/pub. A live stream of a performance can only give an analogue of that performance and in all cases it is not the same as seeing it "live" and in person. Thus, the streaming of performances would at best be a substitute (analogue) for the pub and according to Tristan, a poor one at that.

The live streaming experiment at the Aquarium demonstrates some of the limitations of DCT's transformative potential because it highlights the necessity for a technology to fit into the current business model or if disruptive to that business model, add value to the current product being sold (disruptive potential). In this case, live streaming did not show itself to do either because of the lack of any way to directly capitalize on the technology and the possibility that it would actually dissuade custom in the bar, thus harming the current business model. However,

creating videos of performances for later viewing was *not* disruptive to the current business model and was actually able to add value to the bar and the patron's experience, through advertising potential and the ability to create a souvenir of the evening which could serve as an incentive to return.

5.4 Case Study: The Camelford

5.4a Implementation of DCT in The Camelford Inn

The Camelford Inn is one of the latest pubs in Kemptown to undergo a cosmetic and technological remodel. Formerly known as “The White Horse” the Camelford Inn is located in Camelford Street, a street off of St James Street and the Marine Parade. The pub lease was transferred in mid-2009 and fully refurbished with new landlords (the previous landlords of the Star Inn and the King's Arms). In the process of renovation, free Wi-Fi service was installed and advertised in the window of the pub as well as on a couple of signs within the pub itself. Unlike the Aquarium, DCT was not installed with a specific agenda (i.e.: to provide karaoke or streaming music) but rather to add an amenity for users who would be coming into the pub with their own devices, especially since internet access was needed for the clerical needs of the business anyway. (Jay, 2010). A plasma video screen was added (mostly for sports games (Jay, 2010)) after the pub reopened.

5.4b Usage of DCT in The Camelford in contrast to The Aquarium

The Camelford provides an interesting contrast with the Aquarium because the level of DCT which was installed in the pub is similar (a video screen and Wi-Fi being offered), as well as the size of physical space (though The Camelford seems bigger because its physical space is laid out far more effectively), however both spaces utilize DCT in far different manners, and with a different clientele experience created.

In speaking with customers in The Camelford, most were unaware that Wi-Fi access was available, and noted that the only use that they would put it to would be to avoid paying for use of their own 3G network connection (Camelford, 2010). I asked several patrons whether or not this would be a feature which would draw them into the space:

Patron 1 (approx. 40 years old): No it isn't a feature that I ever used.

Patron 2 (approx. 25 years old): Yea, I use it when I want to go on Facebook. I look for spaces that offer it.

Patron 3 (approx. 35 years old): Sometimes, when I can't get a signal. If it is offered, I will use it, but I don't particularly look for it.

From this small sample, as well as my own participant observations in the space, I would argue that while Wi-Fi may be of interest to some people within a pub space such as The Camelford, it is probably not the primary reason why patrons are in the space. Again, this is in contrast to the Aquarium where DCT-based karaoke is a very specific draw to the space.

Much of the interaction within The Camelford was interpersonal in nature, either at the bar or in small tables by the windows across the room. The music was for the most part kept reasonably low. When I asked Jay about where the music came from, he indicated that they were using Spotify for music provision, after they got tired of their CD collection. (Jay, 2010). This was similar in use to the Aquarium, with the music choice being more varied and less dominated by theatre music and show tunes.

The main point of difference between The Camelford and The Aquarium however was in how obvious the technology was to the clientele and to the activities in the pub. The Camelford's events were not dominated by a DCT-based service (Jay indicated that there were no regular karaoke evenings (Jay, 2010)) and the use of

DCT was only by individual users of the space, rather than in a venue-wide event at the Aquarium.

From a physical point of view, DCT is nowhere as prominent in the Camelford as it is in the Aquarium, and this helps to define the space as being more focused on interpersonal communication. Just as placing the television in the corner in the living room and placing the seating to focus on it, the physical placement of DCT in The Camelford makes it less obvious and makes it less the focus of activity in the space. This “out of sight, out of mind” dynamic means that patrons are less likely to use the service, but also it acts as a limit to what is expected within the space (i.e.: if there are no video screens, karaoke cannot be regularly being offered).

This is not to say that DCT automatically leads to a decline in interpersonal communication (as I discuss in Chapter 2, DCT can enhance interpersonal communication by allowing the user to communicate with a much larger audience simultaneously from within a leisure space), but as I have noted, the use of DCT in the Aquarium *does* limit the levels of interpersonal communication within the bar due to the frequency of karaoke being offered or videos being shown on the video screens. Further, I do not want to imply that the only use of DCT in a pub/bar space is for karaoke or music only. This is why the Camelford is simultaneously both similar and different to the Aquarium, because while in this space DCT is being offered to the individual user to use on their own personal device which is used for patrons to communicate both inside and outside the space which has the tendency to diminish interpersonal communication in the space, the technology is being used for individual activity rather than as a group/communal activity which would actually encourage interpersonal communication because it is not anywhere near as distracting. Interestingly, the Aquarium offers Wi-Fi access, but based on my observations, it is not well used (the bar staff have estimated that they have

only given out the passcode 10 times over the past year and a half). Thus I would argue that the use of DCT in these two spaces is based on the customer's expectation, as well as how DCT was implemented and the intentions of its use.

5.5 Case Study: The Kings Arms

5.5a Introduction

The Kings Arms has gone through several ideations over the past 4 years, changing hands at least three times, and undergoing one major and one minor remodel, with DCT being installed and removed as the vision for the pub has changed with each owner¹⁸. The pub has gone from being primarily a straight pub to gay pub, and in its latest ideation, mixed clientele. Thus the Kings Arms has not presented the kind of continuity which I have found with other pubs/bars which I have observed, notably the Marine Tavern and the Aquarium. However, in one of its ideations, that of a gay space which implemented DCT, the Kings Arms made for a very interesting research object because it was among the first spaces which I observed DCT being used to allow patrons to change the atmosphere of the space. In this section, I will be talking about this period in the Kings Arms story, as I observed it in the period of November and December of 2009.

5.5b Kings Arms in 2009

The Kings Arms is located in what is considered to be the heart of the Kemptown Gay Village, on George Street, directly off St James St. This pub was, until late 2008, considered to be a straight venue insofar as it did not cater specifically to a gay clientele, and had a reputation as an older man's pub.¹⁹ The pub was taken over by a new landlord as the lease was transferred, the physical space remodeled,

¹⁸ In its last ideation, even the name was changed. The pub is now known as "The Kings" specifically to distinguish it from its better known, and more established, competitor "The Queen's Arms" across George Street."

¹⁹ Aside from my own observation in late 2008, this comes from several conversations held in The Marine Tavern, the Aquarium, as well as from an interview with Jay in the Kings Arms in 2009.

and the theme of the pub was changed to serving a gay clientele, specifically the bear, leather, and skinhead scene. According to Jay, a bartender at the pub, the intention of the landlords was to create a “cruisy” environment reminiscent of spaces such as New York’s “Mineshaft” club from the late 1970’s: a dark, cloistered space with a “maze” or “dark room” where more risqué behaviors would be tolerated and in some cases encouraged (such as partial and full nudity, gay sex and lewd behavior). Based on its location (the street is a mix of commercial and residential properties), and the mores of the neighborhood, the landlords included heavy window shades and frosted glass in their remodel of the space to allow this environment to happen.

5.5c Installation of DCT in The Kings Arms

The DCT which was installed in the pub was in some ways similar to the Aquarium Bar in that DCT is visible within the pub, but on a physically larger scale. Three large plasma screens were installed, one on each wall with the bar on the back wall. These were primarily used for information about promotions and pub night events (such as quiz nights etc.). Prominent in the pub was a digital jukebox which was linked to a streaming music service which allowed access to unlimited songs. Unlike other jukeboxes in pubs in Kemptown, this one was free to use. Lastly, Wi-Fi was installed and advertised both on the plasma screen displays, as well as in the window of the pub.

In order to find out more about what was being done within the King’s Arms, I had a formal interview with one of managers at the pub, Jay, and several conversations with one of the pub landlords, John. In my interview, I asked why these services were installed and Jay indicated that part of the reason was the personal interest of one of the landlords in PC systems and sound systems. Most of the control equipment was custom built, including the jukebox. When I spoke to John, he told

me that his goal for the use of technology in the space was to create an atmosphere similar to the larger pub/club venues in London where audio and video technology is very much in use. John was quite aware of the limitations of the technology versus the size of the space and told me that the idea was to provide a space which was more “cruisy” than other spaces in Kemptown, to try to fill a gap that they saw in the Kemptown market.

When questioned about the use of these systems, Jay indicated that they were for the most part well received: “They are a good fit...(the) TVs give information, and we have the news on one of the screens during the day... (they give a) Great visual effect to the bar.” (2009) Wi-Fi use was moderate from my observations, an observation that Jay confirmed in his interview: “The Wi-Fi in here is free. Not seen many people with computers. I’ve seen a few laptops, but mostly people are using it on their phones.” (2009).

5.5d The Digital Jukebox: The key to atmosphere in the pub?

Whenever I was in the Kings Arms in the afternoon during this time period, either for observations or just for a drink, the center of entertainment was the digital jukebox. Patrons were usually interested in it particularly because it was free (and was advertised as such). The music choices were quite varied, from pop, to cult classics, from Abba to ZZ Top (literally: one time that I was in there, a biker group came in and played ZZ Top at first, and a couple of older guys then went up and put Abba on to follow their list!). I found this variety quite intriguing because in most other pubs, including those with jukeboxes, the music tended to be quite limited and focused on the set theme of the bar (i.e.: in the Aquarium, show tunes were usually on the lists, while in the Marine, the list was limited to the CDs behind the bar, and at Legends, the jukebox was only loaded with “popular” songs). What I was unable to determine however is how much self-censorship was going on

in what people were picking when they set up their song lists (how many people would feel confident enough to put on Abba after ZZ Top for example). In the Kings Arm's however, there was a definite limitation on the jukebox: the bartender had ultimate control of the playlists. In my interview with Jay, he told me that the bartender's control was, in his opinion, absolutely necessary:

Jay: It can change the atmosphere quite easily. It is up to the customers to put the music on, so it can change the atmosphere of the pub.

I asked him to elaborate about this, and he commented that there was music that was clearly unsuitable to the pub. His example in this case was show tunes, in that there were enough pubs in the vicinity playing this kind of music (the Zone, The Marine, The Aquarium etc.) and that their pub was striving to be an alternative to these spaces. However, since the King's Arms is directly across the street from the more popular (and much longer established) Queen's Arms, I was curious about what happened with overflow on a Saturday. Jay mentioned that they did not get much in the way of overflow, since the pub had a reputation of being radically different than the Queen's Arms but when it has happened, or patrons have gotten the pubs confused (as the names are quite similar), this has led to definite misunderstandings. However, because the bartender has ultimate control of the jukebox, they are able to control what is being played in the space.

Alan: Do you ever have complaints?

Jay: Sometimes, but we have the control over the jukebox. If there's a song that we don't think should be fitting in for the atmosphere of the pub, then I'll just switch it off and put something else on...There was a guy in once putting on depressing songs. It was a Saturday evening and it was just really depressing...so I just had to switch all these songs off. He was quite pissed off that I'd taken these songs off actually.

I found the idea that the music choice was so important to the management that it found it necessary to run the risk of alienating a patron to maintain the musical atmosphere in the space surprising, but this could be explained with the logic that

one patron does not reflect what the majority wanted to hear. Also, if you go to the pub, you have a certain expectation of what you will find there for atmosphere and entertainment (i.e.: you do not go to a theater bar if you are looking for rock and roll).

More interesting is the idea of giving the patrons control of the space, only to take it away if it does not fit the accepted image of the pub. The fact that the management could, at will, change what was playing on the jukebox meant that the idea that the patrons could control the music, and by proxy, the atmosphere within the space was a chimera.

Alan: So sometimes it (the jukebox) is not useful?

Jay: Yea, but we have the control over it, so if we don't feel it is a good choice of songs we have the power to stop that. It depends on the time of day, day of the week, there are all different factors that come into it. Sometimes people put on really sad songs on a Saturday night.

Alan: Do you ever get people who walk out?

Jay: No, not that I've noticed.

I do not intend to imply that this level of control and of intervention by those who I would call "the controllers of the space" is a new thing. Jukeboxes have always had their record lists controlled to make sure that unsuitable or unpopular music was not installed (as this would be unprofitable to both the bar/pub and the owner of the equipment, as well as the whole argument that ultimately DJs determine *what* is popular in the first place). However, this control would have been exerted in the background, out of sight to the patrons, and would be presented as a "take it or leave it" proposition: either you like what is on the jukebox and pick several songs, or you save your money. The DCT enabled jukebox presents a challenge to this model because unlike a jukebox where the music is physically stored within the machine, the DCT jukebox has almost no limit on its record list (at least in the way the system was implemented in the Kings Arms). Since the controllers of the space

need to maintain the decorum and atmosphere of the space, they need to moderate this equipment and this control over the playlist is done in sight of the pub's patron and is obvious to them as it happens (hence the anger exhibited by the sad-song patron when his songs were deleted for being bad for the atmosphere).

This micro-example however is indicative of the larger question over the level of control that DCT really does provide to the individual in the face of the constraints put in place by established structures. In theory (such as McLuhan's 1967 bold positivist discourse about digital communicative technology (McLuhan, 2006)) and in its propaganda/hype (such as advertising), DCT has been billed as being able to engender transformations and revolutions in the everyday. However, as Winston notes in his work and in the examples that he gives regarding the introduction of the telephone and television, technology does not come into general use until the factors around the "law of the suppression of radical disruptive potential" are met, in that the threat that the new technology possesses to the vested interests in the area are mitigated or controlled (Winston, 1995). The digital jukebox with its unlimited playlist has the "radical potential" to change the atmosphere of the pub by allowing the patrons to completely control the musical atmosphere of the space. This disruptive potential is mitigated literally by giving the bartender the ability to moderate the music choices if they vary from the accepted norm that the landlords (read: vested interest) have set for the space.

5.5e "To make it more cruisy, we turn it all off.": The limits of DCT in the Kings Arms

One of the issues that I have observed in my observations (and one of the main themes that I am interested in in my work) is the change that DCT can bring, both positive and negative, to interpersonal communication and interpersonal behavior in pub spaces. As I have noted above, DCT has a radical potential which can be (and is regularly) limited in these spaces. When it comes to the use of DCT in

theme (or fetish, depending on the bar/pub) events, DCT's role is extremely limited and constrained in order to achieve an atmosphere which suits a particular image of gay space. This image in some cases is nostalgic (such as harking back to older establishments like the "Mineshaft" in New York City), in some cases more modern (such as creating a club space similar to larger London clubs), but all of them are quite conservative in that they are modeled on a stereotypical assumption of what their audience wants. The innovation, or radical disruptive potential of DCT is removed from these spaces, as the example of the Kings Arms demonstrates.

In my interview with Jay, one point that was raised is that there are times that DCT, composed particularly of the video screens and the digital jukebox could serve as a detraction from the atmosphere that the landlords were trying to achieve, particularly if it was a theme (or fetish) night:

Jay: We do have fetish nights. People do come in purely for that...

Alan: Do you find that the technology is used to put on those fetish nights?

Jay: No, not at all...

Alan: Any reason why you think?

Jay: Because it is very dark, its very cruisy, and its very intimate. So I wouldn't say that technology comes into it at all. (Omitted), 2009)

This is particularly interesting because it demonstrates a perceived limitation or detraction that DCT can bring to a space. Jay, as well as the landlord, Charlie, associated the idea that DCT, particularly the video screens and the jukebox as being a detraction to the atmosphere of the night in the space.

