

Young Homeless People and Urban Space:
Displacements, Mobilities and Fixity.

Emma Jackson

Goldsmiths, University of London
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I declare that the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Emma Jackson

Emma Jackson

Abstract

This thesis is an investigation into youth homelessness and its spaces in contemporary London. As an issue, homelessness has often been equated with the category of the street homeless individual and the place of the street. Arguing that existing approaches do not capture the complexity of youth homelessness in the multicultural city, this thesis offers an alternative analytical framework based on an exploration of space as dynamic and processes of mobility, fixity and displacement. A multi-method project conducted in a day centre for young homeless people in central London, this research explores participants' lives and daily trajectories, the systems in which young homeless people are implicated and the survival tactics they practise within them.

In framing the day centre as a *place of the displaced*, the thesis provides a different angle on how movement makes city space, foregrounding types and scales of displacement where movement is shaped by loss and violence. The research explores not only the 'global in the local' (Massey:1993) but the other shorter forms of displacements and daily movements that also make urban spaces. A range of spaces of homelessness – including the street, the hostel, the day centre – are explored revealing both the kinds of surveillance that shape participants' pathways and the place-making tactics (de Certeau:1988) that are practised within them. The thesis argues that young homeless people are *fixed in mobility* a condition that impacts on both everyday life and possible futures. It examines how the enmeshing of systems, the presence of persistent pasts and the lack of tangible imagined futures suspends these young people in a precarious present.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Towards a Dynamic Theory of Urban Spaces of Homelessness

Out on Euston Road in the summer heat...

Mark (staff member) is pulling a big bag on wheels (it is filled with picnic equipment - drinks and games). The bag is very battered, it only has one wheel and so makes a scraping sound on the pavement. Behind him are Sureeya, Aasha and me. Aasha comments that the bag is embarrassing and that she is 'not with us'. Alongside us, and running about, is Sean, shirtless and trying (somewhat unsuccessfully) to hide a can of cider in the jacket he is carrying. Behind us are Janet (staff member) Kelly, Gina and Amanda. Janet tells me she is staying close to Gina in case she overheats. Gina is nine months pregnant and it is the hottest day of the year. Further back are a few of the others: Bilal, Ali and Nelson. We debate the quickest way to Regents Park. Ali thinks we should've gone via Parkway rather than Euston Road. Sean also complains about the route. I maintain that this is the quickest way. 'But this way we go into the posh end of the park,' he says, 'I don't know if it's just my mates, but I don't think we'll be allowed to sit there.' I say that I think we will be ok. I chat to Gina about the baby.

Inside New Horizon one morning...

A few staff members and young people are looking at a map of Great Britain that came free with 'the Independent'. We talk about places we've been or would like to go. Asad says at first that he would like to leave London and had been thinking about going to Norwich but then shakes his head. He takes a pen and draws a circle on the map from the South of England to the Midlands and says: 'That's it. London. London is THE city'. He has lived in London since he was 11. He says the government here are worried about 10 year olds drinking, but in Somalia 10 year olds have AK47s. He says that these kids will kill you for 'looking funny' or take everything you have, even your shoes. Another young man present sitting at the table, but not involved in the conversation is from Darfur. Ali (staff member) asks him about Darfur but he says that talking about it makes him sad and remains quiet.¹

¹ A note on the format: I use italics for field note extracts (as above) to enable me to switch between registers of voice. If something is in italics it is from my field notes.

Introduction

In the summer of 2005, I took on a research job interviewing hostel residents for a report about crime and the displacement of anti-social behaviour in King's Cross.² While conducting my interviews in hostels, with the dust from the regeneration work blowing through the windows, I discussed with the participants their experiences of negotiating public space. I became aware of the ways in which they were being removed from public space and how their very being was becoming framed as anti-social.³ Because of the scope of the research project that I was working on, there was little room for these spatial stories. Lying awake at night, I began to dream up the Ph.D. project, which four years later has become this thesis.

The two spatial stories I opened with, from my own subsequent project based at New Horizon Youth Centre – a day centre for young homeless people – situate this research in both a global context and a specific landscape. They hint at the multiple scales that homelessness works on. The Euston Road story suggests themes of place, exclusion, tactics, class, belonging, movement and its limits (and also of the different cities existing side by side and on top of each other). An interest in this fast-changing place – the area incorporating the edges of Somers Town, King's Cross and Euston – was what brought me to the youth centre initially, although, as I shall explain, that focus has since widened. But the second story is equally important and adds another layer. Asad starts with the map of the Britain, places himself in it and then moves beyond it. His place in London ("THE city") is related to another place, Somalia. This story brings themes of loss, movement and exile into the frame. This thesis frames homelessness as a condition that has to be approached on and across multiple scales of city, nation and beyond.

This thesis is about young homeless people like Asad and like Gina and like Sean. Individuals who may appear to have little in common but come together under the roof of the day centre and who share an experience of homelessness. Furthermore, the thesis explores their accounts of the network of organisations that

² Young et al (2006)

³ It is through working on this project that I became aware of New Horizon and its work of providing advocacy for homeless people.

work with young homeless people, the city and the factors that shape their movement through urban spaces. This work explores the spaces that young homeless people move through in order to pick apart how institutions, structures and biographies intervene in and create spaces that in turn shape future trajectories and possibilities.

The structure of this chapter is as follows. I will briefly introduce the key themes and research questions of the thesis, setting out how these themes weave through the remaining chapters. The remainder of the chapter grounds the thesis in literature about space, mobility and homelessness and puts forward an alternative approach to studying youth homelessness and urban spaces.

Key Themes

i. The young participants of this study are regulated in multiple ways, and come under a range of forms of surveillance (see Chapters 2, 5,6,7). Conducting interviews brought the issue of surveillance sharply into focus and I was forced to confront how my own research was implicated in these processes (see Chapter 2). In both audio and video interviews, the young people discussed the kinds of surveillance that they were subjected to. These included monitoring by the police and the gazes of other young people (Chapter 6). However, I also found accounts of institutional surveillance, which is discussed in relation to the place of the hostel in Chapter 7. The following research questions relate to this theme: How are young homeless people regulated? How does surveillance shape pathways? What is revealed in these experiences about forms of surveillance? What is the impact of forms of surveillance on young homeless people?

ii. Young homeless people's lives are characterised by extreme forms of mobility, yet this mobility is always shaped and limited, by forms of surveillance – as outlined above – and by global and local forms of displacement. I am referring to this process as being *fixed in mobility* (see Chapters 5, 6, 8). In Chapter 4, I argue that the necessity for a multiscalar perspective on homelessness emerges from New Horizon, as a *place*

of the displaced, a place where the results of local and global movement can be seen. In Chapters 5 & 6 I focus on forms of mobility and fixity in everyday life, considering how a range of factors including institutional location, peer surveillance and council policy impact on mobility. Related research questions include: What can the space of New Horizon tell us about the relationship between mobility and homelessness in contemporary London? How might we theorise the relationship between mobility and fixity in the lives of young homeless people? What is the relationship between forms of mobility and fixity and the institutions that regulate young homeless people?

iii. A third key theme is the contradiction between forms of *enmeshing* and ‘moving on’ (Chapters 3, 7, 8). I use the term *enmeshing* to refer to the relationship between young homeless people and what I refer to as the homeless network (hostels and day centres that work with young homeless people, see Chapter 3) and that between the homeless network and the wider network of institutions to which it is tied. I suggest that there is a contradiction between the emphasis on individual progression and ‘moving on’ found at the level of homeless network (i.e. in New Horizon and the hostels) and the obstacles to moving on arising from the wider structures that the network is tethered to. For example, in Chapter 7, I argue that the relationship between the hostel and the benefit system combined with a lack of further housing options makes moving on difficult. I also examine the ways in which the work done at the level of homeless network is shaped by funding considerations, with relation to New Horizon and their education and training programme (Chapter 3). Related research questions include: What is the relationship between young homeless people and the institutions that work with/on them? How might these relationships shape young homeless people’s relationships to time? How might they shape pathways through the city, and future trajectories?

iv. This thesis outlines the ways in which young homeless people remain suspended in a precarious situation (Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8). However, a tension runs throughout between the restrictions on young people’s actions and their ability to act ‘tactically’

(de Certeau:1988). This will be explored through a range of examples. For example, I will argue that a process of being 'fixed in mobility' perpetuates a young person's precarity but that tactics of spatial claiming are used to create moorings (see Chapter 5). This relationship is not always easy to unravel, we can interpret staying mobile as a tactic, yet being mobile is also a manifestation of precariousness that requires the use of further tactics, and so on. The following research questions relate to this theme: What are the factors contributing to the precarious position of the young homeless person? What kinds of action are possible in a precarious situation? What are the results of the tactical actions of young homeless people?

This chapter introduces some of these key themes, particularly using a focus on mobility to open up new areas of researching homelessness in the city. I will firstly consider how discourses of homelessness have become limited through a focus on public space and the figure of the street homeless person. Instead, I will argue for the need to include non- or semi-public urban spaces (hostels, day centres etc.) in discussions of urban spaces of homelessness. I will then problematise the tight focus on the scale of the street by outlining a theory of dynamic space. Drawing on the theories of space of Lefebvre (1991), Massey (1993, 2005) and de Certeau (1988), I will set out a new approach to homelessness as embedded in the contemporary city and the local and global processes that constitute it. In situating my own research in the existing literature I will outline a theoretical framework that takes into consideration global patterns, local specificities, the relationship between places and the ways in which they are moved between and woven together in the lives of young homeless people.

Homelessness and Public Space

Although there is a rich history of research on homelessness, 'homelessness' as an issue has frequently been examined on the scale of the street homeless individual and the place of the street. We can trace this process of framing through policy developments in the UK and beyond but also through responses to those developments in social research. Here I will argue that the tight framing of homelessness and public space risks disembedding homelessness from its context in a network of local and global processes and excluding an analysis of other experiences/spaces of urban homelessness.

In both Britain and the USA we can trace the way in which public space has become the site for the examination of homelessness. When I entered New Horizon Youth Centre, my initial frame of reference for the relationship between homeless people and space was based on a largely US-focussed body of literature that centres on processes of gentrification and clashes between the police and the homeless (Deutsche:1998, Smith 1992,1998, Duneier:1999, Mitchell:2003). This work is rooted in the 1990s, when homelessness became particularly symbolically important in debates about urban problems. The centrality of the homeless person in these debates can be linked to the spreading popularity of the 'broken windows' approach to urban disorder.

Laid out by criminologists Wilson & Kelling (1982), 'Broken Windows' theory suggests that the physical manifestations of small acts of vandalism, such as broken windows, can lead to disorder and crime. This theory which argues that the criminal justice system has failed because of an over reliance on the enforcement of the law, rather than a focus on the broader issue of the control of disorder, has led to the removal of homeless people from public space as they are perceived as evidence of disorder. The influence of this approach on the policing of New York City has led Wacquant to refer to Manhattan as the 'crucible of the new penal reasoning' (1999:327). Indeed, many European police forces have sent representatives to learn from the New York example of Zero Tolerance, including the London Metropolitan Police (Griffiths:1998; Harcourt:2002).

A response from radical geographers developed in opposition to these

policies, voicing concerns about the securatisation of public space (Davis:1992, Low:2006, Mitchell:2003, Low & Smith:2006) and 'geographies of exclusion' (Sibley:1995) on a global scale.⁴ Playing with Marx's phrase, Don Mitchell suggests that in the cities of the US there has been an 'annihilation of space by law' (2003:167). This literature makes links between a Lefebvrian theory of the production of space (see below) and a political concern with the right to *be* in public space (drawing on Lefebvre's idea of the 'Right to the City' (1996)).

As homeless people became emblematic of social disorder in public discourse, they also became central to debates in urban sociology about the right to public space. Smith argues: 'The brunt of 1990s revanchism was borne by homeless people. The anti-homeless legislation that smouldered in the 1980s burst into flames as official urban policy in the early 1990s' (1998:4). Violent conflicts over place, such as the battle of Tompkins Square Park (Smith: 1998, Abu-Lughod:1994) have become crucial touchstones in these debates. Battle terminology and the idea of public space as a 'front' is used by Smith not only in his discussion of the battle of Tompkins Square Park (police VS. the homeless) but also in his image of the city as a frontier where the urban gentrifiers or 'new pioneers' (1992:69) set out to reclaim areas from the 'hostile natives' (1992:70). Centring on the impact of gentrification and Broken Windows-influenced policing policy, focussing on US cities – especially New York under the Guiliani period (Smith:1992,1998, Duneier:1999) – this work made a valuable contribution to an analysis of space and homelessness by placing homelessness in specific urban contexts (the park, the railway station) and linking it to spaces of capital.

But what does this framing of public space and homelessness miss? How useful is it in exploring homelessness in the UK? And has the same clean up of public space happened in UK cities?

The approaches to homelessness and public space coming out of American radical geography in the 1990s are useful in spatialising debates about homelessness and contextualising them in gentrifying urban environments. But they cannot merely be transplanted and applied to the UK. Although there are parallels to be

⁴ Control over public spaces post-9/11 is now also linked to fears about terrorism (Low and Smith:2006).

drawn between Britain and the USA in respect to these debates, there are notable differences between the national contexts.⁵ In the UK these transnational debates about disorder have been meshed with a preoccupation with the local and notions of community. Although street homeless people have been demonised in the UK, the chief folk devil of the public sphere has been the young person (Jamieson:2005) and spaces of fear have included both public city centre spaces and the 'sink estate' (Campbell:1993). This poses particular problems for young homeless people who, because of little access to private space have to occupy, and move through, public space more than their housed peers (Ruddick:1996, Wardhaugh:2000, Pain & Francis:2004). Furthermore, while there has been a move towards clearing street homeless people from public space in London, the emphasis has been on moving individuals into hostels. This is a different kind of displacement and containment than say the clashes in Tompkins Square Park and creates quite a different landscape of homelessness.

Homeless statistics are an inexact science, many people move between different kinds of homelessness. But statistics from the charity *Crisis* (2009) indicate a national picture in which there is a comparatively high number of 'hidden homeless' and a smaller, but consistent, number of people living on the street. *Crisis* estimated that in 2008 (the year I was doing fieldwork) there were 700 people sleeping rough at any one time in Great Britain, they estimate that this equates to about 7000 people per year. However, a further 400,000 people were estimated to be 'hidden homeless'. The category 'hidden homeless' applies to those living in hostels, shelters, bed and breakfasts and those living in overcrowded households. The number of those living on the streets fell from the late 1990s and stabilised in 2002. This picture demonstrates the need for going beyond the place of the street in contemporary British homelessness research. Bringing 'the hidden homeless' into the discussion opens up a range of other places where homelessness happens (see Proposition 3 pg 32). So, what is the relationship between homelessness in political

⁵ Brenner and Theodore argue for paying attention to the 'contextual embeddedness of neo-liberal restructuring projects insofar as they have been produced within national, regional, and local contexts defined by the legacies of inherited, institutional frameworks, policy regimes, regulatory practices, and political struggles' (2002:349).

discourse, this contemporary picture of homelessness in the UK – as sketched out above – and existing research?

Even as research has challenged political discourse about the causes of homelessness, it has often accepted the terrain of the argument. This is, however, shifting terrain. Changes in discourses on homelessness mean that as an issue it has been understood on various scales: of nation, of city and of the individual, over the last fifty years. Scales do not just exist independently out there in the world, but are created by discourse and have material consequences (Marston:2000: Smith:1993), for example, in statutory responses to homelessness. It is possible to trace a shift in the scales that homelessness is understood on, moving from the structuralist accounts of the 1970s to a focus on vulnerabilities and social exclusion under New Labour. We can broadly divide the shifting discourses of homelessness, over the last fifty years, into three sections 1960s-1970s, 1980-1997, 1997-2010.⁶ In this timeline three points become evident. Firstly, the changing explanations of, and approaches to, homelessness of successive governments. Secondly, that there is a close relationship between research and political discourse. And thirdly, it provides a context for understanding the social and political climates that have influenced the formation of the current homeless network of hostels and day centres.

i. 1960s and 1970s

In the late 1960s and 1970s there was a ‘rediscovery of homelessness’ (Waters:1992, Wardhaugh:2000) with particular important landmarks including the screening of the TV drama *Cathy Come Home* (1966) and the founding of homeless charity Shelter. Homelessness at this time was associated with families and older single white men. During this period of homelessness research, structuralist explanations relating to changes in the labour and housing markets, came to dominate (Greve:1964, Timms:1968). In the 1970s, journalistic accounts drawing attention to homelessness as an issue and concerned with social change also emerged (Deakin and Wallis:1976, Wallich-Clifford:1974). Homelessness was thus conceptualised as an issue on a national scale.

⁶ For a timeline of legislation on homelessness that goes back to 1274 see Wardhaugh (2000:ix).

During this period, the Housing Act (1977) was passed making local authorities responsible for permanently housing some categories of homeless people. The Act enshrined the distinction between 'priority need' and 'non-priority need'. Those considered in priority need for housing were: people with dependent children, those made homeless by disasters such as a fire or flood, the mentally or physically disabled, elderly and pregnant women. While other categories have been added in subsequent Acts (for example, care leavers are now considered to be 'priority need') this distinction between categories of 'priority need' and the rest remains. This terminology reinforced a divide between families and single people and perceptions of housing entitlement that continues to operate (Fitzpatrick et al: 2000), although it should be noted that the Scottish parliament have voted to abolish this distinction by 2012. Pleace and Quilgars (2003) argue that research during this period was also guided by this distinction, examining either those considered 'priority need' or those who fell outside of the legislation. This Act also introduced the policy of 'Local Connection'.⁷ This policy divides the responsibility for providing accommodation in London into boroughs requiring local authorities to prioritise those with a 'local connection' to the borough. This national legislation, then, also creates another scale on which homelessness is to be managed, the local authority.

ii. 1980s - 1997

As homelessness escalated in the 1980s and 1990s, so the diversity of people affected increased. Warnes et al (2004) note in the last quarter of the twentieth century that there was a decrease in itinerant workers and an increase in young people and those with mental health problems combined with an increase in ethnic diversity and in the percentage of homeless people with drug problems. Pleace and Quilgars (2003) argue that the Thatcher government presented homelessness as attributed to individual deviance. Pleace (2000) found little public sympathy for those living on

⁷ 'Any reference in this Act to a person having a local connection with an area is a reference to his having a "local connection with that area". (a) because he is or in the past was normally resident in it and his residence in it is or was of his own choice; or (b) because he is employed in it, or (c) because of family associations, or (d) because of any special circumstances.' Housing Act (1977)

the street. This is an important period for considering the emergence of the homeless network of hostels and day centres, as during this time the voluntary sector expanded and attempted to fill gaps left by statutory services.

The empirical focus on rough sleeping in homelessness research can be considered, in part, as stemming from governments' approaches to homelessness from the 1980s onwards. As rough sleepers became more visible in the 1980s, the government launched the Rough Sleepers Initiative (criticised for dealing with the symptom rather than the cause) to fund outreach work, hostel places and resettlement work.

A pivotal study for the Department of the Environment into single homelessness in the early 1990s (Anderson et al:1993), focusing on the causes of homelessness and the characteristics of single homeless people, brought attention to 'risk factors' that can contribute to homelessness, for example, that care leavers and those who had served prison sentences were over-represented. An emphasis on 'vulnerabilities' emerged, i.e. it became accepted that some people are more vulnerable than others to the structural factors that caused homelessness.

It is in the 1990s when it also becomes instructive to consider the impact of the 'Broken Windows' moment in the USA (as outlined above), as there have since been ripples across the Atlantic in approaches to cleaning up urban space. For example, in 1994 Prime Minister John Major spoke of street homeless people as 'eye sores' (Porter: 1998: 372). Thus, in this period, the scale of homelessness shifts from being understood on the level of nation to being framed as a problem of 'vulnerable' individuals (or 'eye sores') in the space of the street.

iii. 1997 onwards

This twin emphasis on 'vulnerabilities' and the need to move people off the streets continued under the Labour government. Although homelessness has moved up the political agenda, the Labour government made few changes in homelessness legislation while in power. The RSI has become the RSU (Rough Sleepers Unit) and rough sleeping became a priority for the new Social Exclusion Unit. The concept of 'social exclusion' impacts on the way all kinds of social inequalities,

including homelessness, are conceptualised. Ruth Levitas argues that the term is intrinsically problematic and has worrying implications for how society is imagined, portraying exclusion as a 'peripheral problem' and leaving structural inequalities 'largely uninterrogated' (1998:7). The rhetoric of 'social exclusion' moves the discussion away from the consideration of structural causes of homelessness and back towards the attributes of the individual, as Pleace and Quiglar argue: 'It is a small step from this position towards one in which the 'characteristics' of a marginalised group start to be used to 'explain' their marginalisation.' (2003:194)

There also appears to be a direct link between New Labour approaches to crime and disorder and the 'broken windows' thesis. The question of community (a key New Labour theme) has been played out, in part, through a concern with public space and disorder (Cooper:1998). The echoes of 'broken windows' can be heard in the Crime Reduction Strategy where it is stated: 'Physical and social disorder are distressing in their own right but they are also important because they can lead to more serious crime' (Home Office: 1998). This concern with disorder has been fused with New Labour's brand of communitarianism (Levitas:1998)⁸ and enshrined in law in the Crime and Disorder Act (1998).

Under the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) local authorities became responsible for creating partnerships – Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP) or Community Safety Partnerships (CSP) – incorporating the council, police and other community groups, to target crime and disorder. A range of new sanctions became available to the partnerships through the Crime and Disorder Act (1998) and the Anti-Social Behaviour Act (2003).⁹

The very definition of 'anti-social behaviour' centres on its effects on the community. It is defined as behaviour that causes 'harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as the person' (Home Office:1998). The community therefore decides what is anti-social. Through these technologies people become citizens of communities¹⁰ by which they can now be governed

⁸ See also Hale who argues: 'much of what commentators have identified as communitarian in New Labour policy is actually its antithesis.' (2005:7)

⁹ including: Anti Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), Acceptable Behaviour Agreements (ABAs), Dispersal Zones (DZ), Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs), and Controlled Drinking Zones (CDZ).

¹⁰ Driver and Martell argue: 'New Labour sell community as the hangover cure to the excesses of

(Rose:1999). Governance by 'community' however is underpinned and enacted through coercive interventions by the state (Davies: 2007). Thus these different scales of governing (local and national) work through each other.

But another measure that increases the influence of the local as the site of governance and the provision of services has received less media attention. In 2003, the Local Authority became responsible for awarding funds to hostels specifically to provide accommodation for people from their own borough that find themselves homeless. Building on the 'Local Connection' policy introduced in the 1977 Housing Act, this latest development means that boroughs can award funds (through the 'Supporting People' fund) to hostels and other organisations, run by various organisations, to provide accommodation and services. Because of this new national structure that channels money through the local authority level, hostels have to prioritise those with a 'local connection'. This is an example of how the local is remade through housing policy (the impact of the policy of 'local connection' will be examined in detail in Chapters 6 and 7).

So, in the wider context of an international preoccupation with cleaning up urban public space, there has also been a turn to 'the local' in the governance of homeless people in two ways. Firstly, a network that represents the local community becomes accountable for addressing public order issues. This is followed by 'the local' becoming the basis for homeless services provision.¹¹

The timeline provides an illustration of how homelessness has been framed on three inter-related and shifting scales, as a national issue, as a local problem and as being about 'socially excluded' individuals on the street. The creation of scales of homelessness maps a problem onto certain constrained geographies and certain bodies. For example, if there is a repeated zooming in, a focus on the 'socially excluded' individual rather than say, a lack of housing or the effect of global inequalities as the site of homelessness then this constricts discourse. The sustained

Conservative individualism.' (1997:27)

¹¹ In later chapters, I will question this turn to 'the local', exploring how the local connection enshrined in policy relates to lived local connections. Furthermore, I will explore the contradiction between a fixation with the local in policy as outlined here, and the intertwining of global and local movement woven into the fabric of people's lives.

focus on the place of the street also risks producing a skewed picture of *who* is homeless. For example, people from ethnic minorities are more likely to be sleeping on floors than rough sleeping with research by the charity *Centrepoint* (2000) suggesting that a quarter of young black African homeless people and a third of young Afro-Caribbean homeless people reported sleeping rough, compared to over half of young white homeless people.

While criticism has been levied that homelessness research has responded to a policy agenda at the expense of theoretical development and has failed to move beyond the structure vs. individual characteristics debate (Clapham: 2003, Neale:1997, Pleace & Quigars:2003), it should also be noted that this research has been a crucial resource for challenging the policies of successive governments (Anderson:2003, Pleace & Quilgars: 2003). British research on homelessness is characterised by a wealth of reports available from homeless organisations focussed on promoting good practice in the sector (Ball & Randall, 1999, Cooper 1997, Cooper et al. 1999, Waters: 1992) or raising awareness of homelessness as a problem or exploring the relationship between homelessness and other issues of substance abuse or mental health (Fountain & Howes:2002, Rees:2009, Croft-White, C. & Parry-Crooke: 2004). This empirical research archive is useful in providing a changing picture of homelessness, and some of its causes, in the UK.¹² However, by responding to a policy agenda which has come to frame homelessness as a problem of street homelessness, this work has also contributed to an idea of homelessness focused on the figure of the rough sleeper and the space of the street as the problem, thus potentially narrowing debates around homelessness (Fitzpatrick et al:2000).

The existing approaches do not capture the complexity of youth homelessness in a multicultural city like London. Suggesting that a more dynamic approach to space can be utilised to crack open these scales, to explore their inter-relationship and also address the specific conditions of urban homelessness and its spaces in the UK today, my alternative framework is based on three propositions: Proposition 1: For a focus on pathways and homelessness, Proposition 2: For a multiscale approach to homelessness, Proposition 3: For an exploration of

¹² While the circumstances of particular kinds of homelessness are considered here, this thesis is not focussed on identifying causal explanations.

inbetween places.

Homelessness, Dynamic Spaces and Mobilities

‘Homelessness is above all a spatial phenomenon. To be homeless is by definition to be a person without a place of one’s own, to be someone who is dis-placed or out-of-place.’ Wardhaugh (2000:111)

‘A *space* exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements ... In short, *space is a practiced place.*’ de Certeau (1988:117, original emphasis)

How, then, might we invigorate the sociology of homelessness? Here I will suggest that using a theoretical framework that approaches space as produced and examines mobilities while remaining attuned to people’s place attachments can open up new areas of research. I will argue that homelessness research can benefit from thinking across intertwined scales and exercising a global sociological imagination, while not losing sight of local particularities.

Let us start with the idea that to be homeless is to be without *place*. Pointing to the exclusion of the homeless from public space in the USA, Kawash argues: ‘Unlike the movement from place to place of travel or migration, the itinerant movement of the homeless is a mode of movement peculiar to the condition of placelessness.’ (1998:327). Both Samira Kawash and Julia Wardhaugh thus find homelessness closely related to (lack of) place. In Kawash’s argument, homeless people are pictured as constantly moving, because staying still in cleaned up public space becomes impossible. However, while acknowledging homeless people’s expulsion from the public it would be a mistake to conclude that homeless people have absolutely ‘no place’ in terms of attachments or sense of belonging to place. Furthermore, as argued above, the assumption that to be homeless is to be on the street restricts our perspective on spaces of homelessness. To assume that homeless

people have no spatial attachments, is to assume a wandering homelessness without any direction, or orientation to past or future. I will argue that the movement of homeless people between places is often driven by the need to get to a certain place, by multiple attachments both enforced and informal, and by systems that both displace and re-place people.

How, then, can we conceptualise place in a way that can work with ideas of movement, yet retain a sense of the particular and forms of fixing? Firstly, I want to distinguish between *space* and *place* and suggest that by looking at *space* it becomes possible to think about the spatial in a more dynamic way. For Michel de Certeau, place is ‘an instantaneous configuration of positions’ (1988:117), it is stable and fixed. Space, however, is *practiced place*, he uses the example of the street (a place) of the planner becoming space when people walk through it. Therefore, when de Certeau argues that to walk is to ‘lack a place’ it is also one of the processes by which urban *space* is made, and a way in which a person comes to understand and order the urban landscape.

A focus on *space* however doesn’t make *place* a redundant concept. Harvey argues succinctly: ‘[W]hat goes on in a place cannot be understood outside of the space relations that support that place any more than the space relations can be understood independently of what goes on in a particular place’ (1993:15). Place retains its potency in people’s narratives and imaginings and, in turn, what happens in specific places effects spatial relations. In this thesis I will be reflecting on people’s narratives of place and movement but using the concept of space as produced to conceptualise their interrelationships. For example, New Horizon itself is an important place for many of the people who use it and its existence as a place has an impact on wider spatial relations, however, approaching it as a space allows a wider exploration of the factors that shape it.

A crucial point of reference here regarding space as *produced* is Henri Lefebvre. Lefebvre uses the analogy of hydrodynamics, where different kinds of waves collide and interfere. He argues, using this imagery: ‘The hypercomplexity of social space should now be apparent, embracing as it does individual entities and peculiarities, relatively fixed points, movements and flows and waves – some

interpenetrating, others in conflict and so on' (1991:88). Although Lefebvre cautions that the terms of his analogy are not equipped to properly explain what *produces* these movements (such as hierarchical relationships) and can thus only be taken so far, it is nevertheless a useful image. If we start from the point of view of a space, one can then follow the waves outwards to explore the power relations and discourses that produce them. For example, starting with the homeless day centre, the site of this research, using Lefebvre we can consider this space as made by a complex set of policy, economics, trajectories, global events. In Lefebvre's approach then, there is not a contradiction between space and movement. Space is made through movement of people, ideas, power relations.

Lefebvre's main conceptual framework however gives us sharper tools to work with. Rather than split the street of the planner and of the walker into place/space, he distinguishes between three categories of spatial production: spatial practise, representations of space and representational space. We could think about his three categories, or layers, of spatial production in relation to the different types of space producing processes covered in this thesis. The interface of spatial practise of individuals (the walk to the job centre from the hostel), representations of space (the idea of what a hostel should do), representational space (how imagined boundaries effect daily movement) all come together to produce spaces of homelessness. While I have not framed my analysis around strict definitions of these categories, the idea of city space as produced through a range of everyday practices, regulatory processes and imaginings, underpins the arguments made here. This conceptualisation of space as being produced has been highly influential on what Amin & Thrift term 'the new urbanism'. An approach with a 'strong emphasis on understanding cities as spatially open and cross-cut by different kinds of mobilities, from flows of people to commodities and information.' (2002:3). The homeless centre where this research is based can only be understood in the context of the city it is part of and the tides of people that constitute it – as an urban space of homelessness.¹³ This leads us to Proposition 1.

¹³ You might wonder if we need more writing on homelessness in the city, certainly rural homelessness has been largely overlooked until recently (Wardhaugh:2000, Cloke et al:2003). However, an expanded definition of homelessness reveals a more complex picture of what urban

Proposition 1: For a focus on pathways and homelessness

Lefebvre's theory of 'the production of space' is useful in breaking down the distinction between the city of the imagination and the material city (Tonkiss:2005, Harvey:1993). Perhaps the most interesting and blurry category that Lefebvre outlines is representational space. This experience of the city that is both lived and dreamed of has much in common with de Certeau's description of the city of urban practices. Standing at the top of the World Trade Center, de Certeau contrasts the city on the ground with the city as seen from above. He provides an account of how spaces are woven together through daily movement, exploring how trajectories interlink or overlap, giving space texture and bringing bodies into an analysis of space. He suggests:

'Their story begins on the ground with footsteps. They are myriad, but do not compose a series. They cannot be counted because each unit has a tactile apprehension and kinaesthetic appropriation. Their swarming mass is an innumerable collection of singularities. Their intertwined paths give their shape to spaces. They weave places together.' (1988:97).

Urban writing often celebrates walking as a form of city knowledge in a fairly romantic way (Benjamin:1986, 2003, de Certeau:1988) but the romance of de Certeau's 'footsteps' should not detract from the argument made here about daily movement making a city. In the case of this research, journeys between places are central to my participants' narratives and visual representations of space. Travel in London is expensive and for the young people who attend New Horizon often walking is just the cheapest way to move around, the 'free bus' is another popular option (discussed below). Their maps of London (see Chapter 5) often depict journeys and are marked by numbers and letters denoting the bus routes that take them around the city – sometimes the bus route *is* the map (Fig. 0.9. pg. 150).

Amin & Thrift argue that acknowledging 'footprints' challenges the idea of

homelessness is. And, I will argue, reveals much about the way spaces are regulated and made in the contemporary city.

the ordered city and reveals its mixity (2002). We might build on this assertion, asking what following these footprints/pathways might be able to tell us about homelessness in the city.

This is a question that has been addressed in a number of ways in ethnographies of homelessness. Nels Anderson (1923) paints a vivid picture of the life of migratory workers in the early 20th century. In this important early text, the mobility of the railroad is revealed as creating new city spaces. The book begins with a mapping out of 'hobohemia' the lodging houses, 'jungles' (camps on the edge of town) and 'stems' (the main street where homeless men can find work, entertainment and food). The symbolic importance of the hobo or 'tramp' in this period has been explored by Cresswell, who argues that in the late 19th and early 20th century knowledge about tramps was informed by a 'sedentary metaphysics' (2001:16), an anti-mobile view of the world. In the present day, Caroline Knowles' research (2000) on Montreal, not only pays attention to a range of public and inbetween spaces but also the movement between them, in order to capture the impact of deinstitutionalisation. In these examples following pathways tells us about more than just the condition of being homeless but also provide an insight into how pathways are produced by intervening factors, for example, in Knowles' work changing forms of state surveillance and containment. I will argue that the mobility of my participants reveals a range of factors that shape contemporary experiences of homelessness in London.

The term 'pathways' is also used with an alternative meaning in homeless research. Fitzpatrick (2000) identifies multiple 'pathways' in and out of homelessness, here pathways refers to the processes of becoming homeless. Although the pathways of these young people in Glasgow varied in terms of engagement with local facilities and kinds of homelessness, and as Fitzpatrick rightly points out are far more complex than a 'downward spiral' (Hutson & Liddiard:1994), the actual paths taken, the movement made, seem limited to Glasgow itself. In contrast, the journeys and experiences of the people I have been working with are far more diverse. These biographical 'pathways' include processes of becoming a refugee, of running away from gang crime in another city or country, seeking out a gay community. We can

bring both senses of the word together (biographical trajectories and everyday movements) in order to expand 'pathways'. We can then ask: How are everyday pathways related to other trajectories and movements? And, how do pathways through the city impact on possible futures?

Proposition 2: A multiscale approach to homelessness

This second proposition is closely linked to the first. The pathways of my respondents are not confined to the city but involve various kinds, and scales, of mobility.

In the last ten years a body of literature focused specifically on mobilities – of people, information, capital – has developed (Urry:2007, Cresswell:2006, Hannam, Sheller & Urry:2006). Drawing on Raymond Williams' terminology, Thrift notes the emergence of a mobilities 'structure of feeling' (1996:159). This turn to mobilities is linked to accounts of globalisation, which have explored global movement through concepts of 'flow' (Luke:1995), 'liquidity' (Bauman: 2000), through culturally inflected 'scapes' (Appadurai:1990) and through identifying economically driven processes of 'space-time compression' (Harvey:1989). Despite increased global mobility (or indeed as a product of it), it has been argued that globalisation is bound up with the reproduction of particular kinds of spaces, rather than the 'annihilation of space by time' (Mitchell:2003, Harvey:1982, Massey:1995). Thus the mobilities paradigm does not obliterate space as a site of enquiry for sociology, but it does pose a challenge to the idea of a stable sense of place, in a productive way.

If we accept that space is made by a combination of processes, institutional practices, movements of people, then understanding how space is produced also involves following connections outwards. For example, in Chapter 4 I will be arguing that the coming together of people in this research setting has to be understood in the context of movement caused by conflicts in Eritrea and in South London. The movement of a person from Eritrea to London is part of London's

‘external geography’¹⁴ (Massey:2007). It would be impossible to make sense of the presence of the various people in New Horizon without considering these trajectories. How then does this effect approaching fieldwork that is rooted in a particular place? While there are critiques of single site ethnography for its boundedness, I would argue that it is the approach to place that is crucial rather than the number of fieldwork sites. If place is approached as an entanglement or a constellation, it is possible to do a global ethnography (Burawoy:2000, Nayak & Kehily:2007) while staying in one location.

In its preoccupation with global movement, the ‘new mobilities paradigm’ (Urry:2007) has been criticised for neglecting the ‘short haul’ (Knowles: 2009) and for suggesting that ‘rootless mobility’ stands against ‘rooted belonging’ (Ahmed et al:2003:3). Critiquing Harvey, Massey argues: ‘Much of life, for many people, even in the heart of the First World, still consists of waiting with your shopping for a bus that never comes. Hardly a graphic illustration of space-time compression’ (1994:163). But this critique risks reinforcing the idea that movement belongs to the privileged, whereas the poor are imagined as living slower, more fixed lives. Within this schema, distance from global flows equals disadvantage – Bauman, for example, refers to the freedom to move as being ‘the main stratifying factor of our late-modern or postmodern times’ (1998:2).¹⁵ The condition of homelessness shows up the importance of this distinction as there is a disjuncture between celebrations of mobility and the close relationship between mobility and homelessness (Cresswell: 2001).

One of the challenges of this thesis, therefore, is taking both the long haul *and* the short haul seriously and, moreover, looking at the ways in which are they interlinked. It is not only movement that needs to be considered but also forms of getting stuck, getting stopped or being redirected.

In order to think about how these scales can be thought across each other, let us take the example of the bus, used by Massey to represent slower, more local,

¹⁴ ‘A richer geography of place acknowledges also the connections that run out from ‘here’: the trade-routes, investments, political and cultural influences; power-relations of all sorts run out from here around the globe and link the fate of other places to what is done in London’ Massey (2007:64).

¹⁵ But note that here it is the *freedom to move* rather than mobility itself that is construed as privilege.

movement. In particular, let us take the so-called bendy bus that my participants use to traverse the city. Known colloquially as the ‘free bus’ (because tickets are not checked by the driver on boarding) these buses are subjected to militaristic raids by London transport staff and police officers. The UK Border Agency sometimes participates in these raids. The Home Office website states: ‘Intelligence has shown that failed asylum seekers and other immigration offenders are using public transport on a regular basis. Previous operations on public transport routes have resulted in identifying and arresting failed asylum seekers and also removing them.’¹⁶ Taking a gamble on the ‘free bus’ can have extreme consequences as fare evasion could lead to deportation, thus the right to move locally is linked to the right to stay in the country. From this example, we can see how a set of processes and institutions – London Transport, the British Transport Police, the Home Office – shape the possibility of interrelated local and global movement. The bus and the plane do not, and should not be made to, represent opposite conditions.

In his discussion of globalisation, Bauman distinguishes between ‘tourists’ and ‘vagabonds’. ‘The tourists travel because *they want to*; the vagabonds because *they have no other bearable choice*’ (1998:93 original emphasis). While this distinction introduces the reason and degree of choice in movement, Massey’s idea of ‘power-geometry’ goes further, enabling a closer reading of how individuals are situated in relation to processes of movement and speeding up that make space. Within this conceptual framework, individuals and groups have unequal levels of power in making a decision to move or stay still. For example, we can see how the person who has little choice over their global movement might then also be pulled off a bus (while moving locally) and deported. This limited control over movement cuts across scales of global and local.

The story of the raids on buses also travels, by word of mouth. While I was working in New Horizon, staff members would advise people to make sure that they had a valid ticket. This may also be a factor that someone with insecure immigration

¹⁶ Home Office ‘Immigration Checks’. See also the Guardian ‘Dave Hill’s Blog (11/2/10) and Metropolitan Police (2009)

status takes into account when deciding how to get from A to B. These stories also become part of movement around the city, shaping paths (de Certeau:1988). Thus if we push 'power geometry' further, and combine it with a concern with the impact of stories told and cities imagined on spatial practice (de Certeau:1988, Lefebvre:1991) we can find a way to examine how possibilities of movement are shaped by multiple forces – imaginings of safe and dangerous places, state interventions, the need to sign on, the route of a bus.

Brenner (2000) points out that when attempting to think across scales, there is the risk that drawing on existing terms merely reifies the existence of separate scalar realms (of the global, the local, the national) and that these terms are 'poorly equipped to grasp the complex, perpetually changing historical interconnections and interdependencies among geographical scales' (2000:367). While I make use of these terms, the bendy bus raids are a reminder of how these scales are not lived separately. In Chapter 4 I will argue that in New Horizon, a picture emerges of not just the global in the local but the constant interrelationship, reimagining and negotiation of scales and movement in people's lives.

Theorising homelessness in contemporary London demands making connections on a global scale, and indeed to forms of management of movement between scales. Therefore, a homeless asylum seeker in London is implicated in global processes of war and exile, the national system of benefits and local hostel provision (which as we will see in Chapter 7 is welded to benefit entitlement) and council policy. She must negotiate moving on, and across, these different scales.

Proposition 3: Inbetween Places

There have been pressing political and social reasons for highlighting the removal of homeless people from public space. However, building on the insights of the existing body of work we might ask what kinds of people/spaces/processes are overlooked by a limiting focus on street homelessness and public space. If we expand our definition to include the hidden homeless then other urban spaces of homelessness (here called *inbetween places*) and indeed, other homeless people, emerge.

Homelessness does not just happen on the street but in a few nights spent at a friend's house, in the keywork meeting in the hostel, in the cupboard where someone's suitcase is stored in a day centre. Inbetween places problematise the traditional distinction between public and private which has little relevance in the lives of young homeless people, whose access to private space is severely limited. Exploring these inbetween places is particularly important when considering youth homelessness, as young homeless people are less likely to be living on the streets than older people (Pain & Francis:2004).

Julia Wardhaugh problematises the distinction between public and private space, instead distinguishing between 'prime space' and 'marginal space' (2000). She argues that homelessness is only thought of as a problem when homeless people enter 'prime space' (Sibley (1995) makes a similar argument about young people's presence being read as problematic only when they enter 'family' spaces). Focussing on Manchester, Wardhaugh identifies a small circuit of homeless services. She explains that these services are located in marginal places (or taking place at marginal times i.e. soup runs at night) in the prime space of the city centre. However, Wardhaugh also points out that many homeless services are located in prime spaces, albeit in marginal locations within that prime space, meaning that homeless people must negotiate the difficulties of being visible in prime space. This finding can be linked to Wolch and Dear's study of the impact of deinstitutionalisation and the creation of ghettos in North America. Wolch and Dear (1987) map out the location of mental health facilities in Toronto alongside the attitudes to the community of the mentally ill, revealing what they term 'the

geography of intolerance' (1987:107). Like Wardhaugh, they find homeless and mental health services located in the centre of the city. There is a tension then, homeless people are excluded from city centres but have to negotiate prime space in order to access services.

Wardhaugh's research explores the relationship between homeless people and the city spaces they move through and thus (partially) create. These findings about the relationship between homeless people and prime space retain their relevance. However, three gaps or potential areas of further investigation arise from Wardhaugh's work: What happens inside the homeless services that make up the circuit? How is marginal space occupied? How are all these spaces woven together in the daily movements of the homeless person?

When inbetween spaces of homelessness such as hostels or day centres have been written about in a North American context, it is usually in a descriptive way to draw attention to inadequate facilities (Siegal:1986, Baxter & Hopper:1981). There has been very little examination of the spaces of governance and care that, in the UK at least, homeless people have been moved into (Johnsen et al (2005) and Waters (1992) are notable exceptions). As services have expanded it becomes pertinent to explore how such spaces are produced and how they intervene in the lives of their clients. How do young people's relationships with these institutions impact on their situation and how do they relate to the interactions that take place within them? Focussing on my own group of participants, who move between various kinds of homelessness but predominantly live in hostels, we might wonder how action is constrained in this particular set of precarious circumstances in contemporary London.

Johnsen et al (2005) and Waters (1992) point to the day centre as both an important source of refuge and resources but also explore how these spaces can be experienced in ambiguous ways by those who use them. Waters problematises the space of the day centre; taking into account, for example, encounters between people from very different circumstances. Johnsen et al examine the homeless day centre as a space of both refuge and fear. Both studies consider the impact of funding, of organisational ethos and of the client group. However, the idea of

dynamic space can open up these inbetween spaces further. We can think of the impact of the day centre's 'external geography' (Massey:2006) on what happens inside, the biographies bound up with global and local conflicts and displacements which then intersect with other vectors of funding and ethos to produce the space of the day centre. I will ask, how can we make sense of the kinds of movement and forms of fixing that create the space of the day centre? And furthermore, how can we use this as a starting point to learn about the ways in which this place is implicated in the lives of young homeless people and woven into their pathways?

The second problem with focusing solely on how homeless people experience 'prime' space is that it may mean that the problems with occupying or moving through more marginal spaces are overlooked. It is crucial to consider the importance and different kinds of surveillance in the lives of my participants. For example some of my participants talk about the 'prime space' of the West End of London as a safe place whereas it is other more 'marginal' spaces that emerge as spaces of fear. From a perspective which focuses only on state or corporate surveillance this is difficult to understand. As I shall discuss in Chapter 6, the West End is a heavily regulated space but relatively free of another kind of surveillance, that of other young people. Therefore in this research project I have had to reconsider the relationship between 'prime' and 'marginal' space and homelessness.

Ethnographies of homelessness have explored the tactics that people deploy in order to make ends meet on the street. Mitch Duneier (1999) and Teresa Gowan (2000) in particular, have focussed on the labour of homeless people in the informal economy. Their work focuses on people who are largely making do outside of systems of governance. However, my participants are embedded in relationships with a variety of agencies and institutions. Therefore we might wonder what kinds of regulation take place in the inbetween places of hostel and day centre and what kinds of tactical actions are used in order to cope with this regulation.

Abdoumalig Simone argues: 'At the heart of city life is the capacity for its different people, spaces, activities, and things to interact in ways that exceed any attempt to regulate them' (2010:3).¹⁷ Turning Simone's argument on its head, and

¹⁷ Similarly, Amin and Thrift argue: 'We accept that urban practices are in many ways disciplined,

perhaps robbing it of some of its optimism, I will be focussing not just on the tactical forms of action that are possible, but also on what such actions can tell us about how other possibilities are foreclosed. Exploring the relationship between pathways and modes of surveillance, we might ask what kinds of boundaries or structuring forces can be traced through looking at where mobility or the possibility to act ends.

Conclusion

Just as Massey argues that the multicultural city can only be understood by its 'external geography', so homelessness has its own 'external geography'. That is to say, just as the city cannot be understood as a separate detached entity, so homelessness has to be understood as something produced by an enmeshing of processes and flows. I have argued for an analysis that goes beyond a focus on clashes in public spaces in order to examine the more complex forms of governance and surveillance that intervene in the lives of young homeless people in the context of the UK, highlighting in particular the importance of inbetween spaces and pathways. I have put forward an argument for an exploration of homelessness that draws on existing literature but that is textured, nuanced and can respond both to ideas of flow, local specificity and other forms of governance.

In outlining an alternative theoretical approach to the analysis of young homeless people and urban space, I have raised some of the thesis's key theoretical underpinnings: a focus on mobility and fixity, an expanded definition of homelessness and its spaces, and a multiscalar approach. Let us now look at how the questions and themes raised in this introduction are addressed in the rest of this thesis.

but we also believe that these practices constantly exceed that disciplinary envelope. Each urban encounter is a theatre of promise in a play of power' (2002:4).

Chapter Outline

In **Chapter 2. 'Demanding Accounts'** I consider how a hope of letting marginalised people 'speak for themselves' through researching them, fails to confront how the demand for certain groups to tell has been historically tied to domination and techniques of 'philanthropic surveillance' (McClintock:1995). The chapter asks: What does it mean to ask people to give accounts of their lives who are already required to do so within systems of governance? I examine how the assumption that everyone is willing and able to give accounts of themselves in an interview situation might lead to the overlooking of other forms of telling and self-representation. Exploring how visual methods (photography, video, mapping) and 'the art of listening' (Back:2007) might be used to draw out different accounts, I will discuss how using this combination of methods has provided a set of lenses through which to examine young homeless people's experiences of the city.

Chapter 3 – Almost Home & Chapter 4 – The Same Boat?

These two chapters introduce the participants and the research setting of New Horizon and explore how it is produced as a space. **Chapter 3** introduces the fieldwork site, New Horizon Youth Centre, its client group, facilities and, most crucially, how rules, relationships and organisational ethos produce the space of this homeless drop-in service. Working with the idea of the centre as 'almost home' I consider the tension between the centre as home space and the centre as a place of progress.

Despite the extreme diversity¹⁸ of the centre, young people often suggest that they are 'all in the same boat'. **Chapter 4** considers the relationship between being in the same set of institutional circumstances of homelessness (the same boat) and the tensions and negotiations of sameness and difference in the space of the centre.

¹⁸ I am using the word diversity with caution. As Ahmed et al argue it is a slippery word and has a range of meanings within institutional settings. (2006: 42) However, in the absence of a better word, I am using 'diversity' as shorthand to reflect the range of ethnicities, nationalities and sexualities of those who use the centre.

Building on the previous chapter, I consider how different kinds of displacement also contribute produce the space of the centre (for example, movement can be caused by the Ethiopian/Eritrean conflict or outstanding drug debts in South London). Using the term *place of the displaced*, I explore processes of local and global exile and the kinds of alliances and tensions that are produced in this coming together.

Chapter 5 – Ambivalent Mobilities & Chapter 6 – The Limits of Reorientation

This pair of chapters focuses on the combinations of movements and fixities that impact on the lives of young homeless people in London. Focusing on movement within London, **Chapter 5** uses a mapping exercise to explore the effect of moving into the hostel system on the young people's mobility. I outline three responses to high levels of mobility: mobility as a loss, mobility as a resource and managed mobility. While there are high levels of mobility in the lives of young homeless people, it is not the case that this mobility is free and random. I suggest that while acknowledging homeless people's expulsion from the public, it would be a mistake to conclude that homeless people have absolutely 'no place' in the sense of attachments or sense of belonging to place. Places are key to these narrations, providing points of anchorage, moments of reorientation and institutional interference. The movement of homeless people is often driven by the need to get to a certain place, by multiple attachments both enforced and informal, and by systems that both displace and replace people. I argue that while mobility is affected by the move into the hostel system, the impact of this move is always caught up with other attachments and experiences. Examining the impact of mobilities on futures, I introduce the concept of being *fixed in mobility*.

Chapter 6 examines how within highly mobile lives, movement is also revealed as heavily restricted. While a network of agencies moves the young people around London, the official borders of borough councils and the non-official (and much maligned) territories of young people feed into an experience of London as a series of exclusionary bounded areas. Using concepts of 'tactics' (de Certeau:1988) and

'bodily hexis' (Bourdieu:1984), I argue that being fixed in a mobile state doesn't just involve bodies being moved around by systems, but that the need to keep moving in order to be safe also works upon the body. The chapter argues for going beyond the paradox of mobility/fixity in order to examine how some people become *fixed in mobility*.

Chapter 7 – The Hostel: Mooring and Meshing & Chapter 8 – Imagined Futures, Persistent Pasts and Precarious Presents

In these two chapters I focus on the impact of the enmeshing of institutions in the homeless network. I argue that these young homeless people don't exist outside systems, in fact their lives often involve juggling interactions with the various agencies that intervene in their lives.

Chapter 7 takes the space of the hostel and its links to the benefits system in order to consider how hostels are woven into a larger institutional network. Paying attention to the institutional context shows that surveillance works in more complex and ambiguous ways than just the straightforward conflict between the state and the homeless person as enacted in public space. I argue that the surveillance that takes place in the hostel works on two levels. As well as following the rules, such as the curfew, the young person must 'engage' and be seen to actively 'work' on their own housing path. Thus the hostel is not just a shelter but also a place of progress. I also argue that other forms of enmeshing take place within the hostel, lives can become entwined, partly through a lack of private space and also through participation in the same network of hostels, day centres and Jobcentres. This is something that can be enjoyed but also resisted.

Chapter 8 explores how young people make sense of the future in relation to their pasts and presents. Asking, how are attitudes towards possible futures forged in the context of precarious presents that are haunted by persistent pasts? I interrogate what it is that makes the present fragile, considering the impact of what has happened before and its reverberations through the present as well as the ways in which a fragile present is maintained by the homeless system. While the structural

constraints of the present impact on the imagined near future of my participants, (for example, in the difficulties of going into education or employment while living in a hostel) hopes for a further away future were voiced. Critiquing Bourdieu's notion of 'the game' (1979), I argue that while participants are often oriented towards an idea of a far away 'positive future' the ability to move towards this is tempered by the fragile present. This is another form of fixing, fixing in the present.

Chapter 9 – Conclusions

In this chapter, I draw the key themes together and put forward the following set of conclusions:

- Homelessness needs to be theorised across scales of local and global.
- New Horizon offers an alternative perspective on the city of movement, foregrounding how journeys made by loss and violence make the contemporary city.
- The language of multiculturalism is inadequate to account for the different kinds of displacement at work in places like New Horizon and the wider city.
- Young homeless people in London are both highly mobile yet restricted spatially by formal and informal forms of surveillance, a condition I have called being *fixed in mobility*.
- New Horizon provides a crucial almost home space and reveals the importance of place in lives lived on the move, challenging the opposition of mobility and space.
- The relationship between the homeless network and the state creates a situation where 'moving on' is both promoted and blocked.
- Place-making tactics make visible both the constraints and shifting ground on which they are employed but also could offer hints about other possible futures for these young people.