I had thought that the video screens would be used in a similar fashion to the screens in The Bulldog during these fetish nights, displaying erotic photos or video, however this was not the case:

Alan: Do you find the technology, the video screens (are)used differently on the fetish nights?

Jay: No, they're switched off completely...The jukebox is covered over, because then Charlie (the landlord) puts on more heavy music , sort of more heavy, more cruisy type music. [Jay points out a live DJ station with mixer and decks in the corner of the pub room] I don't know what sort of music you'd call it. It's heavier, it's louder...It's very dark in here (as well)...we have a dark room over there...

Alan: So the technology is completely removed?

Jay: Yea, basically. (Omitted), 2009)

The DJ station in the corner takes the place of the jukebox in these events, and I find it important to note that it is *live mixing* rather than any kind of playlist in use on these evenings. Very careful control can be regulated in the space with a live DJ versus relying on the clientele to maintain the atmosphere of the evening for themselves. In this example, DCT is seen to be a distraction from what is the main rationale for coming into the pub on a fetish evening (the evening that we were discussing was specifically a skinhead event, where promiscuous behaviour was the expectation and the norm). This is similar to the effect that DCT has in the Aquarium, where the demand for karaoke can change the space between the afternoon and evening patrons. Thus in this case, allowing the free use of DCT within the space during one of these events would be counter to both what the landlord (as event coordinator) and the clientele would desire.

The idea of disruptive potential arises here again, in this case DCT's use would alter the ideation of the fetish night. Control of DCT in these circumstances is essential to mitigate this potential, thus "to make it cruisier we shut it all off." By shutting the technology off, focus remains on the objective of the evening and a hedonistic atmosphere can be maintained.

Consumption of the space is also important in this idea of limiting DCT use in this space. As Jay noted in my interview with him, patrons would specifically come in for fetish nights rather than on other nights of the week. (Omitted), 2009) When I spoke with patrons about these evenings in conversations there, they indicated that they were coming in specifically to meet other men with similar interests to themselves, as well as the atmosphere of the space on these evenings. Because of this specific intent, the space needs to be specifically tailored and controlled to meet the needs of the consumer. Thus, DCT, or more specifically the digital jukebox, would be a distraction and detractor from the crafted atmosphere of the fetish night, which the men are paying a premium to consume. In order to maintain behaviour within specific bounds, DCT needs to be excluded from the space

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have focused on the effects that DCT technology that has been brought into the Kempton pub spaces by the pubs themselves. I have focused on these changes using the theoretical framework of Winston's disruptive potential of new and emerging media technology. This framework helps to highlight many of the pitfalls with technology that the spaces that I have looked at have encountered. In the next chapter, I will turn to the impact that DCT devices that gay men are bringing into these spaces counterpoint these arguments and theoretical frameworks with those of Sherry Turkle and Michael Bull. This will present a complete picture of the DCT use in these spaces and give a clearer understanding of DCT's cumulative influence in my research.

Chapter 6: It's All Friends Together, Gathered 'round the iPhone (!?)

6.1 Introduction

In my previous chapter, I discussed the idea of the impact of DCT installation in pub spaces. In all cases, DCT was being implemented in a rather ad hoc basis, with varied levels of business success and with major alterations in space use. Very little thought was put into the consequences of these changes and often, the DCT implementation led to reactionary changes in business practices, not always for the better. Further, I discussed the differing theoretical implications that I noted, with particular focus on Winston's theoretical arguments, along with the thoughts of my interview participants as well as my own observations.

In this chapter, I will shift to discuss the vagaries of how gay men use their personal DCT devices on the Kemptown scene. The title of the chapter alludes to Sherry Turkle's monograph *Alone Together*, which I will use as a theoretical platform to discuss the changes in communication and the increase in alienation and disassociation among the gay male patrons that I observed over time with the increasing use of DCT in pub spaces. However, I will compliment this position by utilizing the theoretical framework of automobility, as refined by Michael Bull. I believe that his analysis of aural culture and the idea of 'taking private entertainment into the public' will help to further my analysis of the patron's interest in DCT in these spaces.

My analysis will show that personal DCT use in these spaces is an extension in many ways of their private behaviours in their homes and private spaces, but also serves to allow for a familiarity and interlinking of the private spaces with the public spaces that they are inhabiting, causing a blurring of the definition of the

two. Additionally, my research will show that this blurring in many ways alters the relevance of the spaces and alters the familiar pattern of “public house habits”, harking back to the argument I made in the previous chapter regarding “making it pay” on one hand, and supporting Turkle’s argument that technology has a negative potential to replace the need for direct human interaction.

I will also rely on interviews that I made with Tristan, Bart and Adam, as well as with Jules, a regular patron of the Aquarium and the Bulldog. Jules’ interview is particularly important as he was the “IT coordinator” for the Aquarium and was an early adopter of DCT technology in general. His observations touch on the changes that having personal DCT in pub spaces have helped to engender and also signpost a trend away from “gay space” towards a more homogeneous, corporatist pub culture which acts merely as a place to get a drink versus acting as a physical space to socialize.

Finally, this chapter will discuss the continued relevance of social interaction in gay space continuing in conjunction with the changes being brought on by personal DCT use in gay space.

6.2 Alone Together?

Sherry Turkle’s discussion in *Alone Together* on the concept of the ever presence of networking is important to note in regards to the dissemination of DCT in gay spaces:

The first was the development of a fully networked life...[a]nd as the connections to the internet went mobile, we no longer “logged on” from a desktop...[t]he network was with us, on us, all the time. So, we could be with each other all the time. (Turkle, 2011, p. xii)

But, as Turkle goes on to explain (and alludes to in the book’s title), this new form of “togetherness” is in many ways false. Being constantly linked via a network does not create *by default* the interpersonal relationships that we desire. Being

networked simply opens the lines of communication to *allow* for an interpersonal relationship, it does not replace the need for communication itself. It still requires that participants using DCT interact with each other to achieve those relationships; you can lead an individual to the digital water, but you can't make it "drink".

For example, in an observation I made in the Aquarium pub, DCT technology became the topic of conversation, but it did not enable further development:

"So this evening, I decided to continue with my participant observations in the Aquarium Pub, as Michael now knows that I am using his venue as an official part of my research. The pub is reasonably dead as it is a Thursday night, but as soon as I come in, I encounter something that I haven't seen before: 4 guys (one about 30, one in his late 40's, and the other two are not known to me and are not regulars, and appear to be in their mid-30's) are huddled around a new iPhone 3GS at the corner of the bar, talking about how great the device is. I casually sit down near the group and start chatting with Tristan, the bartender on that night. A few minutes later, a discussion starts that I casually begin to take part in about the phone. The owner of the phone, Steve, has downloaded several apps and is showing them off to his three friends. They are looking at photos of men from the app Squirt and Grindr and talking about how many guys in the immediate area are logged on, etc. One of the guys, a previous participant named Jim, shakes his head and says "I don't see why I'd want to do this. If I'm here, I want to meet people, not sit on my bloody phone!" however, he doesn't stop looking on. Another guy takes out his phone, a WAP enabled model, and goes to post something on Facebook while talking about the advantages of the iPhone. Finally, the group breaks up into two smaller groups, one continuing to look at the iPhone, the other discussing other topics relating to the pub."

This encounter raises two points that allude to Turkle's work. First, the idea of the newness of the technology acting as a draw which in this case lead to the interpersonal conversation that these men had in the pub but eventually leads them to split off into other conversation in smaller groups in some cases not with each other directly, but rather on their phone. Second, the argument that Jim makes regarding "...why [would] I'd want to do this...I want to meet people, not sit on my bloody phone!" points towards a discussion of motivation that Turkle alludes

to that can explain the reasons why the DCT phone is such an attractive option in the pub.

6.2a Newness and presence

The idea of “newness” being a draw to DCT is not a new idea. As I have discussed previously, Winston makes the argument that new communication technologies have in many ways been driven by hype and hyperbole around the “newness” and world-altering potential that they present to the (then) current communications networks (that in most cases is later shown not to have occurred in the ways the developers had originally thought) (Winston, 1995). Turkle develops the “newness” thesis further by arguing that the current hyperbole around DCT and robotics could be leading society towards a future where we turn to sophisticated computerized robots, and communication devices infused with a simulated personality (such as Siri on the current ideation of the iPhone), for companionship instead of real interpersonal relationships because we find it easier and more predictable to search for a human response in a computer(!).

Computers no longer wait for humans to project meaning onto them. Now, sociable robots meet our gaze, speak to us, and learn to recognize us. They ask us to take care of them; in response, we imagine that they care for us in return...

We are challenged to ask what such things augur. Some people are looking for robots to clean rugs and help with the laundry. Others hope for a mechanical bride. As sociable robots propose themselves as substitutes for people, new networked devices offer us machine-mediated relationships with each other, another kind of substitution. We romance the robot and become inseparable from our smartphones. As this happens, we remake ourselves and our relationships with each other through our new intimacy with machines. (Turkle, 2011, pp. 2-3)

Turkle even argues that this may *limit* those relationships because we as humans create meaning for the computers that we are using, and by proxy, impart feelings and emotional responses where there are none. Taken to its logical conclusion, Turkle argues that in some circumstances, we would prefer the interaction of a

robot versus that of a human because we are more in control of the outcome, and can even hit the “reset button” to try to redevelop the relationship.

While analysing how young and old people interact with first generation computer devices designed to mimic a human or pet, Turkle notes that children especially begin to view the device as more than just a mimicry of the real relationship; they developed an attachment to the responsiveness of the device by adding meaning to it beyond anything that the device could possibly create. These attachments were literally to the idea of a shared experience, or journey, between the user and the device (e.g.: ‘raising’ a Tamagotchi from the image of an egg to that of a pet) and when the devices were withdrawn (at the end of a study) or malfunctioned, it caused real consternation in the part of the human users. Even when an alternate device was offered, the user was unwilling to use it or invest as much emotional energy to it as it was not “their” device. Thus, I believe that there is a fetishization around the technology itself and that it is evident in my observation in how the men ‘gathered around the iPhone’. The idea that this new technology will help gay men to communicate with each other in a new manner is the draw to the device. The fetishization of the device is but the first step in the process that Turkle argues leads to the potential for complete social isolation.

Turkle does not argue that the device itself is the problem, but she is concerned that we are placing too much stock in the abilities of it to create a synthetic form of relationship and interaction *in place of* human interaction, creating a simulated togetherness which is actually far more isolated than ever before. Turkle stresses that both computer simulation of interpersonal communication and DCT mediation of true interpersonal communications create a similar effect: there is a disconnect from the markers, signs and nuances such as facial expression, gestures, and intonation/inflection that make up the unspoken parts of human communication.

I found that the technological mediation was very frustrating for several of my participants. Adam for example, found this lack of real interpersonal communication to be very limiting, and showed a real frustration for the lack of in-person communication ability among the men he was chatting with on Grindr. He later met with a few of them in the Queen's Arms and for the most part these meetings were less than he expected:

Adam: I don't get it. These guys seem great when we talk, but when we meet up, we don't click.

Alan: Why, what's wrong with them?

Adam: Well, nothing really. It's just they aren't what I thought they were...We don't really have much to talk about...<later> When we talked (on Grindr), we seemed to really hit it off and it seemed easier to chat. In person...not so much... there seemed to be a...block.

Alan: What do you mean?

Adam: They just didn't seem like they could talk, that they were just looking for a quick hook-up, which isn't what I'm out there for.

I asked Tristan what his thoughts were on this:

Well, Grindr isn't a place to *meet*, it's a place to find a shag. Adam is looking for a boyfriend, not a quick fuck, so I don't know why he's bothering on there.²⁰

I find that Tristan is only partially right however. The mediation that the DCT device gives the persons communicating the time for forethought that does not exist in interpersonal communications, nor do the parties have the benefit of the facial expressions and other non-verbal cues that help a conversation along. Thus on one hand, the men Adam talked to could use the mediation of DCT to appear charming and suave while being socially inept, or allow them to pretend to be

²⁰ My first reaction to Tristan was that he was being overly cynical. At this time, as a participation exercise emblematic of "participant observation," I was regularly using Grindr myself, but had to date not met anyone. Shortly after this however, I met a man for coffee in Kemptown after chatting with him for a few days on Grindr. Though our agenda was supposedly "looking for friends," I quickly ran into the same roadblocks that Adam had...and verification that Tristan's stereotype had some truth to it when the person began to pressure me for a "hook-up".

interested in the discussion for ‘nefarious purposes’ (a hook-up). Turkle refers to this as:

...the paradox of electronic messaging. You stare at a screen on your desk or in your hand. It is passive, and you own the frame; these promise safety and acceptance. In the cocoon of electronic messaging, we imagine the people we write to as we *wish them to be*; we write to that part of them that *makes us feel safe*. You feel in a place that is private and ephemeral. But your communications are public and forever. This disconnect between the feeling of digital communication and its reality explains why people continue to send damaging e-mails and texts, ... People try to force themselves to mesh their behaviour with what they know, rather than how they feel. (Turkle, 2011, pp. 258-59) (emphasis added)

Adam and his perspective dates fall into this paradox regularly. They impart an image that does not really fit with the reality of their personalities and when they meet in person, the wish does not add up to the reality and there is no way to edit the image as DCT allowed them to do. Thus, the attachment that they felt and developed over Grindr in this case is ephemeral, and does not stand the test of a face-to-face meeting.

I further asked Adam where he held these meet-ups, and why he chose the locations he did. I found the answers surprising:

Adam: It depends on what I think of the guy. If I think he might be someone who is going to be a potential date or boyfriend, I’ll probably meet him at a coffee shop around mid-day or before dinner. If I think he is just going to be someone who wants to be a one-night-stand, I’ll meet him at the Queen’s Arms, or another gay bar in Kemptown...

Alan: Why one over the other?

Adam: Well, mood... and atmosphere. I don’t want to give the guy the wrong idea or lead him on. I also want to be able to get away if the date goes wrong...

Alan: “the wrong idea?”

Adam: Well, yea. If we meet at a bar at night versus Red Roasters or Starbucks at 2PM, the direction of the date could go a different way. *There’s an expectation I’m not comfortable with* if we meet at the Bulldog for example. If we meet at Red Roasters, there’s no pressure for the date to go anywhere I don’t want it to go... (*my emphasis*)

Adam alludes to arguments that I discuss in Chapter 2 when I discuss the use of gay space: certain spaces have an expectation attached to them (in this case intimacy) due to their safety or perception of their purpose. Adam felt that by taking a person whom he had only “met” on Grindr to a gay bar implied that he was looking for intimacy, irrespective of what he had said previously.

Alan: So, the gay bar means a hook-up?

Adam: Well, I don’t go to the Bulldog because it has a reputation of being a place guys go late at night for a shag. If I took a guy there for a date, what do you think he’d think of me and what I’m looking for?

Alan: What about the Aquarium?

Adam: Well, he’d hear my karaoke voice, and that might scare him away! (laughs!) I could probably take him there, or to the King’s Arms, but if I took him to the Bulldog, he’s going to figure that the date is ending in a fuck.

Perception of what a space is used for then seems to influence how a previous DCT encounter will translate into a real-world one. On one hand, this validates the rationale for having physical gay space, since the space itself helps to contribute to the interactions that men are having. However, I find it worrying that Adam did not feel that going to a gay space set the right tone for the start of a relationship, but rather that it was associated with a “quickie.”

This dichotomy again points towards some of the points that I raised in Chapter 2, particularly the idea that if all the space is needed for is to set up a further liaison, why does the space have to be ‘gay’? It also helps to explain why DCT has been one of the catalysts of the decline in these spaces; why go to a gay bar to meet when the perception will be that by going there you are only looking for sex? Thus, DCT in this case is both creating a simulation of mutual interest and conversation (that may not exist) by removing the social and visual cues which may give a more accurate impression of the true feelings of the speakers, while further presenting a

simulation of propriety that the physical locale of “the old Bulldog” would strip away. This simulation, or change in perception, is key. Unlike the historic examples that I discuss in Chapter 2, gay spaces are losing the multiple purposes and significances (to the local gay community) that they previously held. The more that gay men use DCT in these spaces, the narrower the purpose of the space becomes and the more homogeneous the spaces become in relation to each other, and to “straight” pubs in the same area. Therefore, if the purpose of the space is becoming more generalized, DCT in the space can be seen as “taking up the slack”: creating a perception of community, unity, sexual pursuit and conversation, all in their hands rather than in the space they are in.

Another issue that I have noted, and comes up in the example above, is the idea of presence. I do not believe that the men in the pub spaces that I observed were entirely present in the space when they were using their phones. They may have been *together* in the space, but again alluding to Turkle’s title, they were *alone* within it. For example, in a discussion I had with Tristan about this, I asked him about his habits and those of other patrons while in the Aquarium:

T: Well, when I’m working, I see guys, usually on their own, using their phones and browsing the internet. I’m not sure what they’re doing, I haven’t asked, but I can assume that they are probably using Grindr or Squirt or Gaydar. They could be texting, but they seem awfully focused.

(Later)

T: It’s always interesting when I get messaged on Grindr from someone sitting somewhere in the pub.

A: Why?

T: They can’t just come over and say hello? I mean, do I look that dangerous to talk to? Sometimes they don’t even realize I’m in the pub, that’s how into their phone they are.

I asked what he did with his iPhone when he was out and about:

T: Probably a bit of the same thing that they're doing... I go on Grindr, Facebook, Squirt. The only one I'm not on is Gaydar because you have to pay for the iPhone App service.

A: Do you guys ever talk to each other?

T: On the phones, or in person?

A: In person...

T: Well, I take their orders! (chuckles)...and there are pleasantries. Other than that, not really.

A: Any reason why?

T: They don't seem to want to talk. They just seem to be here for a pint and a quick breather.

In another conversation I had after this, I developed this idea further, as I was interested in Tristan's responses:

A: Why do you think people aren't talking when they're sitting there in the pub?

T: Maybe there's nothing in common... nothing to talk about. They don't know each other, a lot of them. When people who do know each other come in, they'll chat. But during the day, it's either the regulars who keep to themselves, or those looking for a quick pint and a chance to get online with the Wi-Fi²¹. At night, things are a bit different.

A: How?

T: Well, there are more people, and more people stopping here for a quick pint before hitting one of the clubs. They are usually waiting for someone, so they aren't looking for people in the pub. They aren't here to be social, just the pint, the meet, then the club.

A: So what are they doing? Are they just sitting there with a pint?

T: No, they're on their phones... Sometimes they show me photos of guys that they are talking to on Grindr and talk about their meet up. Some guys never do anything but drink their pint though, use their phone, then leave...

I later spoke to Bart about this topic and asked him a similar question to that of Tristan, the difference being when he went to the Queen's Arms:

²¹ The area of Stein Street, around the Aquarium, was notorious for being a 3G blackspot, due to the height of the buildings around it. This was one of the reasons that Michael and Ben installed Wi-Fi in the first place.

A: So Bart, when you go to the Queen's [Arms] alone, what are you doing while there?

B: I usually have a pint and listen to the music, but it can get quite camp in there. If I'm going on a karaoke night, I'd be singing, and if I'm with someone, maybe do the quiz, but otherwise, I'm usually people watching. There's always hitting Grindr to see what's out there...

Bart was in a closed relationship at this point so I was surprised by his going on Grindr.

A: Grindr? Why are you on there?

B: Well, just to look. I'm always curious to see who is around. I'm not going to *do* anything with them, except chat.

A: No one in the pub to chat with?

B: Not without interrupting someone on their phone, in a convo, or someone hitting on me.

A: A bit full of yourself aren't you? (*laughs!*)

B: You've seen the crowd in there, if you start talking to the wrong person they think you're interested!

There are two points in Tristan and Bart's interviews that I find important. First is the awareness that both have regarding the capability of using DCT to separate the user from the environment. In Tristan's case, he finds that DCT acts as an unwanted mediator between men who may want to talk to him and himself when they use Grindr to message him when he is in the same physical space as themselves. In Bart's case, he finds that DCT acts as a block between himself and others due to manners (he would not want to interrupt someone).

In both of these discussions, the phone was not necessarily the first option, but became the default option because the circumstances were not conducive to conversation. Just being present in the space, people watching did not seem to be enough to either Tristan or Bart.

Bart's last comment however, leads to my second point of interest: the idea of being able to control your interactions by using the phone as a filter. One problem that Bart had with the Queen's Arms, the Aquarium, and (especially) the Bulldog, was

that of unwanted advances, particularly late at night. While he enjoyed the idea of being in a gay space, he found some of the clientele annoying. Even though Brighton has the moniker of “Gay Capitol of the UK”²², it has a fairly small base of exclusively gay pubs, thus Bart’s choices were limited. By using the phone as a social barrier, Bart is able to control his interactions in the space to those he wishes to make. This idea of control will be further discussed in the next section of this chapter with the concept of automobility as a method of controlling interactions in a public space.

While all this could perhaps help the socially inept to enable them to come past their social awkwardness and develop relationships with others, this leads to the second point from my initial observation (the point that Jim makes): why? What is the point of going to the pub if you are going to bury your head in the phone? Beyond that, and in a more analytical spirit, I am asking what makes these men want to be present in *these spaces* versus the other options available to them across Brighton?

6.2b “Just Being Here is Enough.”

One of the first answers that I discovered to this question was from Jules. As I have mentioned before, Jules was the “IT consultant” for The Aquarium, and in many ways an early adopter of DCT technology (particularly Macintosh and iPhones). Jules pointed out that there is a sense of nostalgia and performance related to these places:

I come in to see Michael and Ben, first off. I do like the atmosphere here though... the idea of being in a gay pub that’s been around for decades, being a part of the gay scene. It’s nice to have a place where I can go and be seen and be known, and fit in so nicely with people who’ve been in Brighton for years.

²² Much disputed by Manchester’s Canal Street gay village, and Old Compton Street in Soho!!

However, when I would see Jules in the Aquarium, more often than not he'd be on his phone (always the newest iPhone) and only periodically engaging with Michael or Ben. When I questioned him about it he replied:

It's important that I am here. I could do the same thing from my couch, but here, I feel like I belong. I'm part of the pub. I don't always *have* to be talking; just being here is enough.

For Jules, the idea of being in the space was what was important, not what he was doing in it. As he had pointed out to me in the past, many of the men in The Aquarium are people that he has known for years and the space held a special significance to him because of this.

When I asked Jules specifically about his iPhone habits when at the Aquarium, he talked about the different apps and programs he would use to talk to other people and gossip:

A: Why (are you on the phone)?

J: Well, a lot of it boils down to being bored. You can only do so much karaoke you know! I can talk to people who won't come into the Aquarium this way if I'm on the phone. There are a lot of people who won't come into the Aquarium because it is too "old" for them, or too camp with the karaoke. They'd rather hit Revenge or The Queen's Arms. This way I can at least talk with them, but still be in the Aquarium.

A: But you aren't always in the Aquarium.

J: Most of the time I'm out I am. I've known Michael a long time. I like spending time there with him. The pub is his space, and I've helped him with it both with the IT as well as being behind the bar.

Thus, for Jules, DCT allowed him to be in this space that was important to him, but to also remain in touch with other people. This is the other side of presence; the idea that DCT can allow for a person to be in multiple "spaces" at the same time. The relationship that Jules has to the physical space is important enough for him to make The Aquarium his "local", but DCT allows for Jules to be in a virtual space at the same time. DCT use in the pub space means that Jules can be

connected while being physically based in a “less popular” space that has meaning for him. de Sousa et Silva (2006) argues that users tend to relate to virtual spaces using similar descriptors and metaphors to those of physical spaces. Because of this, I argue that the users of Grindr, and other similar services (such as Squirt, Growlr, Gaydar, etc.) in physical gay spaces are in essence blurring the boundary between the two, again as deSousa et Silva demonstrates when looking at Wi-Fi provision and use in public spaces, such as plazas and squares. When Jules does this in a gay physical space to find men who were not present within the space, I theorize that he is either inhabiting two spaces simultaneously (a physical gay space and a virtual gay space which again correlates with deSousa et Silva), or he is extending the physical venue by utilizing the digital venue.

Another theoretical analysis that I found useful when looking at the examples that I have used to so far in this chapter is the idea that the relationship between the technology’s user, the person that they are communicating with, and the goals and needs of the communication in question is important to what level or form of communication is used. Dimmick et al. point out that there is a ranking of levels to how one would communicate with different individuals within an “ego network” and refer to the different DCT services available as “gratification-utilities”:

A personal or ego network consists of all the people with whom a focal individual interacts with some regularity, both face-to-face and through communication media. Personal networks vary in size, the intimacy of members, geographic location of members (Dimmick et al., 1996) and on other variables... Within the network, some members may be instant messaging ‘buddies’ of the focal individual, while others may be contacted more frequently by telephone or seen face-to-face. Network characteristics may be associated with the frequency of mediated communication. For example, email might be used to communicate frequently with intimates, while instant messaging might be used more often to talk with less intimate acquaintances (Baym et al., 2004). (Dimmick, Ramirez and Wang 2007, 798)

What is interesting about this idea of differing network characteristics is that certain people have different levels of communicative access, i.e.: there are certain

people that one would only talk to on a service like IM or Grindr, while others would rate higher and require a phone call, or a face to face meeting; the key point from Dimmick et al's study results being the level of intimacy or strength of the relationship their participants had with the person they were communicating with directly predicated what form of communication was used.

However, looking at Turkle's analysis and her misgivings around the lack of interpersonal cues inherent with DCT, I argue that Jules, in particular, is caught in a situation where the communication one has in person is more valuable/important than the communication that they are having online, particularly if the communication relies on interpersonal cues. I raised this idea with Jules and after he made the point that being in the physical space of the pub was important to him, he remarked:

There are some people who I only really talk to online, even if I am in the same neighborhood. I am not really interested in seeing them. They are just online friends, not people I necessarily see in person... We have an online friendship.

So, for Jules, the lack of interpersonal cues does not seem to be a real problem, though he does seem to classify his friendships and rank them (similar to Dimmick's argument). When I talked with Adam about this idea of classification, he was more direct:

I have Facebook friends, and I have Grindr friends. I have people who I talk to on all of these services all the time! They aren't people I meet though... They are people who I flirt and talk with, and I sorta care about, but they aren't my *friends*. (Italics original)

For Jules and Adam, the conversations that they are holding on DCT services are already somewhat categorized and ranked. Jules finds his DCT communication in the Aquarium is less important than those he is having with people in the space himself, and Adam is categorising his conversations based on the medium he has them on.

6.2d Alone *but* together?

Jim's flip comment of "why?" encapsulate a deeper argument and tension that Turkle's analysis attempts to answer: are we gradually losing the ability to communicate and associate without some form of DCT to mediate for us? Turkle's arguments in "Alone Together" focus quite heavily on computers simulating human interaction and point towards a human adaptability to readily bond with a digital interface that provides this simulation. Turkle argues that it does not matter what is behind that simulation, but rather that the quality of the simulation be good enough to draw us in; to give us the sensation of creating a relationship.

I argue that DCT use in pub spaces gives this same level of simulation. As Jules and Adam point out, the relationships may not be at the same level as those whom they are meeting in the pub, but they are able to create the illusion where they can be together with more people at the same time, and that this is important to them (but not important enough to meet them in person!). However, what effect does this have on patrons interacting within the spaces?

I have already highlighted above that in many cases, this "togetherness" in virtual spaces has led to them being "alone" within the pub "buried in their phone" (a comment Tristan made to me while working at the Aquarium). I have noted the space still holds a significance to many of the users and that the relationships and communications that my participants have in these spaces are ranked by their importance. However, unlike Turkle's primary focus on artificial intelligence and our relationships with them, the people that these men are speaking with on their phones are real. While the communication may be mediated and thus altered, they are still communications with a real person. This creates a sense of togetherness that is not simulated, but it also is not proximity-based. Turkle clearly points out her concern in this regards in her article "The Flight from Conversation:"

In the silence of connection, people are comforted by being in touch with a lot of people — carefully kept at bay. We can't get enough of one another if we can use technology to keep one another at distances we can control: not too close, not too far, just right. I think of it as a Goldilocks effect.

Texting and e-mail and posting let us present the self we want to be. This means we can edit. And if we wish to, we can delete. Or retouch: the voice, the flesh, the face, the body. Not too much, not too little —just right. (Turkle, 2012, p. 1)

I find this to be worryingly accurate in my own observations. While Jules' remarks are the most direct example of Turkle's argument, other observations demonstrate the same movement from direct conversation to DCT mediated discussions that allow for a distance to be maintained between people. Further, as Adam pointed out above, it also allows for a "crafted" communication image that creates a false image of reality.

Lastly, Jules' commentary about the importance of being physically present in the Aquarium to be together with Michael *and* his friends online points to my next analysis: the idea that automobility helps the patron to define their space and their use of the space and allows them to make the space their own.

6.3 Automobility

I am now moving from looking at my data through Shelly Turkle's "Alone Together" towards a theoretical argument which is nested in the concept of individuality and motion. In this section, I will utilize automobility to further analyse the observations that I outline above and demonstrate how Michael Bull's arguments around the "sonic envelope" (Bull, 2004, p. 247) can be used to further understand my observational data

Automobility is defined by Sheller and Urry (2000) in "The City and the Car" as being:

...a complex amalgam of interlocking machines, social practices and ways of dwelling, not in a stationary home, but in a mobile, semi-privatized and hugely dangerous capsule...we argue that automobility has reshaped citizenship and the public sphere via the mobilization of modern civil societies. (Sheller & Urry, 2000, p. 739)

Michael Bull has then elaborated on this concept in his article “Automobility and the Power of Sound” (Bull, 2004). I find Bull’s interpretation and to be useful in understanding the significance of DCT use in gay spaces. I will be looking at the concept of how DCT can substitute for the sound technologies that are at the centre of Bull’s arguments, particularly in how:

[t]he use of these largely sound technologies [inform] us about how we attempt to ‘inhabit’ the spaces within which we live. The use of these technologies appears to bind the disparate threads of much urban movement together for users, both ‘filling’ the spaces ‘*in-between*’ communication or meetings and *structuring* the spaces thus occupied. (Bull, 2004, pp. 243-4) (*emphasis added*)

Bull discusses the idea of how the use of sound systems in cars modifies the user’s experience of public spaces:

... the use of sound systems in automobiles is a particular form of technologically mediated experience in which experience itself appears to be ‘technological’ as the user actively constructs the meaning of their space through a range of strategies ranging from forms of auditory looking to forms of cognitive solipsism... I demonstrate how users use these technologies to re-appropriate urban space actively and ‘fluidly’. For the purposes of this article ‘fluidity’ refers to the proposition that the meanings attached to automobility, or rather, automobile habitation, cannot be dissociated from the way in which consumers use the media in the home and, by extension, how many perceive the public realms of the city from the vantage point of the automobile. (Bull, 2004, p. 245)

I would argue that Bull’s position about the user’s construction of the meaning of their space is critical when analysing the use of DCT in gay spaces. While Bull is looking specifically at the impact of auditory input and listening, I find the core idea of using a personal technology for the re-appropriation of an otherwise public space with private technology to be highly significant. In this section, I will analyse Bull’s theories in relationship to my own research and how I believe

automobility serves as a tool which will help to assess my data and shed light on the effects that DCT is having in these spaces.