Chapter 2 – Demanding Accounts?

Introduction

This chapter reflects on what the failed interview reveals about the legacy of research on the urban poor. I will argue that the experience of difficult early interviews provided valuable insight into the surveillance of young homeless people. By foregrounding ‘bad’ interviews, I am arguing against a tendency to tidy up methods chapters, where the ‘mess’ of methods (Law:2004) is dispensed with.

After conducting many interviews with hostel residents as a research assistant on the project ‘Crime Displacement in King’s Cross’ (Young et al:2006) I had become aware of both the potentials and limitations of interviews. Arriving in hostels with my £10 *Tesco* vouchers (incentives) and digital recorder, I sought to capture stories of King’s Cross. The accounts elicited through these encounters are bounded by time. I was interviewing people in each hostel for a few days only, asking for narratives of change, what was King’s Cross like in the past? How was it now? etc... Listening back to these interviews I can often hear myself insisting on this notion of progress when it was clearly being denied by my interviewees. While these methods were appropriate for the King’s Cross Project, I was keen to take my own work forward using ethnographic research, incorporating interviews. An ethnography poses a different relationship to time. The researcher is present for a sustained period, accounts given can change and different kinds of narratives can emerge. A picture can build up slowly, layer upon layer.

My decision to conduct participant observation while working as a volunteer in a centre for young homeless people gave me a role and enabled me to offer some kind of exchange with the centre. Although, when I contacted the centre initially, I made clear that my intention was to volunteer and to do research, negotiating this exchange was not a one-off agreement but has been an ongoing process. I presented myself as a student/volunteer to the young people. I came into New Horizon with a plan of doing ethnography, unstructured interviews and

possibly a more collaborative visual project (I didn't make any firm plans about what this would entail in advance, as I first wanted to see what would be appropriate in the setting). Becoming part of the youth work team positions me very differently to my participants than those who have conducted ethnographies 'on the street' (Duneier:1999, Bourgois:1996). Instead, I have positioned myself in the system that works with homeless people in King's Cross. My relationships with the participants are mediated through the structural relationship of worker/client. I have had to become a youth worker in order to find my place in the centre, conducting research in this context involves joining in. This has involved cups of tea, talks about pregnancies, current affairs, countries of origin and who's going out with whom. I have also led workshops, made huge vats of mashed potato, sailed on a tall ship, worked on reception (policing who is allowed in the building) and reprimanded young people for using their mobile phones (not allowed in the centre). This relationship is productive rather than static, while I have impacted on the life of the centre, becoming part of this community has had a huge impact on my life and my sense of place and belonging in London.

I began volunteer training in September 2007 and started work in the centre from December 2007 until December 2008. From January to the end of February 2009 I worked on editing the film 'In The Pod' and planning the launch party. This meant I was still working with New Horizon until February 2009. Since then, I have returned for special occasions, such as Open Days.

The ethnography gave me a good grounding in the everyday processes of the organisation, and an insight into both the workings of the homeless system and the issues facing the young people who interact with it. Conducting ethnography in the centre posed challenges. Taking notes would have been impossible, it would have interfered with my contact with the young people.¹⁹ Therefore I have had to rely on my memory, writing field notes at the end of each day. After I had been in the centre for a few months, I discussed my work (briefly) in the Youth Centre's Youth Forum and asked for volunteers for interviews. After the Youth Forum, five

¹⁹ There was an episode in the centre before I arrived where a rumour spread that one volunteer was actually from the CID (Criminal Investigation Department). This resulted in the young people refusing to interact with her.

young people said they were interested in being interviewed. Taking things slowly in this way was important in order to build relationships with both the young people and the staff. This is a closely surveyed population and, quite rightly, I have had to earn my trust.

Throughout the first few months of the ethnography, the only occasions on which I used the digital recorder were recording discussions linked to the Peer Education Project (discussed below). As I waited for what seemed like an appropriate amount of time before starting to interview people, I (naively) assumed that the kind of discussions I had been involved in with the young people could be reproduced in an interview situation. I wanted to capture some of the irreverent humour, energy and rhythms of speech of the young people. I was hoping that interviews might provide an arena for the telling of stories. I had assumed that gaining trust and building relationships would lead to a free and easy interview situation. Instead, the first interviews I conducted brought issues of surveillance and research acutely into focus.

The demand for certain groups to tell has been historically tied to domination and techniques of 'philanthropic surveillance' (McClintock:1995). Early social researchers in 19th Century London are firmly implicated in the process of turning the colonial gaze onto the British city. While their approaches varied – we can think of the journalistic approach of Henry Mayhew at one end of the spectrum and Charles Booth's painstaking statistical analysis at the other – all were involved in quantifying and classifying the urban poor.

The work of these early social explorers raises questions about the production of knowledge (what kind of knowledges were they producing?), the ethics of studying the poor (is it possible to produce accounts of the marginalised without further increasing their marginalisation?) and the politics of representing another social world. In this chapter, my focus will be on how these epistemological and political questions are entangled in issues of method, particularly focussing on the interview. Through looking at a series of encounters in the field I will outline how responding to these issues has forged my methodological approach.

Pete - Encounter 1.

I'm in the counselling room with Pete. I've known Pete for a few months and during this time I have seen him go from being withdrawn and institutionalised, following a stint in prison, to becoming a stalwart of the centre. He has catering experience and can often be found helping out in the New Horizon kitchen. Before starting the interview with Pete, I do my customary briefing. I explain the purpose of the interview, assure anonymity etc... Pete stops me in my tracks with a wave of the hand, 'It's fine' he says, 'I've been in enough police stations'. I explain in a flustered manner that this is different. Pete agrees. They have much bigger tape recorders in the police station, he tells me.

...

E- Do you ever feel like you're asked too many questions all the time about things?

P- No, if people ask me personal things I'll tell them but if they want to hear something else I'll tell them what they want to hear ... Don't tell them nothing else, just what they want to hear.

E- Really? Like, what kind of people are you talking about?

P- Psychiatrists and all that. Keyworkers in my hostel.

E- So how do you know what they want to hear?

cheery voice] 'Oh it was good!' [E laughs] because if I say 'it's good', it's quicker, it's over. If I say 'it's shit' then they go 'why?'.

E- Ok. So a keyworker, what kind of questions does a keyworker ask you then, 'How's your day...?'

P- 'We've got a meeting because we want to talk about how you've been' and all that rubbish. So, I always bring someone back to my hostel so I get out of it or I never go back til late, until he's gone home. I can't be bothered with him. They're boring, keyworkers.

E- Yeah?

P- They're twats. I'm trying to get a social worker but its not happening, I dunno why. My keyworker's meant to get them like last week but he hasn't.

E- And you're talking about, like, psychiatrists what do you tell that they

want to here then? Again, is it 'oh I'm fine'?

P- Yeah, 'I've got no problems' and all that shit. When I feel depressed, I tell them nothing ... I tell them I'm grand, feel on top of the world, when I want to slit my wrist or jump in front of a bus, but I just tell them that I'm feeling fine.

'Philanthropic Surveillance'

A concern for making inequalities visible was a common theme in the work of the Victorian explorer/researchers: Engels (1969, [1892]) draws attention to the way in which cities are structured in a way that conceals poverty from the bourgeoisie, William Booth (1890) advocates a 'Lazarus day' where the poor will parade through the streets, Charles Booth (1889) constructs maps to make poverty visible in a 'scientific' medium and Mayhew (1851) uses interview material to bring to light the lives of London 'street folk'. However, in all the accounts, this process of making poverty visible risks making a spectacle of the poor.

Let us take Charles Booth as an example. Booth was sceptical of studies that were grounded in either theology or political ideology and was determined to carry out a thoroughly 'scientific' enquiry. Booth and his team of researchers took 17 years to produce 'The Life and the Labour of the People in London' (1886-1903) a series of volumes which 'detailed every aspect of life in every district in London' (Gidley:2000). Booth conducted his statistical analysis before taking to the streets, strictly forbidding his researchers to visit the areas under investigation ('From the outset we shut our eyes, fearing lest any prejudice of our own should colour the information we received. It was not till the books were finished that I or my secretaries visited the streets amongst which we had been living in imagination'²⁰ (Booth:1889:25)). Although Booth went on to conduct many interviews and observations, there is a sense in which he seems to distrust his own ethnographic material, writing of it: 'I am indeed embarrassed by its mass' and resolves to 'make use of no fact to which I cannot give a quantitative value' (1969:4). This emphasis on

²⁰ He did change this practise in the course of the research, he describes gaining in confidence and starting to go to every street as the reports by his 'visitors' came in.

'facts' reflects his concern with producing a scientific account and distances him from other accounts that rely on gory description. He writes:

'The materials for sensationalist stories lie plentifully in every book of our notes; but, even if I had the skill to use my material in this way – that gift of the imagination which is called "realistic" – I should not wish to use it here. There is struggling poverty, there is destitution, there is hunger, drunkenness, brutality and crime; no one doubts that is so. My object here has been to attempt to show the numerical relation which poverty, misery and depravity bear to regular earnings and comparative comfort, and describe the condition under which each class lives.'

(1889:6)

He makes the commitment therefore of not adding to the wealth of material about the depraved behaviour of poor people. However, the sample he gives of his notebooks in the introduction to *Life and Labour* are full of judgements of the not strictly statistical variety, so Hubert Street is described as:

'An awful place, the worst place in the district. The inhabitants are mostly of the lowest class and seem to lack all idea of cleanliness or decency ... The children are rarely brought up to any kind of work, but loaf about, and no doubt form the nucleus for future generations of thieves and bad characters.' (1889:8)

Although he is at pains to prove his objectivity then, Charles Booth's conclusions are infused with moral judgements. In working out where to position each street in his taxonomy of classes (from A 'occasional labourers, loafers and semi-criminals' to H 'the upper middle class') they are placed partially on moral criteria – often resting on the behaviour of women – clean doorsteps, clean curtains and non-rowdy behaviour equating with the worthy poor (Walkowitz:1992:35).

Rather than disrupting the discourses of poverty that were coming from the

official reports of the Royal Commission and Select Committee²¹ and sensationalist journalism, the work of the early social explorers contributed to a sense of a knowable and distinct low urban other. Anne McClintock terms the work of these early investigators 'philanthropic surveillance' (1992:120) capturing both their good intentions of improving conditions but also their culpability with modes of regulation based on exposure. The phrase suggests the potential paradoxical effects of their studies, encouraging societal change while reaffirming negative stereotypes of the researched. This paradox continues to haunt those researching the marginalised.

A major part of this process of uncovering through 'philanthropic surveillance' came from asking the poor for their stories. Henry Mayhew proudly claimed that his account was the 'the first attempt to publish the history of the people, from the lips of the people themselves ... in their own 'unvarnished' language' (1851:Preface). Much of his writing is based on interview material. Anne Humphreys applauds his use of his informant's language, arguing:

'The strength of Mayhew's prose then comes in large part from the vitality of the language of his informants. Even if he as scientist had to be 'objective' and his language sober and uncolourful, that of his informants did not ... The result was not just a concise, lively, and seemingly accurate narrative, but also his strongest assertion of the importance of his subjects as citizens and as human beings.' (1977:151)

There are two important assumptions in Humphreys' argument which underscore the long lasting influence of this kind of research. The contrast between Mayhew's own prose and the 'colourful' speech of his informant intensifies the impression that Mayhew is writing from nowhere (Donna Haraway terms this 'the god trick' (1991)). The respondent is rendered a character whereas the researcher is invisible. Perhaps the most important critique of this 'view from nowhere' has come from the field of feminist epistemology where it has been argued that all knowledge

²¹ These reports known as 'the Blue Books', covered sanitation, housing, health, and interment.

is situated (Haraway:1996) and that strong objectivity (Harding:1991) comes with examining the partiality of all research. This challenges the researcher to foster 'a keen understanding of what aspects of the self are the most important filters through which one perceives the world and, more particularly, the topic being studied' (Behar:1996:13). I would go further and argue that reflexivity is not just about identifying filters in any straightforward way, it is an active practise which constantly informs and shapes the research.

The second point Humphreys makes involves an assumption that reproducing narratives automatically validates respondents as human beings. The effect of 'giving voice' in this way can, as, Back (2007) argues, reduce the person to caricature, rather than affirm personhood.

While working through the politics of research and trying to create a more equal form of exchange has been, and continues to be, a key consideration for feminist researchers, the debate around voice and who can speak for whom is far from resolved. Ann Oakley describes the feminist interviewer as making a move 'from being a data-collecting instrument for researchers to being a data-collecting instrument for those whose lives are being researched' (1981:49). For Oakley the traditional interview paradigm of the detached interviewer/researched as object is morally indefensible when applied to a feminist interviewing women. Oakley aims for a non-hierarchical form of interviewing where the respondent can ask questions of the interviewer and where the 'mythology of 'hygienic' research' is abandoned. However, the blindness to class, ethnic differences and the assumption of the category woman as guaranteeing some form of solidarity across different social locations in these pioneering feminist research texts have been widely criticised. The notion of 'giving voice' remains central to these debates. Feminist research has been forced to tackle how giving, or more perhaps more accurately, reproducing voice is fraught with the power dynamics of the fieldwork situation.

The case par excellence, is perhaps 'the Bell debate'. Diane Bell, a white Australian anthropologist was criticised for jointly publishing an article about the rape of Aboriginal women by Aboriginal men with Topsy Nelson her Aboriginal 'collaborator'. Bell was accused of appropriating Nelson's voice and of exhibiting

white imperialism (Bell & Klein:1996) despite Nelson's protestations that she used Bell to 'write it all down for her' (in Ahmed:2000) and their joint claim that this collaboration has taken place in the spirit of friendship. But Sara Ahmed has argued that what is critical in this situation is the relations of production of the text, rather than issues of representation. For Ahmed, 'the discussion of friendship conceals the ethnographic relation' (2000:66). That is to say that just to claim a relationship of feminist empathy between researcher and researched, even if the researched is credited as a collaborator, cannot get us out of the power dynamics of the reporting on worlds of strangers that is doing qualitative research.

Learning from the 'failed' interview

Muna – Encounter 2

Muna sits down on the settee in the counselling room and picks up a mirror that is lying around, she examines her face in it for a long time, slightly adjusting her glittery hijab. I ask her if I can record the interview. She seems horrified, waves her hands and says 'no' and asks me why I wanted to record it. I explain that it is just for me to listen back to, to help me remember what she said, and not for anything else. I proceed with my questions taking notes, but despite not being switched on, the spectre of the tape recorder hangs over the ensuing interview.

E- Can you describe a typical day in your life?

M- I watch TV, I go places.

E- What kind of places do you like to go to?

M- Funfairs and the cinema

E- Do you go to funfairs or the cinema very often?

M- No (silence)

There is an expectation in contemporary society that people can and will give accounts of themselves. Indeed the interview format has become so ubiquitous that a common problem in research can be moving 'beyond' well-rehearsed tales of

the self. Atkinson & Silverman identify an 'Interview Society', encompassing mass media and social research which relies on 'face-to-face interviews to reveal the personal, the private self of the subject' (1997:309). They call for sociological and anthropological research to question the assumptions of this 'interview society' rather than replicate its technologies. Their critique rests on questioning the notion of an authentic self revealed in the interview encounter, however, another of the key assumptions of the interview society, ignored by Atkinson and Silverman, is an assumption of a speaking self-reflexive subject.

This is a position that can be refused. For example, in her 1970s ethnography of American working class families, Lillian Breslow Rubin was puzzled by her interviewees either denying negative feelings towards their childhoods or expressing guilt about having any negative feelings:

'Why, I kept asking myself, are these articulate people so distant from the sources of childhood pain and anger? Why is it necessary for them to deny so much of it? In the professional middle-class world in which I have lived for so many years, one encounters exactly the opposite response – young adults, encouraged by the psychotherapeutic milieu that pervades their culture, expose and examine the pain of their childhood and the anger that accompanies it seemingly without end.'(Rubin:1976:25)

Although later on in the research, stories were sometimes told in a psychotherapeutic narrative, my early interviews demonstrate a similar refusal.

The idea of 'giving voice' assumes a willingness to speak. Steedman comments on a tacit assumption 'that there is an urge to tell the self, that it comes from within, and that the impulsion to do so, in spoken or written language, is part of the very process of self-construction' (2000:26). Sometimes, as I have found, this is simply not the case. Muna was certainly not going to offer me a self-reflexive version of her life.

There is the possibility that it was my dual role as researcher and volunteer

that unnerved Muna. However, it was not the moment of asking for interviews or talking about my work that seemed to cause the discomfort, rather it seemed to be the situation I had created. Muna had approached me, after the Youth Forum meeting, and offered to do an interview. She is not a shy and retiring person. So how, and where, did it all go so wrong? In this interview situation I made mistakes. My first mistake was to take Muna into the counselling room, a small room off the main drop-in area. I had thought that conducting the interviews somewhere with a semblance of privacy would help to make the young people feel comfortable. Also, as the centre is a very noisy place and I wanted to get a good recording, I was pleased to be allowed access to the place sometimes referred to as 'the quiet room'. When I led Muna from her place at the main table in the drop-in to the little room, she looked a little unsettled. What I had managed to do (unwittingly) was to replicate a frightening interview setting – the small room, the tape recorder perhaps replicating the technologies of the immigration interview – which was not conducive to a relaxed conversation with a young Somali refugee.

I asked Muna questions about the centre, about her time in London. I learned that she had been attending the centre for two weeks. She originally came to London in 2005 from Somalia with another woman and stayed with a series of friends-of-friends. After being 'kicked out' of her last place she found out about the centre and, through a housing advice appointment, had secured temporary hostel accommodation. She was currently waiting for a long-term hostel place. According to Muna everything was fine, she was enjoying being in the centre, and enjoying being in London. She looked utterly uncomfortable for the duration of our exchange. In the interview, Muna was keen to tell me that she was happy. She looked as though she wanted to leave the room. After a while, I brought the interview to a close and thanked her for her time. Cursing myself for my stupidity, I concluded that I would have to be much more sensitive about interviewing in the future.

Simone Weil argues that 'Affliction is by its nature inarticulate' (2005:85). Weil uses the example of the vagrant standing before the magistrate stumbling for words. But does this mean that affliction is always inarticulate? Or do the situations

where telling is demanded render those who are already marginalised inarticulate? Perhaps the vagrant in Weil's example can speak, but not under the conditions of the court.

As the extract from Pete's interview exemplifies, my participants are compelled to give accounts of themselves on a day-to-day basis. In the above interview extract, (pg. 43) Pete tells of his strategies for dealing with the constant questioning of hostel keyworkers and psychiatrists. Closing down lines of questioning is something he has learned that gets these encounters over with quickly. The consequences of telling or not telling are directly linked to his position in the hostel system. It is important to note that historically the demand for the poor to tell their stories has been tied to systems of poor relief and regulation, Carolyn Steedman calls this 'enforced autobiography' (2000). These enforced accounts were produced by questioning rather than by self-authorship but in the finished versions of the narratives the voice of the questioner is removed. Beverley Skeggs argues: 'Being the author of one's life rather than the respondent to another's interlocutions generated different sorts of personhood; a class difference that is being reproduced in different types of telling' (2002:354). A focus on these different histories of telling gives a rather different inflection to the 'Interview Society' (Atkinson & Silverman:1997) or indeed to feminist researchers' concern with 'giving voice' to the marginalised.

Jo arrived in the centre not long after I started working there and I considered us to have a certain degree of rapport.²² Jo and I are from the same town and over the first few months of our time in NH we had many conversations and occasional games of Scrabble. This was, I thought, a good grounding for an interview.

I conducted the interview with Jo at a small table in the main room, hoping my recorder could cope with the background noise of the other young people and the DVD that was playing. Jo didn't initially raise any objections to being recorded but seemed uncomfortable, the interview was much more stilted than our previous conversations and she fiddled with a biro throughout, not looking up. I asked her if she could introduce herself at the outset of an interview. I expected a few sentences

²² Geertz (2000:34) provides a reminder that this can be a projection of the researcher.

of explanation, instead she answered 'I don't know how to talk about myself, so...'. Having talked to her previously, I knew that she was sometimes very talkative. Whether she did know how to talk about herself or not, she was certainly not comfortable doing so in the interview situation I had created, only seeming to relax after I brought the interview to a close. She told me 'I just don't like talking on this thing' (pointing towards the recorder). For a while, Jo rebuffed my attempts to find out why she felt uneasy about being recorded but eventually, she stated her prime concern. That I could use the recording 'against her'.

Jo – Encounter 3

J- I don't know, it's just those ... things. You could use that against me or anything. In life.

E- I won't though. There are strict rules around these things.

J- You could, really.

E- What could I do?

J- You could copy that to something else and use that on, like, your real thing but no one would know you had another copy. You could pass that on to some inside story newspaper thing.

E- I would never do that and as well. It's not just that I wouldn't because that would be immoral. My university ... there's really strict rules about when you interview someone what you can and can't do and if I did that I would never get my degree, also I'd be breaking the rules of the centre, so they could discipline me.

J- I'm not saying that you're going to, but you could if you really wanted to.

The young people in the centre are media savvy. Jo is aware of how technology makes the copying and distribution of sound files very easy. While, following Bourdieu, we as researchers may feel anxious about 'making private worlds public' (1993:1), such anxiety doesn't seem to trouble the producers of other

representations. My own explanation of why I would not use this recording ‘against her’, based on a vocabulary of ethics committees and professional conduct, doesn’t have much meaning in this situation. On the TV, the internet, reality shows and mobile phone recorded footage is ubiquitous. The sense of research as surveillance is only exacerbated by the expansion of technology in everyday life.

During my interview with Jo, Keisha came over and started whistling into the recorder. She mouthed ‘what’s this?’ not wanting her voice to be on the tape, this could be read as a courtesy – not wanting to interrupt the interview – if it hadn’t been followed by her making her own audio mark through whistling. The next time I was in the centre, I tried to talk to Keisha about the recorder, asking why she thought the recorder made people uncomfortable. She told me that her voice ‘wasn’t worthy to go on tape’ and that I could sell it to the police. She suggested that I tape people secretly instead because: ‘I wouldn’t lie to your face but I’d lie to a tape’. I told her that I couldn’t do that, how would she feel if I did that to her? She said she’d take me ‘outside’.²³ I told her I would rather avoid that situation.

While Keisha’s suggestion of undercover taping was not very helpful, her comment that she wouldn’t lie to my face but she would lie to a tape recorder positions the recorder as something that gets in the way – a barrier to face-to-face communication. Her whistling during Jo’s interview prompted me consider the potential of the recorder. Could I find a way of making the technology more playful and less of a surveillance device?

In his ethnography of street children in Brazil, Tobias Hecht finds his participants eager to record their stories. One of his participants, Beto, snatches the tape recorder from his bag and proceeded to interview other children. Hecht reflects:

‘Having my tape recorder requisitioned and my role as an interviewer usurped eventually translated into my most important research method. To my surprise, children tended to view the tape recorder not with suspicion but as a means of making themselves heard, of telling stories

²³ For a fight.

they rarely if ever had the chance to recount.’ (1998:9)

In this situation the children themselves intervene and render the tape recorder a playful object. However, the technology of the recorder carries different meanings in different social contexts. In my research setting, the recorder has associations with the police stations, immigration officials and undercover journalism.

After the exchanges with Jo and Muna, I was worried that the awkwardness of the interviews would effect my relationships with the young people, making them suspicious. But it did not. In the weeks after my interview with Muna, she started to tell me more about her life. One day she sat down next to me and asked me about university and told me about her aspirations of becoming a midwife. This time she spoke to me about how she was worried that she had wasted her first two years in London. She said ‘I cried everyday when I came to this country. I missed my Mum, my country, my Dad, I didn’t know the language, I didn’t know the system.’ This account, of how she adapted to life in London and her hopes for the future, was quite different to the ‘everything is great’ story of the interview encounter (it also foregrounds the importance of ‘knowing the system’ for a young homeless person, see Chapter 4). Perhaps, I had just been looking at the interviews in the wrong way.

While my first interview encounters were revealing, they were revealing in a different way to that which I had anticipated. They reveal something about the experiences of these homeless young people, the production of the interview, and the challenges of researching people who are not free and easy with their words. In Muna’s case, the interview opened up the possibility of an ongoing dialogue. She was willing to talk to me, but on her terms.

I considered abandoning the interview as a method but decided to try again, making some changes. Instead of approaching the group and asking for volunteers, I asked individuals who I sensed might be more comfortable in an interview situation. I also conducted interviews at a small table in the main drop-in area (until one of the interviewees requested more privacy). As ‘Emma interviewing people’, not to mention me suggesting other activities such as map making, became

part of centre life, the interviews became less stilted. Some people used them to tell their life stories, others acted as if they were on a chat show. To some I became a figure of fun. One interviewee (Andrew) took to following me round the centre mimicking me by putting on a (really bad) North East accent and saying 'Byker Groooove,²⁴ I'm going to be a doctor! Why aye man!'

I learned a lot from this shaky start, about surveillance and young homeless people and also about how to improve my practice as an interviewer. It was the experience of conducting these early interviews with Muna and Jo that led to surveillance becoming an important theme of the thesis. In my later interviews (such as Pete's interview) I asked about the experience of having to give accounts of oneself to various agencies. The young people had much to say on this subject (see Chapter 7).

While the interview 'successes' provided the arena for storytelling and dialogue I had initially hoped for, they don't solve the issues revealed in the 'bad' interviews. A reliance on interviews in research can mean that those who choose not to, or find it difficult to articulate their views, are under represented. For example, Curtis et al argue that in the case of children those who 'communicate well, and in English, or who are regular school attendees, are more likely to be given a voice in the research literature'(2003:168). Even in the interview 'successes' I was reminded, often jokingly, of the connotations of the situation. For example, Pete telling me that he'd been in enough police stations to know the interview routine. Or at the end of our interview when he played mischievously with the situation by asking me 'are you going to twos me²⁵ on that joint or what?' Another person (Ryan) started their interview by whispering jokingly into the recorder 'I didn't do it, this is a set up!' (see Chapter 6)

I will go on to explore how different methods can be used to create other forms of accounts. In my research setting, the recorder symbolises a certain kind of encounter. Looking towards another project going on in the centre, I considered if the recorder/interview scenario replicates a situation of surveillance, could engaging

²⁴ Byker Grove is a TV programme set in a Newcastle youth club. Funnily enough, I used to work on it as an extra but I didn't tell Andrew that!

²⁵ Sharing a joint.

with the technology/forms of media that the young people themselves use have potential as alternative research tools?

Subverting Big Brother?



Fig. 0.1. The Peer Pod

During my first few months at the centre I became involved with running the centre's peer education project. The peer education programme was to address questions of community safety, with a focus on gangs, gun and knife crime but also media representations of young people. As past peer education projects had not been very successful – because of the transient nature of the centre users training one group of peer educators had proved difficult to sustain – Steven (the member of staff leading the project) had arrived at the idea of making a film. The film was to be made by the young people, facilitated by the workers and could then be used for peer education. Young people would not have to commit to making the entire film and could just participate when they were available. Steven's idea for providing structure to the film was to build a *Big Brother* 'diary room' ('the Peer Pod') where

anyone passing through the centre (staff, clients, visitors) could go in and answer questions relating to the topic. At my point of entry into the centre, funding for a camera had been secured but the project had not started. In preparation for making the film, Steven and myself conducted a series of workshops involving watching documentary and drama, mapping, construction and debate.

The potentials of using media participatory projects with young people are outlined in the report 'Beyond the Numbers Game' (Gidley & Slater:2007). The report refers to media's 'magnetic attraction' (2007:21) for young people and argues: 'Youth culture has a strong affiliation with the entertainment industry which reinforces the attractions of participatory media projects.' (2007:20). The attraction of working with 'sexy' technology and of working towards a finished product helped this peer education film project to gain momentum. Nick Couldry argues that this attraction of the media shows 'the other side of an injustice' (2007:258), that is to say, that it is the product of the unequal access people have to media representation.

In the reality television series *Big Brother* the 'house mates' can go into the diary room at any point and talk to the camera. House mates can also be called to the diary room by 'Big Brother', a changeable faceless voice that governs conditions in the house. Going into the Peer Pod is voluntary but who is 'big brother' in this diary room situation? The film is aimed at other young people (but must also satisfy the funding requirements). It will also have other audiences, the management committee of the centre, the funders, and – in writing about the process – I am creating another audience.

Throughout the processes of preparation and filming the young people were involved in every aspect of the project. Helping to construct and decorate the pod contributed to a sense of ownership. The young people themselves came up with the questions that would be posed in the Peer Pod over the period of two workshops (one of these workshop is described below). The music for the film was taken from the weekly workshop where the young people practise their DJing and MCing skills. Thus, making the film as collaborative as possible lessens a sense of 'Big Brother'.

This particular project has been useful for my research in three ways.

Firstly, the subject of the film intersects with my own research interests meaning the interview material is a useful source (the material of the film will be examined in later chapters, particularly Chapter 6). Secondly, as I have used the recorder (with permission) to tape discussions and workshops, the project has given me the opportunity to document interaction, opinion, narrated experiences and the kind of group dynamics that characterise the centre. Thirdly, it has led me to reflect on my own practise and informed other elements of the research, observations about what 'worked' in the Peer Education Project enabled me to construct further workshops (such as the mapping project). In order to explore the last two points further, I will use an example here of one particular workshop. The session was geared towards creating questions for the Peer Pod but the discussion also covered what constituted adulthood, poverty and the nature of respect. The talk that emerged in these discussions was more relaxed than my early interviews. The recording delivers a typical 'slice of life' from the centre.

(The workshop took place in 'the Project Room' away from the noise of the drop-in. In the project room are myself, Steven (worker), Keisha, Geraldine, Gina, Michael,²⁶ John, Randall and Ash.)

S- The question is 'Why do people join a gang?'

(lots of answers over the top of each other 'insecurity', 'peer pressure', 'having nothing to do', 'being bored as hell.'). So you think it's a good question?

M- it's a very good question.

R- Bored as hell.

G- I'm bored, but I don't join no ...

M- Poverty.

...

S- Poverty, tell me about poverty, Michael.

M- Poverty is...

²⁶ I did not consult the young people about their pseudonyms. However in his later interview I chatted to Michael about the process of anonymisation and he requested to be called 'something from *The Godfather*.' Hence 'Michael', Al Pacino's character's name in *The Godfather*.

R- ... the government.

M- People that come to the centre, we live in poverty, know what I'm saying? We all want to get housed, we all come to the centre to eat food in the daytime because we haven't got fuck all else.

(some grumbles from the others) Well not all of us, but bruv, I'm not ashamed to say it. I've got fuck all. I always come to this centre, and St Michael Connections and Cardinal Hume in Victoria for tuna sandwiches, Bro. Straight up! I've queued outside to eat tuna sandwiches and then go and rob Greggs²⁷ after...

K - (mock impressed) Ahhhh, you're so gangster! He robs Greggs!

[pause]

S- Wicked. The next is 'how would you escape a gang?' (knowing laughter from the young people)

R - You can't.

G- Emigrate.

Although reassurances had to be given throughout about the purposes of the recording, once discussions had started, the recorder did not seem to hinder talk to the same extent as in the interviews. Although the young people spoke more 'naturally' in a group setting, this isn't to say that the recorder became forgotten about. It remained an object arousing curiosity and some apprehension. At one point Michael, who had expressed an interest in recording some music for the film, picked up the recorder and started to beat box into it, elsewhere in the discussion he picked it up off the table and spoke directly into it:

M- (into recorder) Testing 1,2 (taps) Is that still recording? How much memory has this thing got?

E- It's got loads. You can talk into it if you like.

M- Nah.

G- We'll be here all day!

²⁷ Greggs is a chain of bakeries.

S- (sings a 90s dance tune to the recorder) 'Never gonna let you go...'

G- Steve, you go back to the cheesy...

S- I know, old school.

Michael presents himself to the recorder as a musician testing equipment in a soundcheck or studio ('testing 1,2'). He refuses my invitation to take this interaction further. Later on, Keisha continues her aural assault on the recorder crackling sweet papers directly into it and then strokes and prods it with a paintbrush (this really annoys Gina who reprimands her, asking if she knows 'how much those things cost').

While the tape recorder attracts attention the camera does not. It is in the room during this discussion but is not turned on. We have placed it in the room because it is a new acquisition and we want to show it to the young people to generate enthusiasm. The camera functions as a sign that the project is something to be taken seriously. If the spectre of the tape recorder hung over my interview with Muna then the promise of the camera seems to invigorate this discussion. Media tools can thus exert power before they are even switched on.

The next week we started to introduce using the camera to the young people, gradually and in small groups. We wanted to play around with the camera, familiarising ourselves and the young people with this new piece of technology.

We started with Gina and Michael. Gina came in first. She was reluctant to be filmed and so I sat in the Peer Pod, while Steven showed her how to use the camera. I found answering the questions quite difficult and felt (and looked) self-conscious ... Gina read out the questions and operated the camera. It was all done light-heartedly, we all knew we were just testing out the format. We then watched it back on a monitor, laughing at our own jokes and unflattering close-ups. Then Michael came in. He was briefly wary of the camera and had a go at filming Steven in the pod, asking him the set questions ... After interviewing Steven, Michael said 'Now you ask me a few questions, make sure you get Scarface in' (he was wearing a t-shirt emblazoned with a picture of Al Pacino in the film 'Scarface'). Steven responded that the shot had to be quite tight, because of the narrow back drop. Michael took charge, lining up the shot before taking a seat to answer the questions. He talked

about how he started to skip school when he went into secondary education, hanging around with his friends all day instead. He talked about poverty and how having nothing can lead to people joining gangs. He then stood up and walked towards the camera. As he stood up his face disappeared out of shot, leaving the camera to focus on his Al Pacino t-shirt. He started to recite a version of what police say on arrest 'Anything you say could be used in evidence against you...' He came out of the booth and we watched it back on the monitor. Michael said he wanted to do it again. but he had a housing appointment. I went to tell the advice team that they should call him from the project room when they were ready. Al (worker) came in and told Michael that he couldn't see him today for an appointment. It was too late to get a place for the weekend and the emergency hostel was full up. Michael also has rent arrears at the hostel that would have to be settled. Michael had been staying with Ian, who has just gone to prison. This leaves him 'on the road' for the weekend. As Al left Michael said, 'I wish the camera had got that on film'. He went on to explain that those were the kinds of problems the young people were facing.

Using the camera playfully helps to demystify it as a piece of equipment. Giving control of the camera over to the young people, plays around with power relations and the relationship of being watched/watching (and perhaps seeing staff flounder around for answers in the Peer Pod lowered expectations about the kind of performance expected of them!). Although associations with evidence gathering are still present, as attested to by Michael's speech, the camera seems to have more flexible meanings for the young people. It can be co-opted and used for self-presentation in a way the recorder cannot. Michael adjusts the camera and frames himself in the way he wishes to be seen. Also in saying that he wished the exchange with Al was filmed, Michael claims the camera as a way of collecting evidence of grievances.

After this exchange Michael started to talk about his lyrics and his MCing. We suggested that he perform some of his material on camera. He was quite excited at this idea.

He plays around finding an appropriate beat on his phone, putting up his hood and then starts rapping ('spitting' in his words). Gina operates the camera, controlling the zoom carefully, I expected some mock American gangsta style lyrics but Michael's lyrics are about his life, going to the bookies,

nicking phones, hostels and friends that do too much cocaine, mixed with references to British pop culture. We applaud and Michael says he can do a better one. He selects a different beat from his phone. This time he trips over his words halfway through 'I flopped man! I flopped!' he says shaking his head before picking it up again. Now he's on a roll, energised by his own performance. He chooses another beat and takes down his hood. He takes two sheets of crumpled A4 out of his pocket and starts a rap beginning with his gripe about the hostel. He ends it by theatrically telling the camera 'If you want to hear more, you have to pay MONEY' and leaves the room. Gina tells us that Michael has always been good, 'he's real' she says 'not many white boys are that good'.

In this situation the camera provides an opportunity for Michael to represent himself in a way that he feels comfortable with. This is a different kind of performance to the interview encounter, although aspects of this theatricality also characterise Michael's audio interview (returned to in more detail in Chapter 5). Exploring the way the young people wish to present themselves adds another layer to the ethnographic account. The effect of the 'interview society' can leave us assuming that everyone can 'do' interviews, this might make us overlook other forms of telling and self-representation that are already there. Furthermore, using research methods more imaginatively may give rise to these other forms of expression.

I tried to take the collaborative spirit of the film and workshop format forward in some of the other methods that I used in my ethnography. This included photo walks in the local area, mental mapping and watching films together followed by discussion groups. The methods I used function as different lenses through which to examine young people's experiences of the city. All produce incomplete pictures, little glimpses even, of other people's worlds but when stacked up like a palimpsest something else emerges.

Towards a creative ethnography?



Fig. 0.2. Kirsty's Map

I'd been hoping to do some mental mapping with some of the young people. One day Jo, Kirsty and Deandre announce that they are bored. I see my opportunity and ask if they'd be interested in drawing maps of 'their London'. Jo and Kirsty really take to the activity whereas Deandre doesn't. He draws New Horizon, a church, a bus and then stops and scribbles it out, saying he's no good at this sort of thing. Kirsty starts her first map with Old Compton Street and then throws it in the bin, dissatisfied with her work. She requests a ruler and starts another, starting by putting her hostel in the middle. Days later I notice that Kirsty is behaving a bit mysteriously. After a few hours, her and Janet (a worker) take me into the counselling room. Kirsty tells me she has something for me. On the floor is a big piece of paper covered in photos. 'It's my map. For you to take to university.' Kirsty has made a third version by looking for images of places on her map on the internet, printing them out and sticking them together. Later Kirsty talks me through it:

E- Where would you start if you were going to talk me round the map?

K- Right in the centre.

E- So, describe what's in the centre.

K- There's a picture of a gay flag and a picture of me.

E- And what does that signify?

K- That I am proud of who I am, I am proud of my sexuality. I don't shy away from it.

E- So then, where would you go out from there. Talk me round the map.

K- Well most of its Soho cos that's the first place I go. I adore Soho. It's the biggest gay scene, gay friendly, gay central place in London. So, yeah. And that picture off the net is me at Gay Pride. I just don't have the background because I wanted to put my face on top of the flag.

E- I like how you've put your self right in the middle of it all.

K- Well it's my map, I chose ... this is my London.

E- And then, so it goes Soho...

K- [pointing at map] That's Soho, that's Soho square, that's Soho, and that's Soho, yeah.

E- And then where else have we got on the map?

K- Finsbury Park, which is where my best friend lives. Victoria, where I live, my favourite shop, which is Primark, HMV represents how much I love music and New Horizons where I come to ... Damn, I forgot to put a bus on it!

Jo, a reluctant interviewee, enjoyed the map exercise and was quite happy to talk about her work. Kirsty took the exercise into her own hands, going much further than I had planned. However, it is also important to include Deandre's mapping experience. Perhaps as a new arrival he felt this exercise exposed his lack of place in the city, or perhaps he just wasn't that interested. Conversely, for Kirsty, who is from the North of England, the mapping provides a platform for her to express her groundedness in 'her London' and strong attachments to London's gay scene. Working with Kirsty, I learned how powerful mapping could be, but I also took a lead from Deandre. When I did another mapping exercise (see Chapter 5), I provided an option for young people to draw onto a pre-existing map so that they

wouldn't feel the pressure of the blank paper. Reflecting on the moments when methods fail in order to do better should be part of reflexive practice.

So, while being committed to a multi-method approach, I have also had to be flexible. At times I have carried out workshops that I planned in advance: watching documentaries followed by discussion, photo walks of the local area, and a larger mapping project. However, some of the most fruitful moments – such as the mapping with Kirsty and Jo – were quite spontaneous. When working with transient groups of people who often don't plan very far in advance, the researcher has to think on her feet and be creative in her ethnographic practice.

Rather than try and amass quantities of interview data, I changed my focus to using the interviews as case studies, where themes arising from the ethnography were explored. During my time at New Horizon, I interviewed 17 young people individually, and 3 staff members. I conducted a mapping exercise with 13 young people – although, in the following week, more added their contributions to the communal map of 'Our London' (see Chapter 5). Nine young people made their own individual maps and, as outlined above, one of those, Kirsty, made three maps. I conducted a discussion group with six Eritrean women and led a series of three Women's Group sessions with five young women, using photography and collage. Over fifty young people took part in the Peer Education Project and the making of the film 'In the Pod'. I also recorded two of our Peer Education workshops.

Conclusion

'To listen to someone is put oneself in his place while he [sic] is speaking. To put oneself in the place of someone whose soul is corroded by affliction, or in near danger of it is to annihilate oneself ... Therefore the afflicted are not listened to. They are like someone whose tongue is cut out and who occasionally forgets the fact. When they move their lips no ear perceives any sound. And they themselves soon sink into the impotence of language, because of the certainty of not being heard.'
(Weil:2005:91)

I have outlined above how the naïve hope of letting people ‘speak for themselves’ fails to confront how demanding accounts of certain groups of people has been tied to domination and techniques of surveillance. My own research setting has brought this issue into sharp focus as the various young people in the centre are subject to different kinds of surveillance from agencies such as the immigration service, the hostel system, the police and social services. According to Weil, the afflicted cannot speak because they are not listened to. They are not listened to because it is too dangerous for the listener. They are moving their lips in speech but no one is listening to them. Les Back argues: ‘The art of listening to the world, where we take the people we listen to as seriously as we take ourselves, is perhaps the most important quality that sociology can offer today’(2007:163). Perhaps then, one of the real values of ethnography is that it enables the researcher to just listen, rather than demand accounts.

I am not arguing here against using interviews as a research method or against recording in the field. But I am arguing for a more nuanced examination of what it means to ask people to give accounts of themselves. When we do ask for accounts, we need to be aware of the tradition we are working in, to be open to other ways of working and reflexive enough to amend and shape our practice as necessary. There is a tendency to think of the interview as the defining moment in a research project, as revealed by my own anxiety about producing data via taping. In conceptualising my interviews as the ‘real deal’, the crux of the research project, I had been devaluing the accounts I had been listening to for months. My early interviews revealed more about the interview as an encounter than the lived lives of my interviewees. With regard to the recorder, in my research setting the associations it carries made it burdensome rather than a useful tool in some of the interview situations, although in others it wasn’t such an issue. It isn’t that other forms of technology (in this case the camera) are inherently better, technology is only useful in social research in that it might offer alternative ways of telling for the researched.

One response to this whole conundrum of representing the lives and voices of marginalised groups would be to turn the gaze (or perhaps more pertinently, the

ear) elsewhere. But to do so is to shirk the task of providing alternative understandings to the ones bandied about in popular representations. Skeggs argues:

‘We can ask, if the subaltern speaks, how is it that we can hear her? Can the subaltern authorise herself if she cannot speak or be heard only through the self/words of others? Spivak (2000) argues no. But unless researchers like Bell make subaltern stories available how would we know about the subaltern at all? If subaltern groups have no access to the mechanisms for telling and distribution of their knowledge, how do others even know that they exist? It is surely a matter of how we do the research rather than abdicating completely.’ (2002:362)

The paradox of philanthropic surveillance cannot be easily dispensed with. While the researcher must strive to present people in all their complexity²⁸ there is always the possibility that accounts of the poor could be used in ways unforeseen. It is important that researchers preserve people’s complexities and resist the temptation to paint heroic one dimensional portraits of research subjects. The researcher can make their own position and interpretation clear and embed accounts of people’s lives in the context of wider institutional frameworks. But there is no way of making work completely immune from misreading.

It isn’t that using one prescribed set of methods can or should cure all anxieties about power relations and the research project. Ethical research is about more than a one off agreement or getting an ethics form signed off. It is about constant negotiation, the practice of reflexivity and the ways in which methods are implemented. Perhaps the creation of a perfectly ethically watertight project should

²⁸ Les Back and Philippe Bourgois argue for preserving the complexity of research participants when working with marginalised groups of people. Back argues: ‘We have to allow the people about whom we write to be complex, frail, ethically ambiguous, contradictory and damaged. The tendency to write about society as if it were populated by Manichean camps of either good or bad people, angels or devils, is a strong temptation. When one is writing about stigmatised and excluded social groups, this temptation is particularly keen The danger here in creating heroic portrayals is that we make the very people whose humanity one may want to defend less than human. We do not allow them to be as complicated as we are.’ (2007:157). Bourgois argues: ‘[C]ounteracting moralistic biases and middle class hostility toward the poor should not come at the cost of sanitising the suffering and destruction on inner city streets.’ (1996:11)

not be the goal. To set this up as a possibility is to replace the 'old mythology' of detached 'hygienic' research, opposed by Oakley, with a new mythology of ethically hygienic research. This would close down discussions of the productive complexities and necessary messiness of doing research.

Chapter 3

Almost Home? Introducing New Horizon Youth Centre

Introduction

‘If you are 16-21 years old and find yourself homeless, sleeping on a mate’s sofa, living in a car, sleeping rough, or on a bus, living in overcrowded conditions, don’t know where to go, smoke too much weed, you don’t feel right, living in a squat, can’t stop drinking, kicked out by your parents, can’t get a job, feel depressed, or have no hope. Then New Horizon Youth Centre can help you.’²⁹

‘Here, it’s like another world where everything’s peaceful.’

Ash (Men’s Group Discussion)

‘We’ve put a lot of work into feeling that when you come in, it’s not a sterile environment, it’s an environment that is welcoming, ok there might be lots of different things happening but we try to respect the individual ... There’s an informal atmosphere but underlying that, there’s a lot of work going on. And I think it’s something we’ve worked hard to achieve, that balance of recognising the individual, supporting them, giving them food and tea and coffee, those are always great introductions aren’t they? You know “Have some food, sit down. I mean we’ll go through this form but later on you can do x, and z.” Getting them to see that there’s a point of what’s happening and that we will support them and they can feel safe here. I think that’s the most important thing as well. They need to feel safe and those street wise young people we see who are dead hard, initially they’re like you know [laughs] giving us attitude but they find after a few days that it’s not necessary in the centre to have the attitude.’ Shelagh (Director)

²⁹ From New Horizon leaflet (2009).

New Horizon is a day centre for young homeless people (hostel residents, street homeless, sofa surfers). It provides a drop-in, laundry facilities, a free meal, and offers advice on housing, health, education, training and employment. There are four distinct staff teams in the youth centre with different responsibilities: the admin team, the AROW (Advice, Resettlement, Outreach and Women's Open Space) team, the youth work team and the weekend team. The AROW team run the Women's Open Space project for sex workers, which takes place outside of the youth centre hours, do outreach around the train termini/parks/other places in Camden and Islington where homeless people and sex workers are likely to be, and run the Duty Advice. The youth work team run the drop in service (10.30am-4pm), interact with the young people, run workshops, education and training. The weekend team run the drop-in service at the weekend. Because of its funding (it is funded partially by statutory agencies but also has to raise income) and the work that it does, New Horizon is part of a wider network of organisations that work with, and on, young homeless people. New Horizon refers young people to a range of hostels across London. Other services are provided by a nurse, a counsellor, a Connexions worker, an Alcohol Recovery Programme worker and a family mediation worker (Alone in London).

As outlined in the previous chapter, the predominant setting of this research has been the New Horizon drop-in. The drop-in is not merely a backdrop but a place that has structured my interactions with the young people and my vantage point on young people's experiences of the city. This chapter introduces the setting of the fieldwork, the New Horizon drop-in.

When I left the centre I missed it. I hadn't realised that studying the sense of belonging and imagined cities of others, from the location of the centre, would make such an impact on my own. I left with a strong sense of being part of the centre's community. I think this is worth mentioning because, for many people, New Horizon is a kind of home space – an almost home. Although, of course, as someone who is there to do research and volunteer rather than use services, I am positioned very differently to a young homeless person in my relationship to the centre. Shelagh explains in the above quote that 'a lot of work' goes into creating this

environment. Introducing the fieldwork setting and returning to the theme of the production of space introduced in Chapter 1, this chapter examines how New Horizon is produced by rules, relationships, practices and tensions. I will argue that New Horizon needs to be understood in the context of how it is used by young people and also in the context of how it is embedded in a set of relationships, such as funding requirements. I will also consider the relationship between ‘home space’ and the discourse of ‘moving on’ which underscores much of the work done in the centre (‘moving on’ is applied here to both a notion of time and of place).

Now let’s go to the drop-in.



Fig. 0.3. The drop-in, before opening

If you came into New Horizon on a Monday morning at opening time, you would see people from many ethnic backgrounds between the ages of 16-22 queuing to sign in at reception, helping themselves to tea and coffee, waiting for advice appointments. Virgin radio would be providing an inoffensive background noise.³⁰

³⁰ Songs such as Duffy’s ‘Mercy’, Amy Winehouse’s ‘Valerie’ and Scouting for Girls ‘She’s so lovely’,

The names of the staff and volunteers working that day would be written on the whiteboard displayed on the centre wall, as would any activities that were scheduled to take place. About five members of staff/volunteers would be dotted around the room. The mornings are usually a busy time and you would hear voices with accents hinting at the biographies-in-progress of the young people: Irish, Yorkshire, South London Cockney, Scottish peppered with London street slang. You might also hear other languages, most likely Tigrinya, Amharic (Eritrean and Ethiopian languages) or Somali. Very quickly, the buzz of voices would be punctuated by the rattle of table football and the rhythm of the table tennis ball. Young people would be sitting down around the large table in the middle of the room, or on the sofas, some alone, some in groups of two or three. They might be flicking through newspapers or discussing what they did last night or the most recent developments in the misadventures of whichever troubled celebrity is gracing the cover of *the Sun*. Some people would have come to the centre early to get on the housing list³¹ – although the centre opens at 10.30 am, those who need housing advice must be there for 10.15 am when one of the advice team goes outside to take the names of those who need appointments – once inside those people will wait to hear their name called. If the list of 12 places is full then there will be people who are annoyed to have missed out.

There might be new people in for the first time. They will be completing an Initial Contact Sheet with a member of the youth work team. This is a short form that is aimed at getting a picture of the young person's situation and their needs. The reverse of the form outlines the centre's working agreement and rules – including no drug use or preparation in or around the centre, no racist, homophobic or sexist language and, most contentiously, no use of mobile phones. The person must agree to the rules in order to be allowed to use the centre. The contents of this form are inputted onto a database by whoever is working on reception that day.

The main space in New Horizon is the drop-in area, a large room with a long table in the middle. The walls are multi-coloured, painted purple, green and lemon, and boards painted with graffiti are used to divide the main space as

among others, take me straight back to the drop-in.

³¹ Every day the advice team can see up to 12 people for housing advice.

necessary, there are two areas of sofa that are covered in red throws. On one side of the main table is a table tennis table. Behind the table tennis table is an area of sofas, which, before the smoking ban came in, was the smoking area. Now, throughout the day young people come in and out of the centre to go and smoke. The ring of the outside doorbell is a constant throughout the day. There is another area of sofas by the entrance next to the tea and coffee making facilities. People often sit there when waiting for appointments in the advice room. Other spaces on the ground floor include the kitchen which has a hatch that opens onto the main drop-in area, the advice room, the counselling room, a laundry, a computer room, the project room where workshops take place and which contains a store cupboard where young people can store their belongings, two shower cubicles and the nurse's room. The staff offices are at either end of the building in 'the towers'. These office areas are inaccessible to the young people.

After the initial flurry of activity on opening, the centre can stay bustling and busy or change into something more relaxed, depending on the combination of young people present and activities taking place. During my one year at the organisation there were few occasions where the atmosphere was volatile, it is usually a friendly, noisy place. Lunchtime is important, everyday at 1pm staff and clients sit around the table together to eat their lunch, a free meal provided by New Horizon. The meals are hearty and carbohydrate heavy – often served with potatoes and rice. This, perhaps unsurprisingly, is when the centre is at its busiest. Although there are usually between 40 and 50 young people through the doors each day, there are rarely more than 30 people in at the same time, apart from at lunchtime.

After lunch, the centre quietens down. Sometimes there will be a workshop, these include women's group, men's group, football, art, sessions at the gym and IT and usually run from 2pm-4pm. One-to-one sessions on training and employment also take place in the afternoon. The main table in the drop-in is often used during these workshops but at other times for cards or board games. At 4 o'clock the young people have to leave the centre and there is usually another burst of activity at quarter to four as washing is picked up from the laundry and belongings stored in the project room cupboard. The workers then clear up and hold a debrief meeting

where the days events are discussed.

Just as the day has a rhythm, so has the week. Monday is often busy as there is no housing advice at the weekend. The weekend service is run in a slightly different way by a different team of staff members. It is more structured, for example running compulsory sessions on literacy and numeracy. During my year of fieldwork I have attended the centre between one and five days a week. Over this time I adjusted my fieldwork to adapt to the rhythm of the centre. Things, friendships, dramas, seem to unfold over a matter of days. Being in the centre a few days in a row seemed to be more appropriate than once a week (see Chapter 7 about experiences of time and homelessness).

There is also a yearly cycle in New Horizon. Every month has a theme (Black History Month, Anti-Violence Month, LGBT Month, Housing Month etc...). During these months related activities take place. Other seasonal changes affect both the number of people and the atmosphere in the centre. For example, during a short-lived summer heatwave there was an unfamiliar aggressive charge in the air. There was a lull in September as people started new college courses. These changes can't always be explained, sometimes the centre is exceptionally quiet/busy for no perceptible reason.

It might be expected that a centre working with young homeless people might be a bleak place. There are difficult and emotionally highly charged conversations taking place – people come through the doors with all kinds of issues. Those arriving in the centre for the first time can be apprehensive, upset, scared, embarrassed, angry. But humour, though not always easy to convey, is also key to interactions in the centre. There were many things that surprised me about New Horizon, one of which was how much I laughed while I was there. This isn't to paint a patronising image of the 'happy poor' or to detract from the very difficult situations that the young people were in, but at this scene setting moment it should be pointed out that talk between the young people is often fast paced and funny. Added to the mix is that many of the long-term users have built up trusting relationships with staff over time, which forms the base for banter. Such humour is important to the creation of a homely space.

Although the atmosphere of the centre is very informal, a set of rules and boundaries underpin what is and isn't allowed and structure the space. Johnsen et al argue: 'the realities of the service spaces themselves, and complexities of the homeless lives engaged with, mean that day centres are under-girded by complex and fragile forms of social control and inter-personal relations' (2005:809). In New Horizon this is most noticeable in the relationship of staff/client. The importance of maintaining boundaries was heavily emphasised in the volunteer training programme. My early notes are very concerned with the issue of boundaries and correct protocol to an extent that now seems ridiculous (the diagram of how to be in the laundry seems a little extreme):

Steve showed me the laundry. It is a small room and when you are in there you are out of the sight of anyone else. Therefore, Steve told me (I've also been told this in my induction and it was mentioned in the training) to make sure I am always in the doorway while the client is at the washing machine (see diagram in notebook). You're not meant to do the laundry for the young people, although Steve tells me he sometimes transfers washing into the driers just to speed things up. The idea is that you stand there while the person does their own laundry.

I think this example illustrates three points. Firstly, how over time rules and ways of doing things become embodied as part of 'becoming' a professional role, in my case a youth worker – after a few months of being in the centre these kinds of mundane tasks become second nature. Secondly, the emphasis on facilitation rather than doing things for people ('You're not meant to do the laundry for the young people'). Thirdly and most significantly, this preoccupation of mine with getting the rules right reflects the emphasis put on the importance of appropriate of 'boundaries' between staff/volunteers and clients during the volunteer training program. These boundaries are maintained in terms of physical division of space

There are certain areas in the building which only staff have access to (offices, staff room), and areas such as the laundry, where only one client is allowed at any one time accompanied by a member of staff/volunteer, or the kitchen, where clients must always be accompanied by a member of staff. But most significantly,

boundaries are key in structuring the relationship between staff and clients.

The following is taken from a handout entitled 'A Few Tips on Working With Young People' that was distributed during the training:

'Boundaries: do not lend/give money/cigarettes to YP nor accept gifts from YP. Do not give out your address or too many personal details. Do not meet/socialise with clients/ex-clients outside the centre. If you meet a YP by chance, keep it brief and inform a manager on you return to the centre. Appropriate relationships with YP: maintain professional boundaries. Befriend NOT friend.'

'Befriend not friend' means that although it is expected that a worker will talk to the clients about their lives (the client's) they are not supposed to divulge too much information about themselves. The process of 'befriending' is one sided, rather than reciprocal friendship. While staff joke around, dress casually and in some cases have an almost familial relationship with clients, the relationship of worker/young person is defined by their professional relationship. However, it must be emphasised that staff members can build close relationships with the young people, becoming key figures of support. Sometimes it is New Horizon workers who support the young people at critical moments in their lives, for example, on a few occasions a youth worker has accompanied a client to hospital while they give birth.

The difference between what is deemed appropriate in the centre and outside, between the young people and staff, is a big divider. In the centre it is obvious that some staff and service users have longstanding close relationships, some staff hug young people that they have known for a long time and treat them with affection. The strictest policing of boundaries relates to staff contact with clients outside the centre, this is not allowed outside the context of worker/client official business. This doesn't mean there is absolutely no contact, a worker might accompany a young person to court, or see them in their own home for a resettlement visit. However just popping round to someone's hostel to see them or going for a cup of tea outside the centre would be not allowed. Although boundaries

structure the space there is some leeway. In the volunteer training we were told that every worker has their own style, some would never hug a client whereas some would. Some use humour more than others.

Order is also maintained through the enforcement of rules that are prominently displayed near the entrance. The rule that causes the most consternation is the use of mobile phones. It is forbidden to even take a phone out in the centre. Therefore staff are constantly asking young people to put their phones away. While the centre operates a non-judgemental policy towards drug use in terms of advice, any preparation of drugs or drug use on the premises or in the vicinity of the centre is strictly forbidden. As mentioned above, the young people also sign up to an equal opportunities policy. This means that homophobic, racist or sexist language is not allowed. These issues are dealt with in a variety of ways. Young people saying something offensive but jokingly might just be reprimanded on the floor or taken to 'the quiet room' (a small room just off the floor) with two workers and talked to. Aggression isn't tolerated, if someone is being rude or aggressive more often than not they will be asked to leave for the day. There is a system of bans for various behaviours – using a mobile phone can be punished by a day bar, whereas behaviour relating to drugs or violence have longer exclusion periods and in very serious cases life time bans are used.

The centre is a relaxed place but it is structured by a set of protocols and boundaries. This is not a space where anything goes and as I shall go on to explore there are other expectations about those who use the space. Such regulation might seem to be at odds with a 'home space' but perhaps this isn't a contradiction but rather necessary for the creation of a safe shared space.

The volunteer training programme emphasised the potential dangers of working with this particular group of people. We were told not to leave objects lying around that could be used as weapons. This emphasis on the most extreme scenarios meant that for my first few days I was constantly expecting something to erupt. Staff members tend to use normal mugs for coffee and tea, rather than the polystyrene cups provided. I would see these mugs lying around as deadly weapons and surreptitiously move empty ones to the kitchen. After a few weeks this fear lessened.

I never saw a fight occur inside the centre. However, on the odd occasion when something did flare up, the staff were adept at defusing situations and ejecting people from the building if necessary. These moments make visible how managed the space is. Within this set-up though, there is still room for improvisation.

A Homely Space or a Means to an End? – The Majority and the Hardcore

‘London has a transient population, with movement into, out of and around the Capital, as well as more settled communities with specific needs. We provide a flexible response to these movements, supporting vulnerable people from and within their local community and those coming into that community and the problems they face.’³²

‘...But this is a refreshing stop
With munchies and the odd bit of pop
The staff try to bring a smile to our weary faces
And seem to understand that we’ve been through our paces
They know when we come
It’s to rest and get a home
Cause they know we’re fed up with our room
At least they feed and let us shower
So we’re the cleanest homeless this era
After a hard day’s night it’s good to come to this grandest of
environments
Just a shame there ain’t a pillow with mints.’

From ‘NHYC’ by David S.³³

³² From NHYC promotional material

³³ Printed in ‘News Horizon’, the centre’s newsletter.

On my first day as a volunteer, I was surprised by the sheer diversity of the people in the centre. There is great variation among the young people in the centre in terms of ethnicity, sexuality, nationality and in their housing situation – some live in hostels, others sleep rough or sofa surf (many moving between all three), some have their own flats but continue to use the service.

In my previous research job, conducting interviews in hostels, I had met and interviewed older and more entrenched homeless people, including some of the W.O.S³⁴ clients from New Horizon. Whereas the hostel populations I was in contact with were predominantly white, New Horizon's statistics (from 2007-2008³⁵) break the ethnic composition of their client group into 3% Asian, 23% White British/Irish/European, 8% Mixed and 56% Black/Black British. These categories could be further broken down, for example the 56% Black/Black British is comprised of Somalis, British Afro-Caribbean, Eritrean and more. 6% of people who attended in this time period were asylum seekers and 14% were as refugees. None of these statistics capture the various scales of displacement that constitute this place. This is explored in detail in Chapter 4, for now it will suffice to point out that the patterns of movement that effect and constitute London, both at local, national and international levels can be seen here in this mix of people. Such trajectories emerge in conversations: a client and a volunteer worker have a lively conversation over lunch about which is the best parish in Jamaica; two young women chat about the comparative miseries of London and provincial towns; an ex-boy soldier from Sierra Leone plays Scrabble with a refugee from the Congo. Loss and violence are often powerful undercurrents in these stories and often go unspoken in the drop-in.

In their exploration of a range of day centres, Johnsen et al (2005:810) illustrate differences among clients by dividing them into heroin users, alcoholics and those without dependencies, pointing towards the tensions that emerge between groups. This kind of categorisation is not a satisfactory framework for interpreting difference in New Horizon. While there is a mixture of those who use drugs and

³⁴ Women's Open Space is a twice weekly drop-in session and outreach service operated in the Kings Cross area by New Horizon for female sex workers.

³⁵ Many thanks to the New Horizon admin team for providing me with the presentation they gave at the 2008 annual review. The sample is the 1042 people who attended the centre from between September 2007-August 2008.

alcohol in various ways and those who don't, this is not an obvious source of division in the centre. There is a difference, then, between New Horizon and day centres catering primarily for the older street populations surveyed by Johnsen et al. This does not mean, however, that this is not a contested space or that there are no tensions.

Often when a person comes to the centre for the first time it is to seek housing advice. After someone from the youth work team has done an Initial Contact sheet (see pg. 72), the advice team will do a series of two more detailed assessments. The primary aim of these assessments is to find out what the young person needs and to start the processes of referral to external agencies (such as hostels) and internal services (such as the nurse). However, Dean the AROW manager, when interviewed suggested that another function of these assessments is to give the young person a 'reality check', that is, to let them know the options and referrals that can be made from New Horizon and to try and stop clients from going into the homeless system if there is any alternative. The housing team can refer people to various hostels depending on their needs (high support, low support) but most people in emergency need are referred first to one of the short stay hostels in Soho. These are hostels specifically for young people (catering for those aged 16-21 and 16-25 respectively). Once emergency accommodation has been found, the advice team will do referrals to long-term hostels. If a client fits the criteria for being priority need, (if they are under 18, pregnant, care leavers under 21, a person with children, vulnerable because of violence, mental illness or physical disability, become homeless through flood or fire, or are vulnerable having served a custodial sentence, or vulnerable as a result of serving in the armed forces, summarised from the 1996 Housing Act) they will be referred to the Homeless Persons Unit (HPU) of their borough of origin who are obliged to provide accommodation. It should be noted this process is not always that straightforward, councils sometimes try to wriggle out of this obligation.

From the 2007-08 statistics, the majority of the client group could give a London borough of origin in their initial interview. Camden was given as their borough of origin by 16% of clients, 10% Islington, 9% Westminster, 7% Hackney,

only 7% didn't have links in a London borough. This seems surprising as there are many people from outside London using the service. But it is a confusing statistic as someone from outside of London originally but who is claiming benefits in Camden could give Camden as their borough of origin.

In the client group there is a higher level of young people who have been in the criminal justice system than in the general population. In their initial contact interviews, 19% said they had a criminal record. As this information was taken as soon as the young people entered the centre for the first time, the actual figure is likely to be higher. Although a direct comparison can't be made, as the age group of New Horizon is 16-22, the 2007 figures³⁶ for England and Wales show that 45,000 people aged between 18-20 were found guilty of an indictable offence, this is 2% of 18-20 year old population. Also probably underestimated in the statistics based on the initial contact are the levels of usage by gay, lesbian and bisexual people: 2% gay, 2% bisexual and 1% lesbian. As some LGBT young people become homeless because of conflict (sometimes violent) with their family and friends around their sexuality, it is not surprising that this isn't something that can always be discussed openly in a first interview with a stranger. These issues often come up when individuals go through the more private and detailed interview in the advice room.

This, then, is a highly diverse population. Other factors not captured in the statistics above are levels of alcohol and drug dependencies, mental health issues, the varying education levels – from people with very little in the way of literacy or numeracy to university students. So, how does it work as a space and how is it used?

The majority of the young people who come through the doors of New Horizon will visit between one and five times (67%). This statistic prompted gasps of surprise when presented at the 2008 annual organisational review. It is important to note this, as working in the drop-in, seeing many of the same faces day after day, gives a different impression. However, there are others who have used the service for years or who may come every day for months at a time. Dean (AROW manager) distinguished between the 'hardcore' users and the 'majority': 'I would say the majority of our young people just need a couple of meetings to give them all the

³⁶ From [www.poverty.org.uk//33/index.shtml]

information, all the choices, to give them a reality check, that's the majority of our work.' For these people (the majority) the centre has a crucial short-term role as an organisation that can refer to hostels and other agencies. They may not require long-term support or be keen to join in the activities that the centre provides. There is also, then, a division of labour in the centre which means that the advice team see more of those who are just passing through (the majority) whereas the youth work team spend much of their time working with those who use the centre more intensively, or on a long-term basis.

The 'hardcore' are described as those who don't fit into the mainstream: 'because they've had bullying issues, or abuse issues, they don't want to access [the] mainstream because they feel like they've been left out in the past,' according to Dean. These are the 4% of people who use the centre over 51 times a year and who Shelagh, the director refers to when she states: 'The people New Horizon is really here for are the young people who are quite vulnerable and need ongoing support.'

It is important to emphasise that although I have talked to and worked with many young people who use the centre in various ways, my interviews have been with those who have either been using the centre a long time or have used it intensively for a period during my fieldwork. Thus, the minority who attend day after day receive more attention in this thesis than those who might just have had a couple of meetings with the advice team.

Janet, the EET (Education, Employment and Training) worker, also distinguishes between a hardcore and the majority, explaining:

'I think the majority of young people have potential to go on and be part of society and possibly [earn] good money ... I'd say the ratio is about 70% have potential to move on, become good citizens and get a job or a career. 30% ... they're vulnerable and they're not focussed and it's so entrenched ... I think you can rehouse a young person but you can't change their mind ... Their mind and their history³⁷ will make them vulnerable adults as well.'

³⁷ In Chapter 8, I will consider how young people use their pasts to make sense of their present and future.

Sean, a long-term user of the service, explained the important role that the centre was currently playing in his life:

‘I come here just to keep me busy really. I was barred from here last week and I didn’t leave the hostel, I just waste away in the hostel. There’s else nothing for me to do, most of my mates are in jail and I know if I go and see a few other mates, I’m just going to get in trouble. I do rely on New Horizon, even though I slag it off all the time, I do rely on it a lot. I’ve been coming here for nearly four years. So that’s my day, I come to New Horizons, I go home get me dinner and chill out. It’s a sad old life but someone’s got to live it, in’t they?!’

This way of using the centre as a home space is different to someone who is street homeless who needs the centre for food, showering and laundry (the kind of functions described by David S. in his poem above) and also different to those who just need a referral from the advice team. It is worth pointing out that Sean hasn’t used the centre constantly for four years. When we did this interview, he had just come out of prison and was attending every day for at least a month. His attendance got more sporadic again until he stopped coming to the centre altogether for a few weeks and then turned up again. When I asked what he had been doing during this time he said he had been ‘rotting away’ in his hostel. The use of the centre by young people is not always constant but sometimes, as in Sean’s case, cyclical.

Alliances and friendship groups are often formed in the centre and in the network of services, people’s flats and hostel rooms of which it is a part. In the context of hostel life intense bonds can form quickly (the relationship between friendship and hostel life will be explored further in Chapter 7) but don’t always last. These groups can be seen in the way people arrange themselves in the different areas of the drop-in, in twos, threes and large groups. Zula, who I labelled on my first day in the centre ‘Queen Bee’ has been using the centre for three years, she explained:

‘The way I look at it, it becomes like a little family when you’ve been coming here a certain amount of time, everyone gets to know you and you don’t really feel like ... I remember one day a girl came in and she said she didn’t feel like talking to us because we looked rude and we said “It may come across like that but we met through this one service and after a while we see each other as a little family because we’ve got nobody else to turn to.”’

The ‘little family’ Zula describes is a core group who use the service intensively, some have known each other for a long time, but the group evolves. This is a group that interacts a lot with the staff and occupies a central place in the centre.

To summarise, in the centre at any one time there can be a mixture of people who have known each other for years (‘a little family’ that is constantly evolving), new arrivals, those just passing through and everything in between. Thus the centre as a homely space co-exists with the centre that serves as a means to an end. New Horizon as a space has multiple meanings and multiple functions for those who use it.

From Place of Refuge to Positive Futures?

Today was the first Monday that I have been in where the centre closes for LOCN³⁸. This means that between 12-4pm people without housing appointments can only come in if they are going to take part in the training session. An exception was made for John who has a terrible cold and is staying at the cold weather shelter where people are kicked out at 8 am. John lays on a sofa in his sleeping bag snoring away through lunch and the afternoon’s workshop. It transpires later that that morning he had been violently sick in the shelter to the extent where they had taken him to hospital. We don’t know if this is the dreaded gastric bug that is doing the rounds or a result of heroin use. Windows are opened in the centre to allow air to circulate ... Today’s LOCN module was ‘Preparation for Work’. As a few young people had started this at the weekend we worked with them individually to

³⁸ London Open College Network training courses.

finish off their forms. Part of the assessment involves filling in an application form. Janet (worker) was annoyed because many of the people who had completed the exercise had filled in forms for McDonalds. This passes the module, she explained but isn't satisfactory for someone who has work experience and qualifications in catering and wants to be a chef. Jo finds a Duke of Edinburgh team building course she could apply to go on. Janet puts things in motion, making the relevant phone calls. Today, she has managed to secure places on a music recording course for two people. It is obvious that her focus isn't just getting people into the first job that comes along. The young people also have to practise interviewing each other while a third party makes notes. Fahima takes part, she is busy working out a route to becoming a primary school teacher. She has secured a placement as a teaching assistant already and has information about various options. Mohammed is also completing the exercise. He looks quite stoned and a bit bored.

‘As long as we preserve that space in our services for those most vulnerable then we’re responding to what our ethos is and what we were set up to do and that’s quite a difficult one in a sense because as an organisation we’re responding to different funders’ requirements and everybody wants really nice hard outcomes ... There’s lots of softer outcomes that sometimes don’t fit neatly into a recording mechanism.’
Shelagh.

A common refrain from staff is that New Horizon is ‘A Youth Centre not a Youth Club’. This means that the centre isn’t seen by them as just a place where young people can just hang out and play table tennis, instead it is seen and spoken of as a place of action and improvement that enables the users to make changes in their lives. For many of the young people who use the service, moving – as in being in motion – is a condition of their lives (this is explored in Chapter 5). The centre tries to intervene in these lives and in this movement in various ways. For example, the centre can help an individual move into a hostel. This move from the streets to a hostel is a physical one but also can be seen as a movement up the rungs of the housing ladder. This sense of ‘moving on’, or progression, is key to the work of the centre whose slogan is ‘Creating Positive Futures’. The slogan refers to more than

just a person's housing situation, the notion of progress ('positive futures') underpins much of the work that is done, workshops and in-house courses (computer skills, food hygiene) but also in referrals made to colleges, numeracy and literacy courses. There are also activities such as the annual women's sailing trip (the opening scene of Chapter 4) that aim to help create positive futures in a less obvious way, through building team skills and self-esteem.

People cannot attend New Horizon indefinitely. The need to 'move someone on' is intensified by the organisation's age limit. When young people reach 22 they can't access the service any more. Therefore workers have a limited amount of time to work with a client and to get them to a point when they don't need the service. The education and training program is central to this process of 'moving on' and the organisation tries to ensure that if people stay until they reach the age limit (22) there is something else in place, in terms of education, training and employment for them to go on to when they leave. The centre sees itself as a holistic service with training, education and employment being central to its work.

It was explained during the volunteer training sessions that there has been a gradual move from the centre as a place of refuge to something more structured around training. While providing this service is part of the centre's expansion of services for the clients, the way in which the education program is delivered is also shaped by funding requirements. An emphasis on accountability from funders also increases the need to show that New Horizon does enable young people to 'move on'/progress. This creates a situation where New Horizon must not just create positive futures but *measurable* positive futures. The centre aspires to provide a 'holistic' service but sometimes there are tensions in providing both a home-like space and a training programme. The basic provisions that used to be the main function of the centre – eating, sleeping, washing – now have to be catered for alongside other priorities. Janet explains:

'What's changed is how we get our funding, the targets that we have. That's changed the kind of ethos around how the young people are in the centre ... what we require of young people has changed and that's

been a challenge for all of us because the really old-school workers in here that have worked with entrenched rough sleepers – which we used to have much more of, I’m told, before I came – it’s like ‘Well people deserve a place to sleep and where do we fit in to that?’ and what’s changed is, we don’t fit into that anymore and that’s hard on us. Well, I speak for myself, I expect. It’s hard on me as a worker when a young person has got learning difficulties, they’ve been out all night, they can’t do an AQA³⁹ because of the mental health that’s going on ... so if that person’s not going to reach our targets, all that person wants to do is sleep and the way we structure and the way we work doesn’t suffice for that ... I’m not saying it’s wrong or right, that’s how we’ve changed.’

Janet here refers specifically to the issues around providing an education programme. This example highlights the tension between creating a place of refuge and reaching funding targets. At one stage it seemed that the centre would have to close over the weekend, due to lack of funding. New Horizon receives funding from various statutory agencies but it also has to raise a significant percentage of its income every year.

The service was kept open by a grant from the LSE (Learning Skills Education). However with this funding came targets for getting people through an accredited training course – the LOCN programme. More structure was necessary for the education programme to be delivered. The various levels of literacy, English, mental health issues and learning difficulties make this task difficult enough without people wandering in and out. Hence when LOCN was introduced, in order to get people through the programme, access to the centre was restricted to those who would agree to join in. As Senior Worker at the weekend Janet had to juggle her fears about the exclusion of young people with keeping the service open and of a situation of ‘youth work versus funding’: ‘How I justified that to myself was, ‘Well, we wouldn’t have this weekend service without LSE. If they didn’t fund my post then we couldn’t open at the weekend.’

³⁹ Another training qualification.

When I first started at the centre, these LOCN modules ran over the weekend and on Mondays. If young people wanted to remain in the centre, they had to participate. The modules ran on a workshop model where questions were brainstormed on a flip chart, individuals then filled in a sheet answering questions and doing practical exercises. The sheets were then sent off to an external moderator with evidence of the practical exercises. They were quite unpopular both with the staff who were required to run them and with the young people. During the final three months of fieldwork LOCN was replaced with AQA modules, which were more flexible and conducted on a more individual basis. Although the AQAs were less confining and – most crucially – not tied to funding, Janet’s quote above (pg. 87) demonstrates that the expectation that everyone should be involved in some form of training can be a pressure.

Another attempt to turn soft outcomes into something quantifiable for the funders can be seen in the assessments project. Every few months clients have a one to one interview and an outcomes form is filled in about how they are getting on, their next moves etc ... This form asks the worker and the client together to rate the clients health, housing, social skills, education and employment level on a scale of 1-5. There are detailed descriptions of what each level means. At the end the worker asks the client how the centre can help them and an action plan is made. While these interviews are in part about collecting ‘measurable outcomes’ this isn’t the only function. When done well they can serve as a prompt for a much more in depth conversations. But there are two issues here. One, as discussed in the previous chapter, young homeless people are constantly being asked to account for themselves. This kind of assessment interview therefore could just be another such encounter. Two, while the funding objectives rely on a notion of progression, a notion of straightforward progress does not capture the lived cyclical reality of the client group.

On the first point, as we shall explore in further chapters, ideas of working on futures and ‘moving on’, were described by the young people as better received in the context of the youth centre than the hostel (Chapter 7 explores young people’s experiences of encounters with keyworkers in hostels). Non-residential space has

advantages as a location for this kind of work as it is perceived as less of an intrusion into living space.

Although a more satisfactory system for staff and young people is now in place, the issues with LOCN serve as an example of how funding impacts on homeless services and shapes and constrains their work. It also highlights how New Horizon is embedded in a set of relationships with other organisations and funding bodies. As I have set out at the beginning of this chapter, New Horizon works in partnership with other organisations, such as hostels. In this thesis these interweaving relationships of organisations will be referred to as the homeless network. However, this network is also tied to other structures through funding and through government policy. The embedding of organisations in larger institutional frameworks shapes and restricts the services offered. For example, organisations such as New Horizon are not sanctioned to give advice on benefits to clients, in Chapter 8 I will see how this impacts on Janet's work. In Chapter 7 we will consider the impact of the interlocking relationships between immigration status, hostels and the benefit system.

The emphasis on progression, its link to funding, and ensuing dilemmas over how targets can be met, raises questions about what homeless day centres are for. Three separate but inter-related issues arise from this emphasis on 'moving on'. Firstly, the aim of 'Creating Positive Futures' is difficult to achieve when working with a client group whose lives are often more cyclical. Secondly, the creation of 'Positive Futures' needs to be demonstrated in order to attract funding. This illustrates the relationship between providing hard outcomes and funding. Thirdly, the emphasis on 'moving on' and working on yourself can be seen as in line with the government's emphasis on the vulnerabilities of individuals and the need to work with those who are 'socially excluded'. As outlined in Chapter 1, the language of social exclusion moves away from structural explanations of homelessness towards a concern with the responsibility of the individual. Thus neglecting the issue of the shortage of affordable housing. Johnsen et al argue "The extent to which such spaces may be positioned in direct opposition to a more general revanchist turn in urban policy and politics is, of course, a matter for debate. ... day centres too might

also be read as providing simply another form of containment' (2005: 27).

There is, however, variation in the ways that day centres function. Waters (1992) offers three models of kinds of day centres. The first is the *Containment* model, with an emphasis on a place where homeless people can 'just be', the second model is one of *Rehabilitation and Change* (entrance is conditional on accepting the need to rehabilitate) and the third is an approach of *Empowerment* where advice and training is provided but where clients can choose to engage with this or not. These models are not mutually exclusive and Waters finds some centres moving between them.

New Horizon broadly fits within the *Empowerment* model. An emphasis on 'enabling' came through in the volunteer training and the day-to-day running of the service. The sense of New Horizon as a place where you can 'get things done' as well as being a place that meets basic needs (free lunch, washing facilities), a place to socialise or to just 'pass the time' is common among the young people I interviewed. Sean explains:

'If I need to get stuff done I can get it done here but most of my mates that I know now, I've met through New Horizon and so it's social. But I've achieved a lot through here whether or not I've finished all the courses they've got me on and stuff! New Horizon is a good place to be, if you're willing and determined you can come in New Horizons and you can be something in life, they can get you there. A lot of the time I just come in and chill about and don't actually do anything practical, but that's cos I'm lazy.'

Sean acknowledges the centre's role as a place where you could work on a possible future ('if you're willing and determined you can come to New Horizon and you can be something in life') while acknowledging his past of not finishing courses and his present of 'chilling about'.

However, moments of exclusion of those who won't engage, around the LOCN programme described above, for example, fit more with the *Rehabilitation and Change* model. In the instance of LOCN, a decision was made about excluding those

who would not participate, for reasons tied to funding. This demonstrates how what a day centre does is influenced not only by ethos and rules but also by practical considerations which can involve having to walk a fine line between staying open and providing the kind of service that is true to the centre's ethos.

One way of looking at New Horizon's work on 'Creating Positive Futures' could be as encouraging a kind of 'cruel optimism'. For Lauren Berlant, 'cruel optimism' is about the relationship between a person and an object of desire. The object of desire is a 'cluster of promises' (2007:33) and optimism becomes 'cruel' when the realisation of the attachment is either impossible, fantasy or when the object is a toxic one. However, the work on futures that takes place in New Horizon is not driven by optimism. Janet, for example, who works with the young people on education and training doesn't expect 'positive futures' for everybody, although she works tirelessly towards precisely that. She explains that she can't spot who will move on and who will stay in the homeless system. Some go around in circles, starting courses and jobs and ending up back at the centre before eventually moving on:

'[W]e've had young people with mental health [issues] who've been here three or even four years, who've come when they were 16 and they go round so much and eventually they have moved on and that is because of persistence, you know there are some out of that 30% [the most vulnerable, see pg. 82] who with our persistence and everything that we offer they do eventually not come back and a bit of me goes [sad voice] "Oh they've gone!" but thank God they've gone! [laughs]'

The "Oh they've gone" but Thank God they've gone!' is an expression of relief (albeit tempered by an acknowledgment of the attachments that can be formed). If a person has moved on then the centre has done its job. Janet's work involves hope, rather than optimism, and a tricky leap of working within the young people's notion of time (very much in the present) while trying to work towards 'creating positive futures'. Janet explains that she deals with this contradiction of

working on futures in a precarious situation by making every day a fresh start:

‘So when young people keep bouncing back a year later and you’ve got a file that thick [indicates with hands], really thick, of all the work you’ve done with them and advice would have the same folders, that thick. And they’ve been in college but, life history ... and they’re back doing what they’ve always done. For me, I’ve had to accept that and the way I work is, it’s a fresh start, everyday is a fresh start for me, if I don’t work like that then they’re not going to move on and I’m not going to move on with them and so I forget yesterday and I deal with today.’

Janet links the potential to ‘move on’ to the past (‘life history’). In Chapter 8, I will consider the relationship between precarious situations, the past and how this impacts on the ability to move on. I argue that the institutions young homeless people interact with, particularly the benefits system, feed into the process of holding them in a fragile present.

It is also important to stress that this work on ‘Creating Positive Futures’ does not occur in a vacuum. What is possible to achieve in New Horizon is linked not only to a young person’s ability to move on from their pasts, but also to the range of systems that they find themselves implicated in. For example, another important factor that I discussed with Janet are the complications that arise from the benefits system (see Chapters 7 & 8). If ‘moving on’ is largely agreed to be about getting into college, training or employment this often sits uneasily with claiming Housing Benefit. To put it simply, hostels are expensive and in order to pay the hostel, the young person must be entitled to Housing Benefit – usually linked to claiming Job Seekers Allowance or Income Support – or else earning a decent wage. Complications with Job Seekers Allowance/Income Support arise when a young person starts to attend college. This then has a knock on effect on Housing Benefit. Or if a person stops claiming JSA then their Housing Benefit will stop. How the young people talk about being implicated in these systems will be examined in Chapters 7 & 8. But it is important to introduce here the idea that these systems also

contribute to fixing people in certain situations. Furthermore, the rules are always changing: 'depending on what government's in and what they see as current' (Janet).

While recognising the problems of accountability, information gathering and its ties to funding, it is also important to acknowledge its strategic uses and practical consequences. This kind of accountability and record keeping can increase the capacity of the organisation to make claims about the issues faced by the young people and the situations they are coming from. Waters argues:

'Projects that collected information on a regular or systematic basis, which incorporated various aspects of services offered, were in a far better position to review and plan internal services, and to identify gaps in their own and other agencies. Day centres are well placed to monitor trends in groups affected by homelessness, and should be in a position to lobby for other services to undertake their statutory responsibilities, or to increase their accessibility to homeless people. Rather than continue to be the dumping ground of the rest of the world, centres have a role to play in passing information to co-ordinating policy and campaigning bodies that is as important as that of the residential sector.' (1992:58)

New Horizon is a small organisation but also tries to make interventions, when possible, on a policy level. For example, on Christmas Eve 2009 Shelagh O'Connor (the Director) had a letter published in the Guardian challenging current council policy on local hostel provision.⁴⁰

Despite the difficulties and dilemmas involved in meeting the funding targets while providing a holistic service, the staff speak favourably of how the service has evolved. Dean describes the changes as: 'More accountability, more target orientated, much [more] highly trained staff.' While outlining the difficulties in turning the soft outcomes into hard ones, Shelagh maintains: 'Funders have a right to know what we've done with our money and what we've achieved'. Janet would like 'the circle of how we work' accounted for in a more formal way. It isn't

⁴⁰ See pg. 93.

the notion of progress, accountability or of providing a more structured service that causes the consternation among the staff, only short term (shifting) funding objectives.

Conclusion – Homely but on the Move



Fig. 0.4. An Imagined Future: Architect’s model for the rebuild of the centre on the table tennis table.

‘We’re not here as a centre to provide ongoing education, training and ongoing support for people. From my point of view, if people get to a point where they feel they can maintain their independence then I’m really happy that they move, because I don’t want to create young people who are dependent on us ... and over the course of the years we’ve reviewed what we provide and we feel that that the holistic type of provision is the best support that a young person can get, in order to

move them. And that family, almost home, that we create around that young person ... [Y]oung people need to feel that somebody cares about them and that's what we try to engender here.' Shelagh

This chapter has outlined some of the tensions and relationships that underpin New Horizon as a space. While it is a homely space it is also highly structured, despite appearances to the contrary, a lot of work goes into its creation. It is a space structured by rules and a particular emphasis on boundaries. I have argued that the place of New Horizon in the lives of its users varies: For the 'hardcore' whose lives are characterised by movement it provides a constant homely space that can be returned to. For others, it is just a stop along the way – a means to an end of finding accommodation.

The provision of a safe (almost) home space is valued by those who use New Horizon, it is one of the most important roles of the service, and yet is something very difficult to measure. No wonder then that trying to quantify the value of the nearly unquantifiable can be a source of frustration. In the language of 'outcomes' everything must be shoe-horned into the framework of progress. However, movement can be slow, cyclical or of the three steps forward, two steps back variety. The emphasis on accountability and structure doesn't mean that the provision of a homely space is jeopardised, rather trying to reach the outcomes is a balancing act.

The paradox of providing a home space that is also a place of progress involves constant negotiation. For example, changing the education programme from the LOCN system, which was perhaps too rigid for the centre, to the AQAs, which are conducted on a more individual basis and can be geared more towards very basic life skills. As Shelagh noted, there might be forms to fill in but they are introduced with the offer of a cup of tea and such exercises are not carried out in an officious manner. Furthermore, it should be emphasised that although there are workshops and activities running there are also many hours spent playing cards and sitting around. To characterise NH as bursting at the seams with improving activities every moment of the day would be misleading, but neither should the

importance of these periods of down time be underplayed. Sitting around a table and discussing the sports pages of the newspaper can help a new arrival begin to talk to others. A lot of youth work is done over cups of tea and games of Jenga.⁴¹ However, if someone is seen as just playing games all day, every day, this will be viewed as something that needs to be addressed.

Although there has been a move towards an emphasis on training, education and progression, I would argue that the centre still acts as a place of refuge, for example, John being allowed to sleep on the sofa during the day. There is an awareness of people's different capabilities and circumstances, so the expectations for a street homeless heroin user would be different to someone who was in a more stable situation.

The idea of the centre as a 'home' is central to New Horizon's vision of its future. It underscores the plans for the centre's rebuild (a competition to redesign the building was won by Adam Kahn Architects).⁴² The architect's plans state:

'The Centre has made a fantastic social structure, exuding an ethos of respect, care and affection. While the need for a more organised space is evident, it should go beyond the institutional model, and be simple and relaxed like a nice settled house. Tough, robust materials and finishes that will welcome a few knocks. A long wooden table for eating together, playing, chatting. Individual bathrooms like a home. A calm, big house, offering stability and security.'

This recognition of the centre as a homely place was key to the proposal winning the bid. Discussions about making the space more homely by making changes such as removing bars from the outside windows and replacing paper plates with either plastic or crockery have been an important part of thinking about how the centre will evolve with the rebuild.

⁴¹ Jenga is a particularly useful tool. You don't need good language skills or to know complicated rules to be able to play, so it is an inclusive game. For those who know the rules, chess also transcends language barriers.

⁴² The new redesigned centre opened in February 2010.

It is acknowledged by staff and clients that New Horizon functions as a place that can help you 'move on'. Shelagh argues (pg. 94) that creating an 'almost home' is the best way to achieve this. However, there is a paradox. If home is a place to return to, then the centre is most like a home for those who return over and over again, and are therefore not moving on. So by definition, those for whom it is a home are more 'stuck' than those passing through. There is a time limit on the young person's stay in the centre (their 22nd birthday) so this is not a home forever. Thus being *too* attached or reliant on the centre is not seen as a good thing ('I don't want to create young people who are dependent on us.'). They can be 'at home' there but must work on their futures, on moving. In later chapters we will explore how New Horizon is an important mooring for some of the young people who rely on it. It is crucial to highlight in this early that this mooring, though often returned to, can't be returned to forever.

It is also recognised that this process doesn't always work out. The work New Horizon does on 'positive futures' does not occur in isolation. The young people are embedded in a network of systems that can include social services, the Jobcentre, the police, hostels, college, work, prison. Being caught up in such systems, combined with the effect of global events, local events and individual circumstances, move these young people around London, fix them in some places and exclude them from others. The dilemmas of risking losing benefits by working in the 'official' economy for minimum wage, or by going to college must be juggled with these attempts to 'move on'. The impact of the day centre, and what it means to young people, can only be fully appreciated by considering how it fits into daily lives, trajectories, lived maps, where there is little access to private space, rather than by considering the day centre in isolation. These are key themes of Chapters 5, which focuses on the young people's movement around the city, and Chapter 7, which considers the space of the hostel. Chapter 8 returns to the notion of progress and its relationship to pasts and presents.

In trying to help with 'Creating Positive Futures' rather than just providing care in the moment, the centre invests in a notion of progress. This shift involves not only rethinking what the centre is for, but also how to work with those living very

much 'in the moment' on an idea of a future. The centre as an organisation is also placed in this narrative of progress. Shelagh, a very dynamic person, told me after her interview: 'If you're sitting still in this business, you're moving backwards.' The rebuild situates the centre in the redevelopment taking place in the King's Cross area. The service itself must be changing, flexible to compete in the market for funding. Homely but on the move.

Now we will move on to add another layer to the production of the space of the day centre. The next chapter considers how different scales of displacement shape the space of New Horizon.

Chapter 4

The Same Boat? Encounters with Difference

Prelude: Moosk



Fig. 0.5. Moosk and some of her crew, September 2008

The run up to the Women's Group sailing trip is very difficult for the organisers Lou and Kelly. Women sign up and drop out. There are many reasons for this: There are far fewer young women than men in the centre at the moment so there is a smaller pool to draw from. It is September and some people are starting new college courses. The unstable housing situations of some of the young women also pose problems. Those in short stay accommodation need to remain in London, just in case a place in a long-term hostel comes up. For some of those eligible, the thought of being on a small boat at sea for five days is not attractive. It becomes increasingly obvious in the week before the trip that getting six young women to participate is going to be impossible. This is how I end up getting my place on the boat.

The people that go on the trip are me, Lou (senior youth worker who has done the trip every year for five years), Kelly (who is working at New Horizon on secondment from her job as a civil servant) Madihah and Lidi (Eritrean refugees staying with friends and sleeping rough) and Kirsty (who has a long-term hostel place). Just as we are leaving the centre to embark on our seafaring adventure there is a drama, Lidi is accepted for an interview in an emergency hostel. The staff are conflicted as to what she should do. One staff member says housing should take priority but another argues that as she can only stay in the emergency hostel for nine days anyway, she should go on the boat as this is an extra four nights accommodation. Kelly is confident that the interview can be rescheduled for Friday but it's a gamble. It is Lidi's choice and she opts for the trip. On the train to Plymouth, Lidi and Madihah chat in Amharic whereas Kirsty talks to the workers.

On arrival in Plymouth we meet Pete the Skipper and Connell the second mate, and are plunged into an unfamiliar world of mizzens and mainsails and rope coils. All three young women throw themselves into the work. It turns out that getting a boat to move involves a lot of graft. As we sail around the coast of Devon we learn knots, how to steer, how to put up a sail and the strange lexicon of the ship. The living space is very small and we sleep squashed in bunks one above the other.

We sing a lot on the boat, it helps with the sickness. I ask Madihah to sing and she sings a song from her church: 'I'm searching'. She sometimes just breaks into song, most often 'Jingle Bells'. She says she doesn't realise she's doing it. I ask her if she sings when she is happy and she says she does. Lidi says she used to like dancing and music when she was in Eritrea but now other concerns, such as housing, have taken over. Lidi says she used to like taking photos of her friends and had a big bag of photos of them visiting various places in Eritrea, she still has some of them. She tells me that she came to this country over a year ago. She first travelled from Eritrea to Sudan and then met a 'businessman' who said he could arrange for her to go to the USA. She had always wanted to go to America because she grew up watching American movies. Lidi arrived in England thinking it was America. At first she was disappointed but now she likes it here, although she found some things were initially alarming. For example, when it got dark at 4pm she was frightened and wondered what was happening. Both Lidi and Madihah are Pentecostal Christians and attend a church in Battersea. Every time we eat on the ship I can see Madihah and Lidi quietly saying a prayer over their food.

One night we dock in Salcombe. The town is full of white 50-60 year olds in sailing clothes and our party attracts some stares. I fetch fish and chips with Lou. When we get back all the

girls are giggling away. It is obvious that Kirsty is getting to know the others. 'I've been telling them about my everyday life,' she says, 'they think it's really funny'. Lidi and Madihah howl with laughter at Kirsty's tales of gay clubland. Kirsty is loving the audience.

Both Lidi and Madihah like using my digital camera, Madihah takes many photos of the shore at night. Madihah's preference though, is getting her picture taken by me. On seeing a photo opportunity Madihah will point at the chosen scene and say 'Emma? Camera?'. She will position herself in a suitably glamorous pose and then I will take the picture. At the end of the trip we all look back at the photos and laugh about how there are so many of Madihah. Madihah is particularly fond of getting her picture taken next to big flashy boats (not ours).

At the end of the trip Kirsty takes herself away from the rest of us and draws a picture, which has the names of all the Moosk crew on it, the name of the ship and the dates. I ask if I can take a photo of her holding it. She likes how she looks in the photo. Short spiky hair, sunglasses on, face unsmiling. She wants me to take another, like it in style but without the Moosk picture, for her Facebook photo. At the end of the trip I take a photo of each girl on the jetty at Plymouth.

Throughout the boat trip there is the nagging worry that when we get back to Paddington, Lidi will have nowhere to go. Luckily, her interview at the emergency hostel was rearranged for the day we got back.

Introduction

'New Horizon here, there's so many cultures that are here. A lot of them are into rap and hip hop, and other cultures that are from Africa and you have cultures that are from round Europe and you have to be open minded and very careful what you say to them because what you think is right in your head might be wrong in their head, so you have to be very careful when you're choosing your words with people. And the way London is, London's very multicultural. There's a lot of different types in London compared to back home ... Fair enough we have Polish, we have a black culture that are in our town but it's nothing like London or England, its not like that at all. It's more, the town I come from, it's an Irish town through and through.' Niall

'Diaspora space is the intersectionality of diaspora, border, and dis/location as a point of confluence of economic, political, cultural and psychic processes. It addresses the global condition of culture, economics and politics as a site of 'migrancy' and 'travel' which seriously problematises the subject position of the 'native' ... [D]iaspora space as a conceptual category is 'inhabited' not only by those who have migrated and their descendants but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous. In other words, the concept of diaspora space (as opposed to diaspora) includes the entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of 'staying put'.' Avtar Brah (1996:181)

New Horizon is a particularly urban configuration, shaped by and implicated in a variety of local and global processes whereby strangers are brought together. But these are meetings brought about and underscored by displacement and violence. The varied experiences of exile that come together in this place range from the short haul, the young man leaving South London because of fear of reprisals from a drug

debt that can't be paid, to those related to specific global events. For example, the recent increase in Eritrean clients (such as Lidi and Madihah) is a result of the situation in Eritrea, where the repressive ruling regime, the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ) is the only legal political party, the human rights situation is poor and the border dispute with Ethiopia remains unresolved.⁴³ The majority of the Eritrean clients come not directly from Eritrea but from other places in the UK where they were sent as part of the government's policy of dispersal of asylum seekers. Thus New Horizon, a local place, is intertwined with and made by global events and national policy.

Rather than treating New Horizon or the area of King's Cross/Euston as a contained entity then, I have approached it as 'a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus' (Massey:1994:154), a hub from which to follow out stories to other boroughs, across the river and beyond, or as Brah puts it 'an entanglement of genealogies of dispersion'.

In the previous chapter (*Almost Home*), I introduced New Horizon as a place of extreme diversity, I explained how on arriving at New Horizon a quick look around, and perhaps even more pertinently a quick listen, reveals this. Both the 'majority' and the 'hardcore' that I distinguished between are very mixed in terms of religion, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality. The label 'homeless' incorporates refugees, asylum seekers, those with criminal records and without, those who have had to leave home because of homophobia or abuse, those whose families simply can't afford to house them anymore. Thus, in New Horizon a picture of homelessness emerges that is not captured by a look around the 'cleaned up' streets of central London, here the much talked of 'hidden homeless' become visible.

Dispersion is particularly relevant to this context. While some of my participants can be understood as belonging to a particular diaspora, not all of them

⁴³ 'The human rights situation in Eritrea is universally reported as very poor. The country remains a highly repressive state in which dissent is suppressed and nongovernmental political, civic, social, and minority religious institutions largely forbidden to function. Reported human rights abuses have included: unlawful killings by security forces; torture of prisoners and arrest of national service evaders; interference in the judicial system; round ups of young men and women for military service; discrimination against women and societal discrimination based on sexual orientation. There were also no visits to prisons by NGOs which the government prevented from operating during 2008 and prison conditions were considered to be harsh.' UK Border Agency (2009)

can be, though many have made journeys and all are to some degree dispersed. Brah's concept of 'diaspora space' is a useful starting point then, in two ways. Firstly, in encompassing both the constructed indigenous population as well as newer arrivals, it allows a consideration of the construction of Englishness, whiteness, Cockney in a multicultural environment made by displacement, as well as Africanness, blackness, being Somali. Secondly though, I want to propose stretching Brah's definition in a productive way, perhaps to breaking point.

In the context of New Horizon, no one could be described as 'staying put'. As I shall go on to argue in Chapter 5, the lives of young homeless people are characterised by extreme, and usually forced, mobility. New Horizon is a mooring for people *on the move* in conditions not of their choosing; on the move in the sense of those who have crossed continents and on the move as in the day-to-day movement that I explore in Chapter 5. Most people in the centre have moved from elsewhere, whether that be Bermondsey, Newcastle, Ireland, Somalia or Eritrea. New Horizon is a mooring for those in local and global exile, like the ex-boy soldier from Sierra Leone who juggles a cleaning job with his college work and who can barely keep his eyes open: or for the chatty South Londoner, just realised from a Young Offenders Institution to return to his ransacked hostel room in an area where he feels unsafe. 'Diaspora space' doesn't capture individual local exiles and different scales of displacement in a place where everyone is one the move.

There is a problem with finding the right language to describe this place made by forced mobility. The vocabulary of movement is somehow unsatisfactory. Words like 'travel' or 'journey' sound like things undertaken at leisure, evoking packed suitcases and plans rather than having to flee because of civil war or an abusive domestic situation. When Lidi threw in her lot with the 'businessman' in Sudan, promising her America and sending her to England, she didn't so much embark on a journey as put herself in transit. 'Mobility' and 'movement' work to some degree⁴⁴, and I'll be persevering with those words in this thesis, but they are often happily slapped on to both the suited executive and the refugee alike.

⁴⁴ Cresswell (2006) argues that 'mobility' captures power relations more adequately than 'movement'. Whereas Clifford argues for hanging on to 'travel' precisely because of its 'historic taintedness'. (1997:39) Kaplan favours moving away from 'travel' to 'displacement'. (1996)

'Displacement' has a different inflection, suggesting a lack of choice (and as in its use above, 'displacement' also lends itself to being used across scales). As I argued in Chapter 1, an emphasis on 'A to B' (the horizontal) risks should not be at the expense of looking at the forces behind and conditions of that movement. A stretched version of diasporic space, which I will call here *place of the displaced* can capture these forced kinds of movement while retaining a framework that can also take place attachments into consideration.

In this chapter, I will examine the much repeated analogy that the young people at New Horizon are all 'in the same boat', a place of shared circumstances. I will look at moments when that notion is challenged, asking: What kinds of alliances and conflicts does this place of coming together produce? And what is revealed in these encounters about homelessness and the wider city? I will consider expressions of that difference and argue that ultimately there is a disjuncture between the violence and loss of the young people's stories and the language of diversity.

The 'Same Boat' and its limits

'People are friendly, we're all in the same boat' Jameela

Emma - Eritrean and Ethiopian people seem to be the newest wave of people, have you seen other...

Dean⁴⁵ - Yeah, yeah, when I first got here it was Eastern European countries and I've seen Somalian, there was a massive influx of Somalian, massive influx of those from the Congo, I've saw a small influx of Iraqi Iranians ... when I first started it was mostly Eastern European and I think it's come back round again.

I want to return to the boat, the 'actual' boat from the sailing trip experience and the boat as (stretched?) metaphor. The somewhat exceptional circumstances of the (actual) boat can also be understood as representing one

⁴⁵ Housing Advice Manager

element of New Horizon, or one possible outcome of a place of the displaced (another is the Refugee Week workshop outlined below) in the sense that organisations like New Horizon, through making a space where difference comes together, creates both banal and extraordinary encounters. This isn't to say that this is always easy, that these alliances last, and of course there are cases where these encounters break down. Such encounters, like the one between Kirsty, Lidi and Madihah are created by loss and insecurity. This comes to light in Lidi's tales of her lost country, friends and photographs and the structural realities of homelessness that must be negotiated on an everyday basis. In different circumstances the boat trip would merely be an adventure, for Lidi it is also accommodation for four nights.

Many times in the drop-in and in interviews, I'd hear claims, like Jameela's, that people in New Horizon can get along because 'we're all in the same boat.' Having foregrounded the extreme diversity of New Horizon what does the 'we're all in the same boat' statement do? I would argue that it stresses sameness rather than being a denial of difference, in that it relates to a set of present structural circumstances (being in the same boat), rather than making a claim to identity or to a shared past or future. What is 'the same boat' and when does the analogy start to unravel?

The 'same boat', lest it sound too cosy, is the condition of homelessness. It is the shared experience of difficult and painful circumstances. Obviously there are differences in circumstances among the young people in New Horizon. As we shall see in Chapter 7, someone with 'no recourse to public funds' who is sleeping on the street is in a very different situation to someone in receipt of benefits living in a hostel. The person doing A-levels and living in a long-term hostel is in a different position to someone who has just come out of prison and struggles to fill in a benefits form. An asylum seeker is subject to other processes and agencies than someone who has to report to the probation service, and so on. However, there are certain processes that all young homeless people must go through, a language of benefits and hostels to learn for the uninitiated. Here the sharing of information and advice between young people is important. This was very evident in the drop-in, the best ways to get to a hostel by bus, tips on dealing with the hostel ('never tell the hostel if

you get a crisis loan' Sean), the importance of coming into New Horizon early to get a housing appointment were all recurring subjects of conversation.

For Zula it's *not* being in exactly the same boat that enables the young people to help each other. She tells me: 'When you look at them, they're not all in the same boat'. Rather she explains how pooling knowledge of various situations can be useful:

'I've met quite a lot of people through here and even though you don't come to these sort of places to make friends, they are really nice and it's not, when you look at them, they're not all in the same boat. In some ways people can help different people, like I might be able to meet someone here that's had a child and finding it hard to find housing because I went through that. There could be someone here who's had trouble with a landlord and they've gone about it a different way and they might be able to help me cos I've got a landlord who might not want to help. So in a way I think it's a good place to socialise in and find new things out.'

Zula argues that it isn't a case of being in the same circumstances *in the present* but the possibility of being with others who have shared similar experiences in the past that gives people the capacity to help each other. It is also worth noting how gaining expertise in the system becomes very important in terms of knowing how to negotiate the terrain of the homeless system (a recurring theme in this thesis). As a long-term client and expert in the homeless system Zula was well positioned to help others with less experience or language skills. Despite her denial of 'the same boat' scenario, she emphasises New Horizon as a place where people encounter the same structures and similar issues, although at different times and with varying capacities.

Aside from being a place of knowledge pooling, New Horizon also helps provides a mooring and an 'almost home' space, a place of shared experiences. Shared moments of table tennis, doing the recycling, bringing in the fairshare⁴⁶ food

⁴⁶ Fairshare is: 'a charity that redistributes 'fit for purpose' product from the food and drink industry

delivery, watching a movie, eating lunch, smoking a cigarette outside, playing football, create a place and intensify a feeling of being in the 'same boat' (see Andrew on how friends become 'wrapped together' through moving between the same places pg. 209, Chapter 7). However, this does not mean that difference is unmarked in the drop-in. The notion of being 'in the same boat' is challenged in both spoken and unspoken ways.

One disruption of the 'same boat' analogy are divisions between groups in the centre. Friendship groups are often mixed in terms of ethnicity, but if there is a divide between the young people then it is between the latest wave of refugees from Eritrea and Ethiopia and the others. This was expressed both spatially and at times, verbally. Limits on what can be said are imposed by New Horizon's policy on not tolerating homophobic, racist, sexist language. While many youth centres adopt this stance, New Horizon's position as an 'almost home' space for those who have been made homeless makes this policy particularly significant. For example, for many of the LGBT clients who access the service, homophobia (sometimes violent) has caused their homelessness. Curbing the use of homophobic language therefore becomes necessary in order to create a safe space. Those who contravene these rules are responded to in different ways, depending on the specific incident, as outlined in the previous chapter.