6.3a Spatial control

As I discuss in Chapter 2, spatial control is a critical consideration in gay space use. Castells (1985) points out that control over space is as much of a goal as what is going on within the space (i.e.: control for control's sake). Michael Bull's arguments around technology use as a form of spatial control is more nuanced based on "constructions of meanings":

For example, the use of sound systems in automobiles is a particular form of technologically mediated experience in which experience itself appears to be 'technological' as the user actively constructs the meaning of their space through a range of strategies ranging from forms of auditory looking to forms of cognitive solipsism. (Bull, 2004, p. 245)

Thus, for Bull, the use of audio technology acts to create a private spatial meaning for the individual only if using headphones (which differs from the use of "boom boxes", which have the specific purpose of altering public space in a public fashion by sharing the music).

I am particularly interested in Bull's idea of "cognitive solipsism" in relation to DCT use in pub space. The idea of someone being "lost in their phone" is not unique to gay space, nor to pubs in general. When looked at in relation to the uses of gay space as more than just a space of socialization however (as I discuss in Chapter 2), the idea of creating a "digital envelope" (similar to Bull's "sonic envelope" metaphor), becomes more relevant:

In the Camelford last night. The pub was quite dead and I was at times the only person in the pub. Around 8:30p, there were three people in the pub, excluding myself and the bartender. No one was talking to each other. Each man went to the bar and ordered a drink, a casual conversation with the bartender, then to their seats. Once they were at their seats, out came the phones. One of the men said hello to another (I don't know any of them either), but quickly sat down and began to play on their phones.

After reading and watching them for a while, I decided to speak to one of them, Mark, and ask them what they were up to:

Mark: I'm just looking around on my phone to see who is out and about... it's a bit dead in here.

A: Yea, I know.

Mark: I'm on the phone to do something. I feel kinda lost tonight, you're the first person to talk to in here tonight. I'm hoping to catch up with friends later, but in the meantime I can sit here and talk with people on Grindr and Facebook.

Later

Mark: I like having the access in my pocket. I used to have to talk to people at home, but now at least I can come out here and connect to people out in Kemptown, while having a pint. I'm not stuck at home, but I am able to do the same kind of things that I do at home. It's like taking my computer with me. Even if I'm alone, I'm able to be in my element and do just what I want to do here...

This was late in 2010, so while 3G had been available for about a year and a half in Brighton, being able to use gay chat services on one's phone was still a bit of a novelty. For Mark, the idea of being able to come out and "do the same kind of things that I do at home" is important. I would take this idea further to also point out that just as Bull argues that there is an associated link between how audio technology is used in the home, the use of DCT mobile technologies in public spaces are directly related to how the user utilizes them in their private spaces. Mark is specifically using his phone in the Camelford in the same manner that he used his PC at home.

Bart and Adam related to me in a discussion we had after my observation with Mark their feelings around the use of their phones as DCT devices in gay spaces:

Bart: I like the fact that I don't have the just *sit there*. I can do something that I want to do, and it doesn't matter that I'm in the pub. I can talk, read, watch a video, listen to music, whatever. I don't have to put up with anyone else, nor talk if I don't want to. I can just sit there and be left alone. I can decide what I want to do in the pub.

Adam: I'm somewhat shy. I can hop on the phone when I'm alone in the pub, and usually be left alone. It means I can do what I want without

being bothered. I can be in my own space, with my own thoughts if I want... I can be in the pub, but also be in my own little space.

I believe that these examples are a form of “digital (or virtual) envelope” and the extension of a private behaviour into the pub spaces. For Adam, DCT allows him to create “my own space” out of the pub. This is similar to Bull’s analysis of creating the “sonic envelope” (Bull, 2004, p. 247). In the examples he provides, Bull discusses both the example of music in the envelope of a private car, as well as the envelope of headphones in public spaces. I argue that the examples above are similar in that they allow for both an appropriation of how the pub spaces are being used, but also a further form of control over the space, this time completely under the control of the patron.²³

The management of experience through sound technologies is tied to implicit forms of control, control over oneself, others and the spaces passed through. Hence, it is unsurprising that drivers often prefer driving alone. In this way they are able more successfully to re-appropriate their time. Time possessed is more likely to be time enjoyed. The experience of immersion in sound is thus enhanced by sole occupancy, which also permits the driver to have enhanced feelings of control and management of their environment, mood, thoughts and space beyond the gaze of ‘others’... (Bull, 2004, pp. 248-9)

In both the examples that I talked about at the start of this chapter and Tristan’s use of DCT in the Aquarium, personal technology which men brought into a space was able to change the nature of behaviour in the space to fit their own needs (as the car radio in the moving car does for Bull), and how they relate to the space that they are in. In the examples I discussed earlier in this chapter, Tristan was able to engage with flirting and chatting with men who were not otherwise in the space and did not have to leave the venue for other locations and was by proxy able to change how they relate to the space because it meant that he was able to stay at the Aquarium when he otherwise would have had to move on to meet new people.

²³ Unlike those I have discussed in Chapter 5 which give an illusion of patron control, or a control that can be easily revoked by turning the DCT off.

6.3b Avoiding Discomfort

Adam: (when asked why he was on his phone after I had left him alone at the table) I hate just sitting here. I feel like I'm on display sometimes, and I don't like it.

Bart: Whenever I'm in the Bulldog or the Aquarium, I seem to run into the Troll²⁴ so my phone is quite useful. I bury myself in the phone and I'm able to stop dealing with him, and anyone who is with him!

Sam: The phone means I'm secure. I don't have to engage. I know way too many people in this friggin' town and sometimes it's hard to just have a drink.

Mike: Looking at my phone means "I'm not available." I don't have to be flirted with...

Bull discusses the concept of discomfort within automobility; when the radio is not on in the car, it alters the experience:

Drivers often describe the discomfort of spending time in their cars with only the sound of the engine to accompany them. Driving without the mediation of music or the voice qualitatively changes the experience of driving. (Bull, 2004, p. 246)

Adam's argument of being on display is similar to the sensation that one of Bull's participants noted without the mediation of music in the cars: "It's lonely in the car. I like to have music. (Joan)" (Bull, 2004, p. 246). The DCT enabled phone for Adam becomes a tool that allows him to regain control of his own privacy:

Adam: When I am on the phone in the pub, no one else knows what I am doing. I don't have to talk, engage, or answer to anyone. I can just have a drink, people watch, talk if I want, or just sit here. I love that I can do precisely what I want to do.

This again is very similar to material that Bull discusses from his own participants:

The car is a little bit of a refuge. In a way, although people can see into the car and see what I'm doing, it's almost as if this is my own little world and nobody can see what I'm doing and if I want to sing loudly to the music, talk to myself or whatever it is, I don't have anyone else to answer to. I don't have to consider anyone else. I can behave exactly the way I want to. (Lucy) (Bull, 2004, p. 247)

²⁴ The "Troll" was an older local gentleman who used to flirt almost unrelentingly with Bart. No matter how much Bart tried to put this person off, he would seek Bart out. We began calling him "the Troll" after one evening in which we switched pubs only to find that he followed us about 15 minutes later.

While the examples I give here are a further form of spatial control, they are also an example of using DCT as a form of avoidance of discomfort. Bull points out that, for his participants, the use of audio for alleviating discomfort has more to do with defining their relationship to their cars and the spaces that they are moving through (when driving) than discomfort of interrelationships. However, I feel the comparison is very relevant because in both Bull's and my own examples media technology is used to "fill in the blank", and create the idea of solipsism for the user ("I love that I can do precisely what I want to do." Adam). It serves to alleviate social anxiety or discomfort at the expense of socializing.

This discomfort that Bull's, and my own, participants discuss is also discussed by Turkle, as I have mentioned above. One of Turkle's biggest concerns about DCT use is that we are losing the ability to communicate with each other without the mediation of DCT. I believe that this is reflected in the examples that I have noted above because DCT is being used to avert a social interaction rather than engage and diffuse it. I would never argue that using a tool for distraction is new. For example, Ali Madanipour points out that public space is often segmented by furniture specifically to create, or limit, social interactions; particularly those which may cause discomfort (Madanipour, 2003, p. 22), and the trope of "reading the paper on the train" to avoid social interaction is as old as commuter railways themselves. The critical difference between the furniture and newspapers and DCT however is the level of interactivity and dynamism provided. Unlike the newspaper or furniture (both of which are static), DCT is able to allow the user to craft their own experience, again harking back to the idea of the "virtual bubble" which creates a more profound sense of social control. When I asked Adam and Bart to elaborate, they pointed out that there was a difference between using their phones versus the newspaper:

Adam: I love talking about the person that's annoying me via text! I can sit there and have a go at whomever, and they're never the wiser!

Bart: (*laughs*) Yea, that can be quite fun. Particularly when it's the Troll... what a pain in the arse!

Adam: It's nice to be able to keep talking without having anyone else know it. I can talk with other people...

Bart: I find that when I'm really getting annoyed, but I don't want to leave, I can sit there on my phone and do something else without having to worry about what anyone else is up to...

Adam: I can ignore whatever else is up, unless there's an argument in the pub, that's usually my limit.

Bart: (*to Adam*) But at least you can ignore it for a little while... a lot less wasted drinks and time!

Thus for Adam and Bart, the phone provides a way to avoid being uncomfortable, but also not be limited by the static nature of other tools for isolating themselves from others in the pub.

6.3c Performance, Presence and Viewing

As I discussed in the first section of this chapter, the DCT enabled phone at times becomes the object of spectacle itself. There is a dualism in the DCT that gay men are bringing into these spaces in that these devices can assist in privatizing space or creating the situation of performance. While in my initial observation that led to the title of this chapter, the DCT device was the object of performance, in this case, DCT *enables* performance.

In my participant observations in several pubs, I often encountered men having fights in the very public space of the pub via phone, or even by text:

Tonight in the Queen's Arms, before karaoke, a phone fight broke out! I was sitting with Tristan and Bart and we were frankly amazed to watch this go down. I couldn't pick up what the fight was about, but it was loud. The bartender peaked out the back serving window, trying to see what was going on. He saw who it was and chuckled. Bart and Tristan got uncomfortable and left, but the other guy didn't even notice. I picked up a copy of *GScene* and started reading. This fight went on for 15 minutes almost, with 3 different phone calls (2 hang-ups!) before it finally ended with the guy storming outside for a fag...
(*a different observation at the Camelford*)

So, I'm having drinks with Mike and Phil as they are in town, and we hit the Camelford. I am taking this note on my iPhone3 while Mike and Phil have a fag outside. I'm watching a guy sitting here furiously texting while muttering swears! Everyone in here is looking at him now, he looks slightly demented. Now he's gotten another drink...

(slightly later)

He THREW his PHONE! I don't believe this! He was texting more and more frantically, then he said "Oh FUCK this!" and the phone went flying. Phil bellowed "Oi! 'the fuck's your problem?!" as the phone came quite nearby... Needless to say he (the guy) got tossed from the pub. The phone's in pieces on the floor and the bar-back is picking it up into a carrier bag.

In these examples, private encounters literally are colliding with the realities of the public space of the pub. In both of these examples, the patrons forgot that they were in a public space and created a spectacle due to a private dispute that was held in public.

Michal Bull, when discussing automobility within a car, points out that the car creates a simulation of private space in what is actually a scopophilic's dream chamber, a Bentham-ian panopticon in which the driver can see, and be seen on all sides:

The car is a space of performance and communication where drivers report being in dialogue with the radio or singing in their own audited/privatized space... The space of a car is both one to look out from and to be looked in to. It is simultaneously private and public. Drivers both lose themselves in the pleasure of habitation and may also become increasingly aware of the 'look' of others....

Further, automobility allows for the creation of presence and performance where the driver feels free to act as they so choose:

The sound of music, together with the sound of their own voice, acts so as to provide a greater sense of presence as well as transforming the time of driving. Mediated sound thus becomes an opportunity for interactive dialogue, of a personalized performance. Drivers, whether singing or listening, are not of course hermetically sealed from the outside world. (Bull, 2004, pp. 250-1)

The observations that I cite above are an example again of the "virtual bubble", and automobility because just as Bull's participants discover when they begin singing in their cars, their privacy is simulated. They are visible on all sides and

the music and the glass of the car create a false sense of enclosed space. I argue that being on the phone either by text or by voice lulled my participants into acting in a manner that they normally would not have in a public space.²⁵

I also find automobility useful in looking at the idea of performance. I must admit that these two examples were quite unusual, but it added in some ways to the scopophilic side of being in a pub. While in Chapter 5, I have discussed how DCT has helped to alter the levels of performance in pub spaces, democratizing it to some extent with the increase in karaoke availability, this form of performance is less regimented and almost entirely within the control of the pub patrons. I would suggest that some of the ‘performances’ that occurred in the above example were intentional, or “drama” for the sake of being *able* to put on a performance of their anger. Later the same night of the phone-throwing incident, I spoke with the bartender who swept the phone up about what had happened:

This isn't his first time pitching a fit here in the pub. He's such a drama queen! I swear he fucking gets off on creating drama here in the pub. He gets angry, starts texting or talking to his boyfriend, and then starts kicking off in here. I don't understand why he feels it's OK to do that here, he doesn't do it in other pubs that I know of!?!

It drives me crazy because we really don't want to get that kind of reputation, but he's a good friend of the owners and has been with us since the Star Inn... they'll never ban him unless he breaks something or hurts someone...

I find two points of interest here: first, that the man in question repeatedly causes drama in the Camelford that relates to his use of his phone; second, the bonds of loyalty that kept the owners from kicking him out. The “drama queen” in this case had a captive audience, and a sense of ownership in the space that allowed him to behave in an inappropriate manner and create a performance for the crowd. He

²⁵ I would add that I do not know what part alcohol played in these examples. Neither man in my examples seemed particularly inebriated, but this could have helped to further the automobility response and sense of false privacy. I believe though that looking into this would go well beyond the scope of my study, but it does bear noting here.

further had the security of knowing that he most likely would not be thrown out of the pub, or even if he was, he would not be banned.

Thus, automobility again serves as a good analytical tool for analysis in this space because the elements of performance, presence and viewing are all evident.

6.3d The Pub as a “Non-Place”?

Bull discusses the idea that automobility allows the person in their car, again in a “sonic envelope,” to move through environments rather than fully engage with them (Bull, 2004, pp. 252-3) and uses Augé’s definition of “non-places” (Augé, 1995, p. 104) which he alters by pointing out the difference of the automobile interior vs that of a public place:

... [A]utomobile habitation provides drivers with their own regulated soundscape that mediates their experience of these non-places and manages the flow of time as they wish. The meaning of these non-places is overlaid by the mediated space of the automobile from which meaning emanates. Drivers can choose the manner in which they attend to these non-places, or indeed transform these spaces into personalized spaces through the use of their sound technologies. Equally, drivers are not merely responding to the street but are often concerned with making the space of the automobile into one that reflects their desire for accompanied solitude. (Bull, 2004, p. 253)

Bull makes the point that it is the meaning of the automobile as a whole which defines the meaning of the “non-place.” This raises the question in regards to DCT use in the spaces that I have observed: are gay pubs becoming “non-places” due to gay men ‘moving’ through them in a mediated “digital envelope” rather than actually being present within the space?

My observations and interviews point towards this sense of “non-place”-ness being created in pub spaces. As I pointed out earlier when talking about the relevance and meaning of gay space in Chapter 2, Chapter 3, and some of the examples in this chapter, the relevance of gay pub spaces in Kemptown to the everyday experiences of gay men has been fluid. I believe that DCT’s impact on this fluidity is creating a sense that the pub, particularly the “back-room boozier” type (like the

Aquarium) is becoming a “non-place” or a place of transit, between the home (or private sphere) and the larger club or pub along the Marine Parade.

As I point out in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, the club and combined club/pub spaces along the seafront were not suitable for my research because of their size and the dynamic of loud music and limited social interaction. This is not to say that these spaces were not popular however! Several of the pubs along the side streets linking St. James’ Street to Marine Parade benefited from the “through trade” (as Steve of the Marine Tavern on Broad St. called it) of patrons who would get off the bus or from the taxi ranks in St. James’ Street and walk to a pub for a drink *before* heading to the larger (and often more expensive) venues of the seafront. For example, one of the biggest selling points of the Aquarium was that it provided cheap drinks in a space that was *very* close to the larger venues on the Marine Parade (it directly abutted the back of R-Bar) and would purposely time their entertainment schedule to begin about 15 minutes after some of the more popular venues on St James’ Street finished their entertainment. Thus the Aquarium would benefit from patrons looking for a second “quick one” before they would head to the larger venues as the evening went on. In my observations at the Aquarium, Thursday-Saturday nights would always peak between 9:15pm and 10:45 (just before many of the venues would begin to charge cover). A typical Thursday or Friday would be similar to this observation:

At the bar on Friday, Tristan and Michael are at work: Tristan as MC for the karaoke and Michael serving. The number of people in the bar has been variable and there hasn’t been much demand for karaoke, but also, not that much interaction. A lot of men have come in, gotten a drink, and sat down with their phone. Most of the men are alone, sitting away from the bar in the front [the area of the pub with tables and a couch] and it’s only me and a couple of regulars up here talking and singing [karaoke]. (*later*) I didn’t even have to look at my watch: the front end just emptied out so it’s 10:45. The front of the bar is empty now and everyone is packed at the bar or by the stage. Phones are away, most people are singing now, or chatting.

One of the regulars that used to come in for “a quick one,” and promptly depart, Tim, explained what his Aquarium and Marine Thursdays were about:

Tim: The Aquarium and the Marine are quick stops for me. They’re the first port of call for the night. I usually meet people at R-Bar or at Legends, and will hit either the Aquarium or the Marine accordingly. I am usually just heading in for a cheap drink. My friends don’t usually meet me there.

A: So what do you do when you’re in the pubs?

T: Usually catch up on Grindr or text. I’m not into the crowd in there [The Marine] and it can be boring. I don’t do karaoke, so the phone helps me to tune out the horrible singing.

A: Then why hit the Aquarium at all?

T: Because it’s a place to sit, where I can drink and use my phone without paying a cover, or being really disturbed. I don’t go to either bar because I like them...

While I found Tim’s remarks to be very cynical, they really seemed to exemplify the idea of moving through “non-places.” For Tim, the phone allowed him to alter his experiences in both pubs with a virtual experience (by being able to ignore the karaoke, an aural experience, particularly) and use both spaces as a waypoint, between home and his final destination. Tim was able to engage in private discourse within the pub and make it a space of his own creation, to suit his needs. Further, neither pub was a space that Tim particularly wanted to be in; it was part of a journey through his evening. For Tim at least, the Aquarium held little significance beyond a space he was moving through.

I believe that Tim, and the other patrons that I observed acting in the same manner, are able to render the pub into a “non-place” by DCT use. The patron is insulated and in their own “digital envelope” again. The pub itself loses its significances as gay space and could be an “anywhere” space, such as a coffee house, a restaurant, a library, or even a streetscape that a flâneur may observe as they walk through it.

6.3e Automobility conclusions

My research and the observations that I have discussed above use Michael Bull's concept of automobility to frame my understanding of what is taking place in these spaces, as well as the impact of DCT use. The key arguments that I raise relating to automobility are:

- The ability that DCT has to allow the user to privatise a public space. To this end, I discuss the idea that the user can create a “virtual envelope” around the user to insulate themselves from the public in the space. Simultaneously, the user is able to create their own mediated interactions with others both within the physical space and in virtual spaces.
- The ability that DCT has to allow the user to avoid discomfort by allowing them to disengage from the pub space. In the examples I have used, there is evidence that this avoidance goes beyond the idea of simply creating a barrier (like a newspaper), but rather allows the user to be more selective in whom they interact with *within* the spaces they are in.
- My argument that because DCT creates a “virtual envelope” and a sense of synthesized privacy in a public space, private performance becomes possible, often with scopophilic results for those in the pub.
- Finally, DCT allows for the patron to render the pub into a “non-place” and/or a place of transit that becomes a waypoint in a journey between the private of the home and the public of their final destination.

6.4 Conclusions: automobility, simulated intimacy, ersatz privacy?

Looking back at my observation and interview with Jules and my analysis of it, I find that just as Turkle worries about the lack of true intimacy and interpersonal interaction in DCT mediated communications, Bull's conception of automobility also points towards a similar phenomenon. Bull notes this when he discusses

Adorno's arguments around our inclination towards a mediated experience versus the real.²⁶

Adorno perceives the urban subject as increasingly and actively seeking out forms of mediated company within which to live. Auditory media embody a form of compensatory metaphysics whereby subjects seek solutions to their everyday life. Adorno's work in this area can be creatively applied to the experience of driving; to looking in and looking out from the interior space of the automobile in order to assess what it might mean to 'look out' and 'move through' the world from the auditory box that the automobile has become. In focusing upon these concerns I re-appropriate Adorno's use of 'warmth' and 'chill' to denote the contrast between the mediated role of sound in expectations of the social and the 'chill' of the immediacy of 'public' areas of daily life. (Bull, 2004, p. 255)

Whereas Bull is discussing the specific mediation of pre-recorded music, by relating his work to Adorno, he is bringing Adorno's sense of "real culture vs simulated (mediated) culture" into his argument. For the purposes of my argument, this mediation is vital, because I argue that it is precisely DCT mediation that alters the gay patron's relationship to the gay pub.

Bull's concern around automobility is the idea that, as we become more heavily mediated and we create privatized spaces that we can control via audio mediation, we are rapidly losing our *relationship* to these spaces, and by proxy to each other (also a concern of Adorno). My research, Turkle's work and Bull's work all seem to agree on this point. As Bull concludes his article on automobility, he points out that we, as consumers, have an:

increasing ability and desire to make the 'public' spaces of the city conform to a notion of a 'domestic' or 'intimate' private space. As consumers increasingly inhabit 'media saturated' spaces of intimacy, so they increasingly desire to make the public spaces passed through mimic their desires. In doing so drivers reclaim representational space precisely by privatizing it. The consequence for any notion of shared urban space appears serious as the warmth of privatized and mediated communication produces the 'chill' that surrounds it. Proximity and solitariness are increasingly dialectically linked in the mobilization of contemporary forms of sociality in such a way that in the future we may all become like Paul Gilroy's driver, shouting out, impotently, into dead urban space. (Bull, 2004, p. 255)

²⁶ As Adorno initially pointed out back in 1944 in "The Culture Industry" this mediation sees the listener separated from high culture or the real of a live performance for the mediated experience of radio or recording.

Turkle's concerns are that by investing more in digital technology and artificial intelligences, we are losing our ability to be alone with ourselves as well as being able to hold conversations and interactions among ourselves. Further, as Turkle pointed out in 2012, we are even losing our ability to be *in* a space without this mediation:

We expect more from technology and less from one another and seem increasingly drawn to technologies that provide the illusion of companionship without the demands of relationship...

When people are alone, even for a few moments, they fidget and reach for a device. Here connection works like a symptom, not a cure, and our constant, reflexive impulse to connect shapes a new way of being.

Think of it as "I share, therefore I am." We use technology to define ourselves by sharing our thoughts and feelings as we're having them. We used to think, "I have a feeling; I want to make a call." Now our impulse is, "I want to have a feeling; I need to send a text."

So, in order to feel more, and to feel more like ourselves, we connect. But in our rush to connect, we flee from solitude, our ability to be separate and gather ourselves. Lacking the capacity for solitude, we turn to other people but don't experience them as they are. It is as though we use them, need them as spare parts to support our increasingly fragile selves. (Turkle, 2012, p. 3)

From my research, I am in agreement with Bull and Turkle's arguments. From Bull, I believe that we are becoming less engaged in the public spaces that we inhabit, constantly being mediated into a false awareness of privacy and a false demand for it as well. This demand for privacy is related, but contrasted by Turkle who argues instead that we are actually looking for companionship, but on our own terms and use DCT to mediate that companionship. What we end up with is an ersatz sense of relationships, an urge to share, but not really engage, and being present but not really there.

My concern in this analysis is somewhat personal. The meaning of gay spaces is clearly being altered by many factors (as I have noted in previous chapters), but the points I raise in this chapter seem to me to be the most disruptive to the pub status quo because they strike at the relevance of the spaces as a whole,

particularly the idea of a gay pub becoming a “non-place” (why does the space need to be gay if it is just a waypoint anyway?). These spaces for me, having come of age in a time where these spaces were essential, have a special significance that I fear is being lost.

Thus, I fear that this chapter’s arguments points towards a future in which gay spaces are relevant only as a historical markers, or hollow spaces of performance in which the idea of a gay existence in the 20th and early 21st century can be memorialized and ‘experienced’, a pastiche similar to Carnaby St, Soho, where one can go to experience a simulation of “Swinging London” in the late 1960’s. I cannot prognosticate that this will be definitely what will occur, but as of now, I am not left hopeful.

6.5 Pub Culture and Technology: transitional spaces

While sitting in the Camelford Inn, I had an interview with a couple, Mike and Phil, who regularly frequented many of the pubs in which I conducted my observations. The conversation I had with them about pub culture and their uses of technology led to a more positive outlook around the issues of DCT use in a pub space:

Mike: Pub culture changes all the time. Pubs, if they are going to stay ahead of the game, need to change every two or three years. The Marine doesn't, but look at Legends, they need to change every 5 years.

Phil: [Myself] I like the digital jukeboxes and a Wi-Fi hotspot is a necessity today.

Mike: People will go to pubs based on this because people are going to pubs for a technological upgrade to their lifestyle. Especially because of the limits on their accounts for data.

Phil: People’s lives have changed because of wife. I mean you can turn on no matter where you are.

Alan: Do you choose a pub based on what they offer?

Mike: It’s not the only consideration, but it is one of them.

Phil: I like to be able to go online and see what's going on. I want to have that option and not have to use my 3G all the time. My data budget isn't great.

Alan: Do you use (your) iPhones a lot in the pub?

Phil: Yea, particularly if it is loud, or Mike's outside having a fag.

Mike: Same really... sometimes there just isn't anything interesting going on inside.

Alan: You both have been going out to these venues for a long time. What do you think about these changes?

Mike: Well, like I was saying, pub culture is always changing. You have to bear with it, or find a new venue.

Mike's point of view particularly points out the trend towards continual change and development in Kemptown. Many of these changes, as I discussed in Chapter 5, have been relatively haphazard and uncoordinated, but with the overall objective of trying to stay ahead of the market trends. When these changes are then coupled with gay men bringing their own DCT use into these spaces, the outcomes have not always been to the benefit of each venue.

Mike and Phil however also point out that one pub in my research area has actually rejected the pattern of DCT implementation and renovations: the Marine Tavern.

A: Why do you go to the Marine (Tavern) so often?

Phil: We go to the Marine to get away from a lot of the noise and confusion at the Aquarium. I like going there because it is much quieter and we can talk to each other as well as Nat (the landlord). There isn't a TV blaring, or a lot of people on Grindr or their phones. It just doesn't seem to happen in there like it does everywhere else.

Mike: I like being able to avoid using the phone there. There's always someone to talk to or engage with. I don't feel like I *have* to use my phone. It is inviting... I feel like I am at home there.

In a later follow-up about a year later, after Mike and Phil had moved out of Brighton for Deal, Kent, I asked them about this observation and their feelings again:

Mike: Well, since we've moved, I cherish my times in Brighton even more.

A: Where do you guys go now when in town?

Phil: I like to spend the most time in the Marine. We know everyone there and they are glad to see us. We can catch up with them, and not feel like we are distracting anyone from their phone. We hit the Aquarium to see Michael and Ben, but we often try to get them to join us for a pint at the Marine so we can have them to ourselves...

A: Distracting?

Phil: Yea, distracting. People just don't use their phones in the Marine. Steve and Nat just don't go for it, and there's something about [the Marine] that keeps people from using them, I don't know what though....

Mike: The Marine is about the closest thing to a traditional "corner pub" left in Kemptown.

Mike and Phil's interviews serve as an excellent concluding and transition point to my next chapter and draw attention to a question that my research raised: what of the "traditional British pub"? What is happening to those spaces which are eschewing DCT and "trends"? Mike and Phil, and to some extent, Jim, make it clear that these factors are still important to pub culture. What is there for those who want an "Island of safety" from DCT driven change? In the next chapter, I will discuss the one space in my survey that purposely bucked any technical trends, the Marine Tavern. Using a nautical theme²⁷, I hope to 'chart a course' which the smaller venues may 'stay the course' and remain more true to the nostalgic view of the British "local" and at least remain afloat in the tide of DCT mediated change.

²⁷ Which I hope does not become too strained!!

Chapter 7: Flotsam and Jetsam?

Resistance, performance, power and tradition within the Marine Tavern

7.1 Introduction Digital Communicative Technology is never neutral and is laden with preconceived notions that are attached to it. However, one only needs to look to a daily newspaper (or website) where technology is consistently packaged in a Modernist framework of “(digital) technology equals progress” to see that that the general assumption is that digital technology is a positive force for change at best, or a neutral, passive tool in society at worst. As a matter of fact, digital technology can often be divisive because in some instances, as the Marine Tavern will show, digital technology is seen as a divisive tool rather than something which will bring the patrons together. These general assumptions and biases cloud the practical issues that the expansion of digital communicative technology into pub spaces brings. One needs to provide a more critical analysis instead of making sweeping statements assuming that digital technology is a positive thing. Thus I question these limitations, and opportunities of digital technology will be examined further.

In this chapter, I again look at the ideas of change and control within gay spaces and the issues that arise with the intersection of DCT and space occur. However, unlike in my previous examples where technological use has been encouraged as part of the space (as in the Aquarium and the Kings Arms implementation of technology), or accepted by users within the space (individual’s use of personal DCT in gay space in the Aquarium, Kings Arms, and Camelford), this chapter focuses on a particular space which has eschewed DCT and has taken the role of actively discouraging the use of DCT by both the users of the space and the operators of the space. Using the primary example of the Marine Tavern, I discuss how there are countervailing forces against a perceived pressure towards implementing DCT. My observations have revealed benefits and challenges that

the intentional lack of DCT implementation by the owners within the space, and the intentional discouragement of individuals in the space using their own DCT technology presents in the competitive Kemptown gay pub market.