The case of the Refugee Week workshop shows some of the limits of the 'being in the same boat' and some of the tensions that exist around difference, particularly here around issues of immigration and asylum. This workshop, aiming to dismantle some myths about asylum seekers and refugees, revealed much confusion among the young people about the difference between asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants. The tensions between allowing debate and the shaping of what can be said also emerges, here hostility becomes partly speakable.

Janet is running a workshop during Refugee Week aimed at dismantling myths around asylum. She works through a sheet from the Refugee Council and talks about preconceptions of what an asylum seeker is, what a refugee is etc... The group consists of one asylum seeker/refugee who doesn't speak

- to organisations working with disadvantaged people in the community.'
[<http://www.fareshare.org.uk/about-us.php>]

and keeps his arms folded. Robert, who says the subject doesn't interest him and who seems to bristle throughout. Michael, who can't stop talking and helps Janet by writing on the board (he plays to the gallery by writing under 'What is an asylum seeker' 'Gold digger'. His other answers show he doesn't totally subscribe to those kind of views.) There is also Ahmed, who argues against the anti-asylum seeker comments, Mark, Emily and two other white young women who don't say a lot. There is a lot of confusion about what an asylum seeker actually is. Mark talks about 'the Poles' and how they will work for £25 a day. We talk about benefits and whether they attract people to the UK. The widely held opinion of most of the group seems to be that people 'flock' to Britain from other countries because of the benefits system.' Janet and I try and challenge this view.

The workshop demonstrates the limits of what can be said in the centre. Robert, who seemed angry that the subject was even being discussed, did not air his views but his quiet anger was palpable. I suspect the reason Robert didn't speak was because his views were so out of line with those that were being communicated in the workshop. There was talk in the centre at one point that some of the young men (including Robert) were becoming involved in a far right organisation. The rumour was that this was causing bad feeling among a (predominantly white) friendship group. While this was never substantiated there were a few young white men, such as Robert, who would sometimes strongly reiterate anti-immigration opinions.

Another encounter also highlights the spoken and unspoken divisions that operate in the centre.

Today I played chess for the first time in maybe 20 years. I played Nefstalem a young Eritrean guy. I was conscious during the game that it must be very boring for him as I know how the pieces move but that's about it. He corrected me when I made bad decisions, giving me a second chance. I improved in the second game. Ian started to watch. After I was beaten again, Ian asked Nefstalem for a game. As Nefstalem started to beat Ian, he was getting noticeably agitated saying things like 'You're really starting to take the piss now'. I think my spectatorship only increased the loss of face. Ian prides himself at being good at chess because he played it constantly in jail, I have heard him say the same about blackjack. As I have seen Ian lose his temper before, I was a bit worried about this chess game scenario. Ian lost amid much swearing but didn't completely lose his temper. He stood up saying he would play him again later and that Nefstalem wasn't even that good anyway. He stormed

off past his friends saying 'I've been beaten by a ...' His voice dropped and I didn't hear the last word, but I don't suppose it was complimentary.

In the common space of the centre, and in this example, joining in a shared activity doesn't automatically result in the 'we're all the same boat' attitude, here it leads to the reinscribing of difference. Ian would know that saying an offensive, perhaps racist, word would have repercussions so keeps his voice down. At a much later date, Ian flared up at Neftalem for apparently no reason and was asked to leave the centre for the day.

Bringing up the issue of asylum as a point of discussion in the workshop revealed that this was a highly contested subject matter and in the chess game situation an insult, though silenced (it doesn't even need to be spoken to be effective) is used to cope with a loss of face. But more usually this divide was unspoken and expressed spatially with the Eritrean and Ethiopians occupying a distinct corner of the drop-in. This divide is described by Zula, who is from an Eritrean family but who was born in Britain. Instead of drawing on anti-immigration opinions to talk about difference Zula uses an idea of cultural difference:

E - Do you think it becomes, like, little groups within the centre then?

Z - Yeah, there are little groups. With me, I tend to float. I'm a floater, wherever the wind will take me I'll go, I won't discriminate against anyone because of where they're from or [because] they can't speak English but there are like (points to sofas) over here, the Eritreans and the Ethiopians will tend to stick together and the people that speak more English stick together.

E - It must be different for you as well because you're from an Eritrean family but you've grown up here and then there's this other wave of Eritrean people...

Z - It is, because I've never really, even though I'm Eritrean myself, my mum's never really kept Eritrean friends so I've not ever really known a lot of them, so for me to be brought up with different values to them as well, they've come from Eritrea and they don't see women as smoking,

They don't see women dressed how I dress or doing things that I do and then they look at me and think 'Oh she's doing something wrong.'

Zula is unusual in being able to broach this divide as she can speak Tigrinya (and has done bits of informal translation during workshops in the centre) but she occupies this position a little uneasily. In her interview she is keen to distance herself from the Eritreans identifying herself first and foremost with Britishness, contrasting what she regards to be her British values and behaviour with Eritrean ones. It is not necessarily just a question of language and culture that creates this division but also the different ways that people use the centre. For example, many of the Eritrean people use the centre for housing advice and education, they tend not to be involved in the more informal socialising or activities like Women's and Men's Groups.

Many of the Eritrean young people have a strong sense of belonging to a community outside of the centre. In a discussion group some of the young Eritrean women explained to me how this sense of community was sustained by Eritrean churches, restaurants and friendship groups. All the women mentioned religion as being important to them. Of this group, one said she was Muslim, one Orthodox and four describe themselves as Pentecostal. In Eritrea only Orthodox, Catholic, Lutheran churches and Islam are recognised religions, all others are banned. (Amnesty:2009, UK Border Agency:2009). There is therefore likely to be a relationship between the persecuted position of Pentecostal Christians in Eritrea and the high proportion of Pentecostal Christians at New Horizon. Despite these differences the young women were keen to emphasise that the Eritrean community in London is very mixed. When I asked the Eritrean young women how they would go about finding an Eritrean community, if they were arriving from outside London, they looked at me in astonishment, as if it was obvious: 'Eritrean people are friendly!', 'Go to a church.', 'Talk to Eritrean people on the bus.' They told me that every month about 15-18 of their friends get together and put £20 in a kitty. They give the total to whoever needs it the most or, if no one has an emergency, they pull a name out of a hat. Perhaps these support networks lessen the need to use the centre as a place for taking part in activities. When taken together with the

sometimes negative attitudes towards these newer arrivals of those who were 'born here', articulated in the workshop described above, it is easy to see how this divide is compounded.

The combination of the rule of no racist, homophobic, sexist language with the banter that characterises interaction in the centre, gives rise to slippage between the official language of the centre and more everyday expressions of difference. These everyday expressions often involve 'duelling play' (Back:1996:74) which can slip over into causing offence and upset. Here, race and ethnicity – as well as shade, nationality, sexuality and the part of London someone is from, can all be drawn upon.

We are playing Blackjack. Zula starts some banter with her friend Ahmed (the film 'Jungle Book' is on, this seems like a curiously childish film but it's New Year's Eve and yesterday it was 'City of God', so maybe this is light relief).

Zula says, 'You didn't get films like this in Somalia did you?'

'You didn't have them in Eritrea either', replies Ahmed.

'I was born here.' Zula retorts.

'I left Somalia when I was three, I can't even remember what Somalia looks like! I've lived in Italy... Holland...'

Zula starts talking about P Diddy being Somalian. 'That's why he's so dark', she says, 'I mean my Dad's dark but...'

Ahmed retorts that Eritreans also have dark skin and asks,

'What language do you speak? Swahili?'

'No'

'Most Africans speak Swahili'

'Not my people. What language do you speak, Somali?'

'Italian.'

The conversation moves on, and then back again.

Zula continues, 'There is only one group of people I'm racist to and that's Somalians. I was bullied badly by Somalian girls at school you can ask Janet.'

Zula starts to talk about Somali people having long faces. I'm a bit unsure what to do. I try and stop her and refer back to the bullying incident, 'But you must know that doesn't mean all Somali people are like that, Zula?'

'Yeah I know, I was just really badly bullied, ask Janet.'

The card game continues.

As the exchange above illustrates, there can be a fine line between banter and talk that causes offence. Zula refuses Ahmed's appeals to similarity based on their African heritage through the forms of skin colour and language. At the same time as making these outreaches, Ahmed positions himself as European – Italian-speaking with no memory of Somalia. Towards the end, Zula resorts to ascribing physical racist characteristics and making appeals to another authority (Janet, staff member). Ahmed appeared to be a bit hurt by his friend's comments but this didn't result in the termination of the card game. Exchanges like this are commonplace in New Horizon. To simply brand this exchange as 'racist' would belie the complex manoeuvres that are being made. There is a complicated negotiation going on here about migration, authenticity, and African-ness, Britishness, sameness and difference.

When comparing insults and banter aimed across difference as well as taking into account tone and context, it is crucial to note that certain kinds of racial insults, for example, are much more loaded than others. Nayak argues: 'the meanings carried in white derogatory terms rarely carry the same weight as anti-black racist terminology' (2003:149).⁴⁷ The (silenced) insult to Nestalem reinscribes the institutional power that he has been subject to as an asylum seeker and national 'outsider'. So when Gina says 'keep your white hands out' and raps her good friend Sean on the knuckles as he reaches into her bag of sweets, it doesn't have the weight to cause distress. However, as the encounter between Ahmed and Zula demonstrates this isn't simply a black and white matter. When the axes of difference are so multiplied, identifying the point at which banter slips into something more serious can be difficult. The collectivity of being 'in the same boat' then, is

⁴⁷ See also Troyna and Hatcher (1992).

constantly challenged. There are shared experiences in the homeless system, in New Horizon, but they are a result of different kinds of exiles both of the local and international variety.

Perhaps the sense of shared circumstances was challenged most powerfully by a young man called Nadif in a Men's Group discussion. The exchange happened in the context of a workshop that aimed to generate text to go with a set of photographic portraits that the men's group had been working on through the recording of a discussion. We were talking about the portraits and the young men's self presentation. How people judge others on appearances, the media obsession with 'hoodies' and the idea of coming from 'the ghetto' as a shared experience. Ash, a young British Asian man, asked his friend Nadif:

'People in this country they call themselves gangsters and all that, they live in 'the ghetto', they haven't been to a real ghetto. Where you're from, Somalia? You got kids running round with AKs and all that sort of stuff?'

Nadif replied:

'Try walking miles and miles, ducking and diving from bullets hoping, praying that a bullet that's just flying ain't hitting you. Try not sleeping for seven days in a row because you're scared to because you're in fear for your life. Try not eating for seven days and you're so hungry and your stomach starts blowing up and starts looking like you've been eating all year. Now that's ghetto. You ain't got no trainers. You ain't got no shoes. You're faith is in your Lord basically. You've lost human touch. Next thing you know your next door neighbour is dead. Now that's ghetto.'

Thus Nadif challenges the idea that a shared set of circumstances create a community based on commonality, a 'same boat'. The Men's Group portraits show

a multicultural group of young men, dressed in the style favoured by young people all over London: tracksuits, caps, hoodies, jeans. These portraits challenge dominant images of 'the homeless'. The collective project resulted from them all being 'in the same boat' but the profound differences between them and the complex journeys they have made do not show in the photographs.

While I am suggesting approaching New Horizon as a place of the displaced this isn't to flatten out the multiscale experiences of homelessness that come together in the centre. Nadif's story serves as a powerful reminder that while the 'same boat' has resonances, particularly in referring to young people's interactions with the homeless system, there are also major differences in their experiences of dislocation. For Nadif, violence is experienced in varying intensities across these scales. Very often the experiences Nadif describes go unspoken in New Horizon (see also the second example on pg. 9). Voicing his history in the group in this way makes this past present for a moment. The context of this statement in a wider discussion – about young people being feared, and self-presentation, on the streets of London – shows something about the group. Certainly, there are differences between individuals and the kinds of loss, violence and scales of displacement that they have been affected by, but Nadif's contribution to the discussion highlights the need for approaching homelessness as a global issue, it must be understood as tied up with what happens in London and in Somalia.



Fig. 0.6. Men's Group Portrait Project, displayed at the Scala, February 2009

Talking Multiculture in the ‘Same Boat’

While banter is one way in which difference is negotiated in New Horizon, during the interviews I became aware of other kinds of expressions of difference and identity. I will move on to contrast the kind of exchanges in the everyday life of the centre with the accounts of difference given in the interviews. This is productive, not in terms of finding out what the young people ‘really think’, but in terms of examining how some of the young people can make use of the different registers as required. It also reveals the limits of the language of diversity.

For those going into the homeless system in London, there are new difficult experiences to be managed, of going into a hostel for the first time, for example (see Chapters 5 & 6). But there is also the issue of dealing with differences of race, ethnicity, religion and sexuality on a day-to-day basis in a situation where the public/private distinction has little relevance. As a ‘place of the displaced’ then, New Horizon becomes embroiled in discussions of difference, sameness and arrival, on the scales of the wider city, the nation and beyond. I’m going to start here with an examination of Kirsty’s story that moves between the city, her hometown and New Horizon in order to set up the cosmopolitan city as a site of both pleasure and fear.

In the narratives of people from outside London (but from the UK and Ireland), arriving in London is defined partly by encounters with difference. These encounters are described as both negative and positive, often bewildering. One way of making sense of a place of extreme difference (what I am calling a ‘place of the displaced’) is by contrasting it with its other. For many of the young people from elsewhere in the UK and Ireland this other is the hometown. The hometown is cast as depressing, homogenous and lacking in opportunity as opposed to the vitality and multiculturalism of the capital (this story of coming to London as an adventure is not fully available to the young people from within London, or those fleeing other countries). In using comparisons with hometowns, young people invoke the kind of distinctions between town and country as laid out by Raymond Williams (1973), where the country is safe but boring and the town – or city, in this case – is exciting

but dangerous.⁴⁸ Here I want to outline how this distinction can be made use of in various ways, for example, we shall see how in Kirsty's account Selham⁴⁹ can be told as an industrial town or a little country town as befits the point that she wants to make. She can relish London's cosmopolitan character but also be terrified by it.

The smallness of hometowns and the pains of being a visible minority in them often came up in everyday conversation in the centre. One young woman, Gina, of mixed African and White British descent, complained about both London and her South East coastal hometown. She was very aware of how visible she was in the latter but also used to complain about the levels of violence in London. Once when someone else suggested that living in a small town would be preferable to London, Gina commented. 'I'm from a small town and everyone's always getting in your business! It's like being a celebrity, it's like being in EastEnders!' (I had by this point picked up on the fact that people 'getting in your business' is something that particularly irked Gina). Like Gina, Kirsty had struggled with being overly visible in her hometown, a place she describes in less than complimentary terms:

K- I'm from the North East. [E cheers] Newcastle Upon Tyne. Well actually no it's Selham, but that's not even worth mentioning...

E- How would you describe Selham?

K- Am I allowed to swear?

E- Yes, of course you are.

K- Shit hole, absolute shit hole! Mind you doesn't everyone say that about their home town? ... All Selham's really built up on is a bus stand, shops, pubs, cafes. That's all Selham is. It's more pubs than anything and it's a steelworks town, my Granda used to work in the steel works and there's lots of Working Men's clubs and stuff like that. And factories and houses. It's just a small town and it's boring. There's nothing there to do with your life.

⁴⁸ In Chapter 8 we shall see how this distinction is also made by those from London when reflecting on their attempts to leave London.

⁴⁹ Selham is a pseudonym.

Kirsty tells a version of Selham that is classed and gendered: identifying old-fashioned bastions of working class masculinity;⁵⁰ the steel works, the working men's club. It is portrayed as offering no future for her ('there's nothing there to do with your life'). It offers no future in two ways, one by being stuck in the past somehow and also as a place where it is difficult to be a lesbian. She told me that she was refused a job at one of the town's biggest employers – a food factory – because, she suspects, of her sexuality. Like many people before her, Kirsty was attracted to London by the promise of a gay and lesbian community (and the presence of her best friend Jo, also a lesbian, who had moved down a few months earlier) and by needing to leave a difficult domestic situation. For Kirsty, the gay scene in London offers an alternative home, where not seeing the same people is viewed as liberating as opposed to her local gay scene which she finds insular (see her map Fig. 0.2. pg. 63).

There's a slippage between talk of place and herself. Her hometown is cast as dead and depressing, in Soho by contrast: 'In Soho, I'm full of life.':

K- I love Soho. Even if I've got no money I go into Soho.

E- What do you do when you're in that area? Is that where you feel...

K- Just mingle. I feel more at home, more than when I was actually living at home, cos it's my surroundings. I mean there's nothing like that where we're from. I mean Newcastle's gay scene, all of three pubs. You come into London and Soho stretches for miles, miles and miles, bloody gay bars everywhere. And I'm in heaven standing in the centre of it like 'where do I go now?'

The sense of freedom that Kirsty describes finding in the city (and to some extent this also applies to Gina. Although her view of London is much less romantic, London at the very least provides a break from her extreme visibility in her hometown) brings to mind texts that celebrate the anonymity of urbanism (Benjamin: 1986, 2003, Sennett: 1991). Kirsty is positioned differently to Benjamin's

⁵⁰ See Nayak (2003) for an analysis of youth identities in the post-industrial North-East.

resolutely male flâneur who moves throughout the city with ease, looking at, rather than being the object of looks (the possibility of the female flâneur has been much disputed (see Wilson:1991, Wolff: 1985, Munt:1995)). Significantly this feeling of 'at homeness' is attributed to a specific space, Soho, rather than the wider city. Walking in Soho, Kirsty finds a sense of belonging through being able to 'mingle' in gay space with strangers. Here she can be the 'lesbian flâneur', as described by Munt (1995), she both looks and is looked at and takes pleasure in both. Soho is a place where Kirsty both feels 'at home' yet relishes her anonymity. The combination of sameness (gay and lesbian space) and yet the presence of strangers makes, for her, a comfortable space to occupy.

Anne-Marie Fortier (2003) points to the recurring theme in the 'coming-out' story of leaving home and relocating elsewhere, in order to find one's 'true' self. Kirsty's story appears to follow this narrative. But Fortier's argument that: 'identities of home as well as those who inhabit it are never fixed, but are continuously reimagined and redefined.' (2003:116) is also illustrated by Kirsty's account. In Kirsty's story, the characterisation of her hometown shifts. While she talks romantically of her arrival in Soho, her move to London was not without its moments of discomfort, shock even. While she relished the cosmopolitan city in terms of sexuality it was also experienced as frightening in terms of confrontation with difference. These fears are expressed in her story of arriving at New Horizon:

E- Can you remember your first day here?

K- New Horizons?

E- Yeah.

K- I was so nervous! I come through that door and I was like that [pulls scared face]. I sat attached to Jo. I would not leave her, I was so nervous.

E- Why were you so nervous?

K- Cos, not being nasty or racist or nasty or anything [voice drops] but I never seen a black person til I come down here. So it was like 'hmm hmm hmm' [hums nervously]

E- Well that's ... it's different isn't it, that's one thing about the North

East it isn't like London in terms of the mix of people...

K- There's none of them. There's hardly any of them and I walked in here and [even quieter] this place is covered. 'Hmmm' [high pitched nervous]. But I'm all open ... about it now, I'm not so scared about being in a room. I don't associate with people as much and I really don't know why I don't. I do talk to people when they're in here but that's the only time. I don't associate with them outside of here.

E- Do you think that's part of coming from where you come from?

K- I think it is. Aye. Because I was never brought up around people like that. I wasn't brought up around gangs, and knife crime and gun crime. It was all hunky dory where I was from. A little country town, everybody knows everybody.

Kirsty says she had never seen a black person until she came to London, this seems highly unlikely in a literal sense but what matters for us here is that the moment of being afraid is described as not on arrival in London or outside on the street but rather at New Horizon, a more closed and fixed space where interaction is expected. Kirsty looks at the centre and sees 'black people', no distinction is made in her account between different ethnicities or sub groups. Although Kirsty certainly evokes old racisms, these initial feelings of fear are something she is not at ease with. She questions herself about these enduring feelings saying she doesn't know why she doesn't associate with 'them'. While Kirsty says she's 'all open now' her nervousness suggests otherwise. Her fear of black people is expressed in both her tone and in her choice of words 'the place was covered'. Black people are equated with gangs, knife and gun crime. In this context, while trying to make sense of these feelings of fear, the oppressive boring town becomes idyllic 'a little country town' where everything is 'hunky dory'.⁵¹ This initial reaction to perceived racial difference in New Horizon

⁵¹ I offer Kirsty the opportunity to use her place of origin as an explanation for this shock. My intervention could be read as trying to help Kirsty out of an awkward moment. Perhaps there's more to it – coming from the North East is something we share, that we both acknowledge in the interview. Maybe I intervene because I don't want Kirsty to come across as racist (see Frankenburg: 1994)? Possibly. Although, I think it's more my recognition of a culture shock born out of unfamiliarity rather than an entrenched racism.

is very different to the talk of 'being in the same boat'.

In contrast to Kirsty's account, others drew extensively on the language of multiculturalism to make sense of difference. For example Ryan told me:

'I don't know why people don't like to mix. I love other people's cultures. I love my curry goat and rice but in the morning I want my full English meal, my eggs and bacon all that. I like my mixed cultures. I'm sure if people were to come down here and try curry goat and rice they'd like it as much as eggs and bacon. I love mixing cultures!

...

That's why I love East London, it is so multicultural. On the street there's Pakis, black people. I don't mean to be rude! Pakistanis! I meant to put 'stani' at the end! Cos I, like, live down there with my family – I wanna erase that last bit! [laughs] – But yeah, if you've grown up in a multicultural place you will respect other people's cultures. If you grow up in a, if I grew up just around black people, I wouldn't understand white folk, d'ya know what I'm trying to say? If I grew up around white people, I wouldn't understand my own race because it's the way you grow up and what you grow up round you get to understand more. When you're growing up, you take it all on board. When you're older, something gets introduced to you and you've got all these cultures you just judge it.'

Let's compare Ryan's account of living with multiculturalism with Niall's (pg. 102). Niall refers to both the mix in New Horizon and his attempts at dealing with it, knowing how to speak the language of diversity. In this passage taken from an interview, Niall demonstrates to me that he knows how he is *supposed* to talk about difference. Both Niall and Ryan refer to differences between 'cultures'. For Niall, knowing how to speak across difference is expressed as requiring work, not wanting to offend implies he has to think about his choice of words. This process of carefully choosing words seems at odds with much of the interaction that takes place in the centre (above). On

a different occasion when Niall was complaining about South London being ‘full of foreigners’ this was quickly corrected by Gina in a characteristically no-nonsense fashion: ‘You’re Irish! You’re a foreigner! What are you talking about, you idiot?!’

In his account, Ryan slips between a celebratory multiculturalism, in line with the official language that is spoken in the centre, and other words, using the term of abuse ‘paki’. He makes sense of his own Caribbean/British identity using both food and the streets of East London as examples. He talks of ‘mixing cultures’ as something enjoyable. These ‘cultures’ that mix are cast as black/white, it’s a language of multiculturalism (different and separate cultures sitting alongside each other) rather than hybridity. hooks argues: ‘Within commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture’ (1992:21). hooks’ analysis may work when considering the appeal Ryan makes to others (‘I’m sure if people were to come down here and try curry goat and rice they’d like it as much as eggs and bacon.’) which playfully draws on the idea of ethnicity as spice and mixing as fun. But ultimately for Ryan multiculturalism is everyday – notice he talks of ‘multicultural society’ as something that has happened already, an inevitable fact – rather than something to be dabbled in for pleasure.

It is also possible that learning how to deploy the language of diversity in the centre could be useful in the context of work or education. The most striking example of this is demonstrated by Zula:

Zula was in today talking about college. She showed me her essay questions for her Sociology course. ‘Did you know’, she tells me and the people sitting on the sofas ‘it’s politically incorrect to call someone a lady?’ ‘Well you can’t exactly call them ‘man’ can you?’ says Kelly. ‘No you have to call them ‘women’ because in some cultures they don’t like being called ‘lady’. ‘And’, she carries on, ‘it’s politically incorrect to say homosexual because they used to think it was a disease.’ ‘Did you learn this in Sociology?’ I ask. ‘No, I’m helping trainers train professionals about working with young people who have been sexually exploited.’ replies Zula.⁵²

I want to use this exchange not so much because of the apparent dissonances

⁵²The charity that Zula was working with ran a workshop at New Horizon and were so impressed with her that she got involved in their training programme.

between politically correct language and more everyday expression, but because Zula shows here how learning to use this language properly is part of becoming a worker in this sector. I had noticed early on that Zula was very adept in using official language within New Horizon (asking, for example, to 'facilitate' a session). Thus learning how to use this language correctly in New Horizon potentially shores up some cultural capital for the future.

While identity is talked about using the language of multiculturalism, the London street slang spoken by many of the young people reveals other mixings. This 'street talk' combines Jamaican, African American slang with London vernacular in a way that is not a straight forward appropriation (Back:1996, Hewitt:1986). Rather than a conscious 'opting in' to street talk, some of the white young men made efforts to opt out, criticising the use of certain words. For example, in a workshop where gun and knife crime were being discussed and someone was referring to various 'crews', one young man insisted 'It's 'firm' not 'crew'!' Cockney words (often rhyming slang) seem to be used by some of the white young men intentionally to mark out their difference. These utterances need to be taken in the context of New Horizon as a place of the displaced. In considering identity talk and street talk I want to turn to one of the young men who identifies as Cockney.

When I interviewed Andrew, he hadn't been out of a Young Offenders Institute for long. He was keen to be interviewed and he spoke quickly, the words almost tripping each other up. In this extract, which is worth quoting at length, he not only speaks about his identity as a 'little Cockney man' but 'does' a cockney identity through the exchange. Although Andrew is also aware of the limiting effects of this label, he is keen to align himself with Cockney as a culture, using the language of multiculturalism. The exchange could be read as mere performance for my benefit but this would demarcate it from his everyday way of being. It should be noted that this exchange was entirely in keeping with how Andrew was the rest of the time in the centre. Rather than, the exchange can be understood as performative in the sense of repeated 'words, acts, gesture and desire' that produce the effect of an internal core on the surface of the body (Butler: 1990:416).

Reproducing this extract could be risky, merely reproducing Andrew as a

stereotypical 'cheeky chappy' (see the discussion of Mayhew, Chapter 2 pg. 46) . Les Back suggests: 'On occasions where faithfully, and idiomatically, transcribed working-class speech makes it onto the page it jars the eye. The results can read like a Dick Van Dyke caricature of chirpy Cockney brogue.'(2007:76) But there are also threads and hints in Andrew's story that complicate a discourse of Cockney Englishness:

A- I'm brought up and bred in South London, a little Cockney man ...

E- And what does being Cockney mean to you?

A- Cockney, it's me innit?! Cockney, it's where I've brought up, isn't it? Cockney South Londoner, you know, two for a fiver on the old markets and that! [E laughs] That's me. When people talk to me and that, and they say 'You're Cockney, you're Cockney'. I think you don't hear a lot of Cockneys no more as well, it's a rarity to hear Cockneys. Being Cockney to me is one of the diversities of who I am, you know.

Everyone's got diversities of who they are and Cockney to me ... I'm proud to be Cockney. I'm proud to live up to that name, the old Del Boy. I like to be thought of like that, the old dodger.

E- [laughs] Yeah?

A- But in other ways when people say to me 'You're Cockney' they always expect me to be a wheeler and dealer and when I talk to people a lot of people don't trust me, you know just because of my accent and the way I talk and that. You know? They straight away, don't trust me, 'You're Cockney in't ya? You're dodgy you are.'

E- Really?

A-Yeah, 'I wouldn't trust you with my money.' Always.

E- Does that tend to be inside or outside of London?

A- Mainly outside London, mainly, definitely outside London but also inside London ... cos a lot of people now, when I hear people talk it's like a different language, it's all this 'Wa gwaan' and all this completely ... nonsense to me. I'm glad I don't talk like that. I'm glad my

generation just missed all this. I'm glad my generation just missed all this knifing and that's going on at the moment.

E- You say that like you're really old!

A- That's the mad thing. I say like I'm old, I'm only 20 but I think it's like, the area I grew up in. I think if I was brought up in any other area I would be exactly the same but I think the one area I got brought up in, in Bermondsey it didn't matter what colour you are, everyone was just on [making] money and that. Everyone weren't caring what you were wearing, no one cared what postcode you come from, cos where I lived there's lots of estates and that, full of estates, but everyone wanted to make money. I was burgling offices from the age of 14 ... It was mad. No one cared of who you are, about what colour you are, it was more about if you were on it, if you were making money, or working like my pals working. That's why I think my generation isn't a part of this knifing ... I think I'm the last of a dying breed. [both laugh] Definitely.'

E- So what's that breed then? ...

A- ... My breed, how do I say it? If you went back ten years ago, London was like, you'd see people like me, pub men. That's changed. They've changed pubs into all these posh bars and that, which is a joke. It's against my religion. Like all these posh bars and that and you see the old English ... I don't class myself as English, that's the mad thing, I class myself as Scottish because my mum and dad are Scottish.

E- Oh ok.

A- ... but I was brought up English and I've got the English attitude and the pub life is gone.

There is much to say about this exchange in terms of the claiming of white working class identity and Andrew's attempts to define himself against other people. His account draws on notions of whiteness/blackness, masculinity, generation, location, class. In differentiating himself from other young people he alternates between explanations of time and space; it's his age (he's too old for postcode wars); it's his

area (Bermondsey is different). Firstly, Andrew describes himself as belonging to South London, a South London Cockney (you don't have to be well versed in conversation analysis to pick up on the repetition of Cockney in the second paragraph). When pushed on what being Cockney is he responds with a list: market trading, wheeling and dealing, and a famous fictional South London son, Del Boy from *Only Fools and Horses*.⁵³

Andrew uses the language of multiculturalism to reclaim a version of local working class whiteness as something to be proud of. Cockney is, he says: 'one of the diversities of who I am'. I doubt whether in a different situation Andrew would talk about 'diversities' in quite the same way. Once again, the dissonances between everyday expressions of difference and the language of multiculturalism are noticeable. This is just one example of how the young people I interviewed showed how they knew the politically correct way to talk about difference, even when it might be missing from their more casual conversations.

Not only is Cockney marked out by Andrew as an ethnicity but as a breed that is 'dying out'. He links this to changes in the classed landscape, the replacing of pubs with bars. He talks of a shrinkage of space leading to a shrinkage in visibility. Before, he says, 'you'd see people like me'. The other element that he considers to be changing is the hybridisation of youth culture. Although he says nostalgically that when he was young, colour didn't matter, he makes a distinction between Cockney and the street talk that is common in the centre. 'Wa gwaan' has a Jamaican origin but is used in the centre among young people of various ethnicities. Like Kirsty earlier, he links blackness to violence but here by the way of language (by associating 'wa gwaan' with knife crime). For him being a Cockney links him to a tradition that is unrelated to the current turf wars. He also sets up a different kind of morality based on a concern with making money against fighting over area.

In some ways, this account is not unlike the one given by Michael Collins (2004) in his eulogy for the white working class of South London. Both stress the influence of a combination of gentrification and the encroachment of other

⁵³ Only Fools and Horses is a: 'comedy following the misadventures of two Wheeler Dealer brothers Del Boy and Rodney Trotter who scrape their living by selling dodgy goods believing that next year they will be millionaires.' [<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0081912/>]

ethnicities on the existence of the South East Cockney and both acclaim Cockney as a culture. In his own way, Collins also claims to be the last of a 'dying breed'. Collins argues:

'Today, the area is in the throes of the significant change – as is the tribe with which it is historically identified, and its number elsewhere. The white working class that dominated the area for so long is being succeeded by different races and nationalities, as well as a new middle class that is beginning to colonise this area south of the river, as it becomes defined by Tate Moderns, lofts, lattes and multiculturalism.'
(2004:11)

Only Andrew is, in fact, rather more nuanced. He describes Cockney as a 'breed' but he also acknowledges that this isn't straightforward. He has to stop himself to acknowledge his own hybridity as a Cockney Scot. But it isn't just Andrew's self-narration that starts to unravel Englishness/whiteness/Cockney. Once his words are transcribed, they may convey a white Cockney identity, yet it should be noted that in the interview Andrew also uses words that are part of the hybrid London street slang spoken by most of the young people in the centre ('flex', 'innit'). Also, to these ears, there are inflections in Andrew's voice that speak of growing up in a multicultural city,⁵⁴ a slight w sound in 'boy', for example.

When taken in the context of the whole interview there is another element to this story. Andrew does not occupy this area that he talks about having such a connection to and being proud of, in fact he can't go back. His debts in South London prevent him from returning (we shall explore this element of Andrew's story further in Chapter 5). Thus his emphasis here on 'roots' needs to be read from the position of Andrew's location in a place of the displaced. The next chapter picks up Andrew's story again to focus on the theme of movement within the city and the

⁵⁴ And lest we forget what is regarded as 'traditional' London vernacular is a product of the intermingling of many generations, including 'the specialised jargon of street traders, costermongers, market workers and so on, the influences of Cockney rhyming slang, the words and tones of Romany and Yiddish and the idioms of Irish immigrants' (Hewitt:1986:126).

pain of local forms of dislocation.

Conclusion

‘Cosmopolitans today are often the victims of modernity, failed by capitalism’s upward mobility ... Refugees, people of the diaspora, and migrants and exiles represent the spirit of the cosmopolitan community.’ (Pollock et al:2002:6)

‘In the allure of the contemporary global city cosmopolitanism, diversity and difference shimmer for a moment. Racism, nationalism, ethnic cleansing and xenophobia return as urban nightmares.’ (Keith: 2009:551)

I started with the proposition that New Horizon can be thought of as an urban configuration. Here the costs of London as a neo-liberal global city are certainly laid out starkly. Massey (2007) reminds us that the coexistence of extremes of poverty and wealth should not be conceptualised as a contradiction: ‘Rather it is that London is a successful city and *in part as a result of that particular form of success*, inequality is reproduced within it’ (2007:62, original emphasis). I would go further and stress how in this setting it is possible to see how inequalities and different local and global exiles *constitute* the city and are also reproduced in various ways within it. Difference and diversity can, as Keith argues, ‘shimmer’, and there are shimmering moments at New Horizon; Kirsty, Lidi and Madihah giggling away on the deck of *Moosk*. But the encounter is underpinned by urban nightmares of homelessness and exile, which are rarely put into words. Looking at New Horizon as a ‘place of the displaced’ therefore, provides not only a portrait of the ‘hidden homeless’ but also points to the ways in which different forms of violence and forced movement constitute the multicultural city. The impact of successive global nightmares on New Horizon emerged in my interview with Dean (pg. 105). These waves of global displacement produce the space of New Horizon by bringing refugees, asylum

seekers and migrants, alongside more local exiles.

Pollock et al note that today's cosmopolitans are 'often the victims of modernity, failed by capitalism's upward mobility'. By examining New Horizon as a place of the displaced rather than focussing only on those who belong to diasporas or are refugees, it becomes possible to see how others who have been failed by capitalism are also living cosmopolitan lives, shaped by different forms of exile. The sense of being in a shared set of circumstances ('the same boat') can help to create a space where difference can be recognised, sometimes experienced uneasily, not reconcilable but not unbreachable either. In Chapter 7, we will consider how being in the 'same boat' can lead to the formation of friendships. But thinking through the limits of the analogy (of 'the same boat') reveals the different forms of exile and violence that bring people to the centre in the first place. Being 'in the same boat' stems from shared implication in a set of *current* difficult circumstances: homelessness, displacement, poverty (these constraints and push factors that keep young people moving around will be explored in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8) but speaks little of pasts.

I have argued that as well as there being a problem with the language of mobility, there is also a problem with using the language of multiculturalism to grasp these encounters. It is both useful and limiting. This language can be a useful resource deployed in the centre to limit moments of potential conflict and to create a safe space. Although moves from everyday expressions of difference to the interview transcripts may read as a little jarring, being able to move between different ways of talking about difference can also be a form of cultural capital, as in the case of Zula. But ultimately the language of multiculturalism fails to capture the kind of experiences of violence that Nadif articulates in the men's group discussion. These experiences of terror and profound loss are flattened in talk of 'cultures'. Ahmed et al argue: 'by encompassing 'everything' the word 'diversity' can actually stop you from examining how specific social categories shape individuals and organisations.' (2006:43) What Nadif does is to bring back into the discussion the specificity of his experience as a refugee, problematising a shared identity of being 'ghetto'.

This chapter has examined how multi-scalar trajectories of homelessness can be followed out from the place of New Horizon and how difference is spoken in

the day centre. The theme of the 'same boat' will be problematised further in Chapter 7, which looks at experiences of the hostel system. The next two chapters zoom in, looking at how movement around the city is both perpetuated and curtailed.

Mobile Lives – Introduction to Chapters 5 and 6

Mapping ‘Our London’

We sit in a circle on the floor around the map that has been backed on white paper. Various marker pens, smaller pieces of paper and post-it notes are scattered around. The map is of London, ‘EastEnders!’ is the first reaction of a few of the young people. They seem unsure about what they are supposed to do. Me saying ‘Draw a map of your London’, doesn’t seem to be helping. I explain that first we are going to draw our own maps, especially thinking about safety and danger and then plot those personal maps on the big communal map. Amanda takes a post-it note, writes ‘Swag’ on it and sticks it on Clapham Common. More silence. I start to worry, but then people begin drawing.

Marcos scribbles North, West, East, South on his paper and writes ‘Crackheads’ on East, ‘Over gangster’ on West, ‘Dickheads’ on North. But then he starts to write on the big map ‘Smoking spot’ in Regents Park, he marks a hostel he used to live in. Nicola also draws North, East, South and West on the edges of her paper but more carefully. She then fills it in. NW1 is her ‘adopted home’ the first place she came to when she moved to London. In the middle is Central (Soho and Oxford Street) at the bottom is Victoria and a picture of a house with a chimney and smoke coming out of it ‘where I live’. East London is marked ‘Weave’ (she used to get her hair done there). Kelly says she can’t draw and that this is making her feel ‘disabled’. She removes herself from the group. I think she has abandoned the task but actually she sits away from the group with another worker and draws a neat map of the bus route that goes from her house to the youth centre. She names all the tube stops, Holloway Prison and churches. She lines the route with trees and bins (‘because you always get bins next to bus stops, don’t you?’). She is keen to take home ‘the original’ but lets me take a copy. She won’t even let me take the map to the photocopier on my own, ‘It’s my work. I’m an artist.’

Marie also takes herself away from the group and comes back with a map of Victoria. An area of shops is marked playfully with a dollar sign. Individual shops are pulled out - Costcutters, Tesco, a pizza place – as well as landmarks – churches and the Channel 4 building. She also draws buses naming them by their number. In the top right hand corner is a box representing her hostel, (this differs to Nicola’s idealised representation of the same hostel as a house with smoke coming out of the chimney). The three bus routes marked out on the buses by their number represent how this place is linked to others. The only one where the destination is named is the 73, marked

Euston/Victoria, showing the route between her hostel and New Horizon. Copying her map onto the main map, she labels Victoria 'a peaceful place' and adds 'I got lost [the first time] I tried to find Victoria'. Marie also writes next to Victoria 'a place where you can find peace'. Her enthusiasm for the area is conveyed in the invitation 'Come and See!'

Amanda's map points out places from her past, relating to drugs and the arrests of her friends, she elaborates on the post-it note comment, Clapham Common is 'Swag Endz – bad experiences happn'd there'. Saba says she is too new in London to do the exercise, I say she should just put down the places that she knows. She draws a map of her hostel, Euston and the youth centre, barely pressing her pencil on the paper. Between the hostel and youth centre is a figure, signifying that she walks between the two. These tentative markings of a newcomer are drawn so faintly that someone writes over them by accident. Nicola on the other hand, draws all over the big map pointing out a good Portuguese café here and a place to get cheap piercings there. Others recall stories that happened in places 'On Notting Hill Carnival Day me and Amanda had to stop at the toilets at Liverpool Street coz I had a bad tummy'. Kelly comments that she hates Camden because she once saw a man with horns there. She adds to the map 'I hate Camden coz of men with horns'. Those who draw all over the map contrast with George who takes great care in finding 4 points in South London. He marks them with stars and then joins them up and wrote 'Where I live'. When asked what it means he replies 'my territory'.

The maps when put together rub each other up the wrong way. Someone has scribbled 'Lidl' over the Arsenal ground which is corrected by John who proclaims it 'the best football team in Britain'. There is much consternation over the labelling of parts of East London. The map only extends so far and arrows have to be written off to the side to other places, Rochester prison, Kent, Enfield. The map provides an arena to display acquired knowledge – where the good places are – as well as affiliations. It prompts stories, of days out gone wrong (the upset stomach in Liverpool Street station on carnival day), of bewilderment ('I got lost the first time I came to Victoria'), bad experiences, ('got arrested. Met a crackhead, got into serious trouble.') and risks. Both fun and painful experiences are marked on the map and the difficult relationship between feelings of territory and dislocation is summed up in someone's comment, an arrow pointing to somewhere in East London reading 'Home Sweet Home (not)!'



Fig. 0.7. 'Our London' – The Map

'[T]he very idea of a map, with its implicit dependence upon the survey of a stable terrain, fixed referents and measurement, seems to contradict the palpable flux and fluidity of metropolitan life and cosmopolitan movement. Maps are full of references and indications but they are not peopled.' Iain Chambers (1993:188)

In the previous chapter we considered the different kinds of displacement that produce this group of 'young homeless people' in London. We considered how these lives might be characterised by high levels of mobility for many reasons including fleeing war, or running from drug debt. London becomes the destination for many reasons, a search for community, jobs or adventure. It would be simplistic to conceptualise this as a relation of push and pull separating 'place' from 'people' (Hannam et al: 2006), these movements are part of what constitutes place. The last chapter considered movement as the displacement that is related to becoming homeless. However, in the young people's lives, various types of movement are

taking place; the displacement from a place of origin to London or from an outer-lying area of London to the centre; the everyday movement that takes place around the city; the relocation to another hostel or to prison. When examined closely, within these stories of extreme mobility, movement is revealed as heavily restricted.

These two chapters focus on everyday movement around the city. I want to suggest that the dichotomy of mobility/fixity is of limited use here. Rather the young people move, and are moved, around but this very process of moving is something they become fixed into and indeed becomes part of how they talk about themselves. Thus it is a kind of mobility that is heavily restricted but yet perpetuated by a combination of factors.

I have argued in Chapters 3 and 4 that New Horizon is a place of extreme diversity. This is demonstrated in the variety of places marked on the map. There are however, some points where the maps overlap, for example New Horizon and the central London hostels, where most of the young people have resided at some time, are common points of orientation (young people's relationships to these places are considered in Chapters 3 and 7). The map brings together all these fragments, it is a composite map and does not lend itself to being read in a straightforward manner.

Chambers (above) notes that maps are not peopled. This map is rather different from an official map, it is a sort of palimpsest of official map and the young people's personal maps. However, while writing over an official map feels quite transgressive, the individual is still guided by the existing 'objective' representation of the city, the map's edges, the line of the river. There are many things this map misses – the back-stories, the journeys out of London (sometimes indicated by arrows), a sense of time, all these things are flattened out or excluded. The individual maps are different again. I will suggest that they are performative, allowing a kind of place-claiming.

While places on the large official map of London are often circled and labelled, the personal maps are often based on or contain journeys. Saba's London at this point was made up of New Horizon, her hostel and the walk between them. While Kelly's personal map was much more elaborate, the way she chose to

represent London on her own map was similar: the route from her flat to New Horizon – a journey. On paper these journeys are represented as lines, be that Kelly’s snaking bus journey (Fig. 0.9. pg. 150) or Andrew’s map of ups and downs (Fig 0.8. pg. 147) but the lines don’t reveal much about the rhythm of these journeys or how the journeys may be shaped by other factors. These individual maps together with interviews will form the basis for Chapter 5. This chapter focuses particularly one type of movement, moving into the hostel, and how this mobility is managed and made sense of. This chapter will introduce the notion of ambivalent mobility in the lives of the young people.

Chapter 6 focuses on forces that constrain and shape mobility once a young person is set in motion. The young people talk about London as divided into different areas sometimes this just takes the form of North, East, South, West, Central – as noted in the excerpt from the mapping exercise above. Young people from elsewhere seem to pick up this way of talking about London (as ‘West’ or ‘East’) fairly quickly. But areas are also spoken about and experienced as broken into far smaller chunks, most clearly shown on our map by George’s marking of his territory. Focussing on ideas of territory, danger and the limits of reorientation, Chapter 6 will interrogate the different levels of surveillance that emerged in the mapping exercise and video and audio interviews.

In these chapters I want to draw out some of the contradictions of the young people’s implication in systems which move them from some places and fix them in others – and indeed fix them in mobility.

Chapter 5

Making Tracks – Ambivalent Mobilities

In the context of the New Horizon drop-in, it quickly becomes obvious how much movement is involved in the daily lives of the young people. Conversations abound about what is the best bus route to where. The workers are often helping the young people to print maps to help them find various hostels, job centres or colleges. At 4 o'clock everyone has to leave. Those who have nowhere to go may be advised to 'stay on the buses tonight', meaning spending the night riding buses, in order to stay off the street. Others will be going back to their hostels (or flats, or friends' flats) all over London. There is invariably some delaying, cups of tea are made at the last minute, a bag has to be taken from the project room. On my first day on the floor some of the young people strike up a chorus of 'We shall not be moved'. It's a daily displacement in the lives of young people who are always on the move.

The patterns and types of movement in the young people's lives vary considerably. This chapter argues that although the young people I have been working with are put in motion around the city because of their homelessness, this unfolds in very different ways. As argued in Chapter 1, much of the literature on homelessness and mobility focuses on street homeless people who are visibly homeless. While some of the young people would fit into this category, most experience street homelessness not for prolonged periods but for short stretches of time. The majority of them do not look like the predominant image of a homeless person. Here I want to emphasise that being on the 'homeless circuit' (Wardhaugh: 1996) of drop-ins and hostels and job centres for many is experienced alongside other ties of college or family. The young people's moorings (hostels, friends' houses, colleges, New Horizon) can be temporary or of more lasting importance but are key points of orientation. Other affiliations are less easy to tie down but contribute to how the young people make sense of the spaces they move through.

De Certeau's notion of tactics becomes useful in understanding how people make partial claims to space. De Certeau distinguishes between strategy and tactics. For him, power is a precondition of this ability to act strategically. Being strategic

involves 'the mastery of time' (1988:36) and the possession of a panoptic perspective which allows a view of what is about to happen. It involves having a solid position from which to make plans and intervene. Alternatively a tactic is defined thus:

'The space of the tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. It does not have the means to keep to itself, at a distance, in a position of withdrawal, foresight, and self-collection ... It does not therefore, have the option of planning general strategy and viewing the adversary as a whole within a distinct, visible and objectifiable space. It operates in isolated actions blow by blow. It takes advantage of 'opportunities' and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings, build up its own position and plan raids. What it wins it cannot keep. This nowhere gives a tactic mobility, to be sure, but a mobility that must accept the chance offerings of the moment, and seize on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any given moment. It must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers.' (1988:37)

A tactic is a move made in the present without the luxury of the view of the whole terrain from a secure standing place. In the case of my respondents' space claiming activities, these are tactics employed very much on the move by people who are displaced.

Focussing on movement within the city, I will examine the types of tactical movement in the city and ways of relating to movement that are recurring in the accounts of the young people. I consider accounts of mobility as a resource and mobility as loss before moving on to considering mobility as management and the practise of 'the art of being inbetween' (de Certeau;1988:30). Here I wish to emphasise that movement is never totally free and random but requires moorings and direction, as well as introducing the intervention that the hostel system makes in

the orientation of the young people.

Mobility as Tactic

'I've seen the best part of London by foot, everywhere in London in the space of two months. The only place I haven't been is Essex and the reason we didn't go out that way was because he [friend] had warrants out for him ... I've been in the North. I've walked the best part of the North. I've walked Central, South, I've been there and literally walked round everywhere.' Niall

As I suggested in Chapter 1, if walking is to 'lack a place' (de Certeau:1988:103) it is also one of the processes by which urban space is made and by which one finds one's place in it. Various kinds of walking figure in the accounts of the young people. Here I want to examine three different accounts of tactical mobility in the stories of Pete, Niall and Ryan. We encountered Pete in Chapter 2 when he spoke of his approach to dealing with hostel keyworkers.⁵⁵ Originally from Northern Ireland, Pete describes his experiments with walking in the city that have an almost Situationist flavour:

P- I go round everywhere. I even get myself lost cos, I just do.

E- For fun?

P- If I need to go up and take a left, I'll take a left before and try and find it that way. Easier because then I have different routes to go, just to find out London.

E- And how did you get to know your way around, did someone show you or did you have to work it out by yourself?

P- Just worked it out by myself. I don't want to ask no one 'oh where's

⁵⁵ 'Keyworking is a term used to describe an approach to care or support planning where each resident has allocated to them one hostel worker, known as their keyworker, who will be their main source of professional support during their stay.' Homeless Link Handbook [<http://handbooks.homeless.org.uk/hostels/journey/keywork>]

this place?’ You’re better off just finding it out yourself. Rely on your own self because people can’t be there the rest of my life showing me the way. So I just do it myself, figure out my own ways...

I normally just walked everywhere because I used to live in Holborn, so I used to walk round Tottenham Court Road, Trafalgar Square, Euston and all of that, Camden. I used to walk about.

If taken completely out of context this may seem like quite a romantic experience of the city, in line with an equally romantic notion of the flaneur, vagabond or traveller. However, the reason that Pete was walking so much when he was in Holborn was that he had just got out of prison and had been put in a hostel that he found frightening and depressing. It wasn’t one of the emergency hostels that cater specifically for young people and he talks about being surrounded by death and addiction while he was living there. Thus, wandering in this case is a direct result of his being placed somewhere that he finds unliveable, a tactic. Notice that he ‘used’ to walk about. Now he lives in a hostel he is more happy with, his days are structured around attending the youth centre and walking about has become less necessary.

Pete’s story introduces the complex relationship of displacement, motion and the intervention of agencies that characterise the lives of many of the young people. The movement he describes seems to be unhampered by official or unofficial presences that control space. Yet Pete talks of London as a very unsafe place. He talks about London as a place where ‘People [are] getting robbed, stabbed, shot, mugged, raped.’

For Pete, the things that he finds threatening, the police and people who he considers posing a threat to him, could be anywhere. As a relative newcomer to London he doesn’t seem to experience it as bounded territories. This perhaps gives some freedom of movement but also means that he doesn’t feel safe in any area which contrasts with the spatial stories of young people from London who often talk about the city as being divided into North, South, East, West, Central or by borough. While this will be explored fully in Chapter 6, it is perhaps useful to point

out here that young people from London often express an affiliation to their local area of origin even when they are estranged from it. It is very common for them to talk about moving around other areas in London as potentially risky. For Pete playing these tricks on himself and getting lost on purpose is a survival tactic. It serves the dual purposes of keeping him out of his hostel and of learning the different routes that might be useful to him.

The period before entering the homeless system is often characterised by a certain kind of tactical walking in London. Walking to kill time, walking to find a place to stay. This experience encapsulates what Kawash is referring to when she describes 'the perpetual state of movement' of the homeless person (1998:325).

Niall came to London from Ireland to get away from a drug debt and his involvement with gangs in his hometown. In his description of when he first came to the UK, there are two different stages of wandering. In each period he had a guide, the first was a person he met on the streets (who is now in prison), the second was a Swedish traveller he met in a backpackers hostel. While he talks of this former period as a time of discovery and adventure (he says 'We were travelling') it was also very difficult. Through walking he was learning not only the geography of the city but how to negotiate its spaces as a homeless person:

N- Back home you can sleep down in an alleyway and no one will touch you but what he [friend] taught me was one, stay away from alleyways, stay away from the back of train stations because you get a lot of crackheads down there. Basically it was general knowledge that I needed to know out on the street, because there's a certain time to sleep and a certain time not to sleep because you'll always get your wanderers [at] one or two in the morning. If you're going to sleep go to sleep at three and get up again at six so we were only getting three hours sleep. Out in the cold.

E- So, what kind of places did you sleep if you avoided alleyways, train stations?

N- Buildings. Old buildings. We slept in one in Dagenham, in a garage

and it was so warm ... It was an old abandoned place but the way we were looking at it, it was a roof over our heads, we didn't care. We honestly didn't care if we were called tramps, say what you like.

These survival skills are not just about space but also about time ('there's a certain time to sleep and a certain time not to sleep'). These time restrictions also perpetuate Niall's movement. Practising mobility as a tactic here also involves knowing when and where it is safe to stop.

Niall's second period of wandering came when he was living in a hostel for backpackers. The backpackers hostel is not part of the official homeless hostel network and so this was a sort of in-between stage, between the street and the more regulated world of the emergency hostel, made possible by money sent from his family. This part of Niall's story comes from before his entry into the official hostel system and its world of keyworkers and Housing Benefit claims. He talks about being in the backpackers hostel as a happy time where he met people from all over the world. It was also a period of getting to know London. This period of walking was different from the first. It isn't driven by absolute necessity and is more localised to one area of North London. He describes walking around Holloway, Hornsey Road and Archway (all relatively near to each other) at night, drinking a few cans of beer and 'opening his eyes to life around here.'

Niall claims to be indifferent about being labelled a 'tramp' and talks about his movement around the city as travelling. Perhaps being around other people who were 'travellers' in the backpackers hostel enables Niall to claim this category for himself.⁵⁶ Travelling here is cast as an adventure, albeit a very difficult and uncomfortable one. For both Pete and Niall mobility, or more specifically walking, is talked of as a resource, as a way of coming to gain knowledge of London and to keep out of danger.

The need to keep moving in order to seek shelter plays out differently for

⁵⁶ It is worth noting that a period of travelling for self-discovery and adventure in the form of 'the gap year' has become an accepted stage of life between school and university for a certain kind of middle class British person.

Ryan. Ryan is from East London (in the previous Chapter he spoke enthusiastically about the area's multiculturalism) and is reluctant to enter the hostel system because he perceives it as being unsafe. Like Niall, he has to travel around London but Ryan knows people he can ask to put him up for a night here and there, thus keeping him off the street:

R- I'm staying the whole way around London, there ain't a part of London I haven't been in.

E- And how's that?

R- Stressing but I prefer travelling to a destination than having no destination at all. I like knowing that I have a warm place, the couch, the floor, as long as there's heating in that house, I'm happy, it's better than sleeping on the streets.

E- Do you have to go to a different place every day?

R- Not every day, it's just when I've been ... I don't like to overstay my welcome.

Ryan does not frame his movement around London as travelling as a way of gaining knowledge. It's just tiring and stressful. But the movement is purposeful and always towards a destination ('I prefer travelling to a destination than having no destination at all.') Ryan is an extremely energetic and articulate young man who was sofa surfing and trying to maintain his studies at college but the situation was taking its toll. Sometimes we used to play chess together. Ryan was usually keen to play, even though this must have been dull for him – he would beat me in minutes. But some days Ryan wouldn't speak at all and would lie on the sofa on his own. The sheer exhaustion of being on the move should not be underestimated.

Ryan was trying to avoid going into the hostel system, which he perceived as unsafe, by drawing on his connections. He provides a useful counterpoint to Niall. Perhaps coming from London does away with any sense of romanticism about having to travel around it? Or perhaps Niall's experience being a few months in the past led him to reflect on the adventurous element of his travels. In both these cases

though, the movement is driven by desperation, whim and opportunity.

Here, we have seen mobility being used as a tactic in three different ways: to keep out of the hostel, to keep safe on the streets and to avoid being a nuisance to friends.

The kind of movement described by Niall and Ryan often changes when a young person comes into the network of agencies that work with the homeless in London. While looking at the pushes and pulls of this system I do not mean to imply that the young people are passive or that other feelings and calculations of risk do not shape their decisions (we shall consider these factors in the next chapter). Decisions are made on a day-to-day basis about where to go and where not to go. However the homeless system (which I'm using to describe the network of hostels, agencies and borough councils that the homeless person becomes enmeshed in) has spatial consequences.

Moving into the Hostel

New Horizon's advice team regularly refers young people into the Soho based emergency hostels that are specifically for young people. Young people who attend New Horizon (those from London boroughs and newcomers to the capital) often start their move into the hostel system in the West End, as this is where the emergency hostels specifically catering for young people are located. Some of those young people come from inside London, some from outside. This move can have a profound effect on a young person who may be unfamiliar with this area, many of the young people from London describe living quite localised lives until they became homeless. Often following this, young people are then transferred to long-term hostels that are scattered throughout London. This movement shouldn't be thought of in terms of steady progression (on the street, emergency hostel, long-term hostel). Although this can happen, many stories are punctuated by periods of street homelessness, sofa surfing, or a spell in prison.

Here I would like to outline three responses to this move, mobility as a resource, mobility as loss and mobility as managing.

i. Mobility as a resource

The movement into Central London can have the effect of increasing the mobility around the city of the young person who has not travelled far out of their local area before, as Michael (the MC from Chapter 2) describes:

‘When I started getting kicked out of my mum’s I didn’t really have anywhere to go, apart from a lady who I used to stay with who lived on the estate as well, but after I started moving up into the hostels, Soho sort of become the area, Central London, Piccadilly and that. They were the areas where I started becoming prone to going because that’s where I was living and that’s where the Jobcentres were. I just sort of adapted to that area there. And then from there ... that was probably quite a good thing for me as well because from there I sort of got into hostels in different places and my friends got into hostels all over London and so *I made tracks*, do you know what I mean? I know my way around London quite a lot now because I’ve been pushed into that central part and you can go anywhere from Central, it’s not like you’re stuck in one area so it has given me a more wider outlook on London. I can make my way round. Before I got into the hostels I knew as much as Hammersmith, Fulham, Shepherds Bush and Barons Court and just sort of around that West London area and a few areas towards central, as far as Knightsbridge but I just didn’t know as much, like Hyde Park Corner that was about it. But now I know Central, I can go, any road I can go from Central and I know what direction I’m going. It has given me a bit of knowledge about the area I’m living in.’

Michael talks of the move to ‘Central’ in terms of gain and of increasing his knowledge of the city, he ‘makes tracks’, elsewhere he says: ‘it gives you mappage’.

Caroline Knowles reminds us that journeys involve navigation. She argues

'Navigation is inevitably social: it requires knowledge and skill. Knowing 'as we go' from place to place. Not that we 'flow' across the surface of the world, but find our way within it' (2009). Knowing the city and being able to find a way around (navigation) becomes very important for those negotiating homelessness. Learning to move around the city is a skill that young homeless people must acquire. Those who don't are at a disadvantage. The stakes are high. If you can't get to the hostel on time you might miss your interview and not have anywhere to sleep that night.

Sara Ahmed suggests: 'To be orientated is also to be turned toward certain objects, those that help us find our way. These are objects we recognize so that when we face them we know which we are facing. They might be landmarks or other familiar signs that give us anchoring points' (2006:1) She goes on to consider how a moment of rupture can mean a moment of reorientation, a change in direction resulting from being 'knocked off course' (2006:18). Michael's homelessness can be considered such a knock dislodging him from his familiar routes and areas. He is 'making tracks'⁵⁷ and this requires reorientation. In this narrative, the move to a hostel in Soho 'pushes' Michael into Central London. Michael then becomes more connected to the area through attending a nearby Jobcentre. Being placed in 'Central' also reorientates him towards the rest of London. So Michael both becomes more *fixed* in 'Central' but also more *mobile* and outward facing. Michael's increased mobility around London comes not only from his movement to 'Central' but also the movement of his friends. As they become dispersed among hostels all over London, more travelling becomes necessary.

Michael's story encapsulates a process that happens to many young people when they enter the hostel system but this is a move that can also be accompanied by feelings of profound loss.

ii. Mobility as Loss

A similar story to Michael's, in terms of movement from another borough into Central London, is told in Andrew's map. Andrew grew up in South London (he

⁵⁷ The road metaphor was often used in the interviews I conducted, for example, the idea of being at a 'crossroads'.

described his affiliation to his area in the previous chapter: ‘I’m brought up and bred in South London, a little Cockney man.’) but had to leave because of drug debts. He explains:

‘I left South London and come straight up into here and I sorta, never went back to South London after that. I went back to see my dad here and there but people-wise, I don’t talk to them, I ain’t seen any of my old friends. I’ve heard of them through the pipeline, as you do, but I’ve come up to here and that was it. That was where my new life started with New Horizons and the staff, Janet, and yourself and things and that.’

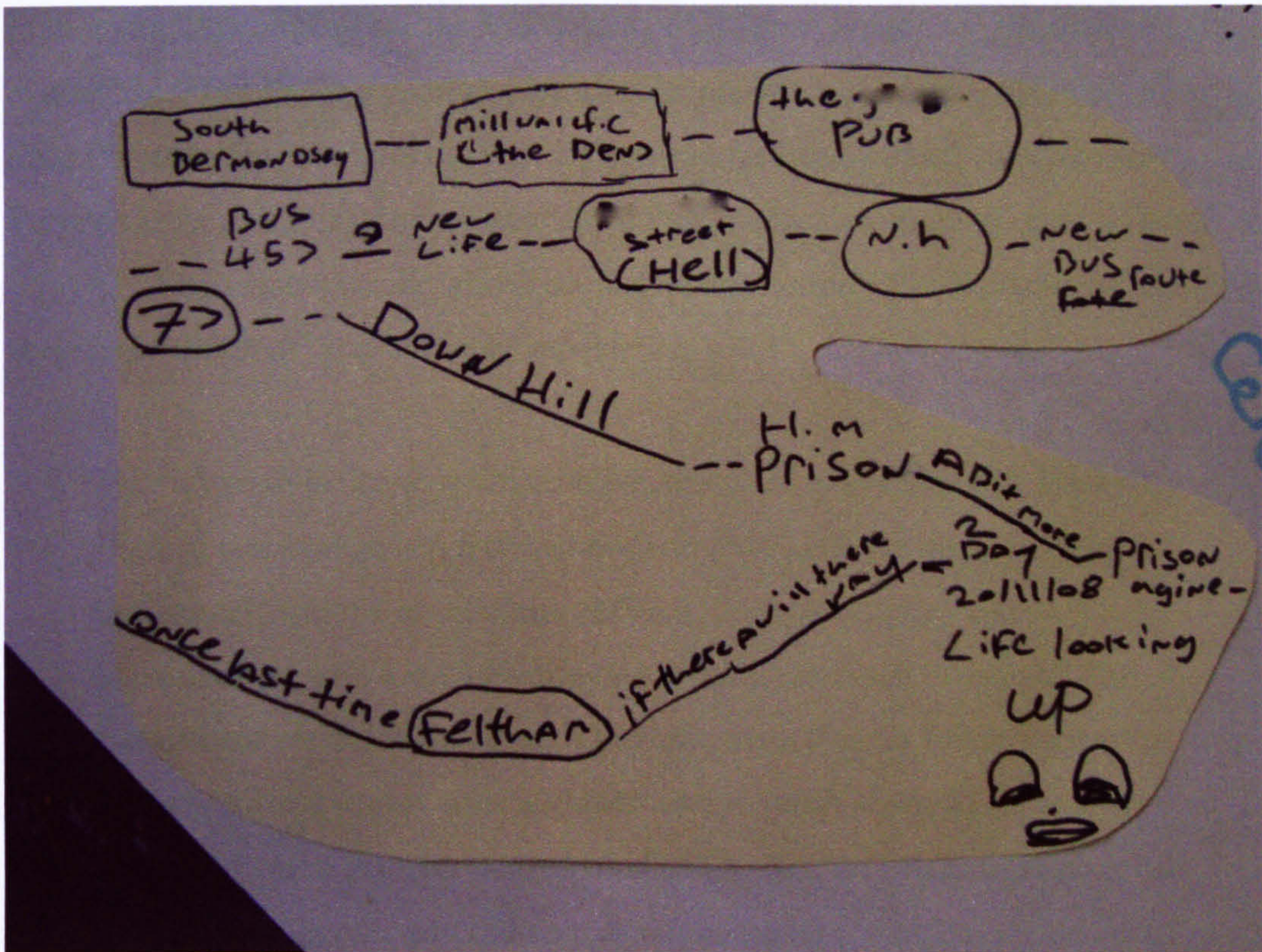


Fig. 0.8. Andrew’s map⁵⁸

⁵⁸ I’ve removed the name of Andrew’s local pub and the hostel for reasons of anonymity.

The above map is Andrew's response to the request to draw 'your London'. In this chronological map, South London reference points (place of origin, a football team's ground and a local pub) give way to the Grove Street⁵⁹ hostel (Central London) and a 'new life' accompanied by a 'new bus route'. There is a definite moment of rupture here. Grove Street is labelled simply as 'hell' (although Andrew's verbal account of life in this hostel is actually much more ambivalent than its representation on the map, see Chapter 7). Bus routes feature on many of the young people's maps and I think here the new bus route can be interpreted as representing the new urban knowledges that are needed to adapt to a new area. From this 'new life' the map moves downhill to prison. The prison here isn't named (but is outside of London). Still, it figures on the map of London as it causes another rupture and displaces Andrew again. This is not just a representation of place. Bundled together in this map are ideas of space-time-progress. The moves to prison are represented by lines going 'downhill'. The ups and downs of his life so far are represented visually as exactly that. But strangely, other periods (and places) in Andrew's life don't make it onto the map, for example, the year he spent in Ireland working as a labourer. Perhaps Ireland is imagined as apart from these process of moving up and down?

When Andrew talks about leaving South London for this 'new life'. He uses the words 'different' and 'difficult' repeatedly:

'Ah, it was difficult, very difficult, because a lot of the kids that I knew there. I was brought up from school and that so they were close friends you know? And it was different, difficult, coming into this new surroundings, new area, new lifestyle. I think physically it weren't bad but mentally it did damage me a little bit, even though I didn't show it. But when I was on my own and had time to think about it, I was upset about it. I was a little bit depressed about it. Not very bad depression but it was a bit different and difficult. It was something that I'm proud that I done now. I'm glad it gave me the experiences. That I can actually do it, move to a different area for me. But it was difficult like I'm saying. I was

⁵⁹ Grove street is a pseudonym.

a bit depressed like I said, all the friends that I've known for ten years and that, I lost all of them. Starting a new life, it's hard to start a new life. Especially at a young age like that. I think a lot of people start a new life when they get a bit older but especially at 18, I thought it was a bit difficult for me.'

Andrew acknowledges that the move wasn't entirely negative and says he's proud of having made this leap from South to Central but the move sounds quite traumatic – 'different' and 'difficult'. This sense of loss of area and disorientation is common in the drop-in but Andrew is unusual in putting this pain of dislocation into words⁶⁰ (this sense of territory and loss will be examined in the next chapter).

The loss that comes from moving also comes across strongly when talking to Kelly. Only this time the loss doesn't relate to a loss of a particular area but rather to the legacy of moving throughout her life. Kelly spent her childhood moving between her family, foster care and children's homes. She then came to London and was street homeless before coming to the youth centre and being referred to a hostel. A period of living in various hostels followed before eventually finding rented accommodation. Kelly told me that the constant movement in her life had left her feeling like a 'hitch-hiker' and that she was expecting to never feel at home anywhere. Her hope for the future was: 'to stay in one place. Just be normal like normal people.' Here moving is seen as not normal and a marker of difference.

⁶⁰ Indeed, this is put into words through the processes of interviewing and mapping that I initiated. Les Back points out that asking people to make such representations sets in motion a 'performance of belonging' (2007:61).

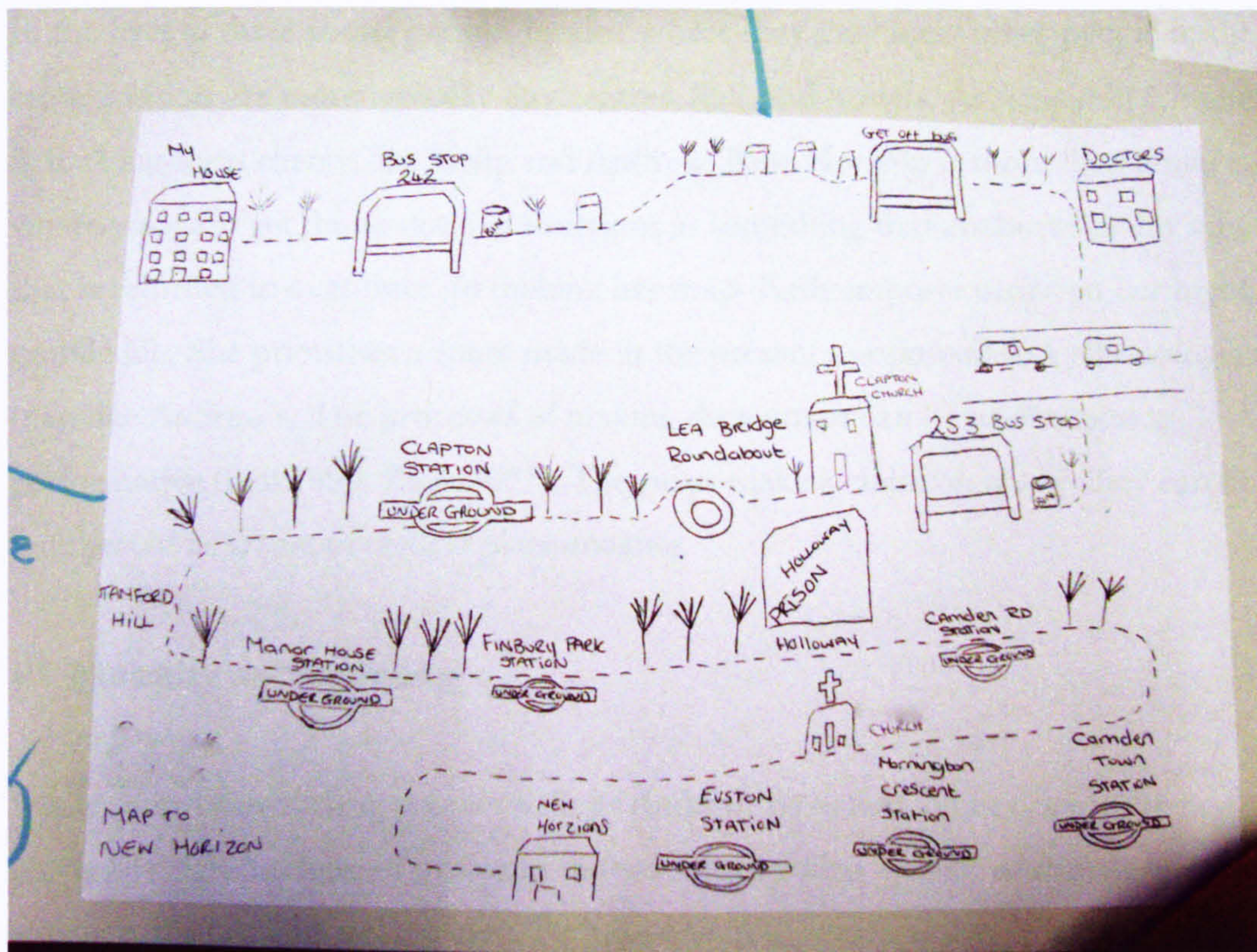


Fig. 0.9. Kelly's map

Although Kelly has moved around London this isn't reflected in her map (her response to the request to draw 'her London'). Kelly chooses to show 'her London' as the every day journey she makes from the flat she doesn't like in Hackney to New Horizon, which is for her more of a home space. She meticulously marks bus stops, bins and trees along the way, as well as places of significance to her, her doctors and church. At the time of the interview, Kelly was pregnant with her second child and still making the fairly time consuming trip from her flat in East London to the youth centre nearly every day. Within this highly mobile life then, New Horizon emerges as a crucial mooring. As Hannam et al argue:

'Mobilities thus entail distinct social spaces that orchestrate new forms of social life around [such] nodes .., for example, stations, hotels, motorways, resorts, airports, leisure complexes, cosmopolitan cities, beaches, galleries, roadside parks and so on.' (2006:12)

In the lives of these young people, 'nodes' where they may meet other people in the same position are more typically day centres, flats and hostels. As argued in Chapter 3, for long-term clients, like Kelly and Andrew, New Horizon is more than a place where you can 'get things done' it functions as something that anchors the day and that is returned to over time. In making her map, Kelly imposes order on her highly mobile life. She prioritises a route made in the present as opposed to a chronological map like Andrew's. The processes of making these maps can be understood as performative (Bell:1999, Back:2007). The maps make a claim on space, they can be interpreted as an act of tactical place-making.

iii. Mobility as Managing

While some of the young people, such as Andrew, have had to cut ties with their places of origin because of problems in their area relating to debt or threats of violence, this isn't always the case. Perhaps one of the reasons that Michael is more positive about his movement into Central London was that he felt able to return to West London where he was from. Indeed, at the time of doing the interview Michael had moved in with his father who had just got a flat in West London. Kelly also had ties to family members who at various times provided her with support but also interference⁶¹ and ultimately distress and a legal battle. It shouldn't be assumed that all young homeless people are separated from their families or areas of origin. Many move backwards and forwards between the spheres of family and of 'the homeless circuit'.

Sureeya is an example of someone who moves back and forth between her local area and her centrally located hostel, describing her interactions with the homeless network (hostel and NH) and her relationships with family, friends and community as existing in two separate spheres. In the interview the tensions between these two spheres surface.

Sureeya came to London from Somalia when she was nine and until she was 18 lived with her aunt. I had spent a lot of time with Sureeya and her best friend

⁶¹ One of her family members had taken her child from her without her permission or the intervention of social services (a situation, thankfully, since rectified).

in the drop in and when I asked if I could interview them both, Sureeya seemed keen, 'it's for research, daaaaaahling!' she explained jokingly, to her more reluctant friend in an affected posh voice. However, she seemed a little uncomfortable in the interview, chewing her gum nervously, and so I didn't push questions about the causes of her homelessness. Near the end of the interview it emerged that most of her friends didn't know she lived in a hostel. She said that a Somali girl not living at home is considered 'a bad person', and therefore she had only told her close friends about her move, everyone else thinks she lives with her aunt.

Sureeya moves between family/community spaces and the spaces of the hostel and New Horizon drop-in. These spheres are geographically demarcated, with her family and friends residing in North London and the hostel and NH in Central (see Chapter 6 for Sureeya's experiences of living in Central). This doesn't involve the same severance experienced by Andrew (although she has already experienced a much more extreme process of dislocation when having to flee Somalia) but the moving between these two kinds of spaces brings its own stresses. She is engaged in a keeping up of respectable appearances (Skeggs:1997).

Sureeya's movement between these different spheres and her continued contact with family and friends from the North London suburb where she grew up can be seen in her art work, powerfully entitled 'a week in my shoes'.⁶² This is one of the collages made with Women's Group. The women were given a disposable camera for a week and were asked to either take photos of their week or of a journey they made during that time. The group turned their photos into collages that were then exhibited at New Horizon's community open day.

⁶² The small reproduction of the collage is intentional. Although I asked for permission from the women to reproduce the artwork from this project there are photos of other young people in the centre in this collage.

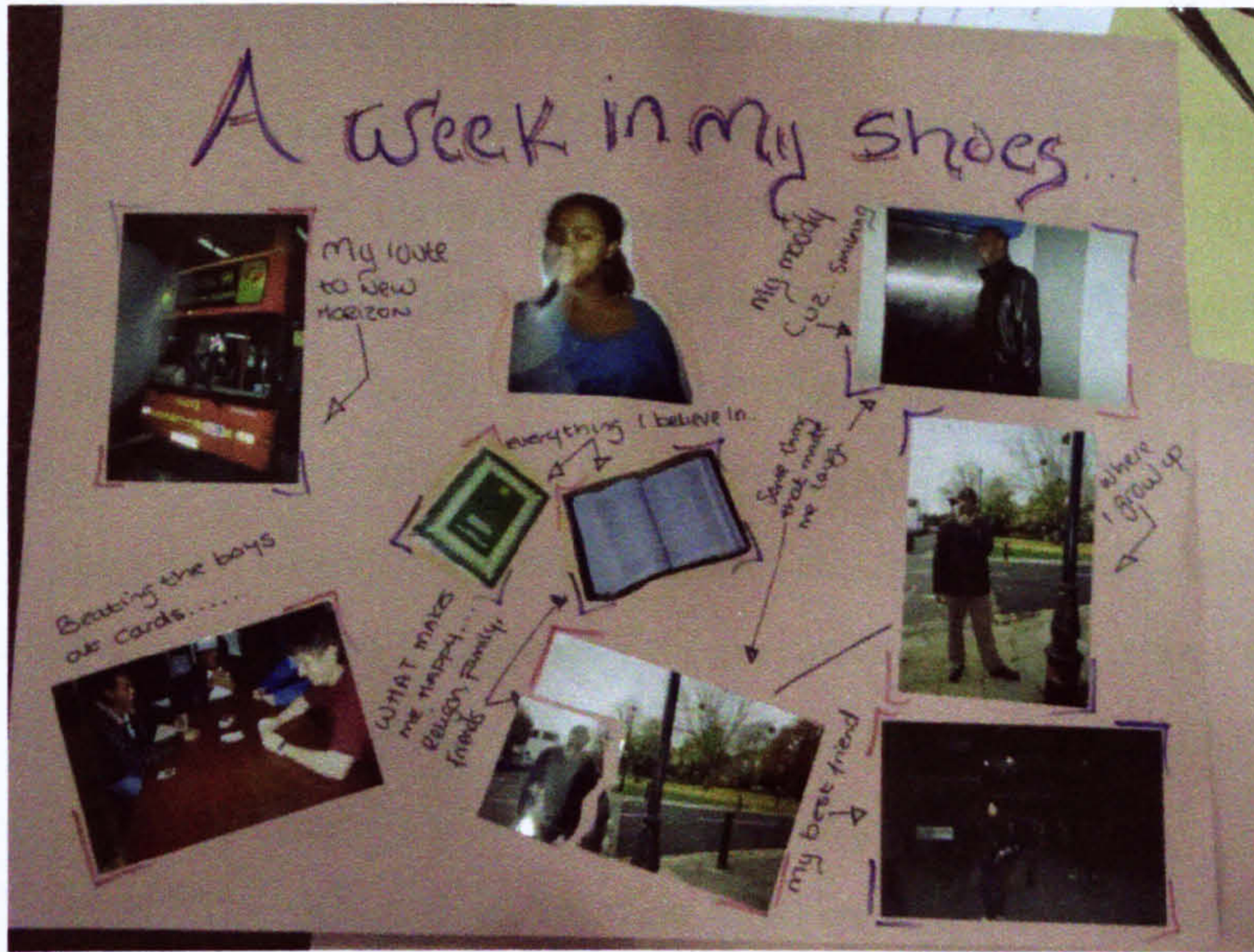


Fig 1.0. 'A week in my shoes'

Sureeya chose to document her week with a wide range of photos; taking pictures of her friends, of objects, of scenes and self-portraits. Central to Sureeya's collage is the Qu'ran ('everything I believe in'). On one side is a photo of the bus she takes to the youth centre and a photo taken in the drop-in captioned 'beating the boys at cards'. On the other side are pictures of family ('my moody cuz ... smiling') friends, and of place ('where I grew up'). These things on the right are linked with arrows and are in turn linked to the picture of the Qu'ran with an arrow and by the caption 'What makes me happy, religion, family, friends'. In this representation the sphere of friends, family, religion and local area sits alongside a distinctly separate sphere of the drop-in. Her hostel is absent from the collage and represented only by the bus that takes her away from it. The two worlds of the homeless circuit and community are not represented as being related at all, no arrows link the two sides.

While this division is represented starkly on the map, I would suggest a possible area of boundary blurring. When I first met Sureeya, she was always accompanied by her best friend Aasha, also originally from Somalia and also living in a hostel. However, at the time of the collage making and interview, Aasha had returned to live with her mother. This serves as a reminder that the collage and the interview need to be considered as snapshots from a particular point in a person's life. As argued in Chapter 2 one of the benefits of ethnography is that it allows a picture

to build over a longer period of time. Furthermore, we can interpret the collage as performatively reinscribing this division between two spheres.

Another form of performative map-making, can be seen in one of the other collages from the Women's Group project, made by Amanda. After dealing with a catalogue of problems – not least of which was someone committing benefit fraud in her name, which interfered in the process of getting a hostel – Amanda had secured a place in a women only hostel in an area that she liked. After having been given a disposable camera for a week and given the option to either document a journey or her week she chose instead to document 'Things That I Like'. All the photos for this collage were taken in, or from her hostel bedroom.

The things that Amanda liked included Tottenham, her make-up, the song lyrics that she wrote everyday, her jewellery and the view from her hostel window. She rearranges objects on her bed and takes photos of them. She wrote below her photo: 'This is a view of outside my window. The area that I recently live in is Stokey N16. It's a view of the buildings and a view of the streets. As it was morning, the sky was bright and I liked the view on a winter's morning.'

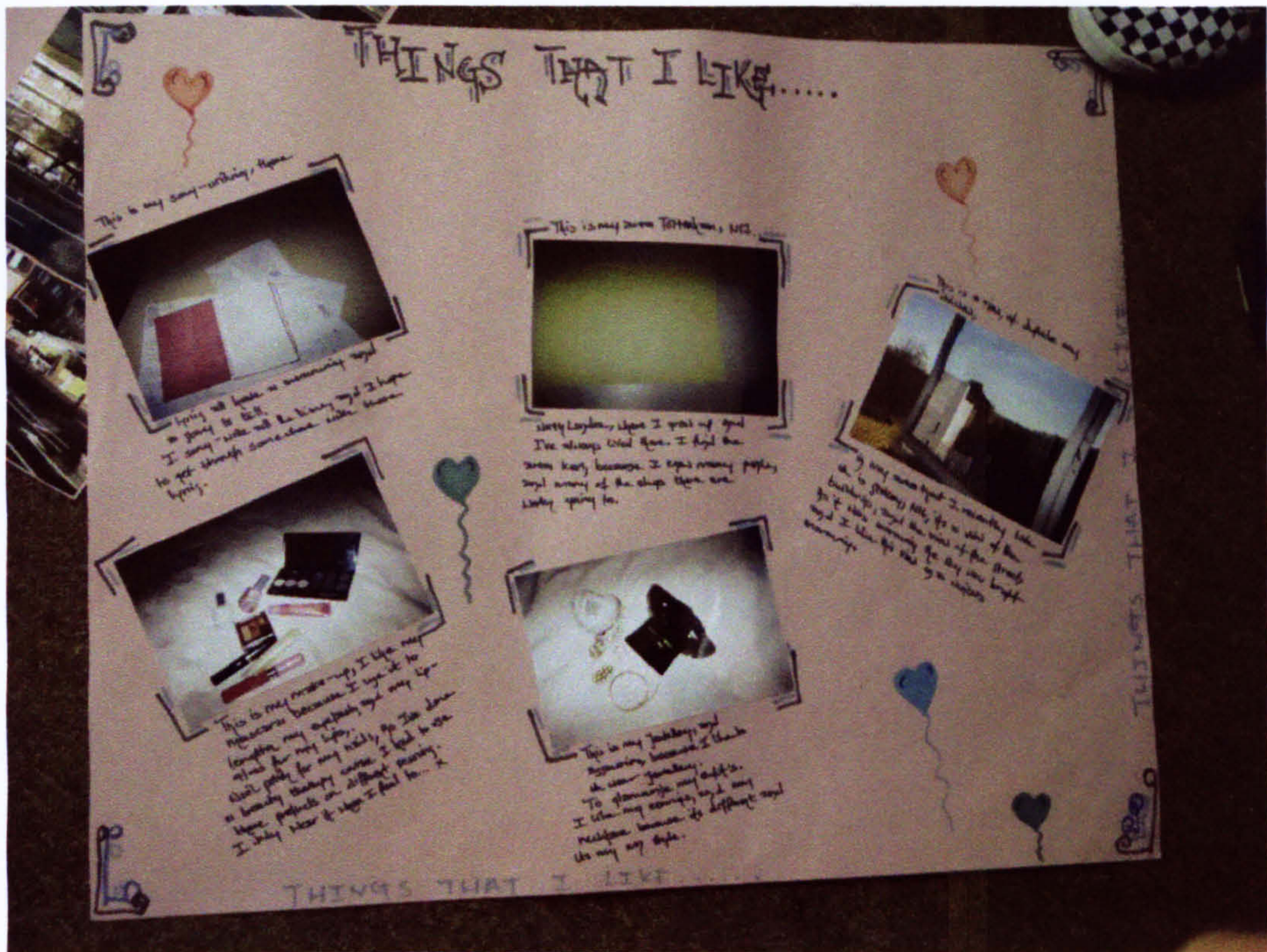


Fig 1.1. 'Things That I Like'

Amanda used to complain to me about her hostel, her neighbour's dogs making a noise for example, but she seemed to feel comfortable there, although she was also waiting anxiously for a council flat of her own. The act of taking the photos in her room in this way, presenting the things she liked from the location of the hostel room, could be considered a place-making tactic. It claims the space of her room as hers in some way; not completely, she is aware that this is temporary, but she locates herself there nonetheless. I want to suggest that this can be read as the kind of improvisation in uncertain circumstances that de Certeau recognises as the 'art of being inbetween' (1988:30).

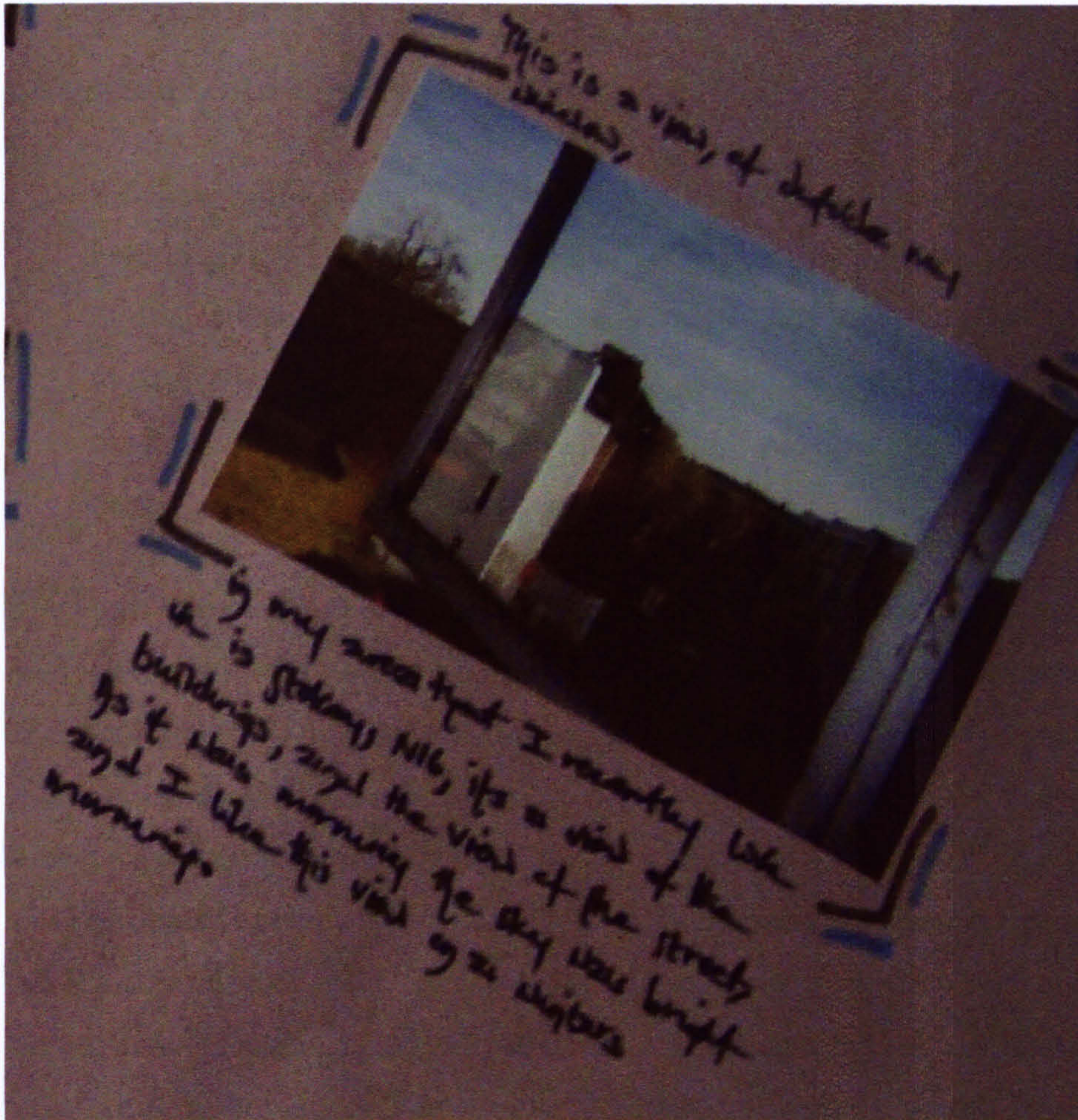


Fig 1.2. 'This is a view of outside my window'

All the young people in this chapter can be considered to be managing their movement through the use of tactics. Across all cases, moving is tied up with the precarious situation of homelessness – for example, in the process of moving to Central – but moving is also used as a tactic in itself. Managing mobility can be seen at work in Pete and Niall’s wandering, Ryan’s movement between houses and Kelly’s claiming of New Horizon as a mooring (an ‘almost home’ space). Making these tactical moves, on the move can make a person weary, here we can think of Sureeya maintaining the pretence of living with her aunt, or Ryan’s constant movement around the city and his attempts to balance a need for shelter with the need to not overstay his welcome. In some cases it is fraught with danger, such as in Niall’s description of trying to keep safe on the streets.

Conclusion – Ambivalent Mobility

‘I belong to the planet, mate. I just go anywhere. I don’t belong to one certain area, if I get moved on, I’ll adapt to the area that I go to. I’m sort of used to that. If I get a plumbing job over in Australia, I’ll move over to Australia. I’ll get my flat and use that as my base and I’ll start learning the area around my base and the next thing you know I’m living in Australia, touch wood!’ Michael

The kinds of movement and responses to relocation that I have outlined demonstrate how the hostel system moves people, yet the effect of this movement is always caught up with other attachments and experiences. The movement of these young homeless people isn’t without mooring or direction. Even the ‘wandering’ period experienced by some is determined by the need for shelter or to not become a nuisance among one’s friends. In this stage of homelessness they are *fixed in mobility*, this is a concept that I will develop in the next chapter. In Ryan’s case, because of having avoid overstaying his welcome and in Niall’s case, to stay safe on the street. This enforced mobility of Niall and Ryan that stems from the search for somewhere warm to take shelter has the by-product of increasing knowledge about London, but this comes at a price – instability, danger and discomfort.

The ability to know how to deal with moving – being adaptable – means that it can also be talked of as a resource to be drawn on in, as in Michael’s narrative. Here, knowing how to adapt to a new place is explained as not just useful for the purposes of managing as a homeless young person in London, but is reimagined as a transferable skill. The effect of mobility on the future also comes through in Kelly’s story. It isn’t just that she feels like a hitchhiker now, despite being housed, but she also predicts that for her ‘nowhere will ever be home’. Thus with reference to my participants it is possible to take Sara Ahmed’s moment of reorientation further, these moments (of reorientation) are repeated. Constantly getting one’s bearings becomes part of a ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu:1979). The relationship between precariousness and the kinds of futures imagined by the young people will

be explored in Chapter 8.

While entry into the 'homeless circuit' Wardhaugh (1996) has an effect on the movement of a young person they also move beyond it and between different spaces. Thus, the movement of young homeless people does not mean that they have no attachments to place. Here a more expanded notion of circuit – including bus routes that order the city – friends' houses, colleges becomes necessary. For example, neither Michael nor Kelly should be thought of as free floating individuals moving around the city at random. Both their stories have moorings of various significance, they can be homelike spaces or stop off points that have reorientating effects. For Kelly, the youth centre has been a constant in her life for a few years and its importance to her is both reflected and claimed in her map. For Michael it was his temporary stay in the West End and his links with agencies in that area, such as the job centre, that enabled him to move outwards. Such journeys shape space: 'It is not just that bodies are moved by the orientations they have; rather, the orientations we have toward others shape the contours of space by affecting relations of proximity and distance between bodies.' (Ahmed: 2006:3). Furthermore, through exploring how movement is lived, I have considered how these journeys work not only on social space but on the moving people themselves.

We have seen here how the movement of young homeless people is effected (though not totally determined) by their move into the hostel system. This chapter has considered the effects of moving into a central London hostel on movement around the city. In Chapter 7 we will zoom in to focus on the hostel and consider the types of enmeshing that occur in the hostel and the structures that the hostel is tied to.

Although I have outlined different responses to movement they can't be neatly separated. Mobility emerges in the young people's accounts as a resource, a burden and as a way of managing in difficult situation. Often it is experienced as all three at the same time. However this mobility is limited. If to be orientated towards something involves a movement towards it, these young people are severely restricted in their movement. Chapter 6 is a direct continuation of the story begun in this chapter and provides a counter; if this chapter privileged accounts of

movement, the next is focused on fixity and restrictions placed on movement. In the next chapter I will examine how various forms of surveillance and power shape and limit that movement.

Chapter 6

Surveillance and the limits of reorientation

Introduction

‘[Tactics] must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers.’ (de Certeau:1988:37)

In the previous chapter I considered the kinds of mobility that characterise the lives of young homeless people. I argued against an imagining of homelessness without place and for one that considers moorings of both temporary and longer-term significance. I considered the reorientation – towards some places and away from others – that is part of being fixed in mobility. However, in this chapter I will argue that orientation, a turning towards something, does not always mean that movement towards it is possible. This chapter explores how the networks of systems in which homeless people are implicated combine with existing geographies of safety and risk, to shape and intercept orientation. I will argue that layers of surveillance impact and mould the paths of young homeless people and, furthermore, that such forms of surveillance work on the body. While two layers of surveillance, of police and of other young people, emerge in the accounts of my participants as effecting day-to-day movement, I will suggest that other structural factors, particularly council policy, also have an impact on the young people’s chances of getting permanent housing. Thus both official processes and forms of surveillance keep these young people fixed in a state of mobility.

In this chapter I will continue to draw on maps, interviews and ethnographic material but I will also introduce extracts from the video interviews from the peer education film ‘In the Pod’ (the process of making this film is outlined in Chapter 2). In the context of much media coverage around guns, gangs and knife crime, the short film aimed to get the young people to construct and answer their own questions on these subjects. A set of ten questions were written by the young

people in workshops and used as a basis for interviews with anyone who came in the centre, visitors, staff, young people, the Women's Open Space clients. The questions ranged from 'Do you think the police discriminate against groups of young people' and 'How safe do you feel on the street?' to 'Why do young people join gangs?'

'Home Sweet Home (Not)!'

In the previous chapter I used Andrew's chronological map to show the rupture involved in leaving a local area. Many of the young men talk about affiliations to their local areas and their tendency to stick within them until they became homeless. Kintrea et al argue:

'Even though many people are increasingly mobile across urban spaces, immediate neighbourhoods remain a significant factor in people's lives ... For those who are less mobile, and in poorer places, the immediate neighbourhood may take on even greater significance.' (2008:12)

However, my research complicates this relationship between being fixed in a place and place attachment. As discussed in the previous chapter, many young people live localised lives until they are put in motion by homelessness. Those who have been forced to leave their area have complicated prevailing attachments.

Let's return to George and his clearly marked territory on the map described in the Introduction to Chapters 5 and 6 (pg. 133). I sensed the kind of feeling of loss that Andrew put into words (pg. 148) from George⁶³ when we were doing the mapping exercise. George was currently excluded from the area that he marked out as 'where I live' because of gang related trouble. Despite not actually *living* there at present this affiliation to a definable marked territory is made clear. Sometimes these affiliations are difficult to express, as argued in Chapter 2; one of the advantages in using visual methods in this way is that it allows the expression of

⁶³ I decided not to ask George for an interview because he was street homeless and often seemed disoriented and troubled. I thought he'd be a longer term user of the centre and hoped that I might get the chance to talk more to him later, but after a while he stopped attending.

things that can't be said.

But as hinted at in George's mapping, these home attachments are complex. 'My area' is not always a safe place for those who are most subject to, or aware of territorial boundaries. Despite these strong feelings of territory, rather than being a place of safety, for some young people such as George their local area is particularly unsafe. And a severing of connections with a local area becomes necessary for reasons of personal safety. In the last Chapter, I argued that reorientation and tactical place claiming were intrinsic to the young people's experience of place. We saw, for example, how Michael made sense of processes of reorientation by referring to his adaptability and how Amanda made a claim on the room of her hostel through her artwork. But these possibilities for reorientation and place claiming are limited, firstly by a set of layers of surveillance and secondly by council policy. I am going to explore these limiting and shaping factors through focussing on Ryan's interviews.

We met Ryan in the previous two chapters, firstly in the context of his effusive take on multiculturalism and then again when he was talking about having to move around between different places to stay. Now, I'm going to go back to the beginning of our interview encounter for a moment. His awareness of being under surveillance manifested itself early on as he jokingly whispered into the recorder 'It's a set up!' As I made my introductory reassurances of anonymity and made references to my research, Ryan asked 'What's your research on? Black people? ... Not really!' Although joking, Ryan was letting me know that as a young black man he knows about coming under scrutiny.

In the interview that followed Ryan was very happy to talk about his housing situation and his reservations about hostels but not his own involvement in groups of young people in his area. He slouched back into his chair and told me he used to be a 'street active youth' but doesn't take up my invitation to elaborate: '[yawning] I'm active in many ways, I like to go out and play basketball, I like to read up on construction stuff ...'. He seemed much more comfortable and happy in front of the camera for his interviews for the peer education film and talked in a relaxed manner about this part of his life. On the camera Ryan is a natural,

articulate and funny. His face is animated as he tells his stories, gives his opinions. In the audio interview he started off casual and evasive, airily batting away my questions before our interview found a more easy rhythm.

In Ryan's account, the area in East London where he is from emerges as a risky space, although more easily managed than other places because of his detailed local knowledge:

'Once you live in an area for so long you know of different places, you know when it's vacant, you know where police are going to be, you know where trouble's gonna be. I lived in East London so long I know exactly where I can jam without being troubled, sometimes I jam in the wrong place and someone, like police or dumb youth, might want to say something or try something.'

Here the notion of a safe home area is problematised, there are safe and risky places within it. Knowing the difference is seen as what makes it safe. In this account there are two levels of surveillance to be managed, the dual risks of other young people and being hassled by the police. In his interview, Ryan talks about the impossibility of living anywhere else other than his area because he knows the people and the place, but he also tells me about how he has to get out. He gives his reasons for needing to leave as his problems with other young people in the area, and his own involvement in conflicts between groups. He is simultaneously orientated away and towards East London. This is the sort of seemingly irreconcilable situation summed up in the 'Home Sweet Home (Not)' comment from the mapping exercise.

Let's pause Ryan's story there for a moment and interrogate these two levels of surveillance.

Police and Peer Surveillance

Emma - I get the impression you move around quite a lot, you always seem to know which buses go where and stuff like that...

Zula - I think it's because when I was younger I used to just get on the bus and go wherever. We don't really ... well we do use buses, young people. But because a lot of people smoke and drink we'd rather just go to one person's house and have a little smoke and a little drink, because it's better than sitting in the cold having to hide from some people, hide from the police and whatnot.

I put this question to Zula because she was always the quickest person to come up with advice for anyone working out a public transport route; she says her boyfriend calls her 'the A-Z'. As argued in the previous chapter, knowing how to navigate the city is an important skill to acquire for the young homeless person. As a Londoner and as someone living in West London but making daily journeys into central and North London, Zula has a good grasp of negotiating the city and its transport links. But she describes how a feeling of freedom 'going on the bus to wherever' has been tempered by other constraints, leading to a retreat into private space. The bus has been transformed from a mode of exploration to something more functional. Summed up in Zula's quote are two identifiable levels of surveillance, also referred to in Ryan's account, that effect the movement of my participants: other young people (here obliquely referred to as 'some people', in her video interview she refers to the dangers posed by other young people) and the police. While there are other layers of surveillance at work in the lives of my participants (immigration services, Jobcentre, hostels – see Chapter 7) these are the two kinds that are repeatedly identified by the young people as shaping their day-to-day movement around London. The need to manage these double risks (police and others) comes out strongly in the maps, audio, interviews and the video.

While I am splitting surveillance in public space into the categories of 'the

police' and 'peer surveillance' in the discussion that follows, it should be recognised that peer surveillance has its roots in structural inequalities. Kintrea et al found a strong interrelationship between territoriality and disadvantaged areas arguing: 'Territoriality appeared to be a product of deprivation, a lack of opportunities and attractive activities, limited aspirations and an expression of identity. It could be understood as a coping mechanism for young people living in poverty.' (2008:5). So, while I am discussing informal forms of surveillance, this is not to suggest that they are untethered from other power relations.

I shall also argue that as homeless young people with little access to private space, my participants come under both these forms of surveillance in more intense ways than their housed peers. Childress argues 'teenagers have limited ability to manipulate private property ... They can only choose, occupy and use the property of others' (2004:196). But young homeless people have even less access to private space than other teenagers, here we will see how claims to public space are severely limited.

i. The Police

'Sometimes police will come along, you're loitering, this that and the other. They think we're just dumb youths and we don't know our rights. Ouuuff! How fast they shut up when we told them what we know, what we're doing is right! They go along their ways.' Ryan

'Do you know who's the biggest gang in the word? The police.' Marcos

On the main map, one young man marks the 106 bus stop at Blackstoke [Blackstock] Road as 'Hustlers Place' and writes 'A good place to make money but can be risky to get stabbed from the people (dealers) or police will nick you'. It is perhaps not surprising that someone who labels a road 'Hustlers Place' and is trying to make money illegally might view the police as a risk. However, this fear of the

police was not confined to those ‘hustling’. (Hustling⁶⁴ here should be understood as making money by selling things, not necessarily, but often illegally, such as drugs, stolen mobiles phones etc...).

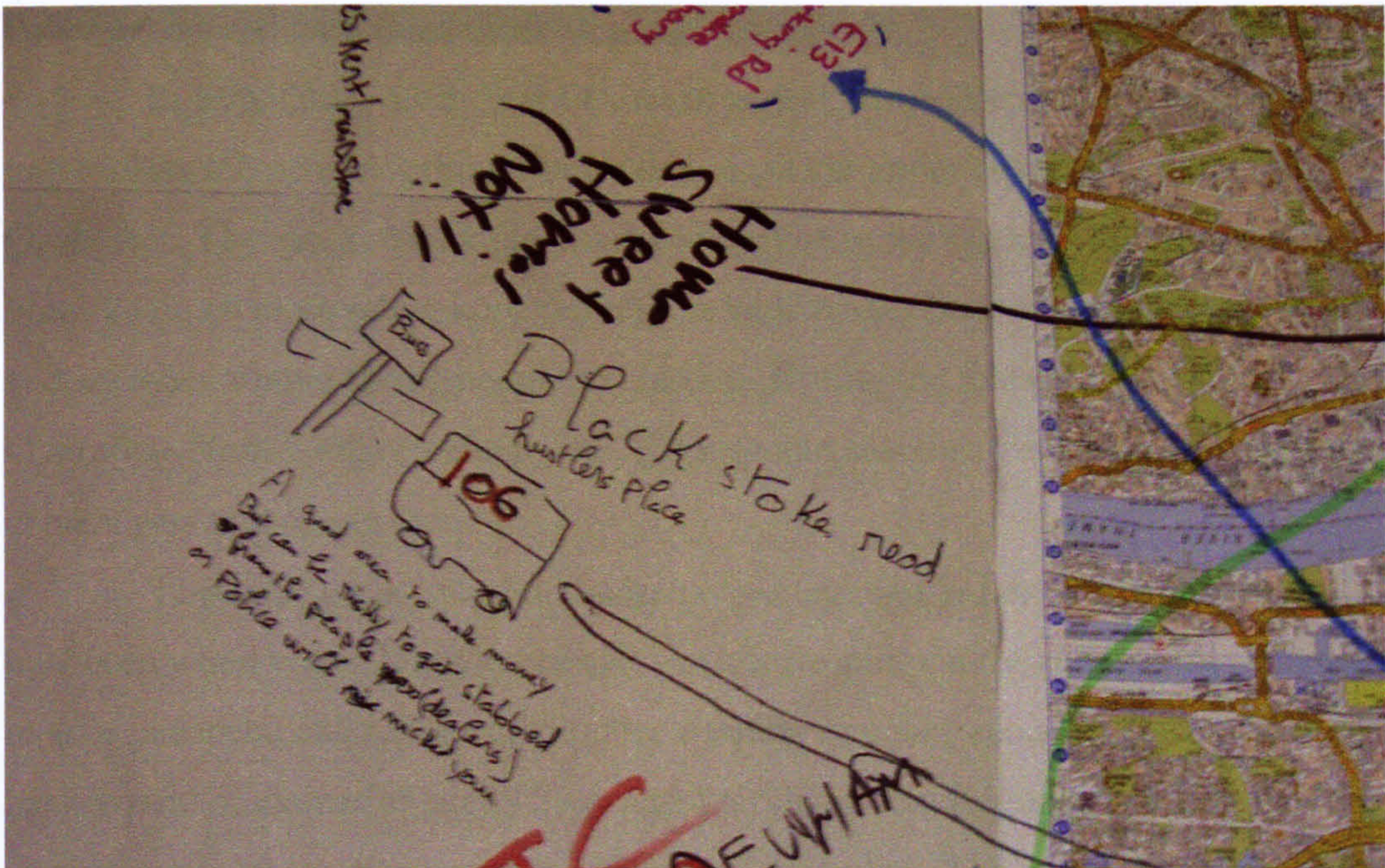


Fig 1.3. Hustler's Place

In a climate where the presence of ‘youth’ in public space is considered a problem, homeless young people who (as discussed in Chapters 1 & 5) have to spend a lot of time on the street because of their homelessness potentially come under state scrutiny twice, as young people and as homeless people. The young men in particular talk of being targeted frequently for Stop and Search. This needs to be put into the context of increasing numbers of Stop and Searches taking place in London, with young people and black people being disproportionately targeted. Between 2006/2007 the number of Stop and Searches conducted in England and Wales had risen by 9% on the previous year. A third of these 955,000 stop and searches conducted nationally were accounted for by the Metropolitan Police. Black people were seven times more likely to be stopped than white people, whereas Asian

⁶⁴ See Venkatesh (2002) for an examination of hustling as a way of life.

people were twice as likely to be stopped as white people.⁶⁵ In the following year (2007/08) the figure of Stop and Searches rose by 8% and black people were eight times more likely to be stopped as white people, Asian people remained twice as likely to be stopped and searched as white people. Once again the Metropolitan Police accounted for a third of all Stop and Searches.⁶⁶

In May 2008, during my fieldwork period, the police announced plans to stop and search people without reasonable suspicion under Section 60 of the Public Order Act. The rise in fatal knife attacks was given as the reason⁶⁷ and Operation Blunt 2 (aimed at targeting knife crime) was launched. This led to an increase in stop and searches among young people in London. During the first eight months of Operation Blunt 2, officers made 209,269 stop and searches predominantly aimed at teenagers and young men.⁶⁸

This increase in Stop and Search of young men in London demonstrates how even when young homeless people are not sleeping on the streets, the young men in particular still come under police scrutiny in public spaces. Against this background of increasing use of Stop and Search powers, it is not surprising that the young people often voice negative opinions of the police. The young men were more likely to voice negative opinions of the police than the young women. Negative doesn't really capture it. For some of the young people, the police are seen as enemies. Race was referred to as a basis for discrimination with a range of young people of all ethnicities suggesting that police are more likely to stop and search young black men. Most predominantly, a way of dressing (tracksuits, hoodies, trainers) was identified as a trigger for police prejudice but also that of older people. Matthew, a young white man, told me:

'I've got seven Stop and Search forms at home just from the last three months. If I get anymore I'm going to file for harassment ... Yesterday I got off the bus, they stopped and searched us. Fair enough we had weed, but they didn't know that. They took it off us as well. It's just annoying.