A further idea I look at is the perceived pressure and tension of technological determinism, in regards to the idea of a traditional pub as enunciated by the owners of the pub, versus the ideas of the patrons. Again, tension and potential conflict arises due to the nature of “ownership” and loyalty between the owners and the patrons due to differing position and outlooks towards DCT use within the space and this chapter discusses how these tensions are resolved and balanced through both the sense of spatial codes of conduct (Churchill, 2004) and performance of power (Browne, 2006).

Finally, I discuss the ideas that came about around the title of this chapter, again in regards to the pressures of technological determinism. I point out how my initial analysis of my data for this chapter has changed over the period of this study²⁸ and how the idea that the metaphor for the Marine Tavern being “Flotsam and Jetsam” in regards to DCT further demonstrates the pervasive nature of the idea that technology is a panacea for the pub trade and the potential pitfalls that can occur from this argument.

7.2 The Marine Tavern, 2002

The first time I walked into the Marine Tavern was in 2002 when I was writing my Master’s at Sussex. Previous to moving to Brighton, I lived in an area which did not have a high concentration of gay bars or social spaces as such, so I really didn’t go out much, nor did I have a lot of gay male friends. Because of this, I picked the Marine Tavern as a small, relatively safe place where I would be able to start going out again. When I walked in, I was immediately welcomed by the bartender/landlord, who was very friendly, more so than I had experienced to date in more “straight” pubs in Brighton. When I sat down at the bar a familiar voice behind me spoke up: it was Mike, a demonstrator at Sussex that I had met professionally in tutorials up at Falmer. We got to talking and he introduced me to the other people that he knew in the pub, most of whom were either related to each other in

²⁸ Though this chapter is structurally near the end of my DPhil, it was one of the first data chapters that I have written and it has gone through several revisions.

some fashion (the landlord's partner, business partner, and mother!), or regulars who were known to prop up the bar for the evening. It was the first place in Britain that I felt was a "safe harbour" for myself; I felt comfortable, safe, and welcomed.

I had only planned on stopping in for a brief drink that night, but ended up staying until the end of the "drink-up" and the Marine became for me a friendly port of call for the rest of my time at Sussex in 2002-3.

7.2a Setting the Scene: The Marine Today

The Marine Tavern, located in Broad Street in Kemptown, is a small single-room pub with a capacity of approximately 50 people comfortably, 75 at crush loads such as at Brighton Gay Pride. The pub is small and cosy, with wood panelling and low lighting, mostly with bar stool seating, with a couple of booths in the back near the stairs to the toilets. The ambiance is quiet and friendly, a space that allows you to be as personable or private as you would like to be.

On an average night, the Marine is usually filled with local regulars who have been coming to the pub for years. Some of the current regulars have been going to the Marine since the current owners took it over in 1999. The pub has been in existence since the beginning of the 19th century, and there is a photograph of Broad Street in the pub from the 1890's clearly showing the Marine. Its history as a gay pub however has been less easy to define. Lawrence indicated in my interview with him that when he first moved to Brighton in the mid 1980's the pub was gay-friendly, but not necessarily a gay pub per se. It was a place where he would stop in, but not really a place where he would stay: "We always went to the Bulldog in those days because it was a place to see and be seen", but as Lawrence also indicated, he was not really paying attention to the places which were not popular among younger people (Steve, 2011). With its small footprint and location which is both off the local high-street (St. James' St) and the Old Stein, the Marine was not then and is not now a place where people really go to "be seen," but rather as a place for quiet socialization.

One of the first things that struck me when I went to the Marine to interview Steve was the lack of digital communicative technology visible in the pub. The pub in many ways looks like it could be in a time-warp compared to some of its contemporaries in the area. There are no video screens on the wall in the pub, nor are there any notices inducing punters to log onto their Facebook site or their Twitter page. Pictures adorn the walls from recent pub nights instead²⁹. The music systems and digital jukeboxes that pervade most of the Marine's neighbours are not visible here at all. The only nod to digital communicative technology in the pub itself is the iPod behind the counter which is used for the very soft music playing in the background during my interview. Lawrence told me the iPod was a recent addition: "Nat got that for the pub about a year ago, mostly to get rid of the clutter of CDs in the space..." since the bar itself is so small (Steve, 2011).

Along with the lack of pub provided digital communicative technologies in the pub space, I observed that most of the clientele did not utilise their own devices in the space. Mobile phones were visible and out on the counters, but not in use in the ways I discussed in the previous chapter regarding the Aquarium or in Charles Street. I made several observations at the Marine and I can only count 4 times that I saw mobile internet technology being used in the space, and a couple of those times were to show me what their phones could do. A patron in the pub, Chris, pointed out that he did not know how to use many of the applications that his phone had and he rarely used anything but the camera in a space other than his home.

The age cohort that I noticed during my observations seemed to be in the late 40's to mid-60's with some younger men and a couple slightly older. Unlike several

²⁹ Since I began research in the pub, the picture wall has expanded, with a web address telling people to look at even more pictures on the Marine's website.

other pubs that I had been to, this pub frequently also had women present (the landlord's mother and her friends) and several transvestites and transgendered people who were in different stages of gender reassignment. I found this space to be a breath of fresh air in a way because of the different cohort which made up the space.

7.2 Flotsam and Jetsam

“Most people who come in here are here to talk, to socialize. They like the atmosphere...” (Steve, 2011)

“I don't want people in here using Wi-Fi. It ruins the atmosphere. I want people to talk and have conversations, you know?” (Steve, 2011)

When I first began to talk with customers in the Marine Tavern, I got the initial impression that I was talking with people who for the most part were not interested in digital communicative technology. Several of the men in the pub asked me why *would* someone come to a pub to use their mobiles or laptops; a question to be fair that I encountered at many of the venues in which I engaged with participant observation and data collection. Most of the men that I spoke with stated that they only used their phones for calls or for texts, nothing more. In these cases, the men showed me phones which were older, some with monochromatic (green) screens. For example, Lawrence had his phone (an older model Nokia) behind the bar while I interviewed him and I asked him about his usage habits both inside and outside the bar. Though he had gotten a mobile phone early on (1996), he had only ever used it for texts and calls, in the beginning for business in London, now primarily between himself and his partner. (Steve, 2011) When I asked him if he was aware of other features that his phone had, such as Bluetooth technology and file sharing, he said that he was aware that these were available, but he had never used them, nor had he ever seen any reason to:

When I socialize (either here or when I'm in other venues), I want to talk to people. I want to socialize with the people who I am with. I mean, I use my mobile to get in touch with people, to tell them where I am or if I am going to another venue because of the crowd, but I don't use my phone to talk with them if they're here with me! (Steve, 2011)

For Steve, the idea of using his phone (as a digital communication tool) made no real sense in the Marine. Steve in his conversation with me made a distinct difference between the space he was in and speaking with people there, and using the phone as a tool to make an external contact when needed. It was not something that he would use *with other patrons in the same space*. The idea of using the Internet or Grindr in the space was not something that he considered. Since Steve worked in the bar, he saw a lot of people using digital communicative technology in the pub, but mostly in the same fashion he was using it; to contact people on the outside of the pub rather than to communicate in some form with other people in the pub or to use as a distraction.

In further discussions with the patrons, I found that some of the men in the pub were very hostile to ideas regarding the use of technology in a pub space. A key informant who I spoke with, John, felt very threatened about the idea of technology being “thrust” upon people in a pub. I had just shown him the Grindr app on my iPhone when he cut me off:

That's all well and good, but why the *HELL* would I want to use (Grindr) in a place like this? I mean, I leave my mobile *home* when I go out to get *away* from people calling me, texting me, pestering me. Can't a guy just go out for a drink!? I want to talk to the people here, not get pestered by the outside world... (emphasis original)

When I explained to John that I was not advocating that people use digital communicative technology like mobiles, he became much more amenable and continued on:

..I can understand *why* people want to use this, but it's not for me. It's probably a younger man's thing...then again, you're American. You have to remember that we are very different here. Our pub culture is

very different and we don't adapt well to things like (Grindr). Remember, England doesn't change, it modernizes.

This idea about modernization is important because it shows the link that many people have between technology and the state of modernity, and the incongruity between the concept of change and modernization. It is here that the idea of technological determinism first began to show up within my analysis of the lack of DCT in the Marine Tavern. To John, 'change' is definitely something to be resisted, but '*modernization*' is something to be accepted and, by his tone, more positive than idea of changes. I would argue that this is specifically because modernization is not seen as having a negative connotation, but rather is synonymous with the idea of 'progress' or 'moving forward', while keeping what is best of the past, whereas change means to people like John a complete break with the past and the communicative/interpersonal space as it was. In other words, John could see the Marine Tavern 'modernizing' so long as its core values and interpersonal structures remained the same. At first I found this idea really impossible because how can one implement the kinds of 'modernizations' that I have noted in the Aquarium for example without fundamentally changing the nature of the communications in the space?

The issue that arises here seems then at first glance to be whether or not technological determinism is automatically a positive feature within Kemptown gay spaces and whether or not spaces which engage with active resistance to this process of technological modernization can survive. For example, DA Walker, in analysing the work of Thorstein Veblen points out that

'new institutions are formed as the result of the dynamic impact of technology', even if, by nature, 'institutions are static and resist change'. As to technological progress, ...according to Veblen, it would stem from the basic human instincts which lead man, directly or indirectly, to improve his mastery over his environment... (Walker 1977 p.220, cited in (Brette, 2003, p. 461))

Thus, to some extent while Kemptown gay pub spaces may be resistant to change on one hand, it could be argued that there is an innate movement towards utilizing technology to further expand or develop a space so long as there is a greater potential for a more efficient (profitable) use of the space (“if you build it, they will come”). This can be seen as a positivist, determinist view for technological expansion into these spaces and following this logic, it would make sense to the owners of pub spaces would implement technological innovation within their spaces.

However, at the time when I was speaking with John, it was his hostility that really surprised me, since as I have noted above, the Marine Tavern is a pub that I have long felt welcome. His hostility towards me and the idea of ‘change’ was leading me to formulate some ideas about the Marine Tavern and its regulars, based on initial analysis of my observations, my interviews in the tavern, as well as from some of the reputation that I had heard expressed within the Kemptown gay community. Based on these points, my initial analysis was that the customers in the Marine Tavern were there primarily to avoid digital communicative technology because they did not wish to engage with it (especially when John emphatically told me so in his comments), and in keeping with the name of the pub, I began to associate the patrons as an example of “flotsam and jetsam” who had been washed up on the shores of the Marine Tavern, looking for a “safe harbour” from the rapidly changing world of digital communication that was “sweeping” other locations, like the Aquarium, the Zone, and even the Bulldog. Based on their lack of technological use in the space, and the hostile reaction to the idea of “change” among some of the customers, I felt that my “safe harbour” was simply a place where people went because their behaviours and space usage was not changing

with the times and technological advancements. It was not a safe harbour, but rather a pub of castaways.

7.2a “I just want to get away from it!”

The idea that the Marine Tavern is a place of “digital castaways” however is overly simplistic, knee-jerk, and somewhat degrading to the customers. The communicative technology use patterns of the men in the Marine Tavern are definitely more complicated than just “flotsam and jetsam” and to say otherwise would completely disregard any form of agency on the part of the patrons of the pub. It would imply that the only reason that anyone would want to patronise the Marine would be because they felt threatened by the technological devices being implemented with other pub remodels, as well as the technology being brought into the pub environment by patrons, and my observations clearly show however that this is not the case. Other key informants that I spoke to regularly went to different pubs in the Kemptown area and were not limited specifically by the technology use in the space either.

In my interview with Steve, I asked him what his socializing habits are, and he said that he mostly went out for quiet drinks with his partner. One of the qualities he looked for in a space was a good “social atmosphere.” However, his viewpoint on this had changed over the years. When I asked Steve what was important for him when he socialized when he was younger, he indicated that he was going to places where he could “see and be seen” and just have a good time. I asked him if he still went to places like that:

There are times that I do. If so I go to places like the Aquarium or the Star Inn for a quick drink or the Queen’s Arms. I don’t go out to do karaoke or see cabaret and drag shows, so I tend to avoid places like that. Usually though, I just want to have a quiet drink with my partner.

Steve really emphasized that the Marine Tavern is the kind of space that he likes to socialize in specifically because it is not dominated by technology or by people using technology. The main emphasis of the Marine Tavern is on interpersonal relationships, rather than what features (like karaoke, cabaret, etc.) that the space

offers. In further conversations with patrons, I found that the thing that they enjoyed the most about the space was that it was quiet and oriented towards conversation. This was something that I had observed as well. Though there was often background music being played in the pub, it was often quieter than other locations and there was much less variety to what was being played. Unlike the Star, the King Arms, the Aquarium or the Bulldog, the music in this space is not on-line but is generated from an iPod. I asked Steve about this, and he pointed out that the only reason they “upgraded” to an iPod was to remove the large rack of CDs which used to be positioned on the bar back. The use of the music did not change and it still takes a secondary role to conversation.

The conversations in the space tend to be small groups of men speaking with each other, and sometimes with the bartender. There really is not space in the pub to hold a truly “private” conversation at the bar as the design of the bar does not lend itself to privacy. However, in the back of the pub, there are two small tables near the stairs to the toilets which do afford some sense of privacy for small groups.

This dynamic of the space tends to encourage broader conversations and discussions, jokes, etc. which are shared among all. Many times when I was in the space, both in a participant observation mode or simply for a laugh, I got drawn into a conversation between the bartender and the other patrons. It is not a place that generally allows someone to be alone with themselves or their thoughts.

In this case, my observations have tended to show that the actual physical layout of the pub discourages an over-reliance on digital communication because it is difficult to do anything in the space without someone else being in on it. The times where digital technology seems to come into play in the space is when it is the *topic* of conversation itself rather than the means of conversation/communication. In my participant observations, I saw people demonstrating their new mobile phones or

the latest apps which they had gotten for their phones. As the digital camera feature on phones got better, I saw more and more people demonstrating their cameras and the pictures that they took. Twice, I saw people in the pub use their Bluetooth-enabled phones to share photos with each other. In each of these cases, the mobile digital technology was secondary to the conversation itself, and the communication was strictly verbal and person to person (not digitally mediated in any way). Also, these examples were ephemeral and extremely brief (less than 5 minutes in each case) interludes before the conversations turned to other matters. The phones would disappear and it would be as if there was no technology in use in the space again.

When I spoke with Steve about this, he emphasized that the Marine is known as a friendly space, a space where people can come to have a chat and a drink, and that is an image that the landlord wants to maintain. In conversations with the patrons, they gave the same impression as well. The one thing they *did not* want more than anything was loud music, or karaoke since “you could go almost anywhere for that, like the Queen’s Arms or the Star or the Aquarium.” This is what the patrons really felt made the space different from other places. Other pubs in Kemptown have far more seating, such as Legends, Charles Street, and the Amsterdam, but due to the loud music, are not conducive to conversation. However, these pubs all offer and promote free Wi-Fi access to patrons, whereas the Marine does not.

When I first began going to the Marine for my observations and asked about this, I was told that “nobody wants it.” (Steve, 2011) At first, my assumption was that the clientele would not use the technology in the pub because I was dealing with a group of people who were not using technology in general, hence the “flotsam and jetsam” title. However, after further observation, I realized that this is not the

case. The people in the Marine are going there with different expectations of what they plan to do there, and the use of mobile digital technology does not fit into that expectation. As I said before, people do use their digital technology in the space from time to time, and it is not discouraged openly by any means, but it is not the dominant activity in the space. Thus, offering Wi-Fi would be redundant because it would not be used as much as in other venues.