⁶⁵ BBC News (8th July 2008).

⁶⁶ Ministry of Justice (2007/8)

⁶⁷ BBC News (14th May 2008).

⁶⁸ BBC News 17th Nov. 2009.

I've got lots of friends in jail and I don't want to get caught up in that whole system. It's kind of like, I just don't know how, I mean obviously they've been given the power to do it, but it's just annoying that you can't walk down the road freely without thinking 'am I going to get stopped and searched by the police...?'"

Accounts like this one are common in New Horizon. This fear and apprehension is built into centre policy. Uniformed police officers are discouraged from coming into the centre. Although I have seen uniformed officers in the centre on a couple of occasions this is kept to a minimum by staff as their presence is alarming for the young people.

It should be noted that not all the young people regard the police as a risk, some of them regard them ambivalently or, a minority, positively. In the video interviews when asked 'What could be done to make people feel safer on the streets' some referred to the need for more police or Community Safety Officers. However the overwhelming majority also answered yes to the question 'Do you think police discriminate against groups of young people?', although some qualified this by saying the discrimination was justified. On the night we screened the finished film ('In the Pod'), when this question came up on the screen it prompted noticeable audience participation (shouts of 'Yes!'). It becomes obvious here that a distrust of the police is complicated by the young people's worries about other young people (as I shall go on to argue ideas about other young people loom large in perceptions of risk). That is, in their accounts a manoeuvre has to be made. The police discriminate against *them* which is a mistake but as they talk of *other* young people as a threat they also often talk about the discrimination of the police, and of the general older public, being justified.

It should also be noted that those involved in the criminal justice system come under a variety of additional surveillance techniques. In the first instance, those with criminal convictions who are 'known' by police are more likely to be stopped by police officers. And those with outstanding warrants have to avoid the police at all costs. Once convicted, technologies such as tagging and the intervention

of the probation service affect the mobility of young offenders, tying them to some places and keeping them out of others.

While Ryan was insistent that there was some room for negotiation with the police through 'knowing your rights'. He also was aware of the limitations of this tactic, saying: 'I've seen a police officer abuse his power. But who's going to believe me?' Another reoccurring opinion in the video interviews was that the police were the 'biggest gang'. This statement puts the police on the same level as gangs, as just another gang to be avoided. This, although said jokingly, conveys some of these young people's suspicion and downright distrust of the police.

While the police were often constructed as at best an annoyance and at worst enemies in the talk of the young people, the main barrier to moving around the city was given as the surveillance of other young people, underpinned by the threat of violence.

ii. Peer Surveillance

Embodiment and Area

Me and Amanda are sitting at the main table in the drop in with Kelly. Amanda is new to the centre and up until this point has been very shy and quiet. We get chatting about street slang. She tells me how some words are used in different areas of London and because of this you can tell if someone is not from an area. For example, in the South (London) she says, they use brushing as in 'Amanda was brushing Emma' meaning cussing. In Tottenham they use 'shower'.

'What does shower mean?' I ask

'Like ... heavy'

'Heavy?'

'Like these shoes are heavy, you know ... good!'

If you say this in Wood Green you would get beaten up, she tells me. We chat some more. I say that I'm writing about young people and space for university and that this is interesting. 'Space?!' Kelly looks at me incredulously, turns to Amanda and asks if she wants to play blackjack.

The strong spatial affiliations of the young people are accompanied by

equally strong feelings about other areas. While some of the young people tend to identify areas where they don't feel safe in broad terms (as, say, South London) others, particularly the young men, often talk about this experience of having to be careful when moving outside of their area at all. Key to these understandings of place are notions of familiarity. Knowing an area is seen as important in order to be able read it, which in turn is seen as allowing them to be safe. Thus in terms of safety the young people are oriented towards familiarity and away from the unknown or risky. Underlying this is a wariness of the surveillance of other young people. This is a different kind of surveillance to that of the police. If the police are part of panoptic state surveillance, 'the few watching the many', then these young people are caught up in a situation of the 'many watching the many', or indeed 'the young watching the young'.⁶⁹ Most of the young people were very disparaging in the video interviews about these types of territoriality, often describing it as 'stupidness' or 'madness', mocking it but at the same time describing being effected by it. These geographies of fear are at once highly personal yet their imagined boundaries intersect with official boundaries of borough, of postcode.

This surveillance doesn't affect my participants in a uniform way. While some young women reported being asked where they were from as they moved through areas, this does seem to be a largely gendered experience, affecting young men the most. Although the young women talked about the dangers of going into an unknown area in their interviews for the film, when talking about their own lives in audio interviews, a concern over 'endz' (area) and what is referred to in the media as 'postcode wars' appeared less pronounced. Kirsty, for example, doesn't feel restricted in movement in the same way as some of the others saying, 'I'm cool with travelling around. I get free buses everywhere'. She talks of moving freely through London. Her social life frequently takes her from central to North London and she only identifies one place where she doesn't feel comfortable: 'I will not go to Peckham. I went there once and when we were going out we were walking up to get the bus and one of my friends got beat up and we all thought this little kid had a knife ... I refuse to go to Peckham after that.'

⁶⁹ This plays with Mathieson's argument (1997) about a post-panoptican society where the many watch the few.

Sureeya and Zula, both from North London, refer to going to North London more than other areas because of connections to family and friends. Although they are both wary of going to areas that are unfamiliar they don't seem to consider themselves to be policed by young people to the same degree as some of the young men. They both have negative associations with South London. Talking of it as far away, dangerous and unfamiliar: ('If I go to South London,⁷⁰ I don't know many people there and that's an area which isn't ... well, it is known but not for the right reasons.' Zula). It doesn't follow that the streets necessarily feel safer to the young people who are less effected by this spatial policing and that they can occupy public space with ease. Kirsty may feel free to travel around London but says she always feels unsafe by herself, regardless of area or time of day.

There is a difference between feeling wary because of unfamiliarity and the concept of 'slipping'. Being caught slipping is to be found out as out of place in the wrong area. It's an interesting choice of word. 'Slipping' is accidental. It implies losing grip, of unwanted movement or else of trying to cross boundaries unnoticed.

Mark's tracksuit top is zipped up to the top and he wears a black hat pulled down over his short brown hair. His head is turned to one side as he answers the questions fully but succinctly. His Scottish/London accent is shot through with world weariness, or should that be world wariness? It could even be called quiet despair.

'How safe do you feel on the streets?' asks Steve (worker).

'In my area I feel safe because I know people but when I go into a different area, I feel like I'm slipping because I don't know that area, I don't know if I'm safe there.'

'What's slipping?'

'Slipping is drifting into the wrong postcode innit, like without knowing, and you get caught slipping.'

'What does the term postcode wars mean to you?'

'Certain areas, certain boroughs you've got to keep away from. You've got to look out for colours, stay away from certain areas if you're not from that area. You do your own business, don't watch other people.'

⁷⁰ Perhaps in this case some of the negative feeling towards South London from these two North London girls can be explained by the old North/South London divide.

'Is that something's that's directly affected you?'

'Yeah'

Mark said he would carry a weapon for protection. When asked if he was worried about being caught with a weapon after already serving a sentence in a Young Offenders Institution. He replied, 'I'm not worried about the police, I'm just worried about other people.'

Mark is acutely aware of, and involved in, life 'on the road'. When asked about how someone could get out of that kind of life he answers:

'Move to a better place. Move to somewhere quieter is the only thing I can think of. But everywhere's got the same problems. It's just poverty ... It's poverty driven children. You're trying to get a better life because you ain't got nothing.'

Any questions about solutions to street violence are met with a shake of the head, 'It's too late'. Such a reaction was common in our peer pod. One of the difficulties that we faced when making this film was reconciling the New Horizon's director's keenness for a solutions focussed project with the fairly grim and pessimistic vision of the future that some of the young people expressed. Watching this footage months later, the answers take on new poignancy as since doing the interview Mark has been sent to a Young Offenders Institution again.

Now I'm going to turn to those, like Ryan and Mark, whose worries about surveillance of other young people is underpinned by a fear of immediate violence.

John is a long-term client of New Horizon and I was pleased and surprised when he agreed to do an interview at the suggestion of his friend, Andrew. Andrew told me that I should talk to John because he's 'had a hard life and seen a lot of things'. It was a short interview that turned out to be a pivotal moment in my research. John has a serious face and talks quickly, if there was a pause he would need me to speed up ('come on then, what else?') not because he was unhelpful or reluctant to talk but because he, like many of the young men in the centre, functions at a fast pace.

John, who is originally from East London, describes being challenged outside of his local area. This is a recurring story. Many of the young men and some of the young women recount a process of being asked where they are from as they move through different areas:

J - I go wherever I want. But there are certain streets where you can't go because you're from a different area. You get asked where you're from and they're starting dramas and stuff.

E - So you wouldn't go to those areas?

J - Yeah I would, but not all the time. Not just to jam on the road.⁷¹ I'd go there if I was going to see someone, get something and come back quick, d'ya know what I'm saying?

E - And is that just in Hackney or in different areas?

J - It's everywhere because if you're from Hackney and you go to Brixton you're going to have problems, obviously!

E- You see, you say that's obvious but to me that's not obvious because that doesn't happen to me.

J- That's because you come from a different type of background. If you come to Hackney and you're from Brixton, and you're like me, and someone asks where you're from and you say Brixton obviously you're going to get moved.⁷²

The moment described by John (of being asked where he is from) is repeated throughout the audio and video interviews prompting the question: How are these young people read as 'out of place'? In John's account, this policing of space does not effect everyone in the same way. The explanation he gives for me not being affected by this isn't based on age or gender but on a combination of class and race ('background') that is embodied in a particular way.⁷³

From these accounts, the policing of areas by other young people seems to rely partly on identifying accent (the difference between an East London and a North London accent), words (as above in the chat with Amanda) and something less easy to pinpoint (Andrew tells me he is obviously from South London, that it's

⁷¹ hang around with friends on the street.

⁷² I think 'moved' in this context means attacked.

⁷³At the time of the interview I had thought that John was white with olive skin but I learned later that he was mixed race and that his blackness was an important part of his identity. So 'background' may be being used in a more racialised way than I originally thought.

revealed in ‘the way you go on’) but most significantly in the accounts of the young people, it’s whether you’re a known face. If you aren’t recognised as a local face and perceived as out of place then you could be approached. This challenges the idea of a city as ever flowing and anonymous, as these local areas emerge in the young people’s accounts as very rigid. Notably, a young person doesn’t have to have first-hand experience of a conflict to know these rules. The shared knowledge that this *could* happen is enough to make someone wary of going into another area.

In terms of explaining how these spatial divisions become embodied and lived, Bourdieu’s concept of habitus: ‘systems of durable, transposable *dispositions*’ (1979:vii), is useful here. Habitus entails:

‘the production of a commonsense world endowed with objectivity secured by a consensus on meaning (*sens*) of practices and the world ... The homogeneity of habitus is what – within the limits of the group of agents possessing the schemes (of production and interpretation) implied in their production – causes practices and works to be immediately intelligible and foreseeable, and hence taken for granted.’ (1979:80)

John is part of a group for whom it is obvious (a taken for granted meaning) that to go from Hackney to Brixton is going to be dangerous. He also understands that he is subject to this in a way that I am not because of my ‘background’. This background is something he reads off me.

However, habitus can only take us so far; it can be an unwieldy tool to work with. The habitus is always a reaction between the past and the present, it doesn’t allow for thinking about subjectivities in progress. It exists in the coming together of a clearly demarcated past and future: ‘Habitus can only be evaluated/made sense of by ‘relating the social conditions in which the habitus that generated them was constituted to the social conditions in which it is implemented.’ (Bourdieu:1990:56) Another Bourdieusian term is perhaps more productive here: ‘bodily hexis’. Bourdieu argues:

‘One’s relationship to the social world and to one’s proper place in it is never more clearly expressed than in the space and time one feels entitled to take from others; more precisely, in the space one claims with one’s body in physical space, through a bearing and gestures that are self-assured or reserved, expansive or constricted’ (1984:474)

Bodily hexis is useful here for exploring how a sense of a right to occupy space, or not, is embodied in a particular way. It is a certain shared ‘bodily hexis’ that means that some young people register on a radar of peer surveillance (a set of embodied practices, the look,⁷⁴ the walk) but it is also differences *between* them that lead to the moment of being found out as out of place.

This isn’t to say that all areas of London are perceived as equally contested. Some areas are talked of as more contested than others (‘North London isn’t as bad but if you were to go to an area nearer South London, it’s like if you’re from Peckham you don’t got to Brixton sort of thing.’ Zula). South London was often identified as a place where these boundaries were very much policed. Hackney was also mentioned repeatedly with reference to ‘postcode wars’. I’m less concerned here whether South London is ‘really’ more contested than North London than in how these geographies are lived and imagined.

The area imagined as most different to others is the area referred to as ‘Central’, meaning the West End and Soho. Most of the young people have lived in the emergency hostels in Soho and it is often from there that they begin to learn about negotiating the space of the West End. My question here isn’t whether Central is inherently more safe or less safe for the young people, or under less or more surveillance, but rather how they make sense of this environment as different and what this reveals about the ways in which they imagine other areas as rigid.

⁷⁴ See Desai (1999) for a discussion of the importance of ‘the Look’ in relation to young people and territoriality.

'Fear' and 'Drama' in Central London

When talking about coming to the West End and moving to Soho, Sureeya contrasts her suburban home area (quiet and safe) with the noise and bad influences of Central. In the previous chapter, I discussed Sureeya's movement between these two spheres. She talks of the North London suburb where she grew up as a safe place:

'That's the first place I came to when I came to the country. And really, I'm attached to there. I feel home when I'm there, I feel safe. Then, cos it's really different from Holborn where I live now. This is proper like city, city. And there, there's like, a little countryside... So, I'm quite attached to there.'

For Sureeya, moving to Central poses the possibility of getting caught up with bad influences and taking 'a bad route', she describes resisting this as requiring personal strength. This account contrasts with her video interview where she identifies Central as an area where she feels safe. It could be the immediate environment of the hostel and Soho that she is talking about in the audio interview but I would suggest that Central is regarded ambivalently, experienced as safe and risky at the same time. In all the accounts, Central is talked about as busy and fast paced. But this speed of Central that Sureeya sees as potentially sweeping you away can also be experienced as liberating.

In John's account, the West End is also contrasted with other spaces. He talks about Central as being 'neutral', saying: 'No boys run the area, d'ya know what I'm saying? You can get drama in the West End ... but it's neutral. No one runs the area ... there's no fear in the West End. You're free. There's no estates ... You feel at ease. It's like being back in your own area.' Here the West End is constructed powerfully as a place of safety ('there's no fear in the West End'). This isn't to say that he experiences it as a place completely without risk, this is not a predetermined, always easy to navigate space. There is still the possibility of 'drama'. But it poses different kinds of risks – there is 'drama' but it's 'neutral'. For John, Central is a

place where he doesn't have to worry about being found out as not being from the area, which in turn means he can be less on guard.

Accounts like John's, of finding freedom in the West End, were initially surprising to me. Not least because Westminster council take a fairly dim view of street homeless people and the area is heavily policed. Furthermore, the 'cleaning up' of public spaces like the West End and the removal of homeless people from them (Smith, 1993, 1998) would point to such spaces of consumption as being inhospitable for homeless people. Someone, or more accurately a network of powerful players and their interests, clearly does 'run the West End'. It should be emphasised here that the West End is not being portrayed as a safe place to sleep on the streets. Rather, a relatively safe place to walk around in and to travel through.

While not wishing to underplay these very real structural forces, the official surveillance that shapes and intervenes in the lives of the young people, this talk of Central as neutral and safe shows how the immediate violence posed by others is a more pressing concern for many of my participants. Although official surveillance (in the form of the police), is very much present in the West End the lack of informal surveillance and sheer volume of people could be an explanation of the positive feelings of anonymity that some of the young people express about Central. Take for example Sean's explanation that 'When I'm homeless I always come back to the Euston area or Somer's Town or West End because that's where you can get away with walking around at night because of all the clubs and stuff.'

Sean's account resonates with John's. However, the reservations young people have about transgressing area boundaries do not mean that they are impermeable. For example, in John's account it isn't that he *never* goes to places outside of his area but that he tries to avoid them and is very aware of the risk involved. Rather a set of tactics: keeping yourself to yourself, not looking at people, keeping moving rather than hanging round on the streets were described by the young people as ways of managing to move through areas where they are unknown and potentially unsafe. This set of coping mechanisms corresponds closely to Cahill's work on teen geographies in New York City (2000). Drawing on a project where young people drew up a 'Streetwise Guide', Cahill finds that many of the rules

about street safety can be reduced to the statement ‘mind your business’.

The need to ‘mind your business’ is central to the narratives of my participants. Crucially these tactics are aimed at moving *through* areas, lingering would be considered foolish. If we consider this risk together with the risk of being stopped by police – also based on being seen to be ‘loitering’ – then a picture emerges of *being on the move* as a way of keeping safe. These young people know how to manage their behaviour in order to reduce the likelihood of confrontation, they can talk reflexively about how to move (quickly, no eye contact). These forms of being on the move to keep safe, add another layer to the kinds of tactical mobility outlined in the previous chapter.

The power of the surveillance of police and of other young people works on the body producing an ‘obligatory rhythm’ (Foucault:1977:152). Here the obligatory rhythm is not supplied by military instruction, as in Foucault’s example, but rather a shared set of meanings, a bodily hexis worked upon by a sense of surveillance. This (slightly jarring) bringing together of Foucault and Bourdieu is perhaps productive here in understanding how it becomes possible for Sean to say ‘I’ve never been approached ... but I can’t go to Hackney because the boys there won’t like it’. Shared embodied knowledges about moving through spaces (bodily hexis) which also could put you at risk, come together with a feeling of potential surveillance. You *might* be approached if you are out of place. Furthermore, as I have noted many of the young men like John function at a fast pace, it’s in their speech, the way they move around a room rather than sitting in one place, the music they make (grime MCing).

Now, let’s return to Ryan.

The Local Connection

In looking at these two levels of surveillance (the police and peers) we can perceive some of the restrictions on Ryan's movements but not all of them. Trouble with the police and with other young people, possibly with a violent outcome, have the potential to produce the most extreme immediate outcomes, but there are other structural forces that intervene in Ryan's ability to move.

Despite his dream of living in the house he grew up in, at the time of the interview Ryan was trying to secure accommodation in Ealing where his aunt lived, but had just found out that his application had been refused by the council. He discussed his frustration with borough council policy:

'I'm just trying to ... find a place up in Ealing. I just really want to get away from, how should I say, over active youths doing madness. A lot of people I know have passed away and I want to get away from that over stupidity, too many people drug dealing, too many people hustling, over stupidity, too many people jacking, stealing, doing stupidity, losing their mind really... That's why I'm trying to move near my auntie's house which is very hard ... the letter came through and they're trying to say I can't go down there, that's what I mean, there should be a little place for people that just want to leave their area... They won't take people from other boroughs which is stupid because I'm working hard, I'm trying to make a future for myself ... but people, they don't see it that way, they think I just want a house up there ... I'm trying to move out but they don't see it. I think they think I'm just trying to move into their borough for no reason at all.'

Ryan here describes a form of local exile that I argued in Chapter 4 contributes towards the creation of New Horizon as a place of the displaced. So what is preventing Ryan from moving to Ealing? First and foremost, a lack of public housing provision makes it difficult for young people to access permanent

accommodation anywhere. This is compounded by borough council policy that is geared towards housing people in their boroughs of origin. While there is much talk of the limiting territoriality of young people and their expressions of areas as bounded and closed, there is little about how council policy, in its own way, perpetuates this. Dean, the head of the advice team at New Horizon told me that working with this policy was the most difficult issue he faced in his job:

‘There is no legal requirement for a local authority to have to work with people only from their own borough but each local authority has implemented that and won’t budge on it. Some do, like Camden, have a 5% remit where they’ll say ‘ok, we’ll take 5% of those without a local connection.’ But it does beg the question, where do refugees go? What about transient people? What about people fleeing domestic violence? What about those who just don’t want to settle down in the borough they grew up in, where’s that right gone?’

This means that it is extremely difficult for people to move to a borough other than the place where they have a ‘local connection’ unless they are defined as priority need (if they are under 18, pregnant, care leavers under 21, a person with children, vulnerable because of violence, mental illness or physical disability, become homeless through flood or fire, or are vulnerable having served a custodial sentence, or vulnerable as a result of serving in the armed forces (summarised from the 1996 Housing Act, see Chapter 1 pg. 18 for an explanation of the ‘priority need’ classification). Combined with the impossibility/undesirability of going home, this keeps the young person in the hostel system.

It is important to add this layer to Ryan’s story. Though still looking to ‘his’ area in East London, Ryan was also looking towards another area as a potential place to live. These structural factors that block reorientation problematise the notion of the homeless person as fully mobile. It doesn’t always follow that the reorientation described by Michael, in relation to his move to Central (Chapter 5), results in the track-making of your choice. Other forces shape where those tracks

can go and show up their limitations. Someone may have an orientation towards something (a flat in Ealing) or away from something (being hassled by their peers) but other forces, though less immediate, also shape the possibility of this movement.

For Ryan, permanent relocation remains unachievable. He is orientated to a new place (in Ealing) but moving in that direction is made impossible by the restrictions of council policy. Ryan stays stuck in his tiring circuit of sofa surfing with no obvious other housing route,⁷⁵ trying to avoid the police and those he regards as ‘dumb youth’. The sheer effort of this movement and the fatigue it induces makes it difficult for Ryan to keep up with his college courses. A precarious present impacts on his future possibilities (see Chapter 8).

The local connection and priority need classifications serve as barriers for many people trying to access public housing. This was brought acutely into focus by Matthew’s account of his housing situation. Matthew was originally from Scotland but had lived in various cities around the UK – moving between hostels, sofa surfing and rented accommodation – for the last six years, before coming to London. He had been living in shared rented accommodation in East London for three months but one day returned home to find that the house had burned down. In the aftermath of the fire, he found out that the person he had been paying rent to was not the legal landlord of the property. Matthew went to the police and was given a crime reference number. Because the house he had been living in had burned down, he had been classified as priority need by Hackney council. He told me that this was a lucky turn of events:

M- I think I’ve been lucky. I get more lucky than most people, like, with the Crime Reference Number and that. Obviously when you get a Crime Reference Number the council will help you straight away. But if I went there and said I was homeless then they wouldn’t have done nothing.

E- So your place burning down might turn out to be quite lucky in the

⁷⁵ Other people who do not share Ryan’s objection to living in hostels could take the route of emergency hostel followed by trying to get a long-term hostel place. Long-term hostels can accommodate people for up to two years.

end?

S- Yeah. I lost all my stuff but... I'm priority and everything.

Matthew had secured an emergency hostel place through New Horizon and was trying to 'bid' for a council flat.⁷⁶ For Matthew, who has had a highly precarious existence, this apparent disaster – being made homeless and losing all his belongings in the fire – created an opportunity to finally get stable, affordable housing.

For those less 'lucky' than Matthew, who are not classed as priority need or as having a local connection, the impossibility of either returning home or being allowed to make a new home in a different area is another way in which these young people are fixed in a state of mobility.⁷⁷

Conclusion

'I thought I'd get a yard⁷⁸ at the end of it but it just kept going and going and going.' John

In the young people's accounts, two levels of surveillance emerge as structuring movement in public space. Whereas police presence is understood as something that needs to be negotiated, the most pressing limit on movement emerges as the surveillance of other young people. These expressions of spatial affiliation and management of movement by other young people shed a different light on the loss experienced by Andrew on leaving his local area and making the 'different and difficult' move to central, in the previous chapter. If a person feels like their movement is heavily restricted outside of their local area then this makes not being able to remain in that area extra difficult, as the possibility to move beyond it comfortably, to reorientate oneself, is severely limited. The homeless young person

⁷⁶ 'Anyone on the housing register who qualifies for a particular size of property can then express an interest in being offered the property advertised. This is called placing a 'bid'. The person who has the highest priority out of those who have made a bid is invited to view the property.' 'Choice Based Lettings' 'Choice Based Lettings' Waltham Forest

⁷⁷ The only way out is to manage to go into the private rental market. I'll discuss barriers to leaving the hostel system in Chapter 7.

⁷⁸ Place to live.

who needs to move around the city in order to find accommodation and access services, potentially comes under not only more intense state surveillance but also that of their peers.

A picture of homeless people's lack of private space is starting to build. In Chapter 3, I argued that although a significant mooring for the long-term clients, New Horizon could only be an *almost* home as a place that promoted progress and moving on. In Chapter 5, I discussed how young people were set in motion and used movement and forms of partial place claiming as tactics. This chapter emphasises the precariousness with which these young people occupy public space and the necessity of moving in order to stay safe. In Chapter 7 we will discuss issues of privacy and precariousness further, in relation to the place of the hostel.

Various agencies – hostels, jobcentres and local authorities – play a decisive role in the movement and the lives of these young people. But the restrictions and fear that young people express about areas are often not accommodated by official agencies. Councils prioritise those from within their borough but there is little provision for those who need to leave. Thus local councils themselves enforce the local area as bounded space. As I have argued, it is often impossible or undesirable for these young people to return to their home borough. The lack of hostel accommodation also means that there is very little choice and so people are moved into areas where they do not feel safe. These geographies of risk do not just effect experiences of housing but also access to other services such as college or probation.

Structural forces have powerful influence over these young people's lives but it is the threat of peer violence that is experienced as a more immediate concern in terms of staying safe. In introducing the interaction between young people and the housing system alongside police and peer surveillance, I have demonstrated how interweaving factors both fix young people in some places and keep them out of others. While I have emphasised how council policy can contribute to fixing people in mobile states, in terms of making it difficult to stop moving, I have also argued that being fixed in a mobile state doesn't just involve bodies being moved around by systems but that the need to keep moving in order to be safe also works upon the body. If we take Chapters 4, 5 and 6 together, we can see how being *fixed in mobility*

is a complex process. As seen in Chapter 4, young people's homelessness is tied up with movement on varying scales. An initial move or set of moves to London, is often followed by the move of entering into the hostel, as outlined in Chapter 5. In this chapter I have outlined three factors that both shape and constrict local movement.

I have drawn out some of the factors that shape and limit the movement of my participants and some of its uneasiness: avoiding someone's gaze and moving quickly through one place, steering clear of a police officer here, spending hours waiting for a meeting with a housing advisor elsewhere. These tales of the city – where to go into an area you are not from is to put yourself at risk and where your rented accommodation burning down can be considered 'lucky' -- demonstrate how moving/being stuck is perpetuated in a way that complicates any easy notion of urban mobility. Can't go home, can't move permanently anywhere else, as John says: 'it just keeps going and going and going.' Going and going isn't 'flowing' though, it has its own rhythm and places of stopping. Next, we shall consider the role that the hostel plays in these processes of moving and stopping.

Chapter 7

The Hostel – Mooring and Meshing

Introduction

‘Suppose then, that we were to draw just one stretch of a person’s trails, showing his [sic] coming to a place, his hanging around for a while and his eventual departure. It might look something like this

[diagram of a string with one knot in the middle]

He is not of course the only person to spend time in the place, for he encounters others there who may have travelled along different trails and will in turn go on their separate ways. If we add their trails to the picture, it becomes a good deal more convoluted. The place now has the appearance of a complex knot ... These lines are bound together in the knot but they are not bound by it. To the contrary they trail beyond it only to be caught up with other lines in other knots. Together they make up what I have called a meshwork. Every place, then, is a knot in the meshwork, and the threads from which it is traced are the lines of wayfaring.’ Ingold (2007:100)

‘There were rules [in Grove Street], you got to be in by this time, you’re allowed one night out a week, you’re getting locked in your room, and it was a lot to take on, especially because I was independent before. I think that was the big deal with it so I ended up getting kicked out of there after 28 days, I went to a place called Broad Street that ain’t open no more. It’s like a basement, you go in there and share a room with four other people but you get kicked out at half eight in the morning and you’re allowed back in at six o’clock at night. I met a guy called Ed there and he helped me out, a [hostel] worker, a good worker ... He tried to

point me in the right direction but like usual I didn't take any advice. So from there I ended up in a seven day, I think it was a two week, short stay place. After there I went into winter accommodation which was a bit hectic, as in, it was a church and being in different churches seven nights a week but I met great people there ... I caught bedbugs there. Hygienic-wise it weren't the best place. If you're a hygienic person, a lot of self-pride I don't think it's one of those places you'd be able to handle but I took it on and then I had a lucky win on the horses one day. I won about £1200 and I went and paid off Grove Street, the debt that I owed them, so I got the ball back rolling there and I got back into Grove Street.' Andrew

One cold winter's afternoon I was taking part in a choir rehearsal in St Mary's church, Camden. Some of the young people and staff from New Horizon were practising songs for a Christmas concert. As we walked into the church, Andrew cheerfully burst out 'This used to be my yard!'⁷⁹ He told me about the time he had lived in the church which doubles as a cold weather shelter during the winter months.

In the excerpt from the interview above, it is possible to see that the housing process can be cyclical rather than a steady progression. Andrew is recounting a series of movements that happened over a matter of weeks. It is like a housing version of Snakes and Ladders. It is possible to go up and also very easy to slide down. The cold weather shelter, one of the few places where staying is not contingent on a Housing Benefit claim, is at the bottom of this hostel pecking order (and not a place for people with pride, Andrew says). Sites are revisited, a lucky moment at the bookies enables Andrew to return to Grove Street and start the housing process all over again.

There are various kinds of hostels in London. There are the emergency hostels, long-term hostels. Hostels for women, hostels for men, mixed hostels. Hostels for young people, hostels for those with mental health problems, hostels for

⁷⁹ home.

those with pets. Each hostel has their own requirements for clients, depending on what kind of hostel it is, for example one central London hostel outlines its target group as: ‘Young single homeless people aged 16-25 who have a history of sleeping rough. Will accept those with low-medium support needs. Must be willing to engage with the support offered by the project. Will not accept: those who have no history of sleeping rough (unless referred by Westminster Housing Options Team). Those with a recent history of arson, violence or sexual offences.’⁸⁰

Hostels also operate in different ways according to whether they are high support or low support. High support hostels are for people with substance abuse or mental health issues. In these hostels there will be more meetings with keyworkers and access to drug and alcohol workers. Low support hostels are for those who are seen as needing housing and little else. One of the key jobs of the advice team in New Horizon is to try and get the client into the right kind of hostel.

The hostel system can be understood as a network rather than a cohesive system, it is run by a patchwork of charities and local authorities. Under the Homeless Act 2002, London boroughs became responsible for carrying out homeless reviews and implementing homelessness prevention strategies. As outlined in Chapter 1, hostels are not funded by the state directly but via the local authorities through a mechanism called, somewhat vaguely, ‘Supporting People’. This funding mechanism, introduced in 2003, means that increasingly hostels have to compete for funding from local borough councils.

Warnes et al outline three sets of pressures currently faced by London hostels: ‘rising demands (e.g. the targeting of more vulnerable people), increasing delivery difficulties (i.e. decreasing availability of low-cost housing) and funding changes (the need to win local authority contracts)’ (2004:vii). The first point refers to the number of people being directed to hostels and the changing homeless population (as outlined in Chapter 1). The second and third points shape what is possible for the hostel as an organisation to deliver. We shall see that although an idea of progress has become central to the work of the hostel, a lack of affordable housing options, and, I shall argue, the rigid benefits system makes moving on

⁸⁰ Taken from the details of a Central London hostel from the hostel directory at www.homelesslondon.org

difficult. The change in funding structure forces hostels to prioritise those with a 'local connection' over those from outside the borough. In a letter to *the Guardian*, Shelagh, New Horizon's director argued:

'We are finding in our day centre based in Euston that unless you have a connection with the local borough you will not be housed. This is true of ... emergency hostels in Westminster, which are forced to retain the spaces for Westminster clients due to borough funding of hostels. Yet many hostel beds in boroughs throughout London are lying vacant. This strategy employed by most boroughs takes no account of the transient nature of young people seeking work, education or starting a new life for themselves in another borough or those forced to move to London.'⁸¹

I outlined the impact of the 'local connection' on Ryan's attempt to secure public housing, in the previous chapter. The 'Supporting People' framework has contributed to this geographically fixed notion of belonging being extended to the hostel system. A model that, as Shelagh argues above, does not take transience or displacement into consideration.

In Chapter 1, I suggested that it is crucial to consider *inbetween places*, those places that are neither public nor private. In Chapter 5, I argued that common points and moorings where people cluster emerge from the young people's accounts, these are often such inbetween places. Along individual journeys there are certain places of intersection where stories become intertwined, for example, on the young people's maps, New Horizon and hostels. Ingold's meshwork analogy seems pertinent as a way of thinking about these kinds of places. Here I will examine 'the hostel' as a kind of mooring, where a process of being 'woven in' occurs in at least three ways. As discussed above, with reference to 'Supporting People', the hostel is enmeshed in a set of relationships that impact on its practices. In this Chapter, I will begin by exploring how the hostel is enmeshed in the benefits system: a Housing Benefit claim being a necessary requirement for admission. I will argue that those

⁸¹ Letters *The Guardian* (24/12/09)

who aren't enmeshed in the benefits system or find themselves with no recourse to public funds cannot get into these hostels, thus they are excluded from the kinds of connections that are possible there. The effects of this enmeshing/lack of enmeshing and the way enmeshing shapes future paths will be explored further in Chapter 8.

Secondly, the hostel is woven into a system that works with/on the young people, and they in turn are expected to 'work' on their housing. In the previous chapter we considered how peer surveillance structures young people's movement through public space. Here we shall consider the semi-public nature of the hostel where young people must follow a set of rules and be accountable to their keyworker. In the young people's accounts, the kind of surveillance inside the hostel differs to that of other spaces. I will ask; why is it that the surveillance and questioning in the hostel causes the most consternation?

The hostel cannot just be reduced to the interactions between staff and client, however. I will also argue that this can also be a place where lives become woven together. This can be experienced as both positive and negative and can be embraced or rejected – having no space of one's own and being forced to live in close proximity to strangers can cause discomfort and conflict. The flipside is the possibility of forming close bonds.

In this chapter I will mainly use the young people's accounts of the emergency hostel that I am calling Grove Street. This is because most of the young people who I have spoken to have stayed in this hostel at some time. It is often the young people's first hostel experience as it is a short stay emergency hostel. When the young people are referring to other hostels I will specify. This chapter does not seek to draw an 'objective' picture of the various hostels that are talked about by the young people, although I have been to some central London hostels I have never been to Grove Street (now closed for renovation). Rather, I am interested in how the young people make sense of, and talk about, hostel life.

The Hostel and the Benefits Claim

In the morning Janet asks me to help Liz to phone the Jobcentre to set up a new Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) claim. Liz is nervous because she has told her hostel that she already had made a claim (she hasn't). Liz is a couple of months pregnant. She doesn't look in a good way. She is shaking and bites her nails nervously, telling me that Grove Street will kick her out for lying to them (they don't). I stand next to her as she phones the Glasgow benefits office on the New Horizon phone. She deals with it herself and only gives me the phone at one point when she is asked which Jobcentre she can most easily get to. Luckily for me, this information is stuck on a wall in the office.

In order to examine how hostels are enmeshed within a larger network of agencies, I am picking out one thread: the relationship between Housing Benefit and the hostel. Hostels are run by various charities and organisations and are funded by Local Authorities, charity and central government (via 'Supporting People' as outlined above). The rent can be expensive, for example a central London emergency hostel charges £194⁸² a week for a single room. A high support hostel, that some of my participants were living in, charges £212.55 a week for a single room. These figures alone make it clear just how contingent the system is on the resident receiving Housing Benefit to cover most of the cost. It should also be added that a condition of being accepted by most hostels is eligibility for benefits. Quite simply without benefits the whole system falls down. This relationship illustrates the way in which the homeless network is tethered to state structures and forms of governance. I shall go on to argue that the inflexible benefits system is key to limiting hostel residents' opportunities in education and employment.

Housing Benefit is paid either by the local council to the tenant who must then pay the hostel, or directly to the hostel. While the majority of the rent is met by councils through Housing Benefit the resident must pay about £24 a week from their Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), Income Support or wages from a part time job (you can work 16 hours a week and still claim Housing Benefit). Considering that JSA for the under-25s is £50.95 per week, this £24 is a large amount, roughly 50%

⁸² Figures taken from 'Advice, Day Centres and Hostel Services' www.homelesslondon.org

of the claimant's weekly money. When someone is receiving benefits there is little room for manoeuvre. The margins are tight. If one Housing Benefit cheque is spent on something other than rent then the arrears start mounting. If the resident gets behind in the rent then they risk losing their hostel place.

Housing Benefit is itself contingent on receiving Job Seeker's Allowance, Income Support or having a part time job (for under 16 hours a week). Liz, in the example above, did not tell the truth at her hostel interview and said she was already receiving JSA. She knew that she had to say this in order to get into the hostel. She had to be receiving JSA before she could make a Housing Benefit claim. Hostels can sometimes, but not always, be flexible in these situations and this time Liz's situation was rectified by her sorting out her benefits before it was too late.

Even when JSA and Housing Benefit claims are in place, any changes in circumstances can set off a chain reaction. A Job Seeker's Allowance claim ending, can lead to the stopping of a Housing Benefit claim. This leads to the inability to pay the hostel rent, which leads to rent arrears, which leads to losing the hostel place. Two things that can set this process in motion are getting a job for more than 16 hours a week or going to college (this will be considered in more detail in Chapter 8). Any change in situation can lead to a gap between benefit payments, so if I change from claiming Job Seekers Allowance to getting a part time job, my Housing Benefit claim will stop automatically and I will have to make a new one based on my new circumstances. The system is complex and cumbersome, making it easy to slide into rent arrears. Take for example, Mariame.

Mariame is originally from Guinea but came to this country from Portugal. She is very organised and always has her papers (relating to work, benefits etc...) in a neat folder. On the front of the folder is a photo of her in a drama performance.

Mariame's ambition is to become a journalist and she is studying at college. She was working as a cleaner in a big West End furniture retailer but had to leave when her employers tried to make her split her hours with someone else, while her pay slip remained unchanged. This would have been a disaster for Mariame as she gets Housing Benefit on the basis of her payslips and would have meant a drop in income without any extra Housing Benefit. Because of this, she left the job, resulting

in a backlog of benefit issues (due to a change in circumstances, she moved from claiming JSA to working part-time and then claimed JSA again). This is the sort of situation that can result in someone losing their hostel place.

The examples of Liz and Mariame show how the hostels are reliant on the client receiving Housing Benefit, which is in turn reliant on either a Job Seeker's Allowance claim/Income Support/part time wage. The hostel is tied to these mechanisms. For those not entitled to benefits the situation is bleak.

One of the youth work team hands me a piece of paper with various numbers and words written on it that don't immediately make sense. She asks me if I can support a young person in making a telephone call. It is explained to me that the young woman (Vesna) needs to phone a women's outreach service to try and find a place to go. She is from a non-EU country and has 'no recourse to public funds'⁸³ so can't go into the usual hostel referral system (which relies on eligibility for Housing Benefit). Gradually, I learn that she is in a violent marriage and wants to leave. Vesna came to England aged 18. She has left her husband's home twice but has had to return because she has no money and nowhere to go. I had presumed Vesna was a volunteer that I hadn't met before or a worker accompanying another young person when she first came into the centre because she seems older than 20 ...

We go into the office and Vesna asks me if I will make the call, although she is supposed to do it herself. I suggest that I will ring and explain the situation and then put her on the phone. She agrees and I dial the number. I explain and give Vesna's name. The woman on the phone asks me if she is Bangladeshi, I say no. She tells me that although she will talk to Vesna, it is better if she fills in a form online. If she speaks to her now, she tells me, she will only have to give the information twice. So I give the woman on the phone a New Horizon email address and she sends the form through promptly. Now Vesna and I must fill out the form which asks about her situation. I apologise as I ask Vesna whether the abuse has been emotional, sexual, physical, or forced marriage (I have to tick boxes). She bears with me, and the form filling. We are in the office which is not totally private, there is a male worker on reception and people can come in, but it's the best

⁸³ "No recourse to public funds' is a useful umbrella term for people who are subject to immigration control who have no entitlement to welfare benefits, to Home Office asylum support for asylum seekers, or to public housing. The term derives from the 'no recourse to public funds' condition applied to certain immigration statuses, e.g. spousal visas, but is generally expanded to include anyone who cannot access certain public services.' Homeless Link

that can be done at that moment. I send off the form. After about half an hour I follow the form up with a phone call and am told that they want to speak directly to Vesna. I put her on and she reads out an address that I write down. She is given an appointment for two days time. Better than nothing, but it seems unsatisfactory that she can't get out of this abusive situation immediately. With her permission I phone the Domestic Violence Helpline. No answer, the recorded message suggests I call back after 7pm. We are closing soon (at 4pm) and so I give Vesna the number and make sure she knows where she is going on Wednesday. I really want to say that she can stay with me for the couple of days between now and the appointment but that is out of the question, given New Horizon's rules, so I don't. My frustration in not being able to find anything for her is compounded by Tina, a member of the advice team, asking me if there are any women who need a hostel for the night because a vacancy has come up. 'Yes, but she's got no recourse to public funds' I reply. 'I hate it when there's a vacancy and we can't use it,' she says with feeling and a shake of her head.

The encounter with Vesna illustrates how access to the hostels is mediated by housing benefit – as well as offering a portrait of a system at its most maddening in its inability to help a person who needs it. In terms of the 'mesh' of homeless services, Vesna can't fully gain entry. Those who have 'no recourse to public funds' cannot be accommodated in the mainstream hostel system and Vesna cannot be referred to an emergency hostel because of her immigration status. While New Horizon helps Vesna to some degree, providing advice and assistance to call the relevant agencies they/we cannot help her with what she needs most, somewhere to stay. I never saw Vesna again.

Other people who find themselves in the same situation as Vesna are failed asylum seekers. Again, having no 'recourse to public funds' means they cannot access the hostels. The cold weather shelters – described by Andrew at the beginning of this chapter – that are open during the winter months are an exception. A survey of users found:

'Welfare benefits are a major issue. Compared to other residential homelessness services, guests in many of the shelters were much more likely to be from abroad, meaning they usually had no recourse to public

funds. Even amongst guests from the UK, a significant minority had no live benefit claim. Without access to Housing Benefit, it is very difficult to access hostels or supported housing in London. This means guests have few alternatives to the shelters.’ (Cold Weather Shelter Report 2009)

However, even those with benefit claims can find themselves refused by emergency hostels. During my period of fieldwork in New Horizon, the emergency hostels became less amenable to housing those without a good grasp of English. In the case of referrals from New Horizon, these were usually the Eritrean asylum seekers. Health and safety reasons were given, with the hostel arguing it wasn’t safe for too many people who couldn’t speak English to be in the hostel at any one time. As I will go on to discuss, the hostel is not just a place of shelter, there are certain expectations about the kinds of ‘work’ that will be done, joining in workshops and key work sessions. These activities are more difficult to deliver with non-English speakers. If these activities are central to what a hostel does then this could be linked to the need to keep the numbers of those who can’t speak English down. Even with the correct benefits then, it can be difficult to get into a hostel. Plus, as argued above even for those who *can* speak English well and *are* eligible for benefits, there are also many other ways in which disruptions in benefits can effect hostel accommodation.

A picture begins to emerge of the system in which benefits and hostels are tightly knitted together. It is a system that can be difficult to get into and equally difficult to get out of. While we shall consider this in more detail in Chapter 8, it needs to be emphasised here that getting a job is risky for a homeless person living in a hostel. Housing Benefit will stop if the job is for more than 16 hours a week. It has to be a relatively well paid job in order to meet the hostel rent and also reasonably stable and long term to be worth the risk. The move into private accommodation requires a deposit and references and so is a difficult leap to make. Fitzpatrick argues:

'HB [Housing Benefit] is withdrawn at a very rapid rate when recipients start to draw an income, and this withdrawal of benefit starts at a lower threshold for the under 25s than for those over this age. The resulting unemployment trap makes it very difficult for young people to take the kind of low paid work that may be available to them.' (2000:147).

Unsurprisingly, many young homeless people are cautious about taking on employment. We have explored here how the mooring of the hostel can be understood as enmeshed in the benefits system. We can now move on to consider the ways in which the hostel is enmeshed in processes of surveillance and governance.

The Rules and 'Knuckling down'

Curfew in Soho

'You're getting controlled but if you have to live there, then you have to live there. It's better than living on the streets.' Sureeya

'In jail, I suppose it comes part of the parcel, you expect it but when you're out in your hostels and you got this geezer that ain't much older than you, probably about five, six years older than you, telling you you've got to go bed or you've got to be in at six for your dinner or you're not getting no dinner, these kind of things can effect you, effect your mind frame ... Certain places I been to, they've got rules but they're more relaxed about them, especially if you show you're mature and you're responsible. But certain places like Grove Street I wouldn't go through it again. Mentally, it was really tiring, it mentally tires me out.' Andrew

In the accounts of my participants, it is the hostels rather than the other agencies that the young people are involved with that come in for the most criticism.

The different agencies that my interviewees made reference to included: the probation service, Jobcentre, social services, hostels, New Horizon, Connexions, borough councils, Young Offenders Institutions, the police, the Home Office. But it is the combination of living somewhere (with little private space) and coming under surveillance in the hostel that seems to cause the most discomfort. I will argue here that there are two levels of surveillance and control at work in the hostel. The first level is the enforcement of basic rules around coming and going, visitors and behaviour. The second is a kind of surveillance through telling and joining in.

The emergency hostel (Grove Street) was often compared unfavourably with other hostels in terms of having strict rules. This kind of surveillance works along the lines of the regulation of bodies in the Foucauldian sense of a disciplining environment seeking to create obedient bodies (1977). Interestingly, from this perspective, Kirsty like many others describes Grove Street as 'a prison'. At the time of the interview, Kirsty had moved from Grove Street to a long-term women's hostel (St Cecilia's). She said she preferred her new place to the emergency hostel because of the more lenient rules:

K- Grove Street was a prison. You weren't allowed out after ten, you weren't even allowed, after 11 I think it was you were locked in your landing, you couldn't even go out for a fag.

E- Locked in your landing?

K- Like all you could do was come out of your door and go to the toilet, you couldn't walk out on the landing or the alarms would go off, you couldn't go outside for a fag but then you'd get wrong for smoking in your room. What do you expect? If you're going to lock the landing doors at stupid o'clock at night when people are still awake, cos not everybody sleeps after eleven til seven.

The curfew was the rule most cited as an example of how the rules at Grove Street were strict and unfair. In order to explain why the interventions and limitations on freedom in the hostel are more difficult to stomach than elsewhere, the young

people made comparisons with other agencies and places in their lives. For example, Andrew's explained that you expect to be told what to do in jail or the Jobcentre but not somewhere where you are paying the rent.

In his account, Andrew, like Kirsty, brings in other hostels that he regards as 'different' in contrast with Grove Street. The emergency hostel comes out of the young people's accounts as the most regulated. Perhaps this extra regulation is an unsurprising response by the hostel to maintaining and keeping safe this busy place where new young people are coming and going every day. The location of Grove Street (in the middle of Soho) is also important as this wider outside context impacts on the young people's experience of life inside the hostel. Many of the young people talk about the frustration of living in a very regimented environment, complete with curfew, in the middle of a place like Soho. For example, in Kirsty's story where finding her place in Soho is so celebrated, her relationship to the place is mediated by the hostel. She says 'I loved Grove Street because I was smack in the middle of Soho. I just thought 'great, I can go out and party!' and then I find out they've got a curfew.'

There is an uneasy relationship between the tightly regulated hostel and its location in central London. I have already argued that 'Central' emerges in the young people's accounts as different to other areas, John suggested that the West End was a site of 'drama' rather than 'fear' (pg. 176). While the West End is ultimately a closely surveyed space of consumption, Soho has a different – though inter-related – history, representing the darker side to the bright lights of Regent Street and Oxford Street. It is, and has been known as a queer space, red light district, place for recreation. It has a history of being an 'Other' place in the heart of the West End, of bohemia, immigration, sex and drugs markets. While separated from the West End by the sweep of Regent Street⁸⁴ and the hordes of Oxford Street, Soho is also a space of consumption. Increasingly Soho has become associated with the media industries and the development of 'sanitized' gay space

⁸⁴It is no accident that Soho is separated from the rest of the West End. Regent Street was designed specifically to segregate. George IV's architect John Nash writes: 'The whole communication from Charing-Cross to Oxford Street will be a boundary, and complete separation between the Streets and the Squares occupied by the Nobility and Gentry, and the narrower streets and meaner houses occupied by mechanics and the trading part of the community' Campbell (2001:37).

(Andersson: 2007). Many of the sex shops of the 1970s have been removed. Nonetheless, the accounts of the young people invoke a sense of Soho as home to drugs and sex markets.

The felt presence of these markets can cause discomfort and fear but can also provide opportunities. As argued in the previous chapter, being in the public spaces of Central doesn't carry the same kinds of risks as other places, in terms of peer policing. But the experience of Central needs to be considered as mediated by the hostel. Despite these controls inside, outside there are opportunities to make money. In the extract below from Michael's interview it is notable that it is the anonymity and flow of people that enables him to engage in this form of hustling:

M- Soho was the area where people used to come out of work on a Saturday or a Friday, even Sundays and most days through the week and go through that area because its known as a hotspot for prostitutes, drugs, a piss up. Places where they can go and they've got a lot of money and we used to use that excuse to see people come looking for their drugs, wrap up what the fuck we wanted to and just sell it off to them for a bit of money and by the time they realise that there's fuck all in what they've bought, we've gone off with it again...

E- But no one ever caught you up?

M- No one's ever really caught me up no. But I was smart because I've seen lots of people getting into trouble for that because they'd do it to people who don't look like they'd take shit off of people. I'd do it to, I used to target the people who, I dunno, like who would pass through the area, people in suits and that. Do you know what I mean? People that wouldn't really look as though they could get me back. Sometimes it weren't even for the piss up, the money. Sometimes I really did need the money. Sometimes I needed the money to fund for food, or to buy some clothes.

With the pace and lack of rigidity of the streets outside comes the opportunity of

making money off those ‘passing through’. The presence of those perceived as rich (‘people in suits’) who are less streetwise and looking for drugs provides a perfect market for Michael and his friends. This entrepreneurial approach⁸⁵ can be seen as a tactic, one way of coping with being housed in a hostel in an area used by others for recreation. This freedom and movement in an illegal market contrasts greatly with the regulated space of the hostel. Although Soho seems to be less subject to the kinds of peer surveillance outlined in the previous chapter, its possibilities also bring with them dangers – Michael talks of Soho as a place that ‘sucks you in’ – a process which perhaps the curfew seeks to limit.

‘Knuckling Down’ - The Emergency Hostel as a Place of Progress

‘I moved to Grove Street, I got referred for emergency and basically I kept my head down and did what they told me, they extended me for 28 days after 15 days, on my 15th day, I got into [names long-term hostel] Whitehart Lane and since then, I been there ever since. It’s a bit difficult at first when you first move to somewhere like that ...’ Niall

‘A life spent entirely in public, in the presence of others, becomes, as we would say, shallow. While it retains its visibility, it loses the quality of rising from some darker ground which must remain hidden if it is not to lose its depth in a very real, non-subjective sense. The only efficient way to guarantee the darkness of what needs to be hidden against the light of publicity is private property, a privately owned place to hide in.’

Arendt (1998:71)

I started this chapter with an excerpt from Andrew’s interview in which he outlined a chain of events that he sees as stemming from his inability to cope with

⁸⁵ Not all the young people’s interactions with the economies of the West End were illegal. Andrew had an on/off job working on the streets of Soho dressed in a suit trying to use his charm to persuade partygoers to go to a West End nightclub. Another found work as a doorman at a busy West End pub, thus becoming part of the surveillance/economy of Soho’s recreational places.

the regulations of the Grove Street hostel. In contrast to Andrew, other young people managed to stay in Grove Street long enough to get a referral to a long-term hostel. Niall describes how he made progress in the emergency hostel by employing tactics of doing what he was told and keeping his head down. Let's stay with that for a moment. In both these stories, the hostel is seen not just as a place just to stay but one in which it is possible to do well or not. The move up the hostel ladder isn't automatic. This sense of having to 'get your head down' is seen as important in the context of the emergency hostel.

Dean (housing advice worker) explained that an important part of his job was dissuading those who had a choice from going into the hostels. If it is just a case that the young person doesn't like their parents' rules, he told me, then they need to be made aware that the hostels have their own rules too. He added: 'a lot of the rules are more stringent and it's a lot more expensive and these days *there's a lot more to do when you're in a hostel. You've got to get on with some work etc...*' Thus there is a second level of management at work in the hostel. It isn't enough to be a docile body you have to also be working on your future. In the accounts of the young people and the advice worker, the hostel isn't a place for staying still. There are similarities with New Horizon here. As I argued in Chapter 3, this is a place that aims to create 'Positive Futures'. But there are also crucial differences between the two. Attendance at New Horizon isn't mandatory. If you do not want to do a workshop you can leave, in the hostel there are not the same options. New Horizon is something you opt into. In the hostel you need to toe the line in order to keep a roof over your head. The stay is short and if an alternative can't be found you may be back on the streets. However, in both settings progress is part of the organisational ethos.

In the emergency hostel you need to 'work' on your housing. Those coming to New Horizon and staying in emergency hostels will usually be advised to attend housing advice at New Horizon every day in case a long-term place comes up for them. As well as coming to New Horizon they need to maintain good relations with their keyworker and attend some sessions at the hostel. 'Knuckling down' involves demonstrating that an effort to change one's situation and being willing to account for oneself. The young people make sense of their progress in the hostels by their

ability or (not to) 'knuckle down'. Some of the young people who didn't employ Niall's tactics look back at their period (or periods, some have lived there more than once) in Grove Street regretfully. If they'd only played the game back then, they reckon, their housing situation could have been different.

Michael first stayed in the Grove Street hostel aged 16. After his mother kicked him out, he secured sheltered housing in his borough of origin. He lost this, he tells me, because of letting a friend stay there. Classed as intentionally homeless and still 16, Michael's friend told him about the emergency hostel (see Chapter 5 for more details of Michael's move to Central). He referred himself there and found the compulsory workshops and key work sessions hard-going:

'When I was in hostels like Grove Street and Broad Street and that ... what they needed you to do inside the system was to do key work sessions and come to these workshops and groups and things ... it's compulsory. You have to actually do it, and for me, the kind of person I am, an outgoing person, I'm not the kind of person who would like to be sitting inside of a hostel doing these workshops and doing these things that don't mean anything to me, so it's hard to knuckle down. But if you actually do need to get yourself knuckled down and you really do want to get yourself a flat then you do have to, got to go through that, which is another reason I got kicked out of Broad Street ... because I just couldn't stick to the key work sessions and all the workshops they told me I had to do, I was always out.' Michael

Michael identifies both why he finds it hard to 'knuckle down' and why it is necessary to do so. This kind of surveillance relies on one of the elements of hostel life, the key work meeting.

Ben's answer to my inquiry about the questions asked in key work meetings was fairly typical: 'What'ya doing, what drugs you're taking, how you're doing it, what you're doing it for, how's living in the hostel, how you getting on with people and [they] ask you about your rent.' Although it should be added that Ben was

staying in a high support hostel at the time of the interview, this combination of questions about how you are, what you are doing and the all important question of rent (as I argued above, this is very important as a slip in benefits can jeopardise the whole situation) is fairly typical. Surveillance in the hostel therefore relies on telling and accountability.

In response to the less-than-promising beginning to my interviews (see Chapter 2), I had to reconsider my interview technique (keeping the interview very informal, not looking at my topic sheet) and questions. One question that I added to my interview topic sheet was about interactions between the young people and the various agencies that they were involved with. How, I wondered, did the young people feel about having to give accounts of themselves to different people all of the time? Various responses were given to this question. Zula stressed the importance of getting people to work together for you, others, such as Pete employed tactics of trying to keep interview situations or meetings as short as possible (see Chapter 2). Others, such as Ben, talked about how they knew how to manage these situations:

‘I could do it in my sleep. I’m just so used to it now. Jobcentre, all the forms you have to fill out. I could do it with me hands tied behind me back, fast asleep, that’s how monotonous it is and then when you’re with your keyworker she just sits there listens to what you say, say stuff back to ‘em, then you go back to sleep and my youth worker Steve is about the only guy I can have a decent conversation with.’

Here, knowing how to perform in the Jobcentre/key work interview becomes a kind of expertise, honed over years in the system. This is another form of resourcefulness learned through the experience of homelessness (we have already seen other kinds for example, in Chapter 4 how shared knowledge is utilized in the ‘same boat’ and in Chapter 5 how moving can be used as a tactic). Ben told me that he⁸⁶ had spent 60 different spells in various hostels all over London and in his Yorkshire hometown since the age of 16 (he was 20 at the time of the interview). An imposing figure with

⁸⁶ At this point, Ben was still using male pronouns.

thick long red hair, Ben is transgender⁸⁷ and had just started the process of transitioning from male to female – thus introducing another set of professionals into his life. Most of the existing professionals he has encountered are treated dismissively in Ben’s account. But although finding meetings with his keyworker in his hostel boredom inducing, it is another professional Steve, his youth worker at New Horizon, that he credits as being ‘the only guy I can have a decent conversation with’. So while the intervention of some professionals is met with annoyance, sometimes they are highly valued.

The process of telling can be a complex one and people make sense of the worker/client relationship in different ways. Zula, for example, told me that she didn’t mind the interventions of professionals:

E – I’ve a feeling you’re quite an expert at knowing how to use [both laugh], how to get through the system, you seem to know it quite well.

Z - Yeah just, I always say, take as much from them as you can.

Obviously going into a hostel you have a keyworker and if you’re using the centre (NH) you won’t have an actual keyworker but you’ll have people you tend to get on with better. And it’s like, making them a support network tends to help you.

When I lived in a hostel if I had any problems about my housing, I would come in and speak to housing [advice] because they knew who my keyworker was and they could phone her up and tell her ‘Zula has these issues’ so if you can get them all together and communicating between themselves you get a lot further than trying to go from one place to another.

An expert in the homeless system, Zula is a very articulate young woman adept at using the vocabulary of the sector. While others could identify helpful individuals or helpful organisations, Zula’s response was different in identifying how to make the network work in her favour.

⁸⁷ When I explained to Ben about how I would anonymise the interview he looked quizzically and said ‘Well there’s only one tranny isn’t there?!’ but didn’t seem concerned.

Individual workers from hostels were singled out as important figures in young people's stories, however they also seem to be the category of professionals whose interventions most irk the young people. I became accustomed to hearing the same reply to my question about dealing with agencies, that keyworkers in hostels were 'the worst'. Only a couple of complaints were made about staff members at New Horizon. This could be partly due to the interviewer effect (I was working there as a volunteer) but also it was pointed out when I raised New Horizon as an example of a place where you are asked questions, that going to New Horizon was voluntary and therefore different. There was very little animosity expressed towards hostel keyworkers as people but much exasperation at their questioning in the context of a supposed private place. In these accounts, the keyworkers come to stand in for the rules of the hostel.

The young people describe having meetings once a week with their keyworker but day-to-day interactions where similar questions are asked are also described. Sean, also in a high support hostel, says he feels constantly watched, even though he concedes his keyworker is a 'lovely bloke':

E- You were saying this hostel you're in, they ask you a lot of questions...

S- Oh yeah, cos it's a high support hostel but I've got a keyworker, he's a lovely bloke but he's constantly, every time he sees you, he wants to know what you're doing and it just stresses you out. When you get up at 8 o'clock to get your breakfast he will come, you will put your breakfast on a plate and he will sit right opposite you while you eat your breakfast and will start interrogating you about what you've been up to and what you're doing and stuff and it just drives you mad cos *I don't think they understand that that's your home*. Would they like someone harassing them when you come in from a long day about what you've been doing? When you get up would you want someone in your face saying "pay your rent, blah blah blah"? And I think that's going to be a problem because I'm quite short tempered and I did have a go at another member of staff about it the other day but it is a real pain in the arse

because they, how do I say it, they just don't leave you alone, its like being constantly watched, under surveillance. It's like *Big Brother* in there. It's like *Big Brother* and you just don't get no peace.'

Sean hits on something important here 'they don't understand that that's your home'. Here, it is not being subject to questioning *per se* that annoys Sean but the context: the questions over breakfast. 'Big Brother' now has connotations that link to, but are not limited to, Orwell. Sean is talking about the TV series *Big Brother* where contestants called 'housemates' are watched on camera and can be reprimanded for breaking the rules. Thus the hostel is constructed as somewhere with the appearance of a home (of sorts), but where the ability of finding 'peace' is severely restricted. 'Peace' here is used to convey a lack of time (being asked to account for himself at breakfast), place ('they don't understand it's your home') and privacy ('It's like *Big Brother*').

It is worth considering the lack of private, homely space in the lives of these young people. For Arendt, there needs to be a private realm in order for a public realm, a distinction between things that should be shown and those that should remain hidden. While I would want to steer clear of accepting 'the home' as a necessarily cosy private space – feminists have been challenging this assumption for a long time see Rose (1993) also, Sibley (1995) – it is notable just how little private space/access to a private realm of any kind, these young people have. One day as I was sitting eating lunch in New Horizon, Sean said that he hadn't had a meal using proper cutlery for months. His meals were all eaten in places with plastic cutlery, New Horizon, the hostel, prison. It is worth considering that many of the young people move between various organisations and institutions where they are watched and regulated, and not given proper cutlery to use. Sean's account demonstrates how the basics of comfort, which most people take for granted, are denied a person in his position. If we take this in conjunction with processes of being fixed in mobility, as outlined in Chapters 5 and 6, then a picture begins to develop in which 'ontological security'⁸⁸ (Giddens:1991) of the most basic kind is consistently under

⁸⁸ 'On the other side of what might appear to be quite trivial aspects of day-to-day action and

threat.

When these settings are considered alongside the kinds of restrictions that the young people experience in public space it becomes evident that traditional realms of public and private have little meaning when used in reference to the lives of young homeless people. Wardhaugh argues:

‘The classic division of space into public and private domains has been oriented towards the explication of the use of space by the domiciled population. ‘Public’ and ‘private’ are meaningful terms when there is a public and potentially dangerous region to venture into the safe, privatised domain of the home. For the street homeless, however, the public-private dichotomy has far less relevance. For them, the distinction between public and private is less clear-cut in that they are routinely excluded from many public, as well as most or all private, places. Furthermore their survival strategies frequently involve them in attempts to privatise public space: for example, to at least temporarily claim a public place such as a shop doorway for their own private usage.’
(2000:111)

While agreeing with Wardhaugh about the irrelevance of the public/private dichotomy (that is to say irrelevant in terms of experience but not in terms of aspiration), I would like to take her argument further. She is referring to the street homeless but those who live in hostels also do not live a public/private division. This is not just a question of access to space or a roof over one’s head. It is also about the management and surveillance of the places that they do manage to access and move through.

However, there is more to hostel life and processes of enmeshing than the surveillance and interaction with staff, it can also be a place where shared space is

discourses, chaos lurks... A sense of the shared reality of people and things is simultaneously sturdy and fragile. Its robustness is conveyed by the high level of reliability of people and things of the contexts of day-to-day social interaction, as these are produced and reproduced by lay agents.’
(Giddens:1991:36)

negotiated among peers. Leading on from the last chapter, we might wonder whether the kinds of peer policing of public space are replicated in the hostel. What kinds of coming together are possible in the hostel?

‘Wrapped Together’

I chatted a bit with Tristan, a gentle soul from Cheshire. He has curly blond hair and is very softly spoken, he is vegan and tells us about the importance of detoxing. He says he is Catholic and goes to mass every Sunday. There’s a conversation going about Grove Street and people are complaining. Sean is talking about Grove Street’s ‘lockdown’ (note the prison terminology). Tristan says that the main reason people complain about hostels is the curfew, whereas he doesn’t mind because he hasn’t ‘found his network yet’. He says he wouldn’t mind if the curfew was 7pm.

For some of the young people, the combination of living in Central London for the first time and being with many other people in the same position means that the short bursts of time spent in Soho hostels are talked of as exciting, a party. Although, it must be emphasised, a party mediated by the strict rules of the hostel. Michael and Andrew identify further mistakes made in the emergency hostel – not only did they not ‘knuckle down’ but they also describe getting caught up in a moment of meeting new people, drinking, smoking. In Chapter 5, I used Andrew’s map to examine the sense of loss that can accompany mobility. If you recall, he labels the hostel ‘hell’ and talks about finding his move into Grove Street ‘different and difficult’. However, there is another side to his hostel experience that he talks about reflectively:

‘When I got there, there was a crowd of people in there ... Everyone was from the same sort of troubles, everyone was in the same sort of boat, everyone was smoking weed and that ... All these people from all over, some of them from different parts of the world. Like a good friend I met Bilal, he amazes me to this day. He had all these qualifications and he came from Sweden straight into Grove Street. Adnan, straight over from

Turkey. It was funny. It was a party, for me it was like a big party, which I regret now because if I'd have played the game from start one, I would've had proper housing and that now, you know? But I think the people I was in there with, it made it easier. And it made it easier to blank out the sadness that I've actually moved out of my area. It made it easier on myself to move because I was scared at first because if you look at Grove Street from the outside, it don't look very pleasant and it don't look like a place you would actually see yourself comfortable but then after a couple of days of meeting people, I felt very comfortable. The people around me made me feel comfortable there. It's easy to talk to people, like I said we was all from the same sort of backgrounds. Everyone had that natural bond. It was good, you know?' Andrew

Thus Andrew frames his actions in the emergency hostel as stemming from his sadness and fear. He describes bonds forming quickly based on a shared intense experience which made an uncomfortable place comfortable. Forming bonds in this way perhaps helps to provide a degree of ontological security in a highly unstable situation, another tactic, an improvisation on an imposed terrain (de Certeau:1988). Michael's account of life in the hostel is very similar. He talks about how in this situation friendships are formed quickly: 'you class them as friends you've known your whole life, but you've only known them a couple of months' because of the intensity of the period.

In his study of street corner men, Leibow finds that relationships are characterised by fluidity. However, he also suggests that because of a lack of other sources of security and self esteem there are incentives to: 'romanticise relationships, to upgrade them, to elevate what others see as a casual acquaintance-ship to friendship, and friendship to close friendship.' (1967:207) In the case of young homeless people these processes are combined with extreme proximity. The young men describe suddenly doing everything with their friends from the hostel:

‘You live in the hostel. You become neighbours and before you know it you’re borrowing sugar off each other, you know what I’m saying, it’s like something you see out of *Friends* but not, obviously, with housing ... because you meet people and it happens so quickly because you’re going to New Horizons together, you’re doing things together, you’re going to the Jobcentre to sort out your benefits for the first time together and when you both live in the hostel and that, you’ve both got something to relate to and so I think it’s easier to make friends quicker because you’re wrapped together quicker.’ Andrew

In Andrew’s account the hostel’s position in a wider network of places becomes apparent. Going to other places (Jobcentre, New Horizon) with the people he meets in the hostel, meant that the friends became ‘wrapped together’ quickly. There is a link there between the meshing of the hostel within a set of agencies that I outlined in the first section of this chapter and the wrapping together that Andrew describes. ‘Wrapped together’, this expression leads us back to Ingold’s concept of meshing. If we take Ingold’s string analogy and imagine strings becoming knotted together at different locations and, it should be added, twisted in the movement between them, then we can visualise how this process of entanglement/wrapping of young homeless people happens as they move between hostel, Jobcentre, youth centre.

Urry (2007) uses Durkheim’s term of ‘effervescence’ to describe a feeling of collective togetherness experienced by those sharing the same path. Durkheim, when discussing the powerful effects of taking part in a collective ritual argues:

‘The vital energies become hyper-excited, the passions more intense, the sensations more powerful; there are indeed some that are produced at this moment. Man does not recognize himself; he feels somehow transformed and in consequence transforms his surroundings.’ (1995 [1912]: 425)

This links to Andrew's description of being 'wrapped together' and some of the rare moments of giddiness that I witnessed among this group of young men.

In his more positive take on the hostel – although we should keep the characterisation of the hostel as 'hell' on Andrew's map alongside this account – Andrew makes sense of this place in two different ways, as a place of meeting people from all around the world and then as analogous with the TV show *Friends*. In both stories, the hostel is configured as an adventure and a learning experience. In the first, as a place of encountering difference in a celebratory way, rather like a middle class youth might talk about travelling in a gap year (see also Niall talking about travelling in Chapter 5 pg. 142). In the second, as a more homely place of making lasting links. He stresses both the differences between the people he met in the hostels and the similarities in background. But while getting excited about the hostel as a place of meeting people and becoming neighbours, Andrew also reaches the limits of his analogy. It is like *Friends* 'but not, obviously, with housing'.

The kind of camaraderie described by Michael and Andrew isn't present in everyone's experience of the emergency hostel. Tristan for example, said he hadn't found 'his network' yet in the hostel. 'Yet', implying that he was hoping to make links there. For some, though, becoming 'wrapped together' in this way is something to be actively resisted.

We have already considered the rules and surveillance through telling, that residents are subject to in the hostel, but there is also the problem of privacy regarding other residents. Sureeya, for example, told me:

'When I was living in Grove Street in emergency accommodation I think you had to be really strong not to get into like, a bad route ... there was so many bad influences around you in the hostel. There's people around you doing god knows what, using god knows what drugs and so you had to be like really, you know, be true to yourself not to get into that.'

Sureeya managed the hostel situation not by becoming 'wrapped together' but by

maintaining a separation between the hostel and the rest of her social world – recall her collage ('a Week in my Shoes' Fig. 1.0. pg. 153) in which New Horizon and the hostel are separate from the other spheres of family and friends. Sureeya told me that it was difficult to feel 'comfortable' in the hostel but rather than attribute this to the rules (which also irritate her) it is because of 'all the people coming and going'. Rather than moving between these places with a group (becoming 'wrapped together') she tries to stay separate in order to avoid a 'bad route', while the movement around her is a source of discomfort.

Within the hostel situation it is difficult to find private space and maintaining a distance from other residents can be difficult. This is a subject that is returned to again and again in the interviews. The lack of distinction between private and public is particularly difficult for Ben who was beginning the difficult process of transitioning from male to female. The start of the change from being Ben to being Vicky was taking place without a 'place to hide in' (Arendt:1998) He told me: 'Everything you do everybody else knows. It's tough to keep secrets in places like that.'

In the account of one of my interviewees who had never stayed in a hostel before (Ryan) part of his hostility was his resistance to the 'we're all in the same boat and therefore the same' notion. Ryan was keen to disassociate himself from those he labelled 'street rats' and not going into the hostel system could be seen as part of the process of distancing. Ryan predicted that in hostels there would be trouble with other young people, arguments, violence. But in most of the accounts of those who had actually lived in hostels, discomfort stemmed from having to live in such close proximity to other people. This contrasts with the stories of public space where peer surveillance is underpinned by a fear of violence.

Many people have to share rooms and complaints about roommates are recurring topics of conversation in the New Horizon drop-in: messy roommates, noisy roommates, roommates who accuse you of making mess, roommates that steal your food:

Kirsty - I hate sharing! I mean the roommate I've got now is such a pain. She's going on, because my old roommate cut her hair and I turn around and go 'excuse me does it look like I have black hair, and it's long enough to go into a sink?!'...

E- So, what are the main difficult things about living in a hostel?

K- I mean St Cecilia's is good, I like it in there, and not just because it's all women, because they bug the hell out of me. All the girly girls do my head in. But I have made friends in there, well, at tops three friends, but I don't really talk to people. But the girls I do talk to: Emily's straight, she's lovely, Karen's bi, she's fit - I really shouldn't be saying that about my friend - and then there's Charley, she's gay but she's taken and she's not my type. I've got loads of friends. I have friends in there, when I'm actually in and I find that St Cecilia's is much better because I can take the days out if I want to. It doesn't have such strict rules.

Kirsty describes a different experience, less extreme than the distancing of Sureeya and Ryan but also not forming the intense bonds described by Michael and Andrew. She has made a select group of friends, away from the 'girly girls', that she describes in terms of sexuality and potential compatibility. Being 'wrapped together' then, isn't inevitable but can be a temporary coping mechanism, a tactic. A way of being with others that makes a difficult situation livable but that is identified by some as having a negative effect, detracting from 'working on housing' or contributing to taking a 'bad route'.

In her study of homeless teenagers in Glasgow, Suzanne Fitzpatrick describes how those who move into the hostels or are rough sleeping, tend to replace old friends with people in the same position as them. She describes this as 'concerning', arguing:

'This is not to suggest that homeless young people aren't worth knowing or can't be good friends, but simply that once a young person's effective 'community' becomes the homeless scene this is likely to make it more

difficult for them to reintegrate into mainstream society.’ (2000:98).

While this process of becoming involved with other homeless people is something that some of the young people describe (Michael’s talk of becoming ‘sucked in’) it is important to note the practical reasons for this: not least the simple day-to-day movement between different agencies that mean young homeless people are often with other people in a similar situation, combined with the impossibility for some people of going back to their own area. Friendships with other homeless people can be difficult to sustain because of both the levels of mobility outlined in Chapter 5 and the curtailing of day-to-day movement described in Chapter 6. However, as some of the places such as emergency hostels and New Horizon are returned to again and again, this brings about meetings. Paths converge, go their separate ways for a while and then cross again.

Conclusion- ‘Just some Zen, some place’

I go to the project room with Kirsty to find her old mobile phone. She roots through her things, bits of paper, random knick knacks. She tells me she’s a hoarder. There is something strangely touching about her things. Teenage girl bedroom things, removed from that context: a glass turtle paperweight, lots of novelty soft toy key rings, without keys.

‘The room can be this big, that’s perfect. The room that we’re in right now is perfect [very small]. Bed, TV, you’re good to go, you know what I’m trying to say? Just some Zen, some place.’ Ryan, on a good living space.

In this chapter we have considered the way in which the hostel can be considered as enmeshed. Firstly, I considered how hostels are enmeshed in the benefits system and both some of the difficulties of those who are in it and the costs of this enmeshing for those who cannot access it. I argued that the surveillance that takes place in the hostel works on two levels. As well as following the rules, such as

the curfew, the young person must 'engage'. This means to be seen to actively 'work' on their own housing path. Thus the hostel is not just a shelter but a place of progress. The system then favours a certain kind of person. They must be eligible for benefits. They are more likely to get a place in the hostel if they speak English. They are likely to progress if they attend meetings and workshops.

Fran Tonkiss compares Kracauer's characterisation of the Labour Exchange as the factory's opposite, a place of inertia and 'empty time' (2000: 123) with the apparent activity of the contemporary Jobcentre. She argues: 'As people perform the motions of actively seeking work, unemployment as blank time no longer exists. You have to work at it.' (2000:124). The hostel, and arguably the homeless day centre, are also places of waiting that have been transformed into places of activity. To paraphrase Tonkiss, being homeless as blank time no longer exists (if you enter the homeless network). You have to work at it.

However, another issue arises from the hostel situation that we shall explore in the next chapter. Warnes et al argue that hostels': 'increasingly effective rehabilitation and resettlement programmes are seriously obstructed by the lack of move-on opportunities' (2004:vii). There is a mismatch between what the hostels hope to achieve (i.e. moving people on) and the reality of what can be achieved under present circumstances within the network. Here we can see how housing benefit and the lack of move on opportunities impact on what kind of action is possible in the hostel. I shall go on to argue that it is a situation where moving on is stressed but where the opportunities to move on are severely constrained.

Other kinds of enmeshing also take place in the hostel. Being subject to the same forms of regulation (being in the 'same boat') has the potential to bring people together. The hostel is a place where lives can become entwined, 'wrapped together' partly through a lack of private space and also through participation in the same network of hostels, day centres and Jobcentres. This is something that can be enjoyed but also resisted.

Through this chapter the breakdown of public/private distinction in the lives of young homeless people becomes apparent. I have brought Arendt's argument about the necessity of the private realm to bear on this. If we take this

chapter in conjunction with the last, a picture emerges of different forms of surveillance and governance impacting on the lives of young homeless people. There is little escape from the glare of the public where they are always being asked to explain themselves. Ryan, in explaining the kind of space he needs, stresses that he doesn't need much space: 'Just some Zen, some place.' The effect of always being in the light of the public is alluded to throughout, by my participants. It is described as tiring, annoying, a lack of peace, I have linked this to a lack of ontological security. However, for some in this situation a livable life is carved out through being with others, even though these tactical associations threaten to hold them back in the snakes and ladders game of housing.

Chapter 8 – Imagined Futures, Precarious Presents and Persistent Pasts

Procession

We meet up in the youth centre, young people and workers, where New Horizon is temporarily housed because of the rebuild. It's my first visit to the relocated centre, a community centre up the road. Lunch is being served. The young men look strangely smart in shirts and ties. I've heard them joke before that for them wearing a suit can mean one of two things, court or a funeral and today it's the latter.

Gina arrives with her baby Ayesha, nearly one now. Almost exactly a year ago we were going for a picnic in the park, Gina in her last week of pregnancy, Janet and me plying her with juice cartons because of the hot weather. Entertaining Ayesha provides a welcome distraction. On leaving the centre, we form a sort of funeral procession to the bus stop. We snake down Chalton Street, a typically New Horizon varied bunch. Me and Steve are at the front pushing Ayesha, behind us are the besuited Pete and Niall. Niall carries a wreath and Pete a bouquet. then come some of the staff, Louise and Janet, Emma and Godgive, the nurse. Behind them the tall figures of Zula and Gina flank the diminutive Leanne, all three arm in arm. Leanne is carrying a football shirt signed by the young people from the centre. We pass the under-renovation New Horizon building, which has boards around the outside. We cut through the estate behind and cross the road weaving through the British Library courtyard, our black clad procession an interruption in the sea of people with laptops drinking coffee in the morning sunshine. We are heading to get the 63 bus which will take us to the cemetery in Honor Oak.

On the top deck the mood lifts. Emma (advice worker) dishes out sweets. Stories abound about the births of Zula and Gina's babies ('there was cockroaches in that hospital, do you remember Steve?'). And some about Andrew. We cross the river and people make jokes about South London. 'It's what you make of it.' says Gina, who lived in Peckham. Leanne who also grew up south of the river, shudders 'I hate this area. The only time I ever come South is if Andrew makes me. And now he's making me again.'

We get to Honor Oak and walk up the long hill to the cemetery. When we arrive there are some other young people from the centre in the crowd. Some of them wear t-shirts with Andrew's

face, dates and R.I.P printed on them. I help Leanne keep her balance as she changes into her heels. Then a bagpipe player starts 'Flower of Scotland' and the main procession comes into view. So many people walking in front of the hearse. Flower arrangements on the car spell out ANDREW, NEPHEW, SON. The coffin is carried in by six young lads. On top of the coffin is a Celtic flag and a Millwall football. There's no need to write the rest. The crematorium is packed to overflowing. Our group finds itself standing and squeezed up close to the coffin. The priest doesn't really know what to say. A couple of cousins talk about Andrew, stories of fishing, drinking, his sense of humour. There is a hymn which no one sings and a song by that other London Scot, Rod Stewart (You're in my heart). A little boy who we don't know is squashed in next to us crying his heart out. Afterwards we regroup and our little procession goes back down the hill to the bus stop. It starts to rain. Gina tells me this is the third time a friend of hers has died but the only time she's gone to the funeral. She hopes Andrew appreciates it.

Introduction

Andrew's chronological map (Fig. 0.8. pg. 147) left off at 'life looking up' but an accident on a day trip to Leeds led to his death. Andrew was hit by a bus after drinking with his friends on the train. A few weeks after the funeral, we gathered in St Mary's church, Camden, where Andrew had lived one winter in the cold weather shelter, ('this used to be my yard!' see Chapter 7) for a memorial service. During the service, I thought about his up and down map and how this was a journey that was over now. No further chances of 'life looking up'. Through the processes of funeral and remembrance, Andrew's map in some respects, joins up. I could trace a line from where he left off back to South Bermondsey, where his life began. The pub marked on the map, where he told me he had his first ever drink and first ever job, back in South London becomes the scene of his wake. Other points are returned to. In the gap between the accident and the funeral, New Horizon, another location on Andrew's map, became a place for people to gather and try to come to terms with this loss. Stories and photos were pinned to a memory board. These traces of a life, its impact on others, tell a different version of the story marked out on Andrew's map, its rendering in this thesis, or the priest's unsatisfactory mumbles at the funeral.

Gina's remark about this being the third friend of hers to have died

reminds us about both the loss and grief that often feature heavily in the lives of young homeless people and the unequal distribution of deaths of young people according to social class. But at these meetings brought about by Andrew's death, there are signs of life stories developing in other ways that point to different possible futures. Some young people are in similar positions to when I saw them last, others were doing less well. Some have moved on, Zula, for example, had secured a job working for a charity dealing with preventing sexual and domestic abuse.

In Chapter 3, I introduced a tension between 'creating positive futures' and lives that seem to take on more cyclical characteristics. I argued that it wasn't that there was no hope of positive futures for these young people, but rather that even when progress does happen, it often did not unfold in a straight line. Here I want to look at the relationship between young people's talk about their futures, how they make sense of the future and present in relation to pasts. Past, present and future are all interlinked and imagined through each other. Pasts persistently make their presence felt in the present and impact on the imagined future. Not that the past is lying there waiting to be discovered (Benjamin:1968), there are different kinds of pasts, corporeal pasts written on and read off bodies/habitus, narrative pasts. Ideas about the future also act on the present. My focus will be on how young people make sense of the future in relation to their pasts and presents. Or to put it differently, I will consider attitudes towards possible futures from the context of precarious presents that are haunted by persistent pasts.

This chapter adds another layer to the picture of precariousness that has been building through the preceding chapters. We have already explored the ways in which constant movement and forms of fixing (being fixed in mobility) keep lives in a precarious state (see Chapters 5,6). In the previous chapter we considered the lack of privacy in the setting of the hostel and I introduced that idea of precarity can exist within a system – in the housing game of snakes and ladders. This chapter develops this last point further, tracing the relationship between being in the homeless network and the kinds of imagined futures available to young homeless people.

An aversion to making plans and a tendency to act impulsively were

described by many of my interviewees. I will argue here that this is an attitude towards the future based on a fragile and uncertain present and often a past that makes its presence felt in the present. Here I will interrogate what it is that makes the present precarious. I will consider the impact of what has happened before and its reverberations through the present as well as the ways in which a precarious present is maintained by the homeless system. But first we need to rewind from the funeral, from Summer 2009, and go back to the earlier days of fieldwork.

‘I don’t do plans’ - Constraints on imagining the near future

‘I don’t do plans. Like every day, I just take one day at a time. I can have bad days and I can have good days.’ Kelly

‘We could go out there now and say to people: ‘what are you up to this weekend?’ Half of them wouldn’t know because it is about today and what’s for lunch today. They rarely come in and go ‘what’s happening next week?’ They’re not interested in next week, it’s today. ‘Am I getting somewhere to sleep today? Am I getting my benefits sorted today?’ It’s almost like they’re forced to be ‘in the now’ because if they aren’t then nothing’s going to be sorted and they need it sorted today, so I suppose it’s about their circumstances. *Their situation actually perpetuates them living in the now*, because if they’re not in Advice now, they’ll have nowhere to sleep tonight but they are not actually thinking about tonight, they’re thinking about their Advice (appointment).’ Janet

One of the challenges of New Horizon’s focus on ‘Creating Positive Futures’ is that many of the young people describe thinking in short term ways and an aversion to making plans, like Kelly. As Janet notes, this is a practical adaptation, why think of tomorrow when you don’t know where you’re sleeping tonight? Lia Van Doorn (2004) suggests that short-term thinking might make homelessness more bearable. She argues that this mismatch between the clock time of institutions and more

cyclical notions of time can perpetuate homelessness, as appointments are missed and it becomes more difficult to adhere to clock time. For Van Doorn living in the now is an adaptation to life on the streets, a similar argument is made by Janet (above) who emphasises how a situation of being in the now is brought about by the fragility of the present. How can you think beyond that night if you have nowhere to stay, or beyond lunch if you are hungry? However, drawing on Janet's account and those of the young people, I will argue that structural forces also contribute towards this experience of time and attitude towards the future. Rather than Van Doorn's analysis – an interpretation of cyclical time as an adaptation made to life on the streets – I will argue that in this situation, it can also be understood as an adaptation to dealing with the homeless network and the mechanisms of the state that it is tethered to. So, while living in the moment could be a response to a lack of ontological security in an unstable situation, this is an instability perpetuated by being enmeshed in systems, rather than existing outside of them.

Let's begin by looking at how Kirsty tells her own relation to time, making plans and the future. She starts by talking of her spontaneous decision to move to London: 'I got up and left. It's all I ever do. I live on impulse. I didn't even pack anything. I didn't have no money ... I jumped on a train and went. I didn't even bother telling anyone I was leaving. I just jumped on a train and left. [laughs]' She told me that she likes the adrenalin rush of living spontaneously. However, later on in the interview other factors emerge in her lack of orientation to a future. It would seem that for Kirsty, living in the moment is an adaptation to the non-arrival of an imagined happy future:

E- And how do you see your future?

K- I don't really know. I don't plan ahead, I just go with the flow, whatever happens, happens. If it does it does. If it don't, it don't.

E- But ideally, the ideal scenario for 10 years time?

K- A flat, a car, a job. A damn good girlfriend and I'll be happy. It will never happen. This is me.

E- Why won't it happen?

K- Because it never happens. I've been planning my future for years, it never happens. My mam always says 'take each day as it comes' and I do, I live by that motto. I don't see the point in planning ahead because it all goes wrong. I just learn to live on impulse, take things as they come.

E- When you say you don't plan ahead, I mean how far does that go?

Do you plan the next day or...

K- Not really, if I'm going away somewhere then I do because then I've got to. But if I'm not doing anything I just wake up and go with the flow, see what happens. See what the day brings up. Probably why I've never got a job yet.

Kirsty, in making sense of how her lack of planning impacts on her situation of unemployment, may seem to be in line with Van Doorn's argument in terms of the perpetuation of homelessness by different experiences of time. But Van Doorn focuses on time as an adaptation to the street rather than an adaptation to dashed hopes. Kirsty talks of her lack of future planning as linked to the failure of a hopeful near future to materialise. Some background context is useful here.

Kirsty, as we know from previous chapters, is from the North East of England. She grew up in a household with her alcoholic, and at times violent, mother. As a teenager she was often put in the position of caring for her mother and younger brother. After her mother died of an alcohol related illness, she moved to America to live with her father and stepmother. That didn't work out, Kirsty had problems with her step-mother and so she returned to England, moving to a town in the South East to live with her uncle. This didn't work out either and she found herself back in Selham, living with her Grandma, who she describes as a 'second mam'. She then got into a relationship with a married woman and moved into the family home taking on childcare responsibilities for four children. She says she had very little freedom during this time.

This past which mixes loss, responsibilities to care for others and displacement could be seen as a reasonable base for assuming that nothing will ever go to plan. But there is another aspect to Kirsty's lack of planning. While Kirsty

suggests that this attitude towards the future may have prevented her getting a job, it also emerges that there are other material reasons for her to postpone employment.

For Bourdieu, the social world can be understood as a (rigged) game, where social actors make sense of the future like football players, positioning themselves according to where they think the ball will land. For Bourdieu, then ‘the forthcoming ... is not a possible which may happen or not happen but something which is already there in the configuration of the game and in the present positions and postures of team mates and opponents.’ (2000:208) Kirsty’s knowledge of the field she occupies is not just reliant on what has been, but on also on her awareness of her position in relation to other players and the game itself, in this case a set of circumstances in the hostel and benefit system:

K- I don’t really want a job while I’m in my hostel because it costs way too much. If I have a full time job it [rent] costs £125 a week. Which means I would have to get a job that pays £300 a week, which to be quite honest, is actually really quite hard in London, it’s really quite hard getting a job that pays you that much in London. I don’t really want to bother when I’m still in that kind of hostel. The kind of hostel Jo’s in, she only has to pay £84 if she works. I’d rather do that because then it would be on minimum wage instead of having to pay £6.50, £7 an hour.

E- So, for you does it feel quite far off getting a job and stuff?

K- Yeah ... I think I want to do more training than anything at the minute. Until I get out of me hostel and into a better one really.

When I talked to the young people about their futures, many made reference to the worry of getting a job or going into education and this leading to them losing their hostel place. Thinking into the future or making significant changes was dependent on ‘getting my housing sorted out’. But this is difficult in the private rental market without a job, and the council flat many hope for is often all too elusive. In order to understand the incompatibility of working/education and

living in a hostel it is necessary to go back to the benefits situation. There are structural obstacles to possible futures, other than a different notion of time.

Janet's interview provides an analysis of how being in the benefits and hostel systems impact on the possibility of moving on. As the EET (Education, Employment and Training) worker Janet is focused on getting young people into education, training or employment yet knows she must tread carefully. By law, New Horizon isn't allowed to provide benefit advice. Janet thus has to help the young people access EET but always with an awareness that a change in circumstances could lead to them losing their benefits, thus jeopardising their hostel place. She explained to me how she always emphasises that the young people need to continually check the effect of a change, for example going into work/education, on their benefits. I outlined the link between benefits and hostels in Chapter 7, but to briefly recap, getting a low paid full time job can be the worst thing for a young homeless person to do in terms of keeping their hostel place. Work such as cleaning jobs are precarious and badly paid. For example, Luisa's situation highlights the difficulty of combining employment and making the hostel rent:

Luisa is Portuguese and was trying to sort out hostel accommodation through New Horizon. She had been given a printout of information about a YMCA hostel but clearly didn't know what it was. I think she thought it was a flat. After her appointment she was waiting for her boyfriend to come to the centre to translate for her. We struggle to communicate with each other but persevere by using paper. She draws a map of a bedroom, kitchen and bathroom all in a line and pointed to it. Reading her printout and pointing at the various rooms on the paper, I explain that there are three rooms for every shower and no kitchen – she seems sad about this. Her eyes well up as I explained that the hostel costs £144 a week, I write this figure next to her drawing and point to it. She isn't on benefits, she works but earns £150 a week. She copies the figure down on a paper towel.

Luisa's situation illustrates the incompatibility of taking on the sort of low paid work that is the employment option for many young homeless people and living in a hostel. It is difficult to imagine how Luisa could sustain living in the hostel with just £6 a week left over for food and transport. In Chapter 7, I argued that the

relationship between benefits and hostels make it difficult to take on employment without risking losing Housing Benefit. This becomes very relevant when considering possible futures. Employment is viewed as one way out of homelessness but Janet also points to examples where taking on full time but precarious work has led to people losing their accommodation. The pay stops, the Housing Benefit is delayed, they slip into rent arrears.

Education is another way by which people seek to create a 'positive future' but this too is beset with difficulties in the present system. Sureeya, for example, who was studying Travel and Tourism at college until she became homeless said she would like to go back and take up her studies again but can't afford to lose her Housing Benefit. In relation to the difficulties of reconciling benefits with going into education, it is worth reproducing this long extract that details Janet's attempts to steer a way through the system, as it shows just how complicated it is for young people, and people like Janet, trying to work within the current framework of benefits:

J- If you're under 19 you can get full time education and go on income support, right. But what they're saying is you have to be in full time education before you can apply for income support ... if they [the young people] apply for income support they have to stop their JSA [Job Seekers Allowance].

E- Ok, so there's a period where they don't get anything.

J- Example: so they get on a full time course, but to get on the full time course they have to stop JSA because they're not available for work and they have to make a reclaim for Income Support. In that time that gap, their Housing Benefit [that needs to be paid to the hostel] is mounting up and they could end up homeless. Their Housing Benefit also stops, so rent for the hostel stops in the gap when they're trying to get on full time education, which is really a lot to ask for a young person. Luckily, young people are so focussed on getting into full time education ...

They have to wait for their Learning Agreement, cos what I was

thinking, what I could do is photocopy their application and say they are on the course. They could apply for Income Support and there won't be that gap. No, they've got to get on the course, then wait for their learning agreement and all that takes time and so there are complications where I have to look at each individual ... What I do now is say to them 'Right you want to do this course, you ring this number and you find out exactly where you stand and what's going to happen' and it's the only way they're going to understand that their money is involved and their Housing Benefit is involved here and now, and then they can make an informed decision and whatever decision they make, I try and support them in that. And so if there is going to be a gap without a bit of money, it could be bus passes, it could be a few tins of beans, it could be liaising with the hostel and saying 'Look, they've got this gap but they will be getting income support' and usually the hostels do agree to it. So, there's ways round it but really, really difficult to ask a young person that wants to go into a career, and if they are over 19, it's a totally different issue. They get on a course, I've seen young people have to stop courses to go on New Deal,⁸⁹ so, example, Sisay is on a dentistry course ... the last time I spoke to him they wanted him to pull out of college and go and do New Deal and he's in his first year, deadlines are really tight and he was like 'what can I do?' I'm helpless, at that stage, I'm helpless and the only thing I can do is say 'If you don't do that they'll stop your benefits' and that's of no help to them at all.'

Janet's attempts – the unsuccessful idea of photocopying the application to send through to the Jobcentre, the ensuing attempts to smooth over the gaps in the system by liaising with the hostel, getting bus passes or a bit of food to keep a young person going – demonstrates the complexities and contradictions of the position of the homeless young person. In order to move into education they risk making themselves more vulnerable in the short term and Janet recognises that this is a lot

⁸⁹ New Deal, a training and employment scheme, was introduced by the Labour Government in 1998.

to ask. The young people are under pressure to ‘work’ on their future yet there are many obstacles to be negotiated, relating to what this work can actually entail.

This example also demonstrates how Janet’s actions as a worker are constrained by the state. The support and back up provided by Janet can be crucial, but she is also aware of the limits of her capacity to help. When faced with the insistence of the benefits system that the young dentistry student has to go on the New Deal she is rendered helpless – although, true to form, she then sets about trying to make his college course placement fit in with the New Deal requirements. These attempts then also exemplify the way in which the state constrains the work that an organisation like New Horizon can do – ‘at that stage, I’m helpless.’

The difficulties of getting someone into education increases further if they are an asylum seeker/refugee. Janet explained to me how asylum seekers/refugees are required to take a year long ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) course. This course is attached to the receipt of benefits and so is compulsory:

‘What I call ‘Government ESOL’ is attached to their benefits and it’s not even a two or three month course, which I could kind of live with because yeah, I agree, they do need to learn English to become a part of this society but it’s a year. Their government ESOL is a year and that’s for people who can speak good English and I find that really insulting but because it’s attached to benefits they can’t opt out even if their English is above Level 2 ... And then, these courses as well usually finish in October, which I’m discovering now, as time’s gone on, I’ve kind of, for a while you get systems ... you’re like ‘Hang on a minute! This system is geared towards that!’ and this system is actually geared towards them finding two-bit jobs rather than finding education because the course end in October, enrolment [for college] is in September, so what they do is whip them up, put them on New Deal and they end up with cleaning jobs.’

Janet’s label of ‘Government ESOL’ encapsulates how some young people are

effectively coerced into one form of education and excluded by processes (the simple mismatch between dates) from other forms by the state. The interface of the immigration system and the benefits system leads to young asylum seekers and refugees becoming a source of cheap labour.

Despite all of these issues some people do manage to move out of the cycle of hostels. Maybe because, as Janet says, they are so focussed on education they take the risk of disrupting their benefits or else they get into employment that can pay the hostel rent. However, even when some kind of balance appears to be found, the reality can be a grind. One couple, who were long standing clients, were trying to get ready for the arrival of their baby, find a flat and move into employment and education:

At night underneath Oxford Street, Jamel crushes cardboard boxes. It's hot and dusty work, the air-conditioning can't be switched on at night because of the noise. Sometimes he finds himself nodding off, which is potentially dangerous as he is using heavy machinery. After 2am he wakes up again, but the last couple of hours drag. When Jamel is talking about his work, I suggest that maybe after a while he could transfer to day shifts. But he tells me night shifts are better paid. Besides, his partner is giving birth in August and starting university in September and this means he can look after the baby while she is at university.

This illustrates how the constrained choices that people like my participants make, are not just linked to the benefits system but to the wider economy. In Chapter 7, I discussed Mariame's West End employers' attempts to doctor her wage slips. Jamel crushing boxes under Oxford Street is a powerful image showing the invisible cheap labour that literally lies beneath the West End.⁹⁰ Both these examples show the ways in which moving into employment is fraught with difficulties for young homeless people.

⁹⁰ For a lyrical exploration of this invisible night time world of labour see Sandhu (2007:34) on cleaners: 'London's cleaners don't exist'.

Persistent Pasts

‘The debts I owe are past beyond being paid. If I get seen it’s over. It’s past that. And that’s the thing, you don’t know when you are going to bump into someone, they could be on the same bus as you. And London is smaller than people think.’ Sean

In the example of Kirsty, a precarious present is made sense of through a persistent past and the experience of things never turning out for the best, combined with structural constraints that shape the options available for the near future. The impact of persistent pasts at New Horizon can be experienced in other ways. One of the most obvious versions of ‘persistent pasts’ impacting on the present and future relates to those who have been involved in crime. For those with criminal records the past reverberates into the future in various ways, including:

- the possibility of meeting someone from the past who could be of danger.
- the effect of criminal record on employment or emigration possibilities.
- as habitus.
- prison as an alternative future.

Sean and Michael both talk about the possibility of their pasts flaring up at any time. Their attempts to limit the likelihood of such encounters, by avoiding certain areas (examined in Chapter 6) are not watertight strategies. As Sean comments ‘London is smaller than people think’. Even when more distance than that between London boroughs has been put between a person and the likelihood of repercussions from the past, the past can still linger.

Niall was heavily involved in the gangs of his hometown back in Ireland. He describes his life then as: ‘a lot of drug dealing, a lot of fighting, robbing, basically anything that a gang basically does, I was involved in.’ He paints a grim picture of the town where he is from. In Niall’s narrative it is the town itself that seems

to pull down the occupants.⁹¹ After getting in trouble with drug debt he finally made the decision to leave. He told few people but those he did tell thought it was a good idea. He flew to Doncaster where he stayed with a friend's brother and then took the train to London. Throughout the interview Niall talks about having to make a break with the person he was in Ireland and about the new start that coming to London represented:

'I had a nickname back home and since I came here I'm not that person anymore, I broke away from it and that name, I don't have that name over my head anymore ... I will always have that name, but that name has a different person to it. In my eyes it's a cruel, it's sly, it's a horrible side to me ... If I hadn't left back when I did, I think, I honestly think I would be either a drug user, a serious drug user, I think I would've gone to heroin in the end because the way my home has gone, is just full of heroin and shootings and stuff like that and it's not worth it at this stage, its not the life I want. I don't want to be down by a river for all my life, drinking cans and injecting myself or smoking it or doing anything to do with heroin or crack. I don't want that to be my lifestyle no more. I came here for a fresh start to make a living for myself, to get a job and maybe settle down and have a family.'

Niall makes sense of his coming to London as a break with his past. Coming to London is starting again, an alternative to what he sees as a dead end future in his hometown. In his interview he insists over and over again that he's 'never looked back' but much of our exchange is taken up with doing just that. He gives detailed accounts of particular incidents, usually accompanied by the date on which they happened. There has been a lot of violence and loss in Niall's life, including a drug related incident when his best friend died, which he feels partly responsible for. The stories of loss he tells me aren't just from his life but go back through the past. He talks about violent incidents in his family going back to his childhood and before he

⁹¹ Like Kirsty talking about Selham pg. 118.

was born. This amount of grief and loss isn't something that can be shaken off or dispensed with by a move overseas. It seems to weigh heavily on him, you can see it in his eyes. His insistence of 'I never look back' is tempered by a different recurring refrain 'I'll never forget it'. Still, he is proud of having made that break and still sees a better future for himself in London than he would have had at home.

Niall tells me about how his long-term hostel provides some kind of stability from which he can imagine a future as a football coach or a youth worker. This goal was something Niall was working towards, he had a place on an FA coaching scheme at the time of the interview. He said he wanted to work with young people and thought his experiences could help him educate young people about drug use. He imagines this brighter future as linked to the future of London and the 2012 Olympics:

'I will definitely stay here because there's so much doing in London, especially with 2012 and that's something I definitely want to stay for. It's something I want to get into as well because it would be great to be in, even a volunteer to help out and stuff like that, I really would appreciate that. That would be great for me, a career, a great boost.'

Although he seemed hopeful about the future he told me that he had suffered from depression in the past and could feel it coming back when he drank too much. He said 'the only thing I really have is here [New Horizon] and football.'

For those from London with similar experiences to Niall – in terms of being involved in drug dealing, the running up of debts that can't be paid and violence – London just doesn't hold the same promise. Some have, like Niall, made attempts to leave their hometown (London) yet always seem to return. London is seen as holding no future for them but at the same time living in other places seems difficult too.

In the previous chapter, Sean discussed his lack of privacy in the hostel he was currently living in. Here he reflects on his attempt to leave London. After feeling like he had 'burnt all bridges' in London, he moved to Hertfordshire where he has family. However, he found the pace of life slow and the place dull: 'So slow! No one had a rush to do anything. You walk down the street in the morning in London and

you've got to rush, you've got to be in with the crowd, you got to get about, but out there everybody just strolls, they're all calm and it's just a different way of life.' Sean also found that being 'street' prevented him from fitting in in this new place, this became especially evident when he started working in a supermarket. I pushed Sean to explain what being 'street' meant, he replied: 'I think it's the way you talk, the way you act, the way you present yourself, it's hard to explain. I know how to use the term but to explain it ... I think it was just a different class than I was used to. The way people act and speak. I just felt odd one out.' The past here works on the present through the formation of a 'habitus'. In Sean's case the past as habitus, a 'socialised subjectivity' (Bourdieu and Wacquant :1992:126), is experienced as limiting the possibilities of movement in the future.

Despite saying that 'it's hard to explain' Sean provides an insightful account identifying a set of embodied practices (the way you talk, the way you act, the way you present yourself) relating to class. This habitus has had exchange value in the past for Sean, it is part of what made him a successful child actor, market trader, MC, but is also what leads to him being read as different in Hertfordshire. To be 'street' is to embody 'the street' in a particular way. However, Sean also experiences this as constraining, moving beyond 'the street' becomes difficult. While in some places Sean is like a 'fish in water' ('it doesn't feel the weight of the water and it takes the world about itself for granted.' (Bourdieu and Wacquant:1992:127)) in Hertfordshire he is most definitely a fish out of water.

However, staying in London is also beset with difficulty. There are large parts of North London where Sean will not go because he feels that his past is particularly likely to catch up with him. At the time of the interview this was causing him problems as he had been assigned a probation office that could only be reached by taking the bus through these areas. This means that he sometimes missed appointments, which could potentially lead to him going back to prison. He had distanced himself from the group of friends that were involved in low level crime but was feeling isolated and bored, as a consequence moving between his hostel and New Horizon daily.

Sean is trapped in a paradoxical situation. The place where he feels like a

'fish in water' (the imagined place of 'the street') is also a place and set of circumstances that he regards as bad for him and dangerous. When I said that it sounded like it was hard for him to be somewhere else but also hard to be in London. He replied: 'It's hard to be here. Yeah. The trouble is, you don't have to cause trouble, trouble will find you but living on the outskirts of London is just too boring, it's a different way of life.'