At the same time, there is the question of “if they offer it, will they come?” and by proxy, will it change the nature of the space? If the response of John is any indicator, it definitely *would* change the space because it would encourage a more digitally mediated space vs. the one-on-one conversation. This also begs the question: “Do people go to the Kings Arms’, the Aquarium, etc. *because* they offer digital technology in the space?” My research has not shown this to directly be the case, but rather indirectly, because people are going to certain venues with certain activities in mind. People go to the Aquarium after 6PM to sing karaoke, which is made available by the venue offering web-based karaoke on demand. People can go to Legends to “cruise” and supplement their person-to-person cruising with free Wi-Fi based mobile digital technology. Conversely, people can go to the Marine Tavern for conversation, because as a space it is quiet and dedicated to interpersonal communication.

To this end, Turkle raises the point that our over-reliance on DCT is diminishing our interpersonal relationships and it has a real impact on our conceptualization of ourselves. In her latest work *Reclaiming Conversation: The Power of Talk in the Digital Age*, Turkle expresses her concern for our overreliance on DCT, and her optimism in the potential for ‘reclaiming conversation’:

We find our voice in solitude, and we bring it to public and private conversations that enrich our capacity for self-reflection. Now that circle has

been disrupted; there is a crisis in our capacity to be alone and together. But we are in flight from those face-to-face conversations that enrich our imaginations and shepherd the imagined into the they begin to recover their empathic capacity. In my own experiences observing children at such a camp [a camp that bans DCT use], I saw how easy it was for them to appreciate—as though for the first time—the value of conversation, with themselves and others. (Turkle, 2015, p. 215)

However, Turkle has pointed out, both in *Alone Together* and in *Reclaiming Conversation* that while she remains optimistic that we *can* move to regain our ability to converse with each other, the evidence that she is seeing is that we *will not*:

Again and again, I've seen people retreat to screens because only there do they feel they can "keep up" with the pace of machine life. I think of Vannevar Bush and his dream in 1945 that a mechanical "Memex" would free us for the kind of slow creative thinking that only people know how to do. Instead we too often try to speed up to a pace our machines suggest to us. (Turkle, 2015, pp. 216-17)

Turkle's concern notwithstanding, I would still argue that in the case of the Marine, many patrons are making the choice to converse in the local in person, embracing an action more in line with Turkle's ideal.

Thus, my original theory, that the patrons of the Marine Tavern were somehow using the Marine as a "safe harbour" from the technological changes and so-called "modernizations", was clearly not an accurate indicator of what was actually happening in the pub. A more accurate understanding of the situation is that the patrons of the Marine Tavern make an active choice to frequent a space where digital commutative technologies are not the centre of the activities in the space.

7.3 Is technological investment inherently positive?

The Marine Tavern provides an interesting research comparison to the other spaces in Kempton that I have researched because it has not remodelled itself in the past 9 years that I have frequented it, nor has it implemented digital communicative technology in that time. In this section I will discuss the impact of this lack of technological investment in relation to the assumption that gay men

are “aggressive consumers” or, aggressive pursuit of the “pink pound”, as well as the exploitation of the “early adopters” in the gay community that frequents pubs in the Kemptown area. I will also discuss the ideas of fragmentation which the Marine Tavern has in some ways been able to avoid by not implementing DCT in the pub, but also discuss the concept of “bypass strategies” (Coutard & Guy, p. 719) which ultimately sees the larger more popular pubs in the Kemptown area catering to the more affluent customers, both fiscally and culturally.

7.3a Keeping its head above water: the coping strategies of the Marine in the face of technological remodelling

In the past three years, several of the larger club/pub combinations in Kemptown have renovated themselves, and in all cases have implemented some form of digital communicative technology in the process. Of note, the larger pubs which were beyond the remit of my study began this trend: Legends was the first to do this, reopening in late 2008, offering free Wi-Fi service and a digital video jukebox. This was followed by the renovation of Charles Street (Wi-Fi and digital jukebox), The Bulldog (digital karaoke, video display screens), and The Amsterdam (Wi-Fi and digital video jukebox). Smaller pubs in the area have also remodelled, each offering DCT along with their cosmetic remodelling. During the period of my research, only 2 pubs that I have frequented have not had a significant cosmetic remodelling (The Aquarium and the Marine Tavern) and only the Marine Tavern has not implemented DCT. Finally, there are no plans to remodel or change the technological offerings in the Marine Tavern (Steve, 2011).

As I have stated above, most of the patrons of the Marine Tavern are there having made a conscious choice to frequent it due as much to what it does not offer for digital technology and by proxy what it offers in interpersonal communications. However, I would argue that there is another process going on in this space, that of resistance to the consumerist culture and to the demand of competition in the

Kempton pub community. This resistance is one of the strategies which keeps the Marine competitive without getting caught up in the cosmetic and DCT remodelling race, and also serves to make the Marine unique and give it a niche within the pub offerings in Kempton.

In their article "STS and the City", Coutard and Guy discuss the ideas of technological discrimination and resistance to the "social" effects of technologies in the terms of the "city" as a macro space. (Coutard & Guy, 2007, p. 717) I would argue that their theoretical approach can be applied on a micro scale to the individual pubs in the Kempton area, especially when looking at the idea of technological progress being an inherently positive development:

For Amin and Thrift, the trajectories of cities have to be seen as an "ordering of uncertainty" in which the regulation of cities through technology is constantly contested and renegotiated (Amin and Thrift 2002, p. 5). This does not, they insist, mean an "unbridled optimism for the future"; in fact they rail against a "politics of nostalgia" for instance for "tightly knit and spatially compact urban communities" that haunts much urban futures literature (Amin and Thrift 2002, p. 4). Instead, they argue, research should search to reveal how "each urban moment can spark performative improvisations which are unforeseen and unforeseeable". (Coutard & Guy, 2007, p. 718)

I argue that the idea of renegotiation and contestation is what is actually occurring on a micro scale in the Marine Tavern. The renegotiation is transpiring in that the Marine Tavern is not trying to keep up with the other pubs in the Kempton area and instead is placing itself outside the technological competition. The Marine Tavern also serves as a site of resistance to the larger forces of change and renovation which have seized many of the larger pub spaces in Kempton over the last four years by recognizing the idea that DCT is not inherently a positive development, but rather a contested area which changes the nature of the pub spaces where it is implemented.

Further, the concept of “the politics of nostalgia” is important when looking at what is happening in the Marine Tavern (and also to my initial analysis of “Flotsam and Jetsam”) because as I have noted above, the lack of DCT is a conscious decision on the part of the pub. The pub at first glance appeared to be a throwback to an earlier time as I noted in my field notes. It seemed to fit the idea of a “traditional British Pub” and serve as a backwater (again in my initial interpretation) within Kemptown. Thus it would appear that the pub is playing with the idea of nostalgia and the past in order to serve a certain niche population of clientele. However, as Amin and Thrift note when talking about cities on a macro level, there are “performative improvisations” which occur, in this case I relate the idea of improvisations to the remodelling that had gone on all around the Marine Tavern. I would argue that instead of looking the Marine Tavern as a nostalgic backwater, tradition-bound pub, that one should look at the Marine in regards to its place within the Kemptown community and how it serves a specific clientele precisely because it has not remodelled (cosmetically or technologically) and is thus able to capitalize on the role that has partially been thrust upon it.

7.3b The foundering: Is the Marine a victim of consumerist “bypass strategies”?

...(Graham and Marvin) argue that the unbundling of infrastructures, reinforced by powerful factors and supported by powerful coalitions of actors, allow for bypass strategies, i.e., strategies that seek the connection of “valued” or “powerful” users and places, while at the same time bypassing “non-valued” or “less powerful” ones...These bypass strategies contribute to the emergence of so-called “premium networked spaces” (Graham and Marvin 2001, p. 249f). (Coutard & Guy, 2007, p. 719)

The quote above discusses specifically the use of technology to create a tiered situation where higher value users (read wealthier in both social and fiscal capital) have better spatial and technological access than lower valued users in living and socialization spaces within a city. However, this idea of using technology to institute a separation of service and the creation of “premium networked spaces”

applies (again on the micro level) to the Marine Tavern because of the effect that the remodel race in the pubs in Kemptown has had on the Marine. In essence, the Marine could be viewed as being bypassed (purposefully) by DCT because it is not a large venue or a particularly “powerful” one when viewed in economic or social terms. This idea of bypass strategies is interesting because it highlights the consumerist nature of the gay pubs in the Kemptown area, and the economic drive to maximize profits by the implementation of DCT in order to draw in higher value gay customers (in this case early adopters who have the fiscal capital to support early adoption, and by proxy buy more drinks (!)). The Marine, by contrast, is not necessarily trying to draw in this clientele, rather focusing on the interpersonal relationships of “locals and regulars”, who make up the majority of their patronage.

The implementation of the cosmetic and technological remodel in Kemptown pubs is directed specifically at appealing to the idea that gay men have disposable income and are thus technologically advanced and are expecting to find the most technologically advanced spaces in which to socialize. These spaces can be viewed as an example of “premium networked spaces” in this regard. Thus a fractionalization and splintering of gay men within the Kemptown pub “scene” could be occurring due to a digital divide between spaces like the Marine which have not “kept up” and provided premium services which gay men are supposed to expect from their pubs, and spaces which have updated their look cosmetically as well as technologically. Interestingly, the general price of drinks in the different spaces has not really changed all that much, and is more a factor of the time of night and the size of the venue (larger spaces can charge slightly lower drink prices through economies of scale).

Another point of interest that moves from the commercial rationale for why the Marine has not updated or moved to a DCT mediated environment is a concept

that Turkle raises of creating “sacred spaces for conversation.” (Turkle, 2015, p. 217) Turkle’s context is specifically referring to the physical spaces in the home (such as the dining table) or spaces in the home schedule to be devoted to the avoidance of “screen time” in favour of interpersonal conversation. However, the Marine could be viewed as a “sacred space” because the spatial mores insist upon interpersonal communication, thus fitting Turkle’s concept.

Further, in a later discussion, Turkle argues that spaces must be consciously created or reclaimed for conversation:

In this environment, it makes sense to recall what is hopeful: We can reclaim places for conversation, and we still know where to find each other. Parents can find children at the dinner table; teachers can find students in class and office hours. Colleagues at work can find each other in hallways, in mini-kitchens, and in meetings. In politics, we have institutions for debate and action. Looking at these, we’ve seen disruptions in the field: meetings that aren’t meetings and classes that are waiting to be digitized. And of course, where this book began: family dinners that are silent because each member is taken away on a device. But the importance of focusing on the places where conversation can happen, and reclaiming them—as opposed to just saying, “Put down your phone”—is that the places themselves propose a sustained conversation, week after week, year after year. (Turkle, 2015, pp. 223-4)

The Marine then can be looked at as a space where conversation is being reclaimed by a conscious rejection of DCT by both the pub and its patrons. This rejection again is an optimistic sign for Turkle, and a possible signpost to a future where DCT reserved spaces thrive as an alternative to an over-mediated environment.

Is DCT then always a positive innovation in pub spaces in Kemptown, and do pubs which do not implement it do so at their own peril? I would argue in the case of the Marine Tavern, DCT would not be a positive addition to the space because right now, the splintering of the gay pub clientele works in their favour because they are able to hold a particular niche in the Kemptown neighbourhood as a space specifically catering to non-DCT moderated conversation. However, pubs and

patrons need to be aware of the impacts that DCT bring to a space as well as on the sense of community in the area.

7.4 Steering clear of the sandbar:

A cautionary tale about personal expectations about technology

My experiences in observing at the Marine Tavern brought to light my own position about the nature of technological expansion into spaces where gay men socialize in Kemptown. I became aware of my own personal bias *towards* technology, looking at it as a positive force and in essence seeing the lack of technology as old fashioned and somehow being left behind. I realized that the Marine Tavern clearly shows that technology, though becoming more mainstream and dispersed within the Kemptown pub community, is not inherently a positive thing. There are definite losses that can be detailed with the changes from a purely interpersonal space to a space with a growing level of digital mediated communication, as further enunciated by John who stated to me “Whatever happened to the art of conversation?” which I had always looked at as a bit of a throwaway remark as I had heard it on a number of occasions, but it is indicative of the sentiment expressed by many of my participants as well as the patrons of pubs such as the Marine Tavern. John decried the fact that whenever he was in a pub space he saw people with mobiles out. To him, they seemed like an unnecessary distraction, slowly ruining the space. It is for this reason that he specifically frequented the Marine (even though on this particular occasion he was speaking to me in the Aquarium). In my first analysis however, I looked at this participant’s ideas as an anomaly. I was not hearing exactly what my participants were really *saying* in regards to the spaces and this led me to the misbegotten idea of “flotsam and jetsam”.

However, if this was the case, spaces such as the Marine Tavern would necessarily have to be on the decline, a sort of “desert island” (to continue the metaphor) gradually declining and eventually closing as it was not (or would/could not) keeping up with the times. Based on my observations however, with the pub being full night after night, this clearly was not the case. Hence I began to realize that there was a major flaw in my thinking. Why does the Marine Tavern seem to buck the trend and continue to thrive while other pubs in the Kemptown area seem to be employing the latest technology in a bid to continue to remain competitive?

I realized that I had made many of my observations initially in the Marine Tavern through a very Modernist gaze as well as my own positivist bias towards technology. I saw the expansion of technology into the Kemptown pub space as a positive expansion of technology which could only bring bigger and better advances to the Kemptown pub spaces. However, this sort of overarching theoretical approach clearly does not apply to the Marine Tavern, and it was this that made me look at my thinking further. I realized that I needed to take a more post-modernist response to the further expansion of technology in Kemptown because as Lyotard (1984) stated when talking about the idea of grand narratives to define , you cannot legitimately explain what is happening in Kemptown with one broad based theory or theoretical position showing a Modernist expansion of technology as benefiting everyone in the area. The danger in doing this is that I was inadvertently attempting to create an overarching hegemonic “Kemptown Technological Narrative” by which everything relating to digital technology use could be formed into a narrative which would explain away anomalies like the Marine. By the same token, you cannot simply disregard those people who do not fit into the larger narrative of technological expansion. Thus, I realized that I’d come to an important point about the Kemptown pub community in general and

my research in particular: technological expansion is not neutral, whether having been brought into the space by the individual or by the pub owners, and that in order to make sense of my research data, I must ascertain my own biases towards both technology and the idea of a Modernist grand narrative.

As I have stated previously however, the men of the Marine Tavern do not see themselves as castaways or the space as a “desert island” at all. Rather, they see the Marine Tavern as a place where they can get away from the pervasive spread of modernity and instead embrace the art of conversation and socialization without the mediation of technology between them. This position, especially enunciated by John and Steve, really made me re-evaluate my biases and take into consideration my own interaction with digital technology in gay spaces in Kemptown.

Another issue with the Modernist ideal is the idea that the grand narrative of technological development *should* even be trying to explain what is happening in the Marine and Kemptown. For example, how can this research pin down the changes in Kemptown are specifically attributable to technology? Does the Marine survive specifically in spite of technology or are other factors involved? Of course there are other factors involved, such as economic factors both on the macro and microeconomic levels, as well as the social factors of changing trends and a changing population of gay men in the neighbourhood. This research cannot and does not try to answer these questions because it is far beyond the scope of a study of this manner. In the case of what makes the Marine Tavern work, based on my observations, it appears that the pubs approach towards technology is ambivalent, and this ambivalence makes the space very interesting because it challenges a lot of assumptions about gay men being drawn to the latest and the greatest technological advances and that pubs require them to stay alive. The Marine has not been drawn into the whole technological competition that has seized other pubs

in Kemptown and thus has remained relatively unchanged since I began to go there in 2002. This is compared to other pubs in the area (the King's Arms) which has seen several revamps due to ownership changes and completely different approaches on technology in the past 4 years.