Andrew had expressed similar feelings about London to Sean, a wish to get out but yet feeling the pull of the city. He had gone to Ireland for a while to work as a labourer and talked about that time wistfully, yet he still found himself drawn back to London. He had tried living in other places too and I asked him what is it was that always made him come back. He sums up the 'irony' or paradox that himself and Sean were caught in:

'Home is where the heart is and I think my heart is here, you know? Which is a sad thing because I hate London. That's the ironic thing about it. I hate it with a passion. The people, the moodiness that people are, they walk about with a chip on their shoulder, the crime rate, I don't feel safe in London no more ... I think with London, *my heart's there but I know it's wrong for me.*'

Sean told me that he felt as if he had come to a crossroads in his life where he could still either go back to prison or else find a job. He said if he went back to prison then he would end up going back again and again. The alternative he said was breaking 'the cycle' he was in, and eventually becoming a youth worker. It is worth noting that for those with past involvement in the criminal justice system, prison is one looming possible future. In his interview Sean repeated something that I have heard him say at other times: 'it's a lot easier being in jail then living out in the city'. That bears some serious reflection. Both Sean and Andrew told me about how jail was 'easy', however, their ensuing descriptions sounded anything but: they described bullying, stabbings, being moved from place to place. The description of prison as 'easy' could be understood as bravado. But in order to make sense of why

prison might be understood as 'easy' the severity of their everyday lives needs to be considered.

Imagined Futures – Reconciling the near and far futures

Maria was back in today, this time with her friend Isabela (the person whose floor she had been staying on). Isabela is Polish and has lived in Russia and France. She says she works in a club and has just come to the centre to support Maria. Maria is worried that she will have to share a room in her next hostel (her time in the emergency hostel is nearly up). She says that she gets anxious and has panic attacks and is worried that sharing a room will bring this on. Isabela reads Maria's fortune from a pack of playing cards. She arranges the full pack on the table and tells her that her mum and dad will stop arguing ('because I've gone' nods Maria). Isabela asks Maria if there is anything she would like to ask the cards. Maria asks 'Will I get my six month hostel?' Isabela stares at the cards for a long time and finally says 'Yes, but you might have to share a room'.

Emma- Do you think about the future much or...

Sureeya- I do! But it's quite hard when you don't really have a permanent place. I mean right now, I know I'm staying in a two year hostel but I dunno, you still don't really feel safe because you think, 'In two years what's going to happen?' and like two years, they go fast so I dunno. But I am, I do want to go back to college and everything, start back.

E- What kind of thing do you think you'd like to do at college?

S- I want to do Travel and Tourism, that's what I was doing before when all my housing stuff got in the way, so hopefully get back to that but at the same time you can't really go full time college cos like your Housing Benefits and everything.

Through the use of examples, I have argued that for young homeless people the near future is precarious and closely linked to the fragile present. Maria asking the cards only about her immediate circumstances ('Will I get my six month hostel?')

once again foregrounds how anxiety about housing shapes concerns and temporalities.

For those with aspirations that were in line with New Horizon's idea of positive futures – for example, those who would like to go into education but couldn't because of financial considerations – often said, like Kirsty and Sureeya, that going into education will be able to happen 'when my housing's sorted'. The ability to make more long-term plans becomes part of a hoped for near future. Sureeya, for example would like to go back to finish the college course she was on that was interrupted by her insecure housing situation but she is aware of how hard this would be in the short-term. The time to go back to college is when where her current problems are sorted out and her life can resume the course it was on before. She can see that there's also a possibility of juggling work and college *and* making the hostel rent ('I don't mind, I can work. But when I'm working I know half of it's going to go to the rent, so you have to find a good balance. That's quite hard to do.') but she also knows that this would be difficult. We can think back to Jamel's situation of tiring and risky employment (pg. 227) as an illustration of the difficulty of finding a 'good balance'.

While the structural constraints of the present impact on the imagined near future, hopes for a further away future were voiced in the interviews, often, as we shall see, with some caveats. Here I will consider the kinds of futures the young people imagine for themselves:

Future Plans and Hopes

'Become a head chef in the next ten years and then buy a place out of London, move away from London but have a job in London, so I just come down by train.' Pete

'I do hope in September to go back to college and from there uni and maybe get a good job, move to the country and settle down.' Zula

'I'd love to make myself a nice bit of fortune from my plumbing and just get out of here man, because there's plenty more of the world to see.'

Michael

'I wanna become something, I don't want to be this bus driver or this builder, because I'm a roofer by trade, I can go and make three, four hundred pound a week roofing, but physically its challenging, but mentally I want something more than that ... I want something that's going to physically challenge me and mentally challenge me like something I enjoy, like youth work, putting something back into the community.' Andrew

'Me? I'm working towards ... a mansion! I want a big place! I want a nice car! I want, well I want kids but I want it with the right woman.'

Ryan

The aspirations articulated during the interviews outlined above can be broadly considered in line with the 'Positive Futures' vision of New Horizon, and to some extent may be a response to being in an interview situation with me, a person perceived as both a member of staff and a student. Although my participants sometimes told me of their dreams and aspirations they are often tempered by the reality of the past and present, the constraints of their situation. These aspirations, given with reservations and caveats are, I think, more than just a reflection of what they thought I wanted to hear. So, Andrew tells me that although he would like to go to university, and thinks he is articulate enough, he thinks his low level of literacy would hold him back. Sean is also aware that his aim of leaving the country will be hampered by his criminal record. He would like to move to Australia but concedes that this may be unrealistic, so he sets his sights on Ireland instead ('I would love to go back over there, even though I'd prefer a hot country, but beggars can't be choosers!').

Bourdieu refers to the fatalism and flights of fancy of those who are forced

to live on a day-by-day basis and sees a cutting between present and future where dreams bear little relation to present circumstances, arguing:

‘The often disorganised and even incoherent behaviours, constantly contradicted by their discourse, of these people without a future, living at the mercy of what each day brings and condemned to oscillate between fantasy and surrender, between flight into the imaginary and fatalistic surrender to the verdicts of the given, are evidence that, below a certain threshold of objective chances, the strategic disposition itself, which presupposes practical reference to a forthcoming, sometimes a remote one, as in the case of family planning, cannot be constituted.’

Bourdieu (2000:221)

But despite the lack of a near forthcoming future, many of these dreams are not exactly far fetched. They are neither the fantasy or surrender that Bourdieu describes, yet are often out of reach in the short term. A possible future spoken of by many of the young men was learning a trade, such as becoming a plumber or builder. Ryan, for example, talks of ‘bettering himself’ through learning carpentry, and other trades. He already has City and Guilds qualifications and talks of himself as being a ‘multi-tradesman’. Ryan is not that far removed from his goal of working in a trade yet his ability to keep up a physically tiring job is compromised by his having to move from friend’s house to friend’s house. Michael got onto a plumbing course but when his housing was disrupted, he had to leave his dad’s flat, started sleeping on his friend Zula’s floor and found he couldn’t keep his college attendance up. These difficulties suggest that the ‘when my housing’s sorted’ position is a rational response to being homeless, rather than merely being tied up with a different perception of time or impulsiveness.

Another option for the future that is voiced by some of the young people is becoming a youth worker. As regular attendees at a youth centre this is a world both within their experience and one where their experiences could be valued. The common narrative here is that youth work is a way for using their experiences to

help others. Zula's trajectory from youth centre client to training professionals to work with young people who have been sexually exploited can be seen as an example of this route.

While I've argued that some of these dreams are not so very remote, arguably this could make these hopes all the 'crueller' (Berlant:2007), as they are in some cases tantalisingly just beyond reach. But let's remember, often the futures spoken of by the young people weren't given in a blindly optimistic fashion. They were given tentatively, with caveats or as responses for what they would like to happen.

While New Horizon promotes education, employment and training as routes to positive futures (and predominantly, the young people expressed thoughts about their futures in these terms) challenges to the 'positive futures' discourse were sometimes voiced.

Walking back from the park to the centre I chat to Gina. I can't remember quite how we get to the meaning of life, but Gina says 'You live and then you die. It's all pointless isn't it?' She looks at me as if she expects an answer rather than this being a rhetorical question. I say it's a big question and make some banal remark about having to have to just do our best while we're around, leaving a mark on the world in a good way. 'By having kids?' says Gina. 'Well, maybe, but not necessarily.' Gina tells me that she's looking forward to being a mother (she's due to give birth). She tells me how she wasn't pleased at first, but now she is. 'Do you want to have kids?' she asks me. 'I dunno, I used to want to but as you get older you get more set in your ways.' 'Don't you want to carry on your name?' I tell her I have lots of nieces and nephews. 'But do you not want to be a mother?' She persists. 'I don't know, not at the minute.' Gina seems really surprised but refers to a worker at the centre. 'She's got it right. Marry a man who earns loads of money and don't have any kids.'

During my time at New Horizon many of the centre's regular women clients became pregnant including Zula, Gina and Kelly. In fact it became a running joke that if you attended the Women's Group you would get pregnant. This perception of a high rate of pregnancy among this small group of young homeless women is in

line with existing findings.⁹² The circumstances and reasons for young homeless women having babies cannot be addressed at length here. However, from my conversations with the young women who were pregnant I would suggest tentatively that motherhood offered both a future and a role in the context of an uncertain future.

While Gina was not pleased about her pregnancy initially, as motherhood approached, she makes sense of it as a reason for being alive, a chance to carry on a name and to become a mother. She was quite shocked that this isn't a concern of mine. These concerns with having children as a way of leaving a mark on the world or feeling a link to the future are not confined to young homeless women, we certainly know that people are having more children, with the UK figures from 2008 showing the highest national birth rate since 1973 (National Statistics Online).⁹³ Within the context of this higher birth rate, it has been argued that women from low income backgrounds have less incentive *not* to get pregnant than those from less deprived backgrounds (Cater and Coleman:2006). The difference here then between working class and middle class women, is timing, with working class women favouring starting a family earlier than their middle class counterparts (Arai:2003).

Aside from this general tendency for people to have more children and for working class women to have children earlier, parenting can also be considered an alternative way from work and education through which to claim value through a role as carer (Skeggs:1997). In their study of planned pregnancy, Cater and Coleman (2006) consider planning and why teenage pregnancy might be a rational and positive choice made on the basis of a variety of reasons. They argue:

⁹² Gorton (2000:vi), in her study of young homeless women and pregnancy, found: 'A high incidence of unplanned pregnancy among young women living in homelessness agencies: in a survey of 31 London hostels approximately 24 per cent of young women residents had been pregnant in the previous year. There was also a low rate of abortion relative to other women in a similar age group in inner deprived London, where the rate of abortion for 16 to 19 year-olds is 41.3 per cent. An estimated 76 per cent of young homeless women were going ahead with the pregnancy.'

⁹³While the bodies of the young women are more obviously marked by pregnancy, and pregnancy impacts more on the housing situation of young homeless women, the importance of parenthood for young homeless men should not be overlooked here. Fatherhood, or the possibility of fatherhood, was mentioned as part of a future and some of the young men in the centre were also already fathers. For those who weren't fathers, fatherhood often featured in their plans for 'settling down' in the future.

‘Parenthood provided an opportunity to create a loving family of one’s own and, in a sense, compensate for their own negative childhood experiences. Bringing up a baby was perceived as providing a purpose, one that provided a sense of capability and satisfaction, and was better than having a low-paid, ‘dead-end’ job.’ (2006:x)

But perhaps to call this ‘rational’ is to assume a secure base from which to plan from, the pursuit of a ‘strategy’ rather than a tactical move in the fragile present.

I have discussed above the constraints of getting into education or employment while living in a hostel. These young women have fewer options and so perhaps even less incentive to delay pregnancy than other working class women. Having a baby can result in a way out of the hostel system, a way to break a cycle. I am not suggesting that young homeless people have children in order to access housing but rather, that having a baby can be understood as a choice based on meagre options. It is also something that didn’t close down my participants other aspirations for the future. Indeed, Duncan et al (2010) argue that for younger parents, having a baby can be an impetus to try and improve their circumstances.

I have suggested that there is a gap between an imminent future that is closely tied to a fragile present and a more remote future, which is a more hopeful place. Perhaps from the point of view of the young homeless person where near futures are very uncertain, a baby provides some kind of certainty, a link from the present to the near future and beyond.

Another alternative to the model of education and employment leading to a ‘positive future’ was summed up by Samuel, who argued ‘you start at the bottom and you stay at the bottom’ meaning that going into low paid work was pointless, you wouldn’t rise through the ranks. Samuel talked about himself as a hustler, (‘being a hustler is about knowing what people want and then getting it for them’). He said that making money was his prime aim in life although he also expressed his wish for a better education and talked about wanting to be a role model for his children (he hasn’t had any children yet, this is about the future) ‘I want to be

someone they can look up to, you know, the pursuit of happiness and all that...'

Samuel's challenge to the 'work your way up to the top' argument shows up the differences between what the centre promotes (progress, getting into training, thinking about the future) and how some of the young people think about their lives. It is worth noting that many more seemed engaged with some form of 'hustling' in the present than those who saw it as providing a future. While many buy into the idea of training and a career path, Samuel's view of society isn't unusual. But these two views can be expressed alongside each other. Samuel's reference to education and his mention of the 'pursuit of happiness' (probably here referring not to the American constitution but to the film starring Will Smith about a man and his son who struggle through homelessness and various trials before becoming a millionaire) hint at an aspiration towards something other than hustling.

Another view of the future came from Mark who started off at New Horizon keen to be involved in activities but gradually seemed to withdraw. I heard him say that there was a time he thought he could do good things, go back to college, but not anymore. It was unusual to hear such a bleak view of the future voiced in New Horizon.

Conclusion

New Year's Eve (2007) feels different, there is something in the air. Maybe because it's a time when people take stock of the year gone by and the future year ahead, and maybe because New Horizon runs a different type of service over the Christmas/New Year period. It is open to all clients and anybody else who wants to come in, bans don't apply and the older WOS (Women's Open Space) clients mix with the young people. There are no workshops running. There are films to watch and chocolates to eat (treats are saved up throughout the year for the Christmas period). I spend most of the day playing blackjack. Debs, a WOS client, sits next to me and advises me on how to play my cards, nudging me when I'm about to make mistakes. Meanwhile, the young people discuss their plans for the night. Ian is going to a rave in his coastal hometown and asks Sean to come with him. Sean however is unconvinced. They were both due in court today on charges of ABH. Ian attended (he is wearing a suit) and has had his tag removed. He is relieved that he wasn't sentenced to prison. Sean and the other person involved didn't turn up which Ian thinks made him look better in the eyes of the judge. This means there is a warrant out for Sean's arrest. Sean looks pale and sad. He says 2007 might be the worst year of his life so far. He knows he is looking at prison as soon as he hands himself in and wonders if that might in fact be easier than this current state of affairs, where he is always trying to avoid the police. I also chat with Zula about impending motherhood. She says 'I've done nothing productive this year, apart from make a baby.'

'If I get the place that I'm looking for and everything goes right, I see, not bleak, not bright, but it's not shadowy. The light's there but I'm working my way down the tunnel. The light's like a little speck right now but I know the light's there.' Ryan

For Bourdieu the labour market is 'the game', those who have failed in it become excluded. This exclusion is demonstrated in one young woman's reaction to her horoscope one morning: 'This is all about jobs and money! I haven't got a job or money!' The 'normal' future as laid out in the horoscope can't apply to her as she is outside of its frame of reference. But there are other games.

The homeless system is another game where people can fail or succeed. In Chapter 7 I compared it to a game of snakes and ladders. Knowing how to play the

game becomes a new form of expertise, recall Andrew's reflection that 'If I'd have played the game from start one. I would've had proper housing ... now' (pg. 208). Like Bourdieu's 'game' not everyone enters the housing game equally. In the previous chapter, I argued that speaking English, knowing how to fill a form in how to deal with a job centre, how to behave in a key work session all improve the chances of succeeding in the housing system. My participants at times act very tactically within this system and here I have argued that living in the present becomes a tactic, in relation to being in the game of the homeless system.

While agreeing with Van Doorn that the perceptions of time of homeless people are an adaptation to the situation of homelessness, I want to argue for a view of the temporalities of homelessness that relates ideas about futures to constraints imposed by the interaction of systems (benefits, hostel, education and employment) rather than a lack of structure, or an existence outside of structures. Outside Bourdieu's 'game' of employment there is not a vacuum but a whole host of agencies that work with and on young homeless people, these have their own rules and intersect in different ways. The difficulties discussed by Janet in her Education, Employment and Training work, for example, show up how achieving progress is made difficult in the context of the rigid benefits system. But these are related games. The consequence of the 'government ESOL' (the obligatory English language courses for asylum seekers/refugees) not meshing with the education system leads to the production of a source of cheap labour. If we take this chapter and Chapter 7 together, we can see that the likelihood of progression is thwarted by obstacles in the system (for example the rigidity of the benefit system) and by a lack of housing options.

The role of the persistent past is crucial when considering how young homeless people think about their futures. The kinds of displacement that have moved young people around the city, country or world often weigh heavily. In the example of Kirsty we considered her explanation that the experience of constant disappointment has led to an attitude of living in the present. The loss that Niall has experienced resurfaces time after time despite his attempts to be oriented towards the future. In Sean's account we saw another way of making sense of the past, that

of something that both shapes a person, a 'habitus', but also the future in defining the circumstances that they are able to feel comfortable in.

While the young people are often oriented towards an idea of a 'positive future' the ability to move towards a positive future is tempered by the precarious present. So although they have ideas about an imagined future the gap comes in the ability to move towards the goal of orientation. This is another form of fixing, fixing in the present.

Andrew's death provides a stark reminder of the precariousness of these young people's lives. Shaw and Dorling (1998) found that young homeless men in London aged 16 to 29 had a death risk 40 times the national average. Although Andrew's death can't be read as being straightforwardly caused by his homelessness – his accident combined alcohol and a motor vehicle – in studies on the causes of death of young homeless people, accidents and substance abuse are often mentioned as key causes, suicide is another (Roy et al: 2004; Morrison 2009). By foregrounding the end of Andrew's story I am not claiming that this is an inevitable conclusion. My argument is not that the young people's futures are determined and that therefore any hope is 'cruel optimism' or that their place in 'the game' is guaranteed. However, when progress is stressed so very much by the institutions that work with this group of people, it is important to show the structural limits and factors that shape what is immediately possible while also being able to pick up on the capabilities, circumstances and acts of imagination that could lead to different outcomes.

Optimism, attachments to objects and promises that can't be realised, might be 'cruel' (Berlant:2007), but a lack of any hope would be even crueller. It might be difficult for young people imagining the near future but this does not mean they had no hopes for their future at all or that their hopes were totally disconnected from their present. For many like Ryan, the light is just a speck at the end of a long tunnel, a further away future seen from a fragile present, but there nonetheless.

Chapter 9 – Conclusion

Precarious Positions, Tactical Moves: Young Homeless People and Urban Space

This thesis is, in part, about young homeless people's trajectories through the city, their negotiation of places and how they talk about these networks of movements, restrictions and their everyday life. To go no further than that, however, would risk merely making more visible a group of people who are already subject to various regimes of surveillance. In Chapter 2, I discussed how the urge to make poverty visible has historically gone hand-in-hand with making 'the poor' visible in highly troublesome ways, often through the processes of enforced 'telling' (Steedman:2000). I argued that there is no guarantee that attempting to make poverty or injustice visible through making *people* visible has a positive impact on their situation or the way in which they are regarded and governed, indeed it is often damaging, helping instead to create figures of fear and loathing. 'Giving voice', I argued, is fraught with difficulty. So what is made visible in this thesis, beyond the participants? A basic claim could be that this thesis complicates the prevalent image of the homeless person, making visible different kinds of homelessness. However, my initial surprise at the diversity in the centre needs to be interrogated more thoroughly than just through a recognition of the presence of difference.

What I have attempted to do is to start with a place, New Horizon, and the people who use it – and therefore help to produce it – as a position from which to ask people about their lives and trajectories, but furthermore to use that as a basis for an exploration of the systems in which they are implicated and survival tactics they employ within the network of these systems. The tension between the possibility of action and the factors that limit it runs through this thesis. For example, we can think of Chapters 5 and 6 as representing this tension in terms of how the young people are both highly mobile, yet restricted spatially by formal and informal forms of surveillance and by council policy.

Although ethnographically firmly located in the starting point of New Horizon, this research explores not just 'the global in the local' (Massey:1993) but

the other shorter forms of displacements and daily movements that make urban spaces. Following stories outwards, I have found that homelessness needs to be theorised across scales of nation, city, global and local. Discourses of progress in the charity sector, government policy on immigration, asylum and housing, biographies, comings and goings, processes of displacement, the Ethiopian/Eritrean war, all these things combine to produce New Horizon as a space.

Using a mixed methods approach has provided a set of tools to follow the tangle of these threads, in order to understand the private troubles that emerge in the drop-in centre in the context of wider public issues (Mills:1973). I have experimented with different ways of working with participants using maps, filming, collages as well as interviews and ethnography. These multiple methods worked as a set of lenses providing pictures that can be overlaid like a palimpsest. The result is not a full and perfect portrait taken from 'nowhere' (Harding:1991), rather a fractured picture emerges, made collaboratively and in dialogue but that ultimately bears my imprint. I interpreted this resulting bricolage of data thematically in the preceding chapters, rather than treating each method separately and in turn.

Although doing this work is fraught with ethical issues, I maintain that if one is going to attempt to understand power relations, systems and the discourses that are produced across them, asking those who are caught up in them what *they* think is a valuable enterprise. Not that what the oppressed say should be valorised, or held up as The Truth, rather that it reveals a valuable set of perspectives on how systems work and how people come to understand their place within them.

So what does an analysis of the production of this space (Lefebvre:1991) tell us beyond the specifics of New Horizon? Here is a set of inter-related theoretical claims/ provocations that I would like to expand on in this concluding chapter:

- Homelessness needs to be theorised across scales of local and global.
- New Horizon offers an alternative perspective on the city of movement, foregrounding how journeys made by loss and violence make the contemporary city.
- The language of multiculturalism is inadequate to account for the different kinds of displacement at work in places like New Horizon and the wider city.

- Young homeless people in London are both highly mobile yet restricted spatially by formal and informal forms of surveillance, a condition I have called being *fixed in mobility*.
- New Horizon provides a crucial almost home space and reveals the importance of place in lives lived on the move, challenging the opposition of mobility and space.
- The relationship between the homeless network and the state creates a situation where ‘moving on’ is both promoted and blocked.
- Place-making tactics make visible both the constraints and shifting ground on which they are employed but also could offer glimpses of other possible futures for these young people.

Global/Local: Thinking across scales of displacement

When I first came to New Horizon, I was very surprised by the variety of people using the centre. My first attempts to write about what kind of a place was created by this coming together were inadequate because I was writing in the language of multiculturalism, diversity and difference. There is a tension at work in New Horizon between the idea of being in the *same boat* (a set of circumstances relating to the homeless system) and powerful senses of difference. The same boat is a useful analogy to describe how young people from very different circumstances come to advise and support each other (often through a pooling of information) as they move through the homeless system. However, there are powerful differences in the circumstances of various young people within this *same boat*. The same boat is the shaky ground on which people meet and forge temporary alliances or become *wrapped together*.

In order to explain the convergence of these various people it becomes important to consider various kinds and scales of displacement; loss, violence and exile are all key to understanding this place. Global and local circumstances put those who come to New Horizon in motion (recall Dean talking about the successive waves of migrants and refugees pg. 105). From the outset of this thesis I have argued for examining the position of young homeless people in the city in relation to and

across different scales of the global, the national and the urban. These scales are created through each other. For example, the global factors that cause homelessness are not only important in influencing a young asylum seeker's move to the UK but also continue to impact on the way that they are treated within the system. The way this international movement is then organised through government agencies, sets forms of national movement in motion (for example, by sending an Eritrean asylum seeker to Middlesbrough). On a national level the responsibility (and funding) for hostels has been devolved through local authorities in a way that creates a local scale of hostel provision. It is particularly difficult for those who do not have a 'local connection'. As this policy constrains the possibilities of moving to somewhere else to live, other than the area that a person is from. Government homeless provision, with its preoccupation with 'local connection' and allocation of funds via local authority, reduces people to their borough of origin and perpetuates a static vision of the city and of belonging. Thus these levels are woven together and impact on each other.

The young people live highly mobile lives, problematising the notion of 'local connection', yet they also experience the city as a series of bounded areas. Thus, there is both a disjuncture and a relationship between how the city is imagined and recreated in the policy of local connection, as divided neatly into boroughs that people belong to, and how the city is lived by these young people. At a time when the highly bounded geographies of some young people have come under intense media scrutiny it is noticeable that these structural forms of fixing are left out of the discussion. Young homeless people in London have highly mobile lives and often need to move boroughs for their own safety. Although according to official policy if a young person is in danger then moving to another area should be possible, in practice this simply often does not happen.

In short, the complicated meshing of agencies/biographies/practices that bring about the forms of movement, exclusion and staying still of my participants are so much more complex than current housing policy acknowledges. If we combine these everyday movements with the kinds of displacement that were outlined in Chapter 4, the two dimensional policy of local connection is revealed as

woefully and dangerously simplistic. A London-wide (if not national) hostel strategy would help to ensure that people could relocate more easily.

In New Horizon, I argued, everyone has been displaced in some way. I worked with Brah's (1994) notion of diaspora space but found it unable to capture the mixture of different kinds of exiles, including local ones. Developing this concept further, I argued for framing New Horizon as a *place of the displaced*, allowing for a consideration of displacements that aren't linked to notions of diaspora. In examining how this place of the displaced functions and is managed, I found a mismatch between the language of multiculturalism and the experience of displacement. The existing language at work in institutions fails to capture what is happening in a place like New Horizon (Ahmed et al:2006); we can think back to Nadif's description of Somalia as a moment where violence and exile are brought powerfully into a discussion of difference (pg. 114). This mismatch between the vague and all encompassing existing discourse/language of diversity and the specific experiences of violent displacement attested to in the drop-in shows the need for developing new vocabularies and analytical frameworks that go beyond just flattening people into 'cultures', for analysing how difference is configured in urban spaces.

Framing New Horizon in this way doesn't merely complicate the prevailing picture of homelessness in London (though this is not an unimportant issue) or provide a picture of a day centre as an urban constellation. It provides another angle on a city made by movement. These flows of people who pass through or make an *almost home* for themselves in New Horizon provide an invisible labour force that underpins the wealth of the city (think of Jamel crushing boxes beneath Oxford Street) and cater for its informal economy. Often the dividing line between the il/legality is blurred, as in Mariame's experience of being employed as a cleaner (pg. 191). Thus, both the invisible labour that helps to produce the city and some of the injustices that are bound up with this become visible in New Horizon; often through the process of making attempts to square low wages, exploitation and somewhere to live, by both clients and staff.

Enmeshing and the capacity to act

‘Sly as a fox and twice as quick: there are countless ways of ‘making do.’
de Certeau (1988:29)

The folders that the young people bring into the centre are full of paperwork carrying traces of their highly precarious positions and of various battles fought relating to delayed benefit claims or immigration status, or of applications for a hostel place or for a college course. A glimpse at these folders shows the need for considering young homeless people not as existing outside of social structures but as enmeshed within them, or else trying to access them. I have problematised the idea of young homeless people as living outside of relations with institutions. I have argued, from Chapter 1, that when government policy has emphasised moving rough sleepers into hostels, and therefore when many homeless people are coming into contact with these organisations, it becomes necessary to ask questions about what happens in these spaces of homelessness. This is an important addition to a literature that focuses primarily on the space of the street.

I can now conclude that while examining the homeless network, the work that it does and the ethos of those organisations that are part of it is important, what is perhaps even more urgent is grasping the implications of the mechanisms by which this network is tethered to the state. The actions that are possible within the homeless network only make sense when contextualised within the bigger picture of benefits, immigration regulation and (lack of) public housing. Until changes are made in this wider set of relationships the organisations’ endeavours to move people on will continue to be beset with difficulty.

Homeless people who are unable to access services are in a precarious position. However, there is also another form of precarity that comes through regulation, and being in the network. If the homeless person is considered in the context of their relation not only to the homeless network but also in the wider set of relationships between the state and the network then we can see a contradiction between the ethos of working on yourself and moving on, and the possibility of

becoming housed or going into employment. It is the system itself that fixes young homeless people in a precarious condition. I will explain this further by considering the hostel/benefits relationship.

In Chapter 7, I examined the interweaving network of systems that work with and on young homeless people by focussing on 'the hostel' and its links to the benefit system. I explored this relationship through the concept of enmeshing. This example shows the ways in which the network of charities that work with young homeless people are constrained by their place in a wider network, the second layer. As well as a lack of housing options, I found that the rigid relationship between hostel and benefits both excludes people from the system and holds them in place once they are enmeshed in it. Young homeless people are urged to 'move on', to change their situation, yet there is a contradiction between this discourse of progress and policies that actively fix young people in mobility. There is a block in the system. Even if a person improves their qualifications or language skills through taking part in training at New Horizon or a hostel there are further obstacles to moving on. The point of stalling often comes from the inflexibility of the benefit system.

The dependence of hostels on Housing Benefit claims means that those who are ineligible to claim cannot be accommodated. Because the hostel rents are high, it can be very difficult for a young person to make the transition into education or employment (an issue taken up again in Chapter 8), which involves either a termination of benefits or a gap while a new claim is processed. More could also be done to stop people falling through the cracks in the existing set up. For example, the gap in income caused by entering employment (the gap between Housing Benefit stopping and wages being received) can have serious consequences. An interim payment being built into the benefits system could prevent some people losing their hostel places.

However, if we shift the focus from papering over the cracks in the current system to the bigger picture, the situation of young people living long-term in hostels with high rents that are paid by Housing Benefit shows up the lack of affordable public housing currently available in London. In considering the hostels as

enmeshed in a network it becomes clear that this is not a situation that can be changed from within the hostels themselves but one that would require changes at a government level to the benefits and hostel systems. The question arises, how are homeless people supposed to 'move on' if there is nowhere to move on to? Ultimately, until there are options for more affordable housing in London for many the moment of 'when my housing's sorted' will continue to hover in the middle distance.

Moving to a different level of analysis, if the housing system emerges as one kind of *enmeshing* we might ask what kind of action is possible within it? Bourdieu's game analogy works up to a point. We can see that as a 'game' the housing system is ultimately rigged because the dream of council flat is often ultimately illusory.⁹⁴ But it is a game in which it is still possible to act and make choices, although not everyone enters equally and the opportunity to behave tactically is reduced for some, for example, those who don't speak English or who have yet to grasp the workings of the system. Thus the kind of displacement that is bound up with homelessness has an effect on experience within the system; entrance into the system at all is barred for those without the correct immigration status. At the other end of the spectrum is someone like Zula who knows both the system she is implicated in and how to speak the language of the agencies she is working with. The room for manoeuvre for the young person depends not only on the system then but their different individual circumstances within it.

While making use of 'the game' as a concept, I also reached the limits of its usefulness. A problem with borrowing the game analogy from Bourdieu is that for him the labour market is not 'a game' but 'The Game', for him, those outside the labour market are excluded. But there are interweaving games, we have seen that analysing the housing system as a game makes no sense without bringing in the benefits system and its implications for employment and education. None of these structures work in isolation, each is enmeshed in a network of agencies that work to organise, intervene in and survey young lives. This is not to suggest that all agencies

⁹⁴ For example, Westminster council give the following council property waiting times on their website 'Studio/1 bed - 2 years 10 months; 2 bedroom - 6 years; 3 bedroom - 7 years 8 months; 4 bedroom - 27 years 7 months; 5+ bedroom - 18 years 6 months.' Westminster Housing Options

have the same ethos or logic or that they are always in agreement. However there is dependency within the network, for example the tight interweaving of institutions such as the benefits system and the hostel make it impossible for individual hostels to be able to work outside of that framework. The devolving of funding for hostels through the localised 'Supporting People' fund has a direct impact on who the hostels can accommodate.

The network is made up of various agencies and being within it has multiple effects. It can provide crucial support. Indeed, not being able to access the web of services and benefits can be disastrous.

New Horizon is positioned in this network. On the one hand, this means it can refer its clients into hostels and access a range of other services, but the parameters of what action is possible are also set by the network. There are moments in this thesis when these limits become obvious, my own failed attempts to get accommodation for Vesna (pg. 192), the frustration Janet expresses at the incompatible timing of the ESOL courses and the college year (pg. 226), or the compromises made over delivery of the LOCN programme (pg. 87). Once an individual is in New Horizon, the work the organisation can do with them is constrained by their position within the wider network. Anyone, regardless of recourse to public funds, is welcome in New Horizon but the organisation's capacity to assist, beyond providing food, daytime shelter and clothing is limited if the person cannot access the benefits that are so closely tied to the hostel system. Thus the horizons that New Horizon can offer are constrained by the state and its institutions.

My analysis is committed to outlining the experiences of being enmeshed while documenting the agency of the young people. De Certeau's concept of tactics is crucial in providing a way of grasping both the power of systems of governance and also the attempts at improvisation of those moving in them. For de Certeau 'the art of being inbetween' and acting tactically is not about finding a gap between structures but rather refers to how manoeuvres are made within a set of circumstances. The kind of tactics practised by these young people show that this is not a two-dimensional 'game' where all is predictable but that they move in a set of shifting circumstances that interlink and are responded to spontaneously. Tactics are

the ways in which people manage to live in a precarious situation, they illustrate what actions are possible and the limits of action. The actions that are possible can make visible regimes of surveillance and forms of enmeshing. We can think of the moves of my participants, the up and down movements on the housing ladder, moves that can only be executed in the precarious present, such as Andrew winning at the bookies and paying off his hostel debt, only to lose the rest of the money.

It is necessary to take moments of tactical adaptation and action seriously in order to grasp how people cope without the comfort of the private and in the glare of the public (Arendt:1998) but without romanticising difficult situations and trajectories forged by loss. Lest we slip into sentimentalism, it is important to clarify that being kept in the realm of tactics is a form of violence. Ruddick argues: 'To speak exclusively of tactical forms of resistance is to risk normalising, even romanticising, the condition of marginalised people, humanising the face of poverty in a way that demands no further action' (1998:358). I am not claiming here that acting tactically is necessarily resistance. I'm using it to describe a way of living on the move with only fleeting claims to space. The realm of the tactical here describes the shifting, grey space and blurry moments in which the individual has the potential to act. There is nothing necessarily positive about tactics other than that they allow an opening for action in situations that may look over-determined and bleak, this is important in itself. But what about beyond that? We might ask what does 'making do' do?

While the outcome of tactics is never certain, they do something to a situation. For de Certeau these manoeuvres come to impact on the landscape on which they are enacted⁹⁵ but this impact cannot be calculated in advance. Tactics are enacted in response to the moment rather than with the luxury of a view towards the future. Because acting tactically is always in the present and, in the case of my participants, on the hoof, they can backfire. I argued that the importance of 'working on your future' was promoted both in the hostels and in New Horizon.

⁹⁵ 'Statistics can tell us virtually nothing about the currents in this sea theoretically governed by institutional frameworks that in fact gradually erodes and displaces. Indeed it is less a matter of a liquid circulating in the interstices of a solid than of different movements making use of the elements of the terrain.' (1988:34)

Behaving tactically in the hostel context was related to young people's success or failure to 'knuckle down', to 'work on housing'. However, refusing to do this is another tactic, refusing to tell because of a feeling of exposure for example ('It's like Big Brother' Sean). Becoming 'wrapped together' with others in a similar situation can be interpreted as a response to making hostel life liveable. But this can have adverse effects on climbing the housing ladder, detracting from 'working on housing'. Thus behaving in a way that makes the hostel situation more tolerable might conflict with behaviour that would enable climbing the housing ladder. The very process of 'making do' can indeed fix someone in place in the present rather than allowing movement. Alternatively, Zula's new career can be seen as another possibility. This is not a move that comes out of nowhere, her experiences in New Horizon, plus her confidence and capabilities, help to bring this about. Neither does this development mean that she is on a straightforward path to a 'Positive Future' rather there is possibility.

There is nothing necessarily positive about the impact of tactics then, although they can bring about the unexpected, shifting one's position. There are a specific sets of tactics involved in getting on in the network of systems that homeless people are embedded in. One result of multiple tactical responses to this situation is the emergence of a shared expertise. Those in 'the same boat' pass on knowledge of how to handle interactions in the network. It is possible that this sharing pooling of resources might help people move through the system more easily. For example, coaching by a peer in how to present yourself in an interview for a long-term hostel place might prove useful.

The notion of being 'fixed' does not just apply to space. I have suggested that my participants are also fixed in time, fixed in the present. I suggested that the experience of living from moment to moment (tactically) could be understood as a practical adaptation to an uncertain situation but furthermore as a response to the situation created by the interface of benefits, hostels, education or employment. I considered the variety of structural obstacles in the way of moving towards a future. Tactics might not always lead to 'positive futures' or to a change in the system, but they might make it possible for a person to have a liveable life in the present. I'm

using liveable in the most literal sense of the word. Suicide rates among young homeless people are high (Roy et al:2004), with the suicide rate among homeless people being 35 times that of the general UK population.⁹⁶ Ultimately, we might answer then that, at the very least, 'making do' offers some ways in which to stay afloat rather than drowning, and that this is an important function.

Mobility, Surveillance and partial place-claiming

'Being grounded is not necessarily about being fixed; being mobile is not necessarily about being detached.' Ahmed et al (2003:1)

In this thesis I have argued that being mobile, in a state of homelessness, does not equate to being detached from either regulation through systems (as summarised above), or else from place. I identified three kinds of surveillance to which young homeless people are subjected (there are more, for example, the immigration service). The first is police surveillance, this was an unsurprising finding. The second was peer surveillance. The third was the surveillance of the agencies with which the young people interacted with, particularly the hostels.

A keen awareness of being under surveillance emerged through examining the young people's accounts of dealing with agencies. This became evident in my own initial attempts of asking for accounts in my interviews. However, it was through the more successful interviews, and the opportunity they gave me to ask about individual experiences, that the hostel emerged as a space of surveillance. Using a mixed methods, qualitative approach was important in relation to exploring this more fully. Through mapping, talking and filming, the peer surveillance that young people described complicated my narrower view of the way homeless people were restricted in their movements. The discussions and workshops I had with my participants made clear the need to pick apart these different layers of surveillance and governance that both move and fix these young people.

I have examined the effects of each kind of surveillance in turn, in order to

⁹⁶Statistic taken from 'Suicide and Mental Health Association International'.

build an analysis of how surveillance impacts on the lives of young homeless people. It is only by considering how different spaces of homelessness interlink and are experienced in conjunction with each other that it becomes clear how little access these young people have to private space. An analysis that focuses solely on institutional spaces and structural factors in the governance of young people's lives would risk overlooking informal peer policing. Conversely, a preoccupation with public space and peer surveillance risks neglecting other structural forces that fix young people in place (such as the Local Connection policy).

These different levels of surveillance show how the idea of the divide between public and private breaks down in relation to the homeless young person. 'The light of the public' (Arendt:1998) makes my participants visible in different ways, in different situations. There are few places to hide. The homeless young person has to traverse public space in particular ways because of their homelessness and is subjected to other kinds of surveillance because of their age. Surveillance through telling and being accountable in the hostel is experienced as all the more invasive because it takes place in an inbetween space, that is supposedly more private.

There are also acts of tactical and contingent place-making demonstrating the importance of a study of homelessness that does not assume that mobility does away with spatial attachments, but that is attuned to forms of partial space claiming and moorings. Acts of spatial claiming can unfold in places where it might be least expected. When John told me that the West End is somewhere he can feel comfortable because 'there's no fear in the West End', I was more than a little surprised. The West End, driven by consumption and a place where homeless people are not readily made welcome, might seem an unlikely haven for a young homeless man. In order to understand John's statement we need to not just consider his relationship to that space and his act of claiming it for himself but also processes of exclusion and surveillance from other places. Thus techniques of moving, here relating to 'bodily hexis' (Bourdieu:2000) can reveal a set of parameters. In this case, where it is safe to go and not go. An imagined city where spaces are bounded and traversed with danger is revealed in the movement and talk of a young man yet also

recreated and made, as such articulations are performative.

Studies of homeless people often give the impression of absolute mobility (Kawash:1998) or else of being stuck in a small rigid circuit (Wardhaugh:1996). Chapters 5 and 6 complicate these models. While there are high levels of mobility in the lives of young homeless people, it is not the case that this mobility is free and random. Chapter 5 introduced the idea that going into the homeless network both moves and fixes people. I argued that being 'fixed' and being 'mobile' were not necessarily opposites. The interplay of the homeless system and council policy can contribute to fixing people in mobile states, but being *fixed in mobility* also describes a condition where keeping moving becomes necessary in order to be safe. This second form of being fixed in mobility refers to the realm of the tactical, as it is action taken in the precarious present. For example, in Chapter 5, Niall, Pete and Ryan, in their different ways, describe how moving is used as a tactic – to stay safe on the streets, to find a place to stay.

In Chapter 6, I focussed on the kinds of surveillance to which the young people are subjected to in public. The interference of the police officer and, often more pressingly, the looks of other young people make necessary a whole set of practices: avoiding some areas, a way of moving, a way of looking. For many of the young men in particular, London was imagined as a series of bounded areas. Staying still in one area was not an option for many and I suggested that mobility was talked about in highly ambivalent ways. Mobility was described in terms of both loss and as a resource. Michael's claim that moving around 'gives you mappage', increasing points of orientation in the city, needs to be considered alongside Andrew's description of his 'different and difficult' move into Central London.

However, I have also argued for moving beyond a focus only on the space of the street. In lives of extreme mobility points of stopping become important for orientating oneself and as sites where lives become 'wrapped together'. Thus I have argued for the importance of exploring how spaces are (partially) claimed or adapted to tactically, rather than focussing on street homelessness in isolation. I have looked at the places in between; the hostel, the day centre, where individuals try to move forward or carve out a resting place for themselves. I have argued that considering a

range of spaces and the movement between them provides a fuller picture of urban spaces of homelessness than isolating one kind of space, such as public space or the space of the hostel. This perspective of looking at public space, pathways and inbetween spaces and the kinds of surveillance that young people come under as they occupy various spaces and move between them has highlighted the lack of private realm of young homeless people. We can think about the place of New Horizon in relation to this.

I have argued that New Horizon serves as an important mooring in the lives of many of my participants, an *almost home* space, one repeatedly returned to and where relationships are built up. But there are still rules that govern the place and that mean it cannot be claimed full scale by those in the position of clients. Even in the space of the hostel, which is described as 'like a prison' (Kirsty) or 'like Big Brother' (Sean) the young people find ways to make the space habitable, often by forging friendships with others in a similar position. For some young people (those who Dean described as 'the majority') New Horizon provides a place from where it becomes possible to act more strategically. In my interviews it was often referred to as a place where you can 'get things done'. But for others ('the hardcore') it functions as something more, a constant base that anchors the day and that is returned to over time. I argued that New Horizon acts as an *almost home* space, a place that provides sanctuary while also being a place where moving forward and, eventually, moving on is stressed. Part of New Horizon's value, then, is in offering a place to return to and a place where it is possible to be still, to sit down and chat. It also provides solid ground where it is possible to stop in order to push off from again, in the sense of moving on.

Reading back through my first draft of this thesis, I was struck by my repeated allusions to tea drinking. One of the reasons for this is quite simply a lot of tea drinking happens at New Horizon. Things happen over tea; tea fuels card games and form filling. In Britain, it is common in the aftermath of a crisis for someone to put the kettle on, and here is a place where the aftermath of multiple crises coalesce. But perhaps I was also using tea drinking as a shorthand to convey a kind of comfort or homeliness. The cup of tea can conjure for a moment a more home-like space.

When people arrive for the first time at New Horizon they are often in the midst of a traumatic situation and the importance of providing a place where people can drink a cup of tea (for free) and sit must not be underestimated. Much more than 'tea and sympathy' happens in this centre; by creating a secure base it can serve the twin functions of allowing staying still and enabling moving on. But it is the former function that is potentially most under threat because of funding requirements. This function of the place is very difficult, perhaps impossible, to measure. It is not quantifiable or easily translated into the language of outcomes necessary for funding bodies. There is a risk in a culture of outcomes, where everything must be framed as progress, that those things that can't be quantified (yet have a massive impact on the liveability of people's lives) can be discarded.

Implicit in my thesis, then, is an argument for the importance of spaces like this, where people can sit still. It is crucial that organisations like New Horizon keep that element of staying still or perhaps more importantly that funding bodies recognise this function that cannot be translated into direct outcomes. Beyond New Horizon, I am arguing for the preservation and creation of, and discussions about, the kinds of places that allow the practices of space claiming necessary for carving out a place from which to act and also flagging up the perils of over determined space packed full of activity.⁹⁷

The lack of 'a place to hide' (Arendt: 1998:71) makes for a tiring life and this comes through time and time again in the accounts of my participants. The exhaustion of having no real private realm is compounded by having to be on the move. For example, Ryan, who moves every few days between other people's accommodation in order to stay off the streets, is tired because of the combination of constant movement and his lack of 'some Zen, some place'.⁹⁸ In this example, the ability to make a strategic move is constrained and the young person is kept in the realm of tactics. In Chapter 8, I argued that this form of fixing needs to be understood in the context of a system rather than through the absence of structure. This link between mobility, fixity and possible futures helps us to understand how young homeless people become suspended in the present. Being suspended in the

⁹⁷ Amin, Massey and Thrift also point to the importance of places of 'slowing down'. (2000:46)

⁹⁸ If you recall, Ryan cannot move because of the Local Connection policy.

realm of the tactical can take its toll. A lack of peace of mind ('some Zen') is linked powerfully to a lack of place in which to hide ('some place').

In order to understand the precarious situation of the young homeless person, *enmeshing* and *fixed in mobility* need to be conceptualised as working through each other, rather than as separate processes. When taken together they challenge us to think beyond being 'fixed' as meaning grounded and 'mobile' as being detached (as proposed by Ahmed et al:2003, above).

Precarious Presents and Imagined Futures

'Creating Positive Futures' is at the heart of what New Horizon wishes to achieve but this takes place in the messy wider context/entanglement of the benefits, employment, immigration and criminal justice systems. New Horizon both makes challenges within the network of systems that the young people are implicated in yet also exists inside it. In order to be able to make referrals to hostels and other agencies it would be impossible to exist outside of the network. As such, the staff have to be able to operate on the levels of both strategy and tactics. For example, the work of the advice team is strategic, using their expertise to advocate for young people and to get them hostel places. We can also read interventions in public debates such as Shelagh's letter to *the Guardian* as attempts to make changes on the level of policy (pg. 93). But sometimes the system is so strangulating that strategy breaks down and tactics are the only form of action available. For example, I would suggest that Janet's attempts to get tins of beans for the person who is starting college without having benefits sorted is a tactical move. It is located very much in the present. The ability to work on both of these levels, to both push for changes in the wider system while also doing this kind of more tactical work, is one of New Horizon's strengths.

We have seen in Chapters 7 and 8 how working on a future is compromised by the limits imposed by the state through the interface between the benefits and employment agencies. Thus the requirement to 'work' on your future has to be carefully managed. A wrong move can be risky and result in a loss of

benefits and therefore place to stay. This keeps people living from day-to-day in a fragile present, as moving forward threatens to destabilise an already highly precarious situation. There is a contradiction that emerges when considering not just New Horizon or the hostel but the network as a whole. The enmeshing of systems that works with young homeless people simultaneously pushes and prevents homelessness.

In evaluating this situation it would be easy to get stuck between the discourse of progress, which suggests anything is possible if you work hard and the Bourdieusian idea of the game, where all is predictable and nothing is possible. I have put forward an argument that the enmeshed structures in which young homeless people are implicated perpetuates their precarious presents, but this is not to suggest that any one outcome is inevitable. Bringing de Certeau into this discussion and acknowledging that there are multiple factors at work in the network shifts the terms of the argument away from 'cruel optimism' versus pessimism; problematising both the sunny optimism of a discourse of progress that insists that hard work hard will always be rewarded, but also countering a strangulating interpretation of 'the game'. It is instructive to think back to Janet's account of how she approaches her work on young people's futures. It is not simplistically optimistic:

'So when young people keep bouncing back a year later and you've got a file that thick [indicates with hands], really thick, of all the work you've done ... and they're back doing what they've always done. For me, I've had to accept that and the way I work is it's a fresh start, everyday is a fresh start for me, if I don't work like that then they're not going to move on and I'm not going to move on with them and so I forget yesterday and I deal with today.'

Janet is well aware of the likelihood that appointments will be missed, that other factors will come between a young person and 'moving on' (in this extract she gives the example of 'life history', or as I have called this the *persistent past*). She tries to remain in the realm of the present where action is possible rather than being

weighed down by a history of things not working out. It is not an optimistic attitude in the sense of expecting a good outcome but is entirely hopeful. To see the glimmer of hope is not to suggest that no further action is required (to return to Ruddick's caution). Throughout this thesis an exploration of tactics has been bound up with looking at their limits and the kinds of interweaving of systems and circumstances that give rise to them.

In the previous chapter, I argued that the fragility of the present prevented looking to the near future. The precarious nature of the young people's situations is reconfirmed daily in the context of the day centre, most obviously perhaps in the case of Andrew's death but in countless everyday ways as well. Through my work as a volunteer I experienced some of the frustration that goes with working within this system (my failed attempt to find a place for Vesna is an obvious example of the interweaving of systems of immigration service, benefits, hostels and the limitations of acting within this set of constraints) but also through the essential support that it can provide.

The young people recognise the fragility of their presents and that being held in the present limits their ability to act strategically. If we think of the 'when my housing's sorted' statement, which postpones planning to a more distant stable future, we can grasp the link between having a space (literally) and the ability to plan. In Bourdieu's game people position themselves to anticipate the next move, but when the present is so fragile sometimes the very next move is the hardest to imagine. Instead of just pushing the idea of progress then, it becomes important to ask questions about how the precarious presents of these young people could be made less fragile in order to make their next move both more imaginable and viable.

Conclusion

The trajectories of the young homeless people I have been working with can reveal much about the way space is ordered and the complexities of moving through the urban landscape. They reveal the official and informal modes of surveillance and interference that shape both pathways through the city and possible futures. While this thesis is not aimed at addressing policy concerns directly, in these conclusions I have made some suggestions about where the current network of agencies is failing, particularly by highlighting the relationship between the homeless network and the institutions to which it is tied. In showing up some of the mismatches and contradictions in current discourse and the difficulties of moving, place making and simply staying afloat (if you'll pardon the use of yet another watery metaphor) I hope this thesis will make an intervention in both discussions of, and policy making on, youth homelessness.

I also hope that these conclusions show how this study is not just about New Horizon or youth homelessness but the city itself. London's inequalities become starkly visible here: in the lack of somewhere decent to live, in the embarrassment felt by an articulate young Londoner who can't read, in the tale of the unscrupulous employer trying to exploit the drama student/cleaner from Guinea. This thesis also provides a reminder of the global-ness of homelessness. In places like New Horizon the impact of wars, of changing boundaries, of immigration policy, can be seen. It is in places like this that people who have suffered all kinds of losses and violence start to try and patch a life back together on a shifting and constrained terrain.

In the more specific area of studies of homelessness and place, this work complicates the idea of state surveillance versus the homeless person and shows the importance for considering how layers of surveillance are interwoven and work through bodies in movement. It challenges the opposition of mobility and space, arguing that wherever there is mobility there are forces that shape and limit it, a rhythm to it, and places of stopping. I have argued that the way people adapt and live in precarious situations reveal not only ways in which a difficult situation is

made tolerable but also the parameters of what is currently possible.

While working on this research I have seen futures closed down dramatically and cycles slipped back into after moments that promised something else, I have also seen people doing well in circumstances that seem almost unliveable. It is necessary to use these accounts to take a step back from the immediacy of these young lives and look at their implication in a network of systems that fails a vast number of young people but which also incorporates small but crucial pockets of support. In highlighting how the precarious presents of these young people are constituted, this thesis makes a contribution in exposing both how the system fails but also the moments and places of hope that point to other possibilities and potentials.

Post-Script

Another day on the Euston Road

It's 7.45am and I am off to a conference on 'Mobilities and the Urban Poor' at Leiden University. Feeling quite the cosmopolitan academic for a moment, I get off the bus and pull my small battered suitcase along the Euston Road. I see a familiar figure. It's Michael. He sees me and we walk towards each other.

'I just need to find a shop that's open to buy a Snickers and then I'm off to work,' he says.

'Oh, are you working?'

'Yeah, doing cleaning. All over the place, High Wycombe. Today, I'm in King's Cross. I got to meet someone outside of there (he points to the station, my destination) Where you going? NH?'

'No, I'm going to Holland.'

'It's alright for some, innit?! For a holiday?'

'No, to go to a university there.'

'For good?'

'No, just for a few days.'

'What are you studying?'

'Sociology. Remember when I interviewed you... '

'Yeah, a lot's changed since then. I was on a plumbing course for a few months but when my housing got fucked up I stopped going.'

'Yeah, it's hard going to college when you haven't got that stability... Are you still at your Dad's?'

'Nah, I'm at Ian's place, well not even his place. Do you remember Zula? We're staying at hers.'

It's a bit cramped but (shrugs). I want to save some money and get into the private rental market.'

That's the way to go. Are you going in there? (points to St Pancras)'

'Yeah'

He gives me a kiss on the cheek.

'Give my love to everyone,' I say.

'Yeah, alright darlin.'

And then he's off and I turn into the train station.



**Fig. 1.4. 'Copper Load of This!' Installation,
New Horizon Youth Centre May 2010**

Architect's model for the centre redesign, as adapted by the young people of New Horizon Youth Centre.

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