7.5 Desert Island or Island Paradise? *The research conclusions of the Marine Tavern*

The Marine Tavern gives an interesting insight into the limits of computer mediated communications and the uses of digital technology in the Kemptown pubs. These limits are both structurally constructed (by the lack of digital technology infrastructure in the space) as well as a construct of the users of the space (by the users not using digital technology in the space). The idea that the Marine Tavern represents some sort of hold out or technological backwater, is definitely not true and discounts the idea of agency on both the part of the venue and of the patrons of the space.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

8.1 Theoretical Conclusions

Throughout my study, I have looked at the communications within the pub spaces of my research area by analyzing the behavior of clientele and landlords regarding DCT through several analytical frameworks: Winston's theory of disruptive potential of new and emerging media technology on vested landlords and clientele, Turkle's arguments around the assimilation of DCT and the impacts that this has on interpersonal relationships, as well as Michael Bull's theory of automobility.

8.1a Chapter conclusions

In Chapter 2, I discuss the theoretical frameworks for gay physical spaces, discussing the importance of safe expression or performance of a gay identity, spatial control and safety of the space, establishment of social norms and mores for the users, and the ability to serve as a power base and source of community. I then move into the discussion of virtual spaces where I discuss the definitions of virtual space, the conceptualization of virtual corporality, and control, both external and self-policing/self censoring by gay men of their own virtual identities. Finally, I discuss the convergence of physical and virtual spaces focusing on the merging's potential for temporal and spatial shifts in both the physical and virtual domains, the renegotiation of these spaces, the ephemerality of the spaces and the potential for extension through 'cyborg' conceptualization. These discussions set up my theoretical basis for my analysis of my data chapters.

Chapter 3 introduced my research area of Kemptown and explained the history of the area, as well as that of the venues, and explained my rationale for looking at this area. Chapter 4 set out my methodological arguments and ethical considerations that influenced my research.

Winston's work served as a theoretical tool for my analysis in Chapter 5, dealing with the DCT implementations of the pub spaces in Kemptown. My findings here are that while Winston argues about the disruptive potential to mass media producers, his arguments can be used to analyze what is happening in these smaller "backroom boozers" spaces in Kemptown because the spaces and landlords are the "vested interest" in a relatively stable Kemptown venue market, and DCT devices hold the potential to alter or disrupt this, just on a micro-socio-economic level. Specifically, I outlined the different DCT implementations by The Aquarium, The Camelford, and the Kings Arms with detailed case studies.

When I analyze my observations looking at Whittle's (1994) concept of the necessity of gay space from a position of power and safety, and de Sousa e Silva's (2006) theory of convergence of physical and virtual spaces, there is evidence that convergence is occurring due to gay men's use of DCT in these spaces and extending the range of communication that they can enter into. Further, I note that DCT can also detract from the importance of being physically present in a gay space by acting as a distraction, as well as a means of being in multiple places at once, particularly in examples such as the Queen's Arms where patrons were straddling multiple spaces, physical and virtual, when the music and entertainment was not to their liking.

Chapter 6, I looked at the mobile DCT technology which is being brought into the spaces by gay men themselves. I use Turkle's conception of newness and presence to frame my interviews and participant observations and in my analysis, I find that Turkle's concerns over DCT's potential to suppress and limit conversation and interpersonal interaction to be quite valid. I then use Michael Bull's perspectives on automobility to argue that gay men's DCT technology create a privatization of gay public space by taking the private interactivity (and interconnectivity) of DCT

communication into public spaces. I discuss examples which look at the concept of scopophilic viewing and performance that the privatizing effect of automobility encourages. Lastly, I argue that automobility serves to render the pubs into “non-places”, or a place that one passes through to get to yet another location.

A critical issue that I discussed in Chapter 7, and with these smaller gay spaces and venues in Kemptown is that there is a definitive shift in what the spaces mean to the patrons. In the case of the Marine Tavern, the physical space is essential to the patrons and their loyalty to pub and its culture is what makes the pub thrive. I look at Turkle’s most recent work discussing the importance of re-engaging with conversation to explain some of my data from the Marine Tavern and found that this location is serving as a “sacred space” (Turkle, 2015, p. 207) for conversation by eschewing DCT use and DCT implementation.

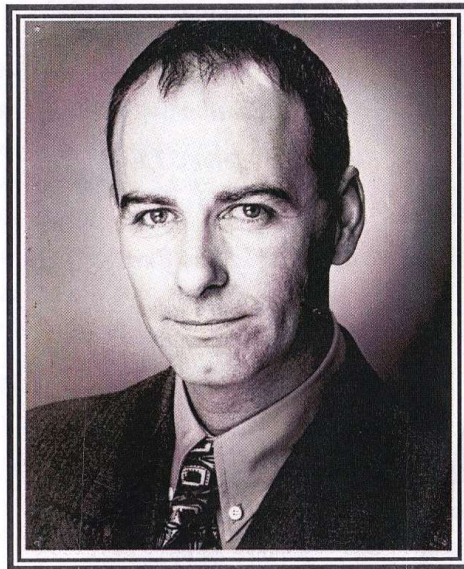
In all three of my data chapters, I point out that loyalty plays a role in the fortunes of the pubs. Spaces such as the Aquarium could not survive without the loyalty of its patrons and that loyalty is also fleeting when it is based simply on DCT implemented by the space. The Aquarium began as a niche operation as a “theatre pub” offering karaoke on demand, which drew in the gay theatrical and choral communities, but this was not enough. However, the Queen’s Arms seems to be charting a middle ground by creating spaces which allow for different clienteles to engage in different activities at the same time, but yet share in a common pub culture and loyalty. By having a space with active entertainment and a quieter backroom with Wi-Fi and 3G access, patrons are able to again assert some control over the extent that they are present and engaged in the space.

Loyalty also played a critical role in the evolution of the Star Inn’s transition to the Camelford, by way of the Kings Arms. However, the elements of spatial control by

DCT introduced was at first expanded in the move to the Kings Arms, but then eliminated, with the exception of Wi-Fi at the Camelford. While this had a lot to do with changing ideas for the theme of the venue, it ultimately resulted in a space that is far more focused on interpersonal communications both through DCT and in-person.

8.2 People, places, and loyalty

April 26th 2012. It's the last gasp of The Aquarium. Darren told myself, Phil and Michael that the pub's lease has been transferred and that the new landlords should be taking over in 2 to 3 weeks, once Michael is able to be moved. [Michael had a heart-valve issue which mimicked a heart attack and led to him being hospitalized, he has only just gotten out and is still VERY weak.] The pub is dead; we are the only 4 people in the pub. The signs on the window and door tell everyone that Tuesday will be the last night of the pub and that there is currently no beer (the brewery isn't delivering anymore). The usual show tunes are gone and in their place is some generic techno/D&B music. The stage is bare, and some of the decorations have already been removed from the walls. The lights are out, and with the exception of a newly added cheap laser light show, the pub looks more closed than open. A couple of people wander by and take a look in the windows, then move on towards R-bar at the end of the road.



Michael Conran
18 March 1957 – 30 August 2012

Two days after this last encounter with a space that I had been working in for 2 years, the pub closed its doors. Four months later, the main landlord, Michael, was dead from lung cancer. I bring this up both because it affected me deeply, as he was one of my first participants that I spoke with about this project, but also because I honestly feel that the gradual

decline and failure of the Aquarium hastened the end of his life. Michael was a great

believer in the advances that digital communicative technology could bring to gay spaces in general, even though he himself did not utilize them personally (Michael was fond of telling me that he still had a Nokia 'candy bar' phone and only used the

internet in the bar or for Facebook! (2009). Part of this was due to his business sense. He saw a niche in the Kemptown community which he and his partners felt they could exploit and it was DCT within the pub spaces which made it possible. However, that same niche that Michael and company sought to exploit eventually came to define the pub, and as tastes moved on, it left the Aquarium behind. Just as many men who would come into the Aquarium felt that the pub was great for offering karaoke “on demand”, once other pubs in the neighborhood began to offer the same experience, the limitations that I have pointed out in regards to the space became more evident. Bad staffing choices, as well as limited staffing to cut costs, began to drive away the regulars just as tightening economic conditions made keeping regulars essential to maintaining a pub which was already marginally profitable in the best of times. The allure of karaoke and “your very own cabaret” was not enough to keep the pub afloat and since it could no longer differentiate between other spaces in Kemptown it was only the futile (and in Michael’s case, terminal) efforts of the landlords which kept it open across the final 6 months.

This is an example of my primary conclusions about the use of DCT in pub spaces: DCT is neither a panacea nor a replacement for good management or personal skills. The Aquarium failed as a business for many reasons, some of which are not germane to this discussion, but I argue that one of the primary reasons is that DCT’s expansion into gay spaces is a double-edged sword. While the Aquarium rapidly exploited a niche and a new idea implementing digital karaoke and Wi-Fi within the pub, as other pubs began to do the same, in some cases with a more effective installation, the limitations of the Aquarium began to become more obvious and detrimental to the experience.

My second conclusion from this experience is that DCT has accelerated a process of homogenizing spaces and rendering those spaces to be less essential to the gay

population in Kemptown. As I noted previously, when the Aquarium began offering DCT in the pub and karaoke on demand, they were the first space to do so in Kemptown and thus had high turnover and popularity. By the time the Aquarium closed, the same DCT services and karaoke evenings (and on-demand) was being offered as a matter of course in the Queen's Arms, Bulldog, the Zone, and Poison Ivy, along with several of the "straight bars" in the neighborhood as well. The homogenization of the spaces also mirrors that of the "experience":

Adam (to Alan and Bart): So boys, where should we go this evening?

Bart: It doesn't really matter; everyone is either holding a drag show or doing karaoke tonight. I don't really feel like doing either so I don't care where we go really.

Adam: Well, that *does* sort of limit our options...

That night (in October 2011) we ended up going to a large venue bar

Mike and Phil, when they would come into Brighton, noted that the spaces were gradually becoming more and more alike and it was hard to find a difference between them. The last time that we met before I began the write-up phase of my work, Phil noted that many of the more "unique" pub spaces had become "boring" and "similar". However, in their case, their preferences were focused on pubs which as I have noted earlier, were never as focused on DCT implementation as the Aquarium, Queen's Arms etc. Thus, I would argue that the differentiation between gay pub spaces in Kemptown had solidified into a division between those spaces that offered direct DCT driven entertainment and those that did not, and that there was very little differentiation between the spaces in those two categories in the kind of experience that they offered. This is not to say that there is not a difference in the *clientele* in these individual spaces, but rather that the forms of communications and the participation of the clientele in the spaces were similar based on the level of DCT implementation.

By the end of the study, three of the pubs that I began research in had closed: The Star Inn, the Kings' Arms, and The Aquarium. In the case of the Star and Kings' Arms, this was due to the landlords finally securing the premises that they had always wanted, The Camelford. The Kings' Arms was replaced by Project 56 and remained as a gay pub space, but the Star became part of a gastro-pub chain as "The Mucky Duck" primarily a straight, food oriented venue. There has been a net loss of two pubs and a transfer of three pubs to different licensees in this time. When I discussed this situation with Tristan before the pub closed he stated that he was not surprised by this, nor did he think it had stopped. After we found out the Aquarium's lease was up for sale, I spoke with Tristan:

Alan: Tristan, why don't you see if you can buy the lease to the Aquarium? You've got a knack for tending bar, and the clientele love you. You could make that place work...

Tristan: Are you kidding?! I'd rather poke my eyes out with hot needles than try to run that place! Places like the Aquarium can't function in this market. I know the state of Michael's books, and remember I used to work at the Queen's Arms. They're all marginal at best and you just can't keep people coming in the door like you used to. You need to be able to have cheap drink promotions, class drag acts, good karaoke or a dance floor, and these smaller places just can't compete. Even if you want a place to just talk, there are already places for that, and if I can go to R-Bar or The Bully (Bulldog) where there's always a happy-hour, why would I come here where the drinks are always going to be 20% more expensive. There's just no way to make a profit in it. There's nothing I could add...The days of the independent landlord are dead...

In speaking to other pub workers such as Lawrence and Sam, they repeated much the same story: the profitability, and popularity, of these spaces had much to do on the level of independence they had from the brewery ties and "entertainment corporations." The most successful pubs in my study were those which had that level of independence, notably the Camelford, Bulldog, and Marine Tavern. These spaces were also those which had the most limited implementation of DCT. This independence gives these spaces the ability to maintain their character and avoid engaging with DCT in a manner which would make it a feature or gimmick of the

venue. This was the crux of Steve and Nate's (Marine Tavern) rationale for not advertising DCT in their pub and for the limits that they placed on technology use.

Similarly, as I have noted, the Camelford eschewed what they saw as a ploy for clientele when they made the final move from the Kings' Arms: the landlords discontinued the use of the digital jukebox and the video-on-demand screens in favour of a much more muted DCT approach, simply offering Wi-Fi access. It meant that control over the pub's atmosphere, was returned completely to the landlord's control, and the focus of the pub moved away from the technology to the interpersonal relationships among the patrons and staff.

Thus while these spaces have in many ways become more similar to each other in the extent of their DCT use, they have still maintained much of the atmosphere and culture which makes these smaller venues viable. As I pointed out earlier, much of the significance that these spaces have had in regards to the security of the gay patrons in a disapproving heteronormative culture has reduced, and the identity of the spaces as a bastion of "gay subculture" is also limited as this subculture become more and more mainstream. These spaces are then caught in a struggle: how to maintain relevance while staying somewhat true to their original purpose. This, I believe will ultimately conclude in these smaller gay venues becoming more marginalized within the Kemptown "gay village" in favour of the larger "mainstream gay" venues along the seafront. DCT, communication, and loyalty in these cases may not be able to protect against the prevailing forces within the UK pub industry.

8.3 Final Thoughts

I do not believe that "communicating in the local" as a concept is ending due to DCT use in these spaces. While the Aquarium is gone, along with the Star Inn and

the Kings Arms, these spaces in many ways served as transitions towards more stable and viable pub spaces in Kemptown that are still in operation and as popular now as they were when I began my project. I cannot walk down Stein Street without feeling a longing for the evenings that I spent in the Aquarium, and I know that particularly since Michael's death, the Aquarium that I hold in my memory is far more nostalgic and positive than the reality of a marginal pub space in a bad location. With all communication though, it is the *people* who matter, and the people in the spaces were, and still are, very dear and important to me and I hope that this DPhil can in some way act as a tribute and record of their times in Kemptown.

After the Aquarium closed, former patrons of the pub put up a Facebook fan page with links to many performances on the pub stage which had been recorded to YouTube. The significance of the page, as well as the number of "fans" that had signed on to the page, jumped after Michael's death and I think that it points towards an interesting future for DCT and gay men's interactions with it. This page in many ways simulates the atmosphere and the essence of the people and times and when I think of those times, I can only smile. It also allows for the community that went to this pub together. There have been "reunion" meetings of the Aquarium regulars at other pubs in the area and these have been well-frequented. This gives me hope that the spaces in Kemptown will be able to continue on and prevail even with all of the changes and transitions that "Communicating in the Local" points out, and I am quite pleased in that.

